



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 03 AUGUST 2021

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

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| Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn | Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training |
| | Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection |
| Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal | Minister of Health and Wellness |
| Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo | Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping |
| Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah | Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare |
| Hon. Avinash Teeluck | Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage |
| Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal | Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms |

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Mr Speaker | Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GCSK, GOSK |
| Deputy Speaker | Hon. Mohammad Zahid Nazurally |
| Deputy Chairperson of Committees | Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy |
| Clerk of the National Assembly | Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena |
| Adviser | Dowlutta, Mr Ram Ranjit |
| Deputy Clerk | Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi |
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 29 of 2021

Sitting of Tuesday 03 August 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)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OBITUARY – MR RETNON PYNEEANDÉE

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we learnt of the demise of Mr Retnon Pyneeandee, former Member of Parliament, on 31 July last, at the age of 88.

Mr Pyneeandee was born on 02 October 1932 in Rose Hill. He started working at the early age of 18 in the office of the Port area.

He joined the civil service in 1956 and served as Field Officer at the Family Planning Division of the Ministry of Health. Concurrently, he worked towards the completion of a Post Graduate Diploma in Population Growth Studies, awarded to him by Cardiff University in 1978.

In 1979, he joined l'*ACIM, l'Association des Consommateurs de l'Ile Maurice*, and held the position of President of the Association from 1983 to 1987.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Pyneeandee became a trade unionist in 1970 and served as member of the Federation of Civil Service Union. From 1970 to 1983, he held the position of Organising Secretary of the Trade Union Educators of the Government Servants Association. He occupied the post of Vice-President of the Federation of Civil Service Union from 1980 to 1983.

In July 1987, Mr Pyneeandee resigned from the civil service to stand as a candidate in the General Election in Constituency No. 8, Quartier Militaire/Moka, under the banner of the MSM-Labour Party Alliance and he was elected as Third Member. On 04 January 1988, he was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary, a post which he held until 06 August 1991.

He also contested the 1991 General Election in the same Constituency under the banner of the MSM/MMM Alliance and was again elected to the then Legislative Assembly.

On 02 October 1991, he became Parliamentary Private Secretary, a post he held until 16 November 1995. Later, in the same year, Mr Pyneeandee retired from active politics. Thereafter, he served as Chairperson of the Lois Lagesse Trust Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to kindly direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, may I associate myself to the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Retnon Pyneeandee. I knew Mr Pyneeandee very well. We started our parliamentary career together and I had the occasion to work closely with him on a number of occasions. My memory, Mr Speaker, Sir, of him is that of a most respectable and respected gentleman. Therefore, may I also request the Clerk to convey our condolences to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Retnon Pyneeandee, former Member of Parliament, by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and I direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

Hon. Members, I have two short announcements.

**LATE SIR ANEROOD JUGNAUTH & LATE DR. KENNETH DAVID BUCHIZHYA
KAUNDA - LOK SABHA - MEMORIAL HOMAGE**

I have been informed by Her Excellency, Smt. Nandini Singla, High Commissioner of India, that the Lok Sabha has on 27 July 2021 paid tribute and observed a minute of silence in memory of the Late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Former Prime Minister and Former President of the Republic of Mauritius and Late Dr. Kenneth David Buchizhya Kaunda, Founding Father and First President of the Republic of Zambia.

In his speech, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Shri Om Birla, recalled that, I quote –

“Sir Anerood Jugnauth was the chief architect of India-Mauritius bilateral relations and that owing to his significant role in fostering the bilateral relations, the Government of India had decorated him with the Padma Vibhushan and the first Pravasi Bharatiya Samman award”.

I am tabling a copy of an English translation of the memorial homage.

I shall, in the name of hon. Members, and in my personal name, transmit to the hon. Speaker of the Lok Sabha the expression of gratitude and thanks of the National Assembly.

Thank you.

I have another announcement.

**HON. MINISTER HURREERAM/HON. SHAKEEL MOHAMED -
UNPARLIAMENTARY WORDS - MEDIA ARTICLES**

My attention has been drawn to several media articles which have repeatedly reported that, as Speaker, I did not call hon. Minister Hurreeram to order when he uttered unparliamentary words at the Sitting of Tuesday 23 June 2020 to the address of hon. Shakeel Mohamed.

I wish to draw the attention of the House that I called both the hon. Minister and hon. Shakeel Mohamed in my office on the same day regarding the said matter.

I have deemed it fit to inform the House and the population at large that upon the Assembly resuming on that day, the hon. Minister Hurreeram tendered his apologies and withdrew the objectionable words twice in the Assembly.

Hon. Members, your kind attention is drawn to pages 89 and 90 of the Hansard dated 23 June 2020, which is posted on the website of the National Assembly.

I thank you.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

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 Immigration (Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record Data) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 182 of 2021)
- (b) The Civil Aviation (Collection of Data from Operators of Private Flights Landing in, or Departure from, Mauritius) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 183 of 2021)
- (c) The Maritime Zones (Territorial Sea Outer Limit Lines) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 184 of 2021)

B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for the period 24 March to 30 June 2020.

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

- (a) The Social Aid (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 185 of 2021)
- (b) The Social Aid (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 186 of 2021)

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

- (a) The Audited Financial Statements of the National Environment Fund for the years ended 30 June 2018 and 2019.
- (b) The Annual Report 2018/19 of the National Environment Fund.

E. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training

Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

The Annual Report 2019/2020 of the Human Resource Development Council.

F. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The COVID-19 (Horse Race Meeting at Champ de Mars) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 181 of 2021)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MV WAKASHIO SHIPWRECK – REPORT – SHORTCOMINGS & REMEDIAL MEASURES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the MV Wakashio shipwreck in July 2020 and its aftermath, he will table copy of the report, if any, from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre on the shortcomings identified, indicating the remedial measures, if any, as recommended by the National Council, that have been implemented to date to prevent a similar shipwreck and to deal with the ensuing threats.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC) acts as the main institution in Mauritius for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of disaster risk reduction and management activities. The NDRRMC coordinates with all stakeholders to ensure that risk reduction and preparedness planning is included at all levels of the country, from individuals and communities, to Government policy and strategy.

The NDRRMC, the National Crisis Committee (NCC) and the National Emergency Operations Command (NEOC) among other entities are governed by the provisions contained in the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2016. The Act provides for a legal framework to better manage disasters with a view to protecting life and property in a more effective manner.

According to the National Disaster Scheme 2015, the NEOC facilities are made available to the Department of Environment when they have to activate the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP). Maritime incidents involving ships at sea are usually dealt with by the Director of Shipping under the Merchant Shipping Act 2007.

As per section 10 of the said Act, “Shipping casualties”, which states –

“(1) Where a shipping casualty occurs, such as –

- (a) the loss or presumed loss, stranding, grounding, abandonment of, or damage to, a ship; (...),

and, at the time it occurs, the ship was registered under this Act or under the law of another country, the Director or a surveyor designated by him may hold a preliminary inquiry into the casualty and may, for that purpose, exercise any power conferred by section 8(1) and such additional power as the Minister may confer on them for the particular inquiry”.

In case of spills at sea, then the Director of Environment under the Environment Protection Act 2002 (EPA 2002) comes into play and becomes the Director of spill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the coming into force of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2016 did not alter the specific responsibilities of the Department of the Environment and the Director of Shipping with respect to shipwreck and oil spill disasters. Accordingly, and as specified previously, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre, has mainly played a coordinating role in disaster risk reduction and management activities.

The MV Wakashio entered our national waters (Territorial Sea - 12 nautical miles) on 23 July 2020, two days prior to its grounding on Sunday night 25 July 2020 off the lagoon of Pointe D’Esny. As such, upon the advice of the Commissioner of Police, the National Emergency Operations Command as well as the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan were activated.

Since Day One of the incident, focus was rather on salvaging operation of the MV Wakashio and was under the direct responsibility of the Director of Shipping.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the grounding of MV Wakashio triggered a convergence of international experts, salvors and logistics from SMIT salvage company to Mauritius from all around the world. In view of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, special quarantine conditions were exceptionally granted to experts from UN, IMO, Reunion Island, France, Japan, UK, ITOPF, cleaning contractors (PolyEco&LeFloch Depollution) whose services and guidance were of critical importance.

However, due to the sea state dynamics, the vessel started to crack on 05 August triggering a TIER III (more than 100 tons) oil spill at sea as from 06 August 2020. A national environmental emergency had to be declared on 07 August 2020 by the hon. Prime Minister under section 34(1) of the EPA 2002.

The NEOC was activated for a total of 25 days. NEOC was upgraded from level II to level III as from 06 August 2020. A total number of 62 Situation Reports together with daily

briefs were prepared and sent to high officials, including key NCC members at a 12/hourly interval since 25 July 2020.

NEOC provided support to the two leading organisations that have the legal mandates to deal with the MV Wakashio situation through coordination of sourcing and deployment of available resources and logistics from local authorities and other agencies. NEOC also provided support for the arrival, COVID-19 quarantine and deployment of foreign staff. Following the Wakashio event, lessons learnt at the level of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC) are as follows –

- (i) The Wakashio is another situation where a vessel went aground near our shore with...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Minister can talk a bit louder. I have some problems to hear, I am sorry.

Dr. Husnoo: If you allow me, I will just remove my mask a bit.

Mr X. L. Duval: I have some problems.

Dr. Husnoo: That's okay, thanks. Following the Wakashio event, lessons learnt at the level of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC) are as follows –

- (i) The Wakashio is another situation where a vessel went aground near our shore with no immediate oil spill. However, MV Wakashio had onboard significant volume of oil representing a threat of spill exceeding a TIER III. In this case, since 25 July 2020, the Director of Shipping, under the Merchant and Shipping Act, had a leading role for the salvaging of the casualty on the basis that there was no oil spill despite real risk of oil spill exceeding a level of TIER III. The legal mandate to respond to oil spill rested upon the Director of Environment as per the Environment Protection Act. Hence, the need for harmonisation of legal provisions among the Merchant Shipping Act, the Environment Protection Act and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act.
- (ii) The Director of Shipping and Director of Environment had different lines of reporting under two different Ministries for the same situation. Sometimes,

there was a lack of convergence in terms of priorities between the two institutions before the vessel started breaking into two pieces.

- (iii) The risk of oil spill from a grounded vessel should never be assumed to be 'low' or 'minimal'.
- (iv) The National Emergency Operations Command (NEOC), which was activated since 25 July 2020 and operating round the clock, was mainly responsible for producing consolidated reports. However, the NEOC had difficulties in obtaining timely and consistent information from a number of stakeholders. A NEOC Oil Spill Incident Action Plan needs to be developed, which will elaborate on its coordination role.
- (v) Ministries and Departments having key roles in an oil spill crisis need to understand their roles and responsibilities and have to develop capabilities and the culture of operating on a 24/7 basis. Such Ministries and Departments have to mobilise their personnel and set up crisis cells at their respective levels.
- (vi) The different cells of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (Evaluation, Operations, Logistics, Finance and Communication) have to be appropriately manned, structured and rendered operational at a suitable place near the incident site as far as possible. A dedicated Ministry/Department to lead –
 - (a) the different NOSCP Cells;
 - (b) taking of samples and carrying out relevant tests and reporting;
 - (c) the management, including logistics arrangement for the Team of International Experts, and
 - (d) the management of volunteers and NGOs.
- (vii) Pre-identification of coastal suitable facilities in the South, West, East and North of the island to be used as the Command Centre for managing future oil spills.
- (viii) The management and capacity building of oil spill management at Agaléga, St Brandon and Rodrigues to be included in the revised NOSCP.
- (ix) Meetings by the Director NOSCP, Director of Shipping, National Crisis Committee (VPM/CP) and National Crisis Management Meeting to be

streamlined so that stakeholders are not unnecessarily held up at the detriment of operational activities.

- (x) The roles of the Shipping Agent, owner of vessel, Charterer of vessel, Salvage Team, Environmental Arm, ITOPF to be understood by stakeholders involved in the issue of oil spills.
- (xi) The revised NOSCP to clearly define the roles, responsibilities and actions by stakeholders before, during and after oil spill emergencies. The revised NOSCP to be based upon scenarios where oil spill has already occurred as well as when there is a threat of oil spill due to an aground/vessel in fire, etc.
- (xii) An in-depth study on the vulnerability of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agaléga and St Brandon to oil spills based on maritime activities/routes. Software/Modelling tools to be made available for identifying possible movement of oil slicks and likely impacts on our coastal areas. Need to implement an oil spill risk reduction measures, that is, structural and non-structural such as pre-positioning and pre-installing of facilities for quick deployment of oil spill combat equipment such as booms, ecological pins, etc.
- (xiii) Guidelines and parameters for waiving off the environmental emergency and restricted areas.
- (xiv) Regular simulation exercises on oil spill incidents so that stakeholders better understand their roles and responsibilities.
- (xv) Media handling and management to be well defined with the identification of dedicated team for regular interventions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I assume that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to the Preliminary Inquiry Report on the grounding of MV Wakashio bearing IMO No. 9337119, in accordance with the Merchant Shipping Act and the Merchant Shipping (Preliminary Inquiries and Formal Investigations of Shipping Casualties) Regulations 2017 which was submitted on 27 August 2020. The report was on the grounding of MV Wakashio on the reefs off Pointe D'Esny. The preliminary inquiry has been conducted in accordance with the Merchant Shipping Act 2007 and the Merchant Shipping (Preliminary Inquiries and Formal Investigations of Shipping Casualties) Regulations 2017.

The purpose of the preliminary inquiry was to investigate maritime accidents and to make recommendations for improving safety in Mauritius waters. The preliminary inquiry is carried out separately from the criminal investigation. The criminal and/or liability aspects of the accidents are not considered therein.

The investigation found that the main reason why the casualty occurred was because of the failure to continuously monitoring the ship's position due to social distractions on the bridge, and this was a failure in implementing the vessel's safety management system procedures for maintaining a proper look out while at sea.

The report has made 21 recommendations to address these safety issues. After a serious incident such as the one which happened with the MV Wakashio, it is most important to look for lessons which can be learnt. The investigation has been as thorough as possible in the circumstances and a number of points have emerged which should be followed through to try to improve safety at sea and pollution prevention in the future. The recommendations which follow are addressed to the shipping community as a whole, but certain points will be of special interest to particular sections of the maritime community. The salient recommendations of the report which are being addressed in the short-term are as follows –

(i) To Shipowners and Flag States

Incidents involving ships do not only affect the vessels concerned and its crew; shore people are very much affected whenever major pollution incident like this one occurred. Therefore, it is recommended that ship owners and flag States ensure that –

- The Safety Management System is correctly applied and followed by all those onboard and ashore too, that is, Manning and Ship Management Companies.
- Proper and appropriate navigation charts for particular locations shall be in use at all times; unnecessary course deviations for unnamed reasons should be banned.

(ii) Coastal State (Mauritius)

It is recommended that a modern Vessel Traffic Management Information System (VTMIS) be set up. This Vessel Traffic Management Information System (VTMIS) shall operate with dedicated personnel who have followed appropriate training and are well versed with movement of ships.

It is, therefore, recommended that Aids to Navigation be provided at locations where there is considerable movement of traffic, especially the East and South Eastern part of the island.

(iii) **Ship's Routing**

Under Article 22 of UNCLOS -

“The coastal State (like Mauritius) may, where necessary, having regard to the safety of navigation, require foreign ships exercising the right of innocent passage through its territorial sea to use such sea lanes and traffic separation schemes as it may designate or prescribe for the regulation of the passage of ships.”

Furthermore, under Chapter V regulation 10 of the SOLAS Convention, there is the mention of ship's routing which may be implemented on a mandatory or non-mandatory basis. The purpose of ship's routing is for the safety of life at sea, the safety and efficiency of navigation and the protection of the marine environment.

Mauritius can adopt the “Areas To Be Avoided” (ATBA) routing measures which are areas within defined limits in which either navigation is particularly hazardous or it is exceptionally important to avoid casualties and which should be avoided by all ships or by certain classes of ships.

It is, therefore, recommended that appropriate ship's routing system be established so that vessels navigating in the vicinity of Mauritius keep well clear of certain areas and respect at least the 12 nautical miles clearance from the coasts, especially the east and the south east parts. This shall apply to all vessels, including those in innocent passage.

It is also recommended that the appropriate legal instrument be drafted to penalise offenders.

The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) shall be amended accordingly to include swift interventions before the actual incident, that is, oil spill at sea. It should also include priorities for protection in case of an oil pollution incident at sea and waste management.

The Shipping Division of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping as well as the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate

Change shall work together and in consultation with all other stakeholders to coordinate their actions in case of a threat to the marine environment from any vessel.

(iv) **Emergency Towing Vehicle (ETV) or Salvage/Towing Tug**

In case of emergency such as fire, grounding or others, a vessel might need to be towed to a safe place to prevent dangers to men and to prevent pollution. It is, therefore, recommended that an ETV, that is, Emergency Towing Vehicle, be permanently on standby within Mauritius, so that it can intervene within Mauritius and its EEZ.

(v) **Vessel Reporting System**

The Automatic Identification System (AIS) allows shore stations to get valuable information on vessels, but, as a matter of information gathering, some vessels such as bulk carriers and laden tankers should be reporting whenever they pass through certain highly sensitive places around Mauritius.

Therefore, it is recommended that a Vessel Reporting System be implemented in Mauritius with the obligation for laden tankers and bulk carriers to report to coasts radio stations of the National Coast Guard, whenever they pass through certain highly sensitive places around Mauritius.

(vi) **Maritime Security**

Therefore, it is recommended that security measures be enhanced in order to deal with vessels that fail to respond to communications or warnings from the National Coast Guard. On one side, it could be that the communications systems of the vessel are not operational, but, on the other hand, it could imply the need for more alertness on behalf of shore authorities, responsible for security matters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, at this point, it would be inappropriate to table a copy of the draft report as the Police enquiry is still going on as well as the Court of Investigation. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management has taken 21 minutes. I hope that you will give appropriate time to me also to ask supplementary questions. The question was addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management as he is responsible for national disasters, and Section 6 of the Act does say that the Council, which he chairs, should examine post-disaster review reports from the National Centre and

recommend remedial measures. This is this report that I am looking at and this report that I have asked him to table.

Dr. Husnoo: I have mentioned it from the beginning that the first report was the National Disaster Risk Reduction Committee.

Mr X. L. Duval: What are the remedial measures that have been taken?

Dr. Husnoo: Earlier, in the first part, I have mentioned the measures we are going to take.

Mr X. L. Duval: Taken.

Mr Speaker: No conversation! Address the Chair and you also, hon. Vice-Prime Minister, address the Chair!

Mr X. L. Duval: The question is which measures have been taken, have been implemented; not are going to be implemented.

Dr. Husnoo: As you know, an enquiry has been done. We cannot take the measures instantly.

Mr X. L. Duval: You have not taken any measures.

Dr. Husnoo: No, it takes time ...

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay.

Dr. Husnoo: I mean we have to be fair; we cannot just do it overnight. It takes time to put them into practice.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, it is just 12 months have gone by; we have not taken any measures. I want to ask about the Maritime Zones Act, where the hon. Prime Minister himself can designate the sea lanes with the approval of the International Maritime Organisation.

Mr Speaker: So, if my presence is not appreciated or needed, then ...

Mr X. L. Duval: Excuse me, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot look at it.

Mr Speaker: No, this is not a debate! This is Question Time. You address the Chair and he addresses the Chair. If I am not needed, then I am going! It is as simple as that!

At 12.02 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 12.18 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Please remain seated!

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the last day of Parliament, I will try to do my best to finish on good terms. The question, Mr Speaker, Sir, relates to the Maritime Zones Act, section 10, where the hon. Prime Minister is authorised to designate sea lanes. And this is why I am asking the hon. Vice-Prime Minister now, whether he knows why the hon. Prime Minister has, up to now, under Section 10 of the Maritime Zones Act, not designated sea lanes for safe passage, to oblige ships to keep away from the coast of Mauritius.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir ...

Mr X. L. Duval: You are in charge of National Disaster Recovery.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained earlier in my reply that yes, as a coastal State, Mauritius can, where necessary, can design ship routing. But, as I have said earlier, the enquiry is still going on. Things are going on now. An enquiry was done by the National Disaster and another enquiry is going on now. I have just mentioned that we are looking into these issues, but if the hon. Leader of the Opposition tells me why we have not done it now, okay! We are planning to do it. I have mentioned that we are going to do it. It takes a bit of time; it cannot just be done overnight. It takes a bit of time and we are going to work on it. According to United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), we can do it. But we have to inform UNCLOS as well that we are going to do this. We just cannot decide that we are going to do it and that's it!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister has just told us that for one year, he has done nothing. I would like to ask him whether he is aware that between the last three months only, there have been three ships that broke down in the territorial waters of Mauritius and had the hon. Prime Minister designated the sea lanes, this would not have happened.

Dr. Husnoo: What is the question?

Mr X. L. Duval: May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether he can tell us, as he is responsible for Disaster Risk Reduction, why the Government has not yet purchased a powerful tug so that you are able to pull any of these ships out of danger zone?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, trying to buy a tug is just...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order there!

Dr. Husnoo: ...trying to buy a tug, is it just something you get off the shelf like that, Mr Speaker, Sir? Or is it something you had...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo, please withdraw from the Chamber!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Pren to sac tou aler!*

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, I was explaining, Mr Speaker, Sir. Trying to buy a tug like that is not something you can just buy like that, because you have to decide for what kind of ship you are going to buy it, for what capacity of ship you are going to buy it. So, it takes lots of time.

That is why I have mentioned it is in our report. We are going to consider it. We are going to do it. Now, to expect the country to go and buy a tug just like that, without knowing what we are going to buy! And then, you are going to come later and criticise us: 'why did you buy this kind of tug and not another tug?' So, you have to be fair! You have to be fair about it.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, at least a tug could have been ordered or a tender; even that! Powerful tug, no tender; one year! What about a lifeboat? Is that also something that is too difficult to purchase? A lifeboat? Because we are a cyclone prone nation, we have so many ships around the country. Have you bought or have you recommended the purchase of a lifeboat?

Dr. Husnoo: We have towing boats here; we have vessels. It is not mentioned here. What is mentioned, we are going to act on it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is well known that 30,000 ships go by our eastern coast every year. There are things like - this was actually mentioned in the Court of Investigation - buoys, Mr Speaker, Sir, RACON buoys, which emit signals to passing ships to warn them of the danger of Mauritius. Why have you not yet recommended or why has the

Government not yet purchased any of these buoys to place on the eastern coast of Mauritius, at least?

Dr. Husnoo: But we are saying that we are looking at the regulation of passage of the ships.

(Interruptions)

You can laugh at it! But if you were in my place, you would not have been able to order it just like that. This kind of thing takes time! An enquiry has been done, we have got the report, and the Government is going to take measures. We are going to take measures! To tell me that, in one year, we have not taken the measures! And you know the situation we are living with nowadays, with the COVID.

When the MV Wakashio incident happened, we were in the middle of COVID. You know what was the situation at that time. Can we just get everything like it is a normal time and get everything sorted out as it used to be? No! There is a lot of restrictions in the present situation. So, we have to appreciate. We do not pretend everything is like normal and we have to get it done overnight; no!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister's officers have said in the Court of Investigation that Mauritius is only equipped to deal with an oil spill of 100 tonnes whereas 1,000 tonnes were spilled; 4,000 tonnes were onboard that ship. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister why is it that 12 months later, we can still only deal with oil spill of 100 tonnes, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Dr. Husnoo: Same thing, Mr Speaker, Sir! We have tried to identify the issues, the problems, and we are going to try to sort it out. I have said it. Mr Speaker, Sir, if we were not genuine about trying to find the solution, I was not going to come and mention it in the House; if I was not going to act on this. The fact that we have done an enquiry, we are going to act on it. But, I have explained, it takes time. The situation as we are living now, it takes time. So, we have to accept, and that is why we have not been able to do it so far. But we are working on it.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, most of the accidents can happen at night. For night operations, is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware that it takes –

- four hours to put the CGS Barracuda to sea;
- two hours to put the Dornier to fly, and

- one hour for the helicopter to fly?

This, Mr Speaker, Sir, means that there is no emergency response time at all in Mauritius, one year after the MV Wakashio! The Sir Gaëtan Duval sank and the poor fishing boat sank also recently. There is still no 24/7 Emergency Rescue System in this country for ships at sea.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: None!

Dr. Husnoo: ...Mauritius, it is easy...

Mr X. L. Duval: It takes time!

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Dr. Husnoo: ...it is easy to come and criticise like that. Mauritius, being a small island, so far from all the major places where you have these facilities, trying to get the help here like that is not easy, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is why, I repeat myself; the hon. Leader of the Opposition is coming and saying: after one year, we have not got A; after one year, we have not got B; after one year, we have not got C. Damn it, it takes time!

We know our responsibilities. This Government has been taking its responsibilities; we know our responsibilities! We have done the enquiry, we have got the report and we are going to do the work!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the nation will take their own conclusions!

Dr. Husnoo: Yes!

Mr X. L. Duval: I will ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister one last question on this point. The Poudre d'Or National Coast Guard Post only has a pirogue and a 25 HP outboard engine which they carry on their shoulders. There have recently been deaths there, and that is where the Sir Gaëtan Duval sank, Mr Speaker, Sir. Why have the Poudre d'Or Coast Guard Post and also the Mahebourg Coast Guard Post not been substantially upgraded since the Wakashio and other incidents on the east coast? That also takes time?

Dr. Husnoo: Naturally it takes time, because if we had started to do the work and then the work was not up to standard, the hon. Leader of the Opposition would have come to the House and said, 'What are you doing? You have put something which is not needed there'. So, that is why we are taking our time, but we will do it properly for God's sake! That

is why. I mean you cannot say we have not got A, it takes time; B takes time; C takes time. But damn it, everything takes time! We have to study the thing and then we come with a solution.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have just got the Finance Bill, which is amending 93 laws. He, himself, said that one of the main reasons for the very slow and inadequate response to the Wakashio shipwreck was divided responsibilities between the Director of Shipping, Environment, the MPA, Coast Guard, your Ministry, etc. Why hasn't at least legislation been put in this House so that you would, in fact, get rid of this divided responsibilities and have one person in charge when the next disaster occurs, as it will?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have had an enquiry done and we have one another enquiry going on. Once everything is done, we are going to get that sorted out. I have repeated it so many times that we are going to get it done. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is going on with 'one year', 'one year', 'one year'. But what are we supposed to do? The next day after Wakashio, we were supposed to order each and everything like that? Is that what he would have done? It is so easy to criticise from the Opposition; after one year, you have not done this. But damn it, it takes time!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the budget for the acquisition of equipment for the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre has been reduced from Rs8 m. last year to Rs800,000 this year. So, how can he explain that although he has done nothing at all, he neither has the budget to do anything for the next 12 months?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Disaster Centre has been doing a great job. So many times in emergencies, they have been working to save lives, and now to come, today, trying to discredit the Centre, it is so easy. But the job is being done and it is going to be done.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary! You finished?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, now it is all at the end of the day a question of human resources. We saw that no one even from the Coast Guard was able to dive on the site; we had to get a foreigner to do it. And your own people said at the Court of Investigation that there is insufficient training and

no training at all in Mauritius as far as towing of ships is concerned. What have you done during the past 12 months - this is all what the question is about - training of your personnel in towing of ships and in diving, so that next time we do not have to sit around and wait for foreigners to come?

Dr. Husnoo: Again, he came back to this 'one year'; 'nothing has been done for one year'. But if we had not done the study, how would we have identified the shortcomings that we have? We have done the enquiry, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the National Disaster Centre. At the Merchant Shipping Department, they have done the enquiry and we have identified our shortcomings, and we are going to act on it.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying 'one year', 'one year'. Okay, it takes time! Suppose we have done it in six months' time, he would have told me: 'why don't you do it in three months' time?' It is all the same; it is always easy to criticise. But no! What I want to mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, we had a major problem with Wakashio; we have learned a lot of lessons from Wakashio; we have got not one but two enquiries done and we have identified our shortcomings, where we have to improve. And we have done all this what for? Not to do anything? No! We have done all this to work on it and we are going to work and try to do what is needed. If we have to buy tugs - this, by the way, is bought by the MPA - to sort out the sea lane, and other equipment, the Government is going to do it. *D'ailleurs*, we have contacted the Japan Government to help us on that. We have not been sitting. We have contacted the Japan Government to help us on all these issues. So, to come and say that we have not done anything and to laugh sarcastically, well, I will leave it to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker: Time over! Prime Minister's Question Time! Hon. Members are advised that PQ B/860 has been withdrawn. Hon. Uteem!

NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS SCHEME 2013 - BIOMETRIC DATA - COLLECTION & RETENTION

(No. B/859) 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 views expressed in a decision dated 21 July 2021 by the United Nations Human Rights Committee on the collection and retention of biometric data in the National Identity Cards Scheme 2013, he will state the measures that will be taken to give effect thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am replying to both Parliamentary Questions B/859 and B/861 as they relate to the same subject matter.

The Mauritius National Identity Card (MNIC) project was implemented in 2013 by a consortium comprising the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, Nippon Electric Company and Crimson Logic Private Ltd under a Government-to-Government Agreement between the Governments of Mauritius and Singapore. The MNIC system became operational in October 2013.

During the implementation phase of the system, Court cases were lodged before the Supreme Court of Mauritius, including one by myself and one by Mr Madhewoo.

In my Complaint with Summons before the Supreme Court, I sought redress under section 17 of the Constitution on the grounds that sections 3(a), (b) and (c), sections 7(1), 9 and 13 of the Constitution were likely to be contravened by the storage and retention in a database, of my biometric information and fingerprints which will be in possession of the Registrar of Civil Status.

In his Complaint with Summons before the Supreme Court, in addition to an order to challenging the constitutionality of the storage and retention of the biometric data on the database, Mr Madhewoo also challenged the constitutionality of the retention of the biometric data on the National Identity Card.

In its judgments delivered on 29 May 2015, the Supreme Court concluded, *inter alia*, that –

- (i) the law which enforces the compulsory taking and recording of fingerprints of a citizen of Mauritius for the purposes of his national identity card discloses an interference with the plaintiff's rights against the search of his person guaranteed under section 9(1) of the constitution, and
- (ii) the provisions of the National Identity Card Act and the Data Protection Act for the storage and retention of these fingerprints and other personal biometric data collected for the purpose of the biometric identity card of a citizen of Mauritius were unconstitutional.

Consequently, in the light of the two judgments of the Supreme Court, all fingerprints which were stored in the centralised MNIC database were destroyed in September 2015.

However, in the same judgments, the Supreme Court made two further orders –

- (i) the law which enforces the compulsory taking and recording of fingerprints for the purposes of a national identity card constitutes a permissible derogation, in the interests of public order, under section 9(2) of the Constitution, and
- (ii) the law providing for the storage and retention of fingerprints and other personal biometric data regarding the identity of a person constituted a permissible derogation, in the interests of public order, under section 9(2) of the Constitution.

It is on the basis of these derogations that the fingerprints of applicants for a national biometric identity card are still being captured and stored temporarily in the centralised MNIC database for a maximum of seven days to enable the fingerprint minutiae to be generated and captured in the chip of the National Identity Card. These minutiae enable one-to-one verification of the identity of the cardholder at the time of collection of the card. The fingerprint data in the centralised MNIC database is automatically destroyed as soon as the card is despatched to the collection centre.

Following the Supreme Court Judgment, Mr Madhewoo appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, but the appeal was dismissed on 31 October 2016. The Board noted, *inter alia*, that the fingerprint minutiae cannot be used to recreate the image of the fingerprint. In other words, there would be no risk that the original fingerprint of an individual could be recreated and misused by another person.

Mr Speaker, Sir, subsequently, being dissatisfied with the Judgment of the Supreme Court and the decision of the Privy Council, Mr Madhewoo forwarded a communication to the United Nations Human Rights Committee for consideration under the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, wherein he alleged that his right to privacy under Article 17 of the ICCPR, was violated, as pursuant to the provisions of the National Identity Card Act, he had the mandatory obligation to provide his fingerprints for the purpose of obtaining a national identity card.

On 04 April 2018, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), requested, through diplomatic channel, the views of the State of Mauritius at latest by 26 September 2018 on the admissibility and merits of the submissions made by Mr Madhewoo. The State of Mauritius responded to the Human Rights Committee on 20

September 2018 refuting, with legal justifications, the averments of Mr Madhewoo that the National Identity Card Scheme was in violation of Article 17 of the ICCPR.

We have now, on 21 July 2021, received an advanced unedited version of the Views of the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) on the matter, wherein it is stated, amongst others, that the State Party, that is, Mauritius –

- (i) has not provided enough information regarding the implementation of measures to protect the biometric data stored on the identity cards;
- (ii) has not provided sufficient guarantees against the risk of abuse and arbitrariness following the potential access to such data on identity cards, and
- (iii) has not provided information as to how the storage and retention of fingerprint data on identity cards can effectively prevent identity fraud.

Consequently, the UNHRC concluded that the right of privacy was violated given the lack of information provided by Mauritius concerning the implementation of measures to protect the biometric data stored on the identity cards. The Committee further pointed out that it was essential that any biometric scheme be accompanied by robust safeguards to protect the right to privacy of the citizens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am apprised that the information provided to the UNHRC was mainly from a legal perspective. Information was not provided regarding the existing technical safeguards, such as the Security Access Modules card, used to protect fingerprint minutiae so as to prevent any possibility of arbitrariness and abuse of the fingerprint data of any citizen that may arise from the issuance of an identity card. Furthermore, the fingerprint minutiae cannot be used to recreate the original fingerprint image.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the UNHRC has requested the State of Mauritius to provide Mr Madhewoo with an effective remedy and sufficient guarantees against the risk of arbitrariness and abuse of his fingerprints data that may arise from the issuance of an identity card to him. Mauritius is also required to review the ground for storing and retaining fingerprint data on identity card in light of the UNHRC Views and to take steps to avoid similar violations in the future.

The Committee has requested the State of Mauritius to provide, within 180 days, information about the measures taken to give effect to the Committee's views and to publish the present views and disseminate them broadly in the official language of the State Party.

To this effect, I have set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee to be chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, and comprising the Attorney General, the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation as well as other officials and co-opted members as and when required to –

- (i) propose an effective remedy that may be provided to Mr Madhewoo, and
- (ii) examine in depth the views of the Committee and to come up with recommendations and to prepare the response to be made to the UNHRC, within the time limit.

Concerning the present views submitted by the Committee, action is being taken to disseminate them broadly in our official language.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the proposed revamping of the MNIC system, I have been informed by the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation that the usual lifetime of such IT equipment is between 5 to 7 years. Hence, after almost 8 years of operation, it has become necessary to revamp the existing Mauritius National Identity Card (MNIC) Scheme as the current hardware and software of the whole system will soon reach their end-of-support and end-of-life, with the consequences that -

- (i) the hardware of the present system will need to be replaced as it is no longer being supported by the vendor resulting in spare parts and security patches being no longer available;
- (ii) along with the hardware, the software components need to be replaced as well as they are also no longer being supported by their respective vendors, and old software versions will not be compatible with new hardware, and
- (iii) moreover, the manufacturer of the national identity card has ceased to manufacture the current card version used by the MNIC system. The new version of the card proposed by the manufacturer will not be compatible with the current system. Furthermore, the stock of the existing card is expected to last up to December 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is, therefore, no other alternative than to revamp the existing system if we want to be able to make available a national identity card to each of our eligible citizens, whilst ensuring that we keep pace with the latest technology and the development of new international practice with regard to the use of biometric data.

In the proposed revamping process, we wish, as a visionary Government, to take the opportunity to upgrade the system to a state-of-the-art one which will provide a wider spectrum of customised e-services, thereby further facilitating the daily activities of our citizens. Such Smart cards are already being used in countries like Belgium, Finland, Germany, Estonia and France, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to ascertaining the timely implementation of the revamping project, a Steering Committee chaired by the hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation and a Technical Committee chaired by the Secretary for Home Affairs have been set up to closely monitor compliance with all the required technical and legal framework requirements of the project.

I am informed that, presently, wide consultations are being held with all concerned stakeholders and considerable progress has been made with regard to the preparation of the specifications and the procurement strategy to be adopted on the basis of –

- (i) the existing MNIC system;
- (ii) our procurement legislation, and
- (iii) the judgments of the Supreme Court and the Privy Council as well as the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) Opinion 7/2018 of August 2018.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now that we have the advanced unedited version of the views of the Human Rights Committee, the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee will, during their consultative discussions, consider the impact of these views on the implementation of the revamping project and make appropriate recommendations thereon. Due consideration will be given to any legislative amendment and technical modification, if so required, prior to the coming into operation of the updated MNIC system. The new system is expected to be operational by December 2023.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: No supplementary.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine! No? So, we move...

(Interruptions)

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. With regard to the existing MNIC system, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House when did it become operational and what was the cost of its implementation?

The Prime Minister: The cost of the project which is being implemented jointly by my Office and the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation is estimated to be around Rs230 m. inclusive of VAT over a period of two years.

I am informed that a number of new add-ons are also being considered in the new system at a cost of Rs32 m. subject to financial clearance being obtained, but, as for the MNIC, I think the cost could be around Rs1.1 billion. It was under a G-to-G agreement between the Governments of Mauritius and Singapore at a cost of Rs1.1 billion. And it is also pertinent to remind the House that, prior to this G-to-G agreement - I am sure the hon. Members of the MMM would remember -there was a tender that was launched and I think the best price that was quoted by a company was around Rs400 m., but the then Government did not find it worth going ahead and then decided to go for this G-to-G project which has, in fact, cost the Government more than Rs1.1 billion.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his reply, the hon. Prime Minister made mention of a new proposed system. Can he provide us with some details about the procurement strategy of this new proposed system?

The Prime Minister: There were four possibilities that were considered, namely a Government to Government collaboration like what was done previously or going for Open Advertised Bidding or Restricted Bidding or Expression of Interest followed by a Request for Proposal.

With a view to ensuring that the most competitive procurement method is used and to ensure full transparency, whilst at the same time taking into consideration the sensitive and confidential nature of the data on each card, my Office has had several meetings with the Procurement Policy Office and the Central Procurement Board to that effect. And in light of the consultations that have been held, my Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, will soon launch an Expression of Interest which will be followed by a Request for Proposal.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide us with more information as to the process which was adopted for the revamping of the system? Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, a Steering Committee under the Chair of the hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation was set up to, *inter alia*, advise the Government of Mauritius on any specific aspect of the MNIC, to review the MNIC Project and project managed duties, and to ensure completion of tasks in connection with the MNIC Project. And in order to ensure that all technical...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Question Time! You have a supplementary question?

Mr Uteem: I am just saying, on a point of order, he is just repeating what he already answered in my question. The Committee set up, chaired; he has already said that!

The Prime Minister: You want to answer in my place? You want to answer? Because you know everything! You are the most knowledgeable person!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Ki fer?*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Met li dehors do!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: *To propriétaire parlement toi?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, j'ai un *point of order*. M. le président, j'ai une question inscrite, aujourd'hui, concernant directement le Premier ministre sur l'affaire *Angus Road*. Le Premier ministre a pris tout son temps pour répondre à une seule question pendant 30 minutes. Alors ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: This is not ...

(Interruptions)

Please! Please, you stop there!

Mr Assirvaden: Alors que la question ...

Mr Speaker: You stop there, please!

Mr Assirvaden: ... concerne le Premier ministre directement ...

Mr Speaker: Please, you stop there! This is not a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Please, give the hon. Prime Minister time to answer his question!

(Interruptions)

No, do not talk to me! You have no right to talk to me! You do not have the floor!

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: On peut avoir votre *ruling* ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, I have already given my ruling!

Mr Assirvaden: On peut avoir votre *ruling* ?

Mr Speaker: Yes, I have already given my ruling!

(Interruptions)

I have already given my ruling! I repeat my ruling! This is not a point of order, hon. Member!

Mr Assirvaden: ...de se cacher !

Mr Speaker: This is your opinion and my ruling is final!

Mr Bhagwan: We all know; we all know!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, you may continue!

The Prime Minister: May I then continue with my reply? I was saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: You are tolerating him to give long answers.

Mr Speaker: What are you talking about?

(Interruptions)

Please, continue!

(Interruptions)

What are you talking about?

Mr Bhagwan: *Ale ta! Tone bwar!*

Mr Speaker: Look at your face!

Mr Bhagwan: *Tone bwar! Tone bwar!*

Mr Speaker: Look at your face!

Mr Bhagwan: *Tone bwar!*

Mr Speaker: Continue!

Mr Bhagwan: *Tone bwar!*

Mr Speaker: Look at your face!

Mr Bhagwan: *Tone bwar!*

Mr Speaker: Look at your face!

Mr Bhagwan: *Tone bwar!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Shame!

Mr Speaker: Look at your face! Look at your face! Look at your face! Look at your face!

(Interruptions)

Look at your face! Look at your face! Look at your face!

An hon. Member: Shame!

An hon. Member: Shame to this Government!

An hon. Member: *La honte!*

Mr Assirvaden: *On a point of order* encore une fois. Je voudrais citer la section 47 et vous donnerez votre *ruling*, M. le président. Merci. M. le président, la section 47 du *Standing Order : Irrelevance or Repetition* –

“The Speaker or the person presiding, after having called the attention of the Assembly, or of the Committee, to the conduct of a Member, who persists in irrelevance, or tedious repetition either of his or her own argument (...)”

Le Premier ministre répète pendant 30 minutes...

Mr Speaker: Do not give a verdict! You have already made your point of order! Who can judge the relevance? You or me?

So, hon. Prime Minister, terminate with your reply.

The Prime Minister: I was saying, Mr ...

An hon. Member: *Bizin poz twa ene lote kestion sa!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: *Pas honter!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order there also! Both sides of the House, order!

An hon. Member: *Fer enn walk-out!*

Mr Speaker: Please!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I was saying, the Committee has been set up under the Chair of the hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation to advise the Government of Mauritius on any specific aspect of the MNIC, to review the MNIC Project, and the project managed duties, and to ensure completion of the tasks in connection with the MNIC Project.

In order to ensure that all technical and non-technical aspects of the project were captured, a Technical Committee was set up under the Chair of the Secretary for Home Affairs, and four sub-committees have also been set up, each with clear objectives.

The first one, under the responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office, to look into the legal and policy matters; the other sub-committee, under the responsibility of the Central Informatics Bureau, to look into the infrastructure matters; a third sub-committee, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, to look into the application and the card usage matters, and the fourth sub-committee is under the responsibility of the Civil Status Division to look into the HR and logistics matters.

Several meetings of the Steering Committee, of the Technical Committee, and of the different sub-committees have already taken place, and a number of important recommendations with respect to the technical features of the new card have already been made.

Mr Speaker: Time over! I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hours.

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame!

LA TOUR KOENIG - DRUG PROLIFERATION

(No. B/860) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to 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 observed thereat since January 2020 to date, indicating the additional measures taken/to be taken in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS SYSTEM – REVAMPING – IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(No. B/861) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the proposed Revamping of the Mauritius National Identity Cards System, he will state if the views expressed in the decision dated 21 July 2021 of the United Nations Human Rights Committee on the collection, storage and retention of fingerprint data in identity cards will have any impact on the implementation thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ B/859)

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

On resuming at 2.36 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Ameer Meea!

COVID-19 – 2021 - EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS – TEMPORARY CLOSURE

(No. B/864) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the educational institutions which have been/are temporarily closed down in 2021 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, she will state the measures taken/being taken to recover the missed courses.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, as you are aware, following resumption of schools as from the 05 July 2021, a few schools were closed temporarily due to the fact that they were located in Red Zones or had positive cases of COVID-19.

These schools were closed temporarily for disinfection and cleaning prior to the reopening on the next day. As already announced, in cases of temporary school closure, arrangements have been made for educational programs to be broadcast on TV for Grades 1 to 9 and for online teaching to be provided for Grades 10 to 13, so as not to interrupt the teaching and learning process.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that the Primary School Inspectorate Division and the Quality Assurance Division of my Ministry are carrying out an exercise to determine the curriculum coverage by e-school.

A Technical Committee has been set up to work on measures to be taken to make up for the loss of instructional time. This Committee will include all relevant stakeholders and will have to come forward with appropriate recommendations.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a few supplementary on this issue as this is a very important one. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister what measures were taken by her Ministry for students that did not have access to the required technology to attend online classes for the recovery of lost school hours?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the close-down of schools last year, the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity has come up

with a policy of providing tablets to all students of Grades 10 to 13, who are on the Social Register of Mauritius, and also to provide internet connectivity to all these students.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to my information, there is rather a high rate of percentage of students who did not attend online courses. Of course, it is my information but can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister if she has the actual figures?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this was indeed the case during the first confinement. But this time, all the students who are on the Social Register of Mauritius, whose parents are on that Register, have been provided with tablets.

Now, at the level of schools, the Heads of schools are monitoring the situation and all teachers are to submit the name of students who are not following the online classes to the rectors so that they may inform the parents of these students.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, I know it is not directly related to the question but if the hon. Vice-Prime Minister would be agreeable to reply to this one because it is an important information that the House and the nation would like to know. For students above 18 years old but who had not had the opportunity to get vaccinated, can I ask the hon. Minister what is the status of those students?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, all students who have not been vaccinated are being asked to go to the Special Medical Panel at the level of the Ministry of Health and Wellness and they are being provided with - You mean to say those who are exempted?

Mr Ameer Meea: No, those who are already at the age of 18, but had not had the opportunity to be vaccinated or could not be vaccinated for some medical reasons.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: As far as the schools are concerned, we have not had any cases of students not being admitted because of lack of vaccination card.

Now, at the level of the University, we have already provided the facilities for them for vaccination and those who cannot be vaccinated for a specific health condition, they are being provided with the exempt card from the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Mr Ameer Meea: I have a last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Currently, our schools are working two days for lower classes and three days for higher classes. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister when does she expect for things to get back to normal, that is, a five-day working class?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all awaiting for the time when all our students can go to school the way they used to go earlier. However, we will still have to wait for the advice of the Ministry of Health and Wellness before we go back to that state of affairs.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQ B/869 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

Next question!

PORT LOUIS CENTRAL MARKET RENOVATION PROJECT

(No. B/865) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Port Louis Central Market Renovation Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to where matters stand, including the expected start and completion dates thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Port Louis Central Market Renovation Project concerns the upgrading of the wing housing the Fish, Meat and Poultry Section and its renovation is long overdue. The Central Market, in addition to being located in the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property, is also a heritage building. Accordingly, all proposed development within the Buffer Zone require the prior clearance of UNESCO.

The Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage has appointed a consultant in February 2021 to carry out an Overarching Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and a Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) for projects falling into the Buffer Zone. In this connection, the consultant is carrying our regular meeting with the relevant stakeholders, including the Municipal City Council of Port-Louis for the renovation of the Fish, Meat and Poultry Section.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the renovation work will start depending upon all the clearance being obtained from the UNESCO.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, as rightly pointed by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, the renovation of the Central Market of Port-Louis is long overdue. In fact, my first

PQ to this matter dates back to 05 July 2016 and since then, almost every year, I have come with a PQ to this House.

So, my question to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister is - I have gone through all the several PQs that have been asked by myself, it is only last year that it came to our knowledge that we need a Heritage Impact Assessment and before that there was no question of this Cultural Heritage because it is only a renovation of the market inside the market. So, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister why is it after 5 years that this is on the table? And, this is also delaying the renovation of the market.

Dr. Husnoo: Actually this renovation, even if it is renovation, it requires the authorisation from UNESCO because it falls in the Buffer Zone, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Unfortunately, as you know, we have already advertised for the consultancy service and we have got a consultant. He has been working on it but then, we were told that we have to go to UNESCO.

Unfortunately, it takes a long time. Going to UNESCO, you have to prepare an Overarching HIA and VIA and after that once we get the report, we have to send it to UNESCO. That is going to take quite a few months as well for them to approve it and after that, again, the Overarching HIA and VIA concerns about 8 projects near the Aapravasi Ghat area.

Then, after we have got the Overarching HIA and VIA, we have to get the individual HIA and VIA of the individual project. For example, you have 8 projects there, you have the

—

- Intercontinental Slavery Museum;
- Art Gallery;
- Grindery;
- Military Hospital;
- Port-Louis Central Market;
- Immigration Square Urban Terminal, and
- Metro Express Light Rail Project.

So, each of them would have to get an individual HIA and VIA.

Unfortunately, that is how it is. I do appreciate it is taking a long time, but to tell you frankly, it is a bit beyond our control, I must say.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will agree and I am sure the hon. Vice-Prime Minister will also agree with me of the very unhygienic conditions at the Central Market. Not only unhygienic but the electrical works date back to very long ago, the water system *est dépassé complètement*. So, I will urge the hon. Vice-Prime Minister since this project has been on the cards for more than 5 years that we need to accelerate this project.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have explained earlier, we have to go through this process. We cannot do any repairs even in this building without the authority of UNESCO. So, I appreciate that; I know the problem, I have been getting these kinds of complaints from the people who work in the market, and they came to see me personally, I am aware of the situation they are working in, but unfortunately we cannot progress with the work until we get that done.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. I would agree with my colleague, hon. Ameer Meea. May I ask the hon. Minister if he has the opportunity to effect a site visit at the Central Market and to see the deplorable condition in which the market is at the moment, the more so we are opening our frontiers to tourists? Because each and every stall owner over there keeps on making complaints like; trees are about to fall down, there are tents all over the place, waste lying on the floor...

Mr Speaker: What is the question?

Mr Osman Mahomed: ...cameras not functioning.

Mr Speaker: Question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: My request to him is would he consider...

Mr Speaker: No. No question?

Mr Osman Mahomed: This is a question.

Mr Speaker: Request is a question? I don't know.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he would consider effecting a site visit at the earliest possible occasion?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just replied. I have met those people who are working at the Central Market. I have got this complaint, I know about the complaint, and I have explained to them. Unfortunately, it is beyond our control, I have explained, because we

have to get the UNESCO clearance before we do anything. So, that is why we are taking time. I do appreciate the situation, because I have met these people working there, in person. So, it is not a question that I am not aware of it, but that is how it is unfortunately. It is going to take a minimum of maybe about 9 months to 1 year before we can get the whole clearance to do any work. That is the minimum.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SOLIDARITY LEVY - MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY

(No. B/866) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Solidarity Levy, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the quantum of funds collected in terms thereof as at 30 June 2021.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, le *Solidarity Levy* a été introduit lors de l'exercice comptable 2017-2018. Avant cette date et depuis le 1^{er} juillet 2007, le régime fiscal mauricien était basé sur l'imposition des revenus des personnes physiques à un taux unique de 15%. Ce taux était applicable à tous les contribuables, quel que soit leur niveau de revenu.

Afin d'assurer plus de justice sociale, il était impératif de rendre notre système d'impôt sur le revenu progressif. C'est dans ce contexte que le *Negative Income Tax*, mesure de lutte contre la pauvreté, a été introduit à partir de juillet 2017. Dans le même temps, pour réduire davantage les inégalités, la décision avait été prise d'introduire un *Solidarity Levy* sur les hauts revenus.

Ainsi, à partir de l'année fiscale 2017-2018, les personnes physiques ayant un revenu annuel imposable plus dividendes dépassant R 3,5 millions ont été soumis à une taxation de 5 % de l'excédent du seuil mentionné au moment de la soumission de leur déclaration de revenus.

L'année suivante, c'est-à-dire à partir de l'année fiscale 2018-2019, il a été décidé de réduire la charge fiscale des personnes à revenu moyen et de rendre notre système d'impôt sur le revenu des personnes physiques plus équitable. Le taux de l'impôt sur le revenu a donc été réduit de 15 % à 10 % pour les personnes gagnant un maximum de R 50,000 par mois.

M. le président, l'aide aux personnes vulnérables, la réduction de la charge fiscale pour les personnes à faible revenu et l'imposition de ceux qui ont les moyens ont toujours été

la pierre angulaire de nos réformes. Ces principes ont également prévalu lors de l'introduction du *Wage Assistance Scheme* et du *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* afin de protéger les moyens de subsistance des travailleurs affectés par la pandémie de la COVID-19.

Dans la même veine, à partir de l'année fiscale 2020-2021, un appel patriotique a été lancé à ceux qui gagnent le plus en révisant le contour du *Solidarity Levy*.

Le prélèvement est désormais applicable au taux de 25% sur le revenu imposable annuel plus les dividendes au-delà de R 3 millions. Il est plafonné à 10% de la somme des revenus nets et des dividendes de la personne physique.

La *Mauritius Revenue Authority* m'a informé qu'un montant total de R 3,46 milliards a été collecté au titre du *Solidarity Levy* depuis son introduction jusqu'au 30 juin 2021.

Un peu plus de précisions, en juin 2018-2019, il y avait 2,830 individus qui avaient contribué à cet impôt et le montant collecté était de R 614 millions. En 2019-2020, il y avait 3,052 individus qui avaient contribué à cet impôt et le montant collecté était de R 787 millions. Et, en 2020-2021, il y avait 3,338 individus qui avaient payé cet impôt et le montant collecté était de R 2,057,000,000.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CALCUTTA STREET – PORT LOUIS – ONE-WAY

(No. B/867) 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 Calcutta Street, in Port Louis, from its junction with Saint François Xavier Street to Little Bridge Street, he will state if consideration will be given for the conversion thereof into a one-way having regard to heavy traffic congestions occurring thereat, especially at the level of the Noor-E-Islam Madrassah.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) carried out a site visit at the Calcutta Street, in Port Louis from its junction with Saint François Xavier Street to Little Bridge Street on 29 July 2021. I am advised by the TMRSU that traffic congestion occurs only when school vans and parents drop and pick up their children near the Noor-E-Islam Madrassah from 08 30 hrs to 09 15 hrs in the morning and 13 30 hrs to 14 15 hrs in the afternoon.

But, in order to alleviate traffic congestion at the said locus, the Calcutta Street will be converted into a one-way road during school peak hours from 08 30 hrs to 09 15 hrs in the morning and 13 30 hrs to 14 15 hrs in the afternoon from the junction Calcutta Street – Little Bridge Street to Junction Maharatta Street. The works in relation thereto will be completed within two weeks and enforcement will be done by Police during the peak hours. So, I think my friend should be very happy.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I appreciate the measure announced by the hon. Minister, but why not make it permanent? Why the TMRSU is only applying it for school hours? Because as you are aware the roads in Plaine Verte are very small and very narrow, it dates back to more than 200 years and many of them have already been transformed in one-way. I think this should have been a permanent measure because I have spoken to not only the responsible officer of Noor-E-Islam Madrassah, but also to the people living in the Street and they are totally agreeable that this road be converted one-way full-time.

Mr Ganoo: *Dans un premier temps, M. le président*, let us stick to what the TMRSU has proposed. I am open, I am sure the TMRSU also is open. We will monitor the situation, and if need be we will go by what the hon. Member is proposing. But, for the time being the TMRSU has proposed that the one-way would be effective only during school hours. Let us do that, and I can assure my honourable friend that in case we need to decide that the whole street should be a one-way 24 hours, we will do that.

Mr Ameer Meea: Since this will be done, I am sure, and the hon. Minister will agree with me that proper notice board and sign marks will be placed there, because it might be difficult for the people there to know exactly about the hours concerned.

Mr Ganoo: Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said the timeframe for the implementation on the one-way scheme will be two weeks so as to enable for the preparation and installation of the traffic signs. The installation of the traffic signs also involves the painting of a supplementary plate indicating the time which will be added under the traffic sign. So, the hon. Member should not be worried about that.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

INTRAUTERINE FETAL DEATH & STILLBIRTH – INQUIRIES

(No. B/868) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to intrauterine fetal

death and stillbirth, he will state the number thereof registered in each of the five regional hospitals, respectively, over the past three years, indicating the –

- (a) number thereof subject to police and departmental inquiries and number of medical officers against whom disciplinary actions have been taken, and
- (b) measures, if any, taken by his Ministry to preserve public confidence in the maternal and neonatal services.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to reply to PQ B/868, B/881 and B/884 together as they relate to maternal and neonatal services in the public health institutions.

In reply to PQ B/868, I wish to inform the House that an intrauterine fetal death is a death that occurs in utero or during delivery after the completion of the 20th week of pregnancy and a stillbirth is the birth of a baby that has died in the womb, after having survived through at least 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the past three years, that is, from 2018 to 2020, there were 3 cases of intrauterine fetal deaths and 253 stillbirths in all our hospitals.

In 2018, there was 1 intrauterine death at Jeetoo Hospital and 1 at SSRN Hospital and

–

| Still birth | Hospital |
|-------------|------------------|
| 30 | Dr. A. G. Jeetoo |
| 14 | SSRN |
| 13 | Dr. Bruno Cheong |
| 6 | Jawaharlal Nehru |
| 15 | Victoria |

In 2019, there was 1 intrauterine death at SSRN Hospital and –

| Still birth | Hospital |
|-------------|------------------|
| 26 | Dr. A. G. Jeetoo |

| | |
|----|------------------|
| 16 | SSRN |
| 13 | Dr. Bruno Cheong |
| 17 | Jawaharlal Nehru |
| 21 | Victoria |

In 2020, there was no case of intrauterine death in our 5 regional hospitals. However, there were –

| Still birth | Hospital |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 31 | Dr. A. G. Jeetoo |
| 21 | SSRN |
| 10 | Dr. Bruno Cheong |
| 11 | Jawaharlal Nehru |
| 9 | Victoria |

From January 2021 up to 30 June 2021, there was 1 intrauterine death at SSRN Hospital and 1 at Victoria Hospital –

| Still birth | Hospital |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 15 | Dr. A. G. Jeetoo |
| 12 | SSRN |
| 05 | Dr. Bruno Cheong |
| 09 | Jawaharlal Nehru |
| 08 | Victoria |

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from 2018 to 30 July 2021, there were 10 cases of intrauterine fetal deaths and stillbirths reported to the Police for enquiry. Of the 10 cases, 6 have been classified and 4 cases are still under enquiry.

I wish to inform the House that there was no formal complaint for 2018. For 2019, 1 case of still birth, 1 case of spontaneous abortion and 2 cases of intrauterine fetal deaths were reported to my Ministry following complaints from the aggrieved parties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that after the investigation, the reports were submitted to my Ministry and one case was referred to the Medical Council as the Committee was of the view that there was medical negligence.

Regarding cases for 2020, my Ministry was notified about an alleged case of a stillborn baby. The said case has been referred to the MNSC and is currently being investigated and a report will be submitted shortly.

For 2021, 2 cases of stillbirth have been the subject of an investigation at the level of the Medical Negligence Standing Committee. One report has already been finalised and referred to the Medical Council. As for the second case of stillbirth, the Medical Negligence Standing Committee is presently investigating into it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that, in 2019, there were 8,381 livebirths and 94 stillbirths in the public hospitals, that is, 1.1% of stillbirths, compared with 3,639 livebirths and 36 stillbirths in the private health institutions, representing 1% of stillbirths. In 2020, there were 8,462 livebirths and 93 stillbirths in the public hospitals, compared with 4,055 livebirths and 40 stillbirths in the private health institutions. These statistics demonstrate clearly that there is public confidence in our maternal and neonatal services.

Besides, the costs incurred for a normal delivery in the private clinics vary between Rs70,000 to Rs75,000 and Rs90,000 to Rs120,000 for a Caesarean-section delivery, whereas the estimated cost for a normal delivery in public hospitals, Government incurs around Rs17,440 and Rs27,250 for a Caesarean-section in our public hospitals.

To further strengthen public confidence in our maternal and neonatal services, my Ministry has taken the following measures –

- (a) There is preparation of a preconception care programme. The NICU beds capacity has been increased by more than 50% (from 23 to 35) and the infrastructural works for the construction of a National Tertiary Neonatal Intensive Care Unit by mid-September 2021 has already begun;
- (b) new treatment modalities have been introduced, namely the Cooling Therapy, to prevent brain injury in babies born with perinatal asphyxia and Nitric Oxide Therapy for management of babies with pulmonary hypertension and refractive hypoxic respiratory failure;
- (c) there is an ongoing advanced training of medical and nursing staff in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit;
- (d) strict infection prevention and control measures are taken in all Neonatal Intensive Care Units to reduce infection and prevent sepsis with the setting up of a National Infection Prevention and Control Committee in the 5 regional hospitals as from this year, and
- (e) implementation and harmonisation of management of Neonatal Intensive Care Units by following established guidelines and protocols.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to address issues in relation to neonatology, not later than last week, I chaired an online meeting with Dr. Simon Clark, who is a Neonatal Consultant and the Vice-President for Policy at the Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health in UK. Dr. Clark is expected to come to Mauritius in October this year to conduct an assessment of the Neonatology Units of our 5 regional hospitals. This has been made possible thanks to the intervention of Dr. Gopal, the Consultant in charge, Orthopaedics and presently, the Ag Regional Health Director at Victoria Hospital.

I am also informed that Dr. Simon Clark would conduct an independent medical audit of the maternity services and neonatal deaths of the 5 regional hospitals and advise on the best practices to improve the whole neonatal service.

In addition, Dr. Clark would offer his support in the implementation of the neonatal guidelines and protocols to standardise the neonatal practice Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ B/881, I wish to inform the House that in February 2019, a Committee of Enquiry was set up by Government to enquire into cases of maternal

death in Mauritius. The Committee is chaired by a former Judge and is assisted by a Specialist in Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

The terms of reference of the Committee of Enquiry are to examine, enquire into causes and circumstances leading to maternal death, assess facilities available at prenatal and post-natal wards and make recommendations to address any shortcomings to prevent maternal death and improve maternal service in general.

The Committee of Enquiry is finalising the report of enquiry and will be submitting same in the last quarter of this year after finalising enquiries on maternal death in Rodrigues. It is worth mentioning that the work of the Enquiry Committee has been hampered due to the lockdown in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ B/881, I am informed that as at 29 July 2021, there is a total of 18 incubators at Victoria Hospital, of which, 14 are operational and 4 under repairs. There are a total of 15 incubators at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, of which 13 are operational and 2 are under repairs. There are a total of 18 incubators at Dr. Bruno Cheong Hospital which are all operational. Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital has a total of 12 incubators, of which 9 are operational and 3 are under repairs. There are a total of 9 incubators at SSRN Hospital, of which 8 are operational and 1 is under repairs.

I am further informed that, as compared to 40 incubators in 2016, there are now a total of 72 incubators in all regional hospitals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has already procured 20 Infant Incubators this year with warmers which have been distributed as follows –

- 10 to the new National Tertiary Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Victoria Hospital;
- 6 to Dr A.G. Jeetoo Hospital;
- 1 to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital;
- 1 to Dr. Bruno Cheong Hospital, and
- 2 to SSRN Hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has also procured 14 neonatal close incubators with integrated Pulse Oxymeter which would be used for level 2 Neonatal and Intensive Care Unit. The 14 new neonatal close incubators have been distributed as follows –

- 5 to Victoria Hospital;
- 5 to Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital;
- 2 to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, and
- 2 to SSRN Hospital.

Dr. Aumeer: I thank the hon. Minister for his detailed answer and surely I do welcome Professor Simon Clarke from the Royal College of Paediatricians who I am sure will do a very brilliant job when he comes over.

The increasing number of pre-term and extreme pre-term babies does surely add to the numbers that you have given us over the last five years concerning intrauterine death and still-birth. Can I know from the Minister why the Ministry is now, only this week, conveying a meeting to be organised with regard to putting a protocol in place with regard to gestation viability of these babies who have to be considered for active resuscitation and treatment which I am sure is very long overdue for our clinicians in the hospitals.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the protocol is being worked out since the beginning of this year. Now, concerning last week we had a meeting with Professor Simon Clarke, it is mostly because of the opening of the borders and then we can arrange his visit in Mauritius.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci, M. le président. Le ministre peut-il informer la Chambre s'il a reçu une lettre de Mme A. de Tyack dont les triplés sont morts à l'hôpital de Rose Belle le 18 avril et le 19 avril sur le fait que ces deux bébés lui sont restés dans le ventre après 24 heures du premier accouchement alors que l'hôpital aurait dû provoquer cet accouchement par césarienne ? Est-ce qu'il compte entamer une enquête à partir de la lettre envoyée par Mme A. ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of this case and the Medical Negligence Standing Committee is already inquiring on this case.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le ministre, répondant à la question, vous avez donné des chiffres qui sont vraiment effrayants et alarmants. Vous le savez mieux que quiconque, M. le ministre, que bien souvent dans les enquêtes qui se sont déroulées nous avons vu que les médecins, les spécialistes bien souvent ne sont pas physiquement présents dans les hôpitaux

et ils donnent, par téléphone des fois, des prescriptions. Est-ce qu'on peut savoir de vous, M. le ministre, quel est le mécanisme que vous avez mis en place pour s'assurer que de façon permanente des spécialistes, des pédiatres, des gynécologues ou les anesthésistes soient présents physiquement 24/7 comme demandé dans le rapport du *PRB* ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the first part of the question is related to whether the figures are alarming. In my reply, I made the comparison between the public sector and that of the private sector. I even made a comparison about the cost incurred in the private sector and in the public sector. We have all seen that the figures do not differ much and I do not think that the figures are alarming.

Now, the other part of the question is related to whether the doctors who have been subject to an inquiry, who have not done their work properly. There are Councils and Medical Tribunals that investigate on such cases and wherever doctors or anyone have not done their work properly, they are subject to sanctions and sanctions. I wish to inform the House that in cases where medical malpractices have been established, sanctions have already been taken.

As for the third part of question, the hon. Member can rest assured that the Ministry is working on the implementation of having doctors, especially gynaecologists and paediatricians to be in the hospital. We do not have the numbers. Because of that - I think, in the past I have given a reply in this House - we will be having a registrar post created so that this can '*combler*' that missing part of not having the specialist but at least having somebody, a registrar who is much experienced, to be there on a 24-hour basis. The time will come when we have sufficient specialists then we can avail of this service on a 24-hour basis.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform us whether his Ministry, particularly the Chief Medical Officer have a *droit de regard* in terms of recommending either stepping down, continuous supervision by the Consultant in Charge, retraining and reappraisal of the very few specialists whose names come up repeatedly involved in alleged negligence over the last couple of months?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the CMO, that is the Director General and other Directors in the health service with the Chief Executive Officer, once an inquiry is done at the level of the Ministry - last time, hon. Quirin did ask me to submit the report where actions have been taken immediately - that is, once the report is available, based on the recommendation of the report, doctors have been suspended, same have been requested to

step down or recommended for further training or not to be on call at all. Different measures have been taken, especially when we know that we have to face cases of negligence or any issues related to negligence.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci M. le président. Concernant la question du nombre d'incubateurs dans nos hôpitaux, est-ce que j'ai bien compris qu'il n'y en a pas à l'hôpital de Rose Belle?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, there are incubators at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital. I think I have mentioned in my reply that at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, we have 12 incubators. Yes, Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital has a total of 12 incubators of which 9 are operational and 3 are awaiting repairs. I understand that you have read on newspapers or getting information. Please come to me, I will confirm it; I will give you the right information.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Excusez-moi, M. le président, je n'ai pas lu dans la presse, c'est la dame, elle-même, qui m'en a parlé. Donc, c'est pourquoi je pose la question. Le ministre vient de me dire qu'il y a plusieurs incubateurs à l'hôpital Jawaharlal Nehru. Pourquoi, dans ce cas, le troisième bébé de Mme A. a dû être transporté de l'hôpital Rose Belle à Flacq?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is simple. There are other babies in those incubators.

Mr Speaker: You can put your last supplementary.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: J'ai oublié.

Mr Speaker: *Ce n'est pas grave.* Hon. Uteem!

UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION - REPORT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/869) **Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, he will state the reasons why some recommendations contained in the latest report thereof on the State of Mauritius have not been implemented.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this question. I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the

combined 20th to 23rd periodic reports on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in view of the fact that the combined 24th, 25th periodic State reports were submitted in June 21 and no recommendations have been received as yet.

It is to be noted, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the State report was submitted to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Committee in July 2017. The review was held in August 2018 and the concluding observations and recommendations received in September 2018. Cabinet was apprised of the concluding observations and recommendations and decided in September 2018 to set up a Ministerial Committee to look into same as issues without a far reaching bearing on the social fabric of the Mauritian Society.

The Committee was chaired by hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo, then Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and was composed of -

- Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, Minister of Education and Human Resources;
- Hon. Dr. Husnoo, the then Minister of Health and Quality of Life;
- Hon. Mr Gobin, Attorney General, the then Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms;
- Hon. Mr Sinatambou, the then Minister of Social Security;
- Hon. Mr Wong, the then Minister of Social Integration;
- Hon. Mr Jhugroo, the then Minister of Housing and Lands, and
- Hon. Mr Boissézon, the then Minister Civil Service and Administrative Reforms.

The Ministerial Committee reviewed all the 26 recommendations made by the CERD Committee and reached to the conclusion that certain of the recommendations should not be implemented, Cabinet agreed thereon.

The reasons for the non-implementation of the recommendations as well as a Status Report of what the State has achieved since the last review are incorporated in its combined 24th and 25th periodic reports covering period July 2017 to May 2021. Same has already been transmitted to the CERD Committee and is available on both the websites of the Office of the

High Commissioner for Human Rights and that of the Human Rights Division of my Ministry.

The reasons as to why certain recommendations made by the Committee following the last review will not be implemented are, *inter alia*, that –

- (a) disaggregated data by ethnicity are not kept as a rule, as it goes against national unity and nation building in a rainbow nation which the Government believes in and fosters;
- (b) the Republic is a land of immigrants, everyone is equal. As such, special measures are implemented for all vulnerable groups irrespective of their race or ethnicity;
- (c) given that Mauritius is geographically small and is among the most densely populated island state, it has limited resources to provide the core basic services that will be required to migrant workers and members of their families, and lastly
- (d) there are presently adequate avenues of redress in the Mauritian legal systems against violation of human rights.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its concluding remark stated and I quote, at paragraph 6 –

“The Committee regrets the State party’s persistent position not to collect data disaggregated by ethnicity, which in the view of the Committee impedes the assessment of the enjoyment of human rights by the different ethnic groups present in the State party”

Does not the hon. Minister agree that the reason why the Government does not want to collect these data is precisely because it will demonstrate an unequal enjoyment of certain rights under the Convention as far as employment, education, health, and housing issues are concerned, as has been claimed again and again by affirmative actions in its report to the United Nations?

Mr Ganoo: I do not think we subscribe, on this side of the House, to the proposal that any component does not have effective access to employment, adequate housing, health care services or pensions, or employment, Mr Speaker, Sir. No, we do not subscribe to this view but this question of keeping the disaggregated statistics can be replied by the fact that we do

not keep such records because we would think that this is stigmatising components of our society. Keeping such data, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be against national unity. We are a land of immigrants, Mr Speaker, Sir. We came to this island as the slaves, merchants or labourers. We are equal in the Republic of Mauritius and special measures, we know, are implemented for vulnerable groups of all components of this society, irrespective of the race or ethnicity and the Republic of Mauritius favours nation building and not division, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Uteem: I am glad to hear the hon. Minister say what he is saying now because when he was in the Opposition that was not the language he was using but, anyway, does not the hon. Minister agree that being given ...

Mr Ganoo: You were against the new census.

Mr Uteem: ... that he has nothing to hide ...

Mr Ganoo: But the MMM has always been against a new census.

Mr Uteem: Let me ask the question, then you can answer. Being given that ...

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Uteem: Being given that this Government has nothing to hide, will he publish, so that everybody knows, all the appointments that have been made by this Government when it comes to the appointment of board members, chairpersons which is not under the PSC, but is done by Minister, by Cabinet; so that everybody in Mauritius can see what is the equal opportunity, equal enjoyment of rights as far as employment is controlled?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was ...

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: There was a recommendation to that effect, as I have just said, there were 26 recommendations which were made and 16 of them were accepted, were taken on board, and 10 were not accepted, Mr Speaker, Sir, and among the 16 recommendations which were accepted, is precisely one which the hon. Member just referred to.

Mr Speaker: Move to your next question!

Mr Uteem: I have one last question on this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Last one!

Mr Uteem: Under paragraph 29 of the Committee recommendations –

“The Committee recommends that the State party takes necessary measures to confer to the Creole language the status of national language, with a view to facilitating its use in the administration, judicial and education systems, and preventing the social exclusion of those who are of Creole-speaking only.”

Can I know from the hon. Minister, why in its views which have been given to the United Nations, Government say that they are not going to implement this recommendation to give the Creole language the status of a national language?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Creole language, we all know that the Creole language is, and this is in the report, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have sent, is used in the country, in the different fora. The use of Creole language is today acceptable in the administration, even in the judicial and education system, Mr Speaker, Sir. And we all know that Government is proceeding in a phased manner and, to this end, in May 2019, Government decided to set up the *Académie Créole République Maurice* to follow up on the development of the use of Creole in the Republic of Mauritius.

With regard to education, Mr Speaker, Sir, we know what progress we are making. A few weeks ago, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, on 25 May, made a statement with regard to the rolling out of the *Kreol Morisien* at the upper secondary level in the wake of the recommendations made by Ministerial Committee, chaired by the hon. Prime Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir. As you know, this Committee came up with a roadmap for the unfurling of *Kreol Morisien* at upper secondary level. So, we are making progress on that score but what we must say also is that, language is a qualification prerequisite for certain jobs and opportunities and because there are very often in the recruitment process the necessity for language to be a qualification, prerequisite for certain jobs, therefore at this stage it would not be appropriate to include same as a ground of discrimination.

Mr Speaker: The next question!

LAND RESEARCH AND MONITORING UNIT - OFFICERS

(No. B/870) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Land Research and Monitoring Unit, he will state the –

(a) number of –

- (i) officers posted thereat;
 - (ii) investigations carried out, indicating the number of court actions initiated, and
- (b) expenditure incurred as at to date.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am advised that the Land Research and Monitoring Unit is at present staffed as follows –

- 1 Principal Surveyor;
- 1 Survey Technician;
- 1 Management Support Officer, and
- 1 Word Processing Operator

who are on the establishment of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning.

In addition, the services of two private Land Surveyors and two private Attorneys have been retained since July 2020 and October 2020, respectively. They are presently attached to the Land Research and Monitoring Unit (LRMU).

With regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am advised that 46 cases had been entered by the claimants themselves prior to the coming into operation in July 2019, of the Land Research and Monitoring Unit. Now, the Land Research and Monitoring Unit has investigated 309 cases as a result of which the present situation is as follows –

- 20 cases are to be lodged in Court;
- 184 cases are still under investigation;
- 105 cases have been deemed not to be pursued further;
- 41 cases pertaining to alleged land dispossession in Rodrigues, and are, therefore, awaiting a mission to Rodrigues by the Land Research and Monitoring Unit, COVID-19 permitting.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am advised that as at July 2021, some Rs5.5 m. have been spent.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister the names of the two Attorneys and two Land Surveyors and the terms of their appointment, how much they are paid?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am grateful to the hon. gentleman for giving me the opportunity of providing information on this issue. Now, as regards the Surveyors; there was a request for proposal, there was an advertisement in September 2019, this could not go ahead as Land Surveyors were not interested.

Then in March 2020, there was another request for proposal whereby 45 Sworn Land Surveyors, registered with the Professional Land Surveyors' Council, were invited to submit their applications according to certain criteria. Six responded, three were selected in July 2020. They are –

- (a) Mr Vinod Seebun;
- (b) Mr Abdool Rajack Bahadoor, and
- (c) Mr Ricardo Ramiah-Isabel.

Mr Ricardo Ramiah-Isabel eventually resigned from the Land Research and Monitoring Unit in December 2020 and attempts to replace him have so far proved unsuccessful. But, we shall certainly try again. These Land Surveyors are on a contract basis, of course. I just wanted to see whether I have the information concerning the Land Surveyors. I should have it somewhere but in the meantime, let me provide the information concerning the Attorneys, which I have at hand.

Mr Speaker: Maybe you can produce it a later stage.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes. Well, the Attorneys are –

- (a) Mr Seebaluck, and
- (b) Mr Rampoortab

who were retained in October 2020 and they have an all-inclusive allowance of Rs85,000 per VAT for 20 hours of work per week. I undertake to provide information concerning the Surveyors.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned that only Rs5.5 m. have been spent when we know that an amount of Rs50 m. had been earmarked in the Budget for the Land Research and Monitoring Unit. Doesn't the hon. Deputy Prime Minister agree that there

is a need to beef up that Land Research and Monitoring Unit so that - the money is there, now we need to have more people so that, there are more cases being lodged because according to him, there are only 20 cases that have been considered in that current year.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue is a complex one. I share the frustration of the hon. gentleman at the pace at which we are progressing. It is very complex because the Report of the Truth and Justice Commission has to be analysed.

Each of these alleged land disposition cases has got to be scrutinised and all the relevant information obtained. The heirs of the owners have got to be found out and liaised with in their individual capacity to have their testimony and get the documents in their possession. Searches have to be carried out at the Registrar-General's Department to obtain title deeds and land survey reports and plans. Site visits have to be effected to gather information concerning neighbours and people in the know. The *rapport de constat* has to be established to get all the relevant information.

So, a lot of time goes into this preliminary work which does not entail major expenses. It is being done by the officers involved already. The key issue concerning expenses will come when cases are to be lodged in Court. Now, my Ministry is presently addressing this matter, which is a policy matter, as to how we proceed once plaint with summons have been drafted by the Attorneys.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Uteem: It is okay.

Mr Speaker: You don't have? Next question!

PRIVATE HEALTH INSTITUTIONS - COVID-19 VACCINES - ADMINISTRATION

(No. B/871) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the private health institutions to which same have been distributed, indicating in each case, the number and type thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, on 09 March 2021, Regulations were made under sections 79A and 193 of the Public Health Act for any eligible person to either get vaccinated in a public health institution, a Vaccination Centre or a private health institution.

Following inspection by the National Pharmacovigilance team of my Ministry and recommendations made thereon as to the infrastructure and equipment in place, 9 private health institutions were provided authorisation to start administration of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as at 28 July 2021, 73,000 doses of vaccines for 1st dose administration and 60,660 doses for 2nd dose administration have been provided to the 9 private health institutions as follows –

- (i) 10,250 doses of Covishield for 1st dose administration and 9,520 doses for 2nd dose administration;
- (ii) 14,250 doses of Covaxin for 1st dose administration and 13,140 doses for 2nd dose administration, and
- (iii) 48,500 doses of Sinopharm for 1st dose administration and 38,000 doses for 2nd dose administration.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Minister, what has been the criteria used for allocating the number of doses between the various private health institutions because he has not answered my question which was to give the number of vaccines received by each private health institution. So, what was the number of vaccines received and what was the criteria given to each private health institution?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, all the private health institutions have been given the same amount of doses in the first instance. Depending upon their administration of the vaccines, then another batch of vaccines has been supplied. So, it all depends upon the number of doses that they have already been administered, and once exhausted, the Ministry provides additional doses. In the circumstance, they have to submit all the information that they have already used the batch given to them.

Mr Uteem: Each private health institution charges a fee for vaccination of Rs300 per dose. May I know from the hon. Minister whether this fee has been fixed after consultation with the Ministry or is each private health institution free to charge whatever fees they want for this vaccination?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this fee has been fixed by the Ministry under consultation with the private health institutions and this is fixed for all the private health institutions.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

COVID-19 - PRIVATE & PUBLIC HOSPITALS - SANITARY PROTOCOLS

(No. B/872) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the private and public hospitals, he will state the established sanitary protocols applicable for patients and visitors accessing same amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in accordance with the COVID-19 (Restriction of Access to Specified Institutions) Regulations 2021 and for the purpose of preventing the spread of COVID-19 in Mauritius, sanitary protocols have been established for staff, patients and visitors to have access to private and public hospitals.

Therefore, in order to attend to their place of work in either a private or a public hospital, each staff must produce –

- (a) his COVID-19 vaccination card certifying that he has been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine;
- (b) in case he has not been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine, a PCR test result slip certifying a negative result dating back to not more than 7 days from the date of the PCR test was undertaken, or
- (c) a documented medical certificate, duly certified by a panel of 2 Government medical officers that, by reason of his medical conditions, he cannot be vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine. In such circumstances, the person will be required to undergo a PCR test at such interval as may be determined by the panel of Government medical officers.

For visitors to have access on the premises of either a private or a public hospital, similar sanitary protocols to those applicable for staff of those institutions have been established.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the other hand, a person visiting a private or public health institution for medical treatment or for the purpose of procuring medicine will not be required

to produce proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test. Similarly, no documentation will need to be produced by one other accompanying person.

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. L'honorable ministre est-il informé que certaines cliniques privées exigent au public, c'est-à-dire celles et ceux qui se sont déjà faits injecter les deux doses de vaccin, on leur demande d'effectuer un test PCR pour avoir accès à l'intérieur de leurs établissements. N'est-ce pas contraire aux protocoles ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Exactly, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. member is completely right. This is contrary to the protocol. The protocol is clear, as I have already stated, once you are vaccinated, you can have access, be it a visitor or a personnel working in that health institution.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, j'ai été informé que les cliniques réclament entre R 750 et R 1,500 pour un test *PCR* rapide. Le ministre, ne pense-il pas que la pandémie de la Covid-19 soit devenue pour certaines cliniques privées de se faire de l'argent au détriment de la population, et en sus de cela tout en faisant preuve d'excès de zèle dans l'application du protocole ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, if ever we receive complaints from the public or any other person saying that these clinics are having different fees or abusing on at a certain amount of money, charging, be it patients or somebody who attended those clinics, especially for rapid antigen test, the Ministry obviously will have to work on how to fix a certain price. As far as the PCR test is concerned, the Ministry of Health is also providing PCR test against payment. The price for PCR test against payment at the Ministry of Health compared to the clinics is more or less the same.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary! Next question!

COVID-19 QUARANTINE CENTRES & TREATMENT CENTRES - OVERCROWDING

(No. B/873) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 Quarantine Centres and Treatment Centres, respectively, he will state if same are presently overcrowded and, if so, indicate the measures taken to address the issue.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, all persons tested positive for COVID-19 are taken to the New E.N.T Hospital or a designated centre, including dedicated hotels, Senior Citizens'

Recreational Centres and other institutions to receive treatment. As at now, there are 8 hotels/institutions catering for such patients.

In addition to the above, persons who have been in direct contact with positive patients are admitted to quarantine centres. As at now, 13 hotels/institutions are being used for quarantining these persons.

Moreover, provision has also been made for quarantining of incoming passengers. At present, 10 hotels have been designated for this purpose.

Mr Speaker, Sir, treatment centres and quarantine centres are made available to my Ministry upon request to the Ministry of Tourism. Accordingly, the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority acts as a facilitator and provides a list of hotels that can be designated as treatment or quarantine centres. These hotels are thereafter inspected by the Public Health Inspectorate of my Ministry and following recommendations submitted thereon as to their suitability, arrangements are made under the Quarantine (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2020 to designate the hotel as a treatment or quarantine facility.

Therefore, the question of overcrowding does not arise as hotels are promptly being made available upon request to the Ministry of Tourism.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je viens d'écouter la réponse du ministre mais d'après les informations qui me sont parvenues, cela laisse comprendre que les centres de quarantaine sont bondés et je vais dire pourquoi. Dans certains cas il y a deux patients qui ne se connaissent même pas, qui sont contraints de partager la même chambre, et de surcroît, M. le président, le même lit. De ce fait, le ministre peut-il confirmer ces informations et nous dire s'il trouve cette situation acceptable ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the treatment facilities, that is, the hotels that have been converted into treatment facilities can have two patients in one room. Now, what happens when there is a patient at night that the rapid response team has already taken into a treatment centre, and for that night, we have to accommodate the patient overnight pending the availability of other rooms on the next day. This happens occasionally in some circumstances. Now, about sharing the same room; usually whenever we have treatment facilities where we have staff of the same company, that is, people who have been working in same places, they have been allowed to stay in the same room. It may happen that they have to stay for few hours by the time other rooms are made available to accommodate patients.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry is planning any change in the protocol, that is, compared to what is being done overseas; people staying at the own place of residence and having online regular check-ups with their doctors, given that as I have heard from his previous interventions that most of the people are asymptomatic and not getting any serious problems from the start of their admission to the end? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start by saying that those in contact who have been vaccinated are allowed to stay at home, to do self-isolation at home, but concerning treatments, so far, all those who have been tested positive have been placed in a treatment centre. Now, obviously, there will be a time, because we have so many asymptomatic cases and especially that many of our patients have already been vaccinated, we will have recourse to self-isolation at home, but I think we have to wait a little bit before we move on to that stage.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je dois rappeler à la Chambre, à l'honorable ministre que dans ma première question supplémentaire, j'ai fait référence aussi à deux patients partageant le même lit, pas uniquement la même chambre mais aussi le même lit, mais passons. M. le président, l'honorable ministre a-t-il pris connaissance des doléances et les craintes exprimées par le personnel soignant par rapport au manque d'effectif consécutif au nombre important des cas positifs enregistrés ces dernières semaines ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, you do not have to be afraid of cases. We all know the treatment modalities clearly now. We also know that once you are vaccinated, you are protected. You will not develop severe form of the diseases. The question that medical personnel are frightened about COVID-19 positive patients is no longer the case as it was last year.. Now, again, regarding the deployment of staff; more cases mean more treatment centres, deploying more staff. This is the situation that we are dealing with. I think the next question will be on this only; I will give all the answers.

Mr Speaker: Move to your next question!

SERGE ALFRED SWIMMING POOL

(No. B/874) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Serge Alfred Swimming Pool, he will state if same is operational and, if not, indicate the –

- (a) reasons therefor, and
- (b) expected date of resumption of operation thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Serge Alfred Swimming Pool is not operational. The temperature sensors of the boiler system of the swimming pool have been damaged by rodents and need to be replaced.

However, the model of sensors required for the system is not available on the local market. A supplier has been solicited for the new sensors. The sensors would be available in 6 weeks.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the temperature sensors are required to control the heating process of the swimming pool, therefore, pending the replacement of the sensors, the swimming pool is closed.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre doit le savoir, plus de R 62 millions ont été dépensées dans la rénovation de cette infrastructure dans le sillage des derniers jeux des îles. De ce fait, peut-il nous dire comment des problèmes qui ne datent pas d'hier, qui datent de plusieurs années ; notamment la chaudière qui ne cesse de tomber en panne et le système de débordement d'eau défectueux sont toujours d'actualité?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, comme je viens de le dire dans ma réponse, le problème actuel auquel nous faisons face c'est le *boiler system* donc pour le chauffage de la piscine. Les câbles électriques de ce système ont été endommagés ; le *boiler* en lui-même il fonctionne bien, c'est juste au niveau des câbles électriques et des *sensors*, et donc nous allons remplacer ces *sensors*. Pour rappel, le *boiler* ne faisait pas partie de la rénovation de la piscine dans le cadre des jeux des îles ; ce n'était pas ça.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, le ministre peut-il nous dire pourquoi la proposition du MSC faite au club de la région de Beau Bassin pour utiliser entre temps la piscine de Côte d'Or a été annulée en moins d'une heure après, selon les informations qui me sont parvenues ? Il y a-t-il d'autres alternatives que propose le MSC à ces clubs?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, le MSC a voulu trouver une solution par rapport aux clubs qui ont besoin d'utiliser, et surtout de s'entraîner, donc je sais qu'il y a eu une proposition qui a été faite par la piscine de Côte d'Or, évidemment je n'ai pas les renseignements nécessaires en ce qu'il s'agit des frais qu'il faut payer. Bien sûr cela coûte, il faut payer, parce que je sais aussi que les clubs ont des membres qui paient leur *monthly* ou

annual fee et donc, c'est juste une question de *fee*. Et je ne sais pas s'ils sont tombés d'accord sur le montant à payer ou pas, mais il y a d'autres alternatives qui sont là, disponible aux différents clubs.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has already replied.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

TOKYO OLYMPIC GAMES - ATHLETES - FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/875) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the athletes participating in the Tokyo Olympic Games 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Olympic Committee, information as to –

- (a) the quantum of financial allowance granted thereto individually for training purposes prior to the holding thereof, and
- (b) if they have all been provided with the official national outfit of Club Maurice and, if not, why not.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to apprise the House that I have been informed by the Mauritius Olympic Committee that it cannot disclose any information relating to both the financial assistance provided to athletes participating in the Tokyo Olympic Games and the provision of official outfits of the Mauritian delegation.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, j'ai en ma possession une lettre du COM, Comité Olympique Mauricien, en date du 12 May 2021, dans laquelle est indiqué qu'une somme totale de R 900,000 sera allouée à l'ensemble des athlètes mauriciens qui vont participer et qui participent d'ailleurs aux jeux olympiques. Et que la somme sera divisée équitablement entre eux. Et dans le cas d'un athlète en particulier, Jérémie Lararaudeuse, l'honorable ministre est-il en mesure de nous dire – il devrait le savoir même si le COM n'a pas souhaité dévoiler certaines informations que nous avons là, aujourd'hui en notre possession – pourquoi il n'a reçu que R 53,900 au lieu des R 112,500 comme promis? Si on prend R 900,000 qu'on divise par les 8 athlètes, je pense que c'est bien 8, l'honorable ministre peut nous le confirmer, je pense qu'il y a un petit problème de comptabilité ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, d'abord, puis que l'honorable membre a soulevé la question de notre athlète, Jérémie, qui était en action déjà aujourd'hui, au 110 mètres haies,

qui a fait une performance de 14 secondes 03 centième, sa meilleure performance actuelle. Malheureusement, il est classé 7^{ème} et donc il n'est pas qualifié pour le prochain tour. Et je profite aussi de l'occasion pour féliciter toute la délégation mauricienne, tous nos athlètes. Et je leur souhaite un très bon retour, *a safe return home*, et bien sûr qu'ils vont commencer à se préparer pour d'autres compétitions.

M. le président, si ce sont des montants alloués par le Comité Olympique, malheureusement, moi je n'ai pas en ma possession ces renseignements-là. Moi j'ai les détails des fonds qui sont alloués par le ministère. Alors les fonds alloués par le *Mauritian Olympic Committee*, malheureusement, je n'ai pas ces renseignements-là. Je dois dire que le ministère n'a pas été informé officiellement aussi par la fédération ou par l'athlète lui-même. Donc, si éventuellement nous avons un courrier qui nous donne les détails de ce qui se passe de la part de la fédération aussi, nous allons pouvoir nous entretenir avec le Comité Olympique.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you. Hon. Minister, will you consider for a cash prize to be given to Mr Mervin Clair for his brilliant performance?

Mr Toussaint: Non, M. le président. Je crois que l'honorable membre se trompe totalement. Le *cash prize* qui est offert aux athlètes, en général, que ce soit pour des compétitions régionales telles que les jeux des îles, compétitions Africaines, intercontinentales, mondiales ou olympiques, il y a des critères bien spécifiés et bien établis. Bien sûr nous reconnaissons l'effort de tous les athlètes, parce que nous parlons des jeux olympiques c'est à un très, très haut niveau que ce soit nos nageurs, nos athlètes, nos boxeurs, nous reconnaissons les efforts qu'ils ont fait et on va les encourager. Mervin Clair est bénéficiaire du projet Paris 2024, allons dire que Tokyo a été son entraînement pour éventuellement aller décrocher quelque chose lors des jeux à Paris en 2024.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Quirin: J'en ai deux, rapidement.

Mr Speaker: No, one last supplementary!

Mr Quirin: Sur 2 questions supplémentaires...

Mr Speaker: No, I do not mind if you have 10 questions, I am giving you one!

Mr Quirin: Mr Speaker, with my previous...

Mr Speaker: Please!

Mr Quirin: Can I say something, please?

Mr Speaker: No, you do not have to shout like this!

Mr Quirin: With my previous...

Mr Speaker: No, no and no! I am giving you a last supplementary, that is all!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je vais revenir à ma question initiale et je vais déposer une copie de la lettre du COM de façon à ce que l'honorable ministre puisse prendre connaissance.

Alors, concernant les habits officiels du Club Maurice pour les JO de Tokyo, le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il est informé que 2 membres de la délégation, encore une fois, le jeune Jérémie Lararaudeuse et son entraîneur George Vieillesse, ont été privé de leur habit officiel par le Comité Olympique Mauricien ? Peut-on savoir pourquoi une telle démarche de la part du COM?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, encore une fois, malheureusement, je ne puis répondre pour le Comité Olympique et comme je l'ai dit précédemment, il n'y a aucune lettre, aucun courriel de la part de la fédération pour nous faire part du problème qu'ont connu, leurs athlètes et leurs entraîneurs. Eventuellement, je le redis, si c'est au niveau de la fédération il y a une requête officielle pour nous demander de faire une enquête et de voir avec le Comité Olympique pourquoi le cas que l'honorable membre a soulevé est arrivé, nous allons le faire. Mais il faut fonctionner d'après les formes qu'il faut, c'est-à-dire éventuellement, si la fédération prend contact avec le ministère.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

(Interruptions)

No, no there is...

Mr Quirin: On a point of order!

Mr Speaker: What point of order?

Mr Quirin: Vous m'aviez demandé si j'avais une autre question supplémentaire, une troisième question, et j'ai dit non sur deux questions. Sur ma dernière question, je vous demande de me permettre de poser une dernière question et vous refusez.

Mr Speaker: I have already ruled on that. You should understand I have a role also in this Chamber. You have your right, I have my right. I respect you and you have to respect me and the matter is closed.

Hon. Ittoo!

LAPEYROUSE SYNTHETIC FOOTBALL PITCH

(No. B/876) 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 new Lapeyrouse Synthetic Football Pitch, he will state where matters stand as to the coming into operation thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that the project construction of the new Synthetic Football Pitch at Lapeyrouse has been completed on 10 October 2020 and handed over to the Municipal Council of Curepipe on the same date.

The inauguration was tentatively scheduled for 06 December 2020, but at the Council meeting of 30 November 2020, decision was taken to postpone all inaugurations/reopening ceremonies for a later date in view of the prevailing sanitary conditions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are presently in the phase of *déconfinement* whereby group sports are being allowed. In view thereof, all the Local Authorities have been advised to proceed by way of a soft opening of amenities, so as allow residents of the locality to benefit from the infrastructure put in place for sports, leisure and recreation.

Mr Speaker: Supplementary!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you. Can we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether, for this particular project, there was any collaboration or coordination with other Ministries, since I understand it is in the same compound as the Lapeyrouse Community Centre, falling under the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund actually sharing the same entrance?

Dr. Husnoo: As far as the decision taken for group sports is concerned, that was not allowed at that time but now the decision has been taken to allow group sports. So, that is why we are opening now.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 - MUNICIPAL FOOTBALL PLAYGROUNDS –
ACTS OF VANDALISM**

(No. B/877) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the municipal football playgrounds in Constituency No.1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state the extent of damages caused by the acts of vandalism observed thereat since January 2021 to date, indicating the –

- (a) repair action plan envisaged and schedule thereof, and
- (b) measures taken to avert the recurrence of acts of vandalism thereat.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to Parliamentary Question B/751, I had informed the House that there were constant acts of vandalism at La Tour Koenig and Camp Chapelon Football Grounds in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, and the Municipal City Council of Port Louis was undertaking repairs at the two football grounds.

I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that at La Tour Koenig Football Ground, the lighting as well as the irrigation system which had been newly installed in June 2021 have been damaged in July 2021. The cost estimates of the repairs are being worked out and the works are expected to start in the second week of August 2021.

With regard to the Camp Chapelon Football Ground, the water meter has been stolen and part of the fencing has been damaged. A complaint was lodged at the Police by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis on 26 July 2021. Consequently, the Central Water Authority has been requested to install a new meter and, the Council would start the repairs of the fence in the second week of August this year.

The Municipal Council of Port Louis has also apprised my Ministry that the lighting system at Freddy Desvaux Football Ground at Cassis has been damaged by vandals on 25 July 2021. A survey on the extent of damage has already been carried out and the scope of work is being worked out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Ward Councilors have been requested to sensitise the inhabitants and the users to make judicious use of these facilities and not to commit acts of vandalism. In addition, the Municipal City

Council of Port Louis will be requested to liaise with the Local Police for regular patrolling in the concerned areas, especially during off-peak hours.

The Municipal City Council of Port Louis, Mr Speaker, Sir, is also ensuring that these facilities and social amenities are operated during a certain period of time during the day and are closed and locked at night for security reasons so as to limit acts of vandalism thereat. As a matter of fact, it has been noticed that such acts of vandalism are occurring too frequently, and consideration is being given for the installation of CCTV cameras on the premises of those amenities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would appreciate that the Government is implementing many projects in terms of social amenities and facilities to enhance the social wellbeing of the population and it is the responsibility of the public also to make good use of these facilities and keep them in good state for their own convenience.

As for example, at Grand River North West Football Ground, the main switch panel which was repaired in June this year, has been damaged again on Sunday – that is three days ago – 01 August, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: What is happening?

Mr David: Merci, M. le président. Puis-je savoir du vice-Premier ministre, - parce qu'il avait mentionné la présence de caméras de *Safe City* - combien de terrains de foot municipaux dans la circonscription no. 1 sont en réalité couverts par les caméras de *Safe City* et si des images ont pu être visionnées dans le cadre d'enquêtes policières afin d'identifier les auteurs de ces actes répétés de vandalisme ?

Dr. Husnoo: I have not said that they have it now I said consideration is being given for the installation of CCTV cameras. So, we are considering putting CCTV cameras now.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. One of the recurrent problems of robbery concerns the electrical panel, the Minister just mentioned it. Can I ask the Minister whether he is going to have a look at placing a safer electrical cubical to prevent such occurrence in the future? Because every time it is being changed, I agree with him, June, July but we have to find a way to have a proper electrical cubical to prevent these robberies. Can he please look into the matter?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Municipal Council is providing these facilities, we have to be fair to the Council as well, they are providing. I think the people who are using it must make good use of these facilities. I answered a similar question about two weeks ago on vandalism in the same Constituency and now, two weeks later, four football pitches have been damaged. I think people would have to take their responsibility. The Municipal Council is doing the repair, we contacted the Police, we are trying to sensitise the inhabitants and now, we are going to consider putting CCTV cameras as well. We are doing our best, but I think, the people in the Constituency should take their responsibility as well.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr David: Merci, M. le président. Je comprends la réaction du Vice-Premier ministre. Sachez que les habitants de ces régions, notamment les jeunes qui nous regardent sont les premières victimes de ces actes de vandalisme. En attendant qu'il y ait de la technologie qui puisse assurer la sécurité de ces terrains de foot, le vice-Premier ministre peut-il nous dire s'il pourrait y avoir une considération pour retourner à l'ancienne bonne vieille méthode d'un gardien de nuit pour pouvoir verrouiller ces terrains de foot, cadenasser et les sécuriser. Je comprends qu'il y a donc des dépenses qui sont faites pour réparer systématiquement les dommages. Est-ce que ce même budget ne pourrait pas servir à rémunérer certains gardiens de nuit ?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have about 100 such amenities in the City of Port Louis. If I am going to get security facilities for 100 amenities, you can imagine how much that is going to cost the Council. But, I appreciate for all the young people who are innocent, who are being deprived of these facilities. I do share that concern as well and that is why the Municipality is going to try to find somebody to lock this place at night and we are going to try to put CCTV cameras gradually. I am not saying we are going to put in all 100 of them instantly but gradually we are going to do so.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES STAFF - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/878) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public health services, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of complaints from employees thereof to the effect that they are

overstretched and overworked following the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and, if so, indicate the measures, if any, taken in relation thereto.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that no official complaints have been received by my Ministry from the public health services staff to the effect that they are overstretched and overworked.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, medical and paramedical staff are redeployed and posted in Quarantine and Treatment Centres as well as in the Contact Tracing and the Vaccination Teams.

The unprecedented COVID-19 situation led the medical and paramedical staff, including the Laboratory Services, to perform extra duties and I wish to seize the opportunity to commend them for their dedication.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since the outbreak, the Ministry put in place the following measures to ensure a fair work distribution by involving staff from each of the 5 National Health Regions –

- A national roster was implemented to cover for staff requirements in quarantine centres, treatment centres, Contact Tracing Teams, COVID-19 Testing Centres and in our medical units set up at the level of the Port and the airport;
- 285 doctors have been enlisted to provide additional manpower to meet with the redeployment of staff;
- 50 retired nurses were employed on a sessional basis, as at date 43 of them are still in service,
- In addition, 7 Nursing Officers have been employed on a contract basis for a period of 6 months since March 2021.

The House will also note that 40 candidates have been offered employment as Nursing Officer on a month to month basis and they will assume duty in our Regional Hospitals as from tomorrow, 04 August 2021.

Provision was made for an allocation of bank sessions to ensure adequate staffing as and where required.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Has the hon. Minister taken cognizance of the difficulties faced by the employees of the public health as pointed out by Mr A.S., the president of the Ministry of Health Employees Union, and it was recently in the Press when they went for a Press Conference elaborating all the difficulties being faced specifically by the nursing officers working within the public health sector?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, the Ministry is aware and we have already given them an appointment and all those issues have already been dealt with.

Mr Lobine: Is the hon. Minister aware as to the difficulties being faced by specifically employees working at Moka Eye Hospital with regard to lack of social distancing, lack of hygiene and lack of equipment for them to work properly? Is the hon. Minister aware of that situation?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes at Moka Eye Hospital there is a space problem that is why the Government is coming with a new Moka Eye Hospital but at the same time there is no lack of equipment or hygiene at the hospital. There is supervision regularly by the different authorities and these issues are being dealt on a weekly basis.

Mr Speaker: Move to your next question!

CLAIRFONDS, PHOENIX - SWIMMING POOL & SPORTS COMPLEX

(No. B/879) 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 newly constructed Swimming Pool and Sports Complex at Clairfonds, in Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix, information as to the –

- (a) expected date of coming into operation thereof, and
- (b) quantum of fees payable for use thereof, indicating how same was calculated and by whom.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix that a portion of land vested with the council was put at the disposal of the Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Pool Foundation through a Memorandum of Understanding for the construction and management of a swimming pool and other associated amenities thereat.

The representative of the Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Foundation includes amongst others the Emirates Airlines which has provided fund to the tune of USD6million, thereto for construction and maintenance of the swimming pool. I am also informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix that the construction work at the swimming pool and its amenities have been completed and the site handed back to the Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Pool Foundation on 18 June 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Pool Foundation has been registered as a charitable foundation on 09 January 2019 under the Foundation Act 2012. As such, the foundation has a separate legal personality and it is managed by a council in accordance with the provision of that Act which includes non-disclosure of confidential information. In view thereof, I am not in a position to provide to the House any detail as to the management of the affairs of Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Pool Foundation nor to communicate the expected date of coming into operation of the facilities or any fees that will be charged.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister who is maintaining and managing that swimming pool? Is it the Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Pool Foundation or the newly Government-owned company, Vacoas/Phoenix Sports Infrastructure Company Limited?

Dr. Husnoo: It is the foundation, the administrative council, which is going to run it.

Mr Lobine: May I further ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to verify that questionnaires and application forms are being delivered under the caption Vacoas/Phoenix Sports Infrastructure Company Limited? Can he inform the ...

Dr. Husnoo: I will check that, but I know it is the council that is looking after that.

Mr Lobine: Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le vice-Premier ministre, nous parlons bien de *l'Emirates Airlines Swimming Pool*?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes.

Mr Assirvaden: C'est de ça ? Vous êtes surement au courant, M. le vice-Premier ministre, que l'initiateur de ce projet fut l'ancien ministre, Showkutally Soodhun, c'est lui qui fut, il faut bien le dire, à la base de ce projet et quand il avait présenté ce projet, M. le vice-Premier ministre, il avait parlé aux habitants de la circonscription no.15, surtout de Vacoas,

pour dire que ce *swimming pool* sera gratuit, il y avait rien à payer, c'était un don de l'étranger. Aujourd'hui, les gens de la ville de no.15 ...

Mr Speaker: Come with your question!

Mr Assirvaden: ... nous posent des questions justement et la question ...

Mr Speaker: No, you ask the question!

Mr Assirvaden: ... et ma question est la suivante – comment est-ce possible aujourd'hui, M. le vice-Premier ministre, que la municipalité de Vacoas/Phoenix va faire payer aux habitants pour utiliser cette piscine alors que l'ancien ministre avait dit que ce sera gratuit ?

Dr. Husnoo: I do not think it is right what you are saying. It is not the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix that is getting the people to pay. I think you have to be fair and to be accurate in what you are saying. It is the foundation, there has been an MoU with the foundation which has financed this project and they are going to decide whether it is going to be free or it is going to be paid. That is what they are going to decide. So, it is not fair to say that Vacoas/Phoenix Council is getting the people to pay.

Mr Speaker: Your question now!

Order! No conversation!

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD (FIBERNET) CO. LTD - ENGINEERS

(No. B/880) **Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Control Center of the Central Electricity Board (Fibernet) Co. Ltd., located in Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of engineers employed thereat, indicating the terms and conditions of employment thereof

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board (CEB) that CEB (Fibernet) Co. Ltd has a Control Centre, also called a Network Operation Centre (NOC), in its Vacoas Office.

The Network Operation Centre consists of a server called the Network Management System which displays all the links in the CEB FIBERNET national backbone and logs any faults on the network on a 24/7 basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that a Managed Service Contract was signed in 2018 with ECI Telecom, subsequently acquired by Ribbon Communication, a US-based organisation, where one of the latter's main responsibilities is "fault management on a 24/7 basis".

Under this Managed Service Contract, the Network Operation Centre is manned during working hours by an Engineer from Ribbon Communication who actively monitors the network and provisions new circuits. After working hours, the NOC equipment is managed remotely by Ribbon Communication Global Services Centre located out of the country.

As such, Mr Speaker Sir, the CEB (Fibernet) Co. Ltd does not employ any Engineer at the Network Operation Centre. The Engineers posted there are employed by the Ribbon Communication.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le ministre, si j'ai bien pu comprendre, le *ECI*, dont la firme initialement israélienne, qui aujourd'hui gère notre *Control Centre* et vous dites, si j'ai bien compris, ce *Control Centre* en dehors des heures normale, ce *Control Centre* est géré en dehors du pays ? D'où voulez-vous dire ? De quelle station est géré ce *Control Centre* si ce n'est pas à l'île Maurice ?

Mr Lesjongard: I understand from the Central Electricity Board, Mr Speaker, Sir, that after working hours, the NOC equipment is managed remotely from Mumbai, India.

Mr Speaker: You addressed the question to the Minister but through me.

Mr Assirvaden: Okay, *je réponds rapidement.*

Mr Speaker: No, we don't need but you should know how to ask a question, please.

Mr Assirvaden: Monsieur le ministre, en vous regardant, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: No, no, I stop your question and I move to the next question! Hon. Doolub!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Doolub!

**MATERNITY & NEONATAL SERVICES - MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE -
INDEPENDENT AUDITS**

(No. B/881) **Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to each of the five public hospitals, he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up of independent audits of the maternity and neonatal services thereat in the light of the recent cases thereat of alleged medical negligence.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/868)

BASIC CONSUMER GOODS – RS500 M. SUBSIDY

(No. B/882) **Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the basic consumer goods in relation to which Rs500 m. have been allocated in terms of subsidy, he will state the -

- (a) monitoring process put in place by his Ministry to ensure the availability thereof on the local market, and
- (b) number of operators having benefitted from the said subsidy and not accordingly ensured the availability of the said consumer goods on the local market, if any, and, if so, indicate the number thereof having been booked therefor.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Callicurn!

Mr Callicurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to restore the purchasing power of consumers, Government has decided to bring some essential and widely consumed products under the price control by fixing their prices for a six months' period, both in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

In the endeavour to protect the consumers, the Government ensured that importers, distributors and retailers do not bear the brunt of this measure. As a result, this Government is providing a subsidy to the importers and distributors through the Mauritius Revenue Authority. This price control measure is estimated to cost around Rs500 m. and will be fully funded by the Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards to the first part of the question, officers of the Consumer Affairs Unit of my Ministry are effecting daily visits to trade premises and are inspecting supermarkets, hypermarkets, shops and warehouses. The products under price control are available on the local market and no shortage is foreseen.

As regards to the second part of the question, I am informed that the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has entrusted the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) the responsibility for the payment of subsidy on the abovementioned essential goods. In order to benefit from the payment of subsidy on essential goods, a two-staged process has been put in place. All eligible traders will have to be registered with the MRA and secondly make an application for payment of subsidy.

Several meetings were held with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the MRA and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Following discussions, consensus was reached that subsidy will be payable to any registered/licensed importer, manufacturer, wholesaler or distributor who sells directly to a retailer and also to any registered/licensed importer or manufacturer who also holds a licence for general retailer and sells the seven commodities directly to members of the general public.

In addition, the MRA has also made arrangements for any licensed retailer who still had in his possession a remaining stock of the seven commodities as at 12 July 2021 to apply for the subsidy only for the month of July 2021.

As at 29 July 2021, 14 eligible traders have been registered under this scheme. With respect to payment of subsidy, the eligible traders shall be able to make their applications as from 02 August 2021.

The Consumer Affairs Unit has effected 1,435 visits and issued a total of 119 contraventions as at 29 July 2021. These contraventions include offences where traders did not affix properly the prices of products and where they were practicing a price which is higher than that fixed by the Government. No case of hoarding has been found and therefore no trader has been contravened for same.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The new subsidised prices were to be effective as from 12 July 2021. Suppliers, importers or distributors already had a stock at that time. Can the hon. Minister inform the House as what would be the mechanism or *modus operandi* with regard to payment of subsidies on stock level held by suppliers or importers?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the first disbursement which will essentially consist of suppliers' stock at 12 July 2021, ledgers will be examined on a case to case basis. The MRA will work essentially to determine and confirm stock levels and refund accordingly to supermarkets and hypermarkets.

As regards to small shops, retail outlets which do not have an online system and are not yet connected with the MRA, the MRA will apply a risk assessment formula and I must confirm, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the refund for payment for stocks before coming in force of this regulation will be a one-off payment.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In his reply, the hon. Minister just mentioned a total of 119 contraventions. Can he inform the House as to what the law provides for those contravening, more specifically selling at a higher price than recommended?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act under which regulation is made, provides for: 'a person may sell or supply an essential good at a price lower than its maximum price and no person shall sell or supply an essential good at a price exceeding its maximum price.' Therefore, any person who contravenes these two sections will commit an offence and on conviction, will be liable to a fine, that is not less than Rs75,000 and not exceeding Rs100,000. So, traders must comply with the law, otherwise they will be called to pay excessive fines.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I refer to the period prior to 12 July 2021, retailers especially from the 'modern trade'; modern trade meaning hypermarket and supermarket, would offer promotional offers and prices on almost all basic items and what is referred to as on fast-moving goods. From my information gathered, it appears that there are retailers who are no longer offering promotional offers on subsidised items, thus leaving the end consumer being penalised. Government has put up means to alleviate the less fortunate ones, can the hon. Minister, please look into this practice?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, right from the beginning, my Ministry made it clear that specific promotions should continue. Unfortunately, the Ministry have noted that promotions are being held but not on the scale and magnitude as it used to be held. Therefore, my Ministry will ask MCCI to talk to its member and members to resume promotions.

Otherwise, in the event they do not comply, we will have to take further steps that is to reduce the price.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PROFESSIONAL FISHERS - ADDITIONAL CARDS

(No. B/883) 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 the proposed issue of additional cards to professional fishers, as announced in the 2021-2022 Budget Speech, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as announced in the Budget 2021-2022, Government has made provision for the issue of 500 new Fisher Cards to applicant artisanal fishers. This decision clearly indicates the economic importance of the off-lagoon artisanal fisheries sector and especially its contribution to food security.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a technical committee has been set up to look into the revision of policy regarding the new condition for the registration of fishers. With your permission, I am tabling the revised policy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, priority of consideration is being given to applicant fishers who have been waiting for the last 10 years. They have been monitored to ascertain the genuineness in fishing activities. Out of 725 applicants, 487 have been found to be neither in gainful employment nor holder of a trade licence. They have been shortlisted and same has been sent to the Ministry of Health and Wellness to arrange for them to undergo a medical examination.

Simultaneously, the applicants have been requested to submit a character certificate and a recommendation letter from the registered fishers in whose boat they are engaged, certifying that they are actively involved in off lagoon fishing activities.

Thereafter, all the applicants who have fulfilled the selection criteria will have to follow the general fisher course to be registered as fishers. The theoretical training courses will be jointly organised by Fisheries Training and Extension Centre and the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy, while for the practical session, around the fish aggregating devices, the collaboration of local offshore fishing vessel will be enlisted in view of limited capacity available at my Ministry to ensure a higher intake.

The course will include modules relating to safety at sea, fishing techniques, communication, mounting of gears, outboard engines and practical at sea. The intake of

trainees for the general fisher course would be increased such that five batches are run in parallel, each batch following a different module to ensure that a cycle of six weeks generates 120 trainees. The course is intended to start as from 01 September 2021. All going well, the training programme would end by March 2022. Thereafter, a screening of new applicants will be effected, and training would continue until all eligible applicants obtain their fisher cards.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci, M. le président. Le ministre, peut-il informer la Chambre s'il est en présence d'une lettre émanant du Syndicat des pêcheurs en date du 21 juillet concernant justement l'éventuelle allocation des cartes de pêche ? Et également, l'exemption du *certificate of character* concernant les pêcheurs éligibles ?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as rightly pointed out, I have received representations from Ms R. L., *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* and *Comité conjoint des pêcheurs sans cartes du sud-est*. I quote Ms R. L. –

“Depriving people of means for a living after they have done their sentence is a punitive measure. It amounts to a lifelong sentence.”

The technical committee of my Ministry has indeed given due consideration to this issue, except those convicted for drug-trafficking or peddling will be disqualified.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Est-ce que le ministre, peut-il nous dire s'il compte rencontrer les représentants de ce syndicat des pêcheurs pour en discuter plus longuement, s'il vous plaît ? Merci.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am meeting the representative on Thursday.

REGIONAL HOSPITALS - INCUBATORS

(No. B/884) **Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to each of the five regional hospitals, he will state the number of incubators available thereat, indicating if they are operational.

(Vide reply to PQ B/868)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SCHOOL CLOSURE - E-LEARNING

(No. B/885) **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 e-learning, she will state if consideration will be given for a review thereof after consultations with the stakeholders, indicating the measures taken and/or envisaged to ensure that all students follow classes.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, a system for online teaching and learning has been put in place by my Ministry to dispense education in case of school closure.

The House may wish to know that online classes were conducted from 21 June 2021 to 02 July 2021 for Grades 10 to 13, while pupils for Grades 1 to 9, relevant educational programs were broadcasted on the national TV. Schools were required to monitor the attendance of students for these online classes and heads of schools had to inform parents in case students did not attend to find out why they did not.

After the resumption of studies on 05 July 2021, a few areas were declared red zones leading to school closure in these zones. Remote classes were conducted for students of these schools. Similar measures were taken for schools where COVID-19 positive cases were detected, and which were closed temporarily for disinfection purposes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as announced in my reply to parliamentary question B/648, we already have an e-learning platform, and my Ministry intends to come up with a more sophisticated one in the future. The Ministry is presently working in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Education on a pilot project; virtual classroom which will allow a blended mode of teaching and learning and that is a mix of face-to-face and online learning.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, merci. La ministre, peut-elle assurer la Chambre que toutes décisions prises autour de la question de *e-learning*, et cetera, et la présence des élèves, le fait que les élèves puissent suivre les cours, est-ce que toutes décisions auraient pu être prise en consultation avec les différents partenaires de l'éducation, et que *no one is left behind* ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the question that I replied a few minutes back, I just mentioned that a committee has already been set up at the level of the Ministry to discuss with all stakeholders regarding any measure we are going to take in cases where online teaching will be required.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, les différents *stakeholders* concernent le corps enseignant certainement, et les parents également. Est-ce que les parents sont consultés sur le sujet ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: M. le président, nous avons un travail à faire au niveau du ministère pour décider de la façon de dispenser les cours en cas de *school closure*. Bien sûr quand il faut parler aux parents, à travers les *PTAs*, cela se fait au niveau du ministère.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

CHAMAREL - ROAD B 104 - DEFORESTATION

(No. B/890) **Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the ongoing deforestation being carried out along Road B 104 at Chamarel, he will state if he is in presence of a letter from the President of the Royal Society of Arts and Science containing representations in relation thereto and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given thereto and, if not, the reasons therefor.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, dans ma réponse à la question parlementaire B/597 j'ai souligné que la route Baie du Cap–Chamarel–Case Noyale (B104), se caractérise par une étroite chaussée unique à deux voies et que l'itinéraire comportait plusieurs virages dangereux avec des coupures abruptes de montagnes d'un côté et de profonds ravins de l'autre. L'état de la structure de la chaussée et le support géotechnique sous-jacent était tel qu'une intervention urgente pour empêcher les glissements de terrain et pour la stabilité des pentes était nécessaire.

Je comprends que mon ministère est bien en présence d'une lettre datée du 05 avril 2021 du président de la Royal Society of Arts and Science avec copie au ministère de l'Infrastructure publique et au ministère de l'Agro-industrie, entre autres évoquant des procurations et des représentations sur l'abattage d'arbres le long de la route B104. Par la suite, l'attention de la RDA a été officiellement attirée sur les plaintes concernant le projet.

M. le président, dans ma réponse à la *PQ* B/597, j'ai souligné que l'amélioration de la route n'est en fait pas *a schedule activity* nécessitant un *Environmental Impact Assessment license* conformément à la partie B du *Fifth schedule* du *Environmental Protection Act* de 2002.

Cependant, dans le cadre de sa mission concernant la route B 104, Lux Consult Ltd a préparé un rapport d'évaluation environnementale. Ledit rapport a souligné la nécessité de préserver des arbres endémiques situés à proximité de la route et a recommandé des mesures pour éviter les dommages directes ou indirectes à ces arbres lors de la préparation du site et de la construction.

On me fait comprendre que le service forestier a autorisé l'abattage d'arbres situés sur le tracé proposés et où des travaux de stabilisation des plantes étaient requis le long de la route B104 à Chamarel sous réserve de conditions. En conséquence, la RDA a été priée d'assurer l'arrachage soigneux de tous les arbres endémiques qui seraient affectés et leur ré-transplantation. Sinohydro Corporation Ltd, l'entrepreneur, a également été sollicité pour déplacer les plantes du site vers State Land Beemanique à la Nouvelle France, sur une superficie de 2 hectares. Cet exercice est en cours depuis le 7 juin 2021 et fait l'objet d'un suivi quotidien par les agents forestiers. Tous les efforts sont faits pour épargner un maximum d'arbres sur le site.

Dans le cas des conditions, la RDA a également été priée de faire planter trois fois le nombre d'arbres endémiques qui seraient abattus et de les maintenir pendant au moins deux ans jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient bien établis. Je suis informé qu'au 30 juillet 2021, 377 plantes endémiques avaient déjà été transplantées sur ledit site et que 623 nouveaux arbres ont été plantés sur le même site.

M. le président, la *RDA* a donné l'assurance que les travaux de réhabilitations seront effectués conformément au rapport d'évaluation environnementale de Luxconsult Ltée et que toutes les mesures nécessaires qui ont été recommandées pour atténuer les impacts négatifs sur l'environnement et protéger les plantes endémiques qui sont près de la zone du projet sont entrepris par Sinohydro Corporation Ltd.

Je suis informé qu'un plan de surveillance environnementale a été préparé par l'entrepreneur à cet effet. De plus, Sinohydro Corporation Ltd a embauché les services d'un ingénieur en environnement pour le suivi de toutes les questions environnementales et ce en étroite collaboration avec les ingénieurs de la *RDA*.

M. le président, la faune et la flore, du site sont ainsi protégées et tous les membres de l'effectif de l'entrepreneur ont été sensibilisés quant à la nécessité de la préservation de la biodiversité sur place. Dans le cas où une zone au-delà des limites est perturbée pendant la

mise en œuvre du projet, l'entrepreneur rétablira le sol et restaurera la végétation appropriée selon les directives de l'ingénieur de l'environnement.

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci, M. le président. Je suis très étonnée du terme utilisé par le ministre 'un abattage soigneux' alors que j'avais déposé sur la Table de l'Assemblée les photos de la barbarie avec laquelle plus d'une trentaine d'arbres endémiques avait été coupés.

The Environment Protection Act states clearly in Fifth Schedule Part B that –

“10. Conversion of forest land to any other land use.”

And at section 24, projects which are undertaken on mountain slopes are undertakings requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment.

So, can the Minister state why no Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out although it is required by law?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je pense avoir répondu à la question et cette question a fait l'objet de plusieurs questions semblables dans le passé adressées à moi-même, adressées à mon collègue du ministère des Infrastructures publiques et d'autres collègues ministres. Je pense que cela a été très clair, M. le président, vu les impératifs en ce qui concerne l'urgence de la construction des routes sur place, les dispositions qui ont été prises par le *Ministry* responsable du *forestry* et la *RDA*, le consultant qui est responsable sur place, le Luxconsult Ltée, conjointement avec le contracteur, M. le président, toutes les dispositions sont prises pour la préservation de la faune et la flore sur place.

M. le président, je maintiens ma réponse telle que je l'ai mentionnée pour dire que les travaux entrepris ne sont pas considérés comme a *scheduled activity* selon l'*Environment Protection Act*.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/894, PQ B/895 and PQ B/896 have been withdrawn. Time over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.40 p.m.)

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE FINANCE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

(No. XIII of 2021)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XIII of 2021).

Question again proposed.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Finance Bill covers an array of amendments to various pieces of legislation to provide for implementation of measures announced in the Budget Speech 2021-2022...

(Interruptions)

...and for matters...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

An hon. Member: *Vive la démocratie!*

The Deputy Prime Minister: ...connected consequential and incidental thereto.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

An hon. Member: *Ban doner leçon!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Minister, continue!

An hon. Member: *Bizin aret repon zot kestion!*

An hon. Member: *Bizin aret reponn sa!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Deputy Prime Minister: It might be apposite to note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that respect for parliamentary traditions is a two-way process just as for Government and for the majority in Parliament, it is our duty to listen to the Opposition, to take into account proposals, criticisms made...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Ala li ale!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Whereas it is the duty of Ministers to respond to questions and answer all questions. It is the duty of Ministers – and I am speaking for the public outside, viewing these images on television – to stay here in the early hours of the morning to listen to all the matters raised at adjournment and to respond thereto. It is also equally the duty of the Opposition not only to hit at Government, but to listen to the explanations offered; to the explanations as to legislation which is before this House and to partake in the business of debating and enacting legislation.

(Interruptions)

All too often, and I am...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Zot nepli dan lopozision!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Deputy Prime Minister: And we do applaud hon. Abbas Mamode!

I was saying that, as we intervene at the end of the debate of the Finance Bill, we, once again, respond to points made by the Opposition and explain the proposal of Government and it is a matter of utter dismay that we note that the Opposition, once again,

having had its say and having been listened to by Government, not to be here; not to do its duty for which it is paid from public funds to represent all of our people and to pay respect to the traditions of parliamentary democracy, but be that as it may! Government business has to go on and we shall do our duty in intervening to conclude the debates on the Finance Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not propose to be long; it is not my intention to repeat the debate on the budget nor to repeat what has been said before by hon. Members. I will, therefore, briefly refer to the clauses of the Finance Bill that pertain to my area of responsibility: tourism, housing and land use planning.

I shall first consider the clauses of the Finance Bill that pertain to the tourism sector to briefly explain what Government is doing through the Finance Bill.

Firstly, Mr Speaker, Sir, clause 22 of the Finance Bill relates to the EDB Act; amends the EDB Act by introducing a new section 13, subparagraph 4, whereby applications for occupation permits will henceforth have a time limit of five days. Whenever a Ministry, let us say the Ministry of Tourism, is consulted on an application for an occupation permit that is being piloted by the EDB, if within five days no reply is obtained, it shall be considered that the Ministry of Tourism is not objecting. This is the most welcomed innovation because the contribution of foreign expertise, of foreign skills to the development of the tourism sector has been of critical importance throughout the history of tourism. And the amendment being brought by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, eloquently states the principle that henceforth we should be expeditious in addressing the request for foreign expertise as proposed by the EDB.

The other Clause pertaining to tourism is Clause 44 of the Finance Bill that relates to the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act. Now, Members of the House will have noted that henceforth the tax on transfer of leasehold rights which is dealt with under Section 45 (a) of the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act and the Seventh Schedule of the Act relates to the rate of tax on transfer of leasehold rights and what is being proposed is to halve the rate of tax so that instead of the current tax rate of 20% being paid equally by the buyer 10% and the seller 10%, the rate is now being reduced to 5% each. Now, this change is to be understood within the perspective of Government's policy to fight the impact of the COVID-19 on our economy by supporting economic firms and enterprises in order to protect jobs and safeguard livelihoods. What is being facilitated through this amendment to the legislation is that when and where it is necessary to transfer leasehold rights having regard to hotels, this can be done

at lesser cost to the enterprises, to the investors involved in order to safeguard jobs and livelihoods.

Another interesting amendment being brought is that embodied in Clause 48 of the Finance Bill that relates to the Local Government Act. This is at the initiative of the EDB and if you will bear with me, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will very briefly explain what we are about here. Actually, at present, tourism operators are exempted from payment of trade fees to local authorities because they are regulated by the Tourism Authority and they already pay license fees to the Tourism Authority. This was an old administrative arrangement with the local authorities.

However, when collection of trade fees was transferred to the Central Business Registration Department under the Minister of Finance, there were certain issues in terms of businesses that were exempted or not from payment of trade fees. For instance, the Tourism Accommodation Certificate caters for services like beauty parlours, health and fitness, spa and wellness, supply and sale of liquor, shops, boutiques, bars owned by the same operator as listed by the Tourism Authority. But these operators in effect were being asked to pay trade fees whereas they were also paying Tourism Authority Licenses.

As it has been announced by the Minister of Finance in the Budget Speech, henceforth trade fees will not be applicable to any person, to any firm holding a Tourist Enterprise License. Consequently, what Clause 48 of the Finance Bill does is to amend the Twelfth Schedule of the Local Government Act to list activities that are exempted from payment of trade fees, to include any holder of a certificate license or permit issued by the Tourism Authority.

Next, Clause 85 of the Finance Bill deals with an amendment to the State Land Act. In this case, you may recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, that last year, rental payments for industrial leases of State lands for tourist-related activities were waived completely. This year, what is being proposed in the Finance Bill, is that rather than having to pay in advance by 31 July, payments will be effected at the end of the fiscal year. Now, this is of critical importance to help the resumption of activities within the tourism sector.

Right now, I am happy to report to the House that more than 50% of our hotels are in operation. If not as quarantine or treatment centres, then again as resort hotels or as establishments open to the locals for local tourism. Guest houses are gradually picking up. Since 23 July, a large number have gone back into operation and this legislative proposal will

go a long way in assisting tourism enterprises to get on their feet again and start operating normally.

The final point regarding tourism relates to Clause 37 of the Finance Bill which amends Section 2 of the Immigration Act, the definition section, to provide a definition for the Invest Hotel Scheme. What is being proposed is that under that scheme for which the EDB makes specific regulations, henceforth, sale of up to 80% of the units of a new, let us say hotel complex, will be allowed with the possibility for the owner of the room to stay for a maximum of six months as opposed to 45 days which it was previously since 2015.

Now, I had proposed to respond to the very harsh criticism of the Leader of the Opposition having regard to the Invest Hotel Scheme but I no longer propose to do so in his absence. I believe the matter is largely irrelevant since nobody else has raised the criticisms that he had in the House and which we patiently listened to and prepared to respond to. I shall, therefore, move on straight to the housing sector.

In the housing sector, Clause 22 of the Finance Bill amends the EDB Act to provide for the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning together with the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Finance, I believe, to have a specific representation on the board of the EDB which is all too logical being given the requirements of development in our days and times. So, I will not delve any longer on that issue, but Clause 45 brings a very important amendment to the Landlord and Tenant Act.

You may recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, that last year, in the COVID-19 Act, the Landlord and Tenant Act was amended so that persons who were not able to pay their rent between March 2020, when the first lockdown intervened, up until August 2020 were no longer at risk of an Eviction Order. Non-payment of rent during that time, according to the amendment brought by Government in 2020, was not considered a breach of the Tenancy Agreement and a moratorium was provided for in the sense that tenants could pay their unpaid rent by instalments up to 31 December 2021. Now, this provided enormous relief to a large number of small tenants but did give rise to some abuse.

So, this year while hastening to act, once again, to protect small tenants from the hardship caused by the COVID-19 confinement period, the proposal of Government has been modified to a certain extent, once again non-payment of rent for the months of March 2021 to August 2021, I am referring to non-payment of rent for premises, of course, will not constitute a breach of the tenancy agreement, will not automatically entitle the owner to an

eviction order but the rent will have to be repaid, this time; half of it will have to be repaid by the end of December 2021 and the balance to be paid in 12 equal monthly instalments between January and December 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Finance Bill also amends the *Morcellement* Act to provide for the Land Drainage Authority to be, henceforth, represented on the *Morcellement* Board, for the simple reason that we know, one of the major challenges facing us is that brought about by climate change and the extent of unusual rainfall and the flooding that this implies.

The Land Drainage Authority came into operation only three years ago and Government feels it is critical at this point that the Land Drainage Authority be fully party to the process of awarding a *morcellement* permit to any prospective developer and finally and this will be my last point, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Clause 75 of the Finance Bill amends the Real Estate Agent Authority Act. Now, this is in line with the good work being undertaken by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance, within the perspective of the fight against money laundering so that, henceforth, any person registering as a real estate agent with the Real Estate Agent Authority will have to register with the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) within a delay of 5 working days of his registration as real estate agent, in compliance with Section 14C of the FIAMLA, which states that –

“Every reporting person or auditor shall, within such time and in such form and manner as may be prescribed, register with FIU.”

So, the proposed amendment aims at classifying promoters, land promoters and developers, as reporting persons under the FIAMLA, whether they act for a client or not, or in their own capacity, to ensure further compliance with recommended international best practices and norms for combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism and proliferation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for bearing with me through these technical explanations of what is being proposed and I will end by inviting all the Members of the House to support the proposals in the Finance Bill as introduced by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(4.59 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: M. le président, tout d'abord, je me joins aux remarques de l'honorable *Deputy Prime Minister* pour que le public puisse bien voir ; et j'espère que le *Parliament TV* peut montrer les bancs vides de l'Opposition, comme toujours, et ça devient une habitude ; à l'exception, toujours, de l'honorable Salim Abbas Mamode. Donc, je ne vais pas répéter ce que l'honorable *DPM* a dit. Mais moi, par contre, j'ai l'intention de faire mon discours comme je l'avais prévu et peut-être, même, je serai inspiré de dire certaines choses en plus ; et on verra en cours de route.

Mr Speaker, Sir, every year, the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill is presented by the Minister of Finance and, normally, a few weeks after the Appropriation Bill is voted by the National Assembly. And every time - I have been looking at the previous Bills - I must say, it has been a voluminous Bill, with amendments to numerous Acts of Parliament, as the measures announced in the Budget cut across many sectors and they impact on many Government departments and public entities.

This year - in fact, it is not only an exception, it goes even further -, the Finance Bill is more voluminous as the challenges faced by the country are multifold and multi-sectoral and are compounded by the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe that hon. Uteem of the MMM should have refrained from saying that we have buried so many amendments to so many Acts in a 300-page document. This is, once more, utter demagoguery as usual from the hon. Member, and I wanted, at the very outset, to denounce that sort of very cheap argument.

Having said so, Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of legislations being amended through the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill testifies that we are adapting our legislative framework to better respond to current realities and challenges.

Since hon. Members, on this side of the House, have abundantly dealt with many of the proposed amendments, I shall also focus my comments on a few of them, of which, of course, some are related to legislations that govern departments and entities falling under my portfolio of responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Budget 2021-2022 paved the way to reverse the economic downfall due to the COVID-19 pandemic, build resilience, and prepare our economy to leap back into the league of high income countries. Measures announced emphasised sustainability and inclusiveness of growth, and for that to happen, there was the need to put in place all legal, administrative, and fiscal instruments to instil confidence, rekindle investment, boost exports,

increase competitiveness, and create the right environment for a culture of integrity and excellence to percolate across all sectors. That is what the provisions of the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 aim at.

In view of the very challenging context, we need to pursue with reforms to enhance further our ease of doing business regime to create an even more conducive environment for businesses by providing predictability and visibility.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to attract foreign direct investment, we need to continuously adapt ourselves to evolving circumstances to –

- first, retain the existing investors who have chosen our country; and
- second, become more competitive and attractive for new investors.

We cannot also be insensitive to the demographic challenges that our country is facing with a natality rate of below 1.4. Last year, we came up with several measures to further open the economy for investors and retirees.

The Finance Bill amends the Immigration Act to align the validity period of an Occupation Permit for professionals to that of investors, that is, for a period of 10 years. This will give more certainty to both employees and employers. Our country needs foreign talents to further develop, particularly, emerging and innovative sectors. In the same vein, the age limit for a dependent child is being waived for as long as the child is dependent on the main holders. This will prevent investors and professionals from leaving the country because of their children having to leave.

The Immigration Act is also being amended to provide for residence permits to non-citizens buying an apartment for at least USD 375,000. This will align investment in apartments with other real estate schemes such as the Property Development Scheme.

With a view to attracting high net worth families to Mauritius, and who could eventually opt to do business in and from Mauritius, the Immigration Act is being amended to introduce a Family Occupation Permit where the family will be required to contribute USD 250,000 in the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund. In addition, holders of a 10-Year Permanent Resident Permit before 01 September 2020 will be extended to cover a period of 20 years, in alignment with those issued with a permit after 01 September 2020. This measure is in line with our strategy to retain investors and professionals who have demonstrated successful contribution to our economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we also introduced the Premium Visa allowing tech savvy professionals to blend their vacations with work in Mauritius. *Le Figaro* publication in France recently ranked Mauritius 4th amongst the most sought over destination for retirement by French citizens.

The Premium Visa Scheme was introduced in November 2020 to attract eligible non-citizens to come to Mauritius to live in a COVID-safe environment for a period of one year with the possibility of renewal thereafter. 685 applications for Premium Visa have been received as at 30 June 2021.

The Premium Visa targets, amongst others, repeat tourists planning to retire and migrate to Mauritius; investors and professionals willing to come with their family and carry out their businesses or work remotely from Mauritius or offer their staff this facility; and those having their children studying in Mauritius. In this perspective, the Economic Development Board has been working in close collaboration with the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority to develop an integrated marketing strategy to promote Mauritius as a safe location.

In order to make the Premium Visa Scheme attractive and to avoid any administrative hurdle, a holder of a Premium Visa spending 183 days or more in the Republic of Mauritius, is taxed only on amounts of his income that is brought and deposited in a bank account in Mauritius. Money spent in Mauritius through the use of foreign credit or debit cards is not liable to tax. Given that Mauritius operates a unilateral foreign tax credit mechanism, there will be no double taxation of income.

The Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act is being amended so that approval of my Office is not required for disposal of property under the EDB Schemes such as the Property Development Scheme and the Integrated Resort Scheme. However, the EDB will have to notify my Office of such disposals.

Moreover, provision is being made for the EDB to maintain a Non-Citizens Property Restriction Register containing particulars about the acquisition or disposal of properties by a non-citizen and if there is any security that has been taken on the property.

The Act is also being amended so that no authorisation of my Office will be required for the initial 20-year lease only. And, for subsequent renewals, authorisation of my Office will be required.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall now comment on some of the other amendments proposed in the Bill that relate to departments, also falling under my responsibility.

The Civil Status Act is being amended to enable the issue of civil documents, such as birth and marriage certificates online through the MoKloud platform, thus avoiding the need for people to call at the Civil Status Offices and queuing up for a document. This is in line with our strategic objective of bringing our services to the people.

Another amendment being brought to the Civil Status Act will require hospitals, private health institutions, and midwives for births at home, to notify the Civil Status Office of the birth of a child through a prescribed form. Presently, following the birth of a child, the concerned hospital or private health institution issues a document to the parent to be remitted to the Civil Status Office for the declaration of the child within the prescribed delay. However, the document issued by public hospitals and private health institutions are different and, therefore, do not necessarily contain the same information. With this amendment, a standard form is being introduced to be used by all institutions concerned. With the amendment, the Civil Status Office will receive a copy of the notification of birth when same is remitted to the mother.

This measure will also be applicable for midwives who assist in the delivery of a child at home, although such cases are very rare nowadays.

The amendment will not only allow the Civil Status Division to have updated information on birth, but will also reduce, to some extent, tardy declarations which constitute a real problem today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the main objective of the United Nations (Financial Prohibitions, Arms Embargo and Travel Ban) Sanctions Act 2019 is to enable the Government of Mauritius to implement targeted sanctions and other measures imposed by the United Nations Security Council, with a view to addressing threats to international peace and security, including the financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The proposed amendments to the United Nations (Financial Prohibitions, Arms Embargo and Travel Ban) Sanctions Act are meant to strengthen existing provisions, to avoid any ambiguity that might arise as well as to better empower the National Sanctions Secretariat to conduct its duties diligently.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the proposed amendments to the ICT Act 2001 are being brought to ensure improved compatibility of the local legislation vis-à-vis the international commitments

taken at the level of the World Trade Organisation, notably with regard to the integration of the regulatory principles formulated under the WTO Telecommunications Reference Paper. The issues that are being addressed are in relation to the notion of essential facilities and universal access. Corresponding sections on universal service, interconnection and access agreements, market definition, and tariffs are being reviewed to address functional limitations identified by the ICT Authority.

The ICT Act is also being amended to address issues raised in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking published in year 2018 regarding the use of satellite phones which, according to information received, are being used by traffickers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, through the COVID-19 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020, various enactments were amended to cater for the impact of COVID-19 and to provide for matters connected, consequential and related thereto. The Interpretation and General Clauses Act was, thus, amended to define the “COVID-19 period” as follows, and I quote -

“the period starting on 23 March 2020, and ending on 01 June 2020 or ending on such later date as the Prime Minister may, by regulations, prescribe under this Act.”

Following the resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic this year, the “COVID-19 period” has to be redefined. The Interpretation and General Clauses Act is, therefore, being amended to include the confinement period for the year 2021 in the definition of COVID-19 and also to make provision for the COVID-19 period to be defined by way of regulations for any subsequent year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prevention of Corruption Act is being amended with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the Independent Commission against Corruption in the fight against Money Laundering and to facilitating asset management and recovery, which is an important component in the context of the FATF and ESAAMLG evaluation of the effective compliance of Mauritius with the FATF AML/CFT standards.

In this context, the validity of Attachment Orders is being extended from 60 days to 6 months to address the challenge of having to continuously apply for an extension of existing Attachment Orders, thus burdening the Court with repeated applications for renewal. Money Laundering investigations, especially complex ones as well as those with international ramifications, often take time and the 60 days validity period of such Attachment Orders is often too limitative.

Moreover, the proposed amendment will enable the Commission to realise assets which have been attached or seized by it in the course of an investigation and will address the issue of security and wear and tear of these assets which are kept within its compound. The realisation of those assets will allow for the preservation of the value of those properties as they will not be subject to depreciation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, presently, only the Financial Intelligence Unit (Enforcement Agency) can apply for an Account Monitoring Order under section 49 of the Asset Recovery Act. An application for an Account Monitoring Order may, amongst others, specify information relating to -

- all accounts held by a person at such financial institution; or
- description of accounts held.

With a view to strengthening our AML/CFT framework, the Prevention of Terrorism Act is being amended to allow a Judge to also make an Account Monitoring Order on an application made by the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the recommendation made at paragraph 7.13.9 of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking in Mauritius, as from 01 February 2019, cigarettes have been banned in prisons.

Clause 76 of the Bill will give legal effect to that decision by amending section 26(1) of the Reform Institutions Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Public Collections Act dates back to 1965. This legislation regulates the raising of funds for medical, social, religious, and charitable purposes, amongst others. Amendments are being brought to sections 2 and 6 of the Act with a view to combatting money laundering and financing of terrorism and to be in line with the guidelines of the Financial Action Task Force.

Besides preventing money laundering and financing terrorism, the amendment of section 6 has also a compassionate dimension, as it allows promoters, particularly those raising funds to undergo urgent medical treatment or surgery abroad, six months to submit their detailed statements concerning expenses incurred for such purposes, as compared to one month presently. The tight deadline was adding pressure on their already precarious situation.

Moreover, a promoter who, in the event of a *Force Majeure*, cannot meet the obligation of submitting the detailed statement of expenses incurred for the collection and the

manner in which the proceeds have been disposed of, is also being allowed an additional period of six months for the submission of these statements. However, to prevent any abuse, the extension will be granted only if the promoter has taken all reasonable precautions, due care, and reasonable alternative measures to avoid the effect of any circumstance or event which would affect his ability to fulfil his obligations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Civil Aviation Act is being amended to provide that henceforth the Passenger Fee and the Passenger Solidarity Fee be levied in US Dollars instead of Mauritian Rupees.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to the proposed amendments to the Gambling Regulatory Act. I shall dwell quite lengthily on these amendments to dispel all doubts and apprehensions and also to denounce the demagogy going on at the moment. At the outset, I must say that all the hue and cry with regard to the proposed setting up of a Horse Racing Division within the Gambling Regulatory Authority is totally unjustified.

It is a known fact that horse racing in Mauritius is at crossroads. Either we undertake a complete overhaul for a better or sustainable future or we let the industry die an inexorable death, which no sensible and responsible person would wish.

Mr Speaker, Sir, serious concerns on horse racing in Mauritius have been expressed since many, many years. I have on various occasions in the past denounced the malpractices and integrity issues that have prevailed for so long. The former Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, while replying to a Parliamentary Question on 22 July 2014, stated, and I quote

—

“Government views with great concern the wide-ranging allegations about the organisation and management of horse racing in Mauritius. Government is equally concerned about criticisms levelled at agencies dealing with horse racing and betting activities related thereto. It is very obvious that public confidence in the integrity of the horse racing industry has been severely dented. I have decided to set up a Commission of Inquiry to look into all aspects of horse racing in Mauritius.”

Subsequently, the previous Government announced on 24 September 2014, the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing in Mauritius and the then President of the Republic appointed Mr Richard Parry as Commissioner to Chair the Inquiry, with two fellow Commissioners, Messrs Dennis Gunn and Paul Scotney, to act as assessors.

The Commission submitted a damning report in March 2015, only three months after *L'Alliance Lepep* assumed office after the December 2014 General Elections. It confirmed the ills plaguing the horse racing industry. It mentioned maladministration, corruption, collusion, conflicts of interests and clans, race-fixing, and, Mr Speaker, Sir, so many other malpractices.

The Parry Report highlighted the following, and I quote –

“The Commission notes that allegations of corrupt races have been a major issue for Mauritian horse racing for many years. Common themes that were highlighted in the Rault Report in 1985 and, in the view of the Commission, are still relevant, include –

- clarity around whose responsibility it is to deal with corruption in horse racing;
- the inability through the structures and processes of the MTC to adequately deal with the issue of fixed races;
- conflicts of interest that inhibit improvements around integrity;
- the management and control of both Mauritian and foreign jockeys;
- the illegal betting markets, and
- inadequate application of the rules and regulations around corruption.”

The Commission considered that the GRA was ‘not fit for purpose’ and required a fundamental overhaul with more dynamic leadership, a clear strategic plan to fulfil its wide-ranging responsibilities under the GRA Act, tactical options for implementing its strategy and, crucially, it needed to be properly resourced with experienced and motivated staff.

The Commission recommended that there was an urgent need to remove the regulatory and governance responsibilities from the MTC and, instead, create a separate organisation, the Mauritius Horseracing Authority, which would be a new independent statutory body to oversee the regulation and governance of horse racing in Mauritius.

The Commission felt that there was merit in consideration being given to changing the MTC’s status from a private club to a company limited by shares under the Company Law.

It also recommended better coordination between the GRA, the MRA, the FIU and the *Police des Jeux* to effectively deal with malpractices and corrupt activities in the horse racing industry.

M. le président, comme je l'ai dit, ce n'est un secret pour personne qu'année après année, l'organisation des courses a été décriée par tous les '*stakeholders*' concernés. Rapport après rapport, de Rault à Parry en passant par Balgobin et Glover, le constat a été unanime et accablant : les courses hippiques à Maurice souffrent de pratiques douteuses. Les turfistes ont été les plus grandes victimes.

M. le président, il fallait agir. Le gouvernement a commencé à prendre le taureau par les cornes dès le début de son mandat en 2015. Comme recommandé par le Rapport Parry, il fallait donner à la *GRA* des muscles et des dents pour évoluer d'un bouledogue sans dents à un bouledogue qui sait mordre. Si la *GRA* n'était pas '*fit for purpose*' en 2014 comme mis en exergue par la Commission d'Enquête, c'est que cette institution régulatrice n'avait qu'une dizaine d'employés, la plupart des retraités qui ne faisaient que du '*rubber stamping*' sous le joug d'un nommé travailliste qui agissait comme Chairperson. Nul besoin de mentionner les noms.

Il fallait nommer un nouveau Conseil d'administration, restructurer l'institution, et recruter des personnes compétentes ainsi que des consultants pour aider la *GRA* à assumer ses responsabilités pleinement. Aujourd'hui, la *GRA* est dotée d'un Conseil d'administration dynamique et proactif et d'une cinquantaine d'employés qualifiés.

Depuis 2015, la *GRA* a pris une série d'initiatives pour mieux exécuter sa mission telle qu'énoncée dans la *GRA Act*. Ces initiatives ont tenu compte des observations et recommandations de la Commission Parry. Ainsi, selon les provisions de la loi, des directives ont été émises à l'intention de l'organisateur des courses hippiques pour s'attaquer au problème de subjectivité et d'iniquité dans la prise de décisions et d'apporter plus de certitude aux *stakeholders* concernés.

La loi a été amendée pour contraindre les opérateurs du betting d'opérer à travers une entité corporative pour plus de transparence et conformément à la réglementation contre le blanchiment d'argent. C'est dans cette même optique que le *MTC*, qui a un statut de club privé, a dû créer une subsidiaire corporative, le *MTCSL*, pour pouvoir opérer selon les nouvelles dispositions de la loi.

Le contrôle anti-dopage a été renforcé, la *GRA* prenant à sa charge le contrôle hors-compétition. Sur une recommandation du laboratoire concerné, le contrôle pré-compétition est fait les jeudis suivant la publication du programme des courses. Ce nouvel arrangement permet au laboratoire d'avoir plus de temps pour effectuer un éventail de tests, contrairement à ce qui se pratiquait auparavant.

M. le président, depuis septembre 2017, 27 cas de dopage ont été détectés.

Pour plus de transparence sur les gains, issus du betting, les '*licensees*' de la *GRA* sont contraints sous l'*Income Tax Act* de répertorier les gains dépassant R 20,000. Des accords de partenariat, des *MoUs* ont été signés entre la *GRA* et d'autres institutions comme la *MRA*, l'*ICAC*, la *FIU*, l'*IRSA* en vue d'une collaboration étroite pour mieux traquer les actes illégaux ou suspects dans le circuit des jeux de hasard et d'argent.

Désormais, il est un devoir légal des '*licensees*' de la *GRA* de divulguer leur bénéficiaire ultime, ce qui permet de connaître l'identité de la personne qui est réellement derrière l'activité concernée.

La *Personal Management Licence* a été introduite afin de déterminer si une personne engagée dans le secteur des jeux de hasard et de l'argent est '*fit and proper*'. Son importance est maintenant mieux comprise, car l'exercice de '*due diligence*' qui précède l'octroi de la *Personal Management Licence* permet de mettre à l'écart des individus suspectés de ne pas être '*fit and proper*'.

La loi a été amendée pour contraindre les institutions financières à ne pas honorer des transactions liées à des paris illégaux sur le net. Et dans peu de temps, la Police des Jeux passera sous la *GRA* en vue d'une meilleure coordination en ce qu'il s'agit des opérations coups de poing sur le terrain.

Et, finalement, il y a eu l'introduction d'un mécanisme de contrôle en ce qui concerne l'achat des chevaux, les paiements effectués aux jockeys et les versements pour l'entretien de chevaux, communément appelé '*keep money*'. Désormais, toutes ces transactions, de par la loi, doivent passer obligatoirement par un compte spécifique de la *MTCSL*. La responsabilité incombe donc à la *MTCSL*, valeur du jour, de rapporter à la *FIU* toute transaction qu'elle jugerait suspecte.

Toutes ces mesures montrent que les autorités se sont armées de dispositions légales et de mécanismes pour combattre des actes illégaux dans le secteur des jeux de hasard et d'argent, susceptibles de ternir l'image du pays.

Evidemment, ces mesures ne plaisent pas à cette mafia dénoncée par la Commission d'enquête Parry. C'est pour cela, M. le président, qu'il y a autant de résistance.

Et aujourd'hui, M. le président, à travers les amendements proposés au *GRA Act*, c'est une autre étape cruciale qui est franchie pour mettre de l'ordre dans l'industrie hippique et assurer sa pérennité. Passer à cette nouvelle étape est nécessaire car il y a encore des entorses répétées aux règles régissant les courses hippiques, au détriment des principaux acteurs du secteur que sont les entraîneurs, les propriétaires des chevaux, et surtout les turfistes.

Inspiré par l'une des plus importantes recommandations de la Commission Parry, nous proposons la mise sur pied d'une *Horse Racing Division* à la *GRA*. Nous ne créons pas une nouvelle autorité, parce que nous estimons inapproprié de dupliquer les institutions, compte tenu de l'exiguïté de notre juridiction. Nous sommes d'avis qu'il faut bâtir autour de ce qui existe et optimiser l'utilisation des ressources disponibles.

Cependant, il est important de souligner que la *Horse Racing Division* opérera en toute indépendance pour assumer les '*regulatory and governance functions*' des activités hippiques. Le responsable de cette division consultera le *CEO* ou l'officier en charge de la *GRA* que sur des questions d'ordre administratif et de politique générale. De plus, cette division, j'en donne l'assurance, comptera en son sein que des professionnels aguerris en matière hippique. Le responsable de la division a déjà été recruté. Il s'agit d'un professionnel australien qui a mis ses compétences au service de plusieurs juridictions hippiques. Il sera épaulé par d'autres consultants réputés dans leurs spécialités respectives. Evidemment, des professionnels mauriciens y feront aussi partie après des exercices de recrutement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said when starting to speak on the amendments to the *GRA Act*, there is nothing sinister in what we are doing. There is an urgent need for reform and change in the horse racing industry. While recognising the contribution of the Mauritius Turf Club in horse racing, we cannot turn a blind eye to the numerous concerns expressed by stakeholders of the industry and especially by racegoers, as I have said.

I wish here to allay the fears of those who have been made to believe that Government wants to take horse racing under its control. This is absolutely not true. Government is only ensuring that horse racing is undertaken in an environment of trust where integrity, fairness, and transparency will prevail.

Some Members on the other side of the House have said: “*A qui profite le crime?*” First of all, there is no crime that is being committed. What is being proposed is an evolution for a sustainable and clean horse racing industry.

Mais, je pose des questions aux membres de l’Opposition:

A qui profite le crime qui est en train d’être perpétué semaine après semaine à l’encontre des turfistes ?

A qui profite le crime de continuer avec des décisions arbitraires et des collusions occultes ?

A qui profite le crime quand certains cautionnent les maldonnées et les activités des corrompus qui ont pris des courses en otage ?

On sait, M. le président, comment les gains provenant des courses hippiques ont servi de ‘*war chest*’ pour des politiciens au sein de l’opposition parlementaire et extra-parlementaire. On sait aussi les relations incestueuses entre ce ‘*Don*’ dénoncé dans le rapport de la commission d’enquête et des politiciens de l’Opposition. On sait comment des politiciens de l’opposition ont donné des consignes de vote aux dernières élections au *Mauritius Turf Club*. Ils ont affiché ces consignes ouvertement, publiquement, à travers leur compte de Facebook. Alors, ce n’est pas difficile de comprendre les motivations de certains membres de l’opposition. Ce sont eux qui ont politisé le *MTC*. Qu’ils fassent leur *mea-culpa* avant tout !

M. le président, si je comprends bien les critiques de l’Opposition, dois-je conclure qu’ils auraient mis le rapport Parry dans un tiroir si jamais ils avaient gagné les élections en 2014? Auraient-ils trouvé une parade pour dire que le commissaire et ses assesseurs ont fauté et qu’il fallait à tout prix maintenir le *statu quo* et laisser pourrir la situation ? Auraient-ils permis à la mafia dénoncée dans le rapport Parry de continuer à détrousser les turfistes semaine après semaine ?

Quant au *Mauritius Turf Club*, maintenant *Mauritius Turf Club Sports & Leisure Ltd*, je ne peux que condamner cette obsession de vouloir à tout prix défier le gouvernement et la *GRA*. Je le redis: le gouvernement agit en toute bonne foi pour le bien des courses hippiques et au lieu de contester à tout bout de champ, le *MTCSL* gagnerait à reconnaître qu’avec la mise sur pied de la *Horse Racing Division*, il serait épargné des dépenses conséquentes liées au contrôle anti-dopage et de sa facture salariale la plus onéreuse. Loin de vouloir tuer le *MTCSL* comme allégué, l’opportunité est donnée à ce dernier de mieux utiliser les ressources

financières qu'il continuera de recevoir des opérateurs de paris, pour améliorer ses infrastructures, moderniser ses équipements, augmenter les '*stakes money*', améliorer les conditions d'emploi des palefreniers, par exemple, ou encore planifier l'avenir. Contrairement à ce qui est dit par le président du *MTC*, un fervent du MMM, le *MTCSL* continuera à s'occuper de l'organisation des courses, des '*race-day operations*', comme on le dit. Depuis la parution du programme officiel jusqu'à la fin d'une journée de course, le *MTCSL* continuera de s'occuper de ce qu'il fait maintenant.

Clairement donc, la mise sur pied de la *Horse Racing Division* sera un '*game changer*', non seulement pour l'industrie hippique mais aussi pour le *MTCSL*. Comme je disais auparavant, peut-être en l'absence surtout du MMM, c'est connu, M. le président, que le président du *MTCSL*, un certain J. M. G., que je disais très proche du MMM, est un membre du MMM; il est très, très proche de son Leader, et je vais prouver ce que je suis en train de dire. Mais moi, je ne fais pas des allégations et je ne viens pas dire des choses comme l'honorable Bhagwan et l'honorable Quirin - j'ai lu avec attention leurs discours, mais je ne vais pas aller dans les détails pour leur répliquer. Mais moi, je vais prouver ce que je dis.

Un proche, un membre du MMM, il avait participé à la campagne électorale 2019. Il y a des témoins ici encore. Il avait pris la parole lors d'une réunion politique du MMM au Domaine Kamellia, Chemin Grenier, le 19 octobre 2019, et cela avait été rapporté dans la presse. Et d'ailleurs, je profite *to table a document ; it is a certified copy of* Le Défi Quotidien. J'ai pris la peine de le faire certifier. Voilà ce qu'il dit, et je cite –

« M. Giraud qui avait (...) »

Monsieur J. M. G., pardon.

(Interruptions)

C'est parce que je lisais ce qui a été rapporté. Dans la presse, ce n'est pas rapporté comme ça, mais il faut que je rapporte, fidèle aux principes parlementaires –

« J. M. G., ancien directeur de ... »

d'une compagnie qui s'appelle U.B.P. Je ne sais pas, peut-être qu'on peut deviner quelle compagnie.

« ... est également intervenu. »

‘Est également intervenu’, s’il vous plaît. Un meeting politique du MMM ; et il est également intervenu. Il a mis l’accent sur le partage équitable des richesses. C’est pour cela, dit-il, et je cite –

« ... que le MMM travaille sur un programme pour promouvoir la justice sociale. »

Et moi, je peux affirmer, ici, qu’il a travaillé sur le programme du MMM. J’attends ; il n’y a personne malheureusement, mais j’attends qu’ils viennent me dire le contraire et puis je vais prouver. Je vais prouver comment, et pas prouver juste par des allégations. Je vais prouver comme si c’était devant une cour de justice. Je vais prouver comment ce Monsieur a contribué, lui-même, personnellement, à rédiger le programme gouvernemental du MMM.

(Interruptions)

Donc, comme je disais, il avait travaillé sur le manifeste électoral en marge des élections de novembre 2019, et qui plus est, la compagnie où Monsieur J. M. G. était *CEO*, renfloue régulièrement les caisses du MMM. Et j’attends aussi ; peut-être qu’ils vont faire une conférence de presse samedi. J’espère qu’ils vont garder quelques minutes pour me répliquer publiquement sur ce que je suis en train de dire ici. Renflouer régulièrement les caisses du MMM ! La Chambre, peut-être, va être choquée, comment des millions atterrissent dans la caisse du MMM. Et puis, ils vont dire que le MMM est le parti le plus pauvre. Le parti le plus pauvre de Maurice, M. le président !

(Interruptions)

Mais attendons ...

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: C’est clair, donc, M. le président, que Monsieur J. M. G. et le MMM ont des intérêts communs. Il est surtout question, comme je dis du *war chest*, parce que c’est ça. Qu’est ce qui est en jeu, là ? Vous savez qu’est-ce qui est en jeu ? Si c’était une question de venir de l’avant avec une loi pour réglementer les courses hippiques, vous croyez qu’il allait se battre comme ça ? Vous croyez qu’il allait mettre toutes sortes de banderoles au Champ-de-Mars ? Parce que là, vous savez qu’est-ce qui est en jeu ? Comme on dit, le patient qui est sur le lit et qui a le sérum qui l’alimente et qui le garde en vie, c’est ce sérum-là que je suis en train de couper, et c’est ça l’enjeu. Le peuple doit savoir. Ça ce n’est rien ; on verra après.

Donc, un enjeu vraiment réel pour le MMM, et c'est pour cela que les députés du MMM, notamment, comme je l'ai dit, les honorables Quirin et Bhagwan sont montés au créneau pour venir répéter dans cette Chambre les allégations malveillantes de Monsieur J. M. G. contre la *GRA* et le gouvernement.

Il serait aussi approprié de souligner que le '*Don*', dont la Commission Parry a fait mention, avait obtenu son premier permis d'opération, celui de la compagnie *Bet Online*, de la défunte *Horse Racing Board*, vous savez en quelle année, M. le président ? En 2002, lorsque le Leader du MMM était ministre des Finances. Attendons voir s'ils vont dire que ce n'est pas vrai !

M. le président, l'honorable Quirin a déclaré, lors de son intervention vendredi dernier, que selon la section 35(15C) du *Finance Bill*, c'est la *Horse Racing Division* qui sera responsable pour l'organisation des courses. J'ai lu et relu cette section et je n'ai rien trouvé qui dit, comme allégué par l'honorable Quirin, que la *Horse Racing Division* va organiser des courses hippiques. Au contraire, la section 35(15C)(1) (a) se lit comme suit, et *I need to quote so that people can understand, and I quote* –

“(1) *The Horse Racing Committee shall –*

(a) *ensure that a horse racing organiser effectively discharges its responsibilities regarding the organisation of horse racing in all its aspects, including safety, comfort and standards of hygiene, security, discipline and the prevention of fraud.*”

Le *Horse Racing Organiser* n'est certainement pas le *Horse Racing Division*. Dois-je comprendre que soit le député n'a rien compris mais soit il est en train de faire de la démagogie et il est en train d'essayer de protéger son *war chest* ; le *war chest* de son parti ? Je pense même qu'il n'est même pas au courant - enfin, je suis sûr ; peut-être qu'il n'est même pas au courant. Je peux vous dire, tous les mois, combien de roupies rentrent dans la caisse du MMM.

Quant aux commentaires de l'honorable Bhagwan, je préfère ne pas répondre, M. le président, à ces attaques personnelles et à ces diatribes coutumières. Mais je ne peux laisser passer son accusation gratuite contre le président de la *GRA*, sous le couvert de l'immunité parlementaire, et j'espère, comme je le dis toujours pour certains membres, que s'ils ont le courage et s'ils sont honnêtes envers les critiques qu'ils sont en train de faire, de les répéter

en public, en dehors de la Chambre. Parce que, moi, tout ce que je suis en train de dire, je peux, à n'importe quel moment, aller les répéter en public.

M. le président, je trouve répugnant que certains veulent, par tous les moyens, discréditer la *GRA* et faire un procès d'intention à la *Horse Racing Division* qui est proposée. Je le redis, le gouvernement agit de bonne foi et je donne encore une fois l'assurance que la *Horse Racing Division* sera composée d'experts et de professionnels qui agiront en toute indépendance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the comments made by representatives of the Mauritius Turf Club about the nationalisation of horseracing are clearly not only unfounded, but I would say also *enfantin*. *Comme s'ils n'arrivent pas à nager et sont en train de s'accrocher à n'importe quels arguments qui passent par leur tête*. But then, these kinds of arguments are meant deliberately to create a sentiment of mistrust amongst horseracing followers about the intentions of Government and the GRA. What this Government truly wishes is that the horseracing industry adopts integrity and professionalism as the cornerstones of its future development. We want to breathe a new life into an industry which deserves better.

M. le président, la pérennité des courses hippiques passe aussi par la mise sur pied d'un nouvel hippodrome moderne avec toutes les facilités nécessaires et dignes de notre République avant-gardiste. Sur ce chapitre également, l'avènement de la *Horse Racing Division* à la *GRA* ouvre de nouvelles perspectives. Et je peux dire à la Chambre que des discussions avaient été entamées avec le *MTC*, à la demande de celui-ci, pour baliser les contours de la nouvelle industrie hippique. Une équipe composée des officiers de mon bureau et du ministère des Finances et du Développement économique avait été dûment mandatée pour entamer ces discussions.

Je suis informé qu'il y a eu sept réunions du 2 décembre 2020 au 15 février 2021 et il y avait consensus sur la marche à suivre, y compris la mise sur pied de la *Horse Racing Division* qui assumerait les '*regulatory and governance functions of horse racing*'. Il y avait unanimité sur la nécessité d'un nouvel hippodrome. Il y a bien eu un dialogue avec le *MTC*, dûment représenté par son ancien président et son ancien *CEO*, et deux consultants d'*Ernst & Young*, dont les services avaient été retenus par le *MTC*.

Il est donc faux de dire qu'il n'y a pas eu de consultation. Si, bien sûr, la nouvelle direction du *MTC/MTCSL* a changé de cap en s'entêtant dans la provocation et l'insulte et n'a pas voulu poursuivre ces discussions, je ne vois pas comment le gouvernement peut être

blâmé ! Et certainement, nous ne privilégions personne par rapport à un autre. Notre agenda : c'est le bien de l'industrie hippique, rien de plus !

Cela étant dit, M. le président, je souhaite réitérer que le gouvernement agit de bonne foi en venant de l'avant avec les amendements au *GRA Act*. Je suis convaincu que dans peu de temps, ceux concernés par l'industrie hippique nous remercieront pour avoir pris les décisions qui s'imposent pour assainir les courses et assurer leur pérennité.

Nous faisons ce que d'autres juridictions hippiques comme la Grande Bretagne, le Singapour, l'Afrique Sud ont fait depuis des décennies.

M. le président, nous avons en tout cas la détermination et la ténacité de mener à bien la réforme à plusieurs volets entamée depuis 2015 dans le secteur hippique. Je veux que cela soit bien compris de tous.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before concluding, I wish to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development on such a comprehensive Finance Bill. The sheer number of amendments, 93 in all, reflects the breadth and depth of all actions of this Government to address the development issues facing our country, our people, and our businesses.

The vast number of amendments also bears out the determination of this Government to ensure that, at all times, our country has a regulatory and legal framework that befits our development vision and the aspirations of the people.

I am confident that the amendments in the Finance Bill that will give effect to the numerous measures announced in Budget 2021-2022 will enable us to deal with the pandemic and its fallouts in an effective way, and, of course, we are looking forward to strengthening and speeding up the path to economic recovery.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for 30 minutes.

At 6.01 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.47 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated. Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Padayachy!

(6.47 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le président, je voudrais tout d'abord saluer la présence de l'honorable Salim Abbas Mamode qui démontre de par sa présence ce que le mot 'démocrate' implique.

Permettez-moi de remercier tout particulièrement le Premier Ministre, mes collègues Ministres et parlementaires pour leurs interventions, leurs observations et leurs précisions. Il est clair que ce gouvernement, porté par le leadership du Premier ministre, a embarqué à l'unisson dans le processus de transformation du pays.

Une économie robuste, une société résiliente et un développement durable. Tels sont les piliers importants et complémentaires, que nous avons érigés comme finalité de l'action de ce Gouvernement. Ce triptyque se retrouve dans chacune de nos prises de décision. Le Projet de loi actuellement débattu est d'ailleurs empreint de cette philosophie.

M. le président, il s'agit de protéger les plus vulnérables, de réduire les inégalités et de faire grandir le sentiment de confiance au sein des ménages et des entreprises mauriciennes. C'est précisément à travers cette dynamique que nous rassemblons nos efforts et forces pour surpasser la crise. Car ensemble, nous sommes meilleurs.

M. le président, dans le sillage du dernier Discours du Budget que j'ai présenté à la Chambre le 11 juin dernier, ce projet de loi apporte des amendements à quelque 93 législations existantes. C'est à la hauteur des aspirations que nous avons pour les Mauriciens, pour tous les Mauriciens. Alors que nous remettons le pays sur les rails après avoir subi la pire crise de notre histoire, le budget 2021-2022 est un budget de renaissance. Je suis convaincu que les mesures annoncées donneront le ton à une croissance économique robuste, durable et inclusive.

Capacité de production, investissements et confiance sont les clés d'une reprise économique vigoureuse et pérenne. Pour les mettre en œuvre, il nous faut, faire évoluer en conséquence notre cadre légal afin de l'adapter aux grands enjeux qui nous pressent.

Depuis le début de la crise, nous avons tout déployé pour empêcher les défauts de paiement, éviter les faillites et préserver les emplois, et nous y sommes parvenus. Il est maintenant temps d'écrire ensemble le prochain chapitre de notre histoire.

M. le président, cette nouvelle ère, nous sommes à présent en capacité de la façonner grâce à notre stratégie d'ouverture des frontières par phase et de vaccination massive. Comme

j'ai eu l'occasion de le dire à maintes reprises, la vaccination est le *game-changer*. Grâce à cela, nous avons pu procéder, il y a deux semaines, à la première phase d'ouverture de nos frontières. C'est un pas essentiel que nous avons franchi pour la reprise économique. Et, nous constatons, déjà, un impact positif sur le climat des affaires et sur la population en général.

M. le président, permettez-moi, maintenant d'aborder certaines des principales préoccupations qui ont été soulevées au cours des débats par les honorables parlementaires de l'opposition. Cet exercice est essentiel pour que nous partions sur une base de compréhension et d'interprétation commune. Il n'y a pas de temps à perdre.

En premier lieu, je souhaiterais revenir sur la critique qui a été formulée par l'honorable Uteem quant au contenu de ce projet de loi. Il soutient en effet que le présent projet de loi de finances modifie un trop grand nombre de législations et qu'il y contient des dispositions qui n'ont rien à voir avec le budget. L'honorable membre est allé plus loin en disant même que certaines dispositions n'ont jamais été annoncées dans le Discours du Budget ou son annexe.

Dans un esprit de transparence et de pédagogie, je me permets de rappeler aux membres de cet auguste Assemblée et d'informer plus largement la population qu'une note explicative incorporant des références au Discours du Budget 2021-2022 et à son annexe leur a été distribuée en amont des débats. Je renvoie donc les honorables députés de l'opposition à ce document qui a été partagé à chacun d'entre eux. S'ils avaient fait leur travail en lisant cette note, ils auraient constaté que leurs arguments ne tiennent pas la route.

Pour en revenir à ce qui est du grand nombre de législations amendées, la logique, des plus limpides, est la suivante. Le nombre d'amendements apportés par le projet de loi de finances reflète la volonté de ce gouvernement à apporter les réformes structurelles nécessaires pour remettre le pays sur la voie d'une croissance forte. Pour ainsi dire, les modifications législatives proposées sont donc le miroir des mesures ambitieuses et innovantes qui ont été annoncées dans le Discours du Budget 2021-2022. Et cela, pour accélérer notre rattrapage économique et favoriser le développement de nouveaux secteurs et des opportunités.

Il n'y a donc rien d'anormal. Je dirais même que c'est essentiel. Nous sommes, nous membres de la majorité, portés sur les actions et les résultats. Le travail est la marque de fabrique de notre Premier Ministre et du gouvernement. Apporter des amendements à quelques 93 lois est la condition sine qua none de l'implémentation des mesures budgétaires.

Je le dis sans détour, l'implémentation est la clé de notre réussite collective. Soyez-en assurés, nous ne tarirons pas d'efforts pour donner vie aux quelques 350 mesures annoncées dans le Budget.

La création de la *Project Implementation Monitoring Agency* a ainsi été pensée à cet effet. Son mandat sera d'assurer le suivi des projets phares afin de veiller au bon déroulement de notre plan stratégique. De mon côté, je continuerai personnellement à rencontrer les opérateurs et parties prenantes sur une base régulière. En tant que gouvernement de combat, nous croyons dans l'efficacité de l'action publique.

M. le président, en deuxième lieu, et dans le même ordre d'idée, je souhaiterai donner quelques précisions au sujet des amendements proposés au titre de l'*Economic Development Board Act*. Lors des débats, l'opposition a insinué qu'une fois les amendements votés, l'*EDB* deviendrait un super-ministère. Sous-entendant qu'il accaparera le pouvoir des ministères. Je me dois de rectifier ces propos.

Permettez-moi de rappeler aux membres de la Chambre que l'*EDB* a été créé pour remplir des objectifs spécifiques, à savoir –

- la planification économique stratégique,
- la promotion des investissements et du commerce, et enfin
- la facilitation des affaires.

Les modifications législatives que nous allons introduire sont complètement alignés avec ces objectifs. Il n'est donc aucunement question de créer un ministère et encore moins un super-ministère. Cela n'a pas de sens. Comme beaucoup des arguments émanant des rangs de l'opposition.

Au contraire, les amendements proposés visent à vrai dire à rationaliser les opérations de l'*EDB* pour atteindre les objectifs fixés par la loi. Afin d'éclairer ces propos pour le bénéfice de la Chambre et de la population, prenons un exemple concret.

Conformément au Discours du Budget 2021-2022, le présent projet de loi de finances introduit l'*Investment Certificate*. A ce titre, le nouveau *Investment Certificate* viendra remplacer plus d'une vingtaine de dispositions existantes en matière de congés fiscaux. Ce régime unique permettra donc de dissiper toute confusion et de réorienter efficacement le soutien public vers les secteurs prioritaires. Le *Premium Investor Certificate* répondra aux

investissements dans les secteurs innovants et émergents, notamment dans un contexte économique perturbé par la pandémie de la Covid-19.

Encore une fois, nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous sommes engagés dans un processus de transformation et d'accélération du développement du pays. Nous faisons ce qui est nécessaire pour y parvenir. Cela passe par la modernisation et la réforme de nos institutions. C'est ainsi que le gouvernement atteindra les objectifs pour lesquels la population l'a placé au pouvoir.

M. le président, par ailleurs, en ce qui concerne la composition du Conseil d'administration de l'*EDB*, les amendements proposés viendront augmenter et diversifier la présence de hauts fonctionnaires. Et cela dans le but d'assurer une meilleure coordination entre les ministères. Cet élargissement est non seulement souhaitable mais nécessaire. L'*EDB*, en vertu de son mandat, pilote des projets complexes, impliquant de façon croissante un grand nombre d'acteurs. La coordination entre les parties prenantes est alors essentielle à la réussite de ces projets.

En élargissant la composition du Conseil d'administration de l'*EDB*, nous améliorerons l'efficacité de l'institution et nous lui donnons tous les moyens pour remplir sa mission. Enfin, au regard de la mise en place d'un *Business Regulatory Review Council*, je tiens à souligner que cela est pleinement conforme au mandat de facilitation des affaires de l'*EDB*. Le Conseil, qui a été recommandé par des experts en matière d'examen de la réglementation, conseillera le gouvernement sur les politiques de réforme de la réglementation liée aux entreprises. Il veillera également à ce qu'il y ait la cohérence et la convergence adéquate pour un environnement commercial toujours plus favorable.

A ce titre, il est bon de rappeler aux membres de cette auguste Assemblée que l'*EDB* avait attiré des niveaux records d'Investissements Directs Etrangers avant la pandémie de COVID-19. Les efforts de l'organisation ont été considérables et ont payé. Ce n'est pas pour rien que Maurice se positionne au 13^{ème} rang mondial dans le dernier rapport *Ease of Doing Business* de la Banque mondiale. Je suis convaincu que l'*EDB* relèvera le défi une fois de plus et que nous resterons compétitifs. C'est notre ambition. Avec vigueur, détermination et perspicacité.

M. le président, il est maintenant opportun et également important de revenir quelques instants sur les modifications qui seront apportées à la *Gambling Revenue Authority Act*. En ce qui concerne les commentaires divers et variés, formulés par les membres de l'opposition,

l'honorable Premier ministre a déjà largement et très largement éclairé la Chambre sur les motivations de certains membres de l'opposition.

Permettez-moi d'emboîter le pas à ces propos et de rappeler aux honorables membres de l'opposition que depuis la publication du Rapport Parry en 2015, ce gouvernement a continuellement mis en œuvre les réformes nécessaires. Et cela, dans le but de toujours mieux encadrer l'industrie des courses hippiques. En effet, des préoccupations ont été soulevées dans le Rapport Parry concernant des allégations de corruption dans les courses de chevaux à Maurice. Nous savons bien que ce secteur d'activité fonctionne très largement sur la base de la circulation d'argent liquide, qui est donc plus difficilement contrôlable. Ce n'est un secret pour personne. Au regard des risques que cela entraîne, notamment en matière de lutte contre le blanchiment d'argent, il a été conclu que la séparation des pouvoirs au sein des courses était nécessaire.

La division des courses hippiques qui sera créée une fois le projet de loi voté, exercera ses fonctions réglementaires tandis que le *MTC* continuera à organiser les courses de chevaux. Cela va dans le sens de l'engagement pris au plus haut niveau par l'honorable Premier ministre de faire de la lutte contre le blanchiment de capitaux et le financement du terrorisme, une priorité de ce gouvernement. Je ne cerne donc pas bien la polémique que certains membres de l'opposition semblent vouloir à tout prix créer. Il faut, je le dis bien, qu'ils se ressaisissent. Il est inacceptable de les laisser jeter de la boue sur nos institutions.

Je suis tout aussi révolté par l'honorable Uteem qui abuse de l'immunité de la Chambre pour faire de graves allégations concernant la *MIC*. Le député a utilisé le mot 'pillage' alors qu'en fait, la *MIC* a, au contraire, porté assistance à des entreprises en difficulté mais vitales à notre tissu économique et social et ainsi sauvé des dizaines de milliers d'emplois. Sans le soutien de la *MIC*, la contagion du secteur bancaire à l'économie réelle aurait été dramatique. Le chaos. Voilà quel aurait été le résultat si la *MIC* n'était pas entrée en jeu.

C'est sans nul doute le souhait le plus cher de ce membre de l'opposition. Mais jamais, je le dis bien jamais, nous les laisserons piétiner les Mauriciens, leurs familles, leurs entreprises. Ils font semblant de ne pas comprendre que *MIC* investit dans plusieurs catégories de projets et que chaque catégorie possède ses propres critères d'investissement. Ils n'ont qu'à lire. C'est écrit noir sur blanc sur le site web de cette compagnie. Il y a certes le soutien aux entreprises systémiques qui ont été en difficulté en raison de la pandémie de la

COVID-19 mais à côté de ces projets, il y a également les investissements dits stratégiques et d'infrastructures. Je me demande, quel est leur degré de patriotisme.

En se prêtant à ce jeu dangereux, certains essaient coûte que coûte de semer le doute dans l'esprit de la population et aussi, des instances internationales. C'est très grave, M. le président. Très grave. Cette tentative de déstabilisation et de dé-crédibilisation est tout simplement honteuse. Ils doivent se rendre compte qu'avec de telles allégations, ils salissent la réputation de notre pays dans un moment si crucial. Alors, s'ils aiment, comme ils le prétendent, leur patrie, il est grand temps qu'ils anoblissent leurs paroles et actions.

M. le président, à ce propos, laissez-moi mettre les points sur les 'i' concernant ce qui a pu être dit lors des débats concernant les dispositifs entourant l'implémentation du Plan d'Action du Groupe d'Action Financière. Comme vous le savez, en vertu du discours du Budget 2021-2022 et du *Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021*, le *Core Group on AML-CFT (Anti-Money Laundering - Combating the Financing of Terrorism)* aura désormais force de loi sous la FIAMLA. Certains membres de l'opposition ont formulé de vives critiques à l'encontre de la composition du *Core Group*, plus particulièrement à l'encontre de certains membres du *Core Group* estimant, sans fondement, que ces derniers ne peuvent siéger sur un comité qui émet des recommandations sur des questions de politique générale.

Permettez-moi de préciser que la création du *Core Group on AML-CFT* est la traduction concrète et un signal fort de l'engagement politique de haut niveau que le gouvernement a donné au groupe d'action financière, concernant la mise en œuvre du plan d'action pour renforcer l'efficacité de notre cadre *AML-CFT*. Il est d'intérêt national que tous les responsables des institutions et agences impliquées dans l'application des lois contre le blanchiment d'argent et le financement du terrorisme soient regroupés et agissent en cohérence pour une plus grande efficacité. C'est d'ailleurs ce qu'attend le GAFI. Tandis que les membres du *Core Group* assureront leur indépendance en ce qui concerne leurs opérations respectives, ils superviseront les travaux préparatoires en vue de la sortie éventuelle de Maurice des listes du GAFI et de l'Union Européenne. Plus encore, ils assureront la viabilité à long terme de notre système d'*AML-CFT*. C'est un combat qui perdurera.

Soyez-en assurés, nous continuerons de faire évoluer notre cadre réglementaire et nos procédures pour que Maurice soit et reste une juridiction en conformité avec les standards internationaux les plus exigeants. Le gouvernement fait tout ce qui est nécessaire pour

préserver la bonne réputation de notre juridiction. C'est primordial pour assurer la durabilité à long terme du secteur des services financiers.

M. le président, j'ai entendu lors des débats un honorable membre dire que j'avais fait de la taxation, la base de la stratégie économique de ce gouvernement. Je me demande s'ils ont même parcouru le discours du Budget à tel point ils semblent loin de la réalité. C'est fascinant, bien que très inquiétant, de voir à quel point cette opposition est constamment dans l'erreur, le déni, la division. Elle veut littéralement faire croire tout et son contraire. Tout est bon pour créer la polémique et cela même aux dépens des intérêts premiers de la nation. Une partie de l'opposition a ainsi critiqué les réformes que nous apportons à l'avantage fiscal qui était accordé aux *Trusts* et Fondations en vertu de l'*Income Tax Act*. Ces mêmes membres savent certainement que le régime existant n'était plus conforme aux normes internationales. Malgré cela, cette carence n'a pas l'air de leur poser un grand cas de conscience. Et ils osent se croire en position de donner des leçons.

Par deux fois consécutives, ils ont pourtant été rejetés par le vote de la population. Le message était clair. Mais cela non plus, ils ne semblent pas l'avoir compris. Si le sujet n'était pas d'une importance stratégique pour le pays, je dirais que c'est tout simplement risible, clownesque.

L'impératif de ces réformes est toutefois clair. Il est de faire en sorte que l'imposition des *trusts* et des fondations ne soit pas dommageable et soit conforme aux meilleures pratiques recommandées. Nous, membres de la majorité, ayant été portés aux responsabilités, nous prenons toujours nos décisions à la lumière d'un arbitrage mûrement réfléchi. Et c'est bien cela qui permettra au pays de rester un centre financier à la fois attractif et respectueux des standards internationaux.

M. le président, c'est dans cette même perspective, je tiens à clarifier le fondement de l'amendement qui sera apporté à la Section 75 de l'*Income Tax Act*. Le principe de *Arm's length*, c'est-à-dire de pleine concurrence, est un principe internationalement accepté en matière d'impôt sur le revenu. Ce principe s'applique aux transactions tant locales qu'internationales. En tant que tel, le *Arm's length test* contenu dans l'*Income Tax Act*, est applicable à toute activité commerciale ou génératrice de revenus exercée à Maurice ou à partir de Maurice. Je tiens à souligner que la *MRA* a toujours appliqué ce principe à toutes les transactions. Et cela, qu'elles soient effectuées à Maurice ou à partir de Maurice.

L'amendement apporté à la Section 75 de l'*Income Tax Act* a pour but de clarifier et de renforcer cette position afin de lever toute ambiguïté qui aurait pu surgir chez certains fiscalistes quant à la portée de cette section.

M. le président, enfin il convient que j'apporte quelques précisions concernant le *Home Ownership Scheme*. J'ai à cœur de terminer mon propos en m'attardant sur cette mesure car elle touche directement aux finances et aux aspirations de nombreux Mauriciens. Elle leur permettra de réaliser plus facilement un grand projet de vie, celui de la propriété. Comme vous le savez, au travers du Budget 2021-2022, nous avons annoncé une mesure historique pour relancer la construction et le secteur immobilier dans son ensemble. Pour y parvenir, nous avons alloué un montant de R 2 milliards pour rembourser aux particuliers 5% du coût d'acquisition d'une propriété ou d'un terrain résidentiel ainsi que du coût de la construction d'une résidence dans le pays. Et cela jusqu'à un montant maximum plafonné à R 500,000. Grâce à cela, nous nous attendons à un véritable *boom* de l'immobilier.

Ce secteur deviendra prochainement l'annonceur de la réussite de notre relance économique. Pourtant, l'opposition fait encore grise mine. Ne trouvant rien à redire sur cette annonce, elle s'invente des problèmes qui n'existent pas. Elle se demande pourquoi le reversement de 5% n'est pas versé au et par le notaire au moment de la signature de l'acte de transfert. Leur argument est de dire que tout le monde n'a pas les moyens de verser la totalité de la somme au notaire le jour de la signature et qu'un tel processus entraînera des lourdeurs administratives.

La réponse à cette accusation est pourtant simple. Avant de procéder au versement des 5%, le département du *Registrar General* doit s'assurer que le demandeur remplit les conditions requises pour bénéficier de cette aide du gouvernement. En outre, et aux antipodes de ce qu'avancent ceux qui siègent de l'autre côté de la Chambre, il ne serait absolument pas pratique d'un point de vue administratif, d'effectuer le paiement chez chaque notaire pour chaque transaction avant que celle-ci ne soit effectuée. Une fois de plus, c'est de la démagogie sur le dos de la population. C'est attristant, mais cela ne fait que renforcer nos convictions. Leurs agissements sont clairement contre-productifs. Plus l'opposition se mure, plus ce gouvernement s'ouvre et œuvre pour le bien des Mauriciens, de tous les Mauriciens. Plus que jamais, nous sommes à leurs côtés, *ad vitam eternam*.

Ensemble, nous sommes en train de traverser la crise de la COVID-19. Ensemble, nous renforçons les fondations d'un modèle socio-économique robuste et inclusif. Ensemble, nous construisons un avenir meilleur pour notre pays et nos enfants.

M. le président, le projet de loi de finances que nous nous apprêtons à voter est une ode à la résilience. Porteur d'espoir, il annonce des jours meilleurs. Léon Gambetta avait dit-

« L'avenir n'est interdit à personne. »

Ces paroles n'ont jamais résonné aussi fort, aussi vrai. Ce gouvernement a fait une promesse à la nation, celle de prendre soin de tous les Mauriciens. En particulier des plus vulnérables. Nés inégaux, ils méritent pourtant les mêmes chances de réussite. C'est cela notre mission. Leur donner les moyens, peu importe leurs horizons, d'aspirer à un avenir meilleur. C'est leur droit. C'est notre devoir. Et tant que ce gouvernement, sous le leadership du Premier ministre, sera aux responsabilités, je peux vous assurer que nous ferons tout, je dis bien tout, pour leur offrir cette vie.

L'action est ce qui commande le *Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021*. C'est le *modus operandi* de ce gouvernement. Grâce au soutien de la population et des parties prenantes, il a déjà largement fait ses preuves. C'est incontestable. Nous ouvrons aujourd'hui une nouvelle page de notre récit national.

Pour conclure, permettez-moi une nouvelle fois de remercier le Premier ministre ainsi que mes collègues ministres et amis parlementaires pour leur soutien indéfectible. Je suis fier de porter à la Chambre, au travers de ce texte de loi, les réformes nécessaires à la transformation de Maurice.

M. le président, sur ces mots, je recommande maintenant le projet de loi à l'Assemblée.

Merci de votre attention.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

THE FINANCE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

(No. XIII of 2021)

Clauses 1 to 16 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 17 (Courts Act Amended).

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

Dr. Padayachy: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 17

“in clause 17, by deleting paragraph (e) and replacing it by the following paragraph –

(e) in section 198(3) –

(i) by repealing paragraphs (f) and (g) and replacing them by the following paragraphs –

(f) the electronic filing of documents and electronic service of process;

(g) the practice and procedure for mediation before any Magistrate, Judge or Court;

(ii) by adding the following new paragraphs –

(h) adjournment matters;

(i) alternate dispute resolutions before any Magistrate, Judge or Court;

(j) time limits for judgment;

(k) management of cases, including pre-trial case management;

(l) the award of any other costs in any proceedings;

(m) any other matter essential to the proper administration of justice.”

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 17, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 18 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 19 (Customs Tariff Act Amended).

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

Dr. Padayachy: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 19

“in clause 19 –

- (i) by deleting paragraph (a) and replacing it by the following paragraph –
 - (a) in section 5(1), by inserting, after the words “This section”, the words “and section 6”;
- (ii) by inserting, after paragraph (a), the following new paragraph –
 - (aa) by inserting, after section 5, the following new section –

6. Purchase of another duty exempted motor vehicle before expiry of 3 or 4 years from date of exemption.

Any person, body or organisation that has benefitted from an exemption of duty, excise duty and taxes on a motor vehicle under section 5(1)(a), (b) or (c) may be granted full or partial exemption of duty, excise duty and taxes on another motor vehicle, provided that –

- (a) (i) the 3-year period from the date he has benefitted from the exemption, in case the exemption is once every 3 years, has not expired; or
 - (ii) in any other case, the 4-year period from the date he has benefitted from the exemption has not expired;
- (b) the person, body or organisation pays the full duty, excise duty and taxes which he has benefitted from; and
- (c) the person, body or organisation complies with such other terms and conditions as may be prescribed.”

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 19, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 20 to 34 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 35 (Gambling Regulatory Authority Act Amended).

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

Dr. Padayachy: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 35—
“in clause 35 —

(i) in paragraph (e) —

(A) in the proposed new section 15A, by adding the following new subsection —

(3) The Horse Racing Division shall, in respect of administrative and policy matters, report to the Chief Executive.

(B) in the proposed new section 15B —

(I) in subsection (2), by deleting the words “shall report to the Board and”;

(II) by deleting subsections (3) and (4) and replacing them by the following subsections —

(3) At a meeting of the Horse Racing Committee, where —

(a) the chairperson is absent or unable to discharge his functions for any reason, the vice-chairperson shall chair that meeting;

(b) the chairperson and vice-chairperson are absent or unable to discharge their functions for any reason, the other members of the Horse Racing Committee

shall elect another member to chair that meeting.

(4) No person shall be appointed as a member of the Horse Racing Committee where that person had, 3 years before his appointment, any direct or indirect interest in an activity regulated under this Act.

(C) in the proposed new section 15D, in subsection (2), by deleting paragraph (d) and replacing it by the following paragraph –

(d) such international best practices as the Horse Racing Committee may approve.

(D) in the proposed new section 15E, in subsection (3)(a), by deleting the words “keep money” and replacing them by the words “pay keep money”;

(ii) in paragraph (aa), in the proposed new section 134F, in subsection (1), by deleting the word “stake” and replacing it by the words “power of decision”.”

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 35, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 36 to 37 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 38 (Income Tax Act amended)

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

Dr. Padayachy: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments at clause 38 –

“In clause 38 –

- (i) by deleting paragraph (g);
- (ii) in paragraph (an)(iii), in the proposed new subsection 71, in paragraph (a)(iii), by deleting the words “income years” and replacing them by the words “income year”;

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 38, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 39 to 58 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 59 (National Payment Systems Act 2018 amended)

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

Dr. Padayachy: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 59

—
“Clause 59 was amended, by inserting, after paragraph (a), the following new paragraph –

(aa) in section 3 –

- (i) in subsection (1)(b), by deleting the words “the Central Depository & Settlement Co. Ltd established under the Securities (Central Depository, Clearing and Settlement) Act” and replacing them by the words “an Official Clearing and Settlement Facility under the Securities Act”;
- (ii) in subsection (2), by deleting the words “the Central Depository & Settlement Co. Ltd established under the Securities (Central Depository, Clearing and Settlement) Act” and replacing them by the words “an Official Clearing and Settlement Facility under the Securities Act”;

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 59, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 60 to 76 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 77 (Registration Duty Act amended)

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

Dr. Padayachy: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 77

—

“In clause 77 –

- (i) in paragraph (b)(ii), by deleting the words “or the Invest Hotel Scheme,” and replacing them by the words “, or the Invest Hotel Scheme”;
- (ii) in paragraph (e), in the proposed new subsection (5), in paragraph (f)(ii), by deleting the words “1 June 2021” and replacing them by the words “1 July 2021”;

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 77, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 78 to 96 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 97 (Commencement)

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

Dr. Padayachy: Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 97

“In clause 97 –

- (i) in subsection (3) –
 - (A) by deleting the words “and (ai)” and replacing them by the words “, (ai) and (ao)(ii)(B)(IV)”;
 - (B) by deleting the words “and 92(g)” and replacing them by the words “, 84 and 92(g)”;
- (ii) in subsection (21), by deleting the words “Section 38(g), (h), (r), (s)” and “(ao)(ii)(B)(II) to (V)” and replacing them by the words “Section 38(h), (r)” and “(ao)(ii)(B)(II), (III) and (V)”, respectively;
- (iii) in subsection (26), by inserting, after the words “come into operation in”, the words “respect of the annual report as from”;
- (iv) in subsection (29), by deleting the words “Section 87” and replacing them by the words “Section 86”.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 97, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XIII of 2021) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 26 October 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

Specific Matter! Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

MATTER RAISED

(7.25 p.m.)

SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME - NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Merci, M. le président. M. le président, il y a quelques semaines de cela j'ai eu l'occasion, ainsi que certaines autres parlementaires, de participer à une conférence organisée par Mouvement d'Aide à la Maternité (MAM).

Une partie de la conférence était consacrée au syndrome du bébé secoué et de ses conséquences, qui peuvent parfois être irréversible. J'en suis sortie bouleversée et je pense ne pas en être la seule.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, d'en parler brièvement, aujourd'hui, dans cette Assemblée. Même si au départ je n'étais pas sûre si je devais m'adresser au ministre de la Santé ou à la ministre de l'Égalité du genre, car en plus des conséquences sur la santé du nourrisson, le syndrome du bébé secoué peut également être le résultat d'actes de violence

envers un nourrisson. Mais je pense, M. le président, que quand il s'agit du bien-être de la sécurité, de la santé de nos enfants mauriciens, nous pouvons travailler ensemble pour les protéger.

C'est quoi le syndrome du bébé secoué ? En anglais, le '*Shaken Baby Syndrome*.' C'est lorsqu'un adulte secoue un bébé par l'exaspération ou épuisement face à des pleurs qu'il ne supporte plus. Le plus souvent, l'adulte saisit le bébé sous les aisselles en le secouant, provoquant un ballonnement du cerveau dans la boîte crânienne, ce qui peut affecter les veines situées à la surface du cerveau. Les lésions cérébrales peuvent être graves, parfois même fatales, en particulier chez les nourrissons de moins d'un an.

Alors, moi je suis allée faire une petite recherche pour bien comprendre et savoir si vraiment cela n'est que phénomène ou est-ce que ce sont des faits, ce sont des choses qui arrivent en réalité et je me suis rendue compte que nous avons peut-être, sans réaliser, une fois dans notre vie, secoué un bébé. Nous avons essayé de le soulever juste pour jouer avec, sans savoir que pendant que ça nous faisait plaisir de jouer, de rire, ça faisait du tort à l'enfant. L'association d'un Hématome sous-dural et d'hémorragie de la rétine chez le nourrisson caractéristique de ce syndrome, a été décrite en 1930 par Sherwood mais ne sera rapportée à des secousses qu'en 1972 par Caffey qui crée le terme de syndrome du bébé secoué.

Le diagnostic n'est pas toujours fait parce que lorsque sa survient, le bébé peut conserver une apparence normale. De plus, la personne qui est l'auteur du secouement, ne le dit pas. Elle ne rapporte pas non plus les premiers symptômes. Un bébé secoué va être calmé. En fait, il n'est pas calmé. Il est juste assommé. Ensuite, apparaisse d'autres symptômes qui peuvent paraître anodins, voire pas très grave, comme vomissement ou pâleur.

M. le président, sous la correction de l'honorable ministre de la Santé, je dirais qu'il est vraiment difficile de chiffrer le nombre de bébés victimes de ce syndrome. Mais il est évident que ce phénomène existe et si nous nous basons sur des études indépendantes ayant permis de quantifier le nombre de bébés réellement secoués dans plusieurs pays, nous pouvons noter qu'aux États-Unis, un sondage réalisé par Gallup, aurait montré que 44,4% de parents secouaient leurs enfants de moins de deux ans mais la force du geste est inconnu.

Un autre sondage réalisé en Caroline du Nord et Caroline du Sud, montrait qu'environ 2,5% des bébés et des enfants étaient secoués. Au Japon, une étude a montré que 3,4% des bébés de quatre mois avaient été secoués durant le mois précédent. Le même pourcentage de bébés néerlandais de six mois avait déjà été secoué au cours de leur vie. Une étude

internationale s'est intéressée à l'incidence du secouement reconnu sur les enfants de moins de trois ans dans différents pays et les chiffres varient de 6,6% au Philippines à 42% dans les bidonvilles d'Inde en passant par 19% en Egypte.

D'après une étude de l'*UNICEF*, entre 18% et 36% des parents de différents pays d'Europe, d'Europe de l'Est, d'Asie-Centrale et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest avaient secoué leurs enfants de plus de deux ans au cours du mois précédent. Et bien sûr, nous nous posons la question : est-ce que Maurice est épargné ? Eh bien, nous nous souviendrons de ce cas très médiatisé, il y a plus d'une dizaine d'années, concernant le cas d'un bébé secoué qui avait été admis à l'hôpital et qui avait ensuite été rendu à ses parents qui l'avait ramené mort, cinq jours plus tard.

M. le président, pourquoi secoue-t-on un enfant ? C'est typiquement un geste incontrôlé de colère mais c'est aussi une véritable maltraitance donc la gravité n'est pas suffisamment perçue dans l'inconscient collectif. Au moins 200 syndromes de bébé secoué se produisaient chaque année en France et parmi eux, 10% à 40% en décèdent. Dans la majorité des cas, il s'agit des bébés de moins de six mois, plus souvent des garçons et l'adulte responsable peut être un parent ou une autre personne, amenée à garder l'enfant comme les beaux-parents, la nourrice ou la gardienne. Et la période de l'enfant en bas âge est un temps de développement social, cognitif et comportemental rapide. Le cerveau du nourrisson est immature et vulnérable aux blessures. Les très jeunes enfants peuvent être plus vulnérables aux effets des lésions cérébrales acquises que les enfants plus âgés. Il est donc important de sensibiliser les nouveaux parents et les personnes assurant la garde de leurs enfants sur les dangers et les conséquences de tel acte.

M. le président, je m'adresse ce soir au ministre de la Santé, l'honorable Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal. Et, je demande au ministre de bien vouloir mettre en place un programme de formation dont l'objectif serait de fournir aux médecins un guide pratique pour mieux repérer ce syndrome, l'enjeu majeure étant d'éviter le risque de récurrence. Nous pouvons comme par exemple, le prévenir cela en incitant les professionnels de santé à informer systématiquement tous les parents au moment de la naissance sur la gravité de ce geste et sur les moyens de l'éviter. Nous pourrions peut-être organiser des cours de formations, regroupant des professionnels des hôpitaux, des pédiatres, des psychologues, les médecins généralistes, les sages-femmes, puéricultrices. Ainsi, pourquoi pas inviter aussi à se joindre à nous le *Child Development Unit* du département du bien-être de l'enfant.

Rapprochez toutes ces institutions et travaillez ensemble afin de conscientiser la population sur les dangers du secouement. C'était mon message. Je vous remercie et je remercie le ministre de la Santé de considérer ma requête en urgence.

Merci, M. le président.

(7.32p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to the concern of the hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River, Mrs Mayotte, I wish to inform the House that the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare has confirmed that there has been no reported case of Shaken Baby Syndrome at their level. However, the Commissioner of Police has informed that for the past three years, only a case of 'Exposing a child to harm' was reported at Piton Police Station on 12 November 2020. I am informed that the police is enquiring into the case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, I wish to inform the House that, at the level of the Records Unit of my Ministry, 3 cases have been reported at the level of our public hospitals from 2018 to 2021.

Furthermore, I wish to inform the House that there has been no reported case of Shaken Baby Syndrome in the Press and I took cognisance of a Press Article by a Dr. F. L. in a weekly, last week, stating the effects of Shaken Baby Syndrome without reference to any case of Shaken Baby Syndrome in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Shaken Baby Syndrome, as reported in the literature, is the most common cause of neurological injury resulting from child abuse. It is specific to infancy, exhaustion, coupled with what seems to be never-ending crying can push the caregiver over the edge and cause harm to shake the baby or young child in anger.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a wide spectrum of clinical signs. The mildest are non-specific so that injury may never be detected. The most severe injury may present with the child being unconscious and having fits.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been given notice of this subject matter not later than last Friday. I have to seek views of the paediatricians and officers of the Gender Equality and Family Welfare as it is a social issue as well and the way forward. As we are all aware, prevention and education are better than cure.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members, I will miss you for some time.

At 7.35 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 26 October 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ANGUS ROAD, VACOAS - IMMOVEABLE PROPERTIES - ACQUISITION - INVESTIGATION

(No. B/862) 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 alleged complaint of corruption in relation to the acquisition of immoveable properties acquired by his goodself and his spouse at Angus Road, in Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police and other relevant authorities concerned therewith, information as to where matters stand as to inquiries initiated thereinto.

Reply: It is reminded that replying to several Private Notice Questions on this matter in November 2020, I did inform that the Independent Commission Against Corruption was investigating into an alleged complaint of corruption in regard to the acquisition of immoveable properties at Angus Road.

I did also point out in my replies that, prior to 2014, the ICAC had initiated two investigations into this matter, but they were subsequently discontinued. As a matter of fact, the first investigation was initiated on 15 March 2011 but was discontinued on 09 May 2011 as no evidence for offences had been disclosed under the Prevention of Corruption Act or the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act. The second investigation started on 20 October 2013 and was discontinued on 27 June 2014.

For information, I have, on 24 November 2020, made a statement to the ICAC and also produced certain relevant documents in connection with the inquiry into this matter.

The ICAC has now informed that the investigations are ongoing.

The ICAC has further informed that by virtue of section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, no information relating to any investigation can be divulged, and the exception for the disclosure of information provided for under section 81(4) of the POCA would not apply to Parliamentary Questions.

As regards the Commissioner of Police, he has informed that no complaint has been reported to the Police on this matter.

SAFE CITY PROJECT – CAMERAS – SUPPLY & INSTALLATION

(No. B/863) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Safe City Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of cameras already installed and operational
- (b) name of the suppliers thereof, and
- (c) expected completion date thereof.

Reply: In line with Government's vision of ensuring that Mauritius remains safe and secure, the Safe City Project is being implemented to provide for an integrated and advance technological system for the safeguard of national security and the enhancement of public safety. The project is a powerful and effective tool to combat crimes and also assist in more efficient traffic road safety management.

With regard to parts (a) and (c) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that, as at date, the following have been completed –

- (a) out of 4,000 Intelligent Video Surveillance cameras, 3,974 have been installed and 2,970 are fully operational;
- (b) out of 300 Intelligent Traffic Surveillance cameras, 158 have been installed and 94 are fully operational;
- (c) 4,500 multimedia radios have been delivered to officers at Police Stations/Posts, units and different branches of the Mauritius Police Force;
- (d) 350 vehicular mounted radios have been installed in Police vehicles;
- (e) 150 static radios have been installed in Police Stations;
- (f) the Main Command and Control Centre is operational as well as six Sub-Command Centres, the Traffic Management and Control Centre and the Monitoring Bays located at Police Stations. The Sub-Command Centre at Abercrombie will be operational by the end of September 2021.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that installation works for the remaining 26 Intelligent Video Surveillance cameras are in progress. Concerning the installation of the 142 Intelligent Traffic Surveillance cameras, the Mauritius Police Force is considering the deployment of these cameras over new sites. The Safe City Project is expected to be completed and commissioned by the end of September 2021.

In regard to part (b) of the question, it is reminded that the Mauritius Police Force had on 19 December 2017 signed a Lease Agreement with the Mauritius Telecom Ltd for the implementation of the Safe City Project. The Agreement includes the supply, installation and commissioning of the relevant infrastructure, tools and technologies. It also makes provision for the operation services, repairs and maintenance of the whole system by the Mauritius Telecom Ltd for a period of 20 years.

UoM - PART-TIME LECTURERS - RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

(No. B/886) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to posts of part-time lecturers at the University of Mauritius, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the recruitment procedures therefor, indicating the –

- (a) date of the last recruitment exercise therefor;
- (b) number of candidates enrolled on the system having been recruited, and
- (c) purpose of an ongoing application system created by CITS when only few candidates are enrolled through advertisement.

Reply: I have been informed by the UOM that the fields of specialisation needing part-time lecturers are posted by the Centre for Information Technology and Systems (CITS) on the Online Part-time lecturer Application System (OPAS), a web-based information system whereby potential candidates register themselves for part-time lecturing at the UOM.

In the event there is a requirement for part-time lecturers in specific/emerging fields, not available on the system, advertisements are made through the local press and on the UOM website whereby interested candidates with relevant expertise are requested to submit their application through the online system.

A selection exercise is carried out through an established procedure which involves screening of the applications of eligible candidates from the database, by a panel. The panel comprises at least two departmental members nominated by the Dean of the faculty. Thereafter a short-list of qualified candidates is made and the best ranked candidates are then convened for an interview at the faculty.

Subsequently, the interview panel submits its recommendations to the staff committee, for approval.

The recruitment of part-time lecturers is effected after having ensured that full-time academics from other departments and faculties are not available for lecturing and is normally carried out once per academic year.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I have been informed that –

- The last recruitment exercise was effected on 15 July 2021. Five (5) part-time lecturers have been recruited following advertisement – three (3) in the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, and two (2) in the Centre for Innovative & Lifelong Learning, respectively to service second semester modules for academic year 2020-2021.
- 283 candidates enrolled on the Online Part-time lecturer Application System (OPAS) have been recruited in the academic year 2020-2021.

Coming to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the purpose of the OPAS, which is open throughout the year, is to allow a maximum of potential candidates to register for part-time lecturing and to enable the University to select the best candidates in line with the established procedures to service specific module(s) as and when required by the institution.

The House will note that most of the part-time lecturers are recruited through the online system. It is only when specific expertise is not available that UOM has resort to open advertisement; as was the case for teaching of medicine.

ROSE HILL & EBÈNE - METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - EXTENSION

(No. B/887) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the extension of the Metro Express Project from Rose Hill to Ebène, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Ltd., information as to if –

- (a) the geotechnical surveys have been completed;
- (b) provisions will be made for traffic deviations, mainly around the Rose Hill area, and
- (c) an Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out and, if so, table copy of the report thereof.

Reply: This extension line is being implemented by Larsen and Toubro Ltd, under the same Engineering Procurement and Construction Turnkey contract as in the case for Phase 1 and Phase 2 for the mainline works, from Port Louis to Curepipe.

As regards to part (a) of the question, I am advised that Larsen and Toubro Ltd has already started conducting geotechnical surveys, topography surveys, conditions survey, engineering surveys, amongst others as from May 2021.

As to part (b) of the question, I am informed that Traffic Management Liaison Group has been constituted to look into issues of traffic diversion. The representatives of Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, Police, Road Development Authority, National Land Transport Authority, Metro Express Ltd, local authorities and other stakeholders sit on this Committee, which meets on a regular basis to recommend traffic diversions relating to the implementation of the Metro Express Project.

The Metro Express Project has been delisted from the requirements of an EIA license. However, Larsen and Toubro Ltd will provide an Environment Management Plan before the start of the construction works.

ROSE HILL MARKET – RECONSTRUCTION

(No. B/888) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed reconstruction of the Rose Hill Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: The existing Rose Hill market, which dates more than sixty years, is a very old one and in view thereof, active consideration is being given to the reconstruction thereof.

The Metro Express Project has given rise to the opportunity for the development of a modern and integrated urban terminal at Place Cardinal Jean Margéot and thereby re-dynamising the Town Centre of Rose Hill.

In this context, and in view of the restricted extent of the Rose Hill bus station, it has been decided that, the plots of land housing the Rose Hill market, the Da Patten Fair as well as the new Arab Town would also be included in the Request for Proposals for the development of the Rose Hill Urban Terminal. Such an inclusive concept of development would be the preferred option for the Rose Hill Urban Terminal Project.

The requirements for the new market are being worked out in collaboration with the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill.

The Request for Proposals document is presently being fine-tuned in consultation with all stakeholders and, once finalised, it will be launched.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES – CASH GRANTS

(No. B/889) 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.

Reply: In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, my Ministry has adopted a new policy with regard to the provision of assistive devices to eligible beneficiaries, that is, the provision of cash grants instead of assistance in kind.

This new policy is being implemented by my Ministry since June 2021. A Press Communiqué dated 03 June 2021 was issued to inform the public of this new policy.

As far as the regulation of the prices of assistive devices is concerned, this is not within the mandate of my Ministry.

ADOPTION BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/891) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of an Adoption Bill in the Assembly, she will state where matters stand.

Reply: As the House is aware, Mauritius acceded to the Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Hague Convention) in 1998, with the Hague Convention entering into force in 1999. Mauritius is also State Party to key international treaties to protect the rights of children, including the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as the Optional Protocol to the CRC on prostitution and child pornography.

There is the need to domesticate our legislations to be in line with the provision of the Hague Convention.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare obtained technical assistance from European Union (EU) for the review of the existing National Adoption Council Act 1987.

In June 2018, a draft of the proposed Adoption Bill was submitted by the EU Consultant. In view of the far-reaching implications of the provisions of the proposed Bill, a technical committee under the Chair of the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry has been set up to look into the administrative and procedural aspects of the draft Bill and to make appropriate recommendations.

The approval of Cabinet will be sought once the technical committee finalises its recommendations prior to giving drafting instructions to the Attorney General's Office.

MITSUI OSK LINES – CHARITABLE TRUST

(No.B/892) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the charitable trust established in Mauritius by Mitsui OSK Lines with funds to the tune of USD 9.42 million, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to how same will be used.

Reply: The Mitsui O.S.K Lines Charitable Trust is a private Trust established under the Trusts Act 2001 and, therefore, not governed by any Ministry.

SELECTED NATIONAL HERITAGE SITES – COMMITTEES

(No. B/893) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Committee set up to engage

in discussions with the private sector to advise on the restoration, preservation, promotion and management of selected national heritage sites, he will state the composition thereof, indicating –

- (a) their respective qualifications and experience, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the inclusion therein of Non-Governmental Organisations and benevolent and other social initiatives actively involved in the restoration, preservation, promotion and management of national heritage sites and, if not, why not.

Reply: The Committee to be set up at the level of my Ministry, with the purpose to engage with the private sector for the restoration, preservation, promotion and management of National Heritage Sites, will be composed as follows –

- (i) Permanent Secretary of my Ministry as Chairperson;
- (ii) Senior Officers of my Ministry, and
- (iii) representatives from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA), Association of Hoteliers and Restaurants in Mauritius (AHRIM), Business Mauritius and National Heritage Fund (NHF).

Additionally, other private organisations such as NGOs, other Ministries and Departments will be co-opted as and when required.

With regard to paragraph (a) of the question, the qualifications and experience would be based on the terms of reference of the Committee, which will be to *inter alia* advise my Ministry on the following –

- (i) selection of the most appropriate national heritage sites to be restored and preserved in the short, medium and long term;
- (ii) elaboration of an appropriate concept for the development of selected national heritage sites;
- (iii) development of an appropriate mechanism for the management of the national heritage sites after restoration;
- (iv) elaboration of an aggressive marketing strategy to promote the national heritage sites after restoration;

- (v) development of an appropriate public-private partnership model to look after specific national heritage sites;
- (vi) identification of sources of funding from the public and private sectors;
- (vii) identification of NGOs and other private organisations for the restoration and management of specific national heritage sites;
- (viii) development of a cultural and heritage trail encompassing various national heritage sites;
- (ix) development of an appropriate business model to generate revenues from the rehabilitated national heritage sites;
- (x) development of a mobile application on the national heritage sites of Mauritius, and
- (xi) any other related matters.

CUREPIPE - GUSTAVE COLLINS, DERBY STREET & ATLEE - SEWERAGE WORKS

(No. B/894) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the sewerage works undertaken in the region of Gustave Collins, La Rue Derby and Atlee, in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to the work progress thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ATLEE BRIDGE – RECONSTRUCTION – WORK PROGRESS

(No. B/895) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the

reconstruction of Pont Atlee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the work progress thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 17 – FLOODS

(No. B/896) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the recent floods which occurred in April 2021, in Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to the actions taken to address the causes thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MOZAMBIQUE – WAREHOUSE PROJECT

(No. B/897) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the proposed implementation of the Warehouse Project in Mozambique for the promotion of Mauritian products, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The Warehouse Project was initiated by our late High Commissioner in Mozambique, Mr Jean Pierre Jhumun.

The High Commissioner had established contact with representatives of Caixa Mulher (translated into “Women Counter”), a micro credit office which provides short term credit at low interest rates without any guarantee to some 3,000 Mozambican women entrepreneurs.

The majority of these women entrepreneurs use the credit facilities to purchase their day-to-day stocks from wholesalers and importers and thereafter sell their goods in the streets, markets and small local shops of Maputo.

The late High Commissioner identified a warehouse ideally located within 2-3 km from the Port of Maputo and near 3 important markets (Malanga Fajardo and Xipamanine).

The Warehouse would have been used as a storeroom for the Mauritian products from which entrepreneurs and other buyers could have purchased their stocks for resale.

The Warehouse would also have been used as a showroom to display Mauritian products and a venue for B2B meetings.

I wish to stress that from the moment the High Commissioner had identified the warehouse and had sent a report on the matter, the role of my Ministry in the implementation of the proposed project was one of a facilitator.

However, in view of the fact that the proposed project was in line with our Africa Strategy to sustain and promote exports of locally manufactured goods across Africa, my Ministry collaborated with the EDB to facilitate the implementation of the project.

On 11 December 2020, the EDB chaired a meeting where it was agreed that it would prepare a paper and survey forms which will be shared with operators to gauge their interest as well as their expectations regarding the warehouse project in Maputo.

With regard to Mozambique Warehousing Project, EDB took the initiative to call for an Expression of Interest in December 2020 and same was circulated through MEXA and MCCI to their members in order to assess any interest from operators. However, by the deadline of 20 January 2021, there has been no response.

On 02 February 2021, my Ministry was informed by EDB, MEXA and MCCI that no operators had responded to the expression of interest, and therefore, it was not possible to go ahead with the project in the absence of any interest on the part of the operators.

As a way forward, EDB now proposes to engage with other stakeholders such as MEXA and MCCI as well as my Ministry to explore other strategies to access the Mozambican market and to identify other African countries for the hosting of the warehousing facilities.

My Ministry has also been given to understand that EDB is currently engaged in identifying a list of products and countries for market penetration in Africa. A market readiness program is being established with a view to preparing Mauritian enterprises to understand the regional supply chain and their exigencies.

TANZANIA – SUGAR PROJECT

(No. B/898) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the proposed implementation of the Sugar Project in Tanzania, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The possibility of having a Sugar Project in Tanzania was mooted in 2017 when H.E Mr Pierre Jhumun, late High Commissioner of Mauritius in Tanzania with residence in Maputo, presented his Letter of Credence to the late President of Tanzania, Mr John Magufuli.

The late President expressed the wish that Mauritius engages into sugar plantation and the setting up of a sugar factory for the production of sugar for the local market.

The late High Commissioner subsequently initiated contacts with the Economic Development Board (EDB) and Sugar Investment Trust (SIT) Land Holdings Ltd (SITLH), a subsidiary of SIT, for the implementation of the project.

A series of meetings as well as feasibility studies carried out by SIT and site visits in Rufuji, the region where 25,000 hectares would be allocated by the Tanzanian Government to implement the project, culminated in the signing on 19 December 2019 of an MoU between the Chairman of the SITLH Ltd, Mr Gansam Boodram, and one Mr Mohamed Dewji, President of the Mohammed Enterprises Tanzania Ltd (MeTL group), Tanzania's largest home-grown company.

One of the meetings which preceded the signing of the above-mentioned MoU, as reported by the Late High Commissioner, was between the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, the hon. N. Bodha and Mr Dewji.

The late High Commissioner had informed that the late President of Tanzania had requested as a pre-condition, for the leasing of the land, that the partner of SITLH Ltd for the project in Tanzania be Mohamed Dewji.

Subsequently, at its sitting held on the 05 March 2020, the Board of SITLH Ltd decided not to go ahead with the project.

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade chaired a meeting on the issue on 10 March 2020. The meeting decided that EDB, in collaboration with SITLH Ltd, will undertake a financial feasibility study of the project. The financial feasibility study which was submitted by EDB on 01 July 2020 concluded that the project would be attractive if Mauritius could secure, in addition to the 25,000 hectares of land, a quota to import and distribute 50,000 tons of sugar in Tanzania.

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade chaired another meeting on 16 December 2020 to discuss the way forward with regard to the financial and legal structure of the project. The representatives of EDB, Regional Multi-Disciplinary Centre of Excellence (RMCE) and SITLH Ltd were present. After deliberations, the meeting agreed that a final feasibility study amounting to cost of USD100,000 would be undertaken.

Subsequently, the approval of the Cabinet was sought and obtained on 29 January 2021 for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to *inter alia* facilitate the setting up of a Mauritian company that will establish a joint venture with the Tanzanian consortium; and for the cost of the final feasibility study of the project amounting to USD100,000 to be borne by the Government, provided that the SIT forms part of the consortium if the project is found viable.

In a report dated 10 March 2021, our late High Commissioner expressed serious concerns about the structure of the two Private Limited Companies incorporated in Mauritius and Tanzania to implement the Sugar Project in Tanzania. He made a few recommendations which have been forwarded to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and to the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

I wish to inform you that the RMCE, which has also been following up on the implementation of the Sugar Project, has been informed of the concerns expressed by the late High Commissioner. Subsequently, the Chairman of the RMCE made some fresh proposals on the way forward. Given that these proposals went beyond the scope of my Ministry, they were sent to the concerned Ministries, namely the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

I wish to assure the House that the stand of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security on the Sugar Project in Tanzania will guide any follow up action of my Ministry.

RODRIGUES - YOUNG & UNEMPLOYED PERSONS - TRAINING FACILITIES

(No. B/899) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the proposed provision of training facilities to young people, he will state the measures he proposes to take in relation to those young people who would not be eligible thereto for failure to satisfy the requirement of possessing the Form 3 Certificate.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that my Ministry provides training to young and unemployed persons as well as those who require further training or skills through the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) and the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC).

My Ministry has also devised specific training programmes for those young persons who do not possess the Form 3 Certificate as follows –

- The MITD offers training programmes of National Certificate Level 2 in 12 fields, amongst others, Electrical Installation Works, Plumbing, Food Service and Production, Housekeeping, Agriculture, Light Engineer Mechanics and Art and Craft. These courses are being run in training centres around the island. Five out of twelve courses being run in Mauritius will be conducted at Le Chou Multipurpose Training Centre in Rodrigues. These courses are opened to candidates who possess a Certificate of Primary Education, now known as the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) or an alternate qualification.
- The HRDC also offers training courses to young persons under the National Skills Development Programme (NSDP) since 2016. This is an ongoing programme and it aims at fostering employment among young persons.

- I also wish to inform the House that both MITD and HRDC offer training programmes under the National Training and Reskilling Scheme to unemployed persons, including young ones, whereby the entry level for certain courses is Grade 6, thus providing ample opportunities to young persons not possessing higher qualifications to join in.

MAURITIUS SHIPPING CORPORATION LTD – BOARD COMPOSITION

(No. B/900) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)

asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the composition of the Board thereof and the name of the Managing Director thereof, indicating in each case, the salary and allowances drawn.

Reply: This is to inform the House that the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry is the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd as from 28 July 2021, pending the appointment of a substantive Chairperson. The Chairperson draws a monthly fee of Rs54,450 and the members of the Board are paid Rs3,000 per sitting. Being given that ex-officio is the Chairperson, no allowance is being paid to him.

I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly a copy of the composition of the current Board of Directors as per Section 13.1 of part IV of the Memorandum of Association of the Company.

The post of the Managing Director is presently vacant. Pending the filling of the post, Mr Rajesh Humath, Assistant Permanent Secretary of my Ministry is performing the duties of the Officer-in-Charge of MSCL on a part time basis. He is being paid a monthly allowance of Rs50,000.

I am informed that the Board of Directors of MSCL will be filling in the post of Managing Director soon.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC (PHASE 2) - PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

(No. B/901) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)

asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the procurement exercise launched in March 2021 for the supply of Personal Protective Equipment for COVID-19

pandemic Phase 2, he will state the name of the successful bidder therefor, indicating the total amount paid thereto.

Reply: I am informed that a procurement exercise was carried out through open national bidding on 08 March 2021 through the E-procurement platform for the procurement, *inter alia*, of protective items for COVID-19 (Phase 2), namely disposable overshoes, disposable caps and disposable face shields.

The closing date for this exercise was scheduled for 19 April 2021 and 36 bids were received.

Contracts for protective equipment were awarded on 02 July 2021, as follows –

- (a) Meditrade Ltd for the supply of 1,500,000 units of Disposable Overshoes for the sum of Rs1,155,000.00 (VAT excl);
- (b) Y & S Trading Co. Ltd for the supply of 1,500,000 units of Disposable Caps for the sum of Rs1,335,000.00 (VAT excl), and
- (c) AX Trading Ltd for the supply of 10,000 units of Disposable Face Shield for the sum of Rs113,900.00 (VAT excl).

As per the contract, deliveries of the first consignments are expected in early October 2021. As such, no payment has been effected yet.

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL – EVENTS & ACTIVITIES – EXPENDITURE - JUNE 2020 TO 03 AUG 2021

(No. B/902) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the National Youth Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain details of the events and activities held island-wide since June 2020 to date, indicating the total expenditure incurred in relation thereto at regional and national levels, respectively.

Reply: A list of events and activities that have been organised by the National Youth Council since June 2020, including the expenditure incurred in relation thereto, is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

