



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 26 OCTOBER 2021

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

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

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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Deputy Speaker	Hon. Mohammad Zahid Nazurally
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 30 of 2021

Sitting of Tuesday 26 October 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

OBITUARIES

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we have learnt of the demise of four former Members of Parliament –

- (i) Mr Khalid Tegally on 06 August at the age of 73;
- (ii) Dr. Satteeanund Peerthum on 22 August at the age of 80;
- (iii) Mr Premdut Doongoor on 21 September at the age of 78, and
- (iv) Mr Marie Joseph Jacques Chateau de Balyon on 25 September at the age of 70.

MR KHALID TEGALLY

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Khalid Tegally was born on 11 May 1948 in Curepipe. He attended the Champ de Lort Primary School in Port Louis and then the Islamic Cultural College. In 1969, he proceeded to London to study law and was called to the Bar in 1974.

He entered politics in 1983, joining the MMM. He contested the 1983 General Election in Constituency No. 2 - Port Louis South and Port Louis Central under the banner of the MMM. He was elected Second Member for the said Constituency.

Mr Tegally served only one mandate. In 1987, he retired from active politics and returned to his practice at the Bar. In 1990, he was appointed Senior District Magistrate in which capacity he served until 1992 when he was transferred to the State Law Office where he assumed the post of Principal State Counsel.

From 1994 to 2004, Mr Tegally served as Chairperson of the Tax Appeal Tribunal. He was appointed Chairperson of the Permanent Arbitration Tribunal in 2004. The next year, he retired from service and returned to his practice at the Bar with specialisation in tax litigation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2016, Mr Tegally was appointed Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission, a post which he occupied until his last breath. Mr Tegally found time in spite of his busy schedules to engage in social and religious activities. He was the initiator of the Muslim Family Council of which he became the first Chairperson in 1995.

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

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition!

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with regret that I have learnt of the passing of the four previous Members of this House. Therefore, I associate myself with the tribute made by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Khalid Tegally, and I also request the Clerk to convey the condolences of the Opposition to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Khalid Tegally, 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.

DR. SATTEEANUND PEERTHUM

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Dr. Satteeanund Peerthum was born on 15 March 1941 in Grand Gaube. He attended Poudre d'Or Primary School and subsequently the Darwin College in Flacq.

In 1959, Dr. Peerthum joined the Teachers' Training College in Beau Bassin and obtained his teaching licence in 1961. After his training, he worked as primary school teacher. In 1965, he proceeded to the Soviet Union to pursue university education. In 1970, he graduated as Master of Arts in History and International Relations from the People's Friendship College of Moscow. In his determination to quench his thirst for more knowledge, he decided to pursue further education in the Soviet Union. In 1973, he was awarded with a Ph.D and later became a Research Fellow at the Lenin-Marx Research Library in Moscow.

Dr. Peerthum returned to Mauritius in 1974 and joined the Bhujoharry College to teach History and Social Sciences. Four years later, he became the Head of the History Department. He entered politics in the same year and joined the MMM. He concurrently worked as Personal Assistant to the Soviet Union Ambassador to Mauritius until 1976.

He contested the 1976 General Election in Constituency No. 9 - Flacq and Bon Accueil under the banner of the MMM, but was not successful. In 1977, he became the Editor-in-Chief of '*Le Militant*' for a period of one year. He also contested the 1982 General Election in Constituency No. 15 - La Caverne and Phoenix under the banner of the MMM/PSM alliance. He was returned Second Member for the said Constituency. In April 1983, he was appointed Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations, a portfolio which he held until August 1983.

He left the MMM in 1983 to join the newly created MSM of which he was one of the founding members. He stood as a candidate for the 1983 General Election in Constituency No. 15 - La Caverne and Phoenix under the banner of the MSM/Labour Party alliance, but was not returned. In 1984, he was appointed Part- Time Adviser on International Relations Matters at the Prime Minister's Office. He concurrently held the post of Senior Research Fellow at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute. During the same period, he served as Chairperson of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund.

From 1987 to 1996, he occupied the post of Ambassador of Mauritius to the United Nations. During this period, he also served as President of the African Ambassadors Group. He was Chairperson of the United Nations Population Fund Committee in 1991.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Dr. Peerthum was a renowned senior historian who has written hundreds of articles and books on Mauritian history and international relations.

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, I again associate myself to the tribute made by the hon. Prime Minister to late Dr. Peerthum. May I also request the Clerk to convey the condolences of the Opposition to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to the memory of late Dr. Satteeanund Peerthum, 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.

MR PREMDUT DOONGOOR

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Premdut Doongoor was born on 23 October 1943 in Triolet. He attended the Dhaneswok Seewraz Government School and the New College of Port Louis and the Port Louis High School. He was later awarded a Diploma in Cooperatives by Dahomey University of Benin.

In 1966, Mr Doongoor showed an interest in politics by joining the PMSD. He contested the 1970 by-election in the Constituency of Pamplémousses and Triolet, but was unsuccessful.

In 1972, he took employment as a Hindi Teacher in a Primary School. From 1974 to 1976, he held the post of Inspector at the Development Works Corporation.

In the 1976 General Election which he contested under the banner of the Independence Party in Constituency No. 11 - Vieux Grand Port/Rose Belle, he was returned as Third Member. From March 1977 to December 1981, he held the post of Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Power, Fuel and Energy.

In 1982, Mr Doongoor ran for the General Election in Constituency No. 6 - Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or under the banner of *L'Alliance Nationale*, but was not elected.

In 1984, he occupied the position of Plant and Transport Coordinator at the Development Works Corporation.

He contested the 1987 General Election in Constituency No. 6 - Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or under the banner of *Mouvement Travalliste Socialiste* but was once more unsuccessful. In the same year, Mr Doongoor joined the Dresswell Knits/Textile Industry as Chief Executive Officer.

Mr Doongoor ran for the 1995 General Election in Constituency No. 6 - Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or under the banner of *Mouvement Militant Socialiste Mauricien* but was not returned. Mr Doongoor was once more unsuccessful in the 1998 by-election in Constituency No. 9 - Flacq and Bon Accueil.

Mr Doongoor made a last attempt in 2005 General Election in Constituency No. 5 - Pamplémousses and Triolet under the Banner of *Top Dhamaka Vrai Rouge* but was not returned.

Mr Doongoor served as Ambassador from February 2007 to August 2011 in Ethiopia and from January 2012 to January 2015 in Malaysia.

Mr Doongoor was also known as a social worker.

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

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I, once again, associate myself to the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Premdut Doongoor. May I also request the Clerk to convey the condolences of the Opposition to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Premdut Doongoor, 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.

MR MARIE JOSEPH JACQUES CHASTEAU DE BALYON

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Marie Joseph Jacques Chateau de Balyon was born on 03 April 1951 in Rose Hill.

After his secondary education, he went on to tertiary education and was awarded a diploma in Accounting by the London Chamber of Commerce. He later took employment in the Sugar Industry where he had a fulfilling career as Accountant.

Since his very young age, he had a passion for politics. He chose to join the PMSD. In 1987, he contested the General Election in Constituency No. 19 - Stanley and Rose Hill, a region where he grew up. However, he was not returned.

In 1991, he contested the 1991 General Election under the banner of the Labour Party/PMSD alliance but was not elected. At some point in time, he left the PMSD and joined the Labour Party.

In 1995, he contested the General Election under the banner of the Labour Party and MMM alliance and was elected Second Member. In 1996, Mr Chateau de Balyon was appointed Junior Minister at the Ministry of Finance. In July 1997, after the departure of the MMM from the Government, he was appointed Minister of Tourism and Leisure, which portfolio he held until September 2000. He did not contest the 2000 General Election and took employment at the Circus Advertising as Administrative Director.

In 2006, he was appointed Ambassador in France with accreditation to Italy, Portugal, Spain as well as the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* and UNESCO, a post which he occupied until 2014.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Jacques Chateau de Balyon wrote a book entitled "*Le Coeur de Solange*" dedicated to his mother - whom he lost when he was only six years old - and to his family.

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

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I associate myself to the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Jacques Chateau de Balyon, with whom I had the occasion to work closely for a number of years. May I request the Clerk to convey the condolences of the Opposition to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Jacques Chateau de Balyon, 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.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Office of the President

The Annual Report 2020-2021 of the Ombudsperson for Children.

B. Office of the Speaker

The Annual Report and Audited Accounts of the Independent Commission against Corruption for the year ended 30 June 2020.

C. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

(a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills (In Original):

(i) The Offshore Petroleum Bill (No. XIV of 2021);

(ii) The Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Bill (No. XV of 2021).

(b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Human Rights Commission for the year ended 30 June 2018.

(c) The Immigration (Fee for Providing Immigration Services at a Port of Entry) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 199 of 2021)

(d) The Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) (Extension of Time During COVID-19 Period 2021) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 242 of 2021)

(e) The Firearms (Marking and Stamping of Firearms) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 250 of 2021)

**D. Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning
Ministry of Tourism**

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Tourism Authority for the year ended 30 June 2020. (In Original)

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

(a) The Annual Report 2018-2019 of the Mauritius Qualifications Authority.

(b) The Annual Report 2018-2019 of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate.

- (c) The Annual Report 2018-2019 of the Mauritius Institute of Education.
- (d) The Annual Report 2015 of the University of Technology, Mauritius.
- (e) The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Tertiary Education Commission for the period 01 July 2019 -16 January 2020.
- (f) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Mauritius Institute of Education.
- (g) The Annual Report 2017/2018 of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority.
- (h) The Private Secondary Education Authority (Board of Discipline) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 233 of 2021)
- (i) The Annual Report of the University of Mauritius for the period 01 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

F. Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management

- (a) The Local Government (Dumping and Waste Carriers) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 193 of 2021)
- (b) The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service (Fire Safety Plan and Fire Certificate) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 231 of 2021)
- (c) The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes (Naming of Public places) Amendment Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 249 of 2021)

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

- (a) The Road Traffic (Personalised Registration Mark for Motor Vehicle) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 247 of 2021)
- (b) The Africa Finance Corporation (Privileges and Immunities) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 248 of 2021)
- (c) The Annual Report and Final Account of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund for the period July 2018 - June 2019.

H. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Lotto Fund for the year ended 30 June 2020.

- (b) The Annual Report of the Civil Service Family Protection Scheme Board for the period 01 July 2019 – 30 June 2020.
- (c) The Annual Report of the Employees Welfare Fund for the Financial Year 2019-2020.
- (d) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Economic Development Board.
- (e) The Annual Report and Accounts of the Treasury Foreign Currency Management Fund for the Financial Year ended June 2019.
- (f) The Customs Tariff (Purchase of Another Duty Exempted Motor Vehicle Before Expiry of 3 or 4 Years from Date of Exemption) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 210 of 2021)
- (g) The Customs (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 211 of 2021)
- (h) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 5) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 212 of 2021)
- (i) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 5) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 213 of 2021)
- (j) The Excise (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 214 of 2021)
- (k) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 6) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 232 of 2021)
- (l) The Finance and Audit (Rodrigues Subsidy Account) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 243 of 2021)
- (m) The Finance and Audit (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 244 of 2021)
- (n) The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Resilience Fund for the years ended 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2018.
- (o) Virement Warrants - Quarter 4 (April – June 2021) Nos. 42 and 44 to 160. (In Original)
- (p) Virement (Contingencies) Warrants - Quarter 4 (April - June 2021): Nos. 16 to 18. (In Original)

- (q) Virement Retrospective Warrant - Quarter 4 (April - June 2021): Nos. 161 to 162. (In Original)
- (r) Virement Certificates - Quarter 4 (April - June 2021): Vote/Sub-Head (Certificates Nos.): 1-1(9), 1-5(3-5), 1-6(5-9), 1-8(1-5), 1-9(2), 1-10(4-7), 1-11(2), 1-12(4-5), 1-15(5-11), 1-18(1-2), 2-1(12-15, 19), 2-107(3-5), 2-2(2-6), 2-3(4-9), 2-5(5-29), 2-10(3-6), 3-1(20, 24-25, 28,30-31), 4-1(8-11), 5-1(5,6), 5-2(5), 5-3(2-5), 5-4(4-14), 6-1(5-8), 7-1(7-9, 11, 13-17, 19), 7-2(7-9, 12), 7-4 (2-5), 7-5 (2-4), 8-1(6-9), 8-2(4-5), 9-1(4-13), 9-2(2-4), 10-2(12-28), 11-1(7-22), 11-102(3-12), 11-104(10-16), 12-102(6-8), 12-105(3, 4, 7, 8), 13-1(5-11), 14-1(7, 8, 10, 11-13, 14A, 15), 15-1(1-2, 4, 6), 15-2(3-4), 15-3(5), 15-4(3-5), 16-1(10-13, 15, 17), 18-1(6-14), 18-2(4), 19-1(6-21), 19-103(6-11), 20-1(5-7), 23-1(2-11), 23-2(1), 24-1(5-7, 9), 27-1(5, 6, 10, 12, 18). (In Original)
- (s) Virement Warrants - Quarter 1 (July – September 2021): Nos. 1-3. (In Original)
- (t) Virement (Contingencies) Warrants - Quarter 1 (July - September 2021): Nos. 1 and 2. (In Original)
- (u) Virement Certificates - Quarter 1 (July - September 2021): Vote/Sub-Head (Certificates Nos.): 1-2(1), 1-7(1), 1-15(1), 2-106(1), 3-1(1), 4-1(1-2), 5-1(1), 5-4(1-3), 7-5(1-2), 8-1(3), 16-1(1), 16-103(1), 18-101(2), 18-102(1), 19-1(1), 19-2(2).
- (v) Carry-Over Warrant (No. 1 of 2021) (In Original)

I. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

- (a) The Annual Report 2018-2019 of the Central Electricity Board.
- (b) The Annual Report 2019/2020 of the Wastewater Management Authority.
- (c) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Utility Regulatory Authority.
- (d) The Energy Efficiency (Registration of Energy Auditors) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 235 of 2021)

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

- (a) The Annual Reports of the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (NCRD) for the periods: (i) July 2009 to December 2010 (ii) January to December 2011 (iii) year 2013; and (iv) year 2015. (In Original)
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Pensions Fund for the year ended 31 December 2011.
- (c) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Pensions Fund for the year ended 31 December 2012.
- (d) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Pensions Fund for the year ended 31 December 2013.
- (e) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Pensions Fund for the year ended 31 December 2014.
- (f) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Pensions Fund for the 18-month period ended 30 June 2016.
- (g) The National Pensions (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 204 of 2021)
- (h) The National Pensions (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 205 of 2021)
- (i) The National Pensions (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 3) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 206 of 2021)
- (j) The National Pensions (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 4) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 207 of 2021)
- (k) The National Pensions (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 5) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 208 of 2021)
- (l) The Social Aid (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 218 of 2021)

K. Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives

- (a) The Mauritius Standards Bureau (Certification Mark) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 201 of 2021)

- (b) The Mauritius Standards Bureau (National Management Systems Certification Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 202 of 2021)
- (c) The Annual Report and Audited Statements of Accounts of the St Antoine Planters Co-operative Trust for the Financial Year 2019/20.

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

The Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 258 of 2021)

M. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

- (a) The Annual Report 2020 of the Insurance Industry Compensation Fund.
- (b) The Financial Services (Crowdfunding) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 219 of 2021)
- (c) The Financial Services (Consolidating Licensing and Fees) (Amendment No. 4) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 220 of 2021)
- (d) The Securities (Exemption) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 221 of 2021)
- (e) The Financial Services (Funeral Scheme Management) (Amendment) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 222 of 2021)
- (f) The Securities (Real Estate Investment Trusts) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 223 of 2021)
- (g) The Securities (Preferential Offer) (Amendment No. 2) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 224 of 2021)
- (h) The Securities (Disclosure Obligations of Reporting Issuers) (Amendment) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 225 of 2021)
- (i) The Annual Report 2018-2019 of the Financial Services Commission.
- (j) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Financial Services Commission.

**N. Attorney General
Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security**

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit and the Annual Report on the Law Reform Commission for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (b) The Annual Report 2019/2020 of the Sugar Insurance Fund Board.

- (c) The Food (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 191 of 2021)
- (d) The Forests and Reserves (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 197 of 2021)
- (e) The Sugar Insurance Fund (Reduced General Insurance Premium) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 203 of 2021)
- (f) The Legal Fees and Costs (Amendment) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 226 of 2021)
- (g) The District, Industrial and Intermediate Courts (Amendment) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 227 of 2021)
- (h) The Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 238 of 2021)
- (i) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden Trust for the 18-month period ended 30 June 2017. (In Original)

O. Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Youth Council for the year ended 30 June 2020. (In Original)

P. Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development

- (a) The Construction Industry Development Board (Collaboration between Foreign and Local Consultants) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 251 of 2021)
- (b) The Construction Industry Development Board (Collaboration between Foreign and Local Contractors) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 252 of 2021)
- (c) The Construction Industry Development Board (Registration of Consultants and Contractors) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 253 of 2021)
- (d) The Construction Industry Development Board (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 254 of 2021)

Q. Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation

- (a) The Annual Report 2020 of the Data Protection Office.
- (b) The National Computer Board (Certificate of Authority) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 190 of 2021)

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

- (a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 21) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 189 of 2021)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 22) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 192 of 2021)
- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 23) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 198 of 2021)
- (d) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 215 of 2021)
- (e) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 24) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 216 of 2021)
- (f) The Consumer Protection (Price of Observatory Committee) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 229 of 2021)
- (g) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 25) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 234 of 2021)
- (h) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 26) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 236 of 2021)
- (i) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 27) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 255 of 2021)
- (j) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 28) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 256 of 2021)
- (k) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 29) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 257 of 2021)

- (l) The Mauritius Qualification Authority (Approval of Non-Award Courses for Employers) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 259 of 2021)
- (m) The Mauritius Qualification Authority (Training Institutions) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 260 of 2021)
- (n) The Annual Report 2017/2018 of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD).
- (o) The Toys (Safety) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 262 of 2021)

S. Ministry of Health and Wellness

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (b) The COVID-19 (Quarantine) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 187 of 2021)
- (c) The COVID-19 (Restriction of Access to Specified Institutions) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 188 of 2021)
- (d) The COVID-19 (Restriction of Access to Specified Institutions, Places and Premises) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 194 of 2021)
- (e) The COVID-19 (Restriction of Access to Specified Institutions, Places and Premises) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 195 of 2021)
- (f) The COVID-19 (Self-Confinement) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 196 of 2021)
- (g) The COVID-19 (Quarantine) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 200 of 2021)
- (h) The COVID-19 (Horse Race Meeting at Champ de Mars) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 209 of 2021)
- (i) The COVID-19 (Horse Race Meeting at Champ de Mars) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 217 of 2021)
- (j) The COVID-19 (Closing Down of Premises and Restriction of Activities) (No. 3) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 228 of 2021)

- (k) The COVID-19 (Closing Down of Premises and Restriction of Activities) (No.3) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 230 of 2021)
- (l) The COVID-19 (Self-Confinement) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 237 of 2021)
- (m) The Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccines for Emergency Use) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 239 of 2021)
- (n) The COVID-19 (Restriction of Access to Specified Institutions, Places and Premises) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 240 of 2021)
- (o) The COVID-19 (Horse Race Meeting at Champ de Mars) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 241 of 2021)
- (p) The Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 245 of 2021)
- (q) The Quarantine (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 246 of 2021)
- (r) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 261 of 2021)
- (s) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 263 of 2021)

T. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements and the Annual Report of the National Children's Council for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (c) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Women's Council for the period ended 7 March 2018.

U. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

- (a) The Annual Report of the Chinese Speaking Union for the Financial Year 2018 to June 2019.

- (b) The Annual Report of the Hindi-Speaking Union for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (c) The Annual Report of the National Library for the period 01 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.
- (d) The Annual Report and Financial Statements 2019/2020 of the Tamil Speaking Union.
- (e) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Sanskrit Speaking Union for the period 31 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

V. Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

The Annual Report 2019/2020 of the Public Officers' Welfare Council.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – PCR TESTS & COVID RELATED DEATHS

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic in Mauritius, he will state the number of –

- (a) PCR tests effected by his Ministry on the local population since 01 October 2021 to date, indicating the number thereof found positive;
- (b) fully vaccinated persons having died from COVID-19 and those admitted to public hospitals, indicating which vaccine had been administered to them, and
- (c) COVID-19 positive persons having died and where the cause of death has been attributed to some other comorbidity.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to seize this opportunity to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for giving me yet another occasion to enlighten the House and the whole population in relation to the COVID-19 situation.

This PNQ will give me the opportunity to provide information on all actions taken by my Ministry as well as Government since the closing of borders, partial resumption of economic activities, vaccination and, finally opening of borders as from 01 October 2021.

Mr Speaker Sir, I also wish to express my sincere condolences to the families of victims of the COVID-19. I wish to put on record the unflinching support and involvement of the hon. Prime Minister since the onset of the pandemic. In fact, the hon. Prime Minister has himself been chairing the daily meetings of the High-Level Committee on COVID-19 set up since January 2020 to take stock of the situation worldwide and in Mauritius and take decisions on important measures to be implemented to curb the proliferation of the virus in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will be glad to note that more than 280 meetings of the High-Level Committee under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister have been held on a daily basis since the beginning of the pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (a) of the question, the number of PCR tests from 01 October to 24 October 2021 in the community, from incoming Mauritian passengers and from private clinics stands at 47,855 and are as follows –

- (i) Central Health Laboratory – 5,868;

- (ii) Airport Laboratory – 25,212;
- (iii) Novalab – 6,327, and
- (iv) Wellkin – 11,819.

The number found positive from 01 October to 24 October 2021 in the community stands at 1,738.

Mr Speaker Sir, in the beginning of the pandemic, the strategy was to contain the virus by preventing its spread in the community. Thus, random testing was being done routinely to detect the presence of the virus.

Upon detection of any positive case, contact tracing was established, contacts were identified and kept in quarantine centres.

Moreover, targeted testing was also being carried out in regions or localities where several positive cases were reported.

Mr Speaker Sir, we have now reached a point where vaccination against COVID-19 is the only solution. In fact, it is the game changer. Thanks to the prompt actions taken to procure vaccines and the population who responded positively to the vaccination campaign, within a short lapse of time, we have been able to vaccinate a large number of our adult population.

Mr Speaker Sir, as the House is aware, our original target as per the Vaccination and Deployment Plan was to vaccinate 60% of the adult population by the end of September 2021. We have achieved this target well ahead and 60% of the adult population had been vaccinated by mid-August 2021.

Given the high percentage of vaccination achieved, the country has been able to open its borders in phases and as from 01 October 2021, the country is open to the world. In fact, on the first day of opening of our borders, the rate of vaccination was 64.2%, more than the targeted 60%.

Mr Speaker Sir, let me now give some clarifications regarding the Rapid Antigen Tests. We have already fully vaccinated more than the targeted 60% of our population and have reached 67% of the population fully vaccinated. Several regulations have been promulgated to ensure various sanitary measures to be taken to further prevent the spread of the disease.

We are no longer in 2020. As everyone is aware, in 2020, the recommendation of WHO was ‘Testing, Testing and Testing’. However, in 2021, the recommendation of WHO and the international community is vaccination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the successful vaccination campaign, we have moved from the strategy of containment and we are now focusing on providing treatment and care to symptomatic cases. We have moved from quarantine to isolation. These actions are scientific-based with the evidence of all our experience we had.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to inform the House that for the same period, that is, from 01 October 2021 to 24 October 2021, my Ministry has effected 44,838 Rapid Antigen Tests, out of which 12,026 have been found positive.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the WHO recommendations and guidance on diagnostics testing for SARS-COV-2, I quote –

“While recommended response activities are the same for probable and confirmed cases, testing of probable cases, where resources allow, is useful since it can exclude cases and reduce the burden required for isolation and contact tracing.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, rapid testing has been effected on asymptomatic persons attending the flu clinics and hospitals for other treatments and procedures and positive persons of Rapid Antigen Tests have been advised to self-isolate under the monitoring of doctors of the Domiciliary Monitoring Unit.

I wish to inform the House that following the phasing out of the quarantine centres, my Ministry enlisted the services of 34 Medical Practitioners of the Domiciliary Monitoring Unit (DMU), on a 4-month contract basis, to effect domiciliary visits to patients tested positive in isolation. The DMU has started its operation since 02 September 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the transmissibility rate of persons tested positive with Rapid Antigen Tests is very low. In fact, 98% of persons tested positive with RATs are asymptomatic. Hence, the question of treatment or recovery of these persons does not arise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the number of fully vaccinated persons having died of COVID-19 from 01 October to 24 October 2021 stands at 16. Amongst those, 15 were fully vaccinated and tested COVID-19 positive and were

admitted to public hospitals. Two were admitted at Victoria Hospital, one at SSRN Hospital, one at Dr. Bruno Cheong Flacq Hospital and 11 at ENT Hospital. No fully vaccinated COVID-19 positive patient was admitted at J. Nehru Hospital and Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital.

As the House is aware, Mauritius benefitted from donations or from procured vaccines such as Sinopharm, COVI-SHIELD, COVAXIN, AstraZeneca, Sputnik V, Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer BioNTech.

In the interest of time, I am tabling the list of fully vaccinated persons having died from COVID-19 from 01 October to 24 October 2021 and the number of persons fully vaccinated and having been admitted to public hospitals with the specific vaccines administered to them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, since 01 October 2021 to date, there have been 47 persons who had been tested positive to COVID-19 but whose deaths are attributed to other comorbidities.

In fact, the cause of death of these persons is as follows –

• Cancer patients	3
• Cardiac patients	17
• Diabetes	6
• Hypertension (HBP)	2
• Skull fracture	1
• Renal disease	16
• Cervical mass	1

Mr Speaker, Sir, I make an earnest appeal to the House to understand and appreciate the paradigm shift this Government has made in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic from containment of infection to a successful vaccination programme and to a new normal under a constant surveillance system ranging from prevention to treatment.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, first, I would like to ask the hon. Minister the number of PCR tests he has done averaged about 244 tests per day in October. This compares to about 5,000 to 6,000 tests that the Ministry was doing. I am talking only about local communities because the Minister gave lots of other figures. I am talking about local

communities. Local communities, you were doing 5,000 tests at least in July; you have reduced this to 250 only per day. Why is that?

Dr. Jagutpal: The reason is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. I pointed out how the vaccination is the solution for COVID-19. Obviously, we have reached a vaccination target of more than 60% to 65% and we have also seen how many PCR tests we have been conducting. As you rightly pointed out, 5,000 to 6,000 tests being done. We have people being quarantined and of all of those tests being done, the majority - should I not say 100% of the tests - was negative. Obviously, the Government has to focus on vaccination, and vaccination has brought that result and we have the results now that vaccination has changed everything, from testing to now focusing on those who are not tested, to focusing on those who are symptomatic. This is the paradigm shift. This is what I want to explain to the whole population and I have been explaining it on a weekly basis at the Press briefing of the National Communication Committee.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has given us a figure of 1,738 positive cases out of the PCR tests. Why is this figure not published?

Dr. Jagutpal: PCR tests of ...

Mr X. L. Duval: October.

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, these PCR tests are being published. All PCR tests, Mr Speaker, Sir, are being published. We always publish the confirmed PCR tests.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are hundreds of discrepancies between what has been published by the Ministry for October and the figure that he has just given to this House. Is he aware of that? It is easily calculated. There are hundreds of people who do not show up from one list to the other. Yet, it is produced everyday by your Ministry.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will take the first part of the question. All PCR positive tests, be it from the Private Lab, Wellkin, NovaLab, be it from the airport being tested positive, be it from the Candos Hospital, from the Central Health Laboratory, they are all being communicated by the proper communicating channel. I invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition to give me the figures and then we will compare.

Mr X. L. Duval: He publishes this every day and this figure shows, for instance –

- Saturday 23 October: 74 people.

This figure, as what he is saying, includes everyone; the labs, the airport, everyone. Yet, the figure that you have given for only local community is far higher than the figure that you have given for October. I will not fight with the figures, you check it and you come back later, please, because this is not right. You must tell everything to the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now let me come to the Rapid Antigen Test. 12,000 people in Mauritius have been tested positive by Rapid Antigen Test since October. Now, we know that 99% accuracy of Rapid Antigen Test. Why is the 12,000 figure not published anywhere by the Ministry and is not included in this 1.32% of population infected that is again published by your Ministry every day? Why do you exclude the 12,000 positive persons tested by Rapid Antigen Test?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will again come back with the data that has been published. The information is that beSafeMoris includes PCR test, not Antigen Test, and not Wellkin and private and airport lab. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has its publication in the Government Information System. This is where you get the right figures. This is the first part of the question.

Now, about the Rapid Antigen Test, I explained it clearly. The Rapid Antigen Tests are all 98% asymptomatic cases. We have to focus...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Dr. Jagutpal: We have to focus on symptomatic cases. This has been, not only for Mauritius, the practice of many other countries. Even in the future, you will reach a point where we will not even publish the number of people being vaccinated, we are not going to publish the number of cases detected, but we will keep on publishing the data for the death. We have to make that shift. And we know very well, Rapid Antigen Tests being tested positive, they are asymptomatic persons, they do not require any treatment, they have been staying at home and they have no intervention. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the reality of being tested positive. We should be asking the question: why we are having Rapid Antigen Tests positive and without symptoms? The answer is vaccination! Vaccination allows...

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

Dr. Jagutpal: Vaccination has allowed us to reach this point and this is what every country is willing to achieve. Every country is willing to achieve vaccination so as to protect the population. This is the final result. The final result, whether a country is not...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me complete. I will complete it in 30 seconds. This is the answer for Rapid Antigen Test. Now, if this country would not have vaccinated its population, if this country would not have put all the sanitary measures of precaution, there would have been many Rapid Antigen Tests turning out to be positive on PCR tests and being symptomatic. The situation would be completely different. This is a paradigm shift and this is the way forward.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like the hon. Minister to be gracious. We are sitting after three months! The population is dying to have some information. Please try to be succinct in your replies.

I maintain, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this figure includes all the tests and not just local tests.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, if that is the case that you do not believe in showing how many people have been infected, why does this bottom here mislead the population by saying “*pourcentage de la population infectée: 1.32%*,” when we know that only for the month of October, you had excluded 12,000 people from that? Because it says: “*pourcentage de la population infectée,*”; *pas pourcentage de la population symptomatique!* You see what I mean, Mr Minister? So, you are misleading; you, your Ministry are misleading the House with this figure! Change it, because we do not believe it. It is inaccurate from what you have said yourself.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a fact! This is my question. I have asked you the question...

(Interruptions)

Can you ask this stupid - this guy to stop interrupting?

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Stupid is parliamentary, I believe! It was used last time!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: The hon. Prime Minister used it last time!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: You will remember!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I have been patient with you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay.

Mr Speaker: After a reply, you make a statement. I had it on two occasions. You come with your question and still you want to...

Mr X. L. Duval: What do you want me to do? I am being interrupted!

Mr Speaker: Please bear with your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister. My question is very clear: it asks how many people died; how many people were admitted to hospital whilst being fully vaccinated. Now, this is not the reply that you have given, hon. Minister! You have only given the figure of the people who died; that is not the question that I asked.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is again only coming to put questions on figures. I will again reiterate my answers. They are based on facts. They are based on scientific evidence. And what he calls infected, that is what we are, in fact, reporting. Patients who are not infected, I will just give you an example. Someone tested rapid antigen positive and being called to self-isolate, we do the testing around because the family members all have to stay at home because one family member is tested positive and in nearly all the cases, the infectibility, that is, the transmissibility from someone who is tested rapid antigen positive to the other members of the family or to the place of work, is negligible. We have to stand, we have to admit; I believe that he will understand that we have to admit. How do we reach this? It is the vaccination because now, nearly 90% of the adult population is vaccinated. Everyone now is protected, has immunity and obviously, that does not give the real picture.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my question to the House is: should we only have the number of cases reported or it is very important to give the number of cases admitted; the number of cases being symptomatic; the number of cases being in ICU, and the number of deaths reported?

The Ministry of Health and Wellness believes that these are the important figures and we should not dilute these important figures. We are going in the right direction and giving the important figures and not just diluting it in the figures.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I remind the hon. Minister that today itself, and yesterday also, people who went to do the Rapid Antigen Test came home or were sent home and died! So, that is also important to tell us how many positives there are in a Rapid Antigen Test. You just have to refer to the families of people who have died in the last few days at home, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister ...

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, should I be given the opportunity to reply to this question...

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

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute!

Dr. Jagutpal: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the right to answer this. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition has the name of the patient who has gone to a testing centre and was sent back home, this is clearly a medical negligence. And I invite him to come with a complaint to the Ministry of Health and Wellness. You have to come with a complaint because this is a medical negligence. I agree with you! I totally agree with him ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: If someone has reached a COVID test centre and sent back home and passed away at home, I am inviting him to give that in writing and I will definitely instruct my Ministry to conduct whatever be the procedures for a case of alleged medical negligence.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: There is medical negligence and that it should be reported to you, that is a good sign.

Dr. Jagutpal: Bien sûr!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, this again shows up here, in terms of people dying having been vaccinated. Sinopharm is top of the list; it is not so surprising because many Mauritians have had Sinopharm. But I would expect the rest of the figures from the hon. Minister in due course, according to my question.

Now, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of studies done by Columbia University, many studies that have shown that Sinopharm as a vaccine is far less effective, sometimes three or four times less effective than AstraZeneca and, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like him to say whether he is aware of that and why now the third dose that is being offered to Sinopharm vaccinated persons is again Sinopharm, and whether he should not do as many other countries, that is, provide another vaccine to Sinopharm vaccinated persons.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the decision to do a third dose is obviously the decision that the vaccination campaign has to be ongoing because vaccines are not going to point out which vaccine does what, but, at the same time, I am going to point out that every vaccine has a life cycle. A vaccine will produce an immunity and that immunity, with time, is going to fade away. Now, this is the job of the Vaccination Committee to decide, because they are experts. They are experts who are going to guide the Ministry on the way forward on the vaccination.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows very well how it is so difficult to get the vaccines, and we have to be thankful to the Republic of China. At this testing point of time, we have been allowed to procure the vaccines, to get the vaccines and in donations.

You are talking about the report on studies. Studies will come on time and we cannot rely on one study, on Columbia University study. Let us look for the different studies that will come up. Now, this study has been done with one group of population. We do not know what are the details, how many vaccines have been done. Let time tell us which vaccination we have to do; along with time, we have to go for another vaccination. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very wrong to criticise a country and one vaccination, and a country that has provided us a vaccine at this point of time. And now we are going to tell that this vaccination is not good? I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that has to be kept on record. We have to be thankful that that vaccination has protected our population. In fact, the majority of the population has been vaccinated with the vaccine and we, at the Vaccination Committee, we know that a booster dose with the vaccination will provide a booster immunity.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, what the hon. Minister is saying is that beggars cannot be choosers. I am tabling the study from the Columbia University.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to come to ENT Hospital where there have been many, many deaths, and half of these are not reported. What I want to ask the hon. Minister is whether he is aware that despite the hundreds of tens of deaths at least every month at ENT, there is no mortuary and bodies are left in the corridor without any dignity, and one body of a Rodriguan was even left four days in a plastic bag in the corridor of ENT Hospital. Well, I will ask the hon. Minister whether he cannot organise rapidly for a mortuary to be set up at ENT Hospital.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will take these words again: beggars are not choosers. I believe Mauritius has been putting all the efforts to get the vaccination like so many countries that have been doing so, and we were fortunate that due to our bilateral diplomatic relationship with countries, we have been able to secure vaccines, and that is what the message of the hon. Leader of Opposition for us, for our people to get vaccinated is: beggars are not choosers.

Now, I will come back to ENT. Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll just briefly come up to ENT because I know the hon. Leader of the Opposition will come up to ENT. ENT has been dedicated as a facility for patients in a critical care since March 2021 till 01 September 2021, and the number of patients admitted and discharged from...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...ENT...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Please continue!

Dr. Jagutpal: I am replying to questions addressed to me on ENT and the facilities and the success at ENT. Let me give that answer and then if the hon. Leader of the

Opposition is not agreeable, I will give more clarity. Now, the patients discharged from ENT Hospital being cured from March 2021 to 01 September is 97.6%. Now, since September 2021, I have to inform the population that only patients requiring six to eight litres of oxygen per minute and who, in spite of this oxygen flow, do not have satisfactory concentration of oxygen in their blood, are admitted to ENT. In spite of their critical situation, the recovery rate at ENT is 60.3% as compared to 64% in Europe and 42% in Saudi Arabia. Here, I wish to again send my gratitude, my congratulations to the staff of the ENT for the good work they are doing.

Concerning the mortuary, Mr Speaker, Sir, COVID-19 is not something that we have learned, we have a lot of experience and that we know everything out of it. I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. At times, it happens that there is lateness, there are delays in managing death or any other situation that may arise dealing with COVID-19 deaths, but the Ministry has kept on improving the facilities made available and I believe that since the last one or a little bit more, we do not have any issues on the mortuary service at ENT Hospital.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister this very important question. The fact that he did not pre-order for the vaccines is why we have today to deal with Sinopharm, etc. I would like to ask this question concerning...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: This is a very important question, maybe the most important, Mr Speaker, Sir. A drug called “Tocilizumab” was approved by WHO on 05 July. It is only a few days ago, mid-October that the Ministry has issued an international tender to buy this “Tocilizumab”, which is obviously very effective against COVID-19. So, why the four months delay in providing Mauritians with this much needed medicine, and why, Mr Speaker, Sir, “Malnupiravir”, which is about to be approved and extremely effective against COVID-19, has not yet been pre-ordered, just like the vaccines, by the Ministry of Health and Wellness to save hundreds of lives in Mauritius?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not know that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is a professor in treating medical cases, but thank you very much. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will invite him to form part of the medical team at ENT.

First I will come back to the pre-order. I think that repeatedly we have been answering questions on pre-order. I am not going to lose the Assembly's time over here.

The second part of the question is on that medication he has just mentioned. There is a second PQ coming on that medication. I will be replying it, unless you want me to reply it now.

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, “Remdesivir”. There is no PQ on “Tocilizumab”.

Dr. Jagutpal: There is a PQ on “Remdesivir” and ...

Mr X. L. Duval: I am talking about “Tocilizumab”.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply...

Mr X. L. Duval: ...doctor!

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, doctor!

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Minister find his way.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, so, I will give you the answer for that question also.

(Interruptions)

I was expecting that I could reply this in the second question. It will come obviously, but, now, in view of your request, I will reply to it now.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in September 2021, the clinico-biological group has recommended the procurement of “Tocilizumab” injections and eventually “Remdesivir” for the patients. The inclusion of this medication is by the clinico-biological group. We stand by the recommendation of those doctors who are working at ENT. They do the recommendation. It is not the Ministry. It is not the Minister, obviously. It is not the hon. Leader of the Opposition obviously. We stand guided by the doctors. It is not the doctors who have been treating COVID-19 cases since last year, and it is their recommendation. When they do their recommendation and the Ministry does not make available those medications, you give me that blame; I will be the first one to take that blame. But if that clinico-biological group is recommending in September and the Ministry is doing all the procedures to acquire this medication which is already being given to patients, we have to stand guided by that group of experts and doctors.

Mr Speaker: Time over by four minutes! Prime Minister’s Question Time!

(Interruptions)

No conversation! On both sides!

The Prime Minister: I was just informing him!

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO - MAURITIUS SOVEREIGNTY

(No. B/903) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the sovereignty issue of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will be aware that on Monday 25 February 2019, pursuant to a request from the United Nations General Assembly, the International Court of Justice gave an Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965.

In its Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice made it clear that the Chagos Archipelago is, and has always been, an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. In view of the illegal excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, the Court concluded that the decolonization process of Mauritius was not lawfully completed upon its accession to independence in 1968. The Court accordingly determined that the United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible and that all Member States are under an obligation to cooperate with the United Nations in order to complete the decolonization of Mauritius.

On Wednesday 22 May 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted by an overwhelming majority of 116 votes to 6, Resolution 73/295 in which it fully endorsed the findings of the International Court of Justice. In that Resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius and demanded the United Kingdom to withdraw its colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago unconditionally within a period of no more than six months, that is, by Friday 22 November 2019. The United Kingdom failed to meet that deadline.

In Resolution 73/295, the General Assembly also called upon the United Nations and all its specialised agencies, as well as all other international, regional and intergovernmental organisations, to recognize that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, to support the decolonization of Mauritius as rapidly as possible, and to refrain from impeding that process by recognising, or giving effect to any measure taken by or on behalf of, the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, more recently, on Thursday 28 January 2021, the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea gave a Judgment in the case brought by Mauritius against Maldives for the delimitation of the maritime boundary between the two States in the Chagos Archipelago region. In its Judgment, the Special Chamber overruled all the preliminary objections raised by Maldives to its jurisdiction. In so doing, it confirmed the undisputed sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago. The Special Chamber further held as follows -

- (a) the determinations made by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of Monday 25 February 2019 have legal effect and clear implications for the legal status of the Chagos Archipelago;
- (b) the United Kingdom's continued claim to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is contrary to the determinations made by the International Court of Justice that the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom from Mauritius was unlawful and that the United Kingdom's continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes an unlawful act of a continuing character;
- (c) the fact that the time limit of Friday 22 November 2019 set by the UN General Assembly for the withdrawal of the United Kingdom's administration from the Chagos Archipelago has passed without the United Kingdom complying with that demand, further strengthens the Special Chamber's finding that the United Kingdom's claim to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is contrary to the authoritative determinations made in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice;
- (d) while the process of decolonization of Mauritius has yet to be completed, the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago can be inferred from the determinations of the International Court of Justice;
- (e) the continued claim of the United Kingdom to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago cannot be considered anything more than "a mere assertion" and such assertion does not prove the existence of a dispute, and
- (f) Mauritius is to be regarded as the coastal State in respect of the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the United Nations and some of its specialised agencies have taken measures with a view to implementing UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295.

With regard to the United Nations itself, it made a formal change in February 2020 to its official map to clearly show the Chagos Archipelago as part of the territory of Mauritius.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation, which is a specialised agency of the United Nations, has taken steps to implement the General Assembly Resolution by updating its maps as well as its databases and relevant country files. It has also rejected an instrument from the United Kingdom for accession to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, a regional organisation falling under its purview, as it was premised on the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory”.

On Tuesday 24 August 2021, the Universal Postal Union, which is another specialised agency of the United Nations, adopted by a majority of 77 votes to 6, with 41 abstentions, a resolution to implement UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295.

The Resolution provides that –

- (a) the Universal Postal Union formally acknowledges that, for the purposes of its activities, the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius;
- (b) the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union should request Mauritius to keep the Universal Postal Union regularly informed of any decisions regarding international postal operations in the Chagos Archipelago, including any authorisations to maintain the operation of international mail processing centres by foreign entities in the Chagos Archipelago;
- (c) the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union should cease the registration, distribution and forwarding of any and all postage stamps issued by the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory”;
- (d) the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union should ensure that Universal Postal Union documentation does not include any references to the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory” or to the Chagos Archipelago as part of the member country of the Universal Postal Union known as the “Overseas Territories of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland”, and

- (e) the International Bureau should take any other measures deemed necessary to ensure due implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following representations made by Mauritius to the European Commission about the reference to the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory” in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the United Kingdom and the European Union signed in December 2020 following Brexit, the European Union has adopted a declaration to the effect that it will interpret and implement that reference in full respect of applicable international law.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with all these developments, it is crystal clear that there is a growing recognition that, as a matter of international law, Mauritius is the only State lawfully entitled to exercise sovereignty and sovereign rights over the Chagos Archipelago and its maritime zones and that the United Kingdom’s continued claim of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is a mere assertion. The so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory” which the United Kingdom purported to create by illegally excising the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence is an illegal entity.

The Government of Mauritius is deeply disappointed and concerned that the United Kingdom continues to adopt a stand which disregards the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, the UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 and the Judgment of the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. The United Kingdom’s position is in stark contrast with its avowed commitment to the rule of law and its claim that it is a long-standing supporter of international courts and a staunch defender of human rights institutions and norms.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has conveyed on various occasions publicly as well as to the United Kingdom and the United States that it has no objection to the continued use of Diego Garcia as a defence facility. In this regard, Mauritius stands ready to enter into a long-term arrangement with the United States, or with the United States and the United Kingdom, in respect of Diego Garcia.

In view of these assurances, the security concerns expressed by the United Kingdom and the United States cannot justify the continued illegal occupation of the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom.

I would like to once again urge the United Kingdom to bring itself into compliance with international law and terminate forthwith its unlawful colonial administration of the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr Speaker, Sir, pursuant to the Government Programme 2020-2024, Government will continue to pursue all avenues, whether at the political, legal or diplomatic level, for the completion of our decolonization process so that Mauritius can effectively and fully exercise its sovereignty over the entirety of its territory, including the Chagos Archipelago and the Mauritian citizens of Chagossian origin can fulfil their legitimate aspiration to return to the Chagos Archipelago. In this context, Government will take further action to ensure the implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 by other international and regional organisations.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our deep appreciation to all countries which continue to support the long-standing struggle of Mauritius to complete its decolonization process. I also express our appreciation to our external lawyers and the team of officials who continue to be vigilant on this issue.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Chair has been advised that PQs B/908, B/910, B/914, B/915 and B/916 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister reveal which six members of the Universal Postal Union voted against the Resolution which was adopted by the organisation last August?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the 124 members of the Universal Postal Union which participated in the vote on the Resolution relating to the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/295, six voted against.

These six Members include five of the United Nations Member States which had voted against the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/295, namely Australia, Hungary, Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The other vote that was cast against the Resolution was from the UK overseas territories which are collectively a member of the Universal Postal Union. It is also worth noting that, initially, Maldives had voted against the Resolution at the United Nations

General Assembly and, in this case, Maldives did not participate in the vote on the Resolution of the Universal Postal Union.

Ms Tour: Can the hon. Prime Minister advise what action has Mauritius taken at the level of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission with regard to the implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, It is again worth pointing that, as a follow-up to the Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, all the agencies of the UN, including all the other international organisations, were asked to implement the Resolution.

In fact, we have tabled a motion before the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. I am not going into the details of what has happened. But I can only say that, because of the COVID situation, the meetings have not been held as they used to be, that is, physically and the matter has accordingly been put on the agenda and has been postponed. It is more appropriate for us to meet physically, and we shall then be able to explain our stand to all the member States. And, of course, there and then, we shall see whether indeed we are able to have a majority of members on our side to vote on this issue.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/907 has been withdrawn.

Mr Bérenger: Thank you. There is a new President and a new Secretary of States in the United States of America and even more recently, a new Foreign Secretary in the UK. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether we have managed to establish contacts with the President and Secretary of State of the United States and the new Foreign Secretary of the UK?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it depends on what the hon. Member means by 'establish contact'. I can now only say what Mauritius and what I have done. As soon as President Biden has been elected, I sent to him a letter of congratulations, and in that letter I also, and of course, mentioned the issue of the Chagos Archipelago. And then, when he was sworn in as President, I again, and of course, congratulated him and raised the issue of the Chagos Archipelago. These are the only communications that I have been able to send to the new President of the United States. There has been no verbal contact. We have also requested meetings with both the US and the UK, and particularly with the UK, because, as we know, the stand of the US has always been that: 'This is a matter between you, Mauritius and the UK, and that you have to deal with the UK'. The US has systematically been saying that it recognises the BIOT, and that sovereignty is with the UK, and so on and so forth. I have also

written to the Prime Minister of UK. And now that I shall be attending the COP26 summit in Glasgow, I have also requested a meeting with the Prime Minister. Let us see whether his side will respond to our request.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister enlighten the House as to the rejection of the UK's instrument of accession to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission by the Food and Agriculture Organisation?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, when the UK exited from the European Union, they had, of course, to come up with a new agreement. But they had also submitted in 2020 a new instrument of accession to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission because, initially, they were represented by the European Union. Since the submission of the instrument of accession, the UK has claimed membership of the IOTC as a coastal State. The UK has been saying so because of the British Indian Ocean Territory. And, as I have said, because of the Resolution that was adopted by the General Assembly, the FAO had rejected that instrument of accession. The UK has submitted another instrument of accession to the FAO so that it could join the IOTC as a distant water fishing nation. This is the situation as at now.

Mr Bérenger: Concerning the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, can I ask for confirmation that, in fact, the UK used to apply for membership as a coastal State, which it can no longer do? But as the hon. Prime Minister has said, they are now applying as a fishing nation. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the rules of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission allow countries which are not a coastal State, which are not in the Indian Ocean, but which have one or more ships fishing in the Indian Ocean; the rules of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission allows such a country, therefore, the UK, to apply for membership and what are we doing about that?

The Prime Minister: I am very well aware about that. These are the rules of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. What we are objecting to is that the UK cannot justify its admission based on the fact that the British Indian Ocean Territory is part of the territory of the UK. This cannot now stand because of the Advisory Opinion; because of the General Assembly Resolution, and more so because of the judgement of the Tribunal of the Law of the Sea. We are, therefore, strongly objecting, as I have said. But we shall see how the UK

will apply for the membership. We shall have to look at the rules and what are the criteria that have been laid down for them to be able to accede to membership.

Mr Speaker: You still want the question?

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci, M. le président. Le Premier ministre a, en plusieurs occasions, annoncé une visite sur l'Archipel, y compris Diego Garcia, avec les Chagossiens et d'autres dignitaires au plan national et international. Pourrait-on savoir de quoi il en est sur le projet, est-ce-que un navire a déjà été affrété à cet effet ? Merci.

The Prime Minister: I shall try to be as brief as I can, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since the announcement of this visit, and I say it as I think it should be said, we have been threatened. Let me put it that way. We have been threatened by the United Kingdom and the United States not to undertake any visit to any of the islands of the Chagos Archipelago. I have stated publicly that on one occasion, the former US Ambassador met me particularly on this issue and said in very clear terms that: 'should you wish to have a boat to go there, your boat will be sunk before it ever reaches any of the islands of the Chagos'. But then, the House may remember, the US Ambassador tried to clarify himself to say that: 'well, it was misunderstood.' I do not misunderstand such things, Mr Speaker, Sir. But, anyway, I can say that I am determined – Mauritius, we are determined. Anyway, on this side of the House, we are determined to continue the fight so that we regain our territory. And I must say it is not easy also. We do not have a ship of our own to be able to go to any of the islands of the Chagos Archipelago. We need to charter a ship. You know, because of COVID and related matters, it has been very difficult, but we are trying our best, and I hope this will happen at some time in the future.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQ B/904 has been withdrawn. Time: one minute! So, let me call it time is over!

(Interruptions)

You have already withdrawn your question.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: 30 minutes gone!

Mr Speaker: Yes, 30 minutes gone. Questions to other Ministers!

The Table has been advised that PQ B/952 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and

International Trade. PQ B/957 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage. PQs B/938, B/939, B/940, B/955, B/958, B/977, B/979, B/959, B/960, B/961, B/962, B/963, B/964 and B/992 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Ms Tour!

BREXIT - NEW CONVENTION

(No. B/918) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the United Kingdom, he will state if Mauritius will be required to sign any new convention therewith following the Brexit and, if so, indicate if discussions have started therefor, giving details thereof.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to Brexit, Mauritius signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the UK in the Eastern and Southern African Configuration (ESA) on 31 January 2019 to prevent trade disruption and to ensure the continuity of trade. This agreement is operational as from 01 January this year. We have included a *rendez-vous* clause in the EPA for future engagement on issues not covered as of now, such as Trade in Services, Investment, Intellectual Property Rights amongst others. We will agree jointly with the ESA group and the UK on the appropriate time to start negotiations on these issues.

Now that that the UK is not a Member of the European Union, Mauritius and UK can, if there is mutual interest, engage in negotiations on issues that were under the competence of the European Commission, such as on Fisheries, for example. However, there is no obligation to do so because of Brexit.

Ms Tour: With regard to the International Driving License for citizens of Mauritius to be able to drive in the UK, can the hon. Minister advise where matters stand?

Mr Ganoo: I understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, firstly, that it is the Commissioner of Police with the competent authority to issue and deliver international certificates of motor vehicles and driving permits.

With regard to the question asked by the hon. Member, I am given to understand that international licenses are still valid for the UK, same as they were valid for European countries with whom we have the necessary arrangements.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, before we come to driving in the UK, let us go to the more important issue of visa and immigration process. Have we assessed the impact of Brexit, on Mauritians, in general, travelling to the UK and more specifically, Mauritian students studying in UK Universities and who will study in UK Universities in terms of visa and immigration process?

Mr Ganoo: May I request the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, if he can come with a substantive question, I could give him the answer.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

MAURITIUS JUDO FEDERATION - MANAGING COMMITTEE - COMPOSITION

(No. B/919) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Mauritius Judo Federation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) composition of the present Managing Committee thereof, indicating the –
 - (i) date of election thereof and of meetings held, including of the last General Assembly Meeting, and
 - (ii) individual responsibilities of members thereof
- (b) clubs –
 - (i) affiliated thereto, and
 - (ii) on the waiting list for affiliation thereto, if any, and
- (c) number of judokas holding valid licenses for 2021 therewith.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Judo Federation that its Managing Committee is composed of 11 members from 16 affiliated clubs at the time of election which was held on 26 January 2019. Subsequently, a total of 28 Managing Committee Meetings have been held.

I am tabling the composition of the present Managing Committee and the status of its office bearers. I am also informed by the Federation that its Annual General Assembly, initially scheduled for March 2020, could not be held due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that a fresh date will be fixed shortly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Judo Federation that, as at date, only 14 clubs forming part of five Regional Sports Committees are affiliated. I am tabling a list thereof.

According to the Mauritius Judo Federation, there is no club on its waiting list for affiliation. Request for affiliation has to be made according to the Affiliation Form provided by the Federation.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed by the Federation that the number of licensees for 2021 is 321.

Thank You.

Ms Tour: Merci, M. le président. Selon le *Sports Act* 2016, section 4(3), les fédérations sportives ont l'obligation d'affilier les clubs et selon nos informations, il y aurait 18 clubs de judo qui se sont vus refuser leurs affiliations par la Fédération Mauricienne de Judo. L'honorable ministre pourrait-il s'enquérir pourquoi la FMJ refuse ces demandes et de voir comment ces demandes d'affiliation peuvent être reconsidérées afin qu'ils puissent eux-aussi bénéficier des facilités de la Fédération Mauricienne de Judo ?

Mr Toussaint: Certainement, M. le président. Donc, au niveau du ministère, nous avons déjà, de toutes les façons, reçu plusieurs lettres, il y a plusieurs clubs qui m'ont écrit personnellement. Donc, là, je vois il y a le club de Cassis, M. Mike Moonawa, il y a plusieurs clubs qui m'ont écrit. Donc, j'ai déjà donné la responsabilité à mes officiers de vérifier et de voir qu'est-ce qui s'est passé par rapport à la demande d'affiliation. Et, je tiens à ajouter aussi que c'est valable pour tous les sportifs, pour tous les entraîneurs, pour tous les clubs, si quelque part, ils se sentent lésés, ils peuvent aussi faire une plainte au bureau de l'*Ombudsperson* qui - c'est son travail - va suivre personnellement les différentes plaintes qui vont être logées. Donc, j'inviterai les clubs qui ont des difficultés avec la fédération, d'aller vers l'*Ombudsperson* pour faire leurs plaintes officielles de sorte à ce qu'on puisse trouver une solution.

Ms Tour: Concernant justement l'affiliation des clubs de Judo, le ministre, peut-il nous dire s'il est informé que le Secrétariat de la Fédération qui se trouve à Grande Rivière, refuse systématiquement de prendre possession des enveloppes envoyées par la poste concernant les demandes d'affiliation des clubs ?

Mr Toussaint: J'ai fait demander une petite enquête à ce sujet, d'après ce qui m'a été rapporté c'est que les lettres qui arrivent au Dojo, bien souvent, il n'y a aucun membre ou

secrétaire administratif de la Fédération qui sont présents et qui pourraient réceptionner ces différentes lettres d'où le retour à l'envoyeur comme on dit de ces différentes lettres de demande. Mais, comme je l'ai dit, je demande à ces différents clubs d'aller vers l'*Ombudsperson*, et si on n'arrive pas à trouver une solution, donc si besoin est, j'appellerai une réunion avec les différents clubs qui n'ont pas eu leurs affiliations et je demanderai la présence de l'honorable Ms Tour dans cette réunion pour qu'on puisse trouver une solution ensemble et avec le président de la Fédération pour qu'on puisse discuter autour d'une table et voir où est-ce que la communication ne passe pas de sorte à ce que la Fédération pourrait, au plus vite, enregistrer ces différents clubs qui font leurs demandes.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/973, B/980, B/981 and B/982 have been withdrawn.

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

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

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

REGIONAL HEALTH DIRECTOR, DR. I.N. – TRANSFER

(No. B/920) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Dr. I. N., he will state the reasons for the transfer thereof as Regional Health Director of the Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital to the J. Nehru Hospital.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that change in posting is a normal course of action in the Civil Service and any public officer is liable to be posted to any Ministry or to any Department for the smooth running of the service.

I am informed that the officer concerned was assigned duties as Regional Health Director at Flacq Hospital as from March 2014 to March 2016. Then, in March 2016, he was transferred as Acting Regional Health Director from Flacq Hospital to SSRN Hospital. Then again, in November 2016, he was appointed RHD and remained posted at SSRN Hospital. In March 2017, the officer was transferred to Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital. Hence, transfer is a normal process.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The doctor, who is currently posted at Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, is a first timer. He has never been Regional Health Director or Acting

Regional Health Director. Can I ask the hon. Minister, being given that Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital has a population base that is twice as J. Nehru Hospital where Dr. I.N. is currently posted, with twice the number of beds, twice the number of staff and a hospital under whose management comes two national hospitals, which is the Brown Sequard Hospital and the Moka Eye Hospital, and to ask him whether against this backdrop, bearing this is in mind, if he can consider re-transferring Dr. I.N. back to Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, at Victoria Hospital, there also we have an Acting Regional Health Director. Victoria Hospital is as busy as Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital. It has two or more hospitals attached to that and many more patients attending that hospital. There also, the Acting Regional Health Director is doing a good job.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Coming back to the clientele of Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the hon. Prime Minister, just like me, since yesterday, is the recipient of a petition against the transfer of Dr. I.N., Regional Health Director, from Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, signed by 4,000 people, which I am going to table, and whether in the light of this, for the sake of the clientele of Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, he would kindly consider re-transferring him back to Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the Ministry of Health and Wellness and all the services with 15,000 officers, with so many centres will start working in terms of petition, then, what will happen to our services?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, in fact, the transfer of Dr. Nawoor was not as a result of a clash that he had between himself and a Director of Health Services, Dr. M., who whilst being posted at the Ministry of Health and Wellness, continued against Regulations, I understand, to perform operations at Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital? This was reported to your Senior Chief Executive and, a few days later, Dr. Nawoor was transferred to Rose Belle and transferred brutally overnight!

Dr. Jagutpal: All transfers are done overnight. There is no transfer that has to be done with a notice of one month. Secondly, hon. Leader of the Opposition, if ever there is any clash, you can come and give me all the details of the clash.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House, if ever a Regional Health Director goes on leave or on vacation, what is the protocol of his Ministry and if such occasions occurred in the past few years or months?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will take the example of Dr. Nawoor itself. He was on leave last year from 03 February 2020 to 03 September 2020, more than six months I believe, and during that time, there was no petition, there was no complaint, the services have been running smoothly.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: The services have been running smoothly for all the Acting Directors. I wonder now what is the reason of having so much pressure to have this Regional Health Director at this hospital! In fact, last year when there was a pandemic, the Regional Health Director was on leave from February to September.

Mr Speaker: One last question! Who would try? Can I give it to the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr X. L. Duval: I have a general question. The Minister was very pleased to tell us that all transfers are done overnight. But, does he really think that, in year 2021, when you have a hospital of 600 beds or more, that you have a Director there, it is good management practice? And, you are not surprised at the state of the health service nowadays, when you are happy to transfer Heads of Hospitals overnight, without any transfer of power, without even finishing what they are doing? Have you ever seen this anywhere else, apart from the Mauritius health service?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hospital is run by the Consultant in charge of the Department. The Regional Health Director overlooks everything. What the hon. Member was saying, the clientele is not for the Regional Health Director. The patients are being treated by a Specialist and the GPs. The GPs and the Specialists are in touch with the patients, not the Regional Health Director! The Regional Health Director oversees the proper running of the services. And, as for transferring an RHD overnight, an RHD may be transferred at any time and allotted any other duties, as per his Scheme of Service.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: B/921!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - REMDESIVIR - TREATMENT

(No. B/921) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Remdesivir, he will state if the use thereof as treatment for the COVID-19 pandemic is now being considered by his Ministry and, if so, give details of the –

(a) treatment, and

(b) measures taken, if any, for the procurement thereof

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir,....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening now?

(Interruptions)

What is happening on both sides? Both sides of the House!

(Interruptions)

Both sides of the House! Please!

(Interruptions)

Both sides of the House! Both sides of the House!

Mr Bérenger: Stop shouting like that!

Mr Speaker: You stop shouting!

(Interruptions)

What's your business in that? I am putting order in the House!

An hon. Member: Wear your mask! Wear your mask!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Cool down!

Mr Speaker: Cool yourself! Cool yourself!

An hon. Member: *Met to mask!*

Mr Bérenger: *Pena pli cool ki mwa, kouyon!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Oh! Oh! You withdraw that word!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Withdraw!

Mr Speaker: You withdraw that word! Thank you very much. You are a great leader!

You have withdrawn your word, it's okay. Silence now!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Oh! Please! Protect your health! Protect your health!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I appreciate the joke.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer to my reply to PQ B/145 at the sitting of the National Assembly on Tuesday 06 April 2021.

Remdesivir is an antiviral, the effectiveness of which is controversial.

There are three significant studies which have assessed the effectiveness of this medicine.

In 2020, a study (ACTT1) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) showed a reduction in the time required for complete recovery in patients with moderate forms of COVID-19, especially if the treatment was started very early.

The World Health Organization's Solidarity Trial study showed disappointing results with no reduction in mortality and hospital stay in patients treated with Remdesivir.

In September 2021, the Phase 3 result of the DisCoVeRy study appeared in the Lancet, involving infected adults over 18 years of age with either decreased oxygen levels in the blood or a need for supplemental oxygen.

This study showed no clinical benefit in treated patients versus those who did not have Remdesivir.

These contradictory studies do not allow a definitive conclusion to be drawn on whether or not Remdesivir is beneficial or not. Given early, it seems to have a slight efficacy, in patients with little disease, given late, it is clearly not effective.

Based on my Ministry's Protocol, the prescription of Remdesivir will depend on the evolution of knowledge about this medicine and the clinical situation of the patient.

The multidisciplinary clinico-biological group, which meets every day to review the cases of COVID-19 patients, will help in deciding whether or not to prescribe this treatment depending on the requirements of each patient. In doubt, and pending further studies, it was decided to reintroduce Remdesivir in the national protocol.

In September 2021, the clinico-biological group has recommended the procurement of Tocilizumab Injections and eventually Remdesivir for the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

The inclusion of Remdesivir for the treatment of COVID-19 has already been considered by my Ministry.

In this regard, procurement of 600 vials of 100 mg has already been initiated by my Ministry.

The tender was launched on 05 October 2021 and the closing date of the tender was 19 October 2021. This tender has now reached the stage of evaluation leading to the issue of award through the established protocol.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. I am no professor in medicine but I read the report from the WHO titled "Therapeutics and COVID-19: living guideline" of 24 September 2021, which is about a month ago, wherein it is stated: "we suggest against administering Remdesivir in addition to usual [COVID-19 treatment]" on page 48 and on page 24 "we recommend treatment with IL-6 receptor blockers (Tocilizumab) for patients with severe or critical COVID-19 infection". Can I ask the hon. Minister, being given this report favouring Tocilizumab, whether the Ministry will adjust accordingly?

Dr. Jagutpal: In my reply, I have already stated that in September 2021, both these medications: Remdesivir and Tocilizumab injection have been recommended by the clinico-biological team.

Mr Osman Mahomed: In the light of WHO recognising Tocilizumab as a proper medication, that was about 3/4 months ago, can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether there was a local company importing that medication? I am not too sure which

company but I have information, which is used for the treatment of arthritis, had approached the Ministry to buy this medication for treatment of COVID-19 patients and in the process if the Ministry had done so, which it did not, lives could have been saved in the meantime?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, no company has the right and it is not a normal procedure for a company who is mandated to sell medication in Mauritius to come to the Ministry and say that I am offering this medication. Purchase of medication will have to be through the experts, the doctors, the specialists and then their recommendations will have to follow the normal procedure. Now, in case this one medication is being recommended by the experts, the Ministry will do the normal purchase procedures. This is the right way of doing things.

Mr Speaker: Next question! You have a last?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes. I understand what the hon. Minister has stated, procedures are procedures but when it comes to saving lives, not many people needed that medication but some could have been saved by this. Notwithstanding this backdrop, would the Ministry have procured for the sake of saving lives of people?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, these medications have already been procured with the procedures, but, at the same time, the Ministry also does procure medication in case that medication is needed for some serious patients, we will expedite it to get the medication as quickly as possible. These procedures are being followed.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SAUDI AUTHORITIES – MOSQUES/ISLAMIC SCHOOLS & FISHER COMMUNITY - FUNDS DISBURSEMENT

(No. B/922) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the proposed disbursement of funds by the Saudi Authorities to mosques/Islamic schools and to the fisher community, he will now state the road map with clear milestones on the processes thereof for the preparatory works therefor.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House was informed of the situation concerning the disbursement of funds by Saudi Authorities to mosques in the answer to a PQ B/153 on 06 April of the current year.

Because of the lockdown and travel restrictions due to COVID-19, the planned visit of an Inter-ministerial Delegation from Saudi Arabia to Mauritius to assess the needs of mosques and establish the *modus operandi* of disbursement of funds was on hold.

However, following the opening of our borders on the first day of this month, the easing of sanitary protocols and the resumption of direct flights, my Ministry was informed on 06 of this month that the Saudi side wishes to send its delegation to Mauritius next month.

Our Embassy in Riyadh is coordinating with the relevant Saudi Authorities in preparation of the visit.

Once the Saudi delegation would have made its assessment of the requirements of the mosques and the necessary mechanism established, the funds to the tune of USD 6 m. already pledged by the Government of Saudi Arabia could be disbursed accordingly.

With regard to the disbursement to the fisher community, the House may wish to note that funding of projects in the fisheries sector, including those to empower the fisher community of Mauritius, will be implemented through a general framework agreement entitled “MoU for Cooperation in the Field of Fisheries.”

This MoU was signed between Mauritius and Saudi Arabia on 07 April 2021 in Riyadh and aims at enhancing cooperation between the two countries in the fields of fishing, fisheries and fish farming.

Pursuant to the provisions of the MoU, a Joint Technical Committee to follow up and ensure its implementation has been established in September 2021. A first virtual meeting of the Committee is to be held in the coming months to draft an agenda for a meeting in person over the operationalisation of the MoU.

My Ministry has also been informed that the Saudi Authorities are coordinating among their Ministries in view of the operationalisation of assistance to the fisheries sector, including support to the fisher community.

In view of the recent opening of our borders and the resumption of normal communications between Mauritius and Saudi Arabia, we are confident that our cooperation will move faster as from now on.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs for his answer. This is the third time I am questioning on this issue and through him I would like to convey our appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the grant that they are giving to the mosque

and the fisher community. From time to time, I will question him again on the progress. I am glad there is. Thank you.

Mr Ganoo: It is unfortunate because of the circumstances that we all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, things are being delayed but I am ready of course to open the books and to give any information with regard to that project to the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to the disbursement of funds by Saudi Authorities to mosques and Islamic schools, can I ask the hon. Minister on the disbursement process? Will it be directly disbursed to the mosques and schools or will it be routed through the Government consolidated fund or through the Islamic Cultural Centre?

Mr Ganoo: I did answer that particular issue last time in a PQ, Mr Speaker, Sir. I did inform the House that at that time, in fact, there was a proposal from the Mauritian side for the Islamic Cultural Centre to set up a Foundation which will be responsible for coordination between the Saudi Authorities and the mosques in Mauritius. I did also inform that the draft charter of the proposed Foundation as well as a copy of the draft MoU in Arabic have been submitted to the Saudi Authorities. But what I think now, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that when the delegation comes, I suppose, things will be clarified and upon the proposals of both parties, I am sure both parties will come to an agreement as to how to disburse the fund. So, that is why it is important that the delegation comes next month.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister just mentioned that there is going to be a Foundation and a draft of the charter has been circulated to the Saudi Authorities. May I know from the hon. Minister whether the composition of the Board of Council for that Foundation has been tentatively established and if same has been communicated to the Saudi Authorities as well, or just the charter that has been sent?

Mr Ganoo: Yes, to be more precise, Mr Speaker, Sir, the draft charter of the proposed Foundation and the copy of the draft Memorandum of Understanding which was vetted by the legal adviser of the ICC were, in fact, forwarded to the Saudi Authorities for consideration and the Saudi Authorities, in July last year, requested that a fresh translated version of the document in Arabic language be submitted, and this has been done but this is where things stopped and we have not heard from the Saudi Authorities any more. So, this is

why, Mr Speaker, Sir, – I repeat what I just said – once the delegation will be in Mauritius, things will become clearer and I am sure the project will be materialised.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table is advised that PQ B/953, B/984, B/985, B/986 and B/987 have been withdrawn. Next question!

COVID-19 PATIENTS – HOSPITAL ADMISSION, SELF-ISOLATION, DEATHS

(No. B/923) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the –

- (a) present number of patients suffering therefrom, indicating the number thereof –
 - (i) admitted in hospitals/health institutions, indicating the number thereof in intensive care, and
 - (ii) in self-isolation, and
- (b) number of deaths attributed thereto, since the outbreak thereof, wherein COVID-19 has been stated as the –
 - (i) direct cause of death, and
 - (ii) underlying cause of death, respectively.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (a) of the question, as at 21 October 2021, a total of 199 patients suffering from COVID-19 were admitted in the five regional hospitals and a total of 34 patients were admitted in the Intensive Care Unit of the new ENT Hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (a)(ii) of the question, asymptomatic patients or patients suffering from mild COVID symptoms of the COVID-19 are advised to stay at home in self-isolation as per the established protocol. The number of patients in self-isolation as at 21 October 2021 is 5,251 for Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital; 2,053 for SSR Hospital; 4,979 for Flacq Hospital; 1,200 for J. Nehru Hospital and 1,108 for Victoria Hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (b) of the question, since 05 March 2021 till 21 October 2021, 295 patients suffering from COVID-19 have passed away.

In reply to part (b)(i) and (b)(ii), respectively, 142 deaths have been attributed to COVID-19 while 153 deaths have been attributed to other underlying causes.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Permettez-moi tout d'abord de présenter mes vives sympathies aux familles de nos concitoyens qui ont perdu la vie malheureusement à cause du COVID-19. Puis-je demander à l'honorable ministre si concernant les personnes positives mais dont les décès n'ont pas été attribués au COVID-19, si des études ont été faites afin de déterminer si ces personnes auraient tout de même perdu la vie à ce moment précis ou est-ce que c'est le COVID-19 qui a joué un rôle pour accélérer and précipiter leur mort?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, so far I do not have any study on this subject. I think this is an important subject that in the future we will have to assess. I agree with the hon. Member. Now, it will be with time that we can really see whether deaths have been accelerated due to COVID-19, because of the presence of COVID-19, but at this time, I do not have such studies in hand to give an explanation.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Merci. Est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire si depuis l'arrivée du variant Delta, y a-t-il eu une augmentation de contamination et des cas sévères de COVID-19?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Delta has been detected as from the earliest report dated in mid of September. And we have seen that many cases have been reported as from August. It will be with time that such an exercise can be done to determine whether the number of cases reported has been more or there has been a surge. Probably, while doing more genetic testing for the variant, we will be able to establish that direct link.

Mr Armance: Thank you. I refer to part (b) of the question. Can I know from the Minister whether there has been any death that has been recorded during self-isolation period?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, I remember, I had this information in my PNQ, but deaths have been recorded in self-isolation. I think there are four deaths having been recorded, out of which three is due to COVID-19 and one not due to COVID-19.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

COVID-19 RAPID TEST KITS – ILLEGAL SALES

(No. B/924) **Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19 Rapid Test kits, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) number thereof sold in pharmacies to date, indicating the reported number of persons having been positive tested through the use thereof, and
- (b) measures taken, if any, to address the illegal sales thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the COVID-19 Home Self-Testing kits which are different from the COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Tests Kits. In fact, the Rapid Antigen Test Kits should be used by trained medical personnel.

On the other hand, the Covid-19 Home Self-Testing kits are screening tests which might orientate towards a diagnostic but do not provide a definite assessment as to the status of its user and can be performed by the user at home.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the importation and sale of the COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kit is regulated by Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

Moreover, the Quarantine (Control of Sale and Use of COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kit) Regulations 2021 stipulates the institutions and persons who can import, sell and/or use the COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kits and the conditions thereof.

Importers of the COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kit are required to obtain an import permit from the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection. All applications received are forthwith transmitted to a Standing Committee of my Ministry for a technical evaluation to be carried out on the proposed COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kit following which appropriate recommendations are submitted to the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection, prior to the approval of the import permit.

In reply to part (a) of the question, the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection has approved the importation of 2,021,366 COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kits.

The Quarantine (Control of Sale and Use of COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kit) Regulations 2021 also provide that any person tested positive to COVID-19 shall forthwith inform the Quarantine Authority.

I am informed that all persons having been tested positive with the COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kits report to the health institutions to confirm their status.

In reply to part (b) of the question, the Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 stipulates the persons and/or institutions to whom wholesale pharmacies are authorised to sell the COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kit.

I am informed that on 09 October 2021, the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection was apprised of one locus whereby the Covid-19 Home Self-Testing Kits were being sold. A surprise inspection was, accordingly, carried out by the Consumer Affairs at the locus on 22 October 2021. However, no sale of the Covid-19 Home Self-Testing Kit was observed.

Moreover, the Quarantine (Control of Sale and Use of COVID-19 Home Self-Testing Kit) Regulations 2021 provide that, every sale of a Self-Testing Kit shall be recorded in a register which shall be produced to Officers of my Ministry on demand. Any person who contravenes these regulations shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs500,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Can the hon. Minister table a list of the companies that have been granted the Import Permit for the Test Kit?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will table it in due course.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: L'honorable ministre est-il au courant que des *Home Self-Testing Kits* sont vendus au vu et au su à travers les réseaux sociaux et les applications de messagerie instantanée?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member can inform the Ministry and can inform the Ministry of Commerce as well as the Police for investigation and for any action to be taken.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Has the Ministry or the Minister come across cases where people used the Home Self-testing Kit, they are tested negative and then when they go to the hospital a few hours later – one or two hours later – they are found to be positive ? I have come across a few cases like that. What is the quality control that there is on such kits in terms of reliability?

Dr. Jagutpal: In terms of the test being performed at home, it is also a procedure that has to be individually accounted for. Maybe that somebody is being tested by the Self-Testing Kit at home and is negative, and fit at the hospital, being given that there is a professional who is used to do the testing and in a proper way and he is found to be positive. This facility is made available to the public to do the testing, it gives an indication of someone being tested positive or not.

About the quality of the test, I have already given it in the reply that these are subject to a Standing Committee where the Standing Committee evaluates, especially for the Self-Testing Kit, where you have to get it WHO approved or EU approved, things like this.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Merci. Si j'ai bien compris des réponses données pendant la PNQ, les *Rapid Antigen Tests* et les *Home Self-Testing Kit Tests* ne sont pas comptabilisés. Puis-je donc suggérer à l'honorable ministre de préciser que les chiffres communiqués au quotidien sont seulement de ceux qui sont symptomatiques et testés à travers les tests PCR, car cela pourrait être perçu comme induire la population en erreur car ces chiffres ne représentent pas le nombre réel des cas positifs ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the PNQ, I have already extensively explained why it is not significant to have Rapid Antigen Tests to be publicised or what is the importance of giving the PCR test with all the details of vaccination and all that.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – GENOME SEQUENCING

(No. B/925) **Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to genome sequencing of the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the number thereof carried out as at to date, indicating the –

- (a) interval at which same is carried out, and
- (b) outcome thereof, indicating if the presence of variants of concern have been detected and, if so, give details as to the response strategy adopted.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, as at 22 October 2021, a total of 798 genome sequencing has been carried out. Out of those 798 sequencing, there were 570

successful sequencing and 228 failed sequencing. Of those 570 successfully sequenced cases, 472 were local and 92 imported cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that on an average, the local sequencing is carried out twice a month at the interval of two weeks since July 2021. Samples were being sent abroad on a monthly basis.

As from October 2021, we are sending samples for sequencing twice a month for genomic surveillance to our World Health Organisation collaborating centres, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in South Africa and Kwazulu-Natal Research Innovation and Sequencing Platform (KRISP) South Africa through the CDC Africa collaboration.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the results of sequencing are as follows –

(a) Variants of concern (VOC)

- (i) Alpha 7 (all imported cases)
- (ii) Beta 18 (all imported cases)
- (iii) Delta 46 (27 imported cases and 19 local cases)

(b) Lineage B1.1.318

- (i) 446 (Local cases)
- (ii) 3 (Imported cases)

(c) Others (Non-variant of concern)

- (i) 10 (Local cases)
- (ii) 40 (Imported cases)

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the response strategy adopted, I wish to inform the House that the vast majority of viruses are characterised by constant genetic evolution, more or less rapid depending on the virus. It occurs in particular following mutations introduced into their genome. For a virus like SARS-CoV-2, the emergence of variants over time is therefore a definite expected phenomenon.

Sequencing makes it possible to reconstruct the phylogenetic tree, equivalent to a human family tree, of the spread of the virus around the world and to identify mutations of the virus. It is important for every country to participate in this surveillance. On a national level, this surveillance can make it possible to specifically identify contamination clusters and therefore identify groups of people who need to be monitored. In this sense, sequencing is a

complementary tool to tracing strategies. Sequencing allows viruses to be classified according to their degree of contagiousness or clinical aggressiveness that is variant of interest or variant of concern.

The identification of a particular strain or a variant also makes it possible at the international or national level to test the effectiveness of the vaccines on the virus and to ensure that the vaccine is still effective, which is the case currently for all known variants.

The response strategy also allows our country and the world, in the event of a virus becoming resistant to the vaccine one day, to manufacture a new vaccine effective against a mutant resistant to the first generation of vaccines.

Ms Ramyad: Given the number of cases, positive cases, that have been registered, would the Minister consider to review the ratio of sampling that is being done because many cases have been noted in different regional hospitals?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the sampling is being done by the Central Health Lab and it is carried out in a scientific manner, given that the number of cases and how they do pick up samples from the different locations from those who were tested positive. I do not have the details of how the samples are being done, but nevertheless I am going to give all the information in due course.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Thank you. The WHO recommends sequencing of at least 5% of the positive cases and based on the answer given by the hon. Minister, we are well below this 5%. Is the hon. Minister aware that a country's access to genomic sequencing is one of the four criteria that the United Kingdom relies on so as to determine which travel list a country belongs to and currently Mauritius does not form part of the countries with approved proof of vaccination to enter the UK. Meaning that, a Mauritian entering the UK, even if fully vaccinated must still self-isolate for 10 days.

Is the reason why Mauritius is not on this list, which is an extensive list of more than a hundred countries, is it because our rate of sequencing is very low?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me first inform the House that sequencing is being done in Mauritius recently thanks to the hard work done by the Central Health Laboratory, the staff of the Central Health Laboratory in terms of equipment, in terms of reagent that the Ministry has already procured. But at the same time, we are one of the countries which have

done more sequencing compared to the population base, compared to the rate of positivity in the country.

Secondly, we wish to do more sequencing but, at the same time, we have to also see that reagents are not easily available.

The third thing is that recently, the Ministry has already procured another apparatus. Now we have two sets of apparatus doing sequencing: one is called the Thermo Fisher apparatus and the other one is called the Nanopore apparatus.

For the Nanopore apparatus, the WHO experts are in Mauritius at present doing training for the staffs at the Ministry of Health and Wellness to do the sequencing and they have also collaborated with Mauritius to get more reagents for sequencing. Mauritius started the sequencing in April, and as from now, the number of tests being carried out, the number of samples being assessed locally is just remarkable.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha, next question!

COVID-19 - DOMICILIARY MONITORING UNIT - MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS & MONITORING

(No. B/926) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Domiciliary Monitoring Unit regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the number of –

- (a) medical practitioners attached thereto;
- (b) patients in self-isolation under the supervision thereof, and
- (c) home visits and phone monitoring performed by the said unit as at to date.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that following the phasing out of the quarantine centres, my Ministry enlisted the services of 34 Medical Practitioners for the Domiciliary Monitoring Unit (DMU), on a 4-month contract basis, to effect domiciliary visits on patients tested COVID-19 positive in self-isolation. The DMU has started its operation since 02 September 2021.

The Medical Practitioners are currently attached to the DMU and are under the responsibility of the Medical Superintendent of the hospital. 8 are posted at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, 5 at SSRN Hospital, 7 at Bruno Cheong Hospital, 6 at J. Nehru Hospital and 8 at

Victoria Hospital. The number of Medical Practitioners attached to each regional hospital has been worked out based on the population in each region.

Given that there are only 34 Medical Practitioners for the DMU out of the required number of 60 Medical Practitioners, new applications have been invited for enlistment of Medical Practitioners by way of public advertisement on 04 October 2021. A total of 17 applications have been received as at the closing date which was 18 October 2021.

After a scrutiny exercise, 15 candidates have been found eligible for enlistment as Medical Practitioner of the DMU. Approval of the Public Service Commission has been sought on 22 October 2021 for the Ministry to set up interview panels to assess the candidates.

Mr Speaker Sir, COVID-19 positive patients are segregated according to gravity of cases. The positive patients who stay at home are sorted according to well-defined criteria.

As regards part (b) of the question, an average of 75 patients in self-isolation are under the supervision of the DMU in each regional hospital daily. Since the coming into operation of the DMU, as at date, the number of patients in self-isolation under the supervision of the DMU is as follows, I have given the figures before, I repeat it –

- 5,221 for Dr. Jeetoo Hospital;
- 2,053 for SSRN Hospital;
- 4,979 for Flacq Hospital;
- 1,200 for JNH, and
- 1,108 for Victoria Hospital.

An average of 15 home visits and an average of 50 phone monitorings are effected daily by DMU at each regional hospital.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Merci. Puis-je demander à l'honorable ministre s'il a reçu des plaintes venant des patients en auto isolement du fait qu'ils n'ont reçu ni de visites à leur domicile, ni de suivi au téléphone et, par conséquent, sont livrés à eux-mêmes et n'ont aucune directive médicale à suivre ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, all those who are tested positive have been given a specific phone number. In case they have any issue regarding their health, they have to call the DMU Team, and the DMU Team will assess whether these patients will need a home visit; whether these patients will need a monitoring over the phone or these patients will need to be transferred to a hospital or ENT. Now, the patients have given these information, it is

for them to call the DMU Team to establish whether these patients will require any information.

Yes, I have also received complaints from patients, but the DMU Team is doing their best to see a priority of those who will need an assessment or those who will need more attention compared to those who do not need any attention. Obviously, patients at home they are asymptomatic or with minimal mild symptoms, there is no issue of visiting those patients, or everything can be done on the phone call.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you. It has been brought to our attention hon. Minister that many staffs attached to the DMU are currently looking for a transfer or to leave the Unit because they are not happy with the working conditions. Are you aware of that, and, if yes, what are you doing to remedy the situation?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, at present, working in the health sector demands a lot of dedication and conviction because as a staff working in the DMU where you have to answer calls, where you have to interpret information and at the same time take decisions, those who will not be able to do it, obviously they will be transferred. And those who have been recruited for that purpose, they have to do that job.

Mr Speaker: Last question! Go ahead!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. Will the Minister confirm whether the Domiciliary Monitoring Unit has had any clinical training in assessing signs and symptoms of infected or supposedly infected patients at home, and who do they report to as they are Supervising Officers, or are they supervised before making clinical decisions? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the recruitment of the doctors before they start working for the DMU, they have been trained, they have been given a brief training on the job that they have to do and at the same time, they have to report to the Medical Superintendent.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PANDORA PAPERS - MAURITIAN CITIZENS & MAURITIAN COMPANIES

(No. B/927) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard

to the Mauritian citizens and Mauritian companies cited in the Pandora Papers, he will state if his Ministry and, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to if inquiries have been initiated in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Financial Services Commission has taken cognizance of information being leaked by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) in the so-called Pandora Papers which has received worldwide media coverage, including Mauritius.

Press articles that have been released as of now, did not mention Mauritius as an offshore centre where named transactions have supposedly taken place. However, we note from the press releases that entities registered in Mauritius have been named.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards actions being initiated by the FSC, the latter has been looking into the various allegations made by ICIJ against Mauritian individuals or entities. As at date, 87 individuals or entities have been cited in various press articles locally and internationally related to the Pandora Papers out of which 12 are borne on FSC records. Out of these 12 entities or individuals, 8 have been found to be Mauritian. The FSC is gathering information, which is ongoing, from the entities mentioned and their respective Management Companies. The FSC is assessing the reported information to establish any breach of its relevant laws and shall take the appropriate actions should the allegations be found to be true. At this stage, no enquiry has been initiated.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Has the hon. Minister taken cognizance of the statement by the FATF President a few days ago on Pandora Papers where he stated –

“Obscuring the true owners of corporate trust, and other structures, and those who control them, is a common technique to hide illicit profits.”

So, in the light of this statement, doesn't the hon. Minister consider that his Ministry should take the names that appear on Pandora Papers very seriously and investigate, not just by the FSC, but by other organisations also entrusted with the duty to investigate money laundering cases?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must also agree that the President of FATF referred to the Pandora Papers with regard to the beneficial ownership and as you may recall, one of the action item that we had to implement was to set up a register of beneficial ownership in Mauritius that would be accessible to competent authorities. And I must say, with regard to

our jurisdiction, we have already set up that kind of register and when he was referring to jurisdictions where they need to make available these kinds of information, I am sure he was referring to those jurisdictions that do not have that kind of information.

Mr Uteem: My question is very specific. Names have come out in the papers internationally as the hon. Minister has mentioned. One of the purposes of using an offshore structure is to hide illicit profits. So, has there been any inter-ministerial committee or any committee between the FSC and the (MRA) Mauritius Revenue Authorities to investigate whether the people cited in the Pandora Papers have undertaken any illicit tax evasion, for example?

Mr Seeruttun: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a meeting where some different authorities concerned were called upon to look into these cases. And thus, like I said, information are still being gathered to see if there is any matter that would require any inquiry and should there be certain features that have occurred, that require so, we'll act accordingly. And I must also inform the House that we are referring to cases, transactions that date back to the late 80s, 90s and the year 2000 also.

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le ministre, la publication des *Pandora Papers* par *l'Express* a vu bon nombre de Mauriciens sur cette liste. Une des personnalités retrouvée sur la liste selon les *Pandora Papers*, est un responsable de la *State Bank of Mauritius*, l'ancien administrateur d'*Air Mauritius*, négociateur du défunt *BAI*. Le fait que la personnalité est au centre financier de plusieurs institutions mauriciennes, est-ce-que vous ne pensez pas qu'une enquête s'impose sur cette personnalité qui a plusieurs chapeaux dans les institutions financières de l'île Maurice ?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I can recall, the article that has been published did mention the name of few Mauritians and if the hon. Member is referring to one particular person mentioned in these articles, my question is whether the transactions that have been referred to by this particular individual, is it of any breach to the law? That is the question. Not because someone has undertaken a transaction means that this transaction is illegal or illicit.

So, we have to be careful about whatever we say. I mean, I am sure the hon. Member who puts the question, hon. Uteem, he himself, he is very well involved in this particular sector. I am sure he himself has been involved in the setting up of structures, be it locally or overseas. Does that mean that when you set up a structure in another jurisdiction or in

Mauritius itself, in an off-shore environment, it means that it is for something which is illegal? I do not think so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. But in this particular case hon. Minister, it is reported that this gentleman dealt with a company by the name of Regula Limited, a subsidiary of Deutsche Bank, based in British Virgin Islands and Deutsche Bank has been fined Euro 15 m. for money laundering using that very same Regula Limited. So, we are not in realms of speculation. It is very specific allegation about Mauritians using Regula Limited, which has been found to be involved in money laundering.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is good to also note that the initial transaction was between that individual and Merrill Lynch, the entity that was selling that insurance policy and afterwards, Merrill Lynch was acquired by the company he just mentioned and that is why there has been, according to the information I have, a requirement that that policy be transferred to the BVI. So, the question about intentionally that particular person had used this company to carry out some, say unlawful transactions, is not correct to say that.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

INFLATION RATE, ECONOMIC GROWTH & PUBLIC DEBT

(No. B/928) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the economy, he will state the current –

- (a) rate of inflation;
- (b) economic growth, and
- (c) level of public debt.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je tiens à remercier l'honorable membre de me donner l'occasion, par le biais de cette question parlementaire, de brosser le tableau de l'évolution de la situation économique.

L'année 2020 a testé nos limites. Notre PIB s'est contracté de 14,9%. Tous les secteurs de l'économie se sont contractés, à deux exceptions près. Le tourisme a même connu une chute d'activités de 80%. Plus encore, au cours des exercices 2019-2020 et 2020-2021, notre PIB s'est contracté deux fois consécutivement de 6,9% et 5,2% pour chacune de ces périodes.

Les contractions de notre PIB résultent des effets de la pandémie de la COVID-19. Plus particulièrement, aux conséquences des confinements en 2020 et 2021, ainsi qu'à la fermeture des frontières, ayant entraîné l'arrêt brutal du secteur touristique. Concrètement, ces contractions ont ramené notre PIB au niveau d'avant 2016.

M. le président, pour empêcher l'écroulement de notre structure économique et financière, nous avons déployé des mesures à hauteur de 30% de notre PIB pour soutenir les entreprises et les ménages mauriciens.

Sans le soutien historique du gouvernement aux opérateurs économiques et aux ménages, l'impact de la pandémie sur l'économie aurait été bien pire. Depuis le premier jour, nous avons été à leurs côtés et nous avons tout mis en œuvre pour éviter des vagues de défauts de paiement, des faillites en cascade et un tsunami de licenciements. L'objectif étant de préserver les emplois et les moyens de subsistance de la population.

Sans cette aide sans précédent du gouvernement, la contraction de notre PIB aurait entraîné la mise au chômage de quelque 100,000 personnes, soit 20% de notre population active. Nous avons réussi à maintenir le taux de chômage à 9,2%.

M. le président, les éléments que je viens d'exposer m'amènent à la partie (a) de la question. Selon la dernière publication de *Statistics Mauritius*, le taux d'inflation était de 3,2% pour les derniers douze mois se terminant en septembre 2021. Ce taux d'inflation s'explique principalement par –

- (a) l'impact de la hausse des coûts du fret au niveau mondial, et
- (b) une augmentation des prix des produits de base au niveau international.

A vrai dire, de nombreux autres pays connaissent également une augmentation du taux d'inflation. Pour citer quelques exemples, aux États-Unis, le taux d'inflation est passé de 1,3 % pour l'année se terminant en août 2020 à 5,3% en août 2021. Au Royaume-Uni, le taux d'inflation est passé de 0,5% à 3% au cours de la même période. Au Canada, il est passé de 0,1% à 4,1%. En Afrique du Sud, l'inflation est passée de 3% à 5,1%.

Ici à Maurice, en tant que gouvernement responsable, nous avons pris les mesures nécessaires pour soutenir le pouvoir d'achat des consommateurs et les protéger contre de fortes augmentations de prix sur certains produits de grande consommation. Le gouvernement a ainsi introduit des subsides sur plus de 30 produits, pour préserver le pouvoir d'achat des ménages.

Parmi ceux-ci, le gouvernement subventionne sept denrées de base, à savoir les conserves de poisson, les tomates en conserve, le fromage, l'huile alimentaire, la margarine et le lait en poudre. La subvention couvre quelque 371 marques. Un montant de R 500 millions a été affecté à la subvention jusqu'en décembre 2021.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, selon les derniers chiffres publiés par *Statistics Mauritius*, le taux de croissance du PIB pour le deuxième trimestre de 2021 par rapport au trimestre correspondant de 2020 est estimé à 18,8%.

Le secteur des TIC continue d'afficher de bonnes performances avec un taux de croissance de 8,5% au deuxième trimestre, supérieur aux 7,3% enregistrés au deuxième trimestre de 2020.

Une reprise majeure a été enregistrée dans le secteur de la construction (+567,7%), dans le commerce de gros et de détail (24,9%), dans le secteur du textile (+96,6%) et dans les autres industries manufacturières (68%).

Nous constatons aussi une reprise significative de l'investissement, de 128,9%, qui s'est élevée à 17,4 milliards de roupies contre 7,6 milliards de roupies au deuxième trimestre 2020.

Les exportations de biens ont augmenté de 52,6% tandis que les dépenses de consommation ont-elles augmenté de 20,2%.

M. le président, la partie (c) de la question, le niveau de la dette brute du secteur public était de 419 milliards de roupies à la fin du mois de juin 2021.

En pourcentage du PIB, la dette s'élevait donc à 96,2 %.

L'augmentation du niveau de la dette s'explique –

- d'une part, par près de 50 milliards de roupies de dépenses exceptionnelles mais nécessaires pour faire face à la pire des crises de notre histoire, et
- d'autre part, par une baisse des recettes fiscales à hauteur de 40 milliards de roupies induite par les deux contractions économiques d'affilée que nous avons subies.

Ainsi –

- (a) De mars 2020 à aujourd'hui, le gouvernement a déboursé plus de 25 milliards de roupies pour soutenir les entreprises et les particuliers dans le cadre du

WAS, du *SEAS* et du *Special Assistance Scheme* pour les travailleurs indépendants et les PME ;

- (b) Quelque 28,7 milliards de roupies ont été affectées à la mise en œuvre de grands projets et programmes qui contribueront à stimuler la croissance économique et la création d'emplois ;
- (c) Environ 4,4 milliards de roupies ont été dépensées pour l'acquisition de fournitures et d'équipements médicaux, de vaccins, ainsi que pour les frais de quarantaine et autres frais connexes ;
- (d) Environ 1,1 milliard de roupies ont été dépensées pour la mise en œuvre d'un certain nombre de projets dans le cadre du programme de relance économique ;
- (e) Quelque 400 millions de roupies ont été versées à titre des indemnités accordées aux *frontliners* ;
- (f) En outre, l'injection de capitaux dans le *National Property Fund Ltd* pour régler ses obligations immédiates en matière de dette et l'injection de capitaux dans la *National Insurance Company Ltd* en vue de l'exercice de restructuration de cette dernière a augmenté la dette du secteur public d'un montant net de 5 milliards de roupies.

M. le président, l'ouverture totale de nos frontières à partir du 1 octobre, rendue possible par le déploiement du programme de vaccination, a insufflé un nouveau dynamisme à l'économie.

Du 1 au 20 octobre, nous avons reçu plus de 30 000 touristes et le niveau des réservations continue d'augmenter.

Maurice n'étant plus sur la liste du Groupe d'action financière (GAFI), les perspectives de développement du secteur des services financiers se sont elles aussi considérablement accrues.

En outre, nous attendons une reprise significative des investissements, tant publics que privés, dans les mois à venir.

Une agence de mise en œuvre et de suivi des projets, *PIMA*, a ainsi été créée au niveau de mon ministère pour suivre, accompagner et conseiller dans la mise en œuvre des mesures budgétaires.

En outre, le *High Level Committee*, présidé par l'honorable Premier ministre, accélère le traitement et l'approbation des projets d'investissement du secteur privé en veillant à ce que les permis et les licences soient délivrés en temps voulu.

Ces développements majeurs devraient permettre d'atteindre un taux de croissance du PIB autour de 5% en 2021.

En juin 2021, *Statistics Mauritius* a prévu un taux de croissance du PIB de 5,4 % pour 2021.

Moody's Investors Service a, dans une mise à jour de son *Credit opinion* sur Maurice, publiée le 20 septembre 2021, prévu un taux de croissance du PIB de 5% pour 2021 et de 6,7 % pour 2022. Ce sera donc une croissance plus rapide que la médiane de 4,7% des pays possédant la note Baa.

Dans son rapport sur les perspectives de l'économie mondiale publié en octobre 2021, le FMI a lui anticipé pour Maurice des taux de croissance du PIB similaires à ceux de *Moody's*, c'est-à-dire 5% en 2021 et 6,7 % en 2022.

La semaine dernière, la Banque de Maurice a quant à elle maintenu sa projection initiale de croissance du PIB de 5,5 % pour 2021. Et cela, sur la base de la croissance positive élevée du deuxième trimestre de 2021 et sur l'amélioration de la confiance grâce à la campagne de vaccination en cours et à la réouverture complète de nos frontières.

Enfin, le taux d'inflation, selon la Banque de Maurice, devrait lui se situer à 3,8% en 2021. Merci.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether he has taken cognizance of the latest report published by the International Monetary Fund, entitled World Economic Outlook, published in October 2021, and in particular table A7 at page 122, where with respect to Mauritius, the projected increase in consumer price index, inflation is projected to be 10%? This is more in line with what Statistics Mauritius itself has just published on Friday in respect to increase in construction prices.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je me permets ici de dire que cela ne concerne pas l'année calendaire. C'est une comparaison, si vous regardez bien, par rapport au mois. C'est sûr que sur certains mois, vous avez des hausses imprévues au niveau de l'inflation; ça peut être dû à un phénomène externe, ça peut être dû à ce qui se passe en Europe mais, nous, nous

devons regarder par rapport à l'année. Les projections que nous regardons, c'est par rapport à l'année calendaire ou l'année fiscale. Concernant l'année calendaire, nous nous appuyons sur les chiffres publiés par la Banque de Maurice, qui est de 3.8% et si jamais nous voyons qu'il y a des disruptions concernant le taux d'inflation, à ce moment-là, on viendra avec des mesures appropriées, comme ce qu'on a fait concernant des produits de base, où nous avons mis sur la table 500 millions roupies avec des subsides pour maintenir le pouvoir d'achat des mauriciens.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development stated in his Budget Speech earlier this year, after confinement was over, that, and I quote, at paragraph 438 –

“Our public sector debt to GDP ratio will be reduced by around 4% to 91%.”

Today, we just heard him say that it is 96.2%. So, it is on the increase. Instead of decreasing, our public debt level is on the increase.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je remercie l'honorable membre de m'avoir posé cette question. Au niveau de de mon ministère, nous avons mis en place le *Financial Stability Committee* et aussi le *Fiscal Stability Committee*. On est en train de voir comment faire pour réduire le niveau de la dette. D'un côté, nous parlions sur la reprise économique avec la hausse du PIB, qui automatiquement va baisser le taux d'endettement de notre pays mais de l'autre côté, concernant la baisse de la dette du gouvernement. En accord avec ce que préconisent certaines institutions internationales, nous travaillons dessus et nous allons venir avec des propositions pour baisser le niveau de la dette publique, en particulier, le niveau de la dette du gouvernement par 4 % d'ici le mois de juin 2022. Merci.

Mr Uteem: On the GDP, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development just mentioned GDP expected to be between 5% and 5.5%, depending on whether we rely on the Bank of Mauritius, statistics or others. How does he reconcile this with his own figures which he gave to this House in his Budget Speech, at paragraph 435, where he said that for “fiscal year 2021/2022, we are expecting a GDP growth of 9%,” which is obviously not going to be achieved?

Dr. Padayachy: Bien sûr! M. le président, l'année fiscale concerne juillet 2021 à juin 2022. Par rapport au 5 ou 5,5 ou 5,4%, nous parlons de l'année calendaire janvier jusqu'à décembre et nous savons tous que la grande partie de l'année calendaire, nous étions sur le processus de vaccination. Nous n'avions pas encore ouvert les frontières. Nous étions dans ce

processus où on était en train de rallumer la machine économique. Donc, oui, la partie la plus difficile ça a été du mois de janvier jusqu'à mars et de mars à juin et de juillet à septembre, les neuf premiers mois ont été assez difficiles parce que nous n'avions pas encore rouvert les frontières.

Depuis la réouverture complète des frontières au mois d'octobre, nous parlons de plus de 30,000 touristes. Ce qui fait que nous pensons pouvoir atteindre le chiffre, la barre des 300,000 touristes. Nous l'espérons pour jusqu'à décembre 2021 mais ce que nous travaillons actuellement, c'est surtout de dépasser la barre des 600,000 touristes pour la période juillet 2021 à juin 2022. C'est sur cette période que nous visons le chiffre de 600,000 touristes ou plus parce que si vous faites une comparaison avec le chiffre de juillet 2020 à juin 2021, là le chiffre était de 3,000 touristes.

Donc, l'impact de cette hausse, je dis bien une hausse énorme du chiffre du nombre de touristes passant de 3,000 à 600,000 ou plus, sera conséquent sur le PIB de Maurice et aussi le fait d'ouvrir de nouveau, nous voyons bien que certains investisseurs arrivent de nouveaux, reviennent vers le pays. Nous voyons bien qu'il y a une confiance qui se répand. Récemment, j'ai vu une photo qui circule sur le net par rapport à l'achat d'un téléphone portable et j'ai vu qu'il y a un attrait énorme de nouveau des gens qui veulent sortir and qui veulent consommer et qui veulent investir. C'est cela aussi la reprise économique. Donc, oui, il y a une différence entre le taux de croissance au niveau calendaire et une différence au niveau du taux de croissance pour l'année fiscale 2021-2022.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary? Next question!

UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE – PERIODIC REPORTS - SUBMISSION

(No. B/929) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the submission of periodic reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, she will state where matters stand.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the 6th and the 7th combined periodic report on the convention on the rights of the child, which covers the period 2013 to 2021, has already been vetted by the State Law Office and approval of Cabinet is being sought for submission of the report by mid-November this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the report was due for submission by 15 October 2021 to the United Nations Committee on the rights of the child and in this respect, my Ministry has requested

for an extension to the UNCRC, the United Nations Committee on the rights of the child, and I am informed that the request is under consideration.

Mr Uteem: The Committee on the rights of the child in its last correspondence on 22 July 2020 asked a series of questions to the State. One of the questions asked is in relation to the Children's Bill. The Bill has been voted almost one year now, in December 2020. May I know from the hon. Minister why has this Bill still not been promulgated and come into force?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed we are approaching almost a year since the three pieces of legislation. I would like to remind the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are talking about three different pieces of legislation and the promulgation of these Acts do take a little bit of time because we have some collaboration which is cross-cutting, there is the judiciary, for example, which is involved with the setting-up of the Children's Court. There are certain regulations that need to be drafted in order to proclaim the Children's Act. The Office of the Commissioner of Police is imminently going to be launching the register for the child sex offender, and we need to also bear in mind, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have been going through quite strict sanitary restrictions, which has hindered the tremendous work that has been going on in the process in view of proclaiming those three pieces of legislation.

Mr Uteem: The Committee on the rights of the child also queried at paragraph 21, legislation to protect and promote rights of children with disabilities. May I know from the hon. Minister whether we have any update with any legislative reform to better protect children with disabilities?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the definition of the child in the Children's Act itself removes any kind of doubt whether a child with disability will be treated differently or not. He will not be treated differently. And secondly, the House will recall that there is a Disability Bill which is not under the purview of my Ministry but under the purview of our colleague Minister. There is a Bill that will be presented to the National Assembly imminently and that will definitely take care of the queries and apprehensions raised by my hon. colleague.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister state whether the third optional protocol to the Convention has been ratified by our Government? If yes, when? If not, why not?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the periodic report has taken a bit longer than expected again due to some delays of submission by different stakeholders, for example, the Office of the DPP had few delays in submitting their views and comments, but I am happy to report to the House that Cabinet is expected to examine the report in its next sitting. We are seeking approval of Cabinet and then the report will be submitted to the Committee.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, specifically of the third optional protocol to the convention, not the report.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: That will all be taken. It is a 350-page long report and it includes the provision that you are talking about, so, it will all be taken *dans l'ensemble*.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SC & HSC EXAMINATIONS – MARKINGS & GRADING – DISCREPANCIES & ANOMALIES

(No. B/930) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the markings and grading at the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examinations, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examination Syndicate, information as to the list of cases, subject-wise, where discrepancies and anomalies were noted since 2015 to date and table copy thereof, indicating the –

(a) causes thereof, and

(b) prejudices, if any, caused to the students concerned therewith.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since 2015 to date, the total number of 91,300 candidates sat for the School Certificate examinations and there were 139 cases of grade changes made during that period.

With regard to the Higher School Certificate, out of 52,877 candidates who sat for the examinations during that same period, there were 56 cases of grade changes.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to give the details thereof. For School Certificate, in year 2015, there were 44 cases. In 2016, there were 20 cases. In 2017 - 21 cases, 2018 - 17 cases, 2019 - 26 cases, and in 2020-2021 - 11 cases.

For the Higher School Certificate examinations, in year 2015 there were 9 cases, in 2016 -20 cases, in year 2017 - 5 cases, 2018 - 15 cases, 2019 - 6 cases and in 2020-2021 - 1 case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the causes of discrepancy may result from marking scheme and assessment criteria not being consistently applied by a few markers having a different interpretation of the marking scheme. This tends to be more common in essay-type and open-ended questions, which require the personal judgment of the marker.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am hereby tabling information pertaining to the number of cases subject-wise for both Cambridge SC and Higher School Certificate, where discrepancies and anomalies resulted in grade changes.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the figures that she gave for 2020-2021 have taken care of Design and Technology discrepancy that was noted especially in the results of 37 students of two particular secondary schools?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the case of Design and Technology results for High School Certificate, it is true that 29 candidates from Collège du Saint-Esprit and eight candidates from New Eton College, who had entered for Design and Technology Paper 9705, found their results as subsidiary results. And this information was given to the MES, which queried and the case was referred to the Cambridge International and the latter informed that for these two batches of students, the special consideration that was meant to be applied because of the fact that they did not take the paper because of torrential rains was not applied and immediately, the results were then reviewed and the students were given the A-level results.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, now that some students have to join University prior to getting their HSC results, Government has made a proviso for these students to get their results directly in that University. I have a case at Toronto University, where students got 'A+' in a subject but when he got his results in Mauritius, it is only 'A' in Main and in Subsidiary, he got small letter 'a' but when he got his results it is small letter 'b'. There are discrepancies which are taking place and I think Cambridge has to be notified about same because here, I hold the two different results in my hand.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, when the results were given to the students online, it was clearly specified that these were provisional results and the proper

scrutiny that normally Cambridge does was not completed. And it was mentioned that their results would come with their result slip and if there are minor changes, the students were already informed about it. What we did prior to their getting their results was to facilitate the admission procedure and we had requested Cambridge to ensure that the results could be communicated to the Universities prior to the release of the results, so as not to penalise the students.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, there is a letter addressed to you on 21 October, I have a copy of it. A student has got 'one', 'one', 'one', 'one' in four papers and still, the overall grade is not an 'A+' that it should be. It is only 'A'. And will the hon. Minister check with the MES whether this discrepancy, if it is, can be modified?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this information was already conveyed to me and the MES is already dealing with Cambridge International Examinations for that.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, students, when they go for remarking of papers - I am not talking of clerical check, but remarking of papers – you know like me, it is very costly. Would you, with the help of MES, check with Cambridge University if the fee could be subsidised, especially for modest families where students very often do not go forward because they do not have the amount of money to do so?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I suppose a subsidy cannot be requested from Cambridge. We will try to see whether things can be done at our level, but I am sure that the students who are on the Social Register could even request from the Ministry of Social Security for support.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS 2021 – ENGLISH LANGUAGE (ORAL) – DETAILED BREAKDOWN

(No. B/931) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations 2021, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examination Syndicate –

- (a) a detailed breakdown, band-wise from 1 to 5, of the results obtained by the students in Oral English Language, and

- (b) information as to the number of students who did not obtain a credit 6 in English Language because of the grades they obtained in the Oral English Language.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to inform the House that in view of the pandemic situation no oral assessments were held for Cambridge School Certificate Examinations in 2021. In addition, due to the torrential rains from the 28 April 2021, the English Paper 1 could not be taken. I wish to highlight here, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Oral English component, counts for 12% of the overall grade. Cambridge Assessment International Education was contacted and we were informed that in such circumstances a special consideration applies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I already informed the House in my reply to PQ /415, special consideration is an adjustment which CAIE makes if the candidate misses one or more papers in a given subject in circumstances considered as exceptional and adverse, for example, disruption of an examination due to being COVID-19 positive, cyclonic weather, floods, earthquakes, etcetera. And this provided that the candidate has taken at least one component in the subject.

Mr Speaker, Sir, candidates for the English paper, in Mauritius entered for an option comprising the Oral test. We were informed that the IT systems at Cambridge could not have produced the grade in the subject unless the input of marks, for all components, is effected. The marks for the oral component were thus determined on the basis of the marks scored by the student in the only paper for which they sat, that is, Paper 2. This is the established standard operating procedure of Cambridge for such cases and the calculated mark of the Oral test was determined in the same way for all candidates.

I am tabling, as requested, a breakdown of candidates results in Oral English band-wise from 1 to 5.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, as explained earlier, the grades assigned in the Oral Paper had no bearing on the overall marks of the candidates. In fact, it was the other way round. The grades assigned to the Oral Paper were based on the marks scored by the candidate in Paper 2. Thus, their results in English at the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations 2021 cannot be attributed to the marks allocated to students for the oral assessments.

I am tabling the papers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. I am a bit flabbergasted because I know 12% is the weighting of Oral, in normal circumstances, I have just heard you. What avenues are left for aggrieved students if they are not happy with the grades they have got? Still they have got a grade 4 or 5 in Oral and this will bear a lot of prejudices to them in the future. What can these students do for remedy?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to bear in mind that we were in a pandemic situation and on top of that we had the torrential rains; the students did not take the papers. And in normal circumstances, if Cambridge did not apply the special consideration, the students would have been ungraded. We had negotiated with Cambridge; Cambridge allowed our students to get a grade. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just explained, the results attributed to the students for the oral papers did not determine their grading. It is, on the other hand, the results that they obtained through the written paper that allowed the allocation of the marks for the oral papers.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NON-VACCINATED PERSONS – MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND/OR HEALTH ISSUES – RESTRICTED ACCESS TO PLACES

(No. B/932) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to persons who cannot be vaccinated owing to medical conditions and/or health issues, he will state the number thereof, indicating the measures taken, if any, for them to be allowed access to their workplace and to any other such places where a vaccination pass is compulsory.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that for people who cannot be vaccinated owing to medical history and/or health issues, a Regional Non-Eligibility Committee and a National Non-Eligibility Committee to COVID-19 vaccine have been instituted since June 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, from June to October 2021, there are 733 people who could not be vaccinated against COVID-19 because of their medical history or health issues as assessed by the Regional Non-Eligibility Committee and the National Non-Eligibility Committee to COVID-19 vaccine.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that a Medical Certificate is issued by the National Non-Eligibility Committee to COVID-19 vaccine, stating that the said person is not eligible for vaccination due to medical history and/or health issues.

However, non-eligible persons should undertake mandatory PCR tests every seven days, which is sponsored by my Ministry in order for them to have access to their workplace.

Dr. Gungapersad: Apart from workplace, hon. Minister, these people sometimes have to go to different places where there are restrictions, not the workplace, I am saying. The card that you are saying, will this be applicable there also?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the restriction to access to other places is already defined in the Quarantine Regulation. As per the workplace, it is already in the Quarantine Regulation for Restriction of Access but for other places, as you will see, we are extending the vaccination pass requirement and obviously somebody who cannot be vaccinated will have to produce his/her Medical Non-Eligibility Certificate.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, will there be vaccines adapted depending on the health of these people in the future?

Dr. Jagutpal: Let's hope so. For the time being, those vaccines that are available are being administered and in case of contraindication they are not being administered, but, in the future, if we do have vaccines that will be of universal coverage it would definitely benefit one and all.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Thank you. Can I ask the hon. Minister if there have been any cases where some people were denied the non-eligibility and then got severe reaction after having a vaccine?

Dr. Jagutpal: To my knowledge, there are cases where they have been denied, but they have a reaction. For example, somebody who has an allergy to food and then for food reaction/allergy, the Non-Eligibility Certificate is not issued and that person may have developed some reaction but the panel assessing the non-eligibility, they have to recommend which vaccine is suitable or not. But, there have been no serious cases of not being given the Non-Eligibility Certificate and then at the same time having a severe reaction.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 6 – DEFECTIVE WATER PIPES – COSTS

(No. B/933) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Constituency No. 6, Grand’ Baie and Poudre d’Or, he will state the extent of defective water pipes replaced to date in each village found therein, indicating the respective costs thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the regions of Grand’Baie and Poudre d’Or in Constituency No. 6, fall under the Water Supply Zone North.

I am further informed that about 20 kms of old pipelines have been replaced over the recent years as follows –

- (i) 3.6. kms of pipelines have been replaced from Cap Malheureux to St François Goodlands. The sum of Rs42,266,105.39. All works were completed on 03 November 2017.
- (ii) 13 kms of distribution mains have been replaced in *Morcellement* Swan Pereybère in the sum of Rs76,906,819, excluding VAT. All works were completed on 01 July 2019 and after commissioning of the above projects, hours of supply in the concerned areas have increased from 6 hours to 16 hours daily and there has been lesser recourse to water tanker services.
- (iii) 3 kms of pipelines have been replaced at Upper Géranium and Lower Géranium Routes and Adolphe de Plevitz Road in Grand’Baie and the minor works contracts for a sum of Rs12,589,321.18, excluding VAT. Works were completed in December 2017 and February 2018.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the CWA that the renewal of another 5.2 km of old defective pipelines from Bois Mangles to Fond du Sac are expected to start in December 2021 for a duration of 15 months. Hours of supply are expected to further improve after implementation of the project.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. I hope this pipe laying from Bois Mangles to Fond du Sac will solve the problem of *Morcellement* Dilchand and we have other places, hon. Minister, which are water stressed. In Grand’ Gaube, we have La Marie, Citerne, Indira Gandhi, Flamboyant and I can go on with the list in Goodlands: Gopal Road, Boodhoo Road, Mamzelle Jeanne, Mosque Road.

Now, the CWA, has a special squad which is on the field in order to repair damages caused to pipes, because sometimes the bedding is not proper and sometimes valves are

damaged. Sometimes the water pressure is not enough and these people suffer. Now, Diwali is coming and many religious festivals...

Mr Speaker: Come with your question!

Dr. Gungapersad: Will the Minister make sure that these problems are addressed in due time?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, these are the problems that officers of the CWA have to tackle on a daily basis. There are special units that have been put in place to tackle these problems on top of the pipe replacement which I have mentioned in my main reply, there are additional projects in order to increase the distribution of water and additional projects which have been identified with the two Members of Government of that Constituency, hon. Teeluck and hon. Ramdhany. This concerns installation of additional pressure filters which will be installed at New Goodlands Reservoir during the months of 2021.

There is also a project at Grande Marée and we are also looking into the increase storage capacity of Nicolière Reservoir and upgrading of Nicolière Treatment Plant to increase the water being distributed to the northern regions. We are aware that with time most of the reservoirs in the northern regions are now undersized, that is why we are increasing the capacity of water distribution in the northern part of the island and we are also replacing undersized pipes and also replacing other types of pipes which are now quite old. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: My colleague has mentioned about the Diwali Festival coming next week. So, can the Minister inform the House whether any special arrangement has been put in place by the CWA for this festive period and whether any hotline is being advertised? Because we are in Rose Hill facing some problems recently because of the broken pipe due to the Metro Express works.

Mr Lesjongard: I thank the hon. Member for this question. We are all aware that the Diwali is a very important festival in the country. We are making all necessary arrangements as it is made every year for the normal distribution of water a day before and on the day of Diwali and I shall be very glad to communicate to Members of the Assembly, the offices which are going to be on stand-by on that particular day. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

COVID-19 VACCINES – MIX-MATCHING

(No. B/934) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the number of persons administered with a third dose thereof as at to date, indicating –

- (a) the number thereof who have been administered mix-match vaccines, indicating the types of vaccines mix-matched, and
- (b) if the decision to mix-match vaccines is based on appropriate recommendations from the World Health Organisation.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, all persons having received a primary series of the same COVID-19 vaccine, that is, two doses of the same vaccine or one single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The COVID-19 Vaccination Committee recommended that an additional dose of vaccine be administered in order to strengthen immunity, as is being carried out in other countries. The COVID-19 Vaccination Committee stays guided by the recommendations of the WHO, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention as well as other international scientific literature. This was, subsequently, approved by the High-Level Committee. In this respect, persons having received two doses of Sinopharm vaccine may be given an additional dose of the same vaccine provided there is a lapse of 4 months following the administration of the second dose.

As regards persons inoculated with the Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccine, they are eligible to receiving a 3rd dose of the same vaccine or may be administered an additional dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

With regard to persons vaccinated with Covaxin vaccine, they may receive an additional dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the administration of the additional dose is being carried out on a voluntary basis. As at 22 October 2021, 14,868 number of persons have already received a 3rd dose of the COVID-19 vaccines.

The number of persons vaccinated with Sinopharm vaccine is 465,732 of which, 870 have received a 3rd dose of Sinopharm vaccine.

155,834 persons have been fully vaccinated with AstraZeneca/Covishield, of which, 1,318 have received a 3rd dose of AstraZeneca vaccine. 99,062 have been fully vaccinated with Covaxin, of which 12,680 have received a 3rd dose with Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (b) of the question, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that moderately and severely immunocompromised persons should be offered an additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine as part of an extended primary series since these individuals are less likely to respond adequately to vaccination following a standard primary vaccine series and are at risk of severe COVID-19 disease. This additional dose can be the same vaccine or a different vaccine to the one previously administered.

However, the decisions of the COVID-19 Vaccination Committee are not based solely on recommendations from the WHO but, also on information from the manufacturers of the vaccines and international and, in particular, scientific literature.

Several studies have demonstrated that the administration of mixed COVID-19 vaccines confers higher protection than administration of an additional dose of the same vaccine, in terms of neutralising antibodies and cellular immunity.

In October 2021, one study on “Heterologous SARS-COV-2 Booster Vaccination” in United States evaluated homologous and heterologous booster vaccination in persons who had received an EUA COVID-19 vaccine regimen. Adults who received the COVID-19 vaccines at least 12 weeks prior to enrolment and had no reported history of SARS-CoV-2 infection received a booster injection with one of three vaccines namely Moderna, Johnson & Johnson or Pfizer-BioNTech. The study demonstrates that homologous boost the increased neutralising antibody 4.2-20-fold whereas heterologous boost the increased neutralising antibody 6.2-76-fold.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l’honorable ministre peut-il nous dire pourquoi dans le cadre de l’administration de la troisième dose, son ministère n’a pas procédé à un exercice de ciblage notamment envers les personnes les plus exposées au virus, du secteur de la santé, du secteur médico-social et les personnes vulnérables et âgées, comme cela se fait en France par exemple, au lieu de le laisser au bon vouloir de tout un chacun de décider ou pas de se faire injecter une troisième dose?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the 3rd dose or booster dose, as you call it, is based upon the recommendation of the Vaccination Committee, specially based upon the duration, that is, from the time that you have done your last dose and that should be at least 4 months.

If we will start prioritising, as the hon. Member has said, then it will be difficult for us to know because the vaccination campaign started as early as January and for the different categories, it has been an ongoing event till June and July. So, calling people in respect of that priority will not meet the purpose of doing the booster dose. But calling people according to the time that they have done the vaccination, let us say, somebody who has done his vaccination in February, obviously this person is invited to do the booster dose.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, selon les chiffres qui viennent d'être communiqués à la Chambre par l'honorable ministre, ne pense-t-il pas qu'on pourrait améliorer la communication ? Notamment parce qu'il n'existe pas de message clair et net envers la population - je dis bien envers la population. Là, ici, l'honorable ministre a longuement élaboré sur les bienfaits de la troisième dose, sur l'importance justement de se faire injecter cette troisième dose du vaccin contre la Covid-19 - message clair et net envers la population ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, thank you hon. Member to come up with this question. In fact, the Ministry is preparing a communication strategy especially for the booster dose. But, at the same time, we still have some people who have not done their first or second dose, as earlier I have pointed out what the vaccination status is for first and second dose. So, we are concentrating more in trying to call those patients who have not done. And now, we should not forget that the young, that is, the adolescents that we are actually vaccinating. We are preparing a strategy to get those young people vaccinated. And, obviously, it will come at a time where we have to concentrate on the vaccination of the booster dose for the whole population.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Est-ce-que l'honorable ministre peut nous informer quelle est la période d'attente après la deuxième ou la troisième dose pour que quelqu'un puisse voyager à l'étranger ?

Dr. Jagutpal: 4 months, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, anybody who has to travel, especially there are countries where you have to do some specific vaccines to get entry into that country, so, in Mauritius luckily we have the Johnson & Johnson vaccine that is present and many countries do recognise this vaccine. And if somebody has done the vaccination, that is, the last dose and there is already an interval, a duration of 4 months, he can get access to a booster dose and that booster dose is already available in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Merci. Est-ce-que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire si une personne qui a déjà eu le Covid et une dose de vaccin est considérée comme entièrement vaccinée, comme c'est le cas pour les voyageurs que Maurice considère comme entièrement vaccinés, et si oui, quelles sont les recommandations de booster dose pour ces personnes ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, somebody who has done his vaccination, one dose, and later on has been tested positive, it is considered as again, to be fully vaccinated. And with this, the Ministry of Health and Wellness will issue a certificate certifying that this is considered as fully vaccinated and they can travel with that. Now, somebody who has at least received one dose, that person when he will be receiving the other dose, it will be after a duration of 4 months; that is, from the time that you have been tested positive, and then after an interval of again 4 months later, you can get another dose of vaccine.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/949 has been withdrawn.

Next question!

MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION – SANCTIONS – 27 AUGUST 2021

(No. B/935) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the sanctions imposed on the Mauritius Football Association by his Ministry by virtue of a letter dated 27 August 2021, he will state –

- (a) if an evaluation of the conditions for the lifting of the said sanctions has been done by his Ministry, and
- (b) why the provisions of section 9 of the Sports Act has not been applied in this case.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, as per the letter dated 27 August 2021, addressed by my Ministry to the Mauritius Football Association (MFA), the latter has up to end of November 2021 to sort out its governance issues and to revert to my Ministry accordingly.

I wish to inform the House that, as at date, the MFA has not yet reverted to my Ministry. At this stage, the question for an assessment of the conditions for the lifting of the said sanctions does not arise.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to point out that section 9 of the Sports Act 2016 will be applied only as a last resort measure when all avenues for redressing the situation have been exhausted.

Thank you.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je constate que le ministère des Sports a pris pratiquement une année pour envoyer officiellement un rappel à l'ordre à la *MFA*, après la sanction de la *FIFA*, dans l'affaire de transfert illégale des joueurs malgaches au Cercle de Joachim et cela, probablement, M. le président, n'aurait pas eu lieu s'il n'y avait pas eu la récente affaire de voyeurisme allégué. De ce fait, l'honorable ministre, peut-il nous dire, comment la *MFA*, dont les statuts ne sont pas en conformité avec le *Sports Act 2016*, va-t-elle pouvoir se mettre maintenant en conformité avec une section de cette même loi ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, premièrement je ne suis pas d'accord que cela a pris une année pour que le ministère réagisse. Loin de là. Nous avons eu plusieurs rencontres avec la Fédération et à plusieurs reprises, nous avons rappelé à l'ordre la Fédération de *Mauritius Football Association*. Evidemment, les récents événements nous ont fait prendre des sanctions encore plus sévères. Quand il s'agit de se mettre en conformité avec la loi, c'est à la *MFA* de prendre toutes les mesures nécessaires pour le faire. Ce n'est pas à nous d'aller tenir la main de la *MFA* pour qu'elle puisse se mettre en conformité.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, j'ai bien écouté l'honorable ministre mais peut-il nous expliquer comment, en l'espace de trois mois, ceux qui sont responsables de cette mauvaise gouvernance au sein de la *MFA*, vont subitement vouloir collaborer avec son ministère, afin de changer les choses ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, encore une fois, je ne peux pas répondre pour la *MFA*. Certainement, les choses ne vont pas très bien dans cette Fédération. Je pense que nous sommes tous d'accord. Moi, tout ce que je peux faire, c'est d'avoir des rencontres avec la Fédération. J'ai rencontré les clubs pour exposer les différents problèmes que nous sommes en train de faire face dans le monde du football et là, je vais demander la collaboration de tout un chacun pour venir de l'avant avec un plan court terme, moyen terme et long terme. Nous avons donné comme *deadline*, la fin de novembre à la Fédération, nous attendons le plan que la Fédération viendra nous proposer.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, les sanctions prises contre la *MFA* dans cette fameuse lettre en date du 27 août dernier, touchent beaucoup plus les clubs que la Fédération elle-même, que les dirigeants eux-mêmes. De ce fait, le ministre, peut-il nous dire - il a parlé en dernier ressort - qu'il fallait attendre encore pour justement appliquer la section 9 (9) du

Sports Act ? Mais je puis rappeler à l'honorable ministre, à la Chambre que ce que dit la section 9 (9) en une phrase, je ne lirai pas tout ce que dit cette section de la loi -

“a Multisport Organisation –

- (a) persistently fails to carry out its functions in accordance with its rules or this Act;*
- (b) commits an act which is prejudicial to the interest of its members or its licensees; or*
- (c) is otherwise not functioning properly due to internal conflicts, the supervising officer may – (i) by written order, dissolve the Managing Committee.”*

Je pense que dans le cas de la MFA, M. le président, si vous me permettez, on aurait dû dès maintenant, appliquer cette section 9 (9) de façon à redorer le blason du football mauricien et de façon à avoir une nouvelle équipe dirigeante qui pourrait justement faire honneur au football local, aux footballeurs alors que là, ce sont les clubs qui sont pénalisés, qui ne reçoivent plus de *grant* annuelle, qui ne peuvent plus s'entraîner sur les infrastructures appartenant au gouvernement. L'honorable ministre ne pense-t-il pas qu'il serait temps d'appliquer cette section 9 (9) et non pas permettre à cette fédération et à ces mêmes dirigeants de continuer dans cette même voie ?

Mr Toussaint: Merci à l'honorable membre de lire la section 9 de notre *Sports Act* que je connais presque par cœur. Pénaliser les clubs, il faut savoir que ce sont les clubs eux-mêmes et leurs présidents qui élisent le président de la Fédération. Comme on dit souvent, on mérite le président que nous avons élu. J'ai rencontré les clubs à plusieurs reprises et on a discuté de la situation mais je peux dire à la Chambre, qu'au niveau des clubs, il y a un bon nombre qui ont l'air d'être satisfaits avec leurs présidents et leur Fédération. Même si nous ne sommes peut-être pas sur la même longueur d'onde qu'eux, il y a une très grosse majorité qui a l'air d'être satisfait avec leurs présidents et qui a défendu - dans la réunion que j'ai eue avec les clubs - bec et ongles la Fédération et leur président de Fédération.

Alors, maintenant lorsqu'il s'agit des *grants*, de l'entraînement *etc.*, je fais un appel au président de la Fédération qui, à maintes reprises, sur plusieurs réseaux sociaux, radio, presse, *etc.*, signifiait son intention de financer lui-même la Fédération elle-même, la reprise de la *league*, puisqu'à ce qu'il paraît, ils ont plus d'une cinquantaine de millions sur le compte de la Fédération de football. De toute les façons, comme j'ai dit, nous

avons donné le temps aux clubs de s'asseoir avec leurs présidents, de s'asseoir avec les officiers du ministère, de préparer. Ce n'est pas juste une question de donner des sous là, d'ouvrir les terrains, *bat impe boule* et puis la situation redevient pareille. L'année prochaine, c'est la même chose. Et, j'aurais les mêmes questions avec l'honorable membre.

Alors, la question n'est pas là. La question, c'est de trouver un plan long-terme, c'est vrai. Nous sommes d'accord même si vous êtes là-bas et je suis ici, nous sommes d'accord. Il y a certainement beaucoup de choses qu'il faut faire pour redorer le blason de notre football mais cela dépend aussi de ces clubs et des présidents des clubs. Donc, je lance un appel. Je leurs dit, venez vers nous pour qu'on puisse relever notre football local.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/936, B/937, B/989, B/990 and B/991 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.

Mr Gobin seconded.

Question put and agreed to

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

REOPENING OF BORDERS – RELAUNCH OF THE TOURISM SECTOR

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to make a statement on the recent reopening of borders and the relaunch of the Tourism Sector.

As the House is aware, since March 2020, Mauritius closed its borders to international travel, prohibiting operation of commercial passenger flights to and from our country. However, authorisation was granted for the operation of special flights on specific conditions, predominantly for the repatriation of Mauritians stranded abroad and medical cases. Thereafter, as from 01 October 2020, Government embarked on an accelerated repatriation

programme which targeted students, Occupation and Residence Permit holders and other Mauritians abroad who expressed the wish to be repatriated.

The House may wish to note that, in April 2021, my Ministry set up a Joint Public-Private Sector Working Group to prepare the reopening of our borders and the relaunch of the tourism sector. As a matter of fact, Government proceeded with the implementation of a phased re-opening of borders, starting as from 15 July 2021 where sanitary protocols were eased and the “Resort Tourism” concept was introduced to provide vaccinated passengers the opportunity to undergo a 14-day quarantine period in a resort hotel with the possibility of enjoying all the facilities within the resort. I wish to recall that the Ministry of Health and Wellness in consultation with my Ministry, and all other relevant stakeholders, elaborated appropriate sanitary protocols to ensure a safe welcome of incoming passengers while at the same time ensuring adequate protection of the population from the virus.

Taking into consideration the prevailing sanitary conditions locally and abroad, coupled with the fact that over 63% of the population was fully vaccinated as at 30 September 2021, Government decided that Mauritius could fully open its borders to international travel as from 01 October 2021. This date represents an important milestone in the relaunching of our tourism sector, which has borne the brunt of the pandemic resulting in a quasi-standstill since March 2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, as announced in the Budget Speech 2021/2022, our target is to attract 650,000 tourists by June 2022, which will be attainable subject first and foremost to favourable sanitary conditions locally and abroad, but also to effective marketing, adequate airlift capacity and an attractive tourism product corresponding to the new COVID-determined reality. It is to be noted that, following the first wave of the pandemic last year, the MTPA embarked on an aggressive marketing campaign to ensure that Mauritius remains ‘top of the mind’ across our main markets, including the MauritiusNow campaign conceived through a close collaborative approach between the public and private sectors.

In line with the recommendations of the Joint Public-Private Sectors Working Group set up under my Chair, Mauritius is pursuing a focused marketing campaign to boost the visibility of the destination in our traditional, proximity and emerging markets with a particular focus on digital marketing and participation in international tourism fairs. For instance, our participation in the Top Resa Tourism Fair in Paris was a major success and the

response from the French market has been very encouraging. Since Reunion Island is our third largest market, a delegation of the MTPA visited the island yesterday to reinforce our promotional campaign and next week, Mauritius will participate in the World Travel Market in London to showcase the destination to the UK market.

We have further amplified our presence on the international scene through interviews and interventions in various prestigious international media, such as CNN, BBC and *TV5 Monde*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards air connectivity, the House may wish to note that our airspace is, in addition to the existing airlines operating to Mauritius, increasingly opening up to additional flights and new airlines. For the month of October 2021, a total of 15 airlines are operating 239 flights to Mauritius. We are expecting 17 airlines to operate some 510 flights to Mauritius in November 2021, and 18 airlines to operate some 560 flights to Mauritius in December 2021.

As regards cruise tourism, some 29 cruise vessels are expected to call at Mauritius during the 2021-2022 cruise season and an appropriate sanitary protocol is being elaborated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with international practice, we have also developed sanitary requirements for all incoming passengers to the country as from 01 October 2021, whereby they have, within 72 hours before departure, to undergo a PCR test, provided that there is no break in travel. Upon disembarkation in Mauritius, fully vaccinated passengers have to undergo a COVID test on day-0 and day-5 whereas unvaccinated passengers are subjected to a 14-day in-room quarantine in dedicated hotels.

It is equally worth noting that 1,140 taxi operators have been trained with reference to the sanitary protocols between 08 and 17 September 2021, comprising 82 taxi operators based at the airport and 1,058 hotel-based taxi operators. Training of trainers as to the new protocols for representatives of 106 hotels and 136 destination management companies started on 24 September 2021 and was completed on 29 September 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that for the period 01 to 24 October 2021, 240 flights have landed in Mauritius and according to data obtained from the Passport and Immigration Office, as at 24 October, a total of 50,408 incoming passengers arrived in Mauritius on these flights, including 43,036 foreigners and 38,181 tourists.

The number of incoming passengers who proceeded to quarantine centres upon disembarkation in Mauritius in the same period is 149, comprising 53 Mauritians and 96 non-Mauritians.

The number of incoming passengers found to be COVID-19 positive upon arrival at the airport as at 24 October 2021 stood at 40, representing 0.08% of total arrivals hailing from various ports of embarkation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the relaunch of the tourism sector in the wake of the reopening of borders has so far been a resounding success. I would like to end on a note of appreciation for all the tourism stakeholders, both from the public and private sectors, who have contributed to the successful take-off of the industry.

Mauritian Tourism has historically been built on an effective public-private partnership and we intend to pursue the same path of close collaboration to ensure a rapid rebound of tourism so as to reach the pre-COVID situation as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Seeruttun!

MAURITIUS - FATF GREY LIST - DELISTING

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement to inform the House of the outcome of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Plenary Meeting held between 19 and 21 October 2021 and update the House on the decision taken regarding the de-listing of Mauritius from the FATF list of “Jurisdictions under increased monitoring”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that, in February 2020, the FATF decided that Mauritius should be monitored under its International Co-operation Review Group (ICRG) process. As a result, Mauritius was placed on the FATF list of “Jurisdictions under Increased Monitoring” with an agreed action plan of two years to address the strategic deficiencies identified in its AML/CFT regime.

In April 2020, the President of the FATF decided to pause the ICRG reviews scheduled for June 2020 Plenary due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The timeline for the completion of each action item under the action plan was extended by one plenary cycle.

Consequently, if the action items would have been completed on the agreed timeline and progress reported, Mauritius would have exited the FATF Grey List at the October 2022 Plenary at the earliest.

However, at the High-Level Stakeholders Meeting, chaired by the hon. Prime Minister, held in March 2020, it was agreed that Mauritius would aim at exiting the ICRG process ahead of the agreed timelines. The challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic made the task still more difficult.

My Ministry together with the core group chaired by the Financial Secretary and other immediate outcome sub-Committees, engaged closely with all stakeholders with the view of expediting the completion of all action items to enable an earlier exit as agreed at the High-Level Stakeholders Meeting. Assistance from the ESAAMLG Secretariat was also sought and it has been instrumental in the process.

Furthermore, with a view to addressing these identified strategic deficiencies, Government embarked on an extremely ambitious exercise and spared no efforts to overhaul the AML/CFT framework. This exercise was fully supported by the hon. Prime Minister himself, who chaired the Inter-Ministerial Committee, to monitor closely the progress made in the implementation of the FATF Action Plan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, sixteen months after placing Mauritius on its Grey list, the FATF made the initial determination at its June 2021 Plenary that Mauritius had substantially completed its action plan, warranting an on-site assessment to verify that the implementation of Mauritius's AML/CFT reforms has begun and is being sustained, and that the necessary political commitment remains in place to sustain the implementation in the future.

In that respect, an on-site assessment was conducted by the Africa/Middle East Joint Group of the FATF from 13 to 15 September 2021.

During the visit, it was confirmed that implementation of the required reforms was well underway and that the requisite conditions were in place for implementation to be sustained, developed and enhanced.

The high-level political commitment to sustain this implementation was confirmed by the Prime Minister, himself.

As already announced by the hon. Prime Minister, the FATF, at its Plenary Meeting of 21 October 2021, decided that Mauritius would no longer be subject to its increased monitoring.

The FATF has recognised that significant progress has been made by Mauritius in improving its AML/CFT regime.

In fact, FATF has concluded that Mauritius has strengthened the effectiveness of its AML/CFT regime and has addressed all the strategic deficiencies identified in its action plan.

I also attended the FATF Plenary virtual meeting on 21 October 2021 together with members of the AML/CFT Core Group and CO-Chairs of the IO Sub Committee.

Following the decision taken by the FATF to de-list Mauritius from the list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring, on behalf of the Government of Mauritius, I thanked the FATF members, all the Reviewers and the countries and Organisations who have assisted Mauritius in the process.

Several countries have also congratulated and commended Mauritius for successfully completing the FATF Action Plan despite the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the significance progress achieved within this record timeframe.

They commended Mauritius for its tremendous efforts and unflinching commitment and will in achieving this progress. They also stressed on the need for Mauritius to assist other countries in the region by sharing the Mauritian experience and lessons learnt.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the serious challenges caused by the pandemic, Mauritius did not let up its efforts to fight money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing.

On the contrary, efforts were doubled so that positive and tangible progress was systematically reported to the FATF.

This was made possible by strengthening both the infrastructural and human capabilities of the relevant institutions to enable them to carry out their functions properly.

Numerous amendments were also brought to the AML/CFT framework.

In this respect, from 2018 to date, 46 pieces of legislations were amended to assist Mauritius in strengthening its AML/CFT regime.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate that this achievement would not have been possible without the efforts of our institutions, the undaunting support of our officers as well as the private sector operators who have been instrumental in the fight against money laundering, terrorism and proliferation financing.

In the process, over and above working closely with the FATF and the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group – ESAAMLG – Mauritius has engaged with several countries and international bodies to obtain Technical Assistance with a view to reinforcing capacity of relevant authorities in the fight against money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism and proliferation.

Mauritius has received technical assistance and support from the ESAAMLG Secretariat, EU Global AML/CFT Facility, the German Development Agency (GIZ), UNODC, UK, France, World Bank and the IMF.

A Technical Assistance Coordination Committee – TACC – co-chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry and the EU Commission was also set up in June 2020 with the aim of facilitating and coordinating Technical Assistance activities with the different donors that have been providing Technical Assistance to Mauritius on AML/CFT issues.

This Committee also allowed several experts from different Technical Assistance providers to coordinate their activities and hold joint meetings and trainings.

It is to be highlighted that this is a unique concept that my Ministry has come up with and since June 2020 this committee has held 22 meetings.

All Technical Assistance Providers have unanimously agreed that this initiative should be marketed to other countries and that this platform has exceeded their expectations in the way my Ministry has coordinated, requested and secured technical assistance from high calibre international experts.

For the period July 2020 to date, a total of 113 targeted training sessions have been organised for the benefit of 2373 participants from the Supervisory authorities, Law Enforcement Agencies and other relevant competent authorities in Mauritius.

The training sessions focused on numerous fields including, *inter alia*, Risk Based Supervision, Suspicious Transactions Reporting, Beneficial Ownership, Parallel Financial Investigations, Targeted Financial Sections, Non-Profit Organisations and Terrorism Financing.

We will continue and spare no efforts to continue to train and build capacity of our officers and the private sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, even with the FATF action plan items, Mauritius did not lose focus on the technical compliance and recommended actions under its Mutual Evaluation Report.

It is also worth noting that Mauritius has, in parallel with the FATF ICRG process, been submitting its progress reports bi-annually to ESAAMLG on the progress made in the implementation of the recommended actions under the Mutual Evaluation Report.

Furthermore, since 2018, Mauritius has submitted four Follow-Up Reports with application for reratings for technical compliance.

As a result, Mauritius is now compliant or largely compliant with 39 out of 40 FATF Recommendations.

These actions are, undoubtedly, testimony of the strong commitment of this Government to comply and adhere to international standards at all times.

With regard to the only remaining Recommendation, namely Recommendation 15 on New Technologies, I will shortly introduce a new legislation to regulate the business activities relating to Virtual Assets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as Mauritius is no longer subject to the FATF increased monitoring process, Government is closely following up on our subsequent delisting from the European Union and the United Kingdom lists of “High Risk Third Countries”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate that the delisting of Mauritius from the Grey List will undoubtedly lead to increased confidence in the integrity of our financial eco-system and boost our foreign direct investment.

Government remains committed to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of its national strategy to combat money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing well beyond the ICRG process.

I would like to conclude by reassuring the House that this Government will continue to preserve the integrity of our financial system and promote Mauritius as a jurisdiction of highest global standards.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

NATIONAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall make a statement regarding the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan of the High-Level Committee on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence in my dual capacity as the Minister responsible for Gender Equality and Family Welfare and also as the Chairperson of the National Steering Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is violence that is directed at an individual based on his/her biological sex or gender identity and this violence includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, psychological abuse, threats, coercion, economic abuse, whether occurring in public or behind closed doors. GBV is a causal factor to huge economic cost estimated at a staggering Rs2 billion according to a quantitative survey initiated by my Ministry in 2016.

But, more importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, GBV is a crime against humanity and is a violation of Human Rights. It is the least prosecuted crime and it is an issue that permeates every corner of our society, and we have witnessed an increasing occurrence of GBV during the pandemic.

GBV is seriously impacting on the individual, the family, the community and the country on the whole. While we can put a figure to the dense GBV causes to our economy, Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot attribute a cost to the loss of lives, to the emotional pain, the suffering, the injuries to our citizens, including the suffering and the negative effects GBV has on our children. Addressing this social scourge ranks extremely high on the agenda of this Government.

As the House will recall, the High-Level Committee (HLC) on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence, under the chairpersonship of the hon. Prime Minister was set up in January last year. It comprises the Deputy Prime Minister, Vice-Prime Ministers and no less than 11 Ministers. It engages 16 Ministries as lead agencies and 24 parastatals and other bodies as collaborators in the implementation of a National Strategy and Action Plan to eliminate GBV. This plan, Mr Speaker, Sir, was launched on 25 November last year which marks the international day for the elimination of all forms of violence against women. This National Strategy and Action Plan was the first immediate achievement of the High Level Committee chaired by the Prime Minister.

The overall objective of the Plan is to eliminate Gender-Based Violence. The Plan is survivor-focused and recognises that GBV is a cross-cutting and therefore requires a shared understanding on its root cause and its extent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Strategy and Action Plan is divided into four (4) sub-strategies and four Technical Working Groups. These groups have been set up to work towards the achievement of activities contained in each sub-strategy –

- Sub-Strategy 1 – Addresses the need for change in societal norms and beliefs that are against principles of gender equality and equity;
- Sub-Strategy 2 – Looks at priority support services for survivors while holding perpetrators accountable for their actions;
- Sub-Strategy 3 – Mandated to identify and redress discriminatory practices that perpetuate gender-based violence, and
- Sub-Strategy 4 – Very importantly makes provision for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the High-Level Committee chaired by the hon. Prime Minister monitors and evaluates the progress made on the implementation of the strategic plan on a quarterly basis. The National Steering Committee on GBV, chaired by myself, monitors the progress of the four Technical Working Groups aligned to these sub-strategies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as soon as the High-Level Committee was set in January last year, our country had to undergo through an unprecedented lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and an immense disruption of our normal life. Despite this fact, and given the challenge of the implementation of this Plan, I do have to congratulate all stakeholders engaged in the fight against GBV for having ensured to date, that 69.8% of the output indicators are in progress and 28.9% have been completed out of the total target of 149 output indicators. While still much more has been achieved, I would like to highlight on a few achievements by Technical Working Groups (TWGs).

The first one being the Mobile Application LESPWAR was launched on 25 November last year. This application was ranked among the Top Five in the category of “Ethical Dimensions” in the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Since 25 November last year to 22 October

this year, 2121 downloads registrations have been made; 952 panic alerts attended to, and 153 users called on Hotline 139 of my Ministry through the use of LESPWAR application.

The Main Police Command and Control Centre is fully operational for intervention on alerts received. There is strict adherence to the Protocol for Intervention signed between my Ministry and the Mauritius Police Force (MPF) in November 2020.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, Phase 3 of the mobile application was successfully deployed in July this year to interface LESPWAR with Domestic Violence Information System (DOVIS). And all alerts triggered in LESPWAR auto-generate a case file in DOVIS which is then assigned to the Family Support Bureau of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has also been an Inter-Faith Forum was set up on 12 August this year with active membership of Faith-based Groups of the Council of Religions. On the same occasion, an Information Pack for these organisations was launched and disseminated. This Information Pack is a tool to equip our religious leaders with necessary information to assist in addressing GBV.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaigns on GBV are crucial to bringing a change in mind-set and to that effect, officers of my Ministry conducted a Training of Trainers programme with Community Development Officers and consequently IEC campaigns were deployed to sensitise adults, students and younger children through the Social Welfare Centres, the National Children's Council, the Community Centres and the Ombudsperson for Children's Office.

Mr Speaker, Sir, an Animated Cartoon on Gender Concept was also launched on 28 September this year. My Ministry and other stakeholders will make use of this animated cartoon to raise more awareness on the issue of gender inequality which, we all know, is the root cause of gender-based violence. It is also meant to sensitise young minds on the gender concept.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a gender-sensitive content analysis and a review of the curriculum for the primary school level is also being undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology.

An economic Empowerment programme, funded by the UNDP under Japan Supplementary Budget was implemented with 29 survivors of GBV and those survivors were identified at the level of shelters, Family Support Bureau and Police Family Protection Units.

Mr Speaker, Sir, new legislations namely the Disability Bill, the Gender Equality Bill as well as the Protection from Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill are in process of being introduced to this august Assembly.

The setting up of an observatory on gender-based violence is also in process and discussions with the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council are in the advanced phase.

On the way forward, Mr Speaker, Sir, the technical working groups will continue to ensure implementation of activities falling within this financial year and my Ministry will shortly conduct a consultative workshop to identify activities to be implemented in the next financial year as well as working out the financial implications. The High-Level Committee chaired by the Prime Minister would be monitoring the implementation of all actions as per an agreed frequency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to place on record, the tremendous support given by all those engaged in this fight against gender-based violence, be it at the level of the High-Level Committee or at the level of the National Steering Committee. I am pleased to report that the institutional synergy that emanated from the four technical groups has been a catalyst in achieving a number of highly commendable results within one year of launching of the National Strategy and Action Plan and the progress status on the High-Level Committee on the elimination of GBV, Mr Speaker, Sir, demonstrate the kind of leadership, institutional and social capital that our country requires in order to rise up to a higher level of development.

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

PUBLIC BILLS*First Reading*

On motion made and seconded the following Bills were read a first time –

- (a) *The Offshore Petroleum Bill (No. XIV of 2021)*
- (b) *The Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Bill (No. XV of 2021)*

(5.05 p.m.)

*Second Reading***THE OFFSHORE PETROLEUM BILL**

(No. XIV of 2021)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Prime Minister: I move that the Offshore Petroleum Bill (No. XIV of 2021) be read a second time.

The object of this Bill is to repeal the Petroleum Act which dates back to 1970. With new market exigencies and dynamics such as evolving technology, higher commitments to environmental preservation, and the need for more transparency in ocean governance, it is now imperative to review the existing legislation. The Offshore Petroleum Bill serves this purpose by reflecting a modern and comprehensive legal and regulatory framework adapted to offshore petroleum activities in Mauritius.

Before I delve into the legislative provisions, I believe it is important to highlight how this Bill is a major breakthrough for our country, the more so against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to provide the right impetus for our economic machinery.

It is undeniable that offshore petroleum activities have been very beneficial to many countries around the globe: while the bigger countries are among the largest exploiters, such as the United States of America, Brazil, China, and Canada, smaller states have also made inroads in this very competitive industry. Trinidad and Tobago is often cited as one of the success stories among the smaller nations. However, this Government is also fully conscious that petroleum activities have also been the subject of frustration for some countries, especially where the legal framework is not comprehensive enough.

Mauritius, for its part, will be making its first steps in this sector. With this Bill, Mauritius will become a new potential for petroleum exploration, and as such, it will be joining the league of frontier countries such as Sri Lanka, Madagascar, and the Seychelles. These countries are also at an early stage in the quest of petroleum exploration and exploitation. In February 2020, an agreement for the conduct of geoscientific survey was signed between my Office and CGG Services SAS. The agreement provides for CGG Services SAS to undertake multi-client seismic data acquisition, processing, reprocessing, interpretation, data brokering, sales and marketing of seismic/offshore geoscientific surveys over an exploration area covering a total of around 45,000 line kilometres in four selected areas of the EEZ of Mauritius. The acquisition of seismic data is important to better understand the subsurface geology and associated structures which are favourable for hydrocarbon accumulation.

At this cross-road, I personally believe that this is the most opportune time for our country to prepare itself and to lay down all the necessary regulatory framework for our country to be ready and to safely embark in any potential offshore petroleum activities. We have had the opportunity and time to observe, examine, assess, and learn from the dos and don'ts of other countries and time is now right to consolidate our preparedness for any opportunity to develop this extractive industry.

In fact, in the Budget Speech 2015-2016, it was announced that a Petroleum Bill would be introduced to provide the legal and fiscal framework for the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbon resources in our EEZ.

The Offshore Petroleum Bill bears testimony, once again, that my Government is moving forward on its vision and agenda as set out in the Government Programme 2020-2024. In fact, hon. Members will recall that it was mentioned that Government will come up with a Unified Regulatory Framework, an Offshore Petroleum Bill, a Seabed Mineral Bill, and will set up a Marine Biotechnology hub, amongst others, to accelerate the development of our blue economy. And this Bill is of course the first step, but also a milestone to focus on developing new economic pillars that would steer the economy to a much higher plane. This Bill shows the commitment of my Government in making the blue economy an important industry to sustain economic diversification, job creation, and wealth generation. We would actively promote research expedition in our quest for fossil fuels and other minerals that can be sustainably exploited.

The Bill is the fruit of several consultations held between the Attorney-General's Office, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, and the Economic Development Board under the steering mantle of the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration of my Office. I would also like to highlight the initial contribution and assistance provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat in drafting the Bill.

The Offshore Petroleum Bill would provide for a more appropriate regulatory regime for the prospection, exploration, retention and production of petroleum in the seabed and subsoil areas of the maritime zones of Mauritius. Under international law, it is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that provides that coastal states are entitled to exercise sovereign rights on the petroleum resources present in their maritime zones, including their exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.

As a signatory party to UNCLOS, the Republic of Mauritius has made submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) for its continental shelf in accordance with Article 76 of UNCLOS. Together with the Republic of Seychelles, the Republic of Mauritius already manages an area of extended continental shelf, commonly referred to as the Joint Management Area (JMA). The Republic of Mauritius also submitted information on the limits of its continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles in the region of Rodrigues Island in May 2009 and in the Southern Chagos Archipelago region in March 2019.

Reviewing existing international and domestic legislation has been instrumental in drafting this Bill. The Republic of Mauritius has abided by the provisions of the Conventions including the Law of the Sea, that it is a party to, when it comes to the utilisation of its resources. In line with the Conventions and international best practices, environmental and occupational safety concerns have been put at the forefront of this new legislation. More so, existing laws of Mauritius have been integrated and applied to strengthen the Offshore Petroleum Bill. The provisions of the Maritime Zones Act in delimiting the maritime zones of Mauritius in terms of internal waters, archipelagic waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf have been respected. The provision for the carrying out of Environment Impact Assessment during the phases of the petroleum Exploration and Production activities has been made.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should emphasize here that the present Bill shall not apply to the prospection, exploration, recovery or mining of seabed minerals or even to the exploration for recovery of petroleum in the Joint Management Area between Seychelles and Mauritius. These are going to be subject of separate legislations.

The Bill provides more clarity with regard to the processes involved in the regulation of offshore petroleum prospecting, exploration, and production. It introduces set time frames and clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the regulatory body throughout.

The Offshore Petroleum Bill provides for the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration, which falls under the aegis of my Office, to be the regulatory body for petroleum activities in the maritime zones of Mauritius and which shall, *inter alia*, be responsible for the following –

- (a) regulate, monitor and oversee petroleum activities;
- (b) issuance of prospecting permits, exploration licences, retention licences and production licences;
- (c) negotiate, on behalf of the Government, prospecting agreements and petroleum agreements;
- (d) facilitate the conduct of petroleum activities;
- (e) develop strategies and policies to minimise and manage the impacts of petroleum activities in the marine environment;
- (f) advise in the formulation, planning and management of policies in relation to petroleum activities, and
- (g) do such other things as may be necessary for the proper conduct of petroleum activities.

With this Bill, Mauritius is preparing to explore its potential and posits itself in an advantageous situation to build petroleum investors' confidence. The Economic Development Board shall have an important role in conducting niche market research and promoting the Mauritius Offshore Petroleum Activities. In this connection, the Department for Continental Shelf shall initiate Request for Proposal among potential petroleum companies for the conduct of petroleum activities.

The Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration would thus be entrusted with appropriate powers so as to enable it to discharge its functions in the most effective and coherent way possible. The powers of the Department will be to –

- (a) invite applications for titles;
- (b) cause any investigation to be carried out in determining an application for the grant of a title;
- (c) reject an application for the grant of a title;
- (d) cause any negotiation or consultation to be made before the Government enters into a petroleum agreement;
- (e) vary, renew, suspend or revoke a title;
- (f) set up such committee as may be necessary;
- (g) collect fees and levy charges, and
- (h) exercise such other powers as may be necessary for the purposes of the legislation.

The Bill, through Clause 12, provides for the Department to designate, by reference to geographical coordinates, any area in the maritime zones to be released for the purpose of petroleum activities except marine protected areas and reserved areas as provided under Clause 13 of the Offshore Petroleum Bill. The areas designated for petroleum activities shall also be prohibited areas for all unauthorised ships or specified classes of ships, except vessels of the National Coast Guard, so as to protect any installation, infrastructure, facilities or ships being used for petroleum activities. Any area released for the purpose of petroleum activities shall be referred to as a sub-block. Sub-blocks are the ‘graticular’ sections obtained following the division of the surface of the seabed.

A system of titles has been devised for the conduct of petroleum activities. This is also undertaken in other jurisdictions such as Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados and closer to us in the Seychelles. A title under the Offshore Petroleum Bill is a prospecting permit, an exploration licence, a retention licence or a production licence. Every title should obtain the approval of the Prime Minister prior to its issuance by the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration and the settlement of the prescribed fee.

The Offshore Petroleum Bill lays out four types of titles, which shall be granted, as follows –

- (a) a prospecting permit that confers non-exclusive rights to the permit holder to undertake low impact exploration activities such as seismic surveying and other non-surface disturbing activities to search for petroleum. The permit is valid for a maximum of two years and may be renewed for an additional period of two years by mutual agreement and subject to the following conditions –
 - (i) the permit shall not entail any right to drill into the seabed and subsoil;
 - (ii) shall not entail the use of explosives or harmful substances in the marine environment, and
 - (iii) shall not give ownership or property rights to the prospector over any petroleum acquired in the course of prospecting, such petroleum remaining the property of the State.
- (b) an exploration licence which allows the licensee to search for petroleum and carry out sampling and analysis of deposits to explore whether petroleum is commercially viable as well as to test systems, equipment and processing facilities. It also allows the conduct of studies before production of petroleum and carrying out in-depth risk assessment related to petroleum activities. The exploration licence confers exclusive rights to recover petroleum for a period not exceeding six years and can be further extended. Any sample of petroleum recovered remains the property of the State. Samples recovered for the purpose of testing and evaluation, shall be made accessible to the Department and records of their origin shall be kept. Where a petroleum field that is commercially viable is identified, the Department shall declare it as a “Location”;
- (c) a retention licence that allows a licensee to recover petroleum in a licenced area for the purpose of an appraisal, other than for commercial purposes. An exploration licensee may apply for a retention licence not later than two years (or no later than four years subject to conditions) after the date of declaration of a location. The recovery of petroleum from that area must be commercially

viable not later than 10 years after the date of submission of the application. A retention licence is valid for five years and may be extended subject to specific conditions, and

- (d) a production licence that allows a licensee to recover petroleum in a licence area for commercial purposes. When petroleum is recovered, the licensee shall acquire the rights to market, process, sell and export the petroleum at the point of extraction. The licence is valid for a maximum of thirty years during which time periodic reports shall be submitted to the Department. Details in an annual report shall include comprehensive information on the results of petroleum activities, health and safety records, a statement of expenditure and costs as well as a statement showing the amount of royalty and taxes determined to be payable for each reporting period together with all related information and calculations.

The application for a title shall contain, *inter alia*, the following information -

- (a) the proposed petroleum activities to be conducted;
- (b) a general description of the nature and objective of the proposed petroleum activities, including the proposed date of commencement and approximate duration, and the proposed use of the data collected thereof;
- (c) the methods, equipment, technology and the installations to be used for the conduct of the proposed petroleum activities;
- (d) any feasibility study or similar study previously carried out by the applicant in relation to the commercial potential of the area within which the proposed petroleum activities are to be conducted;
- (e) a preliminary assessment of the likely impact on the marine environment of the proposed petroleum activities, and
- (f) a detailed contingency plan for responding to any incident that may occur during the conduct of the proposed petroleum activities, including the provision for regular simulation exercises.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will note that this long list of requirements will ensure that a proper diligence is carried out and exercised when titles will be granted. Furthermore, a

committee, comprising of all relevant institutions and experts, will be set up with the mandate to examine all title applications.

Clause 23 of the Bill provides for the duties to be fulfilled by a title holder. These include the following -

- (a) the title holder shall employ the best environment practice in accordance with international standards and endeavor to take all necessary measures to prevent, reduce, and control pollution to the marine environment;
- (b) the title holder shall cooperate in capacity building and exercise due diligence for safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of persons employed in the petroleum activities and ancillary activities, and
- (c) the title holder shall work collaboratively with the Department to ensure the smooth running of the petroleum activities and ancillary activities with a view to mitigating chances of any incidents.

To ensure that the title holder is complying with its obligations and to cater for any non-fulfilment from the part of the title holder, Clause 21 of the Bill provides for an applicant for a title, other than for a prospecting permit, to deposit a security bank guarantee before the grant of the title.

Clause 27 of the Bill makes provisions to attract potential operators by exempting title holders from duty and tax, as follows -

- (a) a title holder and any of his contractors, as certified by the Department, shall, in accordance with the Customs Tariff Act, the Excise Act and the Value Added Tax Act, be exempt from any duty and any other tax for the import of machinery, equipment, vehicle, materials and supplies where such import has been certified by the Department to be used solely for the conduct of petroleum activities;
- (b) where any of the items imported into Mauritius is no longer required for petroleum activities, it may, in accordance with the Customs Tariff Act, the Excise Act and the Value Added Tax Act, be exported without payment of any export duty and any other tax, and
- (c) on the sale or transfer by the importer of any imported item to any person in Mauritius, import duty shall be payable by the importer on the value thereof at the date of such sale or transfer.

The Offshore Petroleum Bill provides for the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, to negotiate, on behalf of Government, petroleum agreements with a potential exploration licensee, retention licensee, or production licensee so as to further substantiate the terms and conditions linked to the petroleum activities. Thereafter, it shall submit to the Government any proposed petroleum agreement for its recommendations and approval. If approval is granted, the Department shall, on behalf of the Government, enter into a petroleum agreement, with a potential exploration licensee, retention licensee, or production licensee.

A petroleum agreement shall include the following provisions -

- (a) payment of royalties and taxes, calculated in accordance with the Income Tax Act and any other relevant enactment;
- (b) the payment of charges and such other fees as the Department may determine;
- (c) insurance covering any damage to the environment in the maritime zones of Mauritius, including oil pollution damage, and liabilities;
- (d) the circumstances or the manner in which a discretion conferred under the agreement is to be exercised;
- (e) requirements relating to project financing, auditing and reporting;
- (f) requirements concerning exploration and production work-plans, operations and relinquishment;
- (g) requirements concerning decommissioning obligations and the financing of decommissioning;
- (h) abandonment operations so as to remove all installations, equipment and infrastructure in the title area to ensure that the area does not constitute a danger to persons, shipping or the marine environment;
- (i) requirements concerning compliance with environmental impact assessment and any obligations;
- (j) procedures concerning the settlement of disputes;
- (k) necessary measures to be taken by the potential exploration licensee, retention licensee or production licensee in case damage is caused to the marine environment;

- (l) standards and guidelines for petroleum activities, including an Environmental Code of Practice and a Safety Code of Practice, and
- (m) any document that the department may determine for the conduct of petroleum activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are also mindful of the environmental and ecological risks associated with petroleum activities and, therefore, the Offshore Petroleum Bill provides for the implementation of environmental best practices and safeguards so as to mitigate the impacts of such incidents. These are, *inter alia* –

- (a) the development of and adherence to standards and guidelines for petroleum activities, including an Environment Code of Practice and a Safety Code of Practice;
- (b) the inclusion in petroleum agreements of insurance covering any damage to the environment in the maritime zones of Mauritius, including oil pollution damage, and liabilities;
- (c) ensuring that marine protected areas and declared reserved areas shall not be released for the purpose of petroleum activities;
- (d) the imposition of a security bank guarantee which shall be used in the event of failure to fulfil obligations by title holders, to rectify any damage of loss caused as a result of such failure, including for clean-up or compensation costs in respect of any damage caused by pollution or other incident occurring as a result of the petroleum activities, and
- (e) the adherence by the title holders to conditions specified in the respective EIA licences, including all mitigation strategies for the protection of the environment and prevention of pollution, based on oceanographic and environmental baseline studies and other relevant studies.

In addition, the Environment Code of Practice will provide further assurance for the sustainable management of the petroleum resources and marine environment of the maritime zones, and the Code will include –

- (a) protecting the marine environment and associated ecosystems, taking all appropriate measures to protect and preserve biological diversity and rare or fragile ecosystems, as well as species of wild fauna and flora and their habitats;

- (b) sustaining the potential of petroleum resources to meet the needs of future generations;
- (c) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of the environment, and
- (d) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

The Safety Code of Practice will ensure the safe, secure, and sustainable conduct of petroleum activities while reducing all risk factors, including –

- (a) the maintenance of the integrity of the offshore installation;
- (b) securing the safety of operational personnel, and
- (c) protecting the marine environment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an unequivocal fact that Mauritius relies heavily on petroleum imports. For the year 2020, Mauritius imported around 1 metric ton of petroleum and in financial terms, this represents a cost of around Rs38 billion.

For a transparent fund management and, more importantly, in order for each Mauritian to benefit directly from revenues that are generated from petroleum activities, provision is, therefore, made for the raising of funds as follows –

- (a) the setting up of a Petroleum Fund under Clause 74, into which all monies shall be paid and which shall be administered and managed by the Ministry responsible for the subject of finance;
- (b) the payment of royalties and taxes, in accordance with the amended Income Tax Act and as specified in the petroleum agreement, for the extraction of petroleum. The Bill sets forth a three-tiered tax regime comprising the following –
 - (i) petroleum royalties;
 - (ii) income tax at the rate specified in Part IV of the First Schedule on its chargeable income; and
 - (iii) petroleum additional profits tax, and
- (c) the payment of charges and such other fees to Government as may be prescribed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again in our effort to make the process transparent, and so that all our fellow citizens are apprised of these undertakings, the Department for Continental Shelf shall maintain a register, to be known as the Register of Titles, that will contain up-to-date and accurate records of applications received for titles and other relevant information on the status of those titles. This register shall be available and open for public consultation during business hours of the Department.

We are also aware that offshore petroleum activities would need to be properly monitored so as to ensure that these are carried out according to the set protocols and standards. Therefore, the Offshore Petroleum Bill caters for an enforcement mechanism, as follows –

- (a) Under clause 66, the Department for Continental Shelf may designate or appoint officers to act as inspectors. The inspectors shall, *inter alia* –
 - (i) board or obtain access to a licence area and all parts of any premises, ships, machinery or equipment used for or in connection with petroleum activities;
 - (ii) inspect or test any machinery or equipment which is being or is intended to be used for or in connection with petroleum activities and may dismantle, test or take possession of any such machinery or equipment;
 - (iii) remove any sample or assay of such samples from any ship, machinery or equipment used for or in connection with petroleum activities;
 - (iv) examine and take copies of books, accounts, documents or records of any kind required to be kept;
 - (v) require a title holder to carry out such procedures in respect of any machinery or equipment used for or in connection with petroleum activities as the department may determine,
 - (vi) document any site visit or inspection activity using any reasonable means, including video, audio, photograph or other form of recording.
- (b) Under Clause 67, a Police Officer, where an offence is committed or about to be committed, may –

- (i) stop, board, search, detain or seize a ship;
- (ii) arrest any person suspected of having committed an offence;
- (iii) seize any property on board which is suspected to have been used in connection with the commission of an offence, and
- (iv) use such force as may be necessary.

Clause 81 describes the offences under the Bill and also the criminal liability of the offenders. For instance, a person who conducts petroleum activities without a title shall be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs30 m. or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years. While a body corporate, which contravenes in the same way, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs150 m.

The Minister to whom responsibility for the subject of non-living marine resources is assigned may make such regulations as he thinks fit for the purposes of this legislation in accordance with Clause 83. The regulations made may provide –

- (a) for the graticulation, mapping of blocks and sub-blocks;
- (b) for the payment of fees, royalties and taxes;
- (c) for the administration and management of the Petroleum Fund;
- (d) for the amendment of the Schedules, and
- (e) that any person who contravenes them shall commit an offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs100,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.

Moreover, the implementation of this piece of legislation would also require consequential amendments to the Customs Tariff Act, the Environment Protection Act, the Excise Act, the Income Tax Act and the Value-Added Tax Act.

It is believed that the Offshore Petroleum Bill being proposed will not only provide the necessary impetus in accelerating the development of our blue economy and tapping the latent resources in our maritime zones, but it will also contribute in our long walk towards economic recovery.

The Offshore Petroleum Bill will contribute in consolidating the base for a new pillar of our economy. Looking at the sheer size of our unexploited EEZ, Mauritius has indeed the potential to be a major player in the marine natural resources sector. The time is right enough

for Mauritius to have this brand new legislative framework, which builds upon the 2020 agreement for the conduct of multi-client seismic surveys in our EEZ.

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

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(5.45 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, the time is right according to what the Prime Minister just concluded. We think the contrary. We think that the timing is clearly not right; the timing is odd.

This is because the Prime Minister himself and his delegation are leaving in a few days for the COP26 conference negotiations. In the COP26 negotiations, Mauritius wishes, I presume, to appear credible; Mauritius wishes to appear sincere in its attempt to prevent the world from going upside down and from disaster hitting all of us. Mauritius, of course, being in the top ten of countries most at risk from climate-related disasters. So, the timing is odd. We are going to COP26, once again asking for funds. We are going to ask the international donors, overseas countries to give us, Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs210 billion to finance 65% of our efforts in mitigation at least, which concerns us today is that we want to have 60% of energy produced from green sources in Mauritius, the total phasing out of coal before 2030, etc. This is on page 4 of our nationally determined contributions for the Republic of Mauritius.

So, it is odd that we are going to ask huge sums of money to help us help the world and help ourselves. At the same time, a week before, we pass a Bill that will, as the Prime Minister himself has said, make of Mauritius a major “player” - that is the word he used - in the extraction of fossil fuels in the world. That is, I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, incongruous; it is even a little bit sort of schizophrenic. One way, we are going to join a conference to reduce the use of fossil fuels, and, at the same time, we want to be a major player in the production of the same fossil fuel for the future. And so, Mr Speaker, Sir, I clearly think that the timing is not right; that this Bill, if it were to come, would best come after the Prime Minister and the delegation has had a chance to meet other world leaders, has had a chance to listen to the conference and maybe even be convinced at the conference as to what the way ahead is. And certainly, it would be a little odd if people were to give us Rs210 billion on the one hand and expect to be walloped with far greater numbers of fossil fuel from the actions of the same country which they have helped to the tune of Rs210 billion.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, it could be said that the Bill presented today is not serious; it is not right; the timing is wrong. And this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, in my opinion, we have presented it today, and so, it is too late; it should be anyway, I think, fully debated after COP26 for the reasons that I am saying now. I mean the Prime Minister should not insist on a vote today for this Bill. Let us have it after COP26 when your delegation returns, and we will see whether you still hold the same view or whether changes need to be made to our policy.

Anyway, also, Mr Speaker, Sir, what are we talking about when we talk about oil deposits? We are talking about a national resource; not only a national resource, but a national resource that will be depleted over time. So, what is the position of Mauritians? Has anyone consulted Mauritians? This is the Assembly, yes, but all Mauritians are concerned; the youths are concerned. People talk of Guyana. In some countries, the population has been against the production of oil. They say: no, we value our future more than revenues that will supposedly accrue from oil! So, I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill should not be voted before there is a national debate on the future actions that this country should take with regard to fossil fuels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I was a bit surprised when the Prime Minister related this Bill to the COVID-19 pandemic, as if now, we are expecting our huge levels of debts, record level of debts that we have - never before we had so much, in absolute terms; the level of debt in Mauritius never had this level before in absolute terms, even after raiding the Bank of Mauritius. So, it is highly optimistic of the Prime Minister to link the offshore petroleum industry to repayment of the debts, which he seems to have done when opening the speech, relating the Bill to the huge expenses which had happened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no guarantee that any oil will be found, that any oil in sufficient commercial quantities will be found and extracted. This depends on a lot of things, Mr Speaker, Sir. Firstly, it depends on really the existence of oil in the economic zone of Mauritius. That, to my mind, has not fully been established. Neither has it really been established in the Seychelles, which obviously assist the nation, which is ahead of us in terms of exploring for oil in their territory. So, it has not really been established neither in the Seychelles ahead of us nor in Mauritius. And then, of course, you have to have it in commercial quantities, so fairly large, and we all know that Mauritian waters are extremely deep.

So, will the price of oil, as it is now, 85 dollars to the barrel, let us say, for Brent, cover the cost of extraction or not? And what will happen to the price of oil in the future with COP26 coming along, every country promising to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels? The UK, as the House will know, recently announced that as from 2030, in a few years' time, no new petrol or diesel car will be sold in the UK. So, what is the real commercial benefit of extracting oil in Mauritius deep waters? The quantity, even if it is there, is not really known, and, of course, whether the price of oil, at any point in time, will be sufficient to cover the cost of extraction.

It is no secret that this sort of extraction of oil has been on the cards since independence. In the last PMSD/Labour Government, we dealt with it; we thought about it; we even - you talked about the Commonwealth Secretariat - talked to them; the World Bank, we have talked to them. But, in the end, the price of oil was not attractive enough for us to carry on. So, whether now, when we are coming to the end of oil, as the King of energy, we are going to find that it is commercially viable. Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would not bet on it, and I certainly would not bet on it to repay our astronomical national debt. I would advise the Government to find another means of repaying our national debt rather than on this questionable finding of oil in commercial quantities in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been told that since February 2020 - I was not aware of this until recently - a large company called CGG, which I understand has also large financial troubles, but that is another issue, had a contract to Seismic Survey of some waters of Mauritius. Again - this is what I am going to talk about in a moment -, what transparency? Now, the Prime Minister has spoken for about an hour maybe. He had not told us this who is paying for that CGG. What will it cost? Are the taxpayers paying for that? Are they paying it themselves? Are they finding - as I understand maybe is the case - some financiers to finance their activity? It must be quite expensive to do so. And if they are self-funding this activity, what will be the reward that is provided to CGG? Perhaps the Minister of Environment who is talking after can provide us some information on this, because we need to know. Because one of the points that I am going to raise, Mr Speaker, Sir, is how open and transparent is the process of granting licenses to our national resource, if it exists? What are the safeguards? What is the transparency? And one example at hand is exactly the contract given to CGG, of which I believe the National Assembly knows nothing about, and I would invite the Prime Minister and perhaps before him, the Minister of Environment, to be completely transparent about this contract which worries me. How much will it cost? Who is paying for it? If

somebody else is paying for it, it may be even worse. What is being promised in return? So, Mr Speaker, Sir, that is an example of exactly what we want to avoid with the allocation of contracts under this forthcoming Offshore Petroleum Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, who has advised Government in the production of this Bill? We are told that the Commonwealth Secretariat has initially advised Government. What does that mean? Does it mean that this Bill being best practice has been vetted and approved by the Commonwealth Secretariat, as it was our aim in the past, or has it been that they have initially, maybe last year, two years ago, I do not know when, given some input and then said the rest has been done by this famous department at the Prime Minister's Office? Please, can we have additional comfort from the Prime Minister and his Ministers as to what was the involvement of the Commonwealth Secretariat and whether this Bill has indeed been vetted and approved by them, which would surprise me tremendously, I must say, if that was the case.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, in this world, as the Prime Minister has said, there are many examples to follow and not to follow. And really the decision here is which example do we follow? Do we follow Norway? Everybody applauds the way Norway has proceeded. Do we follow Alaska, again one of the leaders in good governance or do we follow Nigeria? That is also a possibility in Mauritius; we can follow Nigeria and some of the other countries where, in fact, oil probably has contributed making the country poorer because of the pollution and because of the corruption. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, which are we going to follow? It is not clear in my mind.

Now, why is it not clear? Because, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned earlier, there is absolutely no transparency in this Act. It seems to be that we are going to have a department, staffed by someone and we do not know who it is, etc. Okay, it does not matter. A department in the Prime Minister's Office and that department will do everything. It will negotiate, it will find people, it will allocate contracts, it will decide everything, it will even sign with the Prime Minister's approval, I see, the Model Petroleum Agreement. This will all be done and there seems to me to be no mention at all of any auction or open tender in the whole process. Now, we are potentially talking about billions of not rupees, of dollars, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In my mind, Mr Speaker, Sir, the minimum is that the bids must be open, competitive and transparent. That is the minimum that we can expect of Mauritius in 2021 that has just left, thank God, the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force. That is the minimum, but it

is not here, it is not provided here. And this is a highly, of course, technical decision as to what are the environmental norms that will be applied to anyone seeking to operate in the offshore petroleum sector in Mauritius. Highly technical, Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the environment is concerned and as far as the threats to pollution is concerned. Even Florida, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the USA has not been spared. So, that is a wrong partner, Mr Speaker, Sir. Getting the wrong partner, getting the wrong technology would be a disaster for Mauritius. So, I can see here no transparency. There is this Titles Register which the Prime Minister has mentioned. But even there, it says that commercially sensitive information will not be given to anyone, and I presume not even to the House, and now not even to the Director of Audit, from what the Commissioner of Police has done. And, of course, section 79 of the Bill does impose a duty of confidentiality on everyone involved in this sector concerned by this Bill. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, no transparency at all and obviously there, the temptation, for any Government, would be tremendous.

And let's look now at the example of Exxon, a big company, in Guyana where there was one recent article which claimed that the Government there had, wittingly, unwittingly - it is up to us to decide; we do not know - signed a deal with Exxon that had lost tens of billions of dollars potentially to the Guyana Republic. That is also a possibility; wittingly or unwittingly, lack of knowledge, lack of experience. Obviously, these guys, let us take Exxon, they will be experts in negotiations, Mr Speaker, Sir. Who in Mauritius is in an expert in negotiating all deals? The Prime Minister has not talked to us about who is going to assist in even examining the bids, deciding whether the bid is good or not good.

Let us imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we talk about the various taxes. The levels are not provided for in the Bill, we do not know how much is going to be the additional taxes and royalties, etc. That is going to be by negotiation. That is what we understand. Now, these are too high, Mr Speaker, Sir. No one will come. These are too low, the Government and the people of Mauritius will use billions upon billions of Dollars. So, will the Prime Minister tell us, now that he wants to have this Bill passed with a Certificate of Emergency today, what provision has he made to obtain appropriate technical advice on the environment and also, as importantly, appropriate advice on negotiations, assistance on negotiations, and advice on what level to set our taxes so that nobody loses out in this deal, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I note that, again, Seychelles is better than us. In their law, there is published a model petroleum agreement. Where can you see this in this Bill? It is a secret! Nobody will bother

to give this Parliament the model petroleum agreement. So, again, we are completely in the dark, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Let me come now - I am not going to be that long - on the famous Petroleum Fund, Section 74. I have mentioned before that the resource, the petrol is limited in time. The oil is limited in time; it won't be there forever. We use it, we get revenue for it for some time, and then we see what is to be done with the money.

Now, the quality of the institution which is going to manage potentially billions of rupees of taxpayers' money; nothing is said in this Bill about the quality of that institution. All that we know is that it is going to be managed by the Ministry Finance (MOFED). Are we going to see another Mauritius Investment Corporation (MIC), with friends, and friends of friends queuing up - and we will have more information coming on MIC soon. You will see! -, coming up to borrow hundreds of millions of rupees, if not billions of rupees?

Is the Petroleum Fund going to be another MIC? Because I can see no provision in the law either for transparency, for review, for accountability; none whatsoever, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, the Petroleum Fund, is it going to be like Norway, Alaska, or are we going to be like Nigeria, Chad and all these countries, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I have seen their national wealth depleted, wasted, corrupted over time?

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need transparency badly, we need quality institutions. And this Bill, if it were a serious Bill, would provide Mauritians with the guarantee that the Petroleum Fund, with a schema of how the Petroleum Fund would be run, how it would be managed, what would be its priorities and what would be the transparency and involvement of the National Assembly in the use of the Petroleum Fund, a national resource. I would suggest, Mr Speaker, Sir, that if ever we find petroleum, and that is a big 'if', then, the Petroleum Fund should be accountable to a Committee of this House because this money belongs to the Nation and to future generations, and we cannot just leave it like MIC, like so many of these special funds, in the secret funds of Government. As we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, even simple questions on the Mauritius Investment Corporation, which has Rs80 billion of taxpayers' money, were virtually refused in this House, which is in itself a scandal. So, here we are. We have this Fund; we do not know how it is going to be managed; we do not know what the objectives are. All we know is that if ever we find oil - if ever - then billions will be coming to that Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will end here to say that I really think that this Bill is not ready to be passed in Parliament. It has substantial lacuna as far as accountability is concerned, and I will certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir, be voting against this Bill. To say whether Mauritius should go or should not go into oil exploration is a subject for national debate. Of course, we are entitled to obtain money to help the poor, the people who most need it. Of course, we are! But we also have a responsibility towards future generations, and this must be fully debated before we proceed, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I will reserve my judgment in time, but that must be fully debated.

At the moment, Mr Speaker, Sir, and to finish I will say, to me, this Bill looks like a shot in the dark or maybe, in fact, there are punters and promoters who are waiting discreetly in the corridors of power. Time will tell, Mr Speaker, Sir; time will tell. Hopefully, we will find out what really happens despite all the confidentiality clauses that are included in this Bill.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir,

Mr Speaker: I will suspend the Sitting for 30 minutes for refuelling.

At 6.11 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.55 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): M. le président, merci de me donner la possibilité d'intervenir dans ce *Bill* qui est très important pour le pays, pour ce créneau qu'on est en train de considérer à travers le *Offshore Petroleum Bill*.

M. le président, je souhaiterais répondre à quelques points qui ont été soulevés par le Leader de l'opposition, l'honorable Xavier Duval. Et je souhaiterais prendre un premier point concernant la compagnie qui a été mentionnée, le CGG. Et de par la teneur du discours de l'honorable Xavier Duval, nous avons l'impression qu'on est en train de protéger quelque chose. C'est assez obscur comme procédure ; comment la compagnie a été désignée et quelle est la procédure qui a été adoptée pour donner l'impression que tout n'a pas été fait dans la transparence. Et aussi de par la teneur du discours de l'honorable Xavier Duval, nous avons l'impression que cela a été toujours la position du PMSD ou bien de Xavier-Luc Duval de

considérer que l'exploitation pétrolière dans nos eaux représente un danger et qu'il a été toujours un fervent défenseur ...

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. I said exactly the contrary. I said that we were considering it when we were in Government.

(Interruptions)

Ena nous l'empreinte quand même, franchement !

Mr Speaker: No, you are...

(Interruptions)

Please, allow the Minister to continue! Would you?

(Interruptions)

Please! Please!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: That is exactly the contrary.

Mr Ramano: M. le président...

(Interruptions)

M. le président, je pense que l'honorable Xavier Duval était partie prenante dans la rédaction du programme gouvernemental de 2015-2019. Et il y a eu la question dans le passé de l'honorable Jahangeer. La question qui a été posée à l'époque à Sir Anerood Jugnauth concernant –

“... whether, in regard to our maritime zones, he will state the name of the contractor having been awarded the contract for the carrying out of geotechnical studies therein to detect the presence of oil and/or other minerals thereat, indicating the outcome thereof, if completed.”

Et la réponse de Sir Anerood Jugnauth a été très claire, M. le président –

“Madam Speaker, in the Government Programme 2015-2019, it is clearly stated at paragraph 223 that Government will actively promote research expedition in our quest for fossil fuel and other minerals that can be sustainably exploited. This is also in line with our policy to promote the Ocean Economy.”

Je continue la réponse, M. le président –

“In this context, in January 2016, Government agreed to issue an Expression of Interest through normal tender procedures for the conduct of Multi-Client Seismic Surveys for hydrocarbon exploration in four selected areas of the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Mauritius.

It is relevant to point out that Multi-Client Seismic Surveys are essential for the acquisition of new seismic data using modern technology in order to provide better prospection.”

M. le président, la réponse est claire pour dire que –

“On 04 October 2017, eight companies were invited to submit their Requests for Proposal. In response to that exercise, only three companies submitted their bids. The technical (...).”

Mais plus récemment, M. le président, dans le *Committee of Supply* – je parle du *Committee of Supply* pour le Budget 2021-2022. Il y a eu –

“Vote 2-8 - Continental Shelf and Maritime Zones - Administration and Exploration was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: *Mr Chairperson, at page 98 under Item 22130 - Studies and Surveys, can the Prime Minister give us details of how many studies and surveys have been conducted?”*

Et je continue, M. le président, il y a eu aussi la question de l’honorable Uteem –

“I would like to come back again to Item 22130 – Studies and Surveys. (...) May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether any exploration contract has been signed with anyone to explore the possibility of the presence of petroleum products in the continental shelf?”

La réponse est claire, en toute transparence, M. le président –

“Mauritius has launched a Request for Proposal to undertake multi-client seismic geotechnical surveys. Three companies responded. The Bid Evaluation process has been completed. And the contract has been awarded to Compagnie Générale de Géophysique in February 2020.”

C'est clair, c'est mentionné noir sur blanc, M. le président, en toute transparence dans l'examen en comité qui a été fait pour le Budget 2021-2022, M. le président.

Mr X. L. Duval: These were the terms of the contract.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ramano: M. le président ...

Mr Speaker: Excuse me. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Ramano: Je pense aussi qu'il y a eu toute une bonne partie du discours de l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval concernant le *transparency and procurement process*.

M. le président, je pense qu'il est clair que in this very new Bill, provisions have been made to ensure that public officials may not favour their own interest or that of their families. The Prevention of Corruption Act 2002 is linked to the Offshore Petroleum Bill to prevent any such offence.

In order to further strengthen financial transparency, the Offshore Petroleum Bill provides for the establishment of a Petroleum Fund into which shall be paid all moneys required under this new legislation. The Petroleum Fund shall be administered and managed by the Ministry responsible for the subject of finance. The objective of the Petroleum Fund is to provide added transparency on the management of all revenues derived from petroleum activities. The management of the Fund shall be the subject of further regulations. *Ce qui est tout à fait normal, M. le président,* in order to ascertain that the entire population of Mauritius benefit from this investment.

At the level of procurement, the regulatory body shall be governed as is the case for all Government institutions by the legal provisions of the Public Procurement Act and all prevailing tender process. And in order to again clarify the application and monitoring procedures pertaining to petroleum activities, process documentation and procedures shall be in line with the procurement procedures.

M. le président, le souci de ce gouvernement en ce qui concerne la protection de l'environnement, la protection des ressources marines, la question ne se pose même pas, M. le président. Nous nous sommes engagés dans cette voie.

The Leader of the Opposition made reference that this activity would be conducted in such a manner that would result in the depletion of our natural resources. I would like here, Mr Speaker, Sir, to give assurance to the House that the whole activity would be conducted in

an environmental and sound sustainable manner that would ensure that the benefits derived from the resources would be fairly and equitably shared without jeopardizing any environmental asset.

M. le président, c'est bon aussi de mentionner que le Commonwealth Secretariat has been involved in the drafting of the Bill and has provided technical assistance and they also conducted a study on the fiscal regime that would be applicable to Mauritius as a frontier country.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne les *environment provisions of the Bill*, j'aurai l'occasion tout à l'heure dans mon discours de revenir sur la question. Cela n'est en aucune façon en contradiction avec le *Nationally Determined Contribution* que nous venons de soumettre au Secrétariat de l'*UNFCCC*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, allow me to thank the hon. Prime Minister for introducing the Petroleum Bill to the House after some five years of preparation and to reiterate that the purpose of this new Bill is meant to replace the Petroleum Act of 1970. You may recall that in 2015, Cabinet agreed to the elaboration of a regulatory framework for the exploration and exploitation of natural resources, including petroleum in the exclusive economic zone and the Continental Shelf for Mauritius. As such, it is not a new piece of legislation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it cannot be overemphasized that Mauritius as a Small Island Developing State, has, on the one hand, a limited land mass and natural resources and on the other hand, it has a huge expanse of exclusive economic zone, endowed with natural resources whose potential is not known. It is a fact that the exclusive economic zone of Mauritius is around 1,000 times the size of its mainland and I think it is legitimate for us to take stock of our resources, the more so that today, the means and technologies to exploit such resources as a transition fuel to much environment friendlier resources while minimising the impacts on the environment are available.

In this respect, I would like to quote an extract of the report 'Mapping The Oil And Gas Industry To The Sustainable Development Goals: An Atlas'. It is based on a mapping exercise carried out in 2017 under a UNDP project, I quote -

“The enormity of the energy challenge should not be underestimated. Energy is at the heart of the modern economy and essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As recognized in Sustainable Development Goal 7

(Clean Energy), countries need affordable and reliable energy to run modern economies. Countries want to ensure that the transition to net-zero emissions will not sacrifice economic development, high employment and other social objectives. Moving from a high-emission world economy to a net-zero emission economy over the course of the century will require concerted scale-up actions by Government, business and civil society. To help implement some of the elements that will be needed to reach a net-zero emission future, the oil and gas industry has a unique role to play. In the near term, natural gas can serve as an effective transition fuel, helping countries to switch from coal-fired power to a cleaner alternative while, in parallel, the industry continues and increases its efforts to manage the methane emissions associated with natural gas production.”

Unless and until the locations of any resources are identified and status are known, there is a need to confer optimal conditions integrating all environmental safeguards required for harnessing such resources for the welfare and betterment of our citizens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill is in line with the Government Programme 2020-2024 which provided for its enactment amongst others to accelerate the development of our blue economy. Hence, the Petroleum Bill is in line with the vision of the Government to develop the blue economy as one of the main pillars of the economy. This Government is committed to promote development in line with sustainable development goals. This Bill has been formulated taking all the three dimensions of sustainable development, that is, economy, environment and social aspects into consideration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Petroleum Act of 1970 provided for Prospecting License and Mining Lease and the Regulations GN 25 of 1970 made provisions for the sub-division of Mauritius into blocks and procedures for application or renewal of a Prospecting or a Mining Lease. During application of a Prospecting License, the licensee was required to designate the block for which application for Prospecting would be made. Provisions for the protection of the marine environment was mentioned only at Section 15 of the Second Schedule of the Regulations of 1970, where the licensee was required to take all practical steps in order to prevent the escape of petroleum into waters, in or near the prospecting areas and the pollution of shore areas.

The object of the Offshore Petroleum Bill is to repeal the Petroleum Act of 1970 and replace it with a new and more appropriate regulatory regime for the conduct of petroleum activities in the seabed and sub-soil areas of the maritime zones of Mauritius, such as the prospecting, exploration, retention and production of petroleum and environmental measures and safeguards such as Environment Impact Assessment and Rights entitlements and responsibilities of the Mauritian Government as well as of the Industry.

Part 2 of the Bill provides for the regulatory body for petroleum activities in the maritime zones of Mauritius which is the department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration under the Prime Minister's Office. As such, consequential amendments are being proposed in the Environment Protection Act –

- 1) to include the Offshore Petroleum Activities in Part (b) of the Fifth Schedule of the Environment Protection Act.
- 2) to include the department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration as an enforcing agency for petroleum matters under the Fourth Schedule of the Environment Protection Act.

The Bill also provides for release of sub-blocks for petroleum activities and declaration of reserved areas. A zoning approach has been adopted whereby sub-blocks which are areas designated to be released for petroleum activities have been identified by the department of Continental Shelf. Therefore, the sites where prospection, exploration of petroleum activities would be undertaken are already identified and zoned. It should be noted that areas declared as marine protected areas would not be released for the purpose of petroleum activities. In case, a petroleum pool is identified within a sub-block, that sub-block is declared as a location by the department of Continental Shelf. Furthermore, provisions are also being made for reserves areas within the maritime zones where no title for petroleum exploration would be given, and which will be reserved for marine spatial planning and for environmental protection purposes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be noted that the four types of titles, namely, prospecting permit, exploration licence, retention license and production license, would ensure a phase-wise permitting system and monitoring.

The prospecting phase would include low-impact exploration activities such as seismic surveying and other non-surface disturbing activities in search for petroleum and the estimation of the composition, size and distribution of petroleum and their economic values.

During this phase, the title will not be allowed to drill into the seabed and subsoil and use explosive harmful substances in the marine environment. The exploration phase would include search for petroleum and would include sampling and analysis of deposits to explore whether petroleum is commercially viable; the testing of systems, equipment and processing activities, the conduct of studies before production of petroleum, the conduct of depth risk assessment related to petroleum activities and any ancillary operation in support of the activities.

The retention phase would include the exploration of petroleum in a licensed area, the recovery of petroleum in a licensed area for the purpose of an appraisal other than for commercial purposes and any ancillary in support of the activities. The production phase would include the recovery or extraction of petroleum for commercial purposes and include any ancillary operation in support of the activities.

During the application for a title, the applicant shall submit information on the –

- petroleum activities to be conducted;
- the sub-bloc where the activities will be conducted;
- the methods, equipment, technology and the installations to be used;
- a preliminary assessment of the likely impact on the marine environment;
- a plan for responding to any incident that may occur during the conduct of the activities, and also
- provision for a qualified Marine Mammal Observer, who shall be responsible for conducting visual watchers for marine mammals during the petroleum activities, amongst other details, such as a public engagement and information plan;
- submission of a preliminary report, final report and an assessment of data;
- samples and research results;
- details on Port of Call;
- capacity building program;
- work plan;
- copy of any feasibility study, and

- type of ship to be used.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to protect the marine environment from impacts from the petroleum activities Section 22(c) of the Bill makes provision for the submission of an Environment Impact Assessment prior to the start of the activities for the titles, for the exploration and production licenses. The EIA license would ensure that all environmental safeguards have been taken into consideration while developing and implementing the project.

During the EIA process, extensive consultations would also be held with Government organisations, parastatal bodies, NGOs and the public in general, and their concerns and opinions would be taken and given due consideration. The EIA license would be issued by my Ministry and monitoring of the petroleum activities, including the conditions of the EIA License would be carried out by the Department of Continental Shelf as enforcing agency under the Environment Protection Act of 2002 as well as by all the concerned enforcing agencies.

In order to further to lay emphasis on environment protection, the Bill provides at Section 9 that the Petroleum Agreement would also include an 'Environmental Code of Practice and a Safety Code of Practice', and at Section 23, that title holders shall employ best environmental practice in accordance with international standards.

It should be noted that an Environmental Code of Practice and a Safety Code of Practice have already been prepared to provide for the sustainable management of the petroleum resources and marine environment of the maritime zones to ensure the safe, secure and sustainable conduct petroleum activities, including to maintain the integrity of the offshore installation.

In addition, UNEP IE/PAC guidelines on the best environmental practices may also be applied. These guidelines on environmental management in oil and gas exploration and production are based on the collective experience gained by UNEP and the oil industry. The challenge of fully integrating protection of the environment in the regulatory and business processes that controls the exploration and production of oil and gas has been captured in the provisions of the Bill.

The guideline also provides an overview of the environmental issues and the technical and management approaches to achieving high environmental performance in the activities

necessary for oil and gas exploration and production is a world. Management systems and practices, technologies and procedures are described that prevent and minimise impact.

In case the Department of Continental Shelf considers that there are threats of serious damage to the marine environment or threats to human health in Mauritius, title holders shall take necessary precautions in order to avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of petroleum activities in the marine environment and take appropriate measures to prevent, reduce, control pollution and other hazards to the marine environment, including waste material, arising from petroleum activities.

Moreover, as part of the EIA report, the title holder will have to submit an oil spill contingency plan specifying measures that needs to be taken to prevent any oil spill and to mitigate the impacts of any oil spill if same occurs.

I wish here to inform the House that the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan has just been reviewed and validated last week. The title holder also has a responsibility of notifying the Department of Continental Shelf through a written notice of an incident arising from the petroleum activities.

In order to prevent serious risks to the marine environment, provision has also been made at Section 29 for suspending or revocation of a title.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the timing for introducing this Bill on the eve of 26th session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Conference on climate change in Glasgow, I wish to remind the House that we are very committed to all the commitments that we have taken up to now concerning the oil mitigation and adaptation aspects in our fight against climate change.

I wish also to remind the House at Mauritius is a Small Island Developing State with an insignificant global emission of greenhouse gas emission of around 0.01%. Mauritius is not a historical emitter of greenhouse gases as compared to industrialized countries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to make a final note saying that in the preparation of this Bill, this provision of the Bill started some five years' ago and is long overdue. Notwithstanding this Bill and in line with Article 4 of Paris Agreement, the Government has approved the updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) for the Republic of Mauritius on 01 October 2021 and submitted the document to the Secretariat of the UNFCCC on 05 October 2021.

The revision exercise which started in 2020 has been supported by both the *Agence française de développement* and the UNDP to the tune of 200,000 Euros and 300,000 USD respectively. Some 75 meetings have been held with concerned Ministries, private sector, funding agencies, academia and NGOs, among others. An inter-ministerial meeting chaired by myself on 03 March 2021 was held. An international workshop on 04 March 2021 was also held. And finally we had the inter-ministerial meeting on climate change chaired by the hon. Prime Minister on 28 September 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the commitment of Mauritius in the updated NDC is a reduction of 40% greenhouse gas emission in the Republic of Mauritius by 2030; based on a business as usual scenario, of around 6.9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

This new target is more ambitious as compared to the 30% of greenhouse gas emission targeted in the first NDC submitted by Mauritius in September 2015, and it concerns the following sectors –

- the energy sector;
- the transport sector;
- the waste sector, and
- the industrial processes and product use.

Mauritius will aim at achieving this target in the next 10 years by *inter alia* increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix to 60% and the total phasing out of coal by 2030, and by increasing energy efficiency by 10%.

The key mitigation sectors include energy, transport, waste, industrial processes and product use, agriculture and land use, land-use change and forestry.

I would like here to mention that Government is also working on the long-term energy strategy with a view of achieving carbon neutrality. In fact, at the Climate Ambition Summit in 2020, the hon. Prime Minister stated Mauritius is aiming to achieve carbon neutrality by the year 2070.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the definition of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, carbon neutrality refers to carbon dioxide emissions and the state of balance between the carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere and the carbon dioxide removed from the atmosphere. It does not imply a state of zero emission by striking the right balance to capture and set off carbon dioxide emitted.

It is in these lines that Saudi Arabia, for example, which is a top oil exporter, announced on 23 October 2021 that it aims to reach net zero emissions of greenhouse gases mostly produced by burning fossil fuels by the year 2060.

Besides a series of adaptation measures, we are also planning some key reforms in the following sectors: the water, agriculture, tourism, fisheries, blue economy, infrastructure, coastal zone, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, and health. And also at the gender, social security and education level, which are cross-cutting issues, much effort are being undertaken.

As a small island developing state, adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change remains priority, and Government stands firm in its objective of enhancing our resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change while also promoting energy in our sector.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(7.27 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is being presented today for first, second and third reading. We are asking ourselves what is the urgency of bringing this Bill today? The hon. Prime Minister and just now the Minister of Environment mentioned that as far back as 2015, it was in their programme to bring a petroleum Bill. So it is not new.

And I am asking the question of the timing because the hon. Leader of the Opposition is absolutely right. In a week's time the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Environment will attend COP26 in Glasgow. At that COP26 conference, Mauritius will have to report progress made on its commitment taken under the Paris Agreement which was signed in COP21. And we know that Mauritius had undertaken then to reduce greenhouse emission by 30% by 2030.

We also know that answering to a PQ last year in December, the hon. Minister of Environment stated that instead of reducing the amount of gas emissions, we have actually increased the amount of gas emission.

Nonetheless, the new target is to reduce gas emission by 40%; no longer 30%. We could not achieve 30%. Now we are going to reduce gas emission by 40% by the year 2030.

And the Inter-Ministerial Council on climate change, chaired by the hon. Prime Minister, stated that we will need 6.5 billion dollars to implement these measures. Out of 6.5 billion dollars, 2.3 billion will come from government sources and the rest 4.2 billion, that is, around Rs170 billion will come from the private sector.

So here we are! In a week's time, the hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment will go to COP26 and will ask for financial assistance to mitigate and adapt for the changes, and they will ask for funding because they need Rs170 billion.

But when the private sector, when the lobbies, when the Environmental Group will tell them, how can you reconcile your commitment to reduce gas emission with the presentation of the Offshore Petroleum Bill less than a week before COP26.

Do you really seriously think that what if we find oil, it will reduce carbon emission, do you really believe that you will live up to your commitment of reducing gas emission by 40% by 2030 if we explore petroleum products in our seas? So, there is a credibility issue here, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, this is why I fully endorse what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has stated, because we do not understand why this Bill, an important Bill is being rushed through today, one week before all environmentalists, all ecological groups would be focusing on Mauritius among other countries.

The object of the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to provide for the issue of prospecting permits, exploration licence, retention licences and production licences.

Exploration and production of petroleum products, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a risky and expensive business. Mauritius does not have the technical know-how to prospect and explore the presence of petroleum product in our seabed and subsoil area of our marine zone. So it is quite understandable that we are coming with the legislation to allow Mauritius to delegate the exploration and exploitation rights to third parties, which have the technical knowledge, and, more importantly, the financial resources to do it. The more so as we do not as at now, at least as far as public knowledge is concerned, I do not know if any Member of the Government has other knowledge than that, we do not have any evidence of the presence of petroleum product in our maritime zone, which is in a quantity that is commercially viable.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when granting a concession or like the Bill refers to a title, it is of paramount importance that the interest of Mauritius be protected.

Economists usually refer to the conflict between market values, private sector values and the state public values. Investors are driven by profit, they expect clarity, stability, certainty, but above all a lot of profit.

On the other hand, host countries want to secure and retain the petroleum products, want to have their fair share of the revenue from the products, but also have other social and environmental goals, and have to live up to international commitment which they have taken. Now, striking petrol, *l'or noir*, has always been thought as a blessing. A lot of petrodollars coming in; people becoming rich; people thinking of the Middle East countries; people thinking about small countries like Kingdom of Brunei, which after striking oil has become very rich, but unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, finding oil is not always a blessing. All too often, we have seen how the vast majority of population do not benefit from the oil exploration. And I am not talking about just African countries, we have also Caribbean countries, we have Guyana, recently as an example in his book entitled 'The Oil Curses: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations', Michael Ross explains that, and I quote –

“From 1980 to 2006, per capita income fell 6% in Venezuela, 45% in Gabon and 85% in Iraq. Many oil producers like Algeria, Angola, Colombia, Nigeria, Sudan, and again Iraq, have been scarred by decades of civil war. Today, the oil states are 50% more likely to be ruled by autocrats and more than twice as likely to have civil wars as non-oil states.”

This is reality! Finding gold, the black gold, is not necessarily always a blessing, it can be a curse. So, how do we ensure that we do not suffer from the oil curse? How do we ensure that Mauritius gets its fair share of revenue from the exploitation of petroleum products? How do we ensure that the population at large benefit from the revenue and not a handful of people close to power? The magic formula, Mr Speaker, Sir, is transparency and accountability. So, today, the question before this House is how far will this Bill ensure transparency and accountability in the granting of concession, permits and licenses? How far will this Bill ensure that the population at large will benefit from the exploration of petroleum products that maybe discovered in our territorial waters?

If we return to the Bill, Section 8 (1) of the Bill gives the power to the Department of Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones, Administration and Exploration to negotiate petroleum agreements with potential licensees. So, the power is given to the Department. The

Department is headed by a Director, General, who is a public officer and I have no qualms with that. And he has a statutory obligation under Section 8 (1) to secure the most favourable condition to the Government. And then under section 8 (2) –

“The Department shall submit to the Government any proposed petroleum agreement for its recommendations and approval.”

So, the petroleum agreement is negotiated by the Department and then submitted to Cabinet for approval.

If that was the case, Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe I would not have taken up objection. But then, what does Section 16 of the Bill say? After talking about the Department headed by a civil servant, making the negotiation, acting in the best interest of the country; what does Section 16 of the Bill say? I read it –

“16. Approval of Prime Minister

No title shall be granted except with the approval of the Prime Minister.”

Why? Why have a Department with professional who has an obligation to negotiate in the best interest of the country if then the Prime Minister says: “I am the boss, I decide whether to grant it or not grant it.” And unlike the Department which has a statutory obligation to act in the best interest of the country, Section 16 does not impose any obligation whatsoever on the Prime Minister to consider any factor in deciding whether to grant the title or not. Is that transparency? Is that good governance? Why the Prime Minister? Why give so much power to the Prime Minister? Is that how we are going to fight corruption by giving unchecked powers to the Prime Minister? Is that democracy or autocracy, The same autocracy that has been blamed in the book “The Oil Curse”?

Now, the main object of the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to replace the Petroleum Act 1970 and I quote –

“(...) a more appropriate regulatory regime.”

So, we are being told today that the Bill before this House is better than the 1970 Act. How many hon. Members have read the 1970 Petroleum Act? How many hon. Members of the House have read what Section 4 subsection 1 of the Petroleum Act provides? Section 4 subsection 1 under the heading Prospecting Licence and Mining Lease provides that the Minister may grant a license or a mining lease, and I quote –

“(i) on application made in the prescribed manner; or (ii) by auction or tender;”

This is why when hon. Ramano referred to the circumstances, pursuant to which SGG Fund Services (Mauritius) Ltd was awarded the contract, there was a request for proposal; there was a bidding exercise and they won. Why? Because there was a statutory requirement under the Petroleum Act of 1970. Where is this requirement in this Bill? Where is the requirement to have a tender exercise? Where is the requirement to have an auction? And do not talk about the Public Procurement Act! We know the number of loopholes under this Act; we know the G2G agreements. You just have to negotiate with the Government-owned Petroleum Company; you go by G2G and bypass all the procurements. And we have seen last year with the COVID-19 pandemic what has happened to all these so-called Public Procurement Rules. So, this is very serious, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a Bill where the Prime Minister will decide. We can have unsolicited bids; no need for tender; no need for auction. Is that how you ensure transparency and accountability? Any potential explorer licensee will come and negotiate directly with the Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all the prospective licensees have to sign a Petroleum Agreement which is negotiated by the Department. Section 9 of the Bill sets out what has to be in that Petroleum Agreement. This is the master agreement; this is what is going to regulate the relationship between the Government and the licensee. The very first provision, Section 9 subsection (a), that has to be included in the Petroleum Agreement, I read –

“(a) payment of royalties and taxes, calculated in accordance with the Income Tax Act and any other relevant enactment.”

It seems totally innocent. You will put in the agreement the rate of tax as per the Income Tax Act, because the Income Tax Act is voted by Parliament. But when you turn to the proposed amendment to the Income Tax Act at page 53 of the Bill - and just before this, I would just draw the attention of the hon. Prime Minister and the State Law Office that there is a typo at paragraph (f) reference is made to Sections 44(e) and 44(f), it should be 44(c) and 44(d). So, let us see what the proposed amendment to the Income Tax Act says. There is going to be a new section 4(b) – imposition of petroleum additional profit tax. This additional tax will be calculated by reference to a formula set out in the petroleum agreement. So, the petroleum agreement tells you but it would be in a rate set out in the Income Tax Act. The Income Tax Act tells you, the rate will be as in the agreement.

In fact, it is the Department, and ultimately the Prime Minister who can refuse the title, who will negotiate what rate of additional tax would be paid by the Licensees. Section

4(c), we shall get a petroleum royalty: “The petroleum royalty shall be calculated at the rate specified in the petroleum agreement”. Again, same thing, the law tells you the rate of royalty would be as per the Income Tax Act, and the Income Tax Act tells you the rate would be as negotiated in the Petroleum Agreement. Absolute discretion given to the Department and the Prime Minister to determine the level of additional profit tax, the level of royalty! Is that transparency?

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us not forget Section 54 of the Constitution. Section 54 of the Constitution is very clear when it comes to imposition of taxation, there must be a Bill. The Minister must come with a Bill; the Bill must be approved by this House. So, it cannot be at the whims and discretion of the Department, and the Prime Minister. We are talking of public’s funds here; we are talking of money belonging to the people. So, it cannot be the Prime Minister and the Department that will have to decide how much additional tax you will pay, how much royalty you will pay. It has to be this House because otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, in my humble opinion, this Clause is totally unconstitutional, in breach of Section 54 of the Constitution because it is not for the Prime Minister and Department to decide. This is revenue, this is money belonging to Mauritians, to the people of this House and it is only representatives of the people who can determine revenue collection.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have made it clear that today the most important document is this Petroleum Agreement. It is in that Petroleum Agreement, that the Department, the Prime Minister will negotiate how much revenue will be shared between Mauritius, the people and how much revenue will go to the Licensee. Licensee wants profit, multinationals, but we have to safeguard the interest of Mauritius.

Now, how do you know that the interests of Mauritians are being protected? You can only know if you make this Petroleum Agreement public. If you make it public, then Members of the House can come and ask questions, can say ‘but why did you ask only 5% royalty, why not 10% or why 0 instead of 15?’ So, we need to know first of all what are the terms, what has been agreed in terms of revenue sharing between the Government, the Prime Minister and the Licensee.

What does the Bill say? Section 22 of the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, talks about register of titles, talks about a series of information which is available to the public, but there is nothing about Patrol Agreement, not a word. You are only going to know the name and then it says the address of the title holder, not the terms of the Petroleum Agreement. Worse, Section 22,

Subsection 3(b) goes on to add insult to injury, where the Department so determines that it will not publish information that is commercially sensitive. The Department is going to decide what information can be revealed to the public or cannot be revealed to the public.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us be very clear, when it comes to the well-being of the people, there is nothing sensitive, when it comes to transparency there is nothing sensitive, when it comes to revenue collection, there is nothing sensitive, you cannot hide behind commercial terms. You have to publish all the revenue that you are going to collect from Petroleum Agreement and the hon. Prime Minister should take a firm commitment to the Nation, to the people to disclose the terms, the sensitive terms of the

Petroleum Agreement, especially the amount of additional tax that has been agreed, the amount of royalty that has been agreed.

I will end up, Mr Speaker, Sir, by also in joining my voice to that of the Leader of the Opposition concerning the Petroleum Fund. The money collected, the royalty, everything will not go to the Consolidated Fund, it will go to a special Fund, a Petroleum Fund and that Petroleum Fund will be managed by the hon. Minister of Finance. In other words, when it comes to budget and when we go to Committee Stage and ask line-by-line questions about what use would be made of expenditure, how much has been spent, how much has not been spent, when it comes to Petroleum Fund, this would not be applicable. So, we, representatives of people will not be able to ask questions. We will not even know what happened to the Fund. It would be left entirely to the discretion of the Minister of Finance and we are talking of billions of rupees here potentially, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I think this is again in the same line of this Bill, opacity, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, discretion, discretion to the Department, discretion to the Prime Minister, discretion to the Minister of Finance, hiding things from the public.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if we do struck oil, will it be a blessing? Will it be a curse? With this Bill, nothing is more uncertain. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

(7.50 p.m)

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): M. le président, permettez-moi au tout début de mon intervention de vous remercier, premièrement de me donner l'occasion d'intervenir sur ce projet de loi qui est extrêmement important pour l'avenir économique de notre pays mais c'est aussi, M. le président, une garantie que nous voulons

donner à la population de ce pays que l'Etat mauricien doit être premièrement le bénéficiaire et aussi le propriétaire pour toute éventuelle découverte de pétrole ou de gaz dans nos eaux maritimes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the object of this piece of legislation, as explained in the Explanatory Memorandum, clearly shows the intention of Government. Firstly, which is to repeal the Petroleum Act, a legislation which dates back to the year 1970, and as stated, replace it with a new and more appropriate regulatory regime for the conduct of petroleum activities in the seabed and subsoil areas of the maritime zones of Mauritius. And examples are given for prospecting, exploration, retention and production of petroleum and at the same time the creation of a regulatory body which is the Department for continental shelf, maritime zones, administration and exploration which falls under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office which will have, as responsibility –

- to regulate, monitor and oversee petroleum activities;
- be responsible for the issue of prospecting permits,
- exploration licences;
- retention licences and production licences;
- negotiate on behalf of the Government prospecting agreements and petroleum agreements;
- facilitate the conduct of petroleum activities, and develop strategies and policies to minimize and manage the impacts of petroleum activities in the marine environment.

I have listened carefully to the previous orator and as I go along in my speech, I will rebut some of the arguments which have been put forward.

M. le président, le commerce et l'exploitation des réserves pétrolières est depuis des décennies un sujet déterminant dans certaines régions du monde. La demande, la production, le prix du pétrole sont des facteurs qui influencent le coût de la vie comme c'est le cas à l'île Maurice. Et les pays qui détiennent les réserves de pétrole ont une mainmise sur l'économie mondiale. Malheureusement, ce sont les petites économies qui très souvent, M. le président, souffrent des décisions prises par des *traders* premièrement ou du cartel pétrolier. Nous avons vécu ces situations en 2008 quand le prix du baril de pétrole avait atteint les 147 dollars sur le

marché international. Et il faut l'admettre, M. le président, que nous sommes vulnérables avec ces décisions.

Je l'ai dit notre économie est affectée par le prix du carburant, que ce soit pour le coût du fret pour nos importations, par le prix de l'essence ou du diesel pour les automobilistes, mais aussi par le prix de l'huile lourde qui sert à produire en grande partie l'électricité dans notre pays. Et sans oublier cela a un impact aussi sur le prix du gaz ménager qui comme on le sait est subventionné par le gouvernement.

À chaque augmentation du prix de l'essence ou du diesel, nous savons tous, M. le président, qu'il y a des critiques venant de la population. Et tous les gouvernements successifs ont connu cela. Et cela démontre, M. le président, en quelques mots, l'importance des produits pétroliers dans notre vie de tous les jours.

Certes, nous n'avons pas encore découvert du pétrole dans nos eaux maritime, M. le président, mais ce projet de loi nous prépare à cette éventualité. C'est aussi une garantie pour l'État Mauricien d'éviter les pillages de nos ressources marines.

M. le président, la section 67 de l'*Offshore Petroleum Bill - Search and arrest* fait provision de la saisie des navires et de l'arrestation pour les délits commis sous la loi. Et, *it is stated in the Bill, that is –*

“Where an offence is committed or about to be committed under this Act, a police officer may –

- (a) stop, board, search, detain or seize the ship;*
- (b) arrest any person suspected of having committed an offence under this Act;*
- (c) seize any property on board which is suspected to have been used in connection with the commission of an offence under this Act; and*
- (d) use such force as may be necessary for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) and (c).”*

Et je pense que cette clause quelque part rassure la population en ce qui concerne la protection de nos ressources marines.

M. le président, le précédent orateur a évoqué la question de timing en ce qui concerne l'introduction de ce projet de loi au Parlement. Mais le timing, M. le président, ce qu'on omet de dire, est étroitement lié à quelque chose d'autre pas avec la COP26. Ce timing

est lié avec le Covid-19 parce que nous vivons une période économiquement très difficile. Et nous avons raison, M. le président, de venir de l'avant avec ce projet de loi.

M. le président, nous avons quelque part bâti notre économie sur le secteur touristique et qui a rapporté des centaines de milliards de roupies depuis les années 80.

M. le président, les effets du Covid-19 sur l'aviation et sur la mobilité humaine a fait que ce secteur, aujourd'hui, se retrouve en pleine crise et affecte directement ou indirectement notre économie. Bon, heureusement, M. le président, avec notre programme de vaccination très réussi ce secteur se relève peu à peu, mais aussi avec l'ouverture de nos frontières.

M. le président, cette période difficile nous fait réfléchir sur la solidité de notre économie. La chute d'un secteur a des effets sur tout le pays. Et notre indépendance économique passe nécessairement par des nouveaux pôles de développement.

Dans le Budget 2021-2022, le gouvernement a prévu le développement de deux nouveaux secteurs : le secteur pharmaceutique et le *green industry*. Et c'est là où, M. le président, l'argument des membres de l'Opposition en ce qui concerne la protection de notre environnement ne tient pas la route. Nous avons pris la décision courageuse, M. le président, d'augmenter notre pourcentage de production d'énergie renouvelable dans notre mix énergétique de 40 à 60%. Et pour la première fois, M. le président, nous allons plus brûler le charbon à partir de 2030. Et ces deux décisions importantes démontrent clairement la volonté de ce gouvernement de mieux protéger notre environnement. Et notre objectif d'atteindre une production d'énergie renouvelable de 60% en 2030 n'est aucunement contradictoire avec les éventuelles explorations de sources de pétroles. Il faut être réaliste. La mort du pétrole et ses dérivés : l'essence, l'huile lourde ou le diesel, n'est pas pour demain. Et permettez-moi, là, M. le président, de prendre l'exemple de l'Arabie Saoudite : pays qui détient la deuxième plus grande réserve pétrolière dans le monde et qui a pour objectif d'atteindre une production d'énergie renouvelable de 50% en 2030.

M. le président, il nous faut trouver des nouveaux secteurs de développement et être plus libre économiquement et la présentation de ce projet de loi va dans cette direction. Certes, jusqu'à présent il n'y a aucune découverte dans nos eaux maritimes. Mais la présentation de ce projet de loi est un pas en avant afin que notre pays affirme nos droits sur l'existence premièrement et ensuite l'exploitation de cette matière première. Il nous faut oser pour réussir. Il nous faut oser pour réussir. Et ça a été cité par un orateur, comme cela a été le cas pour la République de Trinité-et-Tobago dans les années 80.

Cet archipel qui se trouve à 11 km du Venezuela, gros producteur de pétrole, la République de Trinité-et-Tobago et notre petite île Maurice ont beaucoup de points en commun. Culturellement riche comme notre île, l'économie de ces petites îles repose sur la production du gaz depuis les années 80. Ensuite, il y a eu une diversification de leurs économies à travers le tourisme et le secteur manufacturier. Trinité-et-Tobago, grand comme notre petite île, est le 25^{ème} producteur de gaz dans le monde et la moitié de sa production est exportée.

Je pense que l'île Maurice peut aussi réussir dans ce secteur et ce projet de loi nous permet d'aller dans cette direction.

M. le président, nous sommes les représentants de cette population. Nous votons des lois et quand nous votons des lois, c'est l'ensemble de la population qui vote avec nous. M. le président, je peux comprendre les appréhensions sur les risques environnementaux mais il est prévu dans ce projet de loi que les explorations et l'exploitation devront être effectuées sous les normes environnementales très strictes. Les différentes sections de *l'Offshore Petroleum Bill* prévoient ainsi toutes les exigences légales en termes de protection de notre environnement.

Il faut souligner, M. le président, qu'à la section 2, l'interprétation de *the Petroleum* -

- “(a) means any naturally occurring hydrocarbon, whether in a gaseous, liquid or solid state and any naturally occurring mixture of hydrocarbons, whether in a gaseous, liquid or solid state, together with other substances produced in association with such hydrocarbons, and
- (b) includes any petroleum that has been returned to a reservoir.”

Alors, cette section, M. le président, prévoit ainsi que nous ne parlons pas uniquement de l'exploration et de l'exploitation des potentiels réserves de pétrole mais tout aussi important, les recherches seront effectuées sur des sources potentielles de gaz naturel qui est grandement utilisé dans la production de l'électricité.

Au niveau mondial, cette source d'énergie a connu une croissance moyenne de 1,5% annuellement de 2004 à 2020 et selon l'Agence Internationale de l'Energie, le gaz naturel est la source d'énergie fossile qui sera la plus demandée dans le monde dans les années à venir et nous devons donc pas négliger ce fort potentiel.

Il y a eu aussi, M. le président, des interrogations de la part du leader de l'Opposition, de l'honorable Uteem, sur la transparence dans l'allocation des contrats pour l'exploitation de nos eaux maritimes. C'est un argument faible avancé par l'Opposition et qui ne tient pas la route puisque les débats sur ce projet de loi qui permettra l'exploitation de nos zones territoriales se tiennent au sein du temple de la démocratie qui est notre auguste Assemblée.

Les membres de l'Opposition, donc, ont l'occasion de faire connaître leurs appréhensions et de soulever les interrogations et le projet de loi est très explicite.

Mr Speaker, Sir, argument was raised also with regard to the Petroleum Fund and here again, Mr Speaker, Sir, the intention of Government is clear, that is, in order to strengthen financial transparency, the Offshore Petroleum Bill provides for the establishment of the Petroleum Fund and it is stated "into which shall be paid all monies required" under this new legislation and that -

"The Petroleum Fund shall, in such manner as may be prescribed, be administered and managed by the Ministry responsible for the subject of finance."

And it further stated that the objective of the Petroleum Fund is to provide added transparency on the management of all revenues derived from petroleum activities, Mr Speaker, Sir.

There is also going to be an Offshore Petroleum Environmental Code of Practice, that is, in addition to the precautionary measures regarding protection of the environment in the Offshore Petroleum Bill, the legislative framework for Offshore Petroleum includes an environmental code of practice. And the environmental code of practice shall provide further assurance for the sustainable management of the petroleum resources and marine environment of the maritime zones.

M. le président, les intentions de l'État mauricien - j'arrive là-dessus - sur les prospections et une exploitation potentielle des ressources pétrolières existaient déjà et ce gouvernement, à travers ce projet de loi, fait une étape primordiale pour que les intérêts de Maurice soient protégés comme ce gouvernement l'avait proposé dans le programme gouvernemental de 2020 à 2024. Et les différentes sections de la nouvelle législation donnent des garanties en ce qui concerne les droits de l'État mauricien sur nos eaux territoriales, sur l'aspect financier pour toute exploration et aussi sur la protection de notre environnement.

En ce qui concerne les permis, M. le président, là aussi il faut le dire, toute demande de permis doit être analysée et approuvée par une institution gouvernementale, comme c'est le cas pour des activités commerciales, qu'elles soient des activités de construction ou touristique. Il faut une institution pour chapeauter ces activités pétrolières à Maurice et dans ce cas précis, c'est le *Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones And Exploration Department*, c'est-à-dire, que toute société intéressée à exploiter nos eaux maritimes, devront adopter les normes internationales pour ces activités et toutes les provisions sont claires et sans ambiguïté.

Maintenant, l'honorable Uteem a mentionné le pouvoir octroyé au Premier ministre dans ce projet de loi, en ce qui concerne les licences. Il a fait référence à la Clause 16 de ce projet de loi et il s'est aussi référé à *the Petroleum Act* de 1970 et là, il a fait référence à la section 4 mais il n'est pas allé jusqu'à la section 6 qui dit -

- a) "It shall not be lawful to assign a Prospecting license or a mining lease unless the Minister is satisfied that the proposed assignee has sufficient technical knowledge, experience and financial resources to ensure the proper prospecting and mining for petroleum;
- b) The proposed assignee undertakes to comply with such other terms and conditions as the Minister may deem fit to impose."

Alors, ces pouvoirs étaient là et ces pouvoirs sont dans la présente législation parce que nous pensons que c'est au Premier ministre de déterminer en ce qui concerne l'octroi des licences.

M. le président, j'ai comme l'impression qu'au niveau de l'Opposition ce sera difficile ou impossible de découvrir du pétrole dans nos eaux territoriales mais si jamais on découvre du pétrole, ce sera une manne d'or pour l'économie mauricienne. Imaginons les effets sur les coûts de production, sur le pouvoir d'achat des consommateurs.

M. le président, cette crainte des membres de l'Opposition viendrait-elle du fait qu'une découverte du pétrole dans la région garantirait une nouvelle élection de Pravind Jugnauth comme Premier ministre ?

(Interruptions)

Par contre, c'est le pays dans son ensemble qui bénéficiera de l'exploitation du pétrole.

Je vais terminer sur cette note, M. le président. Nous avons affaire à un gouvernement visionnaire et un Premier ministre visionnaire. Nous avons énoncé dans la présentation du dernier budget deux nouveaux pôles de développement et j'ai évoqué ça un peu plus haut, c'est-à-dire, l'industrie pharmaceutique et l'industrie de l'énergie verte. Là, nous abordons notre phase de cette vision et aujourd'hui nous votons une législation qui va instituer le cadre légal afin de garantir que tout ce qui va arriver au niveau de ce secteur sera en toute transparence, M. le président, c'est cette garantie-là que nous donnons à la population. Le temps nous le dira.

Deuxièmement, M. le président, dans ces moments difficiles où nous subissons toujours cette pandémie, il nous faut être innovant, il nous faut avancer et c'est pour cela que, M. le président, moi personnellement, j'accueille favorablement ce projet de loi, qui, en ces moments difficiles, va permettre le pays d'avancer vers des nouveaux horizons et d'élargir la panoplie des secteurs qui peuvent nous donner une croissance intéressante dans les années à venir.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

(8.17 p.m.)

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have listened with a lot of interest not only to the previous orator but also to all orators, and I believe that not only is it my duty to give my views as regards this particular piece of legislation, but it is also my duty to rebut the arguments put forward by the hon. Minister a few moments ago. He himself stated that he would rebut hon. Uteem. Now, let me say that with all due respect him, I am still waiting for the rebuttal because I tried to be all ears as regards the arguments that he would bring forward. I was most interested in trying to listen to what the arguments would be, as to why hon. Uteem was wrong, and it is unfortunate that I am still waiting for those arguments to be put forward, and he finished his intervention before he could utter a single word in rebuttal!

Now, he did give us his views in that he said that he stood by that particular piece of legislation. I did not expect the hon. Minister to have the courage to say that he did not stand by that particular piece of legislation; otherwise he would have had to resign from Cabinet. Now, the fact that he is for that particular piece of legislation does not, in itself, make the legislation good. I will not, Mr Speaker, Sir, get into the debate as to whether it is an opportune time or not for this piece of legislation to be brought forward today. I will not get

into the debate because my hon. colleagues have already covered that particular aspect, and I agree with them. But I believe, in my humble view, that there are other important issues that need to be set. There are important documents of research that need to be read. There are Experts who are all not in actual fact, but who have to be listened to. We have to learn from them and that includes me, because in situations of that particular nature - let me start from the beginning. It is in the interest of the country to find natural resources that can benefit the country. There is no denying that. At the end, the end game is for the people of this country to come out winning, to be victorious economically and socially. That is all that matters. It is not to sing the praises to any particular leader or any particular Prime Minister. That is not the way I view things. And, this is unfortunate that, when I listened to Members of Government, it seems as though that they have this God-given duty to praise that one man, the Prime Minister, failing which their discourse would be incomplete. I will leave this to their conscience and to posterity.

What I will say today, Mr Speaker, Sir, is not aimed at hurting anyone's emotion, and if it does, I apologise in advance, but that is not my intent. Yes, it is important to help the country with new pillars of the economy and if we can find oil, if we can find any other natural resources, why not? However, we should not lose ourselves in this march towards progress, like we like to call it. We should not lose the minimum of what makes us a civilised society, responsible people, a responsible Parliament. We should not lose ourselves in the process. And, that is why, in simple language, we should ensure that whatever piece of legislation we bring forward should be an improvement as opposed to the previous one. And when I listened to my hon. friend, allow me to call him my friend, hon. Lesjongard, the hon. Minister refers to the 1970 legislation, which is the Petroleum Act and he says that it is an improvement. The hon. Prime Minister says it is an improvement. The hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change says it is an improvement, and when you read the Explanatory Memorandum, those words are important, the four words – a more ‘appropriate’ regulatory regime. Appropriate for whom and how? How is it more appropriate? In what way is it appropriate? A lot has been said about Trinidad and Tobago. Does the hon. Minister and does the hon. Prime Minister, do our hon. friends on the other side of the House realise that Trinidad and Tobago has a piece of legislation that includes within its various sections the concept of transparency and accountability? The law pertaining to Trinidad and Tobago talks about the necessity to publish agreements, the necessity to gazette decisions of the Minister. But our law does not make any provision for such

publication, for such an element of making public information. On the contrary, the law in Trinidad and Tobago says that one has to be public, not hide information, but, in Mauritius, as my good friends on this side have explained before me, even the agreement that is entered into, there is a beautiful statutory gymnastic that is adopted by the other side to ensure that this is never made public.

No one on the other side, Mr Speaker, Sir, can come and tell me the contrary, and I challenge them to come and indicate to me in this Bill, tell me which clause permits, allows, encourages the publication of any agreement entered into with any operator licensee between Government, any clause within this Bill that says it shall be made public or shall be deposited on the Table of the National Assembly. There is no such clause, and I ask: why is not there such a clause?

The hon. Minister Lesjongard says that it is an improved piece of legislation compared to the 1971. In 1970, the legislation provided as hon. Uteem said that it was possible to apply in a prescribed manner by auction or tender. This legislation does not, Mr Speaker, Sir, provide for auction or tender, and I will explain in a few minutes why it is important to provide for auction or tender, precisely because I read a document here from the Chr. Michelsen Institute of Norway (CMI), and the title of this document published in 2008, that is available for all to read on the internet is “Grand Corruption in the Regulation of Oil”. If one wants to know how to encourage corruption in the field of petroleum exploration, one simply has to avoid making the mistakes that I have found in this Bill that is proposed before the Assembly and I underline it “Grand Corruption”. So, whatever the experts of the CMI Institute, a well-known institute in Scandinavia, Norway that is well respected by all international institutions, it is important to read what they say, that it is indeed an industry where a lot of money can be made, but it is important to avoid the dangers in a regulation, in a law that is not drafted in such a manner to avoid those holes whereby one can fall into the temptation of corruption. And I read here at note 1.5 page 10 of that report of 2008. I quote –

“These are coupled with a tendency among politicians and civil servants to view oil resources as a convenient source of rents for amassing personal wealth and securing political patronage”.

This document goes on to explain at paragraph 2.4 page 17 –

“In the resource curse literature, it is argued that oil resources may alter these democratic mechanisms since control over revenues can be used to bolster political positions through patronage and to build strong political parties.”

I am going to try to connect it to show how this political party in power is precisely doing what the experts in this document says one should avoid.

There is a chapter here that deals with the award of licences and it says at paragraph 2.7 page 23 –

“The risk of corruption is probably greatest during the process of awarding licences. Such awards are often conducted on the basis of direct negotiations with firms through auctions though auctions following professional auction procedures are becoming more common”.

So, what this report says is that direct negotiations with politicians, that is the risk whereby you are opening yourself to the possibility of corruption. Does this legislation provide for direct negotiations? Yes. Does it provide for the creation of a regulatory body for petroleum activities called the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones, Administration and Exploration? Yes. Who will be part of that particular department? It does not say. How will they be nominated? It does not say. Who will choose them? We do not know. What will be their remuneration? We do not know. What will be their minimum qualifications? God knows. What will be their conditions of appointment? We seriously do not know.

Why, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, does this Government choose to shroud this department in such secrecy? Why do we hide such basic information? I am trying to understand, but if I am to give my particular opinion, they will say that I am politically biased. But let me read this particular document of the CMI Institute, the experts, and they say, I quote –

“Auction procedures are an important means of selecting the most suitable company for production though the pre-qualification phase is equally important.”

Auction procedures, it says, is an important means of avoiding the pitfalls of corruption. This is the CMI Institute. It is not me saying it; it is not the hon. Uteem saying it; it is not us in the Opposition saying it. It is a respectable and respected institution: the CMI Institute. Mauritius has knocked at their door whenever we have required directions on policy.

This institution, their doors have been knocked upon by all Governments in our country at different times and époques. But they say that auction is the way to avoid corruption. This Government has decided to remove it from the legislation, and they call it now a more appropriate legislation. And I say it again. Appropriate for whom?

Yes, it is appropriate for all those who want to steal money. Appropriate for those who want to facilitate the process of grand corruption and theft! Then it makes it appropriate! Yes. This is what CMI says. That's not me! Maybe the hon. Prime Minister should not think about me as an enemy, but read this document and then maybe you will see that what I say today is not because I am a political adversary of the MSM, it's because...

Mr Ganoo: On a point of order!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member!

Mr Mohamed: Yes.

Mr Speaker: There is a point of order! May I listen to it?

Mr Mohamed: Please!

Mr Ganoo: I am sorry. There is a line which the hon. Member should not cross, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is imputing motive. What the hon. Member is saying is that those who drafted this legislation, came up with this legislation, came with the idea, with corrupted motive to steal, to loot. This is what he is saying.

Mr Speaker: Then?

(Interruptions)

Please! Please!

Mr Ganoo: This is imputing improper motive.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Mr Mohamed: I never said that.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, it is a good time, it is a proper time for you to continue your speech, but just withdraw those words.

Mr Mohamed: I never said anything of the sort. So, I am not going to withdraw anything. I never said that. Why should I withdraw what I did not say? You want to stop my speech for him to check! That's what you want to do, because it is hurting what I am saying!

Mr Speaker: No, then I have to check and we'll come back.

Mr Mohamed: What are the words that I said exactly? Can you quote?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is a point of order. I am giving my ruling.

At 8.32 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.30 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

POINT OF ORDER – FIRST MEMBER FOR PORT LOUIS MARITIME & PORT LOUIS EAST – OFFSHORE PETROLEUM BILL

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Members, in the course of the debate on the Bill presently under consideration, the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rails, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade raised a point of order drawing attention to the fact that the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East is imputing motives by stating that those who drafted this legislation came up with this idea with corrupted motives to steal.

A perusal of the Hansard of what hon. Shakeel Mohamed said reveals the following, I quote –

“Appropriate for whom? Yes, it is appropriate for all those who want to steal money. Appropriate for those who want to facilitate the process of grand corruption and theft! Then it makes it appropriate! Yes.”

In the light of the aforementioned, I rule that, by the tenor and tone of those words uttered, in spite of the fact that hon. Mohamed was quoting from the CMI Report, in so doing, he clearly implied that the Bill has been so drafted so as to allow to steal money, thus imputing improper motives to the hon. Minister who is in charge of the present Bill, in contravention of Standing Order 40(3) of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly.

I, therefore, invite hon. Shakeel Mohamed to withdraw the said words.

Mr Mohamed: I withdraw!

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr Mohamed: May I go on, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: You already absorbed 15 minutes of your time. I'll give you some more time.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you very much. I was told I have 20 minutes. So, if you give me more, I will have 10 minutes left. Thank you.

It is my duty, Mr Speaker, Sir, to draw the attention of the legislator about loopholes in the Bill and when I refer to the CMI report, and the CMI report says that one of the ways of avoiding the pitfalls of corruption would be to introduce the possibility of an auction as a method of avoiding corruption. I believe it is, therefore, a duty of mine that I have accomplished by drawing that there is a pitfall, there is a lacuna, there is a hole that people could take advantage of, and I would like to clarify my position on this matter.

There is another section of this particular piece of legislation that my other friends have addressed and I think it is important that I address it. It is only a question of one's own opinion about the way a country should run. Back in the old days, be it in the 20s, the 30s, the 70s, and the 80s, it was normal to concentrate power in the hands of one man. It was totally normal to concentrate all power of decision even if we are in a democracy, not in Parliament, but in the hands of one man. Let us not forget our legislation when it comes to citizenship, nationality. It is one man who has the discretion to grant nationality or not to grant it. I am one of those who believe in a rule-based society. Previous Prime Ministers have also benefited from this legislation, whereby the discretion is there for them and no one else, on matters of nationality.

I am someone who does not agree that discretion should reside in the hands of one man. I am someone who believes that it is wrong and a wrong democratic principle used by all previous Prime Ministers – I am not saying abused, I said used, because the law is the law – but it should be something that should be left in the past. And what I am saying here is that when you look at the reports of the CMI, the CMI says that this practice of giving the power to one man is a risk that there might be corruption.

Let me underline the fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the issue is not hon. Pravind Jugnauth. I am not in any way pointing my finger at him; I am talking about legislation that is being

proposed, and I am against the fact that any Prime Minister, of any political party, holds such power. Even if it was someone of the Labour Party, I stand against any power being given to any Prime Minister of any political party. Is that clear? That is not pinpointed towards one man but the principle!

I am entitled to my opinion. One may not agree with it. One may believe that you have to concentrate all power in the hands of one Prime Minister. I do not! Let us respectfully disagree with one another. I believe that we should have a Select Committee of Parliament, as always suggested by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Because what we are talking about here is potentially property that belongs, if found, to the people of this Republic. Should it not, therefore, have a Permanent Select Committee of the House in order to be able to review and to act as a watchdog with regard to the possibility of avoiding corruption? Because the issue, I say again, I shall not go so low as to limit it to one Prime Minister and, that is, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. That is not what I am trying to get at! Because tomorrow, we may have another one; I mean another Prime Minister. And then what do we do if we have another Prime Minister who is hell-bent on abusing the power that you are here proposing in this legislation? What are *les garde-fous*? What are the measures that are included in this legislation that will protect the country from a mad man? What do we do Prime Minister? What do we do, Mr Speaker, Sir? That is why I say, unfortunately, this country when you suggest something that goes against what the other side proposes, you are treated as though you are an enemy of that. But I am not being an enemy! I am just saying I do not agree with the system of governance that you propose and I am not saying that what you are proposing is purposefully done out of malice. I am not saying that what you are proposing is done with an intention to defraud. I am only saying that the risk is there. When you legislate, you do not legislate for you only; you legislate for the Governments that will come ahead in future. And you have to ensure that there are ways and means that a mad Prime Minister would not abuse of this power that we are writing in there. You do not legislate only for your understanding of what morality is; you legislate for the possibility of danger looming over our heads.

So, the power is unlimited. When you look at the legislation provided for in Trinidad and Tobago, such a blanket provision, a blank cheque that is given to one man to decide is not there in this legislation. Yes, Trinidad and Tobago has more experience as opposed to Mauritius in the field of offshore petroleum and onshore. So, we have to learn from them. And that is why, when I read in this particular document of CMI, and it says here, at page 30, and I will gladly communicate this document to the hon. Prime Minister who may go through

it and will see that what I am saying here is not out of spite but out of my love for my country. It is not out of spite. So, what I see here, when I read –

“Another way to strengthen accountability is to require status reports from those in positions of responsibility and to ask them to defend their choices. This simple means of improving the quality of decision-making is not necessarily applied. At the highest level of the political system, the ministry responsible for the oil industry should report to parliament once a year to explain and defend choices relating to regulation of the industry.”

As the hon. Prime Minister is proposing this Bill, such safeguards are not there. So, what I am only asking the Prime Minister to consider is the following –

- Is it possible to improve this piece of legislation by giving back to Parliament the power that the people should have, which is to act as a guard dog, to act as a watchdog to ensure that this power is not abused, that you report to Parliament once a year - and if you wish to report more than once a year, feel free - but at least that this concept is there.

Previous Governments – and I recall, at some point in time, not only limited to the Labour Party but previous Governments – have in matters of corruption decided to have a Permanent Committee to oversee the Prevention of Corruption Act and the ICAC. Why? Because it is important to the national integrity. But why is it not an equivalent, a parallel we can draw, that we can also say: ‘okay, wait a minute, this is not property that belongs to any political party but to the people of Mauritius; therefore, set up this Committee.’ A Permanent Select Committee that is there, that can question those in power, those people who we do not know will be in that department. How, who, when, in what way, how will they be nominated; that we can question their choices in the name of our democracy and for the people.

That is the only thing I am suggesting. That we find oil; I hope we do. That we find natural resources; we pray we do. But what I am asking the hon. Prime Minister to do, Mr Speaker, Sir, – and I will finish on this - is to do things properly. What you are doing there, I do not want it to be done in my name, because it can be improved. And let us not do what you are proposing in the name of our children because they may suffer, because you could end up by legislating and then there is no *garde-fous* provided for, and then *on termine avec un fou*, and that is the danger which I am trying to suggest we can avoid if we do not consider

ourselves, necessarily because we have different views, as enemies. This is not the way the country can progress.

Thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend for one and a half hour.

At 9.42 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 11.10 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, very much. Please be seated! Hon. Minister Teeluck, please!

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, each one of us come to this House to serve a purpose. Each one of us has a role depending on the responsibilities entrusted to them. I come here, and I have my role to play. When questions are put, I come here to reply; when Bills are presented, I come here to participate in the debates, and when I participate in debates, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, particularly when Bills are presented, I have always drawn the contours of my intervention along the provisions of those Bills and the rationale behind their introduction. I do not intervene to dissect and comment speeches of other Members, where Members choose to recognise the contribution of a mover of the Bill or the contribution of the Leader of the House in the introduction of a Bill. But I am disappointed tonight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and also sad to note that the hon. Member whom I am referring to is not present to at least listen to my reply. So, I am disappointed tonight when I hear hon. Mohamed making remarks following hon. Lesjongard's speech about our conscience because he acknowledged the Prime Minister in his speech. Well, hon. Mohamed, to make it clear and whether you like it or not, at least my conscience dictates that I recognise and acknowledge a mover of a Bill or the contribution of the Leader of the House in the introduction of a Bill. And I go further, my conscience dictates that I recognise and acknowledge a Prime Minister who is committed in serving the country. My conscience dictates that I recognise and acknowledge a Prime Minister who has proved through actions and measures that he is only motivated to work for the country and in the best interest of the people of this country. And as a matter of fact, it is not just me or hon. Lesjongard, the whole population acknowledges and recognises the work being accomplished by the Prime Minister. Just like the country has recently acknowledged and recognised the effort of the Prime Minister and hon. Seeruttun in getting the country out of the grey list of the FATF.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now turn to the Bill. The Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius extends over an area of more than 2 million km² if we exclude the approximate 400,000 km² jointly managed with the Seychelles, and this makes Mauritius the twentieth country in the world with the largest EEZ. The 2 million km² of exploitable marine and natural resources does not only provide Mauritius with a huge maritime zone to manage, but also holds a massive potential for development that can change significantly the shape of our economy.

The primary legislation for the administration of offshore petroleum resources date back to 1970 and is today non-responsive nor adapted to the current and prevailing conduct of petroleum activities. It is unarguable that we should seriously consider and put all means required to tap on the vast extent of our seas for potential resources, but, before doing so, we need to put in place a new and more appropriate regulatory regime for the conduct of petroleum activities in the seabed and subsoil areas of the maritime zones of Mauritius, such as the prospecting, exploration, retention and production of petroleum.

This Offshore Petroleum Bill comes in the form of this new and more appropriate regulatory regime. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are growing and we have embarked on the road to create a modern Mauritius. Over the years, many new sectors have emerged and today so many sectors are reliant on petroleum products and we cannot afford to be complacent about the future of our oil consumption and though we are determined to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel in line, of course, with our obligations and commitments under the Paris Agreement, we will still for at least a certain number of years more, depend on these non-renewable energies. But until then, we will continue to import though we can work towards reducing the volume of imported petroleum products but whatever be the amount, even if reduced, import will remain relevant. And what does that entail in terms of costs? What is the cost of petroleum products importation? For Financial Year 2019-2020, we imported more than 19 billion worth of refined products, nearly a metric, 1 million metric ton of products and here we are only talking of a reduced amount of importation during that period because of COVID-19 and lockdowns.

In 2018-2019, we imported more than *R 26 milliards* worth of products, more than 1 million metric tons of products. For argument, let's say, we reduce the volume of import but how to manage or control the unpredictable change in price of oil? Crude oil price in 2021 is above 80 USD, with the highest selling price last year at 63 USD and the prices keep oscillating without any visibility on the fluctuating tendencies. The rise in price does not only

depend merely on demand and supply. Very often, we have also seen how geopolitics issues have had direct incidents on prices. A price factor which weighs heavier year after year because of its volatility and which will result in the budget of petrol imports increasing year after year and there is no simple solution to the problem of high petrol prices.

However, there are things we can do to make a difference. There are responsible steps which we can take now. Instead of increasing our resilience, reliance on imported petroleum products and gas, should we not tap our potential of producing our own oil, should we not tap our potential to export instead of importing oil, should we not consider the ambitions of us being self-sufficient in terms of fuels and be less vulnerable to recurrent global oil shocks?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have a choice, either we keep on importing petrol products for 30, 40 years and keep spending billions of rupees on import with the price of oil increasing or we choose otherwise, that is, exploring and eventually producing our own oil. So many other countries are already doing it, countries *qui sont signataires du* Paris Agreement. To name just a few –

- United States, producing approximately approximately 12 million barrels of oil per day;
- China, four million barrels per day;
- Canada, 3.7 million barrels per day;
- UK, Australia, Norway.

Norway, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition referred to Norway. Yes, it is a point of reference. The petroleum sector is a key driver in the Norwegian economy and it is good to know that oil and gas production in Norway is only off-shore. In the country's single largest industry, the sector accounts for 10% of GDP, 20% of total investments, 10% of State revenues and 31% of total exports. Norway is the world's third largest exporter of natural gas and the 30th largest exporter of oil.

UK, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again the Leader of the Opposition rightly referred to UK's decision to ban sale in 2030 of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars, but it is also important to mention that UK is also an oil producer. The refinery capacity of oil in the United Kingdom has reached 1.25 million barrels per day in 2020. 1.25 million barrels per day!

Coming back to our shores, production of course comes at a later stage but is it not important to know what our sea beds and subsoil areas contain? It is important and

appropriate for us to do prospection and exploration activities and know exactly how rich our maritime zones are. Of course, as it has been said, there is no guarantee we will find oil. Of course, we do not know, we will only know when there is prospection, there is exploration but we cannot do that unless we have the appropriate legislation and that is the reason why we are introducing this Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I failed to appreciate the qualms raised in terms of environmental risks. The Bill does set the preconditions of holding an EIA license before any activity is conducted under the provisions of the Bill. Also, other environmental safeguards are provided in the Bill to ensure that activities to be operated under the Bill are compliant with environmental norms. I have heard Members of the Opposition attempting to suggest that this Bill contradicts with our Renewable Energy Policies or our objectives in terms of carbon emission reduction, or even our Environmental Protection Policies.

My colleague, Mr Ramano, has lengthily pressed on all the measures which have been put in place, and all the measures and actions being undertaken to ensure that the provisions of this Bill, the rationale behind the introduction of this Bill comply with our environmental policy. And these measures, and decisions, and actions very often bold and audacious speak of the commitment *et de la volonté du gouvernement* to work towards our objectives for a greener Mauritius. *Alors*, there is no reason whatsoever to feel odd that this Bill is being presented now, whether before or after COP26 our commitment in terms of our nationally determined contributions remains a priority for the Government, and there is no compromise on that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now, I come to section 16. Unlike what has been stated, the granting of title does not revolve around the whims and caprices of the Prime Minister. There is no sinister motive behind and there is no question of one person deciding. The Bill provides for a clear and defined application process. Section 17, in very clear terms, set out the conditions attached to an application. Section 17 requires an application to comply with 17 requirements. 17 requirements over and above other such requirements which are set out in the Bill, for instance, requirement to deposit a bank guarantee, there is a process, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There are conditions; there is screening, then only title is granted. And for reference, many jurisdictions, including Australia use the application process and not a bidding process. So, we are not departing nor introducing any new concept here.

D'ailleurs, talking about accountability, all Ministers here are accountable to the Parliament, including the Prime Minister for any matter relating to the affairs of their respective Ministries. So even in the case of licensing or granting of title, the Prime Minister remains accountable to the Parliament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I conclude allow me to commend the Prime Minister, the mover of the Bill, for coming forward with this Bill, which will not only lay foundation to a new industry, but also which has the potential to considerably contribute to our GDP to create jobs, which has the potential to significantly change the shape of our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am therefore in full support of the Bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

(11.26 p.m.)

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Si ce gouvernement est bon dans deux choses, c'est bien dans sa capacité à constamment agir en contradiction avec ses paroles et à agir dans l'opacité. Il y a urgence climatique. La COP26 se tient dans un contexte particulier où il y a unanimité sur l'impératif de redéfinir notre rapport à la nature et de nous tourner vers les énergies renouvelables en abandonnant les énergies fossiles responsables du réchauffement climatique.

Le Premier ministre justifiait un peu plus tôt la présentation de ce projet de loi en disant qu'il faisait partie de leur programme électoral en 2015 et 2016. Mais énormément de choses ont changé entre-temps. Le monde a changé. Les données ont changé. Dans l'actualité, de plus en plus de pays mettent fin à l'exploration pétrolière, à titre d'exemple le Groenland tout dernièrement ou encore le Québec, Costa Rica ou la Californie.

Le Premier ministre va à la COP26 pour avoir des fonds pour pouvoir augmenter notre résilience face aux effets du réchauffement climatique. Ce même réchauffement climatique causé par les émissions de gaz à effet de serre et y compris par l'utilisation du pétrole. Le gouvernement choisit donc ce moment pour se lancer dans le pétrole et va en même temps faire un plaidoyer pour les énergies renouvelables à la COP26. Et le Premier ministre trouve que, je cite, c'est le –

“most opportune time”

Comment, donc, est-ce que le Premier ministre réconcilie d'un côté ce *Bill* pour faciliter l'extraction de pétrole avec de l'autre côté notre position à la COP26 en faveur des

énergies renouvelables avec le *Climate Change Act* voté l'an dernier, avec l'objectif d'atteindre 60% d'énergies renouvelables en 9 ans avec notre engagement par rapport à l'accord de Paris.

En amenant cet *Offshore Petroleum Bill* devant la Chambre aujourd'hui, le gouvernement est en train de nous demander le droit de participer à l'aggravation de la crise climatique dont nous sommes cruellement victimes en tant que petit État insulaire. Quelle crédibilité aura le Premier ministre ensuite à la COP26 ? Quelle crédibilité lui sera accordée quand il ira nous définir comme des victimes de ce réchauffement climatique auquel nous sommes en train de vouloir contribuer ?

Autre contradiction, on voit à travers ce projet de loi que le gouvernement pense qu'il est raisonnable d'aller dans la voie du pétrole tout en étant pour autant conscient des risques écologiques. Dans la section 9, on peut lire l'obligation pour les éventuelles compagnies d'avoir une assurance couvrant les dommages liés au *oil pollution*.

M. le président de séance, j'ai tendance à me dire que ce gouvernement est vraiment insensible à ce que nos frères et sœurs du sud-est, qui n'arrivent toujours pas à se remettre de la marée noire du Wakashio, ont vécu il n'y a pas longtemps. J'ai eu l'occasion d'aller à la rencontre des pêcheurs et des plaisanciers de Mahebourg il y a quelques jours et je vous garantis qu'ils ne voient pas ce projet de loi d'un bon œil. La peur de revivre ce traumatisme est belle et bien là. Et ce qu'il nous faut absolument retenir de cet événement ; ce qu'il nous faut absolument retenir de la marée noire du Wakashio - est que de la fragilité de nos ressources et de nos écosystèmes dépend de notre propre fragilité.

Plus loin à la section 23, il est demandé aux détenteurs d'un titre de se conformer aux meilleures pratiques environnementales concernant l'environnement. Mais, là encore, la manque de clarté peut nous être fatal. Quelles sont ces meilleures pratiques internationales ? Est-ce que l'on parle, ici, également du EITI, c'est-à-dire du *Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative* qui se définit comme étant le *global standard for the good governance of oil, gas and mineral resources* ? Les Seychelles sont déjà un pays adhérent de cette organisation-là. Est-ce que, nous aussi, nous allons devenir un pays adhérent ? Et que contient le *Environmental Code of Practice* qui a déjà été préparé, nous l'avons appris par le ministre de l'environnement. S'il a déjà été préparé pourquoi ne pas le présenter en même temps que ce projet de loi ? Qu'y a-t-il à cacher ?

Il y a aussi parmi les responsabilités de détenteurs de titres à la section 23 (d) celle de, je cite –

“mitigate the adverse effects of petroleum activities in the (...) environment”

Encore une fois, manque de clarté.

Qu’elles sont concrètement ces mesures qui seront prises pour atténuer les effets néfastes sur l’environnement des activités pétrolières ? Et encore une fois le gouvernement cherche la facilité en opérant dans l’opacité et je vais vous dire pourquoi. Parce que dans le *brief* de l’Union internationale pour la conservation de la nature sur les exploitations du pétrole, l’Union le dit elle-même, je cite –

“Current technologies may not be sufficient to avoid serious and lasting harm to the environment, including the loss of biodiversity. (...) Minimising impacts should involve, among other things, improving mining equipment to reduce seafloor disturbance. But remedying environmental impacts has not yet been shown to be effective in practice.”

Ce n’est pas moi qui le dis. Aucune technologie, aucune méthode n’a fait ses preuves pour atténuer les effets néfastes des activités pétrolières sur l’environnement. Aucune méthode n’a prouvé son efficacité jusqu’à l’heure. Donc, grand, très grand a été mon étonnement en entendant le ministre de l’environnement venir dire un peu plus tôt que –

“The petroleum extraction will be done without jeopardizing any environmental assets.”

Alors que partout à travers le monde, les effets néfastes des activités pétrolières sur l’environnement sont non seulement reconnus mais comme je viens de le dire, aucune méthode n’a fait ses preuves pour atténuer ces effets néfastes. Est-ce donc sérieux d’aller s’embarquer dans ces activités en pleine crise écologique ?

A la Section 74, le *Petroleum Fund*, je ne vais pas revenir sur ce que mes collègues ont déjà dit concernant l’aspect financier, mais j’aimerais quand même, encore une fois, moi aussi rappeler que cette section est beaucoup trop opaque et pas assez précise. Si pétrole il y a, il faut s’assurer que chaque mauricien puisse bénéficier des revenus du pétrole, pourquoi pas par exemple, à travers un fonds souverain où chaque mauricien détiendrait des actions et obtiendrait des dividendes ? C’est une pratique qui a marché dans d’autres pays pour s’assurer

que la population puisse bénéficier des revenus du pétrole mais qui n'est pas proposée ici dans ce projet de loi.

Et ici, il en va de la survie de notre démocratie. Ce serait une catastrophe pour la démocratie si ce *Petroleum Fund*, si les revenus d'une éventuelle exploitation du pétrole devraient être gérés par le gouvernement MSM. Et avec une telle politique d'opacité où des *special purpose vehicles* sont créés à tout bout de champ pour que les décisions ne puissent pas être questionnées, nous avons de quoi être inquiet. D'autant plus, que selon ce projet de loi, le public ne sera même pas informé du contenu des contrats, des conditions des licences, etc...

A la section 85, parmi les amendements occasionnés par l'entrée en vigueur de l'*Offshore Petroleum Bill*, il y a les amendements au *Environment Protection Act*. A l'annexe 4, il sera rajouté que ce sera donc le *department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones and Administration and Exploration*, cette cellule du département du Premier ministre qui sera le *Enforcing Agency* et qui aura donc la responsabilité de veiller à l'application, des dispositions du *Environment Protection Act* pour tout ce qui concerne la prospection, l'exploitation, l'exploration et la production des activités pétrolières.

Comment est-ce que ce département assumera ses responsabilités et notamment s'assurera que l'impact environnemental soit le moins dévastateur possible? Quels sont les moyens techniques à sa disposition pour lui permettre de s'assurer que les détenteurs de droits de prospection et d'exploitations vont respecter les règlements concernant la protection de l'environnement? Combien sont-ils comme officiers dans cette cellule? Quels moyens, quelles expertises ont-ils pour évaluer les rapports *EIA* ? De quels moyens le ministère de l'Environnement lui-même, disposera-t-il pour faire le *monitoring* des permis *EIA*, concernant les activités pétrolières? Quel sera son rôle en cas d'urgence environnementale?

Le ministre de l'environnement nous a annoncé, en passant, dans son discours que le *National Oil Spill Contingency Plan has been reviewed*. Pourquoi donc ne pas le présenter? Pourquoi ne pas le rendre public? Ça pourrait déjà aider à rassurer. Ces questions sont d'autant plus importantes parce que l'Union Internationale pour la Conservation de la Nature définit la zone économique exclusive de Maurice comme étant un *hot spot* en termes de biodiversité et elle dit également, je cite –

“The scrapping of the sea floor and pollution from mining processes can wipe out entire species. Many yet to be discovered.”

Donc, comment est-ce que cette cellule s'assurera que notre biodiversité et nos écosystèmes marins, que notre capital naturel sera préservé? Est-ce que les inspecteurs mentionnés à la section 66 ont les formations requises pour cela? Qui sont ces inspecteurs? Quelles sont leurs qualifications et expertises par rapport à l'environnement? Et comme l'Union Internationale pour la Conservation de la Nature le dit elle-même, beaucoup d'espèces n'ont même pas été découvertes. Quelles sont leurs expertises pour protéger ces espèces qui n'ont même pas encore été découvertes? L'exploitation des fonds marins génère des sérieux impacts environnementaux et ce depuis la prospection. Et quelques minutes plus tôt, j'ai entendu le ministre de l'Environnement parlait fièrement des études sismiques qui sont en cours, en omettant totalement de dire que celles-ci causent une pollution sonore qui perturbe les mammifères marins.

Nous avons vu la mort de dizaines des dauphins d'Électre après l'étude bathymétrique qui avait été faite pour aller couler rapidement le Wakashio au large de Maurice. Donc, les impacts sur l'environnement vont de la prospection jusqu'à la production elle-même. Maintenant, comment est-ce que les herbiers marins qui sont d'importants puits de carbone, indispensable pour lutter contre le réchauffement climatique mais aussi indispensable pour le maintien des sources d'alimentation humaine et d'ailleurs une des plus importantes au monde se trouve dans notre zone économique exclusive, nommément Saya de Malha ? Comment ces herbiers marins seront-elles protégées ? Comment seront-elles protégées, surtout quand on sait qu'elles n'ont pas encore été ni étudiées ni cartographiées si je me fie à la réponse du ministre Maudhoo à ma question parlementaire B/198. Et je le cite –

“My Ministry is in the process of signing an Agreement in connection with the Seagrass Project, entitled ‘Assessment of Blue Carbon Ecosystem’. This project will include an island-wide seagrass survey and mapping around Mauritius an analysis of Carbon sequestration content, in sediment and will be implemented by the Albion Fisheries Research Center.”

Donc, ce travail n'a pas encore été fait. Il aurait fallu que toutes les aires d'herbiers marins qui doivent être protégées, soit définies, cartographiées, répertoriées avant l'entrée en vigueur de ce projet de loi. C'est là où vraiment le gouvernement aurait montré qu'il est sérieux quand il vient parler de protection de la biodiversité des écosystèmes marins. Par ailleurs, il est écrit à cette même section de l'*Environment Protection Act*, annexe 4, section 3 (e) que cette autorité devra « *carrying out directions issued by the Minister of the Environment.* »

Donc, le *Department for Continental Shelf*, qui est sous l'égide du Premier ministre, devra aussi suivre les directives du ministère de l'environnement et aussi celle du ministère de l'Économie bleue qui est précisément supposé être chargé de protéger nos ressources marines dans notre zone économique exclusive. Comment est-ce que ce gouvernement réconcilie ces responsabilités concernant les mêmes sujets, concernant nos ressources marines mais attribuées à trois ministères différents? Ce cafouillage est la recette même du désastre écologique où sur papier, tout le monde est responsable mais dans la pratique, quand arrivera une catastrophe, comme on a pu le voir dans le cas du *Wakashio*, personne ne sera plus responsable de quoi que ce soit. Chaque ministère viendra jeter la faute sur l'autre.

Ensuite, un autre amendement apporté au *Environment Protection Act* de 2002 et le fait que les activités liées au pétrole seront désormais rajoutées à la liste des activités nécessitant un *Environment Impact Assessment*. A quoi bon insérer cette activité dans la liste des activités nécessitant un *EIA*, si par la suite, la loi n'est pas respectée comme on a pu le voir dans le cas de l'agrandissement de la route de Chamarel où malgré l'existence de la Section 10, c'est-à-dire, *conversion of forest land to any other use*, malgré l'existence de cette section, aucun *EIA* n'a été fait avant la déforestation et les travaux d'infrastructure ou encore à quoi bon faire cet amendement si certaines activités liées au pétrole seront exemptées de l'*EIA*, selon la volonté du Premier ministre comme cela a été le cas pour la construction de la jetée et de la piste d'atterrissage à Agaléga ? Quelle garantie avons-nous que la loi sera effectivement respectée et qu'il y aura pas, à nouveau des tours de passe-passe pour pouvoir faire fi de la législation en place ?

Et M. le président, plus généralement s'il n'est pas possible de faire respecter nos lois ici dans notre propre pays, comment pourrions-nous croire au fait que les lois seront appliquées et respectées à des kilomètres d'ici, au milieu de l'océan indien?

D'autant plus que des études de haute qualité évaluant l'impact environnemental, les activités pétrolières sont indispensables pour pouvoir évaluer les différentes formes d'impact sur l'environnement, leur étendue, la durée dans le temps de ses effets dévastateurs et pour ainsi pouvoir agir en conséquence, c'est-à-dire, s'assurer que la perte de la biodiversité due aux activités pétrolières soit comptabilisée et prise en compte par les autorités concernées avant que toute décision soit prise, avant que tout permis soit accordé, avant que tout contrat soit signé.

Et je le redis, M. le président, la protection de l'environnement ne devrait pas dépendre de la volonté du gouvernement en place. Il devrait y avoir une autorité indépendante pour s'assurer du respect des lois liées à l'environnement.

Pour finir, M. le président, tout ce que...

(Interruptions)

C'était très agréable cette remarque « Ah, enfin. »

The Deputy Speaker: Talk to me! Talk to me!

Ms J. Bérenger: C'était très agréable ! Très respectueux ! Bravo ! Bravo !

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger, while they are lecturing over there, let me take care of it!

Ms J. Bérenger: Please, take care of him.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. So, I do not expect you to be cross-talking. Whoever Member is on that side, please, be respectful! Continue!

Next time, I do not expect you to be talking on that side. Address to me, I will take care of it. Please, continue!

Ms J. Bérenger: Tout ce que l'Opposition propose comme amélioration à ce projet de loi aurait pu avoir été inclus dès le départ dans ce projet de loi, si le gouvernement avait procédé à des consultations avec les différents experts et acteurs de la société civile. Mais comme d'habitude, aucune consultation n'est faite et ce gouvernement impose à sa convenance, mis à part des consultations entre ministères, comme on a pu entendre un peu plus tôt dans le discours du Premier ministre, lui-même.

Mais est-ce que ce gouvernement a demandé aux jeunes ce qu'ils pensent de ce projet de loi ? Le Premier ministre ne sera sûrement plus là quand ces jeunes auront à vivre avec les conséquences de ces décisions qu'il prend aujourd'hui et quand ils auront à répondre de ces actions auprès des organisations internationales. Est-ce que le *National Youth Environment Council*, cellule mise en place par le bureau du Premier ministre, lui-même, a-t-il été consulté ? Ou bien, est-ce que ce *Council* n'est juste simplement encore qu'une mascarade ? Le *National Youth Environment Council* est supposé avoir été mis en place pour donner l'opportunité aux jeunes de contribuer dans les prises de décisions nationales et pour s'assurer, entre autres, de l'implémentation des *Sustainable Development Goals*, dont le

SDG 14 concerne la protection de nos ressources marines. Est-ce que donc le *National Youth Environment Council* a été consulté sur cette loi et sur l'exploitation pétrolière ? A-t-il donné son assentiment ?

J'ai eu l'occasion de lire aussi le *manifesto* voté hier par le *Youth for Climate*, dont nous avons un représentant national qui fait partie. Et, nous pouvons lire à la section 3.7, la demande de ces jeunes du monde entier pour une transformation des modèles de développement, pour ainsi tendre vers l'abolition de l'utilisation des énergies fossiles. Les jeunes, en général, sont particulièrement inquiets de ce projet de loi, car c'est de leur avenir qu'il s'agit et nous le savons l'avenir est dans le renouvelable. Les jeunes veulent un changement de paradigme ; pas la résurrection d'une ancienne loi qui ramène avec elle un modèle de développement dépassé, qui est à la source même de la crise climatique que nous vivons aujourd'hui. Et ce projet de loi, dans sa forme actuelle, ne contient pas les garde-fous indispensables pour empêcher la corruption liée aux éventuels revenus du pétrole et pour protéger notre patrimoine naturel des effets dévastateurs de l'exploitation pétrolière.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy, please!

(11.48 p.m.)

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is with pride that I lend my voice and bring my humble contribution to the Offshore Petroleum Bill. A Bill which is of utmost importance for Mauritius. A Bill which is considered as a game changer by experts in the field.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is after almost 51 years that this Government is coming up with this Bill, which consists of more appropriate legal framework, taking into consideration the context of climate change, which in a few days, would be subject to extensive debates at the COP26.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to inform the House that I am neither an expert in blue economy nor would I pretend to be the local Greta. Then bring as some on the other side of the House do.

I would like to address the House as a simple Mauritian citizen in a simple language so as the youngsters of this country are not misled by the demagogy of Members on the other side, and above all, I would like to give a more realistic approach.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this would have been my normal introduction if I did not listen to the Members on the other side. However, I join my colleague, the hon. Avinash Teeluck, who shared his disappointment today. I am equally disappointed today when I listened to Members on the other side, when I listened to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, when I listened to hon. Shakeel Mohamed - who is not present here. And, I got confused when I just listened to the previous orator, who was talking about climate change, protecting the environment, but at one point in time, I wonder whether she knew what she was reading because she mentioned about dividend.

You come forward during a debate, you say no, we should not have petrol but then the next second, you say, okay, if ever there is petrol, we need to share the dividend! Which is which? Do you want to go for it or not? It is confusing for me. Talking about confusion as well, I think, we need to set the time machine right. Everyone is talking about 2015, 1970, when the Bill was introduced. However, I could listen to the Leader of the Opposition, who at one point in time said, that he has not really an objection about this Bill because he was part of a Government, and hopefully, I had the chance to do some research.

During my research, I went to find out that, okay, there was a Bill in 1970 which is being repealed right now in the National Assembly, but there is one thing which Members on the other side forgot to mention, that in 2013, there was a document which was printed and which was shared and if I am not mistaken, it is The Ocean Economy - Road Map for Mauritius, December 2013, when the current Leader of the Opposition was actually in Government; the Government of that time was PTR/PMSD in 2013 and the hon. Member was actually Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, if I am not wrong. Well, I am new to politics, you know, neophyte, as they call us! I took the time to read this and I think it is very, very interesting and I would love to invite my friends on the other side as well to go through this document. The then Prime Minister mentioned - that was in 2013 - I quote –

“The next frontier for the global economy is the ocean. When it happens, Mauritius must stand ready to seize the opportunities. We cannot wait passively for that rising tide to lift our boat. We must be proactive.”

This is what we are trying to do, right? Well, I continued and when you read the document, you go for the vision; what was the vision of the ocean economy?

The short-term objectives were –

- To develop Mauritius into a major hub in the region for petroleum products, container tranships and port services.

The long-term objectives, I quote –

“The direct contribution of the ocean economy to GDP should reach approximately 20% by 2025, excluding the game-changing contribution of an eventual discovery of hydrocarbons.”

This is not me! This is a document which has been published by the Board of Investment, at that time, in 2013. Well, I continued reading and I could refer to page 27, minerals. I quote –

“The International Seabed Authority (ISA) organises and controls seabed, ocean floor, and subsoil activities beyond the limits of national jurisdictions.”

Several prospective nations have recently made a request to ISA and being allocated deep sea mining blocks in areas contiguous to the Mauritian EEZ. This is very interesting. The discovery in 2009 of inactive hydrothermal fields by the joint Mauritius and Japanese expedition within our EEZ indicates the likelihood of mineral deposits. In fact, previous international expeditions have also discovered fields of polymetallic nodules and mineral ores in oceans basins close to our maritime zone.

So I try to understand, because I know we are youngsters here and we are not expert in maritime. So I tried to understand what exactly polymetallic nodules are. It is very simple. It goes like it is of all the mineral resources considered as potential targets for deep sea mining. Polymetallic nodules also commonly called as manganese nodules are probably the most likely commodity to be developed into a commercial operation. So this was in the report and it was discovered in 2009. But the Leader of the Opposition comes here and says no, there is nothing and there will be nothing. So which is which? I fail to understand and he was part of that Government.

And what are mineral ores? An ore is a natural occurrence of rock or sediment which contains enough minerals with economically important elements, typically metals.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not what they are trying to say and the hon. Member Shakeel Mohamed was saying we need to read. We are reading and we are finding information as well. So I think it is important for him also to go through these documents, which is not from this government, but it is from his side as well. So, before coming to teach us, I think he should get the lessons first and then we youngsters will follow.

Okay, moving on now to my speech. My speech initially was supposed to be on two aspects: the environmental aspect and the second one was good governance. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, when I listened to speeches on both sides of the House, I can understand that the great concern and the debate today is mainly around climate change and we, on this side we do acknowledge that climate crisis is the single greatest long-term challenge that we are facing, and we know the importance of allying in legislations with our climate change targets.

We also take note of the recent IPCC report where they mentioned about ‘code red for humanity’, but for all those fighting for the cause of environment, I have a very simple and direct question. Can we change overnight? Can we wake up one day and say, okay no, we are stopping everything right now. No fuel. No gas oil. The answer is simply no. It is very easy to come here and to give beautiful speeches, to talk about the environment protection. But how about coming up forward with some constructive ideas about how we can do? How about coming forward with some constructive roadmap? No, they will not do that.

But, as a responsible government, we have already set up a roadmap. This government has come forward with the renewable energy roadmap 2030 which was announced at the COP21 in 2015. The Government pledged in its nationally determined contribution by 2030. And for this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has been working relentlessly with a proper roadmap.

In 2019, when the Government took office under the able leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, we brought some laudable legislation and regulations, which serve to strengthen the protection already in place to protect our environment whether it is Climate Change Bill, single-use plastic ban, and maritime area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, climate change is the most challenging issue of our time and how we respond to it will definitely define what we are and who we are.

We also agree that there is an urgent need for the transition of our economy to cleaner and more sustainable future. We do acknowledge this and the action on climate will require that we move away from the use of fossil fuels.

That is why in the Annex of Budget 2021-2022, the Minister of Finance introduced series of incentives among which we have the electric vehicles. And in his book “How to Avoid a Climate Disaster” chapter 2, Bill Gates mentions –

“But we can't solve a problem like climate change without an honest (...)”

This is what we require here. Climate change is not fashionable. You need to have an honest approach towards how to bring their contribution. I quote –

“But we can’t solve a problem like climate change without an honest accounting of how much we need to do and what obstacles we need to overcome.”

And here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill clearly makes provision for an environmental code of practice under section 6 to provide for sustainable management of the petroleum resources and marine environment for the maritime zone with a view to protecting the marine environment and associated ecosystem. We also have the Environment Impact Assessment, which is mandatory and insurance coverage declaration of reserve areas.

With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to share some figures which Members on this side, my colleagues have already mentioned about it, but I think it is very important that we highlight this. Per year Mauritius imports around 1 million metric tons of petroleum products. And mind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to quote my colleague, the hon. Dhaliah who mentioned it last time on the radio like Mauritius has been able to send a satellite, should we not know what is there in our ocean? So I think it is high time that we need to start being proactive.

I wanted to also talk a bit about good governance. Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is an island country, part of the Mascarene Islands and it is a fact that we have such a huge maritime zone, and we therefore need to have a legal framework, *un arsenal juridique* as we say it so as to welcome any potential investor. And this piece of legislation comes immediately after being out of the grey list of FATF, again proving the good faith of the Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we were children, we were at school, I am sure everyone here knows about this “*Stella Clavisque Maris Indici*”, which means we are the key of the Indian Ocean. Indeed today, we are proving to be the key of the Indian Ocean. And Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are undoubtedly well positioned in the Indian Ocean, and that is therefore legitimate for us to explore what’s there in our ocean. And here, I insist that this piece of legislation comes as an element of good governance. Moving away from coal and petroleum will be very costly and it requires massive investment and thus having a good legal framework would attract good investors.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote the ex-President of the assembly of the International Seabed Authority and also a famous legist, Milan Mehtarbhan

who during the radio intervention on 19 October clearly mentioned that this piece of legislation *est nécessaire*. I quote – “*c’est nécessaire*” And this is not a Member of the Government saying this, this is a reputed person, a reputed jurist who is saying this and he said it on the radio. He said that this Bill is necessary. *C’est nécessaire*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has a vision *contrairement* to what some are saying that it is *opaque*. *Non*, we have a clear vision because we have a roadmap and we have to give ourselves ways and means to achieve this ambition, and this is now a reality with this Bill. This Bill will create new jobs. This will bring a new sector, and the Bill has also made provision for training of officers as well. New jobs will be created, be it in the legal sector or financial sector, engineering as well. So no doubt we will definitely attract investors, which means more FDI in our economy.

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

(12.03 a.m.)

Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci, M. le président. Pour commencer, je voudrais apporter ma voix au débat. On peut commencer par une phrase en disant ‘le pétrole n’est plus une manne, aujourd’hui’ pour deux raisons. Nous sommes dans une période de fin de cycle des énergies fossiles et deuxièmement, nous sommes dans une période d’urgence pour lutter contre le réchauffement climatique.

The question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is can the Petroleum Industry in Mauritius succeed at a time when major oil producers are seeking to transition to clean energy? Only time will tell. On this side of the House, many arguments have been presented. First of all, the issue is about the timing. As regards the timing I would say two things.

First of all, it is true, when it comes to the timing now, a few days before the COP26 Summit, that we are in the House debating a Bill for prospection of petroleum products in our shores. And it underlines the contradiction when we had the challenge of the MID, *Maurice Ile Durable*; we wanted to be a model to the world about sustainability, when it comes to green energy. The timing, when the Prime Minister is going to Glasgow and at a time when world leaders are going to make serious commitments as to the future when we are going to have zero emission. It seems that the date of 2050 is commonly being presented by major polluters. So, The timing, these days for me, is not at all what it should have been. The Prime Minister will go to Glasgow; we will have all the debates and this Bill could have waited.

The second thing is the timing in terms of decades. 2050 is being considered by many as the date where we will be able to transition to clean energy. 2050! And many of my colleagues on this side of the House mentioned that there are international organisations advocating for no investment in the coal and oil industry. And in many cases, licences have been cancelled for prospection for new reserves. And I think that we should be part of the transition to clean energy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us see, *comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure*, whether *le pétrole est une manne ou pas*. When we see all the oil producing countries, we have those which have successfully been able to exploit their reserves and their resources to redesign their economy. I think the United Arab Emirates is a very good example. Saudi Arabia is thinking about what to do after 2050. We speak about the example of Norway; we speak about the example of the UK where the oil revenue has been properly used and distributed as national wealth. And this happens in dynamic democracies where you have accountability and transparency. But when we see the disasters in a number of other oil producing countries which have enormous reserves, hon. Mohamed mentioned Venezuela, Angola, other countries in Africa, Nigeria, then we can say that oil is a curse. Why? Because it is one of the commodities which attract greed; which attract corrupt practices; you have the trafficking of black oil; you have a number of issues which goes with oil and the production of oil. That is why I make a difference between those countries which have been able to explore and exploit their reserves and their resources in the best interest of the country. And those countries, in fact, where oil has been a curse and the GDP of the country per capita has decreased over the years and the people have become poorer and poorer to the benefit of a few who have become like a mafia and a mafia system which controls the whole oil production process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are three issues I wanted to raise. One is the powers of the Prime Minister, Section 16. And let us see how this has been drafted, the drafting is very simple. "No title shall be granted except with the approval of the Prime Minister". The drafting could have been different. It could have been that all titles will be granted or approved by the Prime Minister but the way it has been drafted, it explains that, in fact, the powers of the Prime Minister are going to be final. It is the absolute discretion. Whatever is being done *en amont* finally no title has been granted except with the approval of the Prime Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over the years, in many countries where oil is being produced to come to a system where the revenue from oil goes to the people and it forms part

of the national wealth for the development and the betterment of the people, all these unfettered powers, sole discretion and power to grant or revoke oil licences have been curtailed but we are, in fact, bringing this in the legislation. At the end of the day, hon. Mohamed spoke about it, I am also saying that we cannot concentrate all the decisions, all the powers of the national wealth of the country when they are thinking of billions and in some cases it is an industry of trillions of dollars and say that this can only be done with the approval of a Prime Minister.

I am proposing, in fact, that this should be different. The sole power to grant, issue, modify, cancel, terminate all licences, permits, authorisations for midstream and downstream petroleum operations has to be vested in an authority, and I am proposing that this authority be an independent authority which is accountable to Parliament. Again, I am repeating it, my suggestion is that the sole power to grant, issue, modify, cancel or terminate all licences, permits, and authorisations for midstream and downstream petroleum operations, that is, from the pre-drilling to the drilling and the production is vested in an independent authority which is accountable to Parliament.

We need that transparency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Prime Minister, of course, at the Head of the Government, will have the possibility to see to it that all the procedures are respected, but the final permits in all transparency should be given by an independent authority which is accountable to Parliament.

My second issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is regarding the Petroleum Fund. The Petroleum Fund will have the proceeds of the industry and, at the same time, will have the issues of royalty, the issues of taxes. What happens in most oil producing countries, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? They have what is called a Sovereign Fund and that Sovereign Fund has two components. One is a component where you have the proceeds and there is a budget, an estimate which is made, for example, on the cost of a barrel at \$30, \$40 or \$50. So, the whole budget of the country is based on that, that is, oil is going to be an average of \$50 a barrel for this year. Now, it may happen, and it does happen that the price of oil which fluctuates a lot, increases during the year and you have a surplus and that surplus is put in another Fund which is called a Sovereign Fund. Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, here everything is going to be put in the Petroleum Fund and this Petroleum Fund is going to be managed by the Ministry of Finance. We have a Prime Minister who is going to decide on all the permits and licenses and you have a Minister of Finance who will have access to the proceeds of the petroleum industry. We know the way most of the special funds are being

used, handed over. We know the way the MIC Funds have been have been allocated. So, for the Petroleum Sovereign Fund, this Fund as well, should not be under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Finance. Again, this Sovereign Fund,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No!

Mr Bodha: ...there should be accountability,....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr Bodha: ...as regard to the proceeds of this Fund to Parliament....

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Li mem pou vinn Premie Minis !*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Order!

Mr Bodha: But I listened to you, hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Member! Order!

Mr Bodha: I listened...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: I listened carefully...

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Address the Chair, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: Alright!

(Interruptions)

What I am saying,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: Hon. Joanna Bérenger said something extremely interesting. An oil industry can destroy a democracy...

(Interruptions)

The oil industry can destroy a State.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *To ekout zenfan!*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Joanna Bérenger, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Joanna Bérenger, allow me to do my job!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo, I do not expect you to comment again!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Joanna Bérenger, I am telling you very politely for a last time, with a smile, don't tell me how to do my job. Thank you very much!

Hon. Bodha, please stick to your debate. I am listening to it and it is being recorded in the Hansard. This is a job in Parliament for everybody here. Please, continue!

Mr Bodha: What I am saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that an oil industry...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Joanna Bérenger!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Met dehors !*

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Joanna Bérenger, I think you would be courteous enough now to admit that you are talking while hon. Bodha is intervening. Just accept that you have been doing it and you are not going to do it again, please.

Please, continue!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. What I was saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the oil industry has the propensity to make a democracy become an autocracy; it has the propensity to make a party in power become more powerful. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is why I am saying that when it comes to the allocation of permits, we know the powers of the oil lobby and we will listen to them in Glasgow, we will hear them. We know the powers of the oil-producing countries in the world, how they can change a Government; you can have a *coup d'État*. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is why I am saying that if we want to consolidate our democracy, accountability and transparency, the more so in the times that we are living here in Mauritius, I think that it should have been an independent authority when it comes to permits, when it comes to the Sovereign Fund, it should be transparent and it should be accountable to Parliament.

My other suggestion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is regarding the Petroleum Agreement. The Agreement should be in the best interest of the country. The Agreement should be in the best interest of the people of Mauritius and we should have the highly competent people and institutions, and the expertise and know-how and international exposure to be able to help Mauritius to draft those agreements and to negotiate those agreements with oil companies so that the agreements are in the best interest of the people of Mauritius because the Agreement is for 30 years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The agreement is for thirty years! I believe that this is an opportunity to consolidate our democracy, our transparency and our accountability if really we care for the well-being of our people and it has to be done in such a way with all the institutional safeguards so that we can start the prospection. We have a lot of uncertainty, we do not know whether we have the oil reserves, we do not know how long they will take, the

quantum of reserves, how long will it take to be commercially viable and we always know that there is a time between the prospection, the production and the commercialisation.

So, when I hear my colleagues on the other side of the House saying that this is going to be a solution to our COVID-19 issues, economic and financial problem, well, I think that it is very highly hypothetical, and I will end up on the issue of the environment. A lot has been said, but the Wakashio incident has shown that one ship which went astray can destroy the whole island and the image of the island. What is the image of Mauritius? We think Mauritius is a paradise island, we are a tourism destination and now we are trying to relaunch our industry. We should know whether we want to be *une île durable, une île verte, une île paradisiaque ou une île avec un forage pétrolier*.

I think that is why I am saying that we have 2.4 million km² of sea, we should do the prospection and see how things happened, but it has to be done in the best interest of the people of Mauritius and in the best interest of democracy because oil production has the capacity to destroy a democracy and to put at stake the future of a nation.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister Soodesh Callichurn!

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

The Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 09 November 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: Adjournment matters!

Hon. Quirin!

MATTERS RAISED

(11.54 p.m.)

BEAU BASSIN - BEGGARS

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au Premier ministre et cela concerne un problème récurrent d'insécurité dans le centre de Beau Bassin notamment aux alentours des supermarchés, aux abords des *ATM*, près de l'église du Sacré-Cœur et les *food courts*, entre autres. Bon nombre de mes mandants, M. le président, m'ont sollicité pour déplorer la présence de personnes à l'allure suspecte qui à longueur de journée et même le soir mendient avec beaucoup d'insistance et d'agressivité dans certains cas. Ces mendiants, M. le président, sont souvent des jeunes dont le comportement laisse à penser qu'ils sont sous l'influence de produits illicites. Ce qui me pousse à dire que cette situation est aussi un problème d'ordre social. Une situation que les habitants de Beau Bassin, en particulier les dames, déplorent et affirment ne plus se sentir en sécurité. Je demande, donc, à l'honorable Premier ministre de bien vouloir prendre toute la question avec le Commissaire de police par intérim pour toute action à prendre afin de sécuriser ces lieux très fréquentés.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you! Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: M. le président, je ne peux pas, bien sûr, vérifier les dires de l'honorable membre, s'il est sérieux qu'il me communique les détails spécifiques - et quand je dis les détails spécifiques, je crois qu'il sait déjà de quoi je parle. Et donc à ce moment je pourrai fournir ces détails aux autorités pour qu'elles puissent, bien sûr, enquêter d'abord pour vérifier si ces dires sont avérés ; et bien sûr prendre les actions nécessaires. Donc, j'attends que l'honorable membre me communique les détails précis.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you got the message! No, don't crosstalk! You have got the message, do it in private!

Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(00.25 a.m.)

BANGLADESHIS – ACTS OF VIOLENCE

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Tonight my request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. Hon. Minister, you must be aware that the rights of minorities in Bangladesh have been brutally trampled. Hindus have been victims of violence, vandalism, rape and even murder. Temples have been ransacked and one ISKCON devotee, Pranta Das, was among those who lost their lives in that targeted violence. We condemn all forms of violence. In this respect...

The Deputy Speaker: Don't make a speech! Make your request!

Dr. Gungapersad: I request you to use your good Office towards the Bangladeshi authorities through their Embassy in Mauritius to ensure the physical security and legal protection of all Hindus and of the minorities. We tender our condolences to the bereaved families and extend our solidarity to all the victims in Bangladesh and elsewhere as we are firm believers of peace, pacific co-existence, and fully adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad, with all due respect...

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can assure the hon. Member and the House, and the country at large that I discussed this issue in fact with the Prime Minister, himself, when we were made aware of this sad situation which occurred in Bangladesh. I can also inform the House that the High Commissioner of Bangladesh was called at the Ministry and the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and myself we talked to her and she gave us a report of what in fact took place and assured us also that the authorities in Bangladesh, the Prime Minister had already issued a Communiqué condemning what had taken place in terms of these violence on a racial basis or religious basis and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, herself, she had condemned all the events that took place. And she reassured us that the Government has not connived in any way which that situation. We had also some local organisations which we learnt were trying to express their dissatisfaction with that situation in Bangladesh, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And as responsible Members of

Government, we also, on our side, we try to pacify the situation whilst at the same time expressing our sympathy, our concern with the situation that took place in Bangladesh.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

(00.29 a.m.)

COROMANDEL – BUS SERVICE

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Ma requête s'adresse ce soir au ministre du Transport et du *Light Rail* et c'est une demande de la part des nombreux usagers de la route qui chaque jour vont travailler dans la zone industrielle de Coromandel et qui prennent l'autobus à Bambous, Route Geoffroy, Medine, Dragon, Canot, Gros Cailloux, Petite Rivière, Richelieu et Montée S. Et normalement cela fait plus de 20 ans que ces personnes utilisent le service de la CNT pour aller travailler dans la zone industrielle. Mais depuis quelques temps, et bien, ils font face à un service irrégulier. Donc, je demanderai humblement au ministre du Transport d'y remédier afin que ces personnes puissent recommencer à aller travailler normalement tous les jours.

Merci, M. le président.

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

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): I can assure the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that I have received a petition to that effect and my attention has been drawn to that situation and I have already done the needful. I have got in touch with the authorities, the NTC and the NLTA to remedy this unpleasant situation vis-à-vis the commuters on this part of the island.

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

(00.30 a.m.)

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI ROAD, PAILLES - DIVERSION

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête de cette rentrée s'adresse également au ministre des transports terrestres et se veut être le suivi d'un *homework* que j'avais soulevé à l'ajournement du 16 juin 2021 à savoir le changement du sens de circulation de la Rue Shrimati Indira Gandhi à

Pailles. Cette rue ayant été convertie en une voie à sens unique pose de réelles difficultés à plusieurs habitants du quartier lorsqu'ils rentrent chez eux en voiture dans les ruelles qui sont toutes des voies à sens unique. puis-je demander au ministre le retour qu'il a obtenu de la *Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit* pour trouver une solution à ce problème routier.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when this matter was raised I did query from the TMRSU and I was informed that they received a request on 10 November 2020 in fact for a joint site visit to be carried out in November last year. The hon. PPS Dr. Mrs Chukowry and representatives of the NDU and other authorities as well as some residents of the locality attended the site visit with regard to the setting up of the one-way scheme along part of the Indira Gandhi Street in Pailles as from the Dreamprice Supermarket. I was equally informed that following this joint site visit and survey undertaken by the TMRSU, they recommended the setting of the one-way scheme based on the following –

- the Indira Gandhi Street is less than 4 meters wide and thus cannot cater for a two-way traffic safely;
- there are no footpath along the Indira Gandhi Street and thus two-way traffic represents a danger for the pedestrians, and
- due to the presence of the supermarket thereat, the volume of traffic is significant and was giving rise to regular road traffic congestion.

And there were other reasons also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Unfortunately, I have to inform the hon. Member that the above scheme was approved by the TMRSU and the traffic scheme was completed on site in May of this year. So, in light of these reasons it is therefore not recommended to seek the advice of the TMRSU; it is not recommended at this juncture to convert the recently implemented one-way traffic scheme back to the two-way traffic scheme as it would be a source of danger for the most vulnerable group of road users, namely pedestrians who include children and old-aged persons against the speeding vehicles. But I can understand the qualms of the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, especially for other residents who would wish to have the road reverted to the

original two-way traffic scheme. But this would increase, as I have just informed, the possibility of road crashes and accentuate the congestion problem at the said locus which sadly goes against the policy of my Ministry.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Ms Tour!

(00.33 a.m.)

**DR. H. MAHLER LA CURE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE -
CITY CLINIC**

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre de la Santé, concernant une demande des habitants de Résidence La cure, qui auraient aimé qu'on convertisse le dispensaire qui s'y trouve, Dr. H. Mahler La Cure Community Health Centre, en *City Clinic*. Le Ministre pourrait-il considérer la possibilité de réaliser ce projet ?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at Cité La Cure, we do have a Community Health Centre.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Let us hear the Minister, please!

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, we do have a Community Health Centre and to have another Community Health Centre, it will depend upon the population of that area. So, that will be in the next Budget and obviously we have to do all the different procedures to get a new centre there.

The Deputy Speaker: You will consider it. Hon. Ehsan Juman!

(00.34 a.m.)

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS - WASTEWATER CHARGES - EXEMPTION

Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities. I believe you already received a letter from a religious institution appealing you to look into the payment of water and wastewater charges. I understand that they have been exempted from these payments since 1978. They claim to be harassed by Wastewater

Authority which is claiming waste water charges for several past years. I therefore appeal to you to look into the matter since you already know that these religious institutions and worship places are not profit-making and rely on Government subsidy for their running cost. So, see if you can extend the exemption for the wastewater charges.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Yes, I thank the hon. Member for raising this issue. Indeed, we have received requests from those religious institutions. This is being given due consideration. But at no point have they been harassed by the Wastewater Management Authority, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Osman Mohamed!

(00.35 a.m.)

RENGANADEN SEENEEVASSEN SSS – CEILING LIGHTS

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you. I would like to address the hon. Minister of Education this morning, regarding the Renganaden Seeneevassen State Secondary School in my Constituency where since March 2021, there are some problems there. For example, the gym is out of order because of falling ceiling lights and consequently no activities could be held in the gym, including physical education, assembly in the morning and also extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, the Computer-Science educator is on leave. For quite some time, she has not been replaced and to make matters more complicated, the Rector is now on medical leave. I would like to request the hon. Minister of Education this morning to kindly refer the matter to the SCE and the Director of Zone 1 for a prompt solution to Renganaden Seeneevassen State Secondary School problem.

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): I will certainly look into the matter but then, I would like to stress on one particular point. Since March this year, no classes were held in the gymnasium simply because of COVID-19 related sanitary measures. It's true that we have this problem but the classes not being in the gymnasium, were for other reasons as

well, and we are going to certainly look into the matter to see whether the repairs can be done quickly.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

(00.37 a.m.)

ALBION - BREAK-IN, THEFTS & CRIMES -

POLICE PATROL

Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau-Bassin & Petite-Rivière): M. le président, ma requête est adressée à l'honorable Premier ministre et cela concerne l'insécurité qui s'amplifie à Albion. Les habitants d'Albion subissent de plus en plus des cas de *break-in*, des vols à l'arrachée et même des crimes qui restent malheureusement non-résolus et le fléau de la drogue ne fait que de gagner du terrain surtout auprès des jeunes et ajouter à tout cela, la population d'Albion est très grandissante. Une augmentation d'environ 800% durant ces 15 dernières années mais par contre, le nombre de policiers de la station de police d'Albion est resté inchangé. Ma requête par rapport à ce problème est en trois parties: notamment de grandir l'effectif de policiers de la station d'Albion, que plus de policiers assurent la sécurité des habitants plus régulièrement dans les 11 morcèlements d'Albion et la mise sur pied d'un département criminel comme s'était déjà le cas en 2003. Merci à l'honorable Premier ministre de bien vouloir considérer ces requêtes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member. Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: I shall look into the matter and report.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Nuckcheddy!

(00.38 a.m.)

TAXI LICENSE HOLDERS - SURVEY

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request, this early morning, is addressed to hon. Ganoo, Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. In fact, there are several holders of taxi licenses who are no more operating as taxi operators for various reasons. So, I request the hon. Minister to carry out a survey of such cases and if need be, cancel these licenses and advertise for new ones so that a relief can be brought to those using public transport.

Also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Constituency No. 9, there are at least three new hotels, new *morcellement*, new NHDC development and new shopping centres. So, I will request the hon. Minister to see if taxi licenses can be issued to operate at these places as actually there are no public transport services available at these places and this is causing a transport problem to those inhabitants and the public.

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

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): With regard to the new commercial developments all around the country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in terms of new malls and so on, an exercise is underway at the NLTA for the possibility of providing taxi services at these new commercial centres. And with regard to the first point raised by the hon. Member, I will ask the NLTA to look into the matter and to see how many taxi drivers are not in fact respecting the conditions that have been imposed upon them when they were granted their license and not carrying out their duties on the place of work where they should have been operating in fact.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister! Hon. Khushal Lobine!

(00.40 a.m.)

BONNE TERRE, SOLFERINO & PAILLOTE - THEFTS - POLICE PATROL

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister. It is a law and order issue in the region of Bonne Terre, Solférino No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 and Paillote. There have been several reported cases of thefts, even larceny with breaking. Early tonight, at Bonne Terre Pharmacy, there has been a similar case. All these cases have been reported to Sodnac Police Station and I am requesting the hon. Prime Minister to look into the matter, to ask the Commissioner of Police for additional patrol in those regions because most of those incidents are occurring because there are many youngsters, presumably under the influence of alcohol or drugs, who are breaking into those houses, shops or even pharmacies. If the hon. Prime Minister could look into the matter, please.

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

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member is saying that there are youngsters who are under the influence of alcohol, and are breaking in. I seek his help in communicating to me any information that can help the Police to track them down. Of course, I shall convey this message to the Commissioner of Police.

(Interruptions)

But also communicate to me other information, apart from what the camera will show.

The Deputy Speaker: The Prime Minister is mindful to help. I think we are done for tonight. Have a safe trip!

At 00.42 a.m., the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 09 November 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

AIRPORT HOLDINGS LTD – MR K. A. - CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

(No. B/904) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr K. A., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airport Holdings Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) total remuneration drawn as Chief Executive Officer thereof;
- (b) duties and responsibilities thereof, and
- (c) remuneration and other benefits drawn, if any, in all the corporate entities forming part of Airport Holdings Ltd.

(Withdrawn)

AIRPORT HOLDINGS LTD - SHARES ACQUISITION

(No. B/905) 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 proposed acquisition by Airport Holdings Ltd., of shares in Air Mauritius Ltd. from the other shareholders thereof, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airport Holdings Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) reasons therefor;

- (b) estimated aggregate cost thereof, and
- (c) source of finance therefor.

Reply: In my statement at the sitting of Tuesday 04 May 2021, I explained that, in view of its deteriorating financial situation, Air Mauritius Ltd. was put into Voluntary Administration on 22 April 2020 by virtue of a resolution of the Board of Directors. The Administrators were appointed with the objective of salvaging the company's business in the interest of creditors, employees and shareholders.

The primary issues around the operations of Air Mauritius Ltd. were about its running cost which had, for a significant period of time, been far too high. To make matters worse, the imposition of travel restrictions in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the income of the company to negligible levels, in comparison with its running cost. It is no secret and it is internationally acknowledged and accepted that the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted on the airline industry around the world. Borders were closed and travel restrictions imposed practically overnight, drying up the revenue of airline companies and driving the industry into an unprecedented crisis. Air Mauritius Ltd which had already been in a precarious financial situation was very severely hit by the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in its entire revenue base being eroded to almost nil. Hence, the company became insolvent and there was no alternative but to place the company into Voluntary Administration.

I did also emphasize the key role played by Air Mauritius Ltd. since its inception in 1967, in providing air connectivity that has been crucial for the development of Mauritius.

The importance of Air Mauritius as the national carrier and its contribution to the economy cannot be over-emphasized. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategic importance of our national carrier was felt as never before, with its vital contribution in the transportation of urgent medical supplies, equipment and vaccines to the country to consolidate our response to the pandemic. Air Mauritius also contributed significantly to the repatriation of our citizens stranded abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic when many airlines were unwilling or unable to provide the required flights to repatriate our citizens.

The Government therefore decided, in the national interest, to come to the rescue of Air Mauritius Ltd. by injecting the necessary funds to allow the company to resume its operations with the full re-opening of our borders, which itself has been made possible by our successful vaccination programme. However, while injecting funds in Air Mauritius Ltd., the Government must ensure the long-term viability of the company and one of the ways to

absorb shocks for the airline business is to have an integrated approach through a holding structure englobing all the activities pertaining to airport, aviation and related activities with a view to ensuring sustainability. In fact, this has been recommended by Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation India (CAPA) Consultants, whose services have been retained by Airport Holdings Ltd. (AHL) and this model is already successful in Singapore, Dubai, Ethiopia, and some other countries.

AHL has therefore been set up to encompass all the core activities around the airport for the aviation sector with a view to aligning all its entities and consolidating revenues to create synergies.

Following the intended acquisition of shares by Airport Holdings Ltd. in Air Mauritius Ltd., both entities will have to comply with the provisions of the Securities Act, the Securities Takeover Rules 2010 and the Stock Exchange of Mauritius Listing Rules, and in this connection, public announcement will have to be made, in due course, as required under these rules.

ILLICIT DRUGS – REPORTED CASES

(No. B/906) 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 illicit drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Acting Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of students of secondary and tertiary institutions found in possession thereof and/or dealing therewith since 2015 to date, indicating the –

- (a) quantity and types thereof, and
- (b) additional preventive actions taken in relation thereto.

Reply: The Acting Commissioner of Police has informed that over the period January 2015 to 21 October 2021, the number of cases involving students of secondary and tertiary educational institutions including vocational institutions, in dangerous drug cases established by the Police is as follows –

- 42 cases involving 52 students in year 2015
- 31 cases involving 37 students in year 2016

- 33 cases involving 40 students in year 2017
- 42 cases involving 46 students in year 2018
- 17 cases involving 23 students in year 2019
- 13 cases involving 15 students in year 2020
- 8 cases involving 11 students for this year

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am placing a copy of the detail of the quantity and types of dangerous drugs seized over the period January 2015 to 21 October 2021 in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Acting Commissioner of Police has informed that the Police is constantly coming up with innovative measures with a view to raising awareness among the population including youngsters on the drug scourge. The new preventive measures that the Police have adopted are, *inter alia*, as follows –

- (a) use of social media (Police Facebook/Bulletin) to raise public awareness on the ill-effects of substance abuse;
- (b) use of Safe City cameras to keep surveillance in the vicinity of educational institutions and to prevent and detect offences including illegal drug activities;
- (c) Police Officers posted to the ADSU Education Cell, Crime Prevention Unit and *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs* conduct talks with students in educational institutions (both secondary and tertiary schools) and also empower Head Teachers and teaching staff to identify suspicious behavior and report any irregularity to the Police for remedial actions;
- (d) cyber patrols are carried out on a daily basis in order to prevent and detect the procuring of illegal drugs from the dark net;
- (e) ADSU Officers are being provided with additional modern equipment and regular training to enhance their capacity building;
- (f) the reward scheme to informers has been restored to encourage members of the public to share information on drug related activities, and
- (g) targeted crackdown operations are being carried out in drug prone areas around the island.

Given that big seizures of dangerous drugs have been detected at points of entry, Police has come up with the following strategies for preventing the entry of illicit drugs in the country –

- (a) proposed acquisition of new Coastal Surveillance Radar System for the detection of suspicious vessels transporting illegal drugs in the mainland through sea routes;
- (b) close collaboration with MRA Customs Anti-Narcotics Section and Airports of Mauritius Company Ltd for the installation of whole body scanners at the SSR International Airport for detecting mules concealing dangerous drugs in their body cavity;
- (c) extension of intelligence network with friendly countries in the region with a view to gathering intelligence on drug traffickers, and
- (d) collaboration with the Passport and Immigration Office (PIO) for scrutinizing the Advanced List of Passengers in order to identify passengers/visitors suspected to be involved in drug transactions.

Moreover, the Police has recently procured saliva drug testing and urine drug test cup kits for carrying out drug test upon drivers suspected to be under the influence of intoxicating drugs.

It must also be pointed out that the National Drug Secretariat (NDS) of my Office, in collaboration with the United Nations agencies is conducting a national survey among people who use drugs in Mauritius. The study will provide comprehensive information including socio-demographic characteristics of drug users, their living conditions, their employment status, age of onset of drug use, frequency and patterns of use and extent of drug use which will guide our national drug response. The results of the survey are expected to be finalised before the end of this year. We shall then be in a better position to assess the extent of the drug situation among the population across different age groups.

The Government has been working on all fronts to deal with the drug scourge. The Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology is implementing a series of measures in the educational institutions which comprise *inter alia* the following –

- (i) hosting of a multi-sectoral meeting on “Indiscipline and Substance Abuse Prevention Programmes in Schools” yearly with all the major stakeholders;
- (ii) sensitisation campaigns are ongoing in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders such as ADSU, Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Wellness;

- (iii) a protocol has been put in place to act as a guideline for management to handle a case whereby a student is caught in possession of a suspected illicit substance. This protocol also advocates close monitoring and follow up at the level of the school including pastoral care and support from Educational Psychologists;
- (iv) currently, the Ministry is working on a Policy framework for Drug Free Schools;
- (v) an evidence-based Drug Use Prevention Programme which is in line with the international standards for drug use prevention (UNODC & WHO collaboration) has been introduced in our secondary schools across the island, in line with the National Drug Control Master Plan 2019-2023. The programme uses a life skills concept model with the aim to delay tobacco, alcohol and drug initiation among adolescents, and
- (vi) provision in the National Curriculum Framework for both Primary and Secondary subsectors to integrate drug abuse prevention.

A community-based approach has also been initiated through the implementation of the Youth Empowerment Programme Against Drugs (YEPAD) since February 2021 by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in collaboration with the National Drug Secretariat, the Police, the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation and NGO partners targeting different regions of the country. A team of resource persons is present in the targeted region for a week for consultations and capacity building of community leaders to lead drug prevention programmes at the level of their localities.

With a view to enabling our youth to resist peer pressure to indulge in substance abuse, the Government is committed to empower and equip them with skills and aptitudes to face current life challenges. As such, numerous leisure, recreational, physical activities and programmes are being run by the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation in collaboration with the Mauritius Sports Council.

In September 2021, the CSU team of my Office started a National Campaign against drug called *ANSAM KONT LADROG*. The first program was held on Friday 24 September, 2021 at Lakaz Lespwar, Caritas, Solitude and the second one was held on Friday 01 October 2021 at the Social Welfare Centre, Le Hochet, Terre Rouge. Eight more programs will be held at the University of Mauritius, University of Technology, Open University of Mauritius, University of Mascareignes and the Youth Centres of Mahebourg, Bambous, Rivière du Rempart and Flacq. Some 60 to 100 participants are targeted for each event.

After each programme, participants will be invited to join a Regional Platform or Regional Youth Forum against drug whereby they will be taking part in the processes of

planning, initiating and implementing prevention-related programs in their region. Thereafter, one leader for each region will form part of a National Platform of youths.

Our multi-pronged approach and activities are yielding results as may be testified by the numerous seizures of drugs and arrests. I reiterate my commitment to fight the drug scourge relentlessly.

CENTRAL CIVIL STATUS OFFICE – DEATHS REGISTERED

(No. B/907) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to mainland Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Civil Status Office, information as to the number of deaths registered –

- (a) in July, August and September 2019, 2020 and 2021, respectively, and
- (b) since 01 October 2021 to date.

(Withdrawn)

MRS B.K.T. - ALLEGED SEXUAL HARASSMENT - MR J.M.L.S. - INQUIRY

(No. B/908) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Acting Commissioner of Police, information as to if, on 29 July 2021, one Mrs B.K.T. reported a case of alleged sexual harassment against one Mr J.M.L.S. and cases of alleged involvement of Mr J.M.L.S. in illegal betting and, if so, indicate where matters stand as to the inquiries initiated thereinto, including if Mr J.M.L.S. has been interrogated under caution and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

MR K.A. - AIRPORT HOLDINGS LTD – CEO - APPOINTMENT DATE

(No. B/909) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr K.A., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airport Holdings Ltd., information to the date of appointment thereof as Chief Executive Officer thereof, giving details of the –

- (a) terms and conditions of appointment, thereof, including monthly remuneration and other benefits drawn and duties and responsibilities thereof as CEO thereof, and
- (b) duties and responsibilities thereof in all the corporate entities forming part of Airport Holdings Ltd., giving details of the monthly remuneration and other benefits drawn, if any.

Reply: Airport Holdings Ltd (AHL) has informed that Mr K. A. has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer of the company on Monday 06 September 2021.

In regard to the other information sought, it must be emphasized that AHL and the other corporate entities falling under it are incorporated as private companies, and are therefore governed by the Companies Act. In view thereof, and in line with past practice in the House, it would not be proper to give the other information being sought in regard to AHL, inasmuch as information about matters which are entirely under the responsibility of the Board of Directors of the company cannot be disclosed.

In regard to the other entities, forming part of AHL, Mr K. A. does not sit on any of them except for Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd (AML) and its subsidiaries. In regard to the remuneration drawn at AML and its subsidiaries, their Annual Reports provide relevant information concerning them.

MR N.B. – DIRECTOR GENERAL – ICAC – CONTRACT

(No. B/910) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr N.B., he will state the date of the last renewal of his contract of employment as Director General of the Independent Commission against Corruption, indicating the terms and conditions of appointment thereof, including the total monthly pay packet and other allowances and benefits drawn.

(Withdrawn)

POLICE FORCE - NEW UNIFORMS - SUPPLIER

(No. B/911) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in

regard to the new uniforms for the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Acting Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) cost thereof;
- (b) quantity procured;
- (c) name of supplier, and
- (d) if he is in presence of representations from Police Officers regarding the –
 - (i) quality, and
 - (ii) other inconveniences thereof.

Reply: The Acting Commissioner of Police has informed that the new Police uniform, comprising the following items, has been procured for a total cost of Rs51, 868,836

–

- 65,200 Shirts;
- 49,500 Trousers;
- 2,000 Skirts;
- 18,000 Metal Shoulder badges;
- 9,000 Buckles for belts;
- 13,149 Embroidered name-plate on cloth;
- 15,000 sq. ft. Soft black leather for new belt, and
- 180,000 Embroidered MPF shoulder badges.

Separate tender exercises for each item were undertaken by the Police Department.

Bids were received from Caustat & Sons Ltd, New Bombay Ltd, and Fairy Textiles Ltd for the procurement of shirts and the contract was awarded to New Bombay Ltd.

For the procurement of trousers and skirts, bids were received from the following 10 suppliers –

- GNP Wear Co. Ltd;
- New Bombay Ltd;
- Fairy Textiles Ltd;
- Jack Tellor Ind. Ltd;
- Caustat & Sons Ltd;
- Strategic Garments Manufacturers Ltd;
- S.O. Nazir & Co. Ltd;
- Nivra Enterprise Ltd;
- Noshie Enterprise Ltd, and

- RDK Supplies Ltd.

The contract was awarded to New Bombay Ltd.

Regarding the procurement of Metal Shoulder badges and Buckles for belts, bids were received from Knight Trading Agency Co. Ltd, Beryl Rose and Noshie Enterprise Ltd. The contract was awarded to Noshie Enterprise Ltd.

For the procurement of Embroidered name-plate on cloth, bids were received from Knight Trading Agency Co. Ltd, Global & Strategic Procurement Ltd, Bonkoutir Uniforms Ltée., Noshie Enterprise Ltd and I. M. Bawamia Ltd. The contract was awarded to Knight Trading Agency Co. Ltd.

As regards the procurement of Soft black leather for new belts, bids were received from the following 8 suppliers –

- Knight Trading Agency Co. Ltd;
- Excelsior Ltd SMP;
- A. G. Dustageer Ltd;
- Manisga co Ltd;
- Luxor Tannery Ltd;
- Banker shoes Ltd, and
- Salvika Impex Ltd.

The contract was awarded to Knight Trading Agency Co. Ltd.

Finally, the contract for the procurement of Embroidered MPF shoulder badges was awarded to I. M. Bawamia & Co Ltd and bids were received from the following 10 suppliers

–

- Knight Trading Agency Co. Ltd;
- SMP International Ltd;
- Caustat & Sons Ltd;
- Tokyo Embroidery Co Ltd;
- N.E.M Enterprise Ltd;
- Jet Time Ltd;
- Global & Strategic Procurement Ltd;
- I. M. Bawamia & Co Ltd;
- Noshie Enterprise Ltd, and
- Textile Embroideries

The Acting Commissioner of Police has also informed that on Monday 11 October 2021, only one Police Inspector posted at Flic en Flac Police Station made a diary book entry

complaining that the MPF silver metal plate broke when inserting same in the shoulder eyelet. On Thursday 21 October 2021, one Police Sergeant from the same Police Station has complained that the metal buckle of the belt relaxed on its own. The complaints are being referred to the Police Uniform Technical Committee set up at the Police Headquarters for remedial actions and recommendations.

IMMIGRATION SQUARE BUS TERMINAL - ROAD ACCIDENTS

(No. B/912) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Immigration Square Bus Terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Acting Commissioner of Police, information as to the total number of road accidents reported in the vicinity thereof over the past three years, indicating the number of fatal ones.

Reply: The Acting Commissioner of Police has informed that the Immigration Square Bus Terminal, located in the North of Port Louis, is bounded on one side by the Motorway M2 and the other side by Louis Pasteur and Farquhar Streets. This area falls within the jurisdiction of Trou Fanfaron Police Station.

Within the Immigration Square Bus Terminal area, 21 cases of road accidents have been reported whereas in its vicinity, 64 cases of road accidents have been reported over the past 3 years.

The Acting Commissioner of Police has also informed that, for the same period, 5 cases of fatal road accidents have been reported in the vicinity of the Immigration Square Bus Terminal and 3 within the Terminal itself.

POLICE STATION, DETENTION CENTRES & DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS - PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

(No. B/913) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the proposed construction of Police Stations, Detention Centres and Divisional Headquarters, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Acting Commissioner of Police, the list thereof, indicating in each case where matters stand, giving details as to the –

- (a) cost estimate, and
- (b) expected start and completion dates thereof.

Reply: Further to the reply, on 27 March 2018, to PQ B/39 on the same subject, I am placing a list relating to the proposed construction of Police Stations, Detention Centres, and Divisional Headquarters in the Library of the National Assembly, with details on the status of the projects.

The Acting Commissioner of Police has informed that the construction of the Police Stations is carried out in phases over several years and the processes including conceptualization, inception, designing, tendering, and construction of these buildings are lengthy.

The Acting Commissioner of Police has also informed that since the construction of the nine (9) Police Stations is still at preliminary/pre-tender stages, it is premature to provide start and completion dates thereof. Regarding the Detention Centre project at Piton and Divisional Headquarters project at Abercrombie, they are nearing completion.

POLICE FORCE – NEW UNIFORMS

(No. B/914) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the new uniforms for the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Acting Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) if Police Officers and/or Police Unions were consulted prior to the finalisation thereof;
- (b) the names of the bidders and of the successful one;
- (c) the cost thereof, and
- (d) if prior to the procurement thereof, a bid or competition was launched for the design and outlook thereof and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – DETAINEES & PRISON OFFICERS

(No. B/915) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) 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

COVID-19 pandemic, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to the –

- (a) reasons for the non-availability of a 24/7 service of a Medical and Health Officer in the Mauritius Prisons Service for detainees suffering therefrom;
- (b) number of detainees who have died after having contracted same, and
- (c) measures taken for the protection of detainees and prisons officers therefrom.

(Withdrawn)

PRISONS OFFICERS - SELF-ISOLATION - SICK LEAVE/VACATION LEAVE

(No. B/916) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to prisons officers required to undergo self-isolation upon recommendation of a Government Medical and Health Officer, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to if the isolation period is deducted from the sick leave/vacation leave entitlements of the said officers and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

PRB RECOMMENDATION - BANK OF POLICE OFFICERS SCHEME

(No. B/917) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the recommendation of the Pay Research Bureau contained in the PRB Report 2016 and re-emphasized in the PRB Report 2021 for the implementation of a Bank of Police Officers Scheme to deal with the shortage of staff in the Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Acting Commissioner of Police, information as to if consideration will be given thereto and, if so, when.

Reply: The Acting Commissioner of Police has informed that the Bank of Police Officers Scheme, as recommended by the Pay Research Bureau in its Report of year 2016, and re-emphasized in the Report of 2021, is being implemented by the Police Department since June 2016.

In 2016, during the PRB consultative meetings, both the Police Management and the Police Federation requested the creation of a Bank of Police Officers to deal promptly with

the shortage of staff needed for any operational situation. It has been resorted to in specific circumstances, for example during festivities, important conferences and other crowd pulling events.

The Bank of Police Officers Scheme comprises officers who work on a shift basis, in the grades of Police Constable, Corporal, Sergeant, Sub Inspector, and Inspector. The services of these Police Officers are used by Management on a needs basis, when they are off duty or on leave. They are paid an allowance as recommended in the PRB Report.

The Acting Commissioner of Police has also informed that for the implementation of the Bank of Police Officers Scheme since June 2016, a total sum of Rs6, 212,786 has been paid as allowance to Police Officers.

MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL - GOVERNMENT-OWNED SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURES

(No. B/936) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Government-owned sports infrastructures managed by the Mauritius Sports Council, he will give the list thereof, indicating the –

- (a) rental fee applicable in each case, and
- (b) sanitary protocols and other conditions applied for the utilisation thereof amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Withdrawn)

LINDSAY LAW KWAN SYNTHETIC FOOTBALL PITCH, CHEBEL – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/937) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Lindsay Law Kwan Synthetic Football pitch at Chebel, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill, information as to the total construction cost thereof, indicating –
 - (i) the name of the contractor;
 - (ii) the scope of works;
 - (iii) the date of allocation of contract and of handing over, and

- (iv) if the contract was awarded following a bid exercise and, if so, indicate the names of the bidders with respective proposals, and
- (b) state if he is in presence of complaints from users thereof as to the state thereof.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINATION – MAURITIAN CITIZENS BELOW 18 YEARS OLD

(No. B/938) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Mauritian citizens below 18 years old, he will state the present number thereof being COVID-19 vaccinated, indicating the calendar for the vaccination of those who are not yet vaccinated.

(Withdrawn)

AUTISTIC CHILDREN – REGISTERED ASSOCIATIONS – ASSISTANCE & BENEFITS

(No. B/939) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to autism, she will state the present number of children suffering therefrom in Mauritius, indicating the –

- (a) number of registered associations working for the welfare thereof, and
- (b) assistance and benefits granted thereto by her Ministry.

(Withdrawn)

PORT LOUIS – SDF – ACTION PLAN

(No. B/940) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to persons who are *Sans Domicile Fixe*, she will state the number thereof presently identified in Port Louis, indicating if an Action Plan has been worked out for the re-integration thereof in society.

(Withdrawn)

CENTRE JEUNESSE RÉSIDENCE LA CURE – RENOVATION

(No. B/941) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the proposed renovation of the *Centre Jeunesse Résidence La Cure*, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: Currently, there are no renovation works scheduled at the *Centre Jeunesse Résidence La Cure*.

PARIS AGREEMENT - NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION (NDC) - UPDATING

(No. B/942) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions submitted by Mauritius in 2015 as an obligation to the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, he will state where matters stand, since 2015 to date, as to the –

- (a) evolution of greenhouse gas emissions by Mauritius relative to the business as usual scenario on a yearly basis;
- (b) technical and financial support received by Mauritius from international bodies and foreign countries, and
- (c) projects in which money has been invested as –
 - (i) mitigation, and
 - (ii) adaptation measures.

Reply: On 11 August 2020, in reply to PQ B/539, a list of the different adaptation and mitigation measures put in place since 2015 in various sectors, namely energy, transport, agriculture, solid waste management and industry, amongst others, was tabled. Moreover, further to additional questions of the hon. Mahomed, a list of adaptation measures implemented as well as those under implementation by concerned institutions during the last years was tabled.

Additionally, on 08 December 2020, in reply to PQ B/995, the progress made concerning the attainment of the set target for CO₂ emission for the Republic of Mauritius was provided, whereby the House was also informed that the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change was updating the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for the Republic of Mauritius with the assistance of the *Agence Française de Développement* and the United Nations Development Programme.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Republic of Mauritius emits less than 0.01% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. In Mauritius, energy, transport and wastes are the key sectors which emit the highest share of greenhouse gases. In 2015, in its first NDC, Mauritius had committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030, relative to the business as usual scenario, subject to support from international sources are obtained. Based on the Business as Usual scenario of 2015, the total greenhouse gas emissions for the Republic of Mauritius were projected to reach some 7 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent in the year 2030.

In 2015, according to Statistics Mauritius, the total greenhouse gas emissions emitted was around 5.37 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent and that for 2019 was around 5.78 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent. From 2015 to 2019, there has been an average annual increase of approximately 2 per cent in the total greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2020, the actual amount of greenhouse gas emitted amounted to 5.20 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent. This significant drop of 10 %, as compared to the amount of greenhouse gas emitted in 2019, was due to the national lockdown following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In fulfilment to the requirement of Article 4 of the Paris Agreement and following the agreement of Government, the Ministry submitted an updated NDC for the Republic of Mauritius to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on 05 October 2021. The updated NDC aims to reduce overall greenhouse emissions by 40 per cent by 2030 compared to the Business as Usual scenario, together with the phasing out of coal and expansion of renewable energy in the electricity mix from 40 per cent to 60 per cent, subject to a conditional support from external sources amounting to 65 per cent of the financial requirement of USD 6.5 billion by the year 2030. This new target is more ambitious as compared to that targeted in the first NDC, submitted by the Republic of Mauritius in September 2015. It concerns the following sectors –

- (i) Energy (excluding transport): 2,311 kilotonnes carbon dioxide equivalent, which represents 33.5 per cent;
- (ii) Transport: 129 kilotonnes carbon dioxide equivalent, which represents 1.9 per cent;
- (iii) Waste: 313 kilotonnes carbon dioxide equivalent, which represents 4.5 per cent;
- (iv) Industrial Processes and Product Use (IPPU): 55 kilotonnes carbon dioxide equivalent, which represents 0.8 per cent, and
- (v) Promotion of smart agriculture and massive plantation of trees at national level.

Government is also working on the long-term energy strategy with a view to achieving carbon neutrality. In fact, at the Climate Ambition Summit in 2020, the hon. Prime Minister stated that Mauritius will aim at achieving carbon neutrality by the year 2070.

According to the definition of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), carbon neutrality refers to carbon dioxide emissions and is a state of balance between the carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere and the carbon dioxide removed from the atmosphere. It does not imply a state of zero emission but striking the right balance to capture and off-set carbon dioxide emitted. It is in these lines that, for example, Saudi Arabia, which is the top oil exporter, announced on 23 October 2021, that it aims by the year 2060 to reach "net zero" emissions of greenhouse gases, mostly produced by burning fossil fuels.

With regard to part (b) of the question, in the 2015 NDC, the financial requirement to achieve the target of 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 was estimated at USD 5.5 billion, with USD 4.0 billion for adaptation and the remaining USD 1.5 billion for mitigation activities during a period of fifteen years. It should be pointed out that the commitment taken in the first NDC submitted in 2015 was fully conditional, meaning subject to funding being made available by the international sources, namely from developed countries and multilateral funding agencies such as Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund.

According to information received from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, funding mobilised from 2015 to date from international bodies and foreign countries as technical and financial support amount to around USD 85.93 million for various projects and initiatives related to adaptation and mitigation measures. In view of their historical emissions, developed countries have under the Paris Agreement pledged to provide USD 100 billion per year by 2020. However, these commitments are far from being fulfilled by the developed countries by the set deadlines.

Despite the fact that Mauritius emits only 0.01% of global greenhouse gases, in 2021-2022, Government has earmarked some 5% of its GDP on climate change expenditure. This would serve the basis of the unconditional commitment for the 2021 updated NDC. Out of the total financial needs estimated at USD 6.5 billion, USD 4.5 billion are for adaptation and USD 2 billion are for mitigation for the period 2021-2030. It is expected that funding to the tune of USD 2.3 billion would be contributed by Government and the private sector by the year 2030, which accounts for 35% of the funding required and represents the unconditional commitment. An NDC Action Plan is nearing finalisation for implementation of the NDC measures.

Funding and means of implementation remain amongst the main agenda item for COP26. All vulnerable countries, from the Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States, Africa and G77 and China, would all press on the Developed Country Parties to enhance their level of contributions to the financial mechanism and to keep with the pledge of USD 100 billion by 2025.

With regard to part (c) of the question, since June 2018, Government invested Rs6.6 billion into the National Environment and Climate Change Fund for the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures, particularly for the following programmes –

- (i) Rehabilitation, protection and management of beaches, lagoons and coral reefs;
- (ii) Flood management;
- (iii) Clean-up Mauritius and Embellishment;
- (iv) Solid waste management;
- (v) Landslide management;
- (vi) Disaster risk reduction and management, and
- (vii) Green economy

Furthermore, funds are being provided in the respective budgets of various Ministries for the key adaptation and mitigation sectors. In the 2021/2022 Budget, provisions have been made for the following –

- (i) remove the 5 per cent excise duty on electric vans of up to 180 kW used for the transport of goods;
- (ii) allow owners to install a Photo Voltaic system not exceeding 10 kW to charge their vehicles and export any surplus to the grid in order to further promote demand for electric vehicles;
- (iii) phased out subsidies and incentives for the importation of diesel buses;
- (iv) increase the subsidy for the purchase of electric buses from Rs1 m. to Rs1.2 m. for 9-metre buses and from Rs1.3 m. to Rs1.5 m. for buses above 9 metres;
- (v) provide lease to operators acquiring electric buses under the Transformation Fund;
- (vi) purchase 25 electric buses for the NTC to renew its fleet;

- (vii) enable households to purchase solar kits for domestic use, the DBM will provide a concessionary loan of 2% up to an amount of Rs100,000, and
- (viii) support the development of this industry, the CEB's "*Centre de Formation et de Perfectionnement Professionnel*" will become an accredited centre to provide training in the fields of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency.

DEMERSAL FISHING & PROCESSING FACILITIES - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

(No. B/943) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed launching of an Expression of Interest for investment by local and international companies in demersal fishing and processing facilities, he will –

- (a) state if any fish stock assessment in the lagoon, shallow waters and fishing banks within the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius has been carried out and, if so, indicate the –
 - (i) outcome thereof and, if not, why not;
 - (ii) type and quantity of fish, and
 - (iii) fishing vessels and associated fishing areas and seasons for licensing of international companies, and
- (b) table copy of the said Expression of Interest.

Reply: Mauritius has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of around 2.3 million square kilometres, which includes coral reefs, sea grass beds, rough and sandy areas, submerged oceanic banks and oceanic waters.

The exploitation of the demersal fisheries resources of Mauritius provides -

- a) an important source of fish to the population;
- b) employment to the fishermen community, and
- c) income to fishmongers.

I wish to inform the House that back in the 90's, there were around 17 steel industrial bank fishing vessels, such as La Perle, Talbot, Sea Falcon, etc., and the annual production was around 5000 tonnes.

Today, we have only two Mauritian Flag and one Comorian flag industrial steel fishing vessel which have been at quay for more than a year now. The fishers of these vessels

are mainly Malagasy nationals given that Mauritian fishers are reluctant to undertake long fishing campaigns of 2-3 months.

The last catch figures for the year 2020 of these three vessels was around 1300 tonnes of mainly Capitaine, commonly known as “La Perle”.

Regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that several stock fish assessments and related studies have been carried out in the lagoon, shallow waters and fishing banks.

The artisanal fishery Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) is estimated at 1500 tonnes, that is 676 tonnes for in lagoon and 745 tonnes for off lagoon.

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MYS) is the largest catch to be taken from the stocks without destroying them. The catches include Vielle Capitaine, Mullet, Cateux, Cordonnier, Corne, Gueule Pavé, Rouget among others.

The catch from the coastal fishery was 1072 tonnes in 2019 and 820 tonnes in 2020, decrease caused by the combined effect of the COVID-19 and the ban on the south east affected region due to the MV Wakashio oil spill.

The catches from the artisanal fishers are monitored by the Albion Fisheries Research Centre (AFRC) on a monthly basis and the catch rate and fishing efforts are also assessed.

Coastal/artisanal fishery is confined to lagoon and near the outer reef areas. Traditional methods for fishing are undertaken such as basket traps, large nets, gill nets, hooks and lines.

This fishery is the main source of fresh fish for the local market. The coastal fishery section of the Marine Resources Division is responsible for catch landed from the coastal fishery in Mauritius.

Since 1983, about 12 publications regarding stock assessment and related studies were carried out in the artisanal coastal fishery, and since 1986, about 13 publications regarding stock assessment and related studies were carried out in the offshore demersal fishery.

The last publication of Maximum Sustainable Yield on the Nazareth and Saya de Malha banks was effected in 2019/20 and stock assessment of the banks fish stocks was 7000 tonnes.

I am tabling a copy of the Report which contains the scientific rationality of the stock estimations.

In 2019, the catch was 2211 tonnes (including the amount of around 1200 tonnes of 3 industrial vessels).

In 2020, the catch was 1351 tonnes (excluding the 3 vessels) for the 33 active semi-industrial fishing vessels.

Regarding the outcome of the studies carried out, it is noted that the exploitation of the fishing boats is below the MSY.

The species caught on the shallow water and deepwater include, among others, Capitaine, Sacréchien, Gueule pave dorée and Vieille laboue and Viele rouge.

Fishing is usually carried out on the banks during the months of October in a year to May of the following year. However, depending on the weather conditions during the winter months, operators may proceed for fishing.

As mentioned earlier, in 2020, a total of 33 active fishing boats operated in the semi-industrial fisheries and two vessels were active in the industrial fishery. The length range of industrial fishing vessels targeting frozen fish are from 45 to 50 metres, while that of semi-industrial boats targeting mainly chilled fish varies from 12 to 24 metres. All fishing boats are Mauritian owned.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that an Expression of Interest (EOI) is under preparation for demersal fishing.

To encourage new entrants, the amendment in the Fisheries Act through the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2021 allows fibre glass vessels of over 24 metres to be licensed in bank fishing which is less costly and more economical than steel vessels.

As regards the proposed launching of an Expression of Interest (EOI) for investment by –

- (1) local entrepreneurs;
- (2) local with foreign partners, through joint ventures,
- (3) international Investors.

Priority will be given to local entrepreneurs first, then joint ventures between Mauritians and foreigners, and then to foreign entrepreneurs.

The rationale behind this strategy is to attain the MSY of 7000 tonnes, thus, decreasing our fish import level, which represents 60 percent of our local consumption, and to export demersal species through the allocation of a quota to make this business lucrative.

The number of fishing vessels which would eventually be licensed will depend on the tonnage capacity of the vessels, as well as on demands.

For example, assuming the vessel has a fish load capacity of 50 tonnes and the total quota allocation is 4000 tonnes.

We will, thus, license 10 fishing vessels which will each execute 8 trips yearly.

Amidst the turbulence caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, investments in the Blue Economy will support economic recovery and have a new era of prosperity.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF VACOAS-PHOENIX – SCAVENGING VEHICLES

(No. B/944) 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 services being provided by the scavenging department for the collection of domestic and household wastes within Vacoas and Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix, information as to the number of lorries available therefor, giving details as to the operation and use made of the said lorries?

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that its fleet of scavenging vehicles is made up of a total of 19 lorries, which comprises the following –

- 2 roll on - roll off lorries;
- 13 scavenging tipper lorries, and
- 4 scavenging compactor lorries.

I am also informed that 1 scavenging tipper lorry and 2 scavenging compactor lorries are under repairs. These 19 lorries are used to provide once weekly scavenging service to the inhabitants of all the six wards of the township and the service is provided from Mondays to Saturdays. Moreover, a dedicated service is provided on Sundays to commercial units found in the central business district of Vacoas and Phoenix.

I am further informed that the 2 roll on - roll off lorries are used for normal scavenging service in the morning and are sometimes used in the afternoon as paid lorries services. As regards the 13 scavenging tipper lorries and the 4 scavenging compactor lorries, same are used during morning and afternoon shifts for collection of domestic and household refuse.

RDA - ONGOING WIDENING AND UPGRADING - L'ABATTOIR BRIDGE, LA CAVERNE

(No. B/945) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the ongoing widening and upgrading of L'Abattoir Bridge at la Caverne, along the Vacoas La Marie Road B 64, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

- (a) expected completion date thereof, and
- (b) scope of the variation works, if any and, if so, give details thereof and additional costs incurred therefor.

Reply: In my reply to Parliamentary question A/29 on 30 March 2021, I highlighted that the widening and upgrading of L'Abattoir Bridge at La Caverne, along the Vacoas La Marie Road B64, was expected to start after the Maha Shivaratree festival and the rainy season, that is, in April 2021 and to be completed in June 2021.

However, I am informed that on 27 April 2021, following the torrential rainfall in the region of Vacoas, the L'Abattoir Bridge and its surrounding areas were flooded. In this respect, the whole concept and scope of work regarding the widening and upgrading of the bridge have had to be reviewed.

Consultations were subsequently held by the Road Development Authority (RDA) with the Land Drainage Authority and the National Development Unit and it has been agreed that the reviewed scope of work should also address the flooding issues in that region.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the RDA that the Works Order for the new scope of work has been issued on 01 October 2021. Work on site is expected to start by mid-November and the completion date is end of February 2022.

As regards part (b) of the question, the initial upgrading of the L'Abattoir Road has been reviewed, as I mentioned earlier, and it will now comprise the following –

- (a) demolition of existing bridge and reconstruction of a new bridge instead of upgrading of the bridge, with larger hydraulic capacity to cater for rainfall with a return period of 1 in 100 years;
- (b) improvement of the junction of Vacoas-La Marie Road (B64) and Thompson Road by providing a better turning radius thereat, and
- (c) construction of retaining walls along Thompson Road.

It has to be pointed out that the initial project was estimated at Rs12.4 m. and the new project which will address the flooding problems in the region will cost Rs24.9 m. As

such, the question of variation in cost does not arise. The project is funded under the National Flood Management Programme and is being implemented by Gamma Construction Ltd.

COVID-19 - VACCINES - PROCUREMENT - MONEY DISBURSED

(No. B/946) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines administered to the population, he will state the amount of money disbursed for the procurement thereof as at to date.

Reply: Since the beginning of this year, my Ministry has procured a total of 2,128,800 doses of the COVID-19 vaccines as follows –

- (i) 100,000 doses of Covishield (AstraZeneca) vaccines from the Serum Institute of India;
- (ii) 200,000 doses of Covaxin vaccines from the Bharat Biotech International Ltd;
- (iii) 100,800 doses of AstraZeneca through COVAX Facility;
- (iv) 60,000 doses of Component I and 60,000 doses of Component II of Sputnik V vaccines from the Russian Development Investment Fund;
- (v) 108,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccines through the African Union, and
- (vi) 1.5 million. doses of the Sinopharm vaccines from the Sinopharm International Hong Kong Ltd.

I am informed that the National COVID-19 Vaccination Fund has disbursed some Rs1 billion for the purchase of the above vaccines. This comprises the cost of the vaccines, handling and custom charges as well as freight, insurance and inspection costs.

In addition, my Ministry will also be receiving 180,000 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccines through the African Union for which an amount of Rs57 m. has been disbursed.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – FUNDS INJECTED - SOURCE OF FINANCING

(No. B/947) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the injection of Rs12 billion into Air Mauritius Ltd., he will state the source of financing thereof.

Reply: With regard to the question, the source of financing was as follows –

- (a) Rs7 billion from the National Resilience Fund, and
- (b) Rs5 billion from the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund.

COVID-19 - PATIENTS - ENT HOSPITAL

(No. B/948) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 patients, he will state the number thereof –

- (a) admitted at the ENT Hospital since August 2021 to date, indicating the number thereof intubated and placed on ventilators;
- (b) having recovered, and
- (c) having passed away.

Reply: I am informed that since August 2021 till 20 October 2021, 552 COVID-19 patients have been admitted at the ENT Hospital for treatment, out of which 102 have been intubated and placed on ventilators.

In reply to part (b) of the question, I am informed that 324 have been discharged since August 2021 as they were fully recovered from the symptoms of COVID-19.

As regards part (c) of the question, 265 COVID-19 positive patients have passed away in the month of August 2021 to date, out of which 131 are directly attributed to COVID-19 and 134 are related to other underlying causes.

PACK & BLISTER – EMERGENCY PROCUREMENT – DEFECTIVE VENTILATORS

(No. B/949) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the 50 ventilators acquired from Pack & Blister through emergency procurement, he will state if –

- (a) his Ministry has been or will be reimbursed due to same being defective;
- (b) same have been or will be replaced, and
- (c) any legal actions have been initiated against the said supplier.

(Withdrawn)

COP 26 MEASURES

(No. B/950) Mr R. Wochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk

Management whether, in regard to the contributions made towards UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP 26), he will state the –

- (a) steps being taken to ensure adequate representation of the local government at the forthcoming COP 26 Summit in November 2021 to highlight the progress made on climate change at local level, and
- (b) number of meetings he has held with councils and local government organizations on the role of local government in meeting the national net zero target and how same will be communicated at the COP 26 Summit.

Reply: At the very outset, I wish to inform the House that the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change is the national focal point for the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). And in the context of the COP26 and the process for updating the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) for the Republic of Mauritius, extensive consultations were held with key stakeholders, including my Ministry, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre and Local Authorities.

The progress made by Mauritius in all sectors, including on adaptation measures by my Ministry, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre and Local Authorities, have been highlighted in the updated NDC submitted to the Secretariat of the UNFCCC on 05 October 2021. I am also informed by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change that an action plan for implementing the NDC is presently under finalisation.

With regard to part (b) of the question, for the update of the NDC, some 75 meetings have been held with various stakeholders, including those operating at local level. My Ministry was fully involved throughout the whole revision process, from August 2020 to October this year. These consultations include Local Authorities, Non-Governmental Organisations, women associations, senior citizen, private sector, academia, amongst others. And also, as part of this process, the teams of Consultants at the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change held bilateral thematic meetings virtually and participated in a series of workshops held in February and March 2021. Additionally, training

sessions on Measurement, Reporting and Verification and carbon footprint assessment were held in May 2021.

As we are already aware, the hon. Prime Minister will lead a high-level delegation to the COP26 and through his leadership, the concerns and issues for all mitigation and adaptation sectors, including those of concerning my Ministry would be duly addressed through bilateral meetings with friendly countries, working sessions with funding institutions such as the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Fund and participation in events organised by international agencies.

I wish to highlight also that the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy, Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2020-2030 provides the necessary policy guidance for a whole-of-institution and whole-of-society coordinated as well as harmonised approach to further strengthen our resilience to increased risks due to climate change and disasters. The Action Plan 2020-2030 implements the commitment of Mauritius to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports the implementation of the Mauritius Vision 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution for the Republic of Mauritius, the Paris Agreement and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

COVID-19 - VACCINATION - CITIZENS BELOW 18

(No. B/951) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Mauritian citizens below the age of 18 and not attending schools, he will state if consideration will be given for the carrying out of an assessment of the potential merits of administering same with COVID-19 vaccines if they are over the age of 16.

Reply: As you are aware, a first consignment of 76,050 doses of the Pfizer vaccines was received through the dose sharing mechanism on 28 September 2021. According to international literature, the Pfizer vaccines can be administered to children aged 12 to 17 years of age. Moreover, Pfizer BioNTech has, recently, published the efficacy of the Pfizer vaccines on children aged 5 to 11 years. Emergency Use authorisation of the vaccines on this age group is awaited from the World Health Organisation.

Given the limited number of doses, my Ministry has started vaccination of children aged 15 to 17 years and attending schools in a first instance.

My Ministry has already made arrangements to procure 999,180 doses of Pfizer from the manufacturer, Pfizer BioNTech Manufacturing Company. The legal contractual documents are being finalised, following which the supply of the vaccines will start.

In addition to the above, the COVAX Facility has informed that Mauritius would avail of a donation of 107,640 doses of the Pfizer vaccines through the dose donation mechanism by the Government of the United States of America.

My Ministry will also be procuring 48,451 doses of the Pfizer vaccines from the African Union.

Upon receipt of adequate number of the Pfizer vaccines, my Ministry will administer same to all children under 18 years old, whether attending schools or otherwise.

ROAD ACCIDENTS – ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS

(No. B/952) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to road accidents, he will state the measures being taken for the –

- (a) improvement of road safety awareness among specifically the –
 - (i) youths, and
 - (ii) drivers, and
- (b) reduction of the number of fatal accidents and/or serious injuries in road traffic accidents.

Reply (The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade): A series of measures have been taken by my Ministry for the improvement of road safety awareness among the youth as well as all drivers, in general.

As regards part (a) of the question, in line with the National Road Safety Strategy 2016-2025, Road Safety awareness is being imparted in primary schools with the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology. In this connection, a Continuum of

Road Safety Education has been put in place in primary schools, where 530 holistic educators are being coached to transfer road safety knowledge to school children aged 9 to 12 years, through theoretical and practical training.

Intensive road safety awareness campaigns are being conducted by my Ministry and the Police, on television, radios as well as on the social media, for all drivers, targeting the youth, on issues such as motorcycle safety, pedestrian safety and drunk driving. Exhibitions, lectures at schools, lectures to professional drivers, re-education of disqualified drivers and pre-driving test lectures are also being carried out on a continuous basis.

A dedicated website '*respe.mu*' is live since the year 2020 which features road safety advice for each road user category and also showcases current and past road safety campaigns.

A mass media campaign on the safety of two wheelers is under preparation and would be launched in due course.

As to part (b) of the Question, I wish to inform the House that under the National Road Safety Strategy 2016-2025, a number of actions and programmes are currently being implemented by my Ministry to reduce the number of fatal accidents and serious injuries in road traffic accidents, as follows –

- (i) the implementation of a Standard Road Safety Audit at the stage of completion of both preliminary and detailed designs, in addition to the pre-opening safety audit of the road infrastructure and post-operation monitoring, for all new road infrastructural projects and road traffic schemes. Henceforth, a three-stage Road Safety Audit would be implemented in Mauritius as indicated. This would help to remove any road safety hazard at the initial stages for any road infrastructure being put up by the Road Development Authority, instead of waiting at the end of the pre-opening stage where it would be difficult to bring changes to the road infrastructure which would represent a danger to road users;
- (ii) improving the safety standards of our road infrastructure, by upgrading pedestrian facilities and building safe cycle networks and integrating with public transport modes;
- (iii) strengthening of the Road Traffic Laws and enforcement including stricter drunk driving regulations and penalties, and

- (iv) the setting up of a Road Safety Observatory with the collaboration of road safety practitioners and academia to support all aspects of road safety policy development at national level through the scientific study of the road and traffic system.

Moreover, the legislation relating to the detection of drug driving leading to subsequent prosecution would also be promulgated soon.

In addition, my Ministry is envisaging to enact new legislation relating to the mandatory use of child restraints in passenger cars to maximise the safety of passengers having less than 10 years old.

It is also being envisaged to set up a modern Drivers' Education and Testing Centre which would contribute to raise the driving standards of learner drivers.

I am also advised that the Police is taking several measures to reduce the number of fatal accidents and serious injuries in road traffic accidents by adopting specific concepts of operations such as Intelligence-led Policing, High Visibility Enforcement, Selective Traffic Enforcement Policy, Alcotest operations, speed checks, special weekend crack down operations and Vehicle Check Points along Motorway M1 and M2 between 22 00 hours to 06 00 hours.

NATIONAL HEALTH SECTOR STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2024

(No. B/953) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2020-2024, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - THIRD PHASE – ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

(No. B/954) Ms J. Bérenger (First 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 third phase of the Metro Express Project, he will state if an Environment Management Plan, an inventory of cultural heritage assets together with a heritage impact assessment and any public consultation exercise have been

carried out prior to the start of the works and, if so, will he table copy of the respective reports.

Reply: The Phase 3 of the Metro Express Project which extends the alignment from Rose Hill to Réduit through Ebène is being implemented by Larsen and Toubro Ltd under the same Engineering, Procurement and Construction contract, as has been the case for Phase 1 and Phase 2 for the mainline works, from Port Louis to Curepipe.

I am informed that for this extension of the alignment, the Contractor, Larsen and Toubro Ltd has prepared an Environmental Management Plan as was specified in the Request for Proposal and incorporated in the Engineering, Procurement and Construction contract. Larsen and Toubro Ltd is strictly adhering to the provisions of the Environmental Management Plan. The Project Supervisor, RITES Ltd, is closely monitoring that the measures in the Environmental Management Plan are being strictly followed.

Besides, I am also advised that the Metro Express Ltd has initiated the Quality, Health, Safety and Environment (QHSE) Patrol to ensure that the Contractor complies to the Environmental Management Plan and to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. The QHSE Patrol consists of specialists from RITES Ltd, Metro Express Ltd, the Police, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, the Road Development Authority, the Central Electricity Board, the Central Water Authority, Mauritius Telecom, Local Authorities, and Larsen and Toubro Ltd, amongst others.

As regards the undertaking of an inventory of cultural heritage assets together with the heritage input assessment, I am advised that the Ex-Governor Railway Station at Réduit, is not listed as a Heritage site. I am given to understand that actually one Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) wrote to my Ministry and the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage in respect of the preservation and restoration of the Ex-Governor's Railway Station. Accordingly, I am informed that the National Heritage Fund has commissioned a survey for the purpose of relocating, rehabilitating and preserving the historical structure at Réduit itself. So far public consultation has not been held. The suggestions made by the NGO can only be taken on board as far as it is practically possible.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – REVIEW

(No. B/955) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism

whether, in regard to the review of the National Development Strategy, he will state where matters stand, indicating if –

- (a) consideration will be given to the comments of the different stakeholders, and
- (b) if a final draft has been sent to those stakeholders for comments.

(Withdrawn)

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF CUREPIPE - BANYAN TREE BANK

(No. B/956) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Rs90 m. placed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe in the Banyan Tree Bank, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the availability of the deposits made, now that the said Bank has found a new shareholder.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that on 09 August 2021, it received an e-mail from the Conservator of the Banyan Tree Bank to the effect that a share purchase agreement had been executed by a potential investor. The completion of the share purchase agreement and the recapitalisation of Banyan Tree Bank were, however, subject to certain conditions which included, amongst others, deposit restructuring proposals. The Conservator also indicated that if the conditions were not to be met, he would have no other option than to recommend the Bank of Mauritius to order the compulsory liquidation of the Banyan Tree Bank.

With a view to preserving its financial assets of Rs91,654,875.00 held at the bank, the Council, at its sitting of 27 August 2021, agreed to the deposit restructuring proposals and refund terms of the Conservator as these conditions were *sine qua non* to the refund thereof. The terms of the refund were as follows –

- (i) 20% of the investment amounting to Rs18,330,975 be refunded at start of operations of the bank;
- (ii) an additional 20% to be refunded after 3 months of operations, and
- (iii) 60%, i.e., an amount of Rs54,992,925, be invested over a period of 36 months at the rate of interest of 5.37% payable on a yearly basis.

On 15 October 2021, the Municipal Council of Curepipe was apprised by the Banyan Tree Bank that the conservatorship had been terminated and on 21 October 2021, the bank confirmed that it will proceed as per agreed proposal when the bank is operational.

I am further informed by the Bank of Mauritius that –

- (i) The acquisition and recapitalisation of Banyan Tree Bank have been duly completed by an investor on 15 October 2021 and the appointment of the Conservator was terminated at midnight on even date;
- (ii) A public notice was issued on the same day to inform the public of the closure of the conservatorship;
- (iii) Investor is currently completing some formalities for the re-opening of the bank, and
- (iv) The bank will issue further notices regarding its start of operation.

INNOVATIVE INVESTMENT & BUSINESS MODELS - HIGH-LEVEL PANEL

(No. B/957) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the High-Level Panel held between the Republic of Mauritius and the European Union on 10 May 2018 in the Plaza, Rose Hill, for the promotion of Innovative Investment and Business Models to increase the effectiveness of cultural heritage as a factor of social and economic development, he will state the outcome thereof.

Reply (Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage): I am informed that on 10 May 2018, in the context of the 50th Anniversary of the Independence of Mauritius and the European Year of Cultural Heritage, a High-Level Panel on ‘Promoting Innovative Investment and Business Models to increase the Effectiveness of Cultural Heritage as a Factor of Social and Economic Development’ was organised by the Delegation of the European Union (EU) in Mauritius.

The objectives of this panel were to –

- (i) share ideas and discuss key issues in relation to the economic and social benefits of investing in cultural heritage, and

- (ii) share best practices and highlight the importance of an innovative use of cultural heritage for economic growth and jobs in Mauritius.

I am also informed that this panel comprised the former Minister of Arts and Culture, the former Ambassador of the European Union to Mauritius, the former Chairman of the Economic Development Board and the Managing Director, Promotion and Development Ltd.

The main discussion emphasised on the importance of developing an overall understanding of cultural heritage as a key instrument and a useful means to generate direct and indirect economic returns. Moreover, the need to create jobs and growth in the construction and tourism sectors and to foster an attractive environment for entrepreneurs and businesses were also highlighted.

COVID-19 VACCINATION – STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

(No. B/958) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the students under the age of 18, he will state the number thereof having been COVID-19 vaccinated as at date.

(Withdrawn)

TEENAGE PREGNANCY – REPORTED CASES – JANUARY 2020 TO 26 OCTOBER 2021

(No. B/959) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to teenage pregnancy, she will state the number of reported cases thereof since January 2020 to date.

(Withdrawn)

BAI CO. (MAURITIUS) LTD (FORMER) – SUPER CASH BACK GOLD POLICY HOLDERS – REFUND

(No. B/960) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Super Cash Back Gold policy holders of the former BAI Co. (Mauritius) Ltd., he will state if Government proposes to refund them and, if so, when.

(Withdrawn)

CEB FIBERNET CO LTD – PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNTS

(No. B/961) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CEB Fibernet Co Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the yearly profit and loss accounts thereof over the past three financial years.

(Withdrawn)

SENIOR CITIZENS COUNCIL – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – BASIC RETIREMENT PENSION – PAYMENT DATE

(No. B/962) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the decision to pay the Basic Retirement Pension in bank on the fourth working day of the month as from February 2022, she will state if the members of the Executive Committee of the Senior Citizens Council had been consulted prior thereto, indicating if consideration will be given for a review thereof so as not to negatively impact the majority of the senior citizens.

(Withdrawn)

BABY K.E. – DEATH CERTIFICATES

(No. B/963) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the issue of two death certificates of 15-months old baby K.E. who died on the night of 08 September 2021 at the Dr A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, he will state where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

LE MORNE HERITAGE TRUST FUND BOARD – MEETINGS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008

(No. B/964) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) the number of Board meetings held since January 2021 to date, and
- (b) if the Management Plan of the Site dated 2008 has been revised and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

CAP MALHEUREUX RELAY CENTRE – COVID-19 – PROTOCOL AND ISOLATION MEASURES

(No. B/965) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the recent cases of COVID-19 positive tested babies, she will state the protocol and isolation measures put in place at the Cap Malheureux Relay Centre, indicating the date of introduction thereof.

Reply: I have to inform the House that on Friday 10 September 2021, one caregiver (Mrs M. R.) from the Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter was tested positive to COVID-19. She last worked at the Centre on Monday 06 September 2021. Following confirmation of infection, she self-isolated at her residence (Petite Rivière) on the recommendations of the Health Authorities. On the same day, 3 babies were tested for COVID-19, among whom 2 were found positive (one male and one female).

On Monday 13 September 2021 a total of 8 babies from the Cap Malheureux Relay Centre were officially tested positive to COVID-19. As at 13 September 2021, 2 infected babies were admitted at SSRN Hospital and 6 were recommended for isolation at the Relay Centre by doctors from the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

The following actions were taken as regards measures for isolation –

1. The “Elder boys’ section” was converted into an “Isolation Room” at the Relay Centre on 13 September 2021. The Isolation Room was of approximately 2,000 square feet, comprising 2 dormitories with attached bathrooms and toilets. This section was appropriate for the Isolation Room and was set up under the guidance of Domiciliary Monitoring Unit of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.
2. The Relay Centre and its staff strictly abided by the general Protocol set up by the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

3. The 6 infected babies, detected with COVID-19 at the Relay Centre, were admitted there with two Caregivers (Mrs B. and Mrs D.) who were with the babies round the clock. On 14 and 15 September 2021, 2 other babies infected with the COVID-19 got discharged from the Hospital and were admitted in the Isolation Room at Cap Malheureux. 2 other Child-Caregivers (Mrs K. and Mrs K.) joined the Isolation Room to cater for all the infected babies. There were 4 child Caregivers for 8 infected babies. These 4 Caregivers were fully vaccinated. These Caregivers stayed in the Isolation Room from 13 to Monday 27 September 2021. The Relay Centre was declared COVID-safe by the Domiciliary Monitoring Unit on Monday 27 September 2021.
4. Protective Personal Equipment (PPE), hand sanitisers, alcohol, gloves, surgical facemasks, N95 facemasks, face shields, rapid antigen SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) tests and all other necessary provisions were provided to the staff in the Isolation Room at the Centre.
5. The Shelter Manager amended the roster of the Caregivers, who were working with the non-infected residents, to work on a skeletal system. As a precautionary measure, the Caregivers in the infected and non-infected section were also quarantined at the Relay Centre, and were working on a full-time basis at the Relay Centre (they stayed at the Relay Centre on a 24/7 basis).
6. Actions were initiated to procure additional sanitary items, including face shields, face masks, PPE Equipment, rapid antigen tests for staff and others, in case the outbreak would last longer than 2 weeks.
7. As a preparedness plan, if the Relay Centre would have run short of Caregivers because of high contamination, the Resource Persons working in children' clubs would have been requested to act as Caregivers. However, no need arose.
8. A visit was effected by NCC staff on Tuesday 14 September 2021 to encourage the personnel of the Centre and also to ensure that everything was in order and under control. Regular monitoring was also being done through the CCTV cameras installed on the phone of the Coordinator of the NCC.

9. Following arrangements with the Ministry of Health and Wellness for Domiciliary Visits, the Relay Centre received daily visits from the Ministry of Health.
10. The Domiciliary Monitoring Unit carried out their last visit on Friday 24 September 2021. The Relay Centre was declared COVID-safe and all the babies were no longer positive to the COVID-19. As a precautionary measure, the Manager of the Centre prolonged the isolation for 2 more days.
11. As at date, the health of all children admitted in the Relay Centre is stable.

DIGITAL COVID-19 VACCINATION PASS – ERRORS & OMISSIONS

(No. B/966) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for G.R.N.W & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the digital COVID-19 vaccination pass issued by the Mauritian Authorities, he will state –

- (a) if his attention has been drawn to a number of cases wherein same contain errors and omissions, indicating the remedial measures taken in relation thereto, and
- (b) where the use thereof is compulsory.

Reply: In June 2021, the COVID-19 Vaccination Committee chaired by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning and Minister of Tourism, under the aegis of the High-Level COVID-19 Committee under the chairmanship of the hon. Prime Minister, entrusted my Ministry the responsibility to digitalise citizens' vaccination data with a view to coming up with a digital vaccination pass for each citizen. At that time, vaccination data in respect of vaccinated persons was being captured manually on Consent Forms in the vaccination centres across the island. They were afterwards input in the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2) system which has been developed by the World Health Organisation and extended to the Ministry of Health and Wellness. However, given the World Health Organisation support team for the DHIS2 system is an international team outside Mauritius, it was difficult for the officers of the Ministry of Health and Wellness and my Ministry to use the system.

In view thereof, it was decided that my Ministry, through the Central Information Systems Division, would develop a new system to capture vaccination data with a view to creating a national database. This system, known as COVAC, validates data against the

Central Population Database through the Info Highway platform for Mauritian nationals and against the Passport and Immigration Office database for foreigners residing in Mauritius.

For the data capture exercise through COVAC, the services of around 127 officers from different Ministries and Departments in the grades of Management Support Officer and Word Processing Operator were retained. Some 35 trainees were also recruited under the Youth Empowerment Programme to assist in the exercise.

Upon partial completion of the data entry capture exercise, Mauritius Telecom Ltd was approached for the development of the Digital Vaccination Pass on the BeSafe Moris platform through an interface with the COVAC system. Accordingly, the Digital Vaccination Pass was launched on 01 October 2021 on a pilot basis. Since then, the Digital Vaccination Pass can be downloaded on the BeSafe Moris application or portal as well as the MoKloud platform which has been developed by my Ministry to download and securely store personal documents. Arrangements have also been made with the Mauritius Post Ltd for assistance to be extended to citizens not having access to a computer device or a smart phone to enable them to download their Vaccination Pass in 95 Post Offices. The Digital Vaccination Pass contains a QR code which can be verified by a scanning functionality found on the BeSafe Moris platform to ascertain its validity and genuineness.

As at end of October 2021, 265,832 persons have already downloaded their pass from the BeSafe Moris platform and 715 from MoKloud platform.

I wish to highlight that since the very day of the launching of the Digital Vaccination Pass, i.e. on 01 October 2021, my Ministry set up a hotline 401 3060, and a dedicated email address passvaksinal@govmu.org for queries and complaints registration. A Press Communiqué was issued on 01 October 2021 in that respect. A joint team from the Ministry of Health and Wellness and my Ministry is attending to the queries and complaints received.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that a number of complaints have been received from the public. These complaints pertain to incorrect name of vaccine, incorrect vaccination centre, "partially vaccinated" mentioned whilst the person has been fully vaccinated, vaccination data not found, among others. Most of them have already been attended to by the Ministry of Health and Wellness and as at end October 2021, only 69 cases are yet to be attended to.

I wish to highlight that the data capture exercise was a very tedious exercise whereby information relating to 900,462 citizens for first dose and 844,041 citizens for second dose was concerned. In certain cases, the filled-in Consent Forms by the citizens

themselves contained errors which have had to be corrected thereafter. The team of officers who have been involved in that exercise have put in remarkable efforts and I wish to commend them for this.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness that presentation of the Vaccination Pass is compulsory in places listed in the Fifth Schedule of the Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations 2021 made by the Minister of Health and Wellness under section 13 of the Quarantine Act 2020.

I must point out that given that the Digital Vaccination Pass is still in pilot phase, both the paper-based pass and the digital one are acceptable at the specified places.

FREE SUPPLY OF OPTICAL GLASSES TO CHILDREN – SOCIAL REGISTER MAURITIUS SCHEME – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/967) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Free Supply of Optical Glasses to Children of families registered under the Social Register Mauritius Scheme, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, as to the implementation thereof, indicating the –

- (a) number of such children supplied therewith as at to date, and
- (b) name of the supplier, indicating the procurement process thereof.

Reply: Several consultative meetings and working sessions with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the National Empowerment Foundation have been held since July 2021 to work out the modalities for the implementation of this budget measure.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the National Empowerment Foundation has informed that the provision of optical glasses to children of families eligible under the Social Register of Mauritius is demand driven.

Field visits to that effect have started since July 2021 and are ongoing in the nine (9) districts, including Rodrigues, whereby beneficiaries are being made aware of this budget measure and are being accordingly requested to attend to medical screening sessions which will be organised by the National Empowerment Foundation.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the procurement exercise for the services of optometrists will be launched by the National Empowerment Foundation by mid-November 2021.

GRAND GAUBE VILLAGE – RESURFACING WORKS

(No. B/968) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the roads in Grand Gaube Village, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Rivière du Rempart District Council, information as to the roads to be asphalted and/or re-asphalted in the financial year 2021/2022.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that the non-classified roads in the village of Grand Gaube are in good condition and patching works are carried out whenever required. Recently, on Monday 18 October 2021, patching works were effected at Sin Fat Road, Couacaud Road and Nelson Road in the village of Grand Gaube.

I am further informed by the Road Development Authority that in the Financial Year 2018/2019, milling and resurfacing works were carried out from Calodyne to Grand Gaube to the tune of Rs23.4 m. As the classified roads thereat are in good condition, no resurfacing work is planned for the Financial Year 2021/22.

I am also informed that for the Financial Year 2021/22, the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development (National Development Unit) would upgrade the Arya Mandir Road in Grand Gaube to the tune of Rs3.3 m. and the scope of works for this project is under preparation. And also, the National Development Unit is currently upgrading and resurfacing the Kalee Road on a stretch of 800 metres, which links the village of Grand Gaube to that of Goodlands.

POINTE AUX SABLES - AREA HEALTH CENTRE - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/969) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a new Area Health Centre at Pointe Aux Sables, he will state where matters stand –

- (a) giving details of the bid exercise carried out, indicating the –
 - (i) name of the bidders with corresponding quoted amounts, and
 - (ii) project value thereof, and
- (b) functionality thereof, indicating the –
 - (i) services that will be provided thereat;
 - (ii) opening hours thereof, and
 - (iii) number of doctors and staff that will be posted thereat.

Reply: I wish to point out that a new Community Health Centre is being constructed at Pointe Aux Sables.

The Community Health Centre (CHC) caters for a population of about 10,700 inhabitants of Pointe Aux Sables, Petit Verger, Debarcadere, Morcellement Rey, part of Terrasson and La Pointe.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the bid for the construction of Community Health Centre at Pointe Aux Sables was launched on 01 December 2020 with a closing date for submission of bids on 11 January 2021.

The opening of the bids was carried out on 13 January 2021 and five bids were received as follows:

SN	Bidders	Total Amount Quoted (Rs) – Exc. VAT
1	Safety Construction Co. Ltd	37,953,931.11
2	Marbobois Ltée	35,851,650.00
3	Modern Jurassic Building & Construction Ltd	29,108,000.00
4	Keep Clean Ltd	33,707,609.00
5	Kisten Enterprise Company Limited	38,000,000.00

The Letter of Award was issued to Modern Jurassic Building & Construction Limited on 05 May 2021 for the sum of Rs29,108,000.00 and the Contract Agreement was signed on 07 October 2021.

The handing over exercise is scheduled for Friday 29 October 2021.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the new Community Health Centre will be a Ground+1 building and the following major health services will be provided to the inhabitants of the region -

- a) treatment of common diseases and minor injuries;
- b) referral to secondary and tertiary care;
- c) Maternal and Child Health Services;
- d) Well Baby Clinic;
- e) Expanded Programme on Immunisation;
- f) Family Planning and Reproductive Health;
- g) Dedicated NCD Clinics, Health Promotion activities, including Nutrition Counselling and Diabetes Foot Care Clinics;
- h) Community Based Rehabilitation;

- i) Pharmacy Services, and
- j) Breast Feeding Corner.

As regards part b(i), like all other Community Health Centre, the opening hours will be from 08 00 to 16 00 hrs on weekdays and from 09 00 to noon on Saturdays. Exceptionally on two days of the week, the CHC will be opened as from 07 00 a.m for blood collection.

With regard to b(iii), as is the practice in all Community Health Centres, one doctor, two nursing officers (one male and one female) and one attendant will be posted to the Pointe Aux Sables Community Health Centre. There is general consultation on a daily basis.

The additional services at the CHC will be delivered on a sessional basis by other specialised cadres.

ENT HOSPITAL – COVID-19 PATIENTS - INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

(No. B/970) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Intensive Care Unit of the ENT Hospital, he will state –

- (a) the number of ventilators, high flow oxygen apparatus, Pulse Oxymeter in active use thereat since March 2021 for COVID-19 positive patients;
- (b) if the Bi-PAP machine disposables are available round the clock for COVID-19 patients;
- (c) the ratio of doctors and nursing staff to number of patients admitted thereat, and
- (d) if patients are requested to buy their own medications such as Remdesevir.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of ENT Hospital is currently equipped with 25 ventilators. 24 of them are in good working condition and 1 is under repair. In addition, there are 20 fully functioning Pulse Oximeters in the ICU.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that all 24 ventilators are being used as C-PAP equipment whenever required and disposables are available round the clock for COVID-19 patients. Furthermore, two C-PAP high flow oxygen equipment as well as two Bi-PAP equipment are available at the ICU.

The ratio of doctors and nursing staff to number of patients admitted are as follows –

	Nursing Staff	Doctors	Number of Patients	Ratio Nursing Staff: Patients	Ratio Doctor: Patients
Intensive Care Unit	4 (2 teams of 2)	5 medical doctors	6	1:3	5:6
High Dependency Unit	11 (2 teams – 1×5 and 1×6) respectively	2 Anaesthetists, 1 Physician and 2 Medical and Health Officer/Senior Medical and Health Officer	25	11:25	1:5
General Ward (Male and Female)	3 (Adjusted proportionately according to number of patients)		10	3:10	1:2

Patients are provided with all required drugs at the level of the Hospital Pharmacy. No patient is requested to buy his or her own medication.

COVID-19 PCR TESTING - PRIVATE HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

(No. B/971) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19 PCR testing, he will state –

- (a) the eligibility criteria therefor in public hospitals/health institutions, indicating the number thereof carried out over the past six months;
- (b) the number of private health institutions authorised to perform same and number thereof carried out over the past six months;
- (c) the number of persons being refused same in public hospitals for having a positive rapid Antigen test, and
- (d) if the laboratory facilities at SSR International Airport is conducting same on targeted incoming passengers since 01 October 2021.

Reply: In reply to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the Central Health Laboratory receives requests with samples from Flu Clinics, hospitals, treatment centres and quarantine centres to perform COVID-19 PCR.

Over the past six months, i.e., April 2021 to September 2021, the Central Health Laboratory has performed a total of 278,118 RT PCR tests for COVID-19. As regards private health institutions, 5 of them are currently authorised to perform COVID-19 PCR, namely –

1. Airport Health Lab (AHL) - as from October 2020
2. Wellkin C-Care - as from April 2020
3. Nova Lab - as from October 2020
4. City Clinic - as from October 2021
5. Aegle Clinic- as from October 2021

A total of 224,912 COVID-19 PCR tests have been performed by these authorised private laboratories.

Besides the above laboratories, the following have also requested authorisation to perform COVID-19 PCR –

1. Clinique Ferrière, and
2. BioSanté Flacq.

The technical team of the Central Health Laboratory will soon conduct inspection to assess the capacity of these labs to perform COVID PCR.

In reply to part (b) of the question, in accordance with established protocol, all patients attending flu clinics are subjected to a rapid antigen test. A positive test result through rapid antigen is confirmed by a RT-PCR test.

In reply to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the Airport Health Laboratory is conducting RT-PCR tests on all incoming passengers as from October 2020 and has already carried out a total of 159,941 tests as at date.

PREGNANT WOMEN AT WORK – COVID-19 VACCINATION GUIDELINES

(No. B/972) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to pregnant women at work, he will state if –

- (a) his Ministry has issued guidelines as regards mandatory vaccination against COVID-19 in the public and private sectors, and

- (b) non vaccinated pregnant women can be subjected to forceful leave without pay or dismissal by employers.

Reply: The Consolidated COVID-19 Regulations made under section 13 of the Quarantine Act 2020 provide that no person shall have access to specified institutions, places or premises as described and specified in the Fifth Schedule to the Regulations, unless such persons, which include pregnant women workers, employed in both public and private sectors, produce –

- (a) his/her COVID-19 vaccination card in the form set out in the Sixth Schedule to the Regulations or in such electronic format as the Minister of Health and Wellness may approve, certifying that he/she has been vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, or
- (b) in case he/she has not been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine produces an RT-PCR test result slip in the form set out in the Seventh Schedule to the Regulations, certifying a negative result dating back to not more than 7 days from the date of the RT-PCR test was undertaken; or
- (c) documented medical certificate (*certificat médical détaillé*), 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.

The specified institutions are as follows –

- (i) Educational or training institution,
- (ii) Health institution;
- (iii) Residential care home/Residential care institutions for children victims of violence, abuse and neglect/Shelters for women victims of domestic violence;
- (iv) Reform institution;
- (v) Plaine Corail Airport;
- (vi) Port Louis & Port Mathurin Harbours;
- (vii) Child Care Services establishment;
- (viii) Police as well as Fire and Rescue premises;
- (ix) Lodging accommodation (commonly known as dormitory);
- (x) Beautician/Aesthetician, etc., and
- (xi) Multiplex, cinema/theatre/concert halls.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that no guidelines have been issued by my Ministry for pregnant women workers in the public and private sectors to be mandatorily vaccinated against COVID-19.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the reply is in the negative.

This Government has at heart the safety and security of its population and has left no stone unturned to protect them. In this regard, Government is encouraging all persons to be vaccinated and has made it mandatory for all persons to, amongst others, –

- (a) wear a protective face mask in any place other than in his place of residence;
- (b) strictly observe the social and physical distancing rules specified in the Regulations, and
- (c) ensure that he/she disinfects his hands regularly using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, where same is available, or wash their hands regularly.

Equally at any place of work, every employer is required to –

- (a) provide to his employees –
 - (i) hygiene products, and
 - (ii) rubbish bins for the disposal of waste;
- (b) ensure that waste is regularly disposed of, and
- (c) ensure that the place of work, including used surfaces such as benchtops, desks and doorknobs, are regularly cleaned and disinfected.

GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY - RACING DIVISION

(No. B/973) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if the post of Head of the Racing Division thereof has been filled and if so, indicate the –

- (a) name of the incumbent and terms and conditions of employment thereof, including, monthly pay packet and other benefits drawn and if a due diligence exercise was carried out prior to the appointment thereof, and
- (b) recruitment procedures followed therefor.

(Withdrawn)

**COVID-19 VACCINES – FUNDS COLLECTED FROM THE SALE OF
MOGAS AND GAS OIL**

(No. B/974) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the financing of COVID-19 vaccines, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the quantum of funds collected from the sale of Mogas and Gas Oil therefor.

Reply: The amount collected from July 2021 to 11 February 2022, in relation to COVID-19 vaccines is Rs284,731,430 for Mogas and Rs305,091,088 for Gas Oil.

NHDC HOUSING PROJECTS - NBCC (INDIA) LIMITED - CONSULTANT

(No. B/975) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the construction of housing units by NBCC (India) Limited, he will state the extent of land leased out thereto.

Reply: I am informed that NBCC (India) Limited is the Consultant for two NHDC housing projects financed by the Government of India as follows –

- (i) Construction of 656 housing units at Dagotière over 27A21 of State Land at Dagotière, and
- (ii) Construction of 300 housing units at Mare Tabac over 10A of State Land which have been put at the disposal of the NHDC Ltd.

I am further informed that my Ministry has also acquired two plots of land of an extent of 4A31 at Dagotière and 2A07 at Mare Tabac for the construction of a Sewerage Treatment Plant on each of the plots.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 3 – STATE LAND – ALLOCATION

(No. B/976) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to State land, he will state the number of

applications presently being processed by his Ministry, for Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East for the allocation of plots thereof to holders of building site leases for an amount of Rs2,000, indicating if consideration will be given for the expeditious processing thereof.

Reply: I am advised that there are some 458 applications at the level of my Ministry that are being processed.

STRAY DOGS – PROLIFERATION – REMEDIAL ACTIONS

(No. B/977) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to stray dogs, he will state if his attention has been drawn to a proliferation thereof on public roads and places, beaches and hospitals and, if so, indicate if urgent remedial actions have been/are being taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL & HEALTH OFFICERS/SENIOR MEDICAL & HEALTH OFFICERS - OVERSEAS COURSES/SCHOLARSHIPS, STUDY LEAVE

(No. B/978) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers, he will –

- (a) give the list of those benefiting from overseas courses/scholarships and study leave without pay for post graduate studies since March 2017 to date, and
- (b) state the –
 - (i) name of the university;
 - (ii) field of course, and
 - (iii) start and completion dates thereof.

Reply: With your kind permission, I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly the list of the Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers benefiting from overseas courses/scholarships and study leave without pay for post graduate studies since March 2017.

Moreover, the hon. Member may wish to note that in accordance with the Data Protection Act, the names of the Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers cannot be disclosed.

**METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – EXTENSION – ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT PLAN – COST**

(No. B/979) 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 Ebene, he will state –

- (a) the revised cost thereof, if any;
- (b) the expected start and completion dates thereof
- (c) the provisions made for traffic deviations, especially, around the Rose Hill area, and
- (d) if the Environmental Management Plan has been completed and, if so, table copy thereof.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINES – AGE GROUP – SIDE-EFFECTS – FATAL CASES

(No. B/980) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the number of Mauritians administered with two doses thereof, indicating if a survey has been carried out as to the number of persons having suffered side-effects thereto, indicating –

- (a) the age group mostly affected by same;
- (b) if there have been fatal cases and, if so, give details thereof, and
- (c) which vaccines administered were more likely to cause side-effects.

(Withdrawn)

**ANIMAL WELFARE PROJECT - HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL
(HSI)**

(No. B/981) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the animal welfare project “*Nou toutou*”, he will state why the Humane Society International (HSI) has put an end to its collaboration with his Ministry therefor, indicating if he has received a letter from HSI representative in Mauritius in connection therewith to discuss matters about animal welfare in Mauritius and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - SENIOR CITIZENS - DEATH

(No. B/982) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, she will state the number of senior citizens who died as a result thereof, indicating –

- (a) the measures taken by her Ministry to monitor closely the health of the senior citizens, and
- (b) if her Ministry has set up a plan to cater for those who need to do PCR tests at home.

(Withdrawn)

CUREPIPE - STREET LIGHTING

(No. B/983) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to street lighting in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to the average time taken for the replacement of damaged lamps on the poles.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that in accordance with section (50) of the Local Government Act 2011, its Public Infrastructure Department is responsible, *inter alia*, for the maintenance, improvement and lighting of all public roads falling under its purview. The maintenance of lamps by the Municipal Council of Curepipe is effected on a ward wide basis from Monday to Friday and regular inspections as well as visual checks are carried out on street lights to ensure they are fully operational.

I am also informed that complaints received regarding faulty street lamps are attended by the Council within a time frame of one week. As regards the repairs of decorative garlands, same are carried out on Saturdays.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AUTHORITY - 'NORMS AND STANDARDS' DOCUMENT

(No. B/984) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Special Education Needs Authority, she will state if she

will consider impressing upon same for a review of the document on ‘norms and standards’ released in July 2021 by the said authority in consultation with different stakeholders, considering the fact that there exist different types of disabilities.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS FILM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION – BOARD COMPOSITION - ALLEGED CANNABIS POSSESSION

(No. B/985) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Mauritius Film Development Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the composition of the Board, indicating if one of the members has been allegedly found in possession of a certain amount of cannabis on Friday 08 October 2021.

(Withdrawn)

FISHERS – FISHERS’ CARDS & LUMP SUM AMOUNT

(No. B/986) 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 fishers, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof who have –
 - (i) returned or transferred their cards since July 2021 to date, and
 - (ii) applied for new cards, and
- (b) if he proposes to review the amount of lump sum to be granted thereto.

(Withdrawn)

ELDERLY PERSONS – ASSAULT

(No. B/987) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the elderly, she will state the number thereof who have reportedly been physically assaulted and been sexually abused whilst being robbed since January 2021 to date, indicating the protective measures taken by her Ministry, if any, for the protection thereof.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINES - BOOSTER JAB

(No. B/988) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to all available COVID-19 vaccines in Mauritius, he will state the recent assessment made thereof with a view to prioritising access to the COVID-19 booster jab.

Reply: As you may be aware, in the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan, provision is made for the setting up of a National Vaccination Committee to advise my Ministry on vaccination against the COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Vaccination Committee has recommended that an additional dose of vaccine be administered in order to strengthen immunity against the different COVID-19 variants which was approved by the High-Level Committee.

In reply to part (a) of the question, the COVID-19 Vaccination Committee has made the following recommendations –

- (i) Persons having received two doses of Sinopharm vaccine, may be given an additional dose of the same vaccine provided that there is a lapse of 4 months following the administration of the second dose.
- (ii) As regards persons inoculated with the Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccine, they are eligible to receiving a 3rd dose of the same vaccine from the limited stock available. Thereafter, this category of persons may be administered an additional dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
- (iii) With regard to persons vaccinated with Covaxin vaccine, since my Ministry does not have any stock thereof, they may receive an additional dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The booster dose is being administered on a voluntary basis.

Booster dose for AstraZeneca (Covishield) is being carried out in each regional hospital while the booster dose for Covaxin and Sinopharm vaccines is being carried out in the vaccination centres across the island.

Moreover, for dialysis patients who are eligible to a booster dose 4 months following their 2nd dose, mobile teams have been deployed in the different dialysis centres for the administration of booster doses.

In addition, a calendar is being worked out for private charitable homes for administration of the booster doses to the inmates and personnel.

CONTRIBUTION SOCIALE GÉNÉRALISÉE - REVENUE COLLECTED

(No. B/989) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, he will state the quantum of revenue collected since the introduction thereof in September 2020 to date, indicating how same has been/is being spent.

(Withdrawn)

**COVID-19 VACCINES - VACCINATED PERSONS -
BOOSTER SHOT**

(No. B/990) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the category of vaccinated persons who would require a booster shot.

(Withdrawn)

M.V. WAKASHIO SHIPWRECK - VICTIMS - INSURANCE MONEY

(No. B/991) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the M.V. Wakashio shipwreck, he will state the quantum of insurance money claimed and received, indicating the quantum thereof—

- (a) remitted to each of the victims as at to date, giving a breakdown of the figures, and
- (b) yet to be paid.

(Withdrawn)

NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT – BEDS & HEALTH CARE

(No. B/992) Mr K. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to neonates, he will state the –

- (a) number of neonatal intensive care unit beds available island-wide, and
- (b) measures taken to provide better health care thereto.

(Withdrawn)

VALLEE-PITOT - ROADS & DRAINS - UPGRADING

(No. A/53) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the roads along Boulevard Pitot, Boulevard Hugon, Alma Street and Inkerman Street, in Vallée Pitot, he will state when same were last resurfaced, indicating if any plan is in the pipe line to remedy the number of existing potholes and irregular patchy areas along same.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that it has not undertaken any resurfacing works at Boulevard Pitot, Boulevard Hugon, Alma Street, and Inkerman Street, in Vallée Pitot, during the last ten years.

The Municipal City Council of Port Louis has scheduled patching works along those streets starting on 25 October 2021 and the works are expected to be completed in two weeks' time.

I am further informed by the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development (National Development Unit) that it has completed the upgrading of several roads and drains in the region of Vallée Pitot for an amount of Rs63,998,797.55 including that of Inkerman Street and Alma Street at a cost of Rs4,620,710.75.