



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 23 MARCH 2021

CONTENTS

ANNOUNCEMENT

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER

BILLS (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS (*Written*)

THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

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
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 01 of 2021

Sitting of Tuesday 23 March 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)

ANNOUNCEMENT

OBITUARY – MR MAHYENDRAH UTCHANAH

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we learnt of the demise of Mr Mahyendrahan Utchanah, former Member of Parliament, on 01 January last, at the age of 70.

Mahen Utchanah, as he was commonly known, was born on 29 December 1950 at Poudre D’Or Hamlet. In 1973, he proceeded to India to pursue tertiary education at Pune University. During his university studies, he assumed responsibilities of President of the Mauritius Students’ Association and Secretary General of the Symbiosis Student Council.

In 1976, after the completion of a Bachelor of Arts in English, he returned to Mauritius and started working as an English teacher at Patten College in Rose Hill.

He began his political career in the same year by joining the MMM. In 1976, he contested the General Elections in Constituency No. 7 - Piton/Rivière du Rempart, under the banner of the MMM, but was not elected. In 1979, he took a job as Principal at Progressive College in Rivière du Rempart, a position he held until 1983.

In 1982, he stood as a candidate for the General Elections in Constituency No. 7 - Piton/Rivière du Rempart under the banner of the MMM-PSM Alliance and was elected Third Member.

In 1983, he left the MMM and became one of the founding Members of the MSM as a result of the split within the MMM. He was appointed Minister of Energy and Communications in the same year. He was entrusted with the post of treasurer of the MSM, which he held until 1995.

In August 1983, he contested the General Elections again in Constituency No. 7 under the banner of the MSM-Labour Party Alliance and was elected Third Member. He was re-appointed Minister and held the portfolio of Energy and Internal Communications.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the General Elections of 1987, Mr Utchanah was returned Third Member to serve Constituency No. 7 under the banner of the MSM-Labour Party Alliance. He was re-appointed Minister of Energy and Internal Communications.

In 1991, he ran for the General Elections in Constituency No. 7 under the banner of the MSM-MMM Alliance and was returned Third Member. He became Minister of Energy, Water Resources and Postal Services, a portfolio he held until October 1994.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Utchanah was also known for his social activities and was engaged in charitable work at the Human Service Trust. He was associated with the setting up of the Ayurveda Hospital of the Trust in 1985.

Mr Speaker, Sir, committed to the concerns of the people of Indian origin settled in different parts of the world, Mr Utchanah became a member of the Mauritian Branch of GOPIO, the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin in 2001.

In 2012, he became the Chairperson of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and in 2013, the Chairperson of GOPIO International. Mr Utchanah was instrumental in the setting up of the International Indentured Girmitiyas Foundation which was incorporated in 2016.

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, in my name and that of the Opposition, we associate ourselves with the tribute made by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Mahen Utchanah, and I also request the Clerk to convey our sincere condolences to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Mahyendrah Utchanah, 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. 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 Institute of Technical Education and Technology Bill (No. I of 2021);
 - (ii) The Mental Health Care (Amendment) Bill (No. II of 2021);
 - (iii) The Taxi Operators Welfare Fund Bill (No. III of 2021); and
 - (iv) The Optical Council Bill (No. IV of 2021);
- (b) The Firearms (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 300 of 2020)
- (c) The Firearms (Competency Certificate) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 301 of 2020)
- (d) The Annual Report 2019 of the Probation and Aftercare Service.
- (e) The Double Taxation Agreement (Kingdom of Eswatini) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 14 of 2021)
- (f) The Financial Statements of the Independent Broadcasting Authority for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (g) The Annual Reports of the Outer Islands Development Corporation for the financial years ending 2017, 2018 and 2019.
- (h) The Annual Report of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for the period July 2009 to December 2010. (In Original)

- (i) The Annual Report 2015 of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority.
- (j) The Annual Report of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority for the period January 2016 to June 2017.
- (k) The Firearms (COVID-19 Period) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 30 of 2021)
- (l) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for the year ended 31 December 2015. (In Original)
- (m) The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Human Rights Commission for the period 01 January 2016 to 06 September 2016 and 07 September 2016 to 30 June 2017.
- (n) The Annual Report of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for the period January 2016 to June 2017. (In Original)
- (o) The Radiation Safety and Nuclear Security (Control of Import and Export of Radiation Sources and Other Controlled Items) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 43 of 2021)
- (p) The Ports (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 34 of 2020)

B. Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning

Ministry of Tourism

- (a) The Annual Report and the audited Financial Statements of the Tourism Authority for the year ended 30 June 2018. (In Original)
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Tourism Employees Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2019. (In Original)
- (c) The Annual Report 2019 of the Tourism Employees Welfare Fund.

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

- (a) The Annual Reports 2011, 2012 and 2013 of the University of Technology Mauritius.
- (b) The Annual Report 2013 of the University of Mauritius.

- (c) The Annual Report of the University of Mauritius for the period 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.
- (d) The Education (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 10 of 2021)
- (e) The Private Secondary Education (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 19 of 2021)
- (f) The Special Education Needs Authority (Registration of Special Education Needs Institutions) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 28 of 2021)
- (g) The Annual Report of the Tertiary Education Commission for the period 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

D. Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management

- (a) The District Council of Flacq (renting parking places for vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (Government Notice No. 311 of 2020)
- (b) The Local Government (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (Government Notice No. 22 of 2021)

E. Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade

- (a) The Road Traffic (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 4 of 2021)
- (b) The Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicle) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 5 of 2021)
- (c) The Road Traffic (Use of High Visibility Clothing) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 6 of 2021)
- (d) The Road Traffic (Control of Vehicle Emissions) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 7 of 2021)
- (e) The Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 8 of 2021)

- (f) The Road Traffic (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 44 of 2021)
- (g) The Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 45 of 2021)
- (h) The Road Traffic (Registration of Motor Vehicles and Trailers) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 46 of 2021)

F. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Government for the Financial year 2019-20.
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the Financial Year 2019-20.
- (c) The Certificate of the Director of Audit on the Annual Statements of Government for Financial Year 2019-20.
- (d) The Certificate of the Director of Audit on the Annual Statements of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for Financial Year 2019-20.
- (e) The Public Procurement (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 302 of 2020)
- (f) The Customs (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 313 of 2020)
- (g) The Freeport (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 314 of 2020)
- (h) The Finance and Audit (National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Fund) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 317 of 2020)
- (i) The Finance and Audit (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 4) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 318 of 2020)
- (j) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Employees' Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2018.
- (k) The Annual Report 2019/2020 of the Central Procurement Board.

- (l) The Certificate of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Resilience Fund for the 18-month period ended 30 June 2016.
- (m) The Report of the Director of Audit of the Employees' Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (n) The Income Tax (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 9 of 2021)
- (o) The Annual Report 2019/2020 of the Procurement Policy Office.
- (p) The Reports & Accounts of the Treasury Foreign Currency Management Fund for the Financial Years 2014, 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.
- (q) The Customs (Export to the African Continental Free Trade Area) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 23 of 2021)
- (r) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 24 of 2021)
- (s) The Excise (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 25 of 2021)
- (t) Virement Warrants - Quarter 2 (October - December 2020) Nos. 9 to 18. (In Original)
- (u) Virement (Contingencies) Warrants - Quarter 2 (October - December 2020): Nos. 4 to 10. (In Original)
- (v) Virement Certificates - Quarter 2 (October - December 2020): Vote/Sub-Head (Certificates Nos.): 1-2(2), 1-6(1), 1-7(1-2), 1-15(1), 2-101(3), 2-107(1), 2-2(1), 3-1(3,5,7-13), 4-1(2-4), 5-2(2-3), 5-4(3), 6-1(1), 7-2(1-5), 7-3(1), 9-2(1), 10-2(1-4), 11-1(1), 12-1(1-4), 15-2(1), 15-4(1-2), 16-1(3-5), 17-1(1), 19-103(2), 20-1(1), 21-1(3-5), 23-1(1), 25-1(1), 26-1(2) . (In Original)
- (w) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 33 of 2021)
- (x) The Income Tax (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 49 of 2021)

G. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

- (a) The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 305 of 2020)
- (b) The Annual Report 2018/2019 of the Utility Regulatory Authority.
- (c) The Annual Report 2018/2019 of the Wastewater Management Authority.
- (d) The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (No. 2) (Revocation) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 11 of 2021)
- (e) The Annual Report 2017/2018 of the Central Water Authority.
- (f) The Annual Report 2018/2019 of the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency.

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

- (a) The Annual Report of the National Solidarity Fund for the Financial Year July 2018 to June 2019.
- (b) The Annual Report 2013 of the National Economic and Social Council.
- (c) The Annual Reports of the National Solidarity Fund for the year ended 31 December 2015 and for the Financial Year July 2017 to June 2018.

I. Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives

- (a) The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Mauritius Standards Bureau for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (b) The Annual Report 2018-2019 of the Fashion and Design Institute.

J. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

- (a) The Annual Report 2019 of the Insurance Industry Compensation Fund.
- (b) The Financial Services (Special Purpose Fund) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 36 of 2020)
- (c) The Financial Services (Peer to Peer Lending) (Amendment) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 37 of 2021)
- (d) The Financial Services (Family Office) (Amendment) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 38 of 2021)

- (e) The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 39 of 2021)

K. Attorney General

Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security

- (a) The Judicial and Legal Service Commission (Prescribed Office) Order 2020. (Government Notice No. 303 of 2020)
- (b) The National Agricultural Products (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 307 of 2020)
- (c) The Sugar Investment Trust (Election of Directors and Representatives) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 309 of 2020)
- (d) The Law Practitioners (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 3) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 315 of 2020)
- (e) The Food (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 316 of 2020)
- (f) The Law Practitioners (Prescribed Office) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 1 of 2021)
- (g) The Annual Report of the Agricultural Marketing Board for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (h) The Annual Report 2014 of the Vallée d'Osterlog Endemic Garden Foundation.
- (i) The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Law Reform Commission for the financial year ended 30 June 2019.
- (j) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Law Reform Commission for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (k) The Supreme Court (Jury Lists and Panels) (Amendment) Rules 2021. (Government Notice No. 27 of 2021)
- (l) The Interpretation and General Clauses (COVID-19 Period) (Firearms) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 29 of 2021)
- (m) The Sugar Investment Trust (Election of Directors and Representatives) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 32 of 2021)

L. Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation

- (a) The Financial Statements of the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (b) The Annual Report 2016/2017 of the Mauritius Sports Council.
- (c) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Youth Council for the period 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

M. Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development.

- (a) The Annual Report 2018/2019 of the Road Development Authority
- (b) The Annual Report 2018/2019 of the Construction Industry Development Board.

N. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training

Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Workers' Rights (Payment of Special Allowance) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 304 of 2020)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 33) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 310 of 2020)
- (c) The Workers' Rights (Prescribed Period) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 312 of 2020)
- (d) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 34) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 2 of 2021)
- (e) The Workers' Rights (Additional Remuneration) (2021) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 15 of 2021)
- (f) The Workers' Rights (Payment of Special Allowance 2021) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 16 of 2021)
- (g) The Export Enterprises (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 17 of 2021)
- (h) The National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 18 of 2021)

- (i) The Annual Report 2018/2019 of the Competition Commission.
- (j) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 26 of 2021)
- (k) The Annual Report of the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund for period July 2018 to June 2019.
- (l) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 31 of 2021)
- (m) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 47 of 2021)
- (n) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 48 of 2021)
- (o) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 50 of 2021)
- (p) The International Labour Standards: Proposed action by The Government of Mauritius on a Convention and a Recommendation adopted by The International Labour Conference at its 108th (Centenary) Session (June 2019)-Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) And Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No 206)

O. Ministry of Health and Wellness

- (a) The Quarantine (COVID-19) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 306 of 2020)
- (b) The Quarantine (COVID-19) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 308 of 2020)

- (c) The Report of activities of the Mauritius Institute of Health for the period July 2018 to June 2019.
- (d) The Medical Council (Additional Qualifications) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 3 of 2021)
- (e) The Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccines for Emergency Use) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 20 of 2021)
- (f) The Quarantine (COVID-19) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 21 of 2021)
- (g) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Trust Fund for Specialized Medical Care for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (h) The Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccines for Emergency Use) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 35 of 2021)
- (i) The Quarantine (COVID-19) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 40 of 2021)
- (j) The Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccines for Emergency Use) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 41 of 2021)
- (k) The Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccines for Emergency Use) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 42 of 2021)

P. Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping

- (a) The Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Harmful Substances Carried by Sea in Packaged Form) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 298 of 2020)
- (b) The Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 299 of 2020)
- (c) The Annual Report of the Fishermen Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (d) The Annual Report of the Seafarers' Welfare Fund for the period 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

Q. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

- (a) The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Children's Council for the years ended 30 June 2006 to 30 June 2007 and years ended 31 December 2011 to 31 December 2015. (In Original)
- (b) The Annual Report of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund for the Financial Year 2013.

R. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

- (a) The Annual Report of the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund for Year ended December 2015.
- (b) The Annual Report of the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund for period January 2016 to 30 June 2017.
- (c) The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the English Speaking Union for the period 01 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.
- (d) The Annual Report of the Conservatoire National de Musique François-Mitterand Trust Fund for the period 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.
- (e) The Annual Report 2019 of the Mauritius Telegu Cultural Centre Trust.
- (f) The Consolidated Annual Report of the Telegu Speaking Union for the periods January 2015 to December 2015 and January 2016 to June 2017
- (g) The Annual Reports and Financial Statements for the years 2015, 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 of the Tamil Speaking Union.

S. Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

- (a) The Civil Establishment Order 2020. (Government Notice No. 12 of 2021)
- (b) The Civil Establishment (Rodrigues Regional Assembly) Order 2020. (Government Notice No. 13 of 2021)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

COVID-19 VACCINATION CAMPAIGN

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 vaccination campaign, he will state –

- (a) the different types of vaccines that will be administered to the population;
- (b) when it is expected that 70% of the population will have received two doses of the vaccine;
- (c) the percentage of senior citizens, persons suffering from diabetes and heart diseases who have been vaccinated as at to date, and
- (d) whether the consent form will be amended.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity to enlighten the House and the population at large on our vaccination programme

In July 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade informed my Ministry that there was a proposal from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI Alliance), inviting Mauritius to submit a non-binding expression of interest for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines being developed by several international pharmaceutical companies. After consultation with all relevant stakeholders, my Ministry entered into an Agreement with the GAVI Alliance. The Agreement provides for the procurement of the vaccines to cover 20% of the population.

In a bid to ensure that more than 20% of the population, that is, at least 70% would be covered, my Ministry sought information on availability of vaccines from other manufacturers of candidate vaccines.

The African Union (AU) is also facilitating the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines for AU Member countries through the Africa Medical Supplies Platform. The latter has informed my Ministry that the allotment for Mauritius would be 199,682 doses, of which, 48,451 from Pfizer and 151,231 from Johnson and Johnson.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 16 December 2020, my Ministry wrote to other manufacturers, namely AstraZeneca (Oxford), Pfizer, Moderna and Gamaleya Research Institute, seeking

information in respect of the process and modalities for the procurement of each vaccine, the prices thereof, the supply chain, the temperature requirement and the scheduled delivery of the vaccines. Pfizer requested my Ministry to enter into a Non-Disclosure Agreement, which my Ministry did. Thereafter, a working session/webinar was held with representatives of Pfizer on 07 January 2021 and my Ministry was also requested to make an official request. The Ministry submitted a request for the procurement of 1 million doses of Pfizer vaccines and requested the manufacturer to inform about the terms and conditions, delivery schedule and pricing. However, no conclusive deal was reached with any of the manufacturers.

On 16 December 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade requested my Ministry to inform as to whether we intended to procure Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India under the brand name Covishield. The Covishield vaccine has been validated by the WHO. It is administered in two doses, with the second dose being administered after 8 to 12 weeks with more efficacy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the World Health Organization, the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines have an efficacy of 66.7 % against symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection after administration of two doses. It was found that the vaccine efficacy increased significantly when the interval between dose 1 and the dose 2 was longer than 4 weeks. Efficacy after dose 1 has been shown to be as high as 76 % through at least 12 weeks after vaccination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 13 January 2021, after consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, my Ministry wrote to the Director of Serum Institute of India, signifying our intention to procure 1 million doses of Covishield vaccine and requesting information in respect of the price per unit of the vaccines, the time frame within which the vaccines could be made available and the terms and conditions attached to such procurement and delivery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following exchange of correspondence between my Ministry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the High Commission of India in Mauritius, my Ministry submitted an Emergency Use of Covishield vaccine to the Serum Institute of India through diplomatic channel. On 26 January 2021, a Safety Data Exchange Agreement was signed between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India. The purpose of the Safety Data Exchange Agreement was to describe the procedures and to define the responsibilities between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India. The Indian Authorities informed the

Government that they would make a donation of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines to Mauritius to enable us to kick-start our vaccination programme. The consignment reached Mauritius on 22 January 2021 and our programme started on 26 January 2021 in Mauritius and on 06 February 2021 in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 27 January 2021, a firm order was placed on the Serum Institute of India for the purchase of 300,000 doses of Covishield vaccines, that is, 100,000 doses to be supplied in February 2021, 100,000 doses in Quarter 1 and 100,000 doses in the second Quarter. A Vaccine Purchase Agreement was thereafter signed between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India on 15 February 2021.

On 21 February 2021, the first consignment of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines reached Mauritius.

The second consignment of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines is expected in mid-April 2021 and the last consignment by end of June 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry finalised the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 vaccines with the support and collaboration of the WHO and other stakeholders. The plan, which was approved by the Government in January 2021, highlights the target population, including Rodrigues and Agalega and is as follows –

- Priority No. 1 covers 15,000 frontline healthcare workers, 5,000 frontline Police and Prison Officers and 25,000 other frontliners;
- Priority No. 2 covers 9,000 healthcare workers from the public and private sectors, 10,000 personnel from the Mauritius Police Force and 52,000 other essential workers;
- Priority No. 3 covers persons above the age of 60 years, and
- Priority No. 4 covers adults with at least two comorbidities, residents of dedicated homes, teaching and non-teaching staff of educational institutions, fire fighters, staff of supermarkets, bank front office personnel and scavenging personnel.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the vaccination programme started with the frontliners, that is, the medical staff, Port and Airport staff and staff of the tourism sector. It continued with the vaccination of the senior citizens and patients with two comorbidities. However, with the lockdown, the vaccination programme was targeted for persons who had been granted the Work Access Permit.

As from 17 March 2021, the EDBMRU platform has been created to register applications for vaccination from business operators, including SMEs, general retailers, grocery stores, planters/vegetable growers, animal breeders, fishermen and all operators dealing with the general public.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the administration of the vaccines, initially, the vaccination was being carried out in the five Regional Hospitals. with a view to ensuring that any person showing signs of adverse reaction, could be given immediate medical attention.

Subsequently, in a bid to scale up the vaccination programme, vaccination was carried out in other settings having medical posts or medical facilities such as the port, airport, police posts, hotels and other tourist resorts.

Given the high response shown from the public to be vaccinated and in order to carry out the vaccination in a more conducive set-up, vaccination is now being carried out in large spaces such as Stadiums, Village Halls, Sport Complexes, Gymnasiums and Conference Centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, also approached the Russian authorities with a view to securing supply of the Sputnik vaccines. My Ministry was, subsequently, advised to send our request to the Russian Direct Investment Fund, a Russian Government Agency responsible for the commercialisation of the vaccine. My Ministry, therefore, approached the Russian Direct Investment Fund through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade on 16 December 2020 and we had been informed that the Russian Direct Investment Fund is agreeable to provide 250,000 doses of the Sputnik vaccine.

For this purpose, a draft Agreement, a Non-Disclosure Agreement and a Draft Supply Agreement have been signed with the Russian Direct Investment Fund. On 19 March 2021, the Russian Direct Investment Fund has informed that a first shipment of vaccines would be made possible as soon as the registration with the Federation is complete and subsequently other shipments would follow at regular intervals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 05 March 2021, the High Commission of India informed my Ministry that vaccines against COVID-19, manufactured by Bharat Biotech India Ltd and commercialised under the brand name COVAXIN was available for procurement by Mauritius and submitted relevant documentation regarding same.

The information was submitted to the National COVID-19 Vaccination Committee, which gave its approval for the use of COVAXIN. My Ministry submitted an emergency use authorisation to the company and a purchase order of one million doses. The company informed my Ministry that 230,150 doses of the vaccines were available immediately at the rate of USD 15 per dose and for a total amount of USD 3,452,250. Payment was effected through the Bank of Mauritius.

On 18 March 2021, my Ministry was informed that due to export restrictions on vaccines, the Government of India has authorised the sale of only 200,000 doses. The consignment reached Mauritius on Friday 19 March 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the vaccine commercialised under the brand name COVAXIN has been approved by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for emergency use. In Mauritius, the Trade and Therapeutics Committee and the Pharmacy Board have also approved the emergency use of the vaccine.

COVAXIN has recently completed its 3rd phase of clinical trial, and as per data available, its efficacy is 81%. The vaccine has already been administered to millions of people in India and in some other countries. As at date, no Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI) has been registered in any country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 12 March 2021, my Ministry was informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Government of the People's Republic of China has agreed to make a donation of 100,000 doses of vaccines to Mauritius. The National COVID-19 Vaccination Committee has given its approval to accept the brand Sinopharm.

In this context, my Ministry will have to sign a letter of commitment for the receipt of the donation and submit the authorisation of emergency use and liability execution. My Ministry is seeking all necessary clearances before signing the undertaking.

In a nutshell, Mr Speaker, Sir, we can safely say that Mauritius will be provided with vaccines of different brands and at different time intervals either as donations or procured on a commercial basis as follows -

COVAX Facility	507,200 doses, with delivery to be confirmed
Serum Institute of India	100,000 doses (donation, already received)
Serum Institute of India	100,000 doses (procured, already received)
Serum Institute of India	200,000 doses (procured, on order)

COVAXIN	200,000 doses (already received)
Sputnik	250,000 doses (on order)
African Union	48,451 in Ministry's doses (on order) Pfizer and 151,231 (on order) from Johnson & Johnson
China (Sinopharm)	100,000 doses (donation, awaiting delivery)
Total excluding (Johnson & Johnson)	1,455,651 doses to cater for the vaccination of 727,825 persons
J & J vaccines	151,231 single dose vaccine

With these numbers of vaccines, a total of 879,056 persons can be vaccinated, representing 82% of the adult population of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would be glad to note that even today, while going through the Private Notice Question, we have been informed by the Mauritius Embassy in Russia that the Russian Direct Investment Fund has agreed to supply 1,250,000 doses of the Sputnik vaccine in two equal consignments. This shows our commitment to have recourse to all necessary diplomatic channels and our long-standing amicable bilateral relationship in order to have sufficient doses of vaccines to protect our population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, my Ministry has worked out two different scenarios.

For scenario 1 with the vaccination of 10,500 persons per day, it is expected to immunise 62% by August 2021.

For scenario 2 with the vaccination of 12,500 persons per day, it is expected to immunise 74% of the population by August 2021.

I wish to inform the House that the vaccination team of my Ministry and the private clinics have the capacity to administer the vaccines up to 12,500 to 13,000 persons per day. However, the programme will depend on the timely delivery of the vaccines from the various suppliers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that our senior citizens remain a priority for this Government. Preventing them from being infected with the virus is a constant objective of my Ministry.

The resurgence of the virus and its consequences have compelled us to take a decision regarding pursuing the vaccination of the elderly.

On the sanitary side, it seems very risky to continue vaccinating the elderly in the centres, even by maintaining all hygienic measures, without exposing our elderly and getting the risk of them being infected. Our Government chose to stop the vaccination in order to better protect them.

I wish to inform the Leader of the Opposition that confinement and sanitary measures are the best preventive measures against COVID-19. Once the resurgence of the virus is controlled, the vaccination of the senior citizens and patients with comorbidities will resume without delay.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that 18,034 out of 228,284 senior citizens have already been vaccinated and this represents 8% of senior citizens. With respect to persons suffering from diabetes and heart diseases, I am informed that around 1,000 persons have been vaccinated. These figures do not include senior citizens and patients with comorbidities who have been vaccinated in the private clinics. The figures of the latter have yet to be compiled and submitted to my Ministry.

The House will recall that with respect to part (a) of the question, I stated that with the lockdown, the vaccination programme for senior citizens and patients with comorbidities was put on hold and the programme was targeted with the Work Access Permit. The House will also note that holders of WAP include senior citizens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (d) of the question, I have to inform the House that COVAX Facility conveyed to my Ministry three conditions for Mauritius to be enlisted for the supply of vaccines under the Facility -

1. The first one is Product Labelling

The model packaging for label for vials for COVID-19 vaccines that will be supplied through COVAX Facility was submitted for the Ministry to inform whether the model label is in line with the statutory requirements. The Pharmacy Section informed that there would be no need to amend the Pharmacy Act as Mauritius complies with the labelling requirements. Moreover, there is no import restriction on vaccines.

2. The second condition is Product Liability Risk

Manufacturers have expressed reluctance to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to countries participating in COVAX Facility unless product liability risks are adequately

addressed through an Agreement with the manufacturers. However, Mauritius being a high-income country does not fall under the list of countries which have to sign such an Agreement.

3. The third condition is Compensation Fund

The World Health Organisation and GAVI also submitted a draft briefing note, INDEMNIFICATION FOR COVAX that requires high-income and middle-income countries which are considered to have the financial means to provide adequate compensation to individuals who sustain unexpected Severe Adverse Events to adequately indemnify manufacturers and other stakeholders. Hence, it would be advisable to establish a compensation mechanism to compensate individuals suffering from adverse events associated with COVID-19 vaccines distributed under COVAX and to pay any legal awards in that regard against the indemnified Entities.

I wish to inform the House that three of the manufacturers of the vaccine who have supplied or will supply vaccine to Mauritius, namely the Russian Direct Investment Fund, the Chinese Authorities or the Serum Institute of India have also made it a condition precedent prior to the supply of any vaccines to have the following clauses -

- (i) no claim clause;
- (ii) a hold harmless clause, and
- (iii) a no liability clause.

My Ministry normally has recourse to a consent form which safeguards the Ministry from such effects of vaccines like fever and mild rash. However, for the COVID-19 vaccine, a no fault compensation should be established for severe adverse events or rare disorders arising out of use of vaccines (death or disability). The Fund should clearly indicate that affected people would either have recourse to the Compensation Scheme or to lawsuit and not both. The ceiling of the Fund has to be capped by my Ministry.

After discussions with the Attorney General's Office and other stakeholders, it was agreed that regarding the indemnity for the manufacturers, a consent form would be elaborated. Any compensation that the State of Mauritius may be found liable to pay to any person would be made under the Consolidated Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not proposed to bring any amendment to the consent form. The consent form has been designed according to what obtains in the US (including the State of Florida). I will table a copy of the Florida State's consent form. The vaccination form and the vaccine are voluntary and not mandatory. Manufacturers of the vaccines have had to

develop vaccines in an expedited timeline, i.e., one year as from the threat of the pandemic instead of the usual five years.

The UK Government has passed regulations reducing legal protection from anyone injured by COVID-19 vaccine approved for emergency use. One of the reasons for such a decision was to encourage companies to aggressively invest and back vaccine development.

The legal immunity covers –

- (i) companies supplying the vaccine;
- (ii) all health workers injecting the vaccine, and
- (iii) the NHS trust and foundations that employ the health workers.

Consumer protection rights still apply for people injured by the COVID-19 vaccine as the UK Government was not allowed to take away those. COVID-19 vaccines have been added to the existing damages fund, which awards 120,000 pounds to anyone who suffers 60% of disability as a result of getting a COVID vaccine.

Further, in the European Union, “Article 5(3) of Directive 2001/83 requires that Member States lay down provisions so that marketing authorisation, manufacturers and health professionals are not subject to civil or administrative liability for any consequences resulting from the use of an unauthorised medicinal product or from the use of a product or from the use of an unauthorised medicinal product or from the use of a product otherwise than in accordance with its authorisation when such use is by the licensing authority in response to the spread of pathogens.”

In France, *Code Civil* provides as follows –

« Le producteur est responsable de plein droit à moins qu’il ne prouve –

Ou que le défaut est dû à la conformité du produit avec des règles impératives d’ordre législatif ou réglementaire.

Le producteur de la partie composante n’est pas non plus responsable s’il établit que le défaut est imputable à la conception du produit dans lequel cette partie a été incorporée ou aux instructions données par le producteur de ce produit. »

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the foregoing, the reply to “part (d)” of the question is “NO”, the consent form will not be amended.

I seize this opportunity to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition and Members of the Opposition who have, graciously and voluntarily, signed the consent form in order to be vaccinated on a priority basis. I also thank the Members of the legal profession who, through the Bar Council, got vaccinated last week at Port Louis. All these Barristers duly signed the consent form.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is now 6 past 12. The Minister has spoken at length on probably the most important issue that our country faces in the last 50 years. I hope that you will give the Opposition adequate time to respond and take him to task, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since August of last year, for the last eight months, at least, the Minister and his trusted Adviser Dr. Mrs Gaud have warned repeatedly the population and us here in the House that use of vaccines - in his own words - not approved and validated by the WHO is dangerous; that it would be foolish to do so; PQ B/612 and PQ B/783, this is what the Minister said, Mr Speaker, Sir. He said it would be catastrophic to purchase vaccines not validated. Maybe he is himself a catastrophe, I don't know, but he said it would be catastrophic to purchase vaccines not validated, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Member, show respect!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this Minister is currently administering invalidated, unapproved vaccines by the WHO, and, in his own words, Mr Speaker, Sir, these vaccines could have catastrophic effect on Mauritians. I am asking him now whether he is not taking our citizens for fools.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I indeed stated that we would use WHO approved vaccines back in December last year. The context is completely different. I also stated that we will not - I have to remind you - at any cost take our citizens for *cobaye*. Mr Speaker, Sir, today, once more in this House, I wish to reiterate the firm commitment we took and confirm that this Government and my Ministry will always stand by this principle. The scheme being deployed by the Leader of the Opposition is clear. As I stated in my former interventions, some are indeed praying for us to fail in our management of COVID-19 situation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: Their aim is merely to cast doubt in the mind of the population and to create confusion around the ongoing vaccination campaign. This is their aim.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House that, as at date, the WHO approved vaccines have not been given the green light for emergency use. Back in December, we were COVID-19 safe. As time went by, the situation evolved, both locally and internationally. We had the duty to consider the vaccination of our population in order to continue to cater for their health and well-being.

We also had to allow our economic activities to resume to their full capacity and we also anticipated the global rush that we might have to face, that's true, in the procurement of safe and efficient vaccines. Again, back then in December 2020...

Mr X. L. Duval: On a point of order, if I may. If you are going to allow the Minister to go on *bla-bla-bla* like this, already he has taken 20 minutes or more to respond in his formal reply, I think you have to be fair to us, Mr Speaker, Sir. These answers have to be succinct, brief, to allow the Opposition to ask the questions; otherwise, we will be done in two minutes after two questions.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, rest assured I will give you some more minutes, number one; number two, you have been a former Ag. Prime Minister, you know that I can't control answers of the Ministers.

Mr X. L. Duval: Not yet Prime Minister!

Mr Speaker: Best wishes; best wishes.

Mr X. L. Duval: It was a *lapsus*!

Mr Speaker: Shadow Prime Minister!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition has to bear with me; even if he has catastrophic ears, I have to continue. Again, back then in December 2020, we did not have enough guarantee – it is very important to listen to this part – on the safety...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ... of the available vaccines and as soon as we are satisfied with the safety and efficiency concerned, we move for the procurement of vaccines. You have to understand that in December 2020, no one was aware which one of the candidate vaccines would be given approval.

(Interruptions)

We were not aware. That's why we stated that we have to get vaccines that are approved. Let me finish! The vaccines being rolled out in Mauritius are safe and efficient. They have been validated by international bodies of repute, also by the Pharmacy Board, by the Trade and Therapeutics Committee and the Vaccination Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we acted fast but not in a haste. Today, Mauritius is among the 20 countries in Africa having started the vaccination for their respective population. Now, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition is alleging that we have not been true to what we stated in December, he is again completely wrong. The COVID-19 pandemic is ever evolving and we cannot stay idle. We have been constantly adapting our strategy to the changing situation. It is very important to understand why we have changed the situation, and I firmly believe ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: I understand their frustrations, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: They are frustrated. They cannot blame the Government's actions. They do not have anything to say about the Government's actions and the Government programme; that is why. I ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: I will quote John Patterson, an American industrialist.

"If dead men can't change their minds, fools simply won't."

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Reza Uteem, be careful!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the last eight months ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bérenger, be careful!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am trying my best to keep calm in the face of such a catastrophe. Mr Speaker, Sir, since the last eight months, we have been begging the Minister, begging him to pre-order vaccines, reserve vaccines like the UK, the US, the European Union, Israel, you name it. We had been begging him to pre-order vaccines, reserve vaccines so that he can take delivery once the vaccines are approved by WHO. He has stubbornly and negligently refused to do so, putting the population of this country at risk both as to health and economically, Mr Speaker, Sir, and he dares to say that we have not done our work. We want this country, Mr Speaker, Sir, to succeed. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was not going to ask him to resign because we have a pandemic, but really he ought to. But I am going to ask him, Mr Speaker, Sir, to give an unreserved apology to this nation for having been negligent and putting our lives at risk, our economy at risk, and the well-being of this population at risk. He has been negligent, Mr Speaker, Sir; he must apologise.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: So, there is no question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Will he apologise?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker,...

Mr Speaker: Do we have an answer?

Dr. Jagutpal: Should I request ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No answer!

Dr. Jagutpal: No answer!

Mr Speaker: Move on to your next question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, thank you very much. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come back to many other important points, with your permission. I am going to come, now, to this famous consent form which has created so much anxiety in Mauritius and I am going to talk ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: Why did you sign it?

Mr X. L. Duval: I signed, Mr Speaker, Sir. Don't laugh like a fool! I signed because I am patriotic and I wanted to give the good impression.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: And I will sign it again! But I will say this: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Attorney General misled the population when he was on TV. When he said ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, bear with me. Put your question, do not make statements!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, he has been speaking for 10 to 20 minutes!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is one Leader of the Opposition I recognise in this House; hon. Xavier-Luc Duval!

Mr X. L. Duval: For the moment, Sir. Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Attorney General misled the population in a Press Conference when he stated...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish the question, it is not long!

Mr Speaker: Finish the question!

Mr X. L. Duval: He misled the population when he stated - I have the consent form here, and it is getting me very upset -

‘Ayo, consent form pou vaccin li pareil ; li pareil kouma consent form signé dan lopital.’

I am going to table it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: So, where is the question?

Mr X. L. Duval: Sorry?

Mr Speaker: It is question time. Where is your question?

(Interruptions)

Use this time to put question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am doing my work. If you are not happy, you can expel me, but I will do my work as I see fit. This consent form, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is nothing here; it is consenting to information that is being given as to the issues that may arise. Nowhere in the consent form - and this is where he has misled the population in the presence of the hon. Minister of Health - are there any waivers.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, try to understand my position! I am here to regulate Parliament! If you do not have any question, I just feel sorry for you. Come with your question! Use Question Time to put questions, not to make statements, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for your advice, but I am unable to ask a two-word question. I have to ask in the context, and the context is this, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the question: Is the hon. Minister aware that his colleague misled the population? Is

he aware of that? Is he aware that nowhere along in Mauritius do these consent forms have any waiver of ...

Mr Speaker: Okay.

Mr X. L. Duval: This is the question.

Mr Speaker: This is a long statement!

Mr X. L. Duval: But what can I do? I have to explain, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Speaker: Come with your question!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I will be brief. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken a Xanax before coming; I will be very brief with you. Do not worry; I am not going to get excited. Now, this consent form does not have any waiver; this consent form for admission, for blood transfusion, etc. Therefore, the hon. Attorney General misled the whole population in the presence of the Minister of Health.

Mr Speaker: Again, hon. Member, you are making insinuations and accusations. You know fully well, you are a full-fledged politician, Leader of the Opposition; you know that you have no question. Why do you not use this precious time to put questions?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is extremely important. Will he now respond?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to ...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Will he respond now to the question? Has he raised the matter with the hon. Attorney General?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no question! Please, I am willing to answer questions!

Mr Speaker: Point of order, please! Please, go ahead!

Mr Ganoo: No hon. Member can use the word 'mislead' against any other Member of this House. If any Member has misled the House ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: ... the point is that the hon. Member should come with a substantive motion reproaching the Member for having misled the House. That is my first point.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: My second point is: the hon. Leader of the Opposition cannot ask a question to the Minister of Health, asking him whether another Minister has spoken the truth or not. This question should be addressed to the Minister in question. A Minister cannot answer for what another Minister is allegedly to have committed. This is out of order.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, put proper questions!

Mr X. L. Duval: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, on 04 February, a few weeks ago, the hon. Minister of Health ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Titanic was sinking, people were playing the violin.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: The Minister on 04 February ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, I am being interrupted, can you do something about it?

Mr Speaker: Put the question!

Mr X. L. Duval: The Minister and his trusted Adviser said on TV, in the papers, ‘*Il n’y a aucune urgence à se faire vacciner*’. Even at that time there was no pandemic, is he aware of the horrible economic consequences of having our borders closed, and is it not shameful of him that he was so misguided to say there was “*aucune urgence à se faire à vacciner*?” And, now, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Attorney General, a few weeks later, are saying ‘*seule solution, vaccination*’. Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister...

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer!

Mr X. L. Duval: Will the hon. Minister apologise again to the nation for being incompetent?

Mr Speaker: Once more, do not give lessons! First of all, hon. Leader of the Opposition, withdraw the word ‘shameful’ that you used and put a proper question.

Mr X. L. Duval: I withdraw ‘shameful’ in whatever context it was if it upsets you. No problem!

Mr Speaker: Your question is over? Any answer?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me start by first saying that the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I know this is your first day, you have taken Xanax, you have a lot of *abruti* in you. I understand, you don’t know how to formulate questions. I understand perfectly ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Sir, Ok. I will first start by what the Leader of the Opposition has said, that is, the pre-order. Did he know that once the development for the vaccines started, there were 200 candidates for the vaccines, the research? He would come to make a political point, that we should have pre-ordered. Does he know what pre-order means? As an Accountant, he should not know only figures; he should also know the administrative procedures involved. I said it in my intervention, what are the different steps involved in procuring vaccines. It is not just like going in a supermarket and it is just over the counter that you buy it. There are lots of regulations. He should understand. He should make the population understand that we are in a pandemic stage. Vaccines take years to develop and these vaccines have been given approval due to the emergency use. He should know that! And we should at the same time bring safe vaccines to Mauritius, but, at the same time, we have to act fast.

Second, his question was about 04 February. I don’t know from where he is quoting that, from which newspaper he is reading. In fact, if we started our campaign on 26 January it is because we know that it is important. Taking any quote from any newspaper does not mean that I have said so. He is doing that *bla-bla-bla*. You are taking *bla-bla-bla* of any newspaper.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: The Government has stated preparing for the vaccination programme since early December. In my intervention, I gave all the details. Can't he listen properly? All the details I have given to him about the procurement of vaccines. At the same time, he is saying that I said in the Press that the vaccine is not urgent. So, why have we started vaccination as from 26 January, especially for the frontliners? Try to be frank and don't try to mislead the population because I know this is the only opportunity that you have; otherwise, nobody will listen to you.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I am in the House and the Minister is accusing me of misleading my colleagues here. Withdraw it, please!

(Interruptions)

Withdraw it now! Now, now, now!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order here!

Mr X. L. Duval: Withdraw it!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to know what I should withdraw. I won't withdraw till I know perfectly. If ever you have to go back...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, withdraw the word 'mislead'.

Dr. Jagutpal: I withdraw the word 'mislead'.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

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

Dr. Jagutpal: Get prepared.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has given us a timeline and it shows clearly that he has been dragging his feet for months and only now he is panicking. I am going to ask him something. Mr Speaker, Sir, PQ B/622, this is what he said; he said something contrary at the same time, but this is what he said. When talking about vaccination, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is mostly for them, that is, the old-age pensioners and the persons at risk and the frontliners who were looking forward to these vaccines. He is talking, Mr Speaker, Sir, about people with comorbidity, old age, etc. What we have found, Mr

Speaker, Sir, is what he is doing now, which is shameful also. He does not like the word ‘shameful’.

Mr Speaker: Not only you don’t have a question, but you use words which are unparliamentary. Withdraw the word yourself!

Mr X. L. Duval: Absolutely! Is that ok for you? It is regrettable, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a small, small percentage of old people, 8% I think, he said, these old people are maybe 50 times more at risk of getting severe COVID or death than anybody else, and he is giving priority to people who have - not frontliners, listen! - Work Access Permits. 200,000 people in Mauritius have Work Access Permits, and he thinks that these 200,000 people who are not really at risk because they are young - yes, most of them - should have priority against 210,000.

Mr Speaker: Question time should not be a pretext for debate. Don’t debate, hon. Member! You put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: I don’t see *Kot monn fauter*, but, still, there you go. It is, Mr Speaker, Sir, very regrettable that he is *complètement délaissé* the old people; 8% only had been vaccinated in favour of clients of Business Mauritius who, as the Deputy Prime Minister said, are sending buses of people to be vaccinated. I listened to him on the TV.

Mr Speaker: Question?

Mr X. L. Duval: Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, will he stop this nonsense and revert to vaccinating persons who are...

Mr Speaker: The word ‘nonsense’ is not proper. Withdraw the word ‘nonsense’!

Mr X. L. Duval: Is ‘rubbish’ acceptable, Mr Speaker, Sir? Will he withdraw this rubbish and, therefore, revert to vaccinating old people, people with diabetes, people with heart disease...

Mr Speaker: Question! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, be respectful to the Chair! You should ask questions. This is your prerogative. This is Question Time! There is no time for statement, and you asked me to give you some more time. How am I going to do that?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, with all due respect, it is a question. That is the question. Maybe you missed it, but it is the question. Will he revert - that was my last sentence, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Let me hear the question.

Mr X. L. Duval: You heard it, but I'll tell it again.

Mr Speaker: Don't make statement!

Mr X. L. Duval: Will he revert to vaccinating people who are at risk, the old, people with diabetes, these people who have heart disease, who are 50 times or more liable to get severe COVID and death, and he is giving priority to clients of Business Mauritius who, as the Deputy Prime Minister said, are sending...

Mr Speaker: Put your question! Leader of the Opposition, I am sorry, don't make any comparison. State your question directly. I allowed you to lay the foundation of your question, but you are making an abuse of the time of the House.

Mr X. L. Duval: It is the declaration of the Deputy Prime Minister. He said that Business Mauritius, as from tomorrow, will be sending people by buses for vaccination.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Minister of Health and Wellness is not responsible for any article, any statement. The thing is that you have to have a proper question. Why can't you have a proper question? I am sure there are many interesting questions there!

Mr X. L. Duval: My question is, Mr Speaker, Sir, will he now revert to giving priority to old people, people with diabetes, etc., etc., comorbidity who have - it is the third time I give the question - 50 times more chance of severe COVID than clients of Business Mauritius?

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained properly how the vaccination campaign has started, when we started doing vaccination for the elderly and when, as soon as the confinement was *en vigueur*, we started to do the vaccination differently. The hon. leader of the Opposition should understand that old age people are more vulnerable to the risk of contracting the disease. The Ministry of Health and Wellness always advises them that they have to stay safe at home. In this context where we have local transmission, where there is a surge of the disease, we should allow those people to stay at home. They should not be allowed to go out of their home because it is very risky. The Leader of the Opposition has to understand this. He should not mingle what has been said. There is a vaccination programme and, in fact, the Government has acted promptly. During confinement period, we have been

doing vaccination for all people who will be going out, will be in contact with the population, will work with the public. This is the strategy and once this confinement will be over, we will again resume our vaccination programme, as it has been the priority groups. He should not make allegations on old age, about their disease. We know that they are priorities; we know they are very sensitive. But, now, allowing elderlies to go out of their homes and to do vaccination is not recommended.

Second, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has already given priorities to all the dialysis patients attending dialysis centres to do the vaccination because they are attending our institution, they are moving out of their homes. Similarly, for cancerous patients, we are doing vaccinations for those who are attending the hospitals. Why are we doing that? Because we know they are sensitive groups, and it is not what the hon. Leader of Opposition is saying. You know, as a psychiatrist, I understand the effect of Xanax.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, Xanax, if you take it too much, it is not good for your health, and if you take it too little also, it is not good. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Only crazy people will go and see a doctor like this! I tell you; you have to be crazy to go and see him. Let me tell him one thing, Mr Speaker, Sir. He has himself said that only 100 diabetes patients have been given vaccines - 100! - whereas there are something like 260,000 people suffering from diabetes in Mauritius. Are all these people supposed to stay at home and die of hunger because he has not given them priority?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: He had a question! The answer, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I again say it. We are living in a confinement period; there are no transport facilities. These people have to stay at home. The Ministry of Health has advised them that only in an emergency, in an urgent context, to go to the hospital. They are attending local health centres to get their medicines, to get their treatment, and we have to protect these people in their houses and not tell them to come and get vaccinated. He should also note that if you do the vaccination today, the effect will be after weeks. There is no

emergency to do it in a time of confinement, in a time when the virus is circulating among the population. We have to be careful for them; we have to be protective of the elderly and not do what he is saying.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister has made a *contre-confession de taille*, as a result of which, because of policy failure and failure to pre-empt, there is a shortage of vaccine. Can we have it from him that he will give us a forecast as to how we will reach 74% of herd immunity by August, and will he table the document?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my intervention, I mentioned how the Government, how the Ministry is proceeding with the vaccination. No country in the world, even those which are producing the vaccines, can give a timeline when they can vaccinate their population.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

Mr X. L. Duval: Seychelles! Seychelles!

Mr Speaker: You asked your question! Listen!

(Interruptions)

No, don't discuss with the Chair!

Dr. Jagutpal: Seychelles?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: On this side, be quiet!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, they are comparing Mauritius with Seychelles with a population of 85,000, where they have been given Sinopharm vaccination. I will see what would be their reaction when the Sinopharm vaccination will come to Mauritius. I will see! Now, they are saying that Seychelles have been vaccinated. Let's wait for their reaction when the vaccination will come to Mauritius. Now, at the same time, Government has been preparing for the vaccine. It is not that the vaccination is available tomorrow, but there is a preparation, there is a commitment of the Government how to procure the vaccination. I have already stated how the vaccination will be procured, but, at the same time, Mr Speaker, Sir,

we don't know the time frame. We cannot pre-empt now to say when will be the delivery time.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, in answer to PQ B/992 last year, the hon. Minister of Health stated that, and I quote –

“(...) countries have been asked to establish a compensation mechanism to compensate individuals who might suffer from serious adverse effects associated with the vaccine.”

Being given that there was a commitment taken with COVAX to set up this Compensation Fund, why is the hon. Minister telling us, today, that no such Fund will be set up, and instead, no one will be compensated and will have to sign a waiver exculpating Government and anyone else from liability?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I think the hon. Member has not listened to me properly. I have said that after consultation with SLO, the Government - we have the Consolidated Fund; if ever somebody is suffering from any adverse effect, that Consolidated Fund is the compensation fund that we can use for any compensation. Now, at the same time, the compensation fund which is required has to get a cap. The Ministry of Health and the SLO, we cannot value a person's life; it is better that we have it from the Consolidated Fund.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, last supplementary!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will stay on this subject. Can the hon. Minister perhaps tell us what are the parameters for compensation? Now, Singapore has just published the parameters for compensation up to Rs7 m. for people with grave disabilities. Given the many months he has had to think about this, in his mind, tell us now, please, what are the parameters for compensation from the Consolidated Fund?

Dr. Jagutpal: That's what I said. In the compensation fund, we have to get the parameters, but in the Consolidated Fund,...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...there is no lieu of such parameters.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, show respect! Show respect to the House!

Hon. Members: Withdraw! Withdraw!

Mr X. L. Duval: He is not crazy. I am sorry, he is not crazy. He is not crazy. I was wrong. I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Time over by 30 minutes! Prime Minister's Question Time!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/2 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Labour, Human Resources Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection.

PQ B/6 and PQ B/7 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. PQ B/37 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting.

Hon. Nagalingum!

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - PRIVATE FLIGHTS

(No. B/1) 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 GAM Terminal at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Civil Aviation Department, information as to the number of private jets which landed thereat over the past six months, indicating in each case –

- (a) the embarkment port;
- (b) the number of passengers carried;
- (c) the date of approval for landing and by whom, and
- (d) if all established quarantine protocols were observed.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, as from the confirmation of the first positive case of COVID-19 in Mauritius, in March 2020, my Government took all precautionary measures possible to contain the spread of the virus among the people. One of the measures is the closing of our borders, except for cargo flights and cargo ships. I also considered, on a case to case basis, requests for flights destined, *inter*

alia, for medical evacuation, transportation of medical supplies and repatriation, under strict sanitary protocols as laid down by the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

I am informed by the Department of Civil Aviation that flights commonly referred to as private jets, other than those carrying persons for official or military purposes, are categorised as “private flights”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that, over the past six months, that is, from September 2020 to February 2021, there have been six private flights processed by “GAM Terminal” presently known as the YU Lounge (Mauritius) Ltd.

As regards parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, I am tabling the information requested.

As regards part (d) of the question, I am further informed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness that all established quarantine protocols were observed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate that quarantine protocols are mandatory and form an integral part of the stringent sanitary measures taken by Government to minimise the risk of COVID-19 virus proliferation in Mauritius. As such, incoming passengers are required to strictly abide by all the sanitary protocols, including quarantine.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House if he is aware of a private jet which landed in Mauritius, whereby the cabin crews stayed overnight, I mean, one day, in a hotel in the east and, if yes, were all sanitary protocols observed?

The Prime Minister: I have the list; but I do not see anyone who has stayed in a hotel. Maybe, if the hon. Member has more specific information about the flight he is thinking. Mr Speaker, Sir, from the information that I have here, I do not see, unless it is Astroe Hotel - I do not know where it is. Is that the one the hon. Member is referring to?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question, if you don’t have the information!

Mr Nagalingum: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether one L.G. did travel to and from Mauritius for the filming of *Prisoners of Paradise* and other purposes by private jet and, if so, when and where did he do his quarantine period?

The Prime Minister: From the information that I have been provided here, the first flight is from the UK and carried two passengers who are volunteer philanthropists and they came to take certain reptiles to be brought to the UK. The second flight was for three passengers who are Salvage Experts from Nippon Salvage of Japan and they came in connection with the Wakashio, and the third was for two passengers. I believe that they are Mauritians and they came back to Mauritius, but no such flight that has been processed by GAM in relation to what the hon. Member has referred to.

For the first question, I have been provided with the information. It is, in fact, the first flight from the United Kingdom where the crew stayed overnight, I believe, in a hotel in the east as the hon. Member mentioned probably. But I am told it is the crew.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister has given the number of private jet flights that have come in, in a given period of time, through the GAM Terminal. Can I ask him whether there have been other private jet flights that have come into Mauritius, apart from those that have gone through GAM, and which he has mentioned, through facilities different from GAM Terminal?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is specific, and maybe I need to read it to refresh the memory of the hon. Member: “whether, in regard to GAM Terminal at SSR International Airport”. So, I have information in relation to that question. Now, the hon. Member is asking me whether there are other jets that have come, that have been serviced at the main terminal. Well, he should come with a specific question. I shall be very happy to answer. But put the question properly!

(Interruptions)

And put relevant question! So many years of experience that he has in this House...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

The Prime Minister: But he is talking to me.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nagalingum!

Mr Nagalingum: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to confirm whether the quarantine procedure was applicable to film producers and celebrities, including one M.P., also known as M.T., and one C.M. who visited Mauritius by private jet and roamed around the country for filming purposes?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned that the flights which conveyed passengers to Mauritius - let me repeat again; maybe, they have not listened properly. It is good that I provide some details. The first one, date of arrival 13 September 2020, carrying two passengers for evacuation of reptiles from Ile aux Aigrettes. The second flight, 22 September 2020, conveyed three passengers; they are experts with regard to the salvage of Wakashio. And the third arrived on 26 September 2020, conveying two; I believe they are Mauritian nationalities who stayed in Mauritius. I have not mentioned any celebrity, actor, anyone coming for filming.

First of all, there has been no celebrity or any crew coming for filming in the answer that I have given.

Secondly, there are, in any case, no exceptions with regard to our sanitary protocols for any incoming passengers; no exceptions, except in cases - maybe the question will be replied later on - for State visits, for diplomats who have visited us.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the GAM Terminal was closed from October onwards and all private jets have had to use the main terminal, because GAM was closed by the Government for sanitary purposes?

The Prime Minister: But the question relates to the past six months...

Mr X. L. Duval: No, but, therefore...

The Prime Minister: You put a question that GAM has been closed. So, you know it has been closed, and then you do not put the question!

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary, hon. Nagalingum, if you have one!

(Interruptions)

Next question!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE - FACE MASKS & MEDICAL EQUIPMENT - SUPPLIERS

(No. B/2) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the decision of the High-Level Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic for the retention of Bo

Digital Co. Ltd and AV Techno-World Co. Ltd. as suppliers of face masks and other medical supplies and equipment, he will state –

- (a) who introduced and/or recommended these companies to the High-Level Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic, and
- (b) if any due diligence was carried out on the financial history, business activity and track record thereof prior to the award of the contracts thereto.

(Withdrawn)

WORK ACCESS PERMITS – ISSUE

(No. B/3) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Work Access Permits, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the total number thereof issued since 10 March 2021 to date and table the list of companies/entities having been granted same, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) sector of activity;
- (b) dates of applications;
- (c) dates of issue, and
- (d) number thereof issued.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the detection of new local cases in March 2021, the Temporary Restrictions of Movement Order was made under Section 3 of the Quarantine Act 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A Closing Down Order was issued on 10 March 2021, ordering that commercial premises or offices to remain closed for such period and under such terms and conditions as specified, except for certain commercial premises and offices as specified at paragraph 4 of the same Order.

However, Section 3(2) of the Quarantine Act 2020 empowers the Commissioner of Police to issue a permit to a person to be outdoor for such purpose and on such terms and conditions as he may specify therein.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the website *besafemoris.mu* was thus reactivated on 10 March 2021 where applications for Work Access Permit (WAP) could be submitted online. The

Mauritius Police Force issued two communiqués dated 10 and 11 March 2021, respectively to inform the public of the procedures for the application for WAP.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since 10 March 2021 to Monday 22 March 2021, 7,435 applications have been approved where permits were issued to 187,619 persons.

As regards details of companies/entities which have been granted WAPs and the sectors of activity, the information is being compiled.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to the issue of WAPs, the Work Access Permits to Members of Parliament, is the Prime Minister aware that Work Access Permits have been issued since about a week to all Municipal Councillors and, therefore, it seems discriminatory - it doesn't apply to me, but to my colleagues, all here - that MPs do not have Work Access Permits to visit their constituents, whereas Municipal Councillors are allowed to do so?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, there have been requests that were made by the Chief Executives of local authorities to the Ministry of Local Government for the issue of Work Access Permits for their respective Councils.

I am informed that the Chief Executives indicated that the WAPs were needed to ensure business continuity in local authorities, especially for refuse collection and for cemetery services.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Wait! Wait! Do not get excited! And what we did was just as in the case of last year. The request for WAPs was also received for Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Municipal Councillors as well as Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of District Councils and District Councillors, as they form part of the Permits and Building Monitoring Committee and the Executive Committee of the respective Councils.

Applications for Building and Land Use Permits are received on the National Electronic Licensing System platform of Corporate and Business Registration Department whereby these have to be determined within the prescribed time frame of 14 working days. It is to be pointed out that the Local Government Act provides that BLUPs application which are not determined by the PBMC within the time frame are deemed approved by silent

agreement. That is the reason why those Councillors have been given a WAP, and the WAP is also for them to move from their place of residence for the purpose of attending the meetings, of those committees.

Let me say that there is a difference also with Members of the National Assembly. We just heard the Minister of Health saying that the purpose of the confinement is to try to limit movement of people generally, and as far as possible. For the protection of Members of the National Assembly, there is, in fact, every reason why they should not be out, and if there is an urgency like what we are having today, I have issued an order to enable Members of the National Assembly to meet yesterday and for the Assembly to sit, for Members to attend. Therefore, in very specific situations, we shall facilitate Members to attend to their responsibility.

Mr David: Mr Speaker, Sir, actually there is another urgency. We all know that during this new confinement period, so many vulnerable people throughout the country are struggling to feed their families despite the operation of supermarkets and shops, and we all know as well that many NGOs are prepared and willing to help this hardship situation. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether consideration would be given to add these NGOs on the list of essential services organisations so that they would not need to wait endlessly for Work Access Permits before going out and helping the people of Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, let me say that we do not want to have a situation where there are so many people going around. I do, of course, understand the work that NGOs do, especially with regard to helping the poor and the vulnerable. So, there is a request for those NGOs which are registered with NSIF to be probably considered for WAP, if there is a real justification to give them a WAP so that they can attend to the poor, to the vulnerable. I know this is being looked into, but I do not have the details.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House if WAP is being provided to farmers and planters and their supporting staff, as many do not have a Business Registration Card but possess their farmers' card from Small Farmers Welfare Fund?

The Prime Minister: I know that the breeders, planters and fishermen are allowed to travel from their place of residence to the base of operation or where the plantation is ongoing or the breeding site by using their registration card. So, they do not need to apply for a WAP.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have listened to the reply of the hon. Prime Minister concerning MPs. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there is one Member of his party, who has recently joined the MSM and who is on the social media, who is roaming around in Albion, very close to Canot which is a red zone? And he even went in Canot and was in Petite Rivière yesterday. You can go and see in the Press, where the President of the Village Council of Petite Rivière *a dénoncé*. And the case has been reported to the Police by me and my colleague, hon. Quirin. Can the hon. Prime Minister at least see to it there is not *a politique de deux poids deux mesures*, that in cases where there is a red zone...

Mr Speaker: You have made your point.

Mr Bhagwan: ... people go there to do active politics *au vu et au su du ministère de la Santé*? And I have reported to the Minister's Press Attaché also.

Mr Speaker: You made your point!

Mr Bhagwan: You are watching me.

Mr Speaker: You are giving the answer?

(Interruptions)

So, there is no need, Prime Minister, to answer this question.

The Prime Minister: No, but let me...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Unless you want to answer it.

(Interruptions)

Are you continuing?

(Interruptions)

Are you continuing your question? Show respect to the Chair! Show respect!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Let me answer, Mr Speaker, Sir. I can assure the hon. Member that there is and there will be no *deux poids deux mesures*. The hon. Member said he has made a declaration to the Police. The Police will enquire and, in the meantime, if I can have the details with regard to that person, of course, I shall request the Police to see to it that he cannot roam around, unless he has a WAP, unless he is authorised - I do not know. So, I

cannot pronounce myself on a case for which I do not have the details and about that person who is supposed to be roaming around.

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I understand the Prime Minister will table the list of applications in the Chamber. I would like him to find out about one particular company named “*Votre Pôte Agé*” owned by Mr Chinatamby, whether this company obtained its WAP on the same day the application was released and whether he has been favoured because he is well connected to Government.

The Prime Minister: No, there are so many people who seem to be well connected with Government. So, I am happy that there are a lot of them, but I happen to know also that shop. But that shop is categorised in the list of activities that are eligible for a WAP; they can supply. In fact, they do sell fruits and vegetables. So, I do not see why. Others are doing; supermarkets, superette, shops, and so many of them. So, I do not see the reason why the hon. Member picks on this one. I am not here to defend this one, but this is a shop also selling fruits and vegetables.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr David: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ B/2 on 05 May 2020 about WAPs, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned, and I quote –

“(...) there is a committee that scrutinises all these applications (...)”

Can the hon. Prime Minister state the composition of this committee and the approximate average time taken by this committee to process one application? I am sure the hon. Prime Minister must have access to such statistics.

The Prime Minister: The committee is chaired by the Commissioner of Police and the Secretary for Home Affairs is also part of that committee. Now, how long does it take to process an application, I have to find out because I do not process the application. I shall ask for the relevant information.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Juman!

PRIVATE JETS – FOREIGN DELEGATIONS & PASSENGERS

(No. B/4) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to incoming passengers, including officials and foreign delegations and passengers

who travelled by private jets, since 01 February 2021 to date, he will state the number thereof who were exempted from undergoing quarantine, indicating in each case, the reasons therefor.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director of Civil Aviation that there has been no private flight with incoming passengers since 01 February 2021 to date.

Therefore, the second part of the question does not arise.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ms Anquetil!

NATIONAL COVID-19 ALERT SYSTEM

(No. B/5) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard the current lockdown, he will state if Government -

- (a) will extend the lockdown presently imposed in Constituencies Nos. 15, 16 and 17 qualified as Red Zone Areas, and
- (b) consider introducing a National COVID-19 Alert System.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to Parliamentary Questions B/5 and B/14 together as part (b) of Question B/5 and Question B/14 relate to the same subject matter.

I wish to inform the House that since the detection of a new local case of COVID-19 in the Island of Mauritius on 05 March 2021, the High-Level Committee on COVID-19 has been meeting on a daily basis to monitor the situation and coordinate measures to contain the spread of the virus.

At its meeting on 09 March 2021, held at 5 p.m., the Committee, after taking note of the increasing number of local cases of COVID-19, decided that a national confinement be imposed on the Island of Mauritius, excluding Rodrigues, Agaléga, St Brandon and the Chagos Archipelago from 10 March 2021 at 6 a.m. until 25 March 2021 at 8 p.m. In this connection, a Temporary Restrictions of Movement Order was issued on 09 March 2021 and a Closing Down Order was issued on 10 March 2021 under the Quarantine Act 2020 to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus by limiting to the maximum extent practicable outdoor activities by members of the public.

Subsequently, on 11 March 2021, the High-Level Committee on COVID-19, after taking into account that the number of cases was concentrated in the Constituencies of La Caverne and Phoenix (No. 15), Vacoas and Floreal (No. 16) and Curepipe and Midlands (No. 17), decided to impose additional strict measures to prevent movement of persons in order to halt the proliferation of the virus in those regions. Accordingly, it was decided that movement of persons in those regions would be restricted to the strict minimum, save in exceptional circumstances. A new Closing Down Order under Section 3(1) (c) of the Quarantine Act 2020 was issued on the same day. The Order would remain effective until 25 March 2021 at 8 p.m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of Question B/5 on whether the current confinement in Constituencies 15, 16 and 17 will be extended, obviously, it will depend on the evolution of the situation of COVID-19 in those regions and a decision will be taken in the light thereof by the High-Level Committee on COVID-19, based on the recommendation of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of Question B/5 and Question B/14, the main function of any COVID-19 Alert System is to inform the public in a timely manner of the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to convey instructions and restrictions that must be followed to contain the spread of the virus. I wish to highlight that the National Communication Committee on COVID-19 is already providing detailed information on the prevailing situation on a daily basis, including the number of cases being detected, the measures being taken to contain the spread of the virus and also on the precautions that must be taken for their own safety.

Furthermore, information is also broadcast on MBC TV and radio channels, private radio channels and the Government Information Service website.

I wish to inform the House that regular updates on all matters relating to COVID-19 are being provided on a daily basis on the mobile application “beSafeMoris”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that currently, Government is in the process of implementing a National Multi-Hazard Emergency Alert System to be managed by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre. The first phase of the project will allow for the implementation of a Common Alert Protocol Aggregator for the dissemination of warnings and alerts, mainly during natural disasters and emergency

situations, through a number of communication channels such as TV, radio channels, the Internet, social media platforms, Mobile Apps, SMS and fixed line phone.

Consideration is also being given to the National Multi-Hazard Emergency Alert System providing alerts on COVID-19 or any other emergency situations to the public. The system has, in principle, the possibility of disseminating timely messages on any kind of hazard to the public at large.

In this connection, the detailed technicalities would be worked out in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQ B/37 has been withdrawn. Supplementary! Let me give priority to hon. Lobine.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister give a time frame as to when this committee will sit and when this Alert Level System will be implemented? A time frame for this special committee that the Prime Minister intends to...

The Prime Minister: No, I do not intend. The work is being done actually.

Mr Lobine: No, to set up the Alert System.

The Prime Minister: Yes, this is what is said in my answer; that the work is being done. In fact, I also queried. I wanted to know when this will be operational. It is expected that Phase I of the project would be tested by May 2021 and go live by June 2021 and become operational by June 2022. But I must say one thing. Because there have been certain events and confinement and so on, I say there could be delay in the implementation process. But it is going on well and I believe that they will be able to incorporate this alert system for COVID-19.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Would the hon. Prime Minister consider carrying out a massive vaccination in the Red Zone Constituencies in view of the acute contamination?

The Prime Minister: Well, my colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness has replied earlier about the priority cases that we are attending to in terms of vaccination and that those priority cases also include people who are not only outside the Red Zone but in the Red Zone also. But I am advised we have to be careful, as people who are already infected should not be vaccinated. They should be vaccinated at a much later stage. So, we have to be

careful about this. We cannot now disrupt the vaccination campaign and say let us concentrate only on people who are in the Red Zone. So, we shall be going according to the strategy and the plan that have, in fact, been laid down by Government. It is not only by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, but also by Government.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The current two weeks lockdown which were imposed is due to expire in two days' time, that is, on Thursday. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if you can give an indication to the House and the Nation whether the current lockdown, two weeks lockdown, will be lifted on this Thursday or will it be extended?

The Prime Minister: As I said, it will depend on the evolution of the situation, but I can tell the House that we are meeting everyday, taking stock and assessing the situation and everyday decisions are taken. So, obviously, when a decision will be taken, either to extend or not or do something else, rest assured that we shall communicate to the people.

Mr Speaker: Time over by 5 minutes! I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hours.

At 1.16 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.52 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please, be seated. Hon. Nagalingum!

COVISHIELD (ASTRAZENECA) VACCINE - DOSES

(No. B/15) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the on-going administration to the population of the Covishield (AstraZeneca) Vaccine under the National Deployment and Vaccination Programme, he will state –

- (a) the scale and pace thereof, indicating if sufficient doses of the Covishield (AstraZeneca) Vaccine are presently available for both doses for at least 60% of the population and, if not, indicate the measures being taken to ensure the availability thereof for 100% of the population, and
- (b) if the further decentralization thereof through the primary healthcare centres, mediclinics and offices of the Citizen Advice Bureau will be envisaged.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as part (a) of the question, I have intensively elaborated on the scale and pace, planning, procurement, future requirement during my reply in today's PNQ. I also pointed out that due to resurgence of the COVID-19 in many countries with the onset of the third wave, the time for the delivery of vaccines is not well defined.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to part (b) of the question, places such as mediclinics and primary healthcare centres and offices of the Citizen Advice Bureau are not being used for vaccination in view of limited space. The vaccination exercise engages various personnel and several steps which require a large surface area for the administration of the vaccines and adherence to sanitary protocol while ensuring adequate medical supervision. Up to now, there have been no side effects reported except some mild effects such as fever and pain, which is common after administration of any vaccine.

Mr Nagalingum: Just to assure the population, if I can ask the hon. Minister whether the current supply of the AstraZeneca vaccine catered for the second dose for those who have already been administered the first dose, and the Minister has also placed other order, would the hon. Minister also provide the public with an update weekly report of AstraZeneca vaccine stock.

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, till now, we have already vaccinated more than 100,000 with AstraZeneca vaccine and we already have a supply of 100,000 that will be used for the second dose for those who have been vaccinated with the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Currently, we are doing vaccination with Covaxin. That also we already have 200,000 doses, 100,000 doses will be used for the first dose and a second dose will be used by the same vaccine that we already have in our supply.

Mr Nagalingum: Is the hon. Minister aware as reported by Reuters, the South African Health Minister on the 10 February 2021, that the South African Government has the intention to sell 1 million of the vaccine produced by Serum Institute of India and other 500,000 doses since the South African Minister of Health has announced that the country has already sold 1 billion doses of AstraZeneca vaccine for distribution in 14 fellow African Nation. Can the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness assure the House that his Ministry is going to contact the South African Government urgently to secure part of the remaining 500,000 doses of AstraZeneca?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, we are very much well aware of South Africa not using this vaccination, but they have given it to an organisation in Africa and that organisation has been distributing the vaccines under its purview.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. Will the hon. Minister consider a dedicated walking service to all persons who have had the vaccines so far, considering that they may get mild to moderate and severe symptoms so that they can be reassured?

Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, thank you, hon. Member. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has the Pharmacovigilance Committee to look after the vaccination, that is, the post vaccination period and there is a dedicated team at the Ministry of Health and Wellness who does the data entry and the monitoring, if ever there is any event after the vaccination.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président, selon un article de France 24 en date du 19 mars, les Etats-Unis sont en train d'aider les pays comme le Mexique et le Canada en mettant à leur disposition 4 millions de doses d'AstraZeneca qu'ils n'utilisent plus. Peut-on savoir si le gouvernement a l'intention de solliciter l'aide des Etats-Unis et je pense que ce serait une bonne chose si on pouvait aussi en bénéficier ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Thank you, hon. Member, for this question. Well, I have to obtain more information about this. Obviously, if there are vaccines available where the other countries are not using, Mauritius will solicit their help to get these vaccines for our population.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Merci, M. le président. L'honorable ministre, peut-il nous dire, s'il vous plaît, lors de votre *Press briefing* quotidienne le samedi 20 mars, le Dr. Zouberr Joomaye, président du *Vaccination Committee* annonce qu'à vendredi 19 mars, un total de 92,524 personnes se sont fait vacciner d'AstraZeneca, et hier, lors de cet même exercice, il annonce que samedi le 20 mars, 13,000 personnes se sont fait vacciner. Ce qui nous amène à un total de 105,524 doses d'AstraZeneca. Alors que selon le gouvernement, la vaccination aurait dû s'arrêter à 100,000. Quelle garantie donnez-vous à ceux qui se sont vaccinés par AstraZeneca qu'ils seraient tous inoculés du même vaccin lors du deuxième dose ? Il y a environ 11,021.

Dr. Jagutpal: Thank you, hon. Member, for this question. The second dose of the vaccine will be done in three months' time, that is, in twelve weeks. We started the vaccination at the end of January and it has ended on Saturday. In the next three months, the Covax facility is going to get us only 20,000 doses of the vaccine, and these vaccines will be added up to complete the vaccination for those who have already received the first dose.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: Can the hon. Minister state the expiry dates of the Covishield that we have which are in store?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, I think I am having many questions related to this topic, but I am sure that I have the answer. The Covishield vaccines will expire in July 2021.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members the Table has been advised that PQ B/38 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance. PQ B/43 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity. The Table had been advised that PQs B/17, B/48 and B/55 have been withdrawn. The Table is also advised that PQ B/2 has been withdrawn.

Next question!

LOCAL EXAMINATIONS 2021 - EXAMINATION CENTRES

(No. B/16) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Primary School Achievement Certificate, the National Certificate of Education and the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Local Examinations for 2021, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to the –

- (a) number of examination centres that will be set up therefor;
- (b) number of students to be accommodated per class, and
- (c) health and safety measures being taken for everyone involved therein.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQs B/16 and B/62 together as those relates to the conductive examinations and the health and safety and sanitary measures being implemented.

With regard to part (a) of PQ B/16, I am informed by the MES that the total number of examination centres is as follows –

- (a) for PSAC, 346 centres;
- (b) for the NCE, 143 centres, and
- (c) for SC and HSC, 133 and 92 centres, respectively.

As for part (b) of the question, arrangements are being made for candidates to be accommodated in examination rooms in such a way as to allow for a physical distancing of at least 1 metre. On 15 March 2021 during a Press Briefing, I had announced that arrangements were being made with authorities concerned to enable students to sit for the examinations in the best possible manner and under strict observance of established health, sanitary and safety guidelines and procedures.

With regard to the health and safety measures, I wish to reassure the House that following discussions with various Ministries concerned, strict guidelines have been devised as follows –

- (a) vaccination of the staff of the MES, Heads of schools, supervisors, invigilators and all other personnel involved in the conductive examinations started on 18 March 2021;
- (b) daily cleaning and disinfection of all examinations centres to be effected and even between examination sessions;
- (c) Public transport facilities have been arranged for all concerned to commute to their examination centres. Transport companies will ensure frequent cleaning and disinfection of their vehicles, allowing sound ventilation so as to eliminate all risks of contamination. All candidates and travellers of the public bus service will have to adhere to specific sanitary measures such as hand sanitising, wearing of masks at all times, physical distancing, amongst others.

In addition, the following measures will be implemented in the examination centres –

- ☐ strict control will be effected at the entrance of the examination centre;
- ☐ all candidates and examination personnel will be given access to the examination centre upon presentation of their timetables or a pass issued by the MES;

- ☐ temperature checks at the entrance of the examination centres will be carried out;
- ☐ all persons having access to the examination centre should wear a mask covering their face and mouth, sanitisation of hands at the entrance of the examination centre will be compulsory;
- ☐ candidates will be directed immediately to their examination room by the examination personnel;
- ☐ candidates will not be allowed to group up on the premises of the examination centre and will be constantly reminded of the need of social distancing of at least one metre at all times;
- ☐ the examination rooms will be disinfected between each examination session.

With reference to PQ B/62, I wish to inform the House that all candidates having entered for SC/HSC examinations will normally sit for their examination. Should a candidate be detected with high temperature on arrival, the candidate will be placed in an isolation room and the Ministry of Health and Wellness will be immediately contacted. The candidate will sit for his examination in the isolation room as per the protocol established by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. A candidate in quarantine centre will be allowed to take part in the examinations under strict sanitary and examination conditions. A separate hall will be identified for that purpose. The centre will be designated by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Candidates tested COVID-19 positive and under treatment will not be allowed to sit for the examinations. However, after having recovered, he/she will be allowed to sit for the examination's remaining papers as may be advised by the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

I also wish to inform the House that libraries and stationary stores were open from 16 to 20 March 2021 to enable students to purchase necessary materials for their practical examinations. Relevant arrangements have also been made for students sitting for Food and Nutrition as well as for Art and Design practical examinations.

Dr. Gungapersad: I would request the hon. Minister to inform us whether special consideration has been given as to the mental health of those students who may be unduly stressed, one, because of the exam stress, plus the prevailing pandemic?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry already has a team of psychologists working and whenever it is felt that there is a need for support or whenever there is a demand for that, the Unit will automatically provide support to the students.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Bérenger!

Ms Bérenger: Can we know from the hon. Minister, what measures have been taken by her Ministry to ensure accessibility of disabled students to those examinations, please?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we already have a team working on that and whenever there is a request from any student with special education needs, the needful is done by the MES.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci, M. le président. Concernant le *National Certificate of Education Examination*, la ministre ne pense-t-elle pas que vu la situation actuelle, qu'il serait souhaitable de renvoyer ces examens à l'année prochaine, cela éviterait une grande circulation d'enfants en ce moment difficile, vu que c'est un examen qui a lieu pour la première fois, personne ne sera pénalisée ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already planned the exams and we have been working under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. As for the timing of the exams and the dates, we have made sure that there is no massive movement of students during the examinations. The examinations for SC and HSC will start full-fledged as from 12 April and earlier, that is, from 30 to 08 April, there are only few candidates for SC and HSC who will be going for exams. So, we hope that nothing happens, but then, I assure the House that the number of students that will be circulating during those days is manageable.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, I have one concern, I know, the personnel of the MES will take that into consideration. Regarding days when we have two papers, when students have finished the first paper and waiting for the second paper to get into the examination rooms, because we know kids are kids after all, that all measures are taken so that they do not group together in between two papers?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that students will be constantly reminded of the need for social distancing and special rooms will be made

available for students to remain in, prior to getting to the next session, under the supervision of an invigilator. However, we do understand that students will need to be constantly reminded of this and will have to be supervised.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Just to come back to the last question of my colleague, Dr. Gungapersad, I have been given to understand that on some days there are going to be two papers that are going to be set for the students. Now, given that most of the schools and colleges are regionalised and the students reside near to the schools, will they be allowed at least to go back home during the recess, freshen up and make use of toilet facilities, if need be, and come back and this is going to prevent overcrowding during recess time?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not normally advise students to leave the examination centres during examinations, but as I have stated earlier, parents can come and drop their children at school and pick them up. I would rather have students remaining within the school compound, or in the cars, in the time they have to wait before getting into the examination, but it is not advisable for students to leave the exam centres for various reasons. But then, in case the parent is there and let's say, for example, has brought the lunch of the student, I think the student can get into the car and have the food, but we will not allow parents to group up or to assemble in the school yards. They will have to be outside the school yard, but I would not advise students to go back home between exams.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister announced that for certain grades, there will be no final examination and there will be automatic promotion. And recently, it appeared in the Press that some schools are contemplating to have examination before those students can move to classes. I think it was in the private schools, but I am not sure whether it also applies to Government schools. Can the hon. Minister, please, clarify on this issue?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We have had no such complaints from students, but I must say what we have been saying to schools and to rectors, is to allow students to get promoted to the next year, but obviously, we had also underlined that in case a student is facing a lot of difficulty and has not been working according to the requirements of the

school during the year, that child may, on the request of parents or teachers be retained in a class, but by no means we have been asking the schools to carry out tests at this point in time.

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

SECONDARY SCHOOL - ACADEMIES

(No. B/17) 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 Academies at the secondary school, she will state -

- (a) if those which were formerly single gender schools are now infrastructurally equipped and ready to run as mixed schools, and
- (b) the nature of work that has been carried out to accommodate students of both genders.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE – PSAC, SC & HSC 2021

(No. B/18) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Primary School Achievement Certificate, the National Certificate of Education and the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Local Examinations for 2021, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to the number of supervisors, coordinators and invigilators who will be required, indicating –

- (a) the number of applications received therefor and the number of those who have now declined amid the prevalence of COVID-19 cases, and
- (b) if they will be vaccinated prior to officiating as such.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, according to information submitted by the Mauritius Examination Syndicate, details pertaining to supervisors, coordinators and invigilators are as follows –

For the PSAC assessment, the number of coordinators required is 74; the number of persons who have applied is 96; none have declined. Invigilators, number of persons required

is 3,008. Number of persons who have applied is 3,750. 25 have declined and have been replaced.

For the NC assessment, the number of supervisors required is 365. The number of persons who have applied for that post is 1,000. Number of persons who have declined is 50 and they have been replaced.

Coordinators, number of persons required is 78. Number of persons who have applied is 300. 40 have declined and have been replaced.

Invigilators, number of persons required is 1,800. Number of persons who have applied is 5,505. None have declined.

For SC and HSC Examinations, number of supervisors required is 225. Number of persons who have applied for that post is 1,677. Number of persons who have declined is 58.

Coordinators, 83 required. 183 persons applied and 3 persons declined.

Invigilators, 3,560 required. Number of persons who have applied is 4,500.

350 persons have declined and have been replaced.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is customary that a number of officers, after having applied to work for examinations, happen to subsequently decline the offer. The MES, however, manages to readily replace them from a backup pool.

I would also wish to inform the House that arrangements have been made for all examination personnel to be vaccinated.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, my main concern is that, because of this pandemic, we need additional number of classrooms where exams will be conducted and in that respect we will need more invigilators to manage the exams. Has this been taken care of?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, while answering to the previous question, I had mentioned that we are following strict sanitary measures and one of the requirements is to have the students placed one metre apart. Bearing this in mind and considering the number of students we have, and the space provided in each school, the MES has done the needful.

Dr. Gungapersad: I again would like to insist on this fact that, allowing students in and out of the red zone to take the different exams as well as the different personnel is quite risky, hon. Vice-Prime Minister.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the arrangements made by the Ministry of Land Transport is such that, students moving from one zone to the other go in a bus and the bus remains there and takes the students back to the place from where they have been picked. So, this will reduce the risk or eliminate the risk of their meeting others, etc. and especially when we consider all the sanitary measures that have been adopted at the level of the exam centres, I believe that the risk has been enormously minimised.

Dr. Gungapersad: Those who have declined to work during this pandemic, one reassurance that they want is that they would not be penalised subsequently because they could not work during the pandemic, so that next year and the year after, they are not penalised on the basis that they refused to work during the pandemic.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this has to be tackled by the MES. I do understand that in a pandemic condition people may have very valid reasons not to be able to attend work or to be present in the exam centres, but I will leave it to the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate to consider its list of exam personnel.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Dr. Gungapersad: I think it is our duty here, everyone's duty to reassure all the kids and to say all the best to all the personnel, especially the MES which is working in very difficult circumstances and we wish all the kids all the best for the exams.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I thank you for the concern expressed.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - PUBLIC OFFICERS - WORK-FROM-HOME SCHEME

(No. B/19) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Work-from-Home Scheme, he will state the number of public officers who are working thereunder in each Ministry, amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, indicating the –

- (a) facilities given thereto, and

- (b) training given thereto, indicating –
 - (i) by whom;
 - (ii) when, and
 - (iii) duration thereof.

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the hon. Member for this question which gives me the opportunity to apprise the House on the new work culture that is gradually gaining momentum in Mauritius in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, that is, the Work-from-Home culture.

COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered the world of work and ushered rapidly in the culture of Work-from-Home, amongst others, as a means to mitigate the transmission of this deadly virus among the population. This paradigmship from the traditional pattern of work poses new challenges and constraints for millions of public officers across the globe, some of whom are actively engaged in the fight against COVID-19 while others are involved in continuing the normal work of Government.

As the crisis continues to evolve, public administration must take bold measures to help public officials perform their duties as effectively as possible. Government introduced in May 2020 the Work-from-Home Scheme on a pilot basis in the public sector in response to the COVID-19 and with a view to ensuring business continuity.

I am informed that, as at now, 1,724 public officers in 29 Ministries and Departments are working from home as compared to 220 officers last year. These officers have been provided with appropriate IT equipment and paid a monthly cell phone and internet allowances. I am tabling the list of Ministries concerned along with the number of officers working from home.

The UNDP Mauritius Country Office is currently financing a consultancy service for my Ministry for the establishment of a Business Continuity Plan model that could be activated in case of a total lockdown. The consultancy has been entrusted to PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd. One of the deliverables of the consultancy is to propose an acceptable working arrangement, flexible working hours and a Work-from-Home protocol for consideration by Government. The consultant has, on the basis of the outcome of a survey carried out by my Ministry in November 2020 on the Work-from-Home Scheme,

submitted a comprehensive Work-from-Home protocol for the public sector on 15 March 2021 to ensure business continuity and agility in public service delivery in times of crisis.

The salient features of the protocol are as follows –

- (1) Introduction of flexible and agile working policies that balances the needs of Government and public officers.
- (2) All public officers should discuss the working arrangement with the Head of Department/Division/Section and the latter should take every possible step to facilitate the process.
- (3) The protocol is applicable to all public officers and does not change or replace the existing terms and conditions of employment.
- (4) The protocol makes provision for officers with caring responsibilities and disabilities to be provided with additional flexible working option such as revised work target of flexible working hours.
- (5) The protocol set out clear criteria to be used for assessing and approving application for Work-from-Home, monitoring progress and evaluating performance. One of the main criteria for qualifying an officer for Work-from-Home is a minimum of three hours per day for the task assigned.
- (6) The policies of the Government, including the terms and conditions of employment and policies to Safety and health, data protection and security will apply during a Work-From-Home arrangement, and
- (7) Public institutions should procure laptops with appropriate software and other equipment required for employees. There is a need to transition from desktop pcs to laptops in a phased manner.

Mr Speaker Sir, the Work-From-Home Protocol also makes provision for the setting up of a Steering Committee under the chair of the Secretary for Public Service to drive the implementation of the Work-From-Home mode of work across the Public Sector.

Government adopted the Work-from-Home protocol on 19 March 2021 and the appropriate mechanism is currently being put in place to implement the Protocol across the Public Sector.

As regards part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, so far, the need for special training on the Work-from-Home has not been felt as officers have been called upon to perform tasks that they normally perform at office. However, as recommended in the Protocol, an awareness programme will be conducted across all level of Public Officers to sensitise them on the benefits of this new pattern of work. Moreover, the Steering Committee will look into any specific training needs that Public officers may require in the course of implementation of the Protocol and the Civil Service College, Mauritius will be approached to include a slot in all its courses and also mount specific courses on Work-From-Home.

Mr Speaker Sir, my Ministry is leaving no stone unturned in encouraging public organisations to adopt the Work-From-Home culture. A circular letter was issued by my Ministry last week to this effect.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. I think Work-From-Home is inevitable and it is good that you have listed the protocol. In spite of that, some trade unionists have raised concern regarding the disorderly and chaotic manner in which it is being done. I am bringing it to your attention so that needful can be done. For example, they have complained that many supervisors are harassing workers, are disturbing the family life of officers and many officers – fortunately, you have mentioned it - have been asked to use their personal equipment but you have just mentioned it. Perhaps in the days to come there are going to be a...

Mr Speaker: Question!

Dr. Gungapersad: So, can the hon. Minister look into it.

Mr Hurdoyal: I thank the hon. Member for his suggestion. In fact, as the protocols have been approved last week by the Government and it is yesterday that my Ministry has issued another circular letter to inform all Ministries and Departments to adhere to all those protocols that have been circulated to them.

Ms Ramyad: There have been concerns among public officers that the Performance Management System which is in place does not cater for the Work-From-Home culture and this is why there is a request that since it is Performance Management Review, it is important that this Performance Management System be reviewed. Would the Minister please give a re-assurance that this is reviewed in the earliest delay?

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the protocol it is mentioned that there should be a progress report and also upon completion of the Work-From-Home arrangement, there is an evaluation form that needs to be completed by the Supervising Officer and also has to be completed by the public officer and through this, we can say that Key Performance Indicators that have been set out by Ministries and based on this they can evaluate the performance of those public officers.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister consider reintroducing flexy time within this Work-From-Home protocol within the public sector?

Mr Hurdoyal: Yes, I already mentioned that there is the possibility of flexi time, but only to those public officers who have disabilities or those with health problems, but, in fact, we can look forward. It is already mentioned in the protocol of the Work-From-Home.

Dr. Boolell: I will ask the Minister to table the protocol.

Mr Hurdoyal: Yes, I am laying on the Table of the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker: Next Question!

FACE MASKS & MEDICAL SUPPLIES – CONTRACTS – ADVANCE PAYMENTS

(No. B/20) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the companies which were awarded contracts for the supply of face masks and other medical supplies and equipment amid the COVID-19 pandemic from the State Trading Corporation and the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection, he will state the names of those having benefitted from advance payments, indicating in each case –

- (a) The quantum of funds advanced and date/s thereof, and
- (b) If due diligence exercises were carried out on the financial history, business activities and track record thereof prior thereto.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the list of companies which had been awarded contracts for the supply of face masks and other medical supplies and equipments by the STC and the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection during COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the ICAC has started an investigation which is still ongoing by virtue of section 81 (3) of the Prevention of Corruption Act. Unfortunately, I cannot disclose any further information for the time being.

Mr Bhagwan: A supplementary, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is known by the public by now that there has been a mafia operating at the State Trading Corporation and in connivance with the Ministry of Commerce...

Mr Speaker: Now, I will not allow this sort of language, mafia, in connivance with the Minister, this is accusation. Rephrase your question, please!

Mr Bhagwan: I'll rephrase, but there has been connivance. Connivance is not a...

Mr Speaker: No, I am not talking of *connivance*. *Connivance* with the Minister.

Mr Bhagwan: No, I have not mentioned the Minister, the Ministry I have said. STC and the Ministry I have said.

Mr Speaker: If it is the Ministry, you may proceed.

Mr Bhagwan: This is why I am asking the Minister since he has stated that he will clear up the air at STC, use crash air if possible, whether he has started an enquiry and has cleared the air at the STC and the Ministry.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, with due respect to the hon. Member. I have stated it and I am stating it again. There is an inquiry which is ongoing and it will be for the inquiry to determine whether there has been *maldonne* or not and not me to come and say such things.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the advance payment that was done, can I find out from the Minister whether there has been an advance payment guarantee and a performance bond that was issued by the company prior to the disbursement of the fund?

Mr Callichurn: Unfortunately, I cannot answer this question because, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Listen to me first! By way of search warrant, the ICAC has seized original documents at the STC, be it at the STC, at the Ministry of Commerce and computer devices also. So, I am not in presence of these information.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the Minister inform the House whether it is common practice, especially concerning emergency procurement to do advance payment and has this been done in the past?

Mr Callichurn: I cannot answer this question unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going to ask the hon. Minister obviously about issues pertaining to the enquiry at ICAC and I totally understand him there. However, could you please inform the House whether any members of the Board at the particular time when those transactions took place, have they been suspended and if they have not been suspended, why not?

Mr Callichurn: Well, none of the Board members have been suspended as yet because whatever procurement exercise happened it was during confinement, they were at their home and they took decision by way of circularised resolution.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I have two, Mr Speaker, Sir. You have given the chance to other people, to other Members. I have two. Can the Minister inform the House whether the Chairperson of the STC, Dr. Bheenick is still in office? He is a political appointee whether the Minister is contemplating to replace the Chairperson of the STC who has been partly concerned by all unscrupulous behaviour of certain people at the STC and the Ministry?

Mr Callichurn: All the members of the Board, including the Chairman are still in office.

Mr Bhagwan: I have a last supplementary.

Mr Speaker: I allow you.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House for the records - he is a Member of Cabinet also - whether the then Minister gave his approval for the go ahead of all these purchases and even advanced payment of more than Rs300 m. to Rs400 m. were given to that company, whether Ministerial approval was given, if yes, when?

Mr Callichurn: ICAC is investigating into the matter and as soon as the enquiry is complete, surely the hon. Member will know of the outcome as it will be in the public domain.

Mr Speaker: Order! Next question!

FISHING ACTIVITIES – 11 MARCH 2021 TO 25 MARCH 2021

(No. B/21) **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 special permission granted for fishing activities from 11 to 25 March 2021, he will state the -

- (a) arrangements made by his Ministry to facilitate fishing activities at sea;
- (b) number of registered fishers and applicants for Fishermen Card who have notified the Fisheries posts since 11 March 2021 to date, and
- (c) financial assistance envisaged to compensate non-fishing days.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (a), following the current lockdown due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, arrangements have been made by my Ministry to allow registered fishers to carry out fishing activities. A first communiqué was issued on 11 March 2021, including the time of operation and equally to follow the general rule of alphabetical order to limit the number of fishers operating at landing station and to enable observing all sanitary measures. The communiqué was also meant for applicant fishers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after consultation with the National Coast Guard and the Mauritius Police Department, a Monitoring Plan was approved following which my Ministry issued another communiqué on 19 March 2021 with detailed information for registered fishers, applicant fishers, fishmongers and ornamental live fish (Aquarium Shop). The condition of alphabetical order had been waived thus allowing both registered fishers and applicant fishers to operate on a daily basis from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. except on public holidays and Sundays. Registered fishers must be in possession of their respective fishermen cards and applicant fishers must have a Memo from the fisheries post in their locality.

The operation is being closely monitored by the Fisheries Protection Service of my Ministry, the National Coast Guard and the Mauritius Police Force.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) in respect of the notification made to fisheries posts as at 19 March 2021, the information is being compiled and same will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Regarding the registered fishers, their activities are being monitored at fish landing stations by officers of the Fisheries Protection Service and National Coast Guard.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (c), as a caring Government, I am pleased to announce that my Ministry will provide financial assistance based on bad weather allowance to eligible registered fishers to compensate non-fishing days for the period from 11 to 19 March 2021 excluding Sunday and public holidays.

As regards the applicants for Fishermen Card, they may apply to the Mauritius Revenue Authority under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme.

Mr David: M. le président, j'ai été rassuré de constater un certain bon sens retrouvé dans le communiqué du ministère de la Pêche en date du 19 mars 2021 venu supprimer la surréaliste sortie par ordre alphabétique demandée aux pêcheurs par le communiqué du 11 mars 2021. Juste pour m'assurer, parce que nombreux sont les pêcheurs qui nous regardent, M. le président, entre ces deux dates, il y a eu 6 jours de pêche en excluant les jours fériés du 12 mars et le dimanche 14 mars et certains pêcheurs n'ont pu sortir pêcher qu'un jour ou deux. Le ministre peut-il bien confirmer que les jours non travaillés pendant cette période donneront droit à une compensation pour les pêcheurs, et si oui, sur quelle base financière ?

Mr Maudhoo: As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to announce that my Ministry will provide financial assistance based on the bad weather for those non-fishing days. *C'est-à-dire, ils vont être payés, M. le président.*

Mr Osman Mahomed: Last year, in Parliamentary Question B/309 addressed to the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, hon. Bodha, it was question of a sum of USD 6 million from Saudi Arabia met for a mosque and to the fishers community. In the same reply, the Minister had said that the Draft Memorandum was forwarded to you, hon. Minister, and for you to bring onward to Cabinet for fishers to benefit from that money. Can I ask the hon. Minister the status on this fund donated by Saudi Arabia meant for the fisher community?

Mr Maudhoo: The agreement has not been signed yet. I would prefer to wait and after the signature I will pronounce on that.

Mr David: M. le président, le nouveau communiqué du 19 mars 2021 a repris les mêmes horaires autorisés de pêche, à savoir de 6 heures du matin à 6 heures du soir. Or, ceux qui portent attention au dur métier de la pêche, savent que pour la pêche en haute mer et notamment pour certains poissons comme le thon ou la dorade, et j'imagine que ces poissons n'ont pas lu le communiqué du ministère de la pêche, les pêcheurs doivent prendre la mer aux alentours de 4 heures du matin. Puis-je demander au ministre s'il est disposé à revoir les créneaux horaires autorisés du matin en conséquence ?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter definitely, but, first of all, we must ensure that the COVID-19 protocol are observed. This is the main issue. We have to put the officers over there and I must talk to the fisheries protection officer about this possibility. I can't say now.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Just in case there is an extension of the lockdown period, can the Minister ensure the House that the same protocol will be observed by the fishermen and that in case they are not able to go fishing, he will still give the compensation to the fishermen and if he can, please, communicate to the House the quantum of the compensation he mentioned earlier? He never mentioned the sum; he only said it is an allowance.

Mr Maudhoo: I just mentioned we will stay with the bad weather which is Rs425. This is it.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

FISHING VESSEL LU RONG YUAN YU 588 - GROUNDING - INVESTIGATION

(No. B/22) 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 fishing vessel Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 which ran aground on the reefs of Pointe aux Sables on 07 March 2021, he will state -

- (a) when the vessel entered the territorial sea and the port waters of Mauritius, giving details of the communications exchanged between the captain thereof and the National Coast Guard and the Mauritius Ports Authority, respectively;
- (b) if it holds a fishing licence to operate in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius, and
- (c) the first conclusions of the preliminary investigation on the grounding thereof.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed that on Friday 05 March 2021 at 01 42 hours, the Chinese-flagged Fishing Vessel (FV) Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 entered into the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius for a call to Port Louis Harbour for bunkering and provisioning, after obtaining the necessary clearances from the Mauritius Ports Authority and the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The movement of the vessel was being monitored by

the National Coast Guard Operations Room, through the Seavision Automatic Identification System which is commonly known as the AIS.

On Sunday 07 March at 04 14 hours, the vessel entered into our territorial waters to sail towards the port area. At 06 10 hours, it entered the port limits.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have further been informed that on 07 March 2021 at 17 21 hours, the National Coast Guard Operations Room received a phone call from the Port Louis Harbour radio to the effect that the vessel, with sixteen (16) crew members on board, ran aground on the reef off Pointe aux Sables. Immediately after receiving the call, the National Coast Guard Operations Room contacted the National Coast Guard Harbour Security, which is the nearest Unit to the scene of the incident for assistance.

The Ag. Port Master, the MPA Port emergency Services and the Port Security Unit were mobilised. Tug Ionian Sea FOS was requested to proceed to the casualty site to provide assistance.

As regards part (b), I have been informed that the Fishing Vessel Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 has no fishing licence to operate in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (c), I am informed that a team consisting of officers from the Police Force, Shipping Division and Polyeco boarded the fishing vessel Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 by Police helicopter during the afternoon on 08 March 2021 and a first assessment of the condition of the vessel was made.

On 09 March 2021, Captain H Noel, Principal Nautical Surveyor of the Shipping Division was formally appointed to hold a preliminary inquiry into the circumstances that led to the grounding of the fishing vessel in line with section 10(1) of the Merchant Shipping Act.

The Director of Shipping has detained the fishing vessel in the port.

I am also informed by the Director of Shipping that all documents of the vessel have been secured. The preliminary inquiry is under way but with the COVID-19 situation, there might be some little delay in the process.

The first conclusion of the preliminary inquiry can only be reached after the completion of interviews of the crew members which are being awaited due to the COVID-19 protocols, the national lockdown and the need for translators as the crew members are of different nationalities, namely Chinese, Indonesian and Philippines.

An ecological survey is being also carried out by officers of my Ministry for an assessment of the damages which might have been caused by the grounding of the vessels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House that my Ministry and all other Authorities have promptly reacted to the casualty at Pointe aux Sables and no oil spill has occurred and the salvage operation was a success.

I also seize the opportunity to thank the officers of my Ministry including the Fisheries Protection Officer, the Shipping Division, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute and all stakeholders, including the Mauritius Ports Authority, the National Coast Guard, the Mauritius Police Department, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, Polyeco and the inhabitants and fishers of Pointe aux Sables.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Lord Mayor, hon. PPS Dorine Chuckowry, hon. Patrice Armance and hon. Fabrice David for their positive attitude during this successful salvage operation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

Mr David: *Merci, M. le ministre.* Mr Speaker, Sir, the procedures to nominate a vessel with the Port Authorities are that full documentation reaches the latter at least 48 hours prior to a vessel's expected time of arrival and one main document is the Notice of Arrival. I have downloaded a template of this document from the Mauritius Ports Authority's website. Can the hon. Minister table the Notice of Arrival received by the Port Master and the Harbour Radio for the vessel Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588?

Mr Maudhoo: I do not have the document right now, but I will check with the MPA; this can be done.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister, in line with the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act, did the fishing vessel at any stage send a letter, fax or email to your Permanent Secretary, at least 24 hours before the boat or vessel entered or exited the maritime zone with details about the quantity of fish on board; and whether that same vessel, at least 72 hours did send a letter, fax or email to the Permanent Secretary to inform the latter of the purposes of its call into the Port because you did say that it had entered the Port area, and was a copy of the vessel or boat authorisation to fish or information on the quantity of fish on board given. If this was given, could he please table the document?

Mr Maudhoo: I can table, but, as I said in my reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, this fishing vessel Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 has no fishing licence to operate in the EEZ of Mauritius and he has not even applied. In fact, I am informed that this vessel called at the Port for bunkering and provisions.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Suite à une étude bathymétrique qui avait été réalisée l'an dernier dans le cadre du démantèlement du Wakashio, nous avons tristement constaté la mort de plusieurs dizaines de cétacés et plusieurs experts s'accordent à dire que cet exercice peut déstabiliser les cétacés. Pourrait-on savoir, si dans le présent cas, une étude bathymétrique aurait été réalisée et si le ministère aurait fait un quelconque suivi et aurait constaté la mort de cétacés?

Mr Maudhoo: No bathymetric has been done this time and we have no information as to any death of any species.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: I understand from the Minister that there is an ongoing investigation and he mentioned there are many documents that have been secured. May I know from him whether the list of documents, the vessel VDR, the Port Louis Port control log book, the National Coast Guard operation book have been secured, and most importantly, where are the seamen at the time you are answering the question now?

Mr Maudhoo: The crew of the Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 are all in a sister vessel belonging to the company in the Port areas. As for the documents, I think the enquiring officer, Mr Noël, has secured all the necessary documents.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr David: M. le président, j'ai pris le soin d'étudier les *daily port situations*, disponibles encore une fois sur le site web de la MPA pour les dates du 3, 4, 5 et 8 mars 2021. Je rappelle que le bateau dont nous parlons s'est échoué à Pointe aux Sables le 7 mars. Hors dans ces rapports quotidiens portuaires, le Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 n'apparaît nulle part dans la liste des bateaux attendus contrairement à son 'sister ship', le Lu Rong Yuan Yu 599 qui lui est arrivé au Port le 3 mars. Le Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 n'apparaît que sur le rapport du 8 mars dans la liste des bateaux arrivés. En fait, il avait même déjà échoué. Le ministre peut-il éclairer la Chambre sur cette surprenante absence dans les rapports portuaires?

Mr Maudhoo: I have given all the information that I have been informed of, but this is news to me, I must look into it.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME – NAMES & TYPES OF VACCINES

(No. B/23) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the on-going administration to the population of COVID-19 Vaccine under the National Deployment and Vaccination Programme, he will state the names and types of vaccines being administered, indicating in each case –

- (a) the number of available doses thereof;
- (b) if the green light of the World Health Organisation or of any other international health organisation has been granted prior to the utilisation thereof, and
- (c) if the second dose to be administered will be same as the first one and, if not, why not.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already earlier answered to questions related to this subject in regard to parts (a), (b) and (c).

Mr Speaker: You have finished? Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Donc, concernant les vaccins Covaxin, Sinopharm, Sinovac, Sputnik, nous savons tous qu'ils sont au stade de Phase III d'essai clinique et ne sont toujours pas validés par l'OMS. De ce fait, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire si son ministère, malgré tout, a sollicité l'expertise, les recommandations de l'OMS à travers son représentant qui est basé à Maurice? Si oui, peut-on savoir quelles ont été les réactions, les recommandations de l'OMS? Si non, pourquoi cela n'a pas été fait ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Thank you, hon. Member. Yes, I would say the Ministry is in constant touch with the WHO representative in Mauritius. In fact, he is participating in all the High Level Committees and he is giving us the latest news that is happening at the WHO concerning the vaccines. So far, what we have received from the WHO is that all the vaccines are in the process of being validated in the coming weeks.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: With regard to the several vaccines that are being purchased by your Ministry, by Government, can I ask the hon. Minister how the procurement process is being done? Is it being purchased by your Ministry directly with the suppliers, the Government in Europe or be it anywhere or are the purchases being routed through intermediaries?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already given the reply to this question in detail of how all the purchases have been done and I do not think I have to repeat it again.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, this morning, the hon. Minister mentioned about the Vaccination Committee that gave the approval for the vaccines. May I know from him who are the experts, their names and their qualifications that sit on his Board that took the decision to approve these vaccines while the OMS has not done so?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will start by the –

- (a) Chairperson, Dr. Z. G. Senior Adviser;
- (b) Dr. V. P., the Chairperson of MAUNITAG (Mauritius National Immunisation Technical Advisory Group). MAUNITAG is again in the Ministry of Health and Wellness to look for vaccination;
- (c) Dr. V. D., Director Health Services for Public Health;
- (d) Dr. S. M., Director of Laboratory Services;
- (e) Dr. P. L., Consultant-in-Charge, Internal Medicines;
- (f) Dr. T. R. G. Chairperson, Pharmacovigilance Committee;
- (g) Dr. D. C. N., Specialist in Infectious Diseases;
- (h) Dr. M. K., Regional Public Health Superintendent, CDCU;
- (i) Dr. S. R., Deputy Permanent Secretary, and
- (j) the technical officers.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary! Hon Quirin!

Mr Quirin: I have two more, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: No, you cannot choose.

Mr Quirin: No, I won't be able to choose. Both are important, please.

Mr Speaker: Combine them.

Mr Quirin: Yes. M. le président, le Dr. Joomaye, président du *National Vaccination Committee*, est venu affirmer à la télévision nationale que le vaccin Covaxin est efficace contre certains variants Brésilien, Anglais et Sud-Africain de la COVID-19. L'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire sur quoi cette affirmation est basée, est-ce qu'il partage l'avis du Dr. Joomaye ? Si tel est le cas, de bien vouloir déposer les documents y relatifs.

Dr. Jagutpal : Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a PQ related to this question, I will be replying it at a later stage, but, I wish to inform the House, we are in a stage where we need vaccination to protect our population and, at this stage, all countries are going through the same procedures. They have to...

Dr. Boolell: *Pa pe dir nou!*

Mr Speaker: Former Leader of the Opposition! Former Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Jagutpal: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, all countries are adopting the same strategies and the same procedures...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do not interrupt!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...concerning procurement of vaccination, planification for vaccination and administration of vaccination.

Mr Quirin: M. le président...

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, j'ai une dernière question.

Mr Speaker: Next question! No, I have allowed four supplementaries; you cannot take all the supplementaries. There are many questions left.

Mr Quirin: Only two!

Mr Speaker: Help me! Help me! You have another question...

Mr Quirin: That is the third one.

Mr Speaker: Put your question! Put your question, you have another question, B/24!

Mr Quirin: I have a third one, a last one, very important one, please. You have given three questions to all.

Mr Speaker: You want to shout?

Mr Quirin: I am not shouting, I am just telling you.

Mr Speaker: Please, respect the Chair,...

Mr Quirin: I respect you.

Mr Speaker: ...The Chair has given its ruling. The ruling is that ...

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS - MAURITIAN ATHLETES - VACCINATION

(No. B/24) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Mauritian athletes, he will state if it is mandatory for them to get vaccinated against the Covid-19 pandemic prior to proceeding abroad to attend international competitions, indicating the reasons therefor.

Mr Speaker: That is it!

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, while the COVID-19 vaccines are not mandatory in Mauritius, athletes proceeding overseas to attend international competitions are highly encouraged to do so and will have, at all times, to abide strictly to the sanitary rules and regulations of the host country.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre si un athlète, pour des raisons de santé, ou autres, refuse de se faire vacciner, aura-t-il le droit de voyager et représenter le pays à des compétitions internationales ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, nous allons devoir respecter ce que les pays organisateurs vont mettre comme règlement.

Donc, si les règlements sont de se faire vacciner, malheureusement, un athlète qui ne peut pas se faire vacciner pour des raisons de santé, il ne pourra pas participer, mais tout ça ce sont des suppositions, il faudra attendre les compétitions internationales.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister advise if Sports Federations have requested vaccination for the athletes. If yes, which ones?

Mr Toussaint: Oui, M. le président, il y a certaines fédérations qui ont déjà signifié leur intention de faire vacciner leurs athlètes, les entraîneurs, aussi bien que le personnel. Par exemple, il y a le *Mauritius Football Association* qui a fait une demande officielle au ministère, le Shotokan Martial Arts, aussi, a fait une demande. La fédération mauricienne de cyclisme, bien avant le *lockdown*, avait déjà fait une demande de vaccin parce qu'elle prévoyait certaines compétitions internationales, et je présume qu'il y aura, bien sûr, sûrement d'autres fédérations qui vont venir de l'avant et faire des demandes de vaccination pour leurs athlètes.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre, est-ce qu'il peut nous informer par rapport aux athlètes qui partent dans des compétitions internationales, à leur retour, même s'ils sont vaccinés et est-ce qu'ils sont dans l'obligation à leur retour de faire la quarantaine ? Et si oui, qui en fera les frais ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, il y a le *National High-Level Committee on Covid* qui prend toutes les décisions. Ceci n'est pas de mon ressort. Bien sûr, athlètes ou autres personnes rentrant dans le pays aura besoin de respecter les critères et les règlements.

Mr Quirin: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: You have another one?

Mr Quirin: Oui, M. le président, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre, je sais que la vaccination des athlètes qui sont présélectionnés pour les JIOI ont déjà commencé, est-ce qu'on peut savoir s'il y a eu un *time frame* par rapport aux autres disciplines ? Il vient de le dire qu'il y a certaines disciplines qui ont déjà signifié leurs intentions, mais est-ce qu'il y a eu un délai qui a été accordé à tous les sportifs, à toutes les fédérations, afin que leurs athlètes soient vaccinés.

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, ce que nous sommes en train de faire au sein du ministère, c'est de rassembler toutes les informations concernant les fédérations qui demandent à se faire vacciner, et ceci implique beaucoup de personnes. Donc, nous sommes en train de faire un exercice d'abord, de voir combien de personnes cela va impliquer et, bien sûr, nous allons faire la demande au *High-Level Committee on COVID-19*, qui vont, bien sûr, nous guider et il y va de soi que ceux qui ont des compétitions urgentes à aller faire, bien sûr, on va demander qu'ils soient vaccinés en priorité.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are talking about international competitions, where high level of performance is required. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has given thought to that aspect of things, insofar as the type of vaccine is being envisaged and the timeframe they will have to get vaccinated because when they arrive overseas, it does not affect their performance, if at all there is an issue there?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, c'est très prématuré comme question, et puis, de toutes les façons, ce sont les responsables de la santé qui vont devoir nous guider par rapport au vaccin, est-ce que cela va affecter les performances ?. Nous sommes aussi en contact avec le *World Anti-doping Organisation* pour nous guider dans ce sens, et, bien sûr, nous allons prendre tout cela en considération.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS - AMBASSADORS

(No. B/25) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to our diplomatic missions abroad, he will state the number of Ambassadors posted thereat who are presently in Mauritius, indicating since when.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, presently, there are 16 Ambassadors, High Commissioners who are posted in our diplomatic missions abroad. They are Mr Busgeet posted at Addis Ababa. His Excellency Mr Busgeet, Her Excellency Mrs Labelle at Antananarivo, His Excellency Mr Wong Yen Chong at Beijing, His Excellency Mr Gunessee at Brussels, His Excellency Mr Goburdhun at Cairo, Her Excellency Mrs Monty at Canberra, Her Excellency, Mrs Kanabajee at Geneva, His Excellency Mr Soobadur at Islamabad, His Excellency Mr Goburdhun at KL, Kuala Lumpur, His Excellency Mr Nunkoo at London, His Excellency Mr Joomun at Maputo, His Excellency Mr Jankee at Moscow, Her Excellency Mrs Hanoomanjee at New Delhi and His Excellency Mr Koonjul at New York, His Excellency Mr Valaydon at Paris and His Excellency Mr Luchmun at Pretoria.

Two Ambassadors, Mr Speaker, Sir, have not yet assumed their post in their respective country of posting and arrangements are being made for them to proceed accordingly. They are His Excellency Mr Jugroo to be posted at Washington and Her Excellency Ms Sohun to be posted at Berlin. In addition, the following two career

Ambassadors are currently posted at the Headquarters, Ambassador Mr Dhilum, appointed as Secretary for Foreign Affairs since 10 August 2020 and His Excellency Mr Mungur, Ambassador since 13 August 2018.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have one roaming Ambassador who is based in Mauritius, His Excellency Mr Showkatally Soodhun and he is accredited to the United Arab Emirates, the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain since 25 January 2021. Ambassador Mr Soodhun was previously accredited to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with residence in Riyadh from 07 January 2020 to 24 January 2021. He was also accredited as non-resident Ambassador to the following countries; United Arab Emirates, the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président, merci pour le ministre pour la liste des ambassadeurs et qui ne répond pas à ma question. *(Expunged following the Announcement of Mr Speaker at the Sitting of Tuesday 30.03.21)*

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I leave it to the hon. Member to take responsibility for the statement he is making.

Mr Assirvaden: Le ministre ne répond pas à la question, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

Okay! M. le président, nous savons tous que la place d'un ambassadeur se trouve à l'ambassade où il est posté. Malheureusement, ici, à l'île Maurice, nous voyons qu'il n'y a pas que Monsieur Soodhun, il y a aussi l'Ambassadrice Maya Hanoomanjee de l'Inde qui se trouvait à l'île Maurice. Peut-on savoir du ministre, si quand les ambassadeurs sont en vacances, ici, pendant des mois et des mois, est-ce qu'ils sont payés de leur salaire des privilèges et une voiture avec chauffeur ? On peut le savoir ?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, just to remind the hon. Member that in the past Mrs Thacoor-Sidaya, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Azad Dhomun and Mrs Roussety have also served as Non-Resident Ambassadors, Roving Ambassadors....

(Interruptions)

...under different Government. In fact, Mrs Roussety was appointed as Non-Resident Ambassador for a period of three years with residence in Mauritius to the Republic of Seychelles as from 03 August 2012. Mrs Indira Savitree Thacoor-Sidaya was Roving Ambassador for Africa with residence in Mauritius from July 2012 prior to being posted to our mission in Moscow on 13 June 2013.

Now, with regard to the benefits and privileges, Mr Speaker, Sir, Ambassador Showkutally Soodhun is being granted the benefits and privileges in line with the recommendations of the PRB Report of 2016 and is entitled to a series of benefits and privileges according to what have been provided for, as I said, in the PRB Report.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Did I correctly hear the hon. Minister say that we currently do not have any ambassador in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since Mr Soodhun returned to Mauritius? And, if this is the case, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the post is going to be filled and what is the timeframe for filling that post?

Mr Ganoo: Well, as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Soodhun is based in Mauritius but he is accredited to the United Arab Emirates, the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain and before taking residence here, he was previously accredited to these three countries. This is what I said in my answer.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: How many questions do you have? One?

Mr Ganoo: Can I also reply to the question concerning Mrs Hanoomanjee, Mr Speaker, Sir, since it has been raised by hon. Assirvaden. In fact, Mrs Hanoomanjee came to Mauritius on 25 August on medical leave for her personal treatment. She resumed duty at the High Commission of Delhi on 11 January 2021, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, she came here for personal medical treatment.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just informed the House that Mr Soodhun is no longer the Ambassador in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. May we know what exactly happened that Mr Soodhun is no more the Ambassador of Mauritius in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the more so we know of his close relationship with the royal family?

Mr Ganoo: If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will be pleased to reply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary question!

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le président, nous savons tous, et vous le savez mieux encore que quiconque, qu'un ambassadeur a le devoir de retenue. Nous avons tous écouté le *now roving Ambassador, l'Ambassadeur Soodhun* à la radio en ligne dans des commentaires politiques, dans des émissions politiques, tenant des reproches, des critiques à l'encontre de l'opposition, flattant le gouvernement. Est-ce que le gouvernement, le ministre trouve-t-il normal qu'un ambassadeur digne de ce nom se permet de ternir un tel langage contre les opposants politiques dans le contexte actuel, et Monsieur Soodhun l'a fait à la radio à plusieurs reprises ? Est-ce normal ? Est-ce qu'il sera rappelé à l'ordre ?

Mr Speaker: You made your point.

Mr Ganoo: I suppose the way to answer this question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that Ambassador Soodhun is entitled to his political opinion.

Dr. Boolell: Entitled...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question! Next question!

Dr. Boolell: Worst diplomatic *impair*!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Former Leader of the Opposition, what is happening to you?

(Interruptions)

Now, you stop fighting me!

(Interruptions)

You stop fighting me! You don't have the floor! You don't have the floor, you are shouting and you are fighting me!

Mr Assirvaden: PQ B/26!

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN – FOOD DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/26) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to food distribution and price control during the present Covid-19 lockdown, he will state the measures taken to ensure –

- (a) a fair distribution to prevent artificial shortages thereof, and
- (b) an effective price control by retailers and other food distributors.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is having to face a national confinement for a second time. The whole commercial and industrial sectors were caught by surprise. However, we are this time guided by the experience we acquired last year so as to ensure that consumers have access to food products and other basic necessities.

The officers of my Ministry and the Mauritius Chambers of Commerce and Industry have been working together in order to ensure that there is an adequate supply of essential commodities on the market. In order to ensure a regular supply of food and essential commodities to the population, all distributors and supermarkets have been classified as essential services.

This Government has given priority and fast-track Work Access Permits for supermarkets, distributors and specialised logistics organisations. Within the second day of the national confinement, all supermarkets were opened and implementing all shopping guidelines, including the alphabetical order for shopping and ensuring enforcement of all safety measures. All supermarkets and hypermarkets have been operating as per their normal working hours and have been allowed to start operation as from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. This decision has helped to prevent long queues and ensure that consumers shop at their own convenience. The officers of the Consumer Affairs Unit of my Ministry are ensuring that distributors are providing regular supplies of goods throughout the island. For Constituency Nos. 15, 16 and 17, delivery is being done as per days and time allowed by the Police for delivery in the red zones. The Police and the private sector are fully collaborating so as to ensure an adequate supply of basic necessities in strict adherence with sanitary protocols.

All supermarkets have been requested to take necessary measures to ensure that stocks of basic commodities are regularly replenished. Following consultation with my Ministry, supermarkets have maintained all their current promotions which were planned before the national confinement. The Price Fixing Unit of my Ministry, which is fully

operational on Work-from-Home basis since a year, ensures that prices of controlled products continue to be fixed. This Government introduced the Price Fixing Information System which is an online platform whereby importers and traders can submit costing on line on a 24/7 basis.

I am pleased to announce that during this crucial period, my officers have provided a 24/7 support to importers. There are regular checks by the officers of my Ministry in hypermarkets, supermarkets, *supérettes* and retail shops to ensure that prices of goods are properly affixed and that there is no abuse on goods and that are subject to price control.

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le ministre. Je reconnais, M. le président, que l'inspecteurat du ministère du Commerce, dans ce confinement actuel, sévit à travers le pays mais le ministre a sûrement lui-aussi vu et nous avons constaté, que juste après ce présent *lockdown* comment certains commerçants ont commencé à faire des abus sur la tête des consommateurs mauriciens. À titre d'exemple, vous l'avez sûrement vu, certains légumes se vendaient et se vendent à des prix scandaleux. Est-ce qu'on peut savoir, M. le président, quelles ont été les actions prises concernant cet état de choses?

Mr Callichurn: Well, there have been regular visits to different commerce across the island. I must say that between the 07 to 20 March, 1,652 trade premises have been visited by the officers of my Ministry and we have also drawn 533 contraventions. We have put also a hotline at the disposition of the general public, that is, 185, so that they can report any case of abuse.

Mr R. Duval: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry has a prior list monitoring liberalised on consumer products to avoid undue price raise?

Mr Callichurn: Yes, we do monitor prices on a regular basis and it is with regard to basic commodities.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I appeal to the Minister with regard to Canot village which is now in a Red Zone? The inhabitants of Canot are having problems because the suppliers are not allowed to supply food in the shops there and there is a problem of goods which are not coming in the Dream Price Supermarket of Petite Rivière; we have only one in the region. Can I appeal to the Minister to ask his officers to deal with the Police and ask the suppliers to come and supply food in the shops of Canot?

Mr Callichurn: Well, this is not the information I got, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have been informed that for Constituency Nos. 15, 16, 17 and Canot village, the delivery is being done as per the date and time decided by the Police and it is being done three times a week. I take on board your request and I shall address it with the Police to ensure that *il n'y a pas de pénurie dans la chaîne de distribution*.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le ministre, malheureusement, il n'y a pas que les supermarchés et les légumes, il y a aussi les pharmacies. Je parle, ici, en pensant à ces milliers d'aînés, de retraités qui achètent leurs médicaments en pharmacies privées. Dès l'annonce du *lockdown*, le lendemain, certaines pharmacies ont augmenté leur prix pour les médicaments de plus de 15% à 20%. C'est scandaleux, M. le président. Est-ce que le ministère peut intervenir au niveau des pharmacies aussi?

Mr Callichurn: We will certainly, but we should encourage the population to report these pharmacies and different trades that practice abusive prices.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

EMERGENCY PROCUREMENT EXERCISES – ALLEGED MALPRACTICES

(No. B/27) **Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to allegations of malpractices in the emergency procurement exercises carried out during the first COVID-19 lockdown, he will –

- (a) state the measures taken in relation thereto, and
- (b) table copy of the changes brought to the emergency procurement procedures if any, and, if not, why not.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that as of now, no malpractice has been established in relation to emergency procurement undertaken during the first confinement period. There is an investigation being carried out by the Independent Commission against Corruption into some alleged malpractices but the enquiry is still ongoing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, emergency procurement procedures are defined by section 21 of the Public Procurement Act 2006. In addition to this, on 19 March 2020, the Procurement Policy Office issued Directive 44 setting out the

instructions to be followed for having recourse to emergency procurement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am further informed that there have been no changes brought to the emergency procurement procedures, up to now. However, should the need be felt, the Procurement Policy Office would do the needful.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, donc, il n'y a pas eu de changement dans les procédures. Est-ce qu'on peut savoir du ministre du moins si le ministère de la Santé s'est prévalu du *emergency procurement* dans ce présent confinement?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member will come with a proper question, I am going to give the answer for that.

Dr. Boolell: Does the Minister agree that when he packed all those allegations of malpractices, he landed up with so many blisters in his hands?

Dr. Jagutpal: I do not agree.

Mr Speaker: I am confused with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he has taken, he must have an advanced report of the Director of Audit who has published his report this morning. And in there, the Director of Audit says that he has been restricted in his verification because the information that he required regarding the COVID-19 pandemic was not available for him to audit although he has a constitutional office. Is the Minister aware of that and what is he going to do to make the information available to the Director of Audit?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I again invite the hon. Member to come up with a question and I am going to give the answer.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le président, vu les allégations graves dans le passé - les allégations, je dis bien - concernant l'achat des équipements médicaux dans le dernier confinement, est-ce que le ministre peut donner la garantie du moins à la Chambre, à la population, au pays, que s'il devrait y avoir d'achat - et je sais qu'il est sincère à ce niveau-là -, que son ministère ne fera pas appel comme facilitateur au *Senior Adviser*, le Dr. Joomaye ? S'il vous plaît, pas de Dr. Joomaye cette fois-ci !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Question!

Mr Assirvaden: Non, s'il peut prendre l'engagement, parce-que c'est après le confinement qu'on saura. Est-ce qu'il peut prendre l'engagement que le Dr. Joomaye ne sera pas là?

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramful!

COVID-19 VACCINES GLOBAL ACCESS (COVAX) FACILITY

(No. B/28) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the procurement of doses of COVID-19 Vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) facility, from other pharmaceutical companies or friendly countries, he will give an update thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in July 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed my Ministry that there was a proposal from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI Alliance) inviting Mauritius to submit a non-binding expression of interest for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines being developed by several international pharmaceutical companies.

After consultation with all relevant stakeholders, my Ministry entered into an agreement with the GAVI Alliance. The Agreement provides for the procurement of vaccines up to 20% of the population estimated at 253,600.

On 16 December 2020, my Ministry also approached other manufacturers namely AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna and Gamaleya Research Institute seeking information in respect of the process and modalities for the procurement of each vaccine, the prices thereof, the supply chain, the temperature requirement and the scheduled delivery of the vaccines. Pfizer requested my Ministry to enter into a Non-Disclosure Agreement which my Ministry did. Thereafter, the working session/webinar was held with representatives of Pfizer on 07 January 2021 and my Ministry was requested to make an official request.

My Ministry submitted a request for the procurement of 1 million doses of Pfizer vaccines and requested the manufacturer to inform about the terms and conditions, delivery schedule and pricing. Pfizer requested my Ministry to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement which my Ministry did. However, there was no conclusive deal with any of the manufacturers.

The African Union is also facilitating the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines for AU member countries through the Africa Medical Supplies Platform. The latter informed my Ministry that the allotment for Mauritius would be 199,682 doses, of which 48,451 from Pfizer and 151,231 from Johnson and Johnson.

The purpose of the Safety Data Exchange Agreement was to describe the procedures and to define the responsibilities between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India concerning the emergency use of Covishield vaccines.

On 27 January 2021, a firm order was placed on the Serum Institute of India for the purchase of 300,000 doses of Covishield vaccines, that is, 100,000 doses to be supplied in February 2021, 100,000 doses in first quarter and 100,000 doses in second quarter.

The first consignment of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines reached Mauritius on 21 February 2021. The date of expiry of the vaccines is July 2021.

The second consignment of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines is expected in mid-April 2021 and the last consignment by the end of June 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the 200,000 doses already available will cover for nearly 100,000 persons. In order to achieve herd immunity, my Ministry has ordered one million vaccines from Serum Institute of India which has requested us to submit a purchase order for only 300,000 doses.

On 05 March 2021, the High Commission of India informed my Ministry that vaccines against COVID-19 manufactured ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Point of order!

Mr Ramful: This question has already been fully debated during the PNQ and all these answers have already been given by the Minister. Can the answer be curtailed?

Mr Speaker: Too much noise on this side.

Mr Ramful: Can he just curtail his answer and allow us to put another question, please?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

Mr Ramful: It is a waste of parliamentary time.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has made his point?

Mr Ramful: It's okay.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, be quiet! Hon. Members! Hon. Minister, finish your reply!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will continue because these questions were addressed to me and it is my duty to give all the details even if I have to give it hundred times more.

Mr Speaker: Next supplementary question, hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: I have only one question. This question has already been debated fully. There are lot of concerns internationally and locally with regard to the content of the vaccines, the side effects, product liability, exclusion of liability, all these are questions of concerns and in order to allow the public to make an informed decision and also to boost public confidence, many countries have resorted to the rules of transparency.

Mr Speaker: Put your question, you are creating confusion.

Mr Ramful: The question is that the EU has made public all purchase agreements which contain all the clauses and many countries have followed the same principle. On a matter of transparency, is the Minister ready so that the Mauritians can have an informed decision, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You have made your point?

Mr Ramful: ... make all these purchase agreements public?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I invite the hon. Member to come up with a question; I am going to give all the details and information related to his question.

Mr Ramful: I have just one last question with regard to the vaccines that we are supposed to get under the COVAX facility. We have signed not an ordinary agreement, a committed purchase agreement, we are a self-financing partner of COVAX facility and we are in a situation of urgency. Can we know from the hon. Minister when we are going to get our batch of vaccines under the COVAX facility?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the COVAX facility, in my reply earlier I have already mentioned what is the contribution of UNDP in the COVAX facility. I am not going to repeat again and as far as the batch that we are supposed to receive, we are liaising with the WHO. They will give us the appropriate date, but there is a forecast that we should receive the vaccination in April or in the month of May.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramful!

COVID-19 VACCINES - EFFECTIVENESS - NEW VARIANTS

(No. B/29) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 Vaccines being administered under the National Deployment and Vaccination Programme, he will state if the suppliers have been queried as to the –

- (a) effectiveness thereof against the new variants, and
- (b) duration of the effectiveness thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the manufacturers and suppliers of the COVID-19 vaccines provide information on effectiveness, composition and expiry of the vaccines produced by them.

According to the World Health Organisation, the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, which is a viral vector vaccine, has an efficacy of 66.7% against symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection after administration of two doses. It was found that the vaccine efficacy increased significantly when the interval between the first dose and the second dose is done after a period of 8 to 12 weeks. The vaccine efficacy is then of 76 to 82%, according to recent studies.

The vaccine commercialised under the brand name Covaxin, has been approved by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for Emergency use. In Mauritius, the Trade and Therapeutics Committee, the Pharmacy Board and the COVID-19 Vaccination Committee have also approved the Emergency use of the Covaxin.

The Covaxin vaccine is an inactivated COVID-19 vaccine with adjuvant. The conclusions of its Phase 1 and Phase 2 trials have been published in the Lancet.

My Ministry has been provided with the interim analysis of Phase 3 trials. In all, 25,800 persons aged between 18 and 98, took part in the phase and more than 9 million persons have already received a first dose of the Covaxin.

The interim results of Phase 3 trials show that the vaccine has an efficacy of 80.6% when the number of COVID-19 cases registered in the vaccinated group and the placebo group are compared.

Currently, the duration of the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines remains unknown, given that the time elapsed as from the first vaccination, till date, is only of some months.

As of now, we know that the duration of the immunity conferred by the vaccine is of at least 8 months. This period of 8 months could, however, be extended, but only time will tell.

In the light of current available data, the rates of efficacy of the different vaccines, against the South African and Brazilian variants cannot be established with precision (disparities between the small number of existing studies).

We know that viral vector vaccines and inactivated vaccines with adjuvant convey a cellular immunity which is not modified by mutations. This is opposed to antibody immunity, which in this case, can be diminished by mutations but the immunity remains present.

Regarding the UK variant, the vaccines have the same efficacy as with the initial strain of COVID-19.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: We have heard from the director of Abiolabs that according to him the interim report that was submitted to the authorities shows that the new variants are present in Mauritius. We have not heard any confirmation from Government. Can the Minister confirm if the interim report shows that there are new variants presently in Mauritius?

Dr. Jagutpal: Abiolabs have been conducting these tests for the first time and whatever results they have given, we have to crosscheck them with the South African CDC and then we can compare whether these results are the same or not.

Mr Ramful: My question is what are the results according to Abiolabs? I don't want to know about the confirmation. What are the interim results that have been submitted by Abiolabs?

Dr. Jagutpal: At this stage, the Ministry has not received any interim results from the Abiolabs.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre avait laissé entendre à un certain moment que les 200,000 doses de Covaxin seraient un don du gouvernement Indien et voilà que nous apprenons que tel n'est plus le cas et cela à travers le communiqué émis à l'issue du dernier conseil des ministres.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet! Put your question!

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir ce qui s'est passé, à quoi est dû ce revirement et quel est le coût de cette cargaison de 200,000 doses de Covaxin ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have replied to this question earlier, giving all the details of what were the donations and what were the procurements.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: In regard to that specific reply that the hon. Minister gave this morning, if I heard him correctly, it is \$15 per dose, meaning Rs600 and 200,000 doses, meaning \$3 million. Can I ask the hon. Minister - because the question pertains to supplier - what is the name of the supplier who has purchased this vaccine, which to my view is very expensive compared to AstraZeneca ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... which is way cheaper and approved by WHO?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the vaccine has been procured directly from the Bharat Biotech Laboratory and whatever be the financing, it has been done directly to that laboratory, there is no intermediary.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary, hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: From what I understand, according to the Minister, there is no scientific evidence at this stage to suggest that either Covishield or Covaxine are resilient against the South African virus. If that is true and if this is the case, then, what Government proposes to do with regard to all the number of persons who have been administered Covishield and Covaxine?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are at a very preliminary stage to comment on effectiveness of variant on vaccine. Let the international studies come, we will all know about the vaccines that would be effective against variants.

Mr Speaker: You have another question.

COVID-19 PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT FUND

(No. B/30) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the allocation of funds for approved projects under the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund and the Local Development Projects for the Grand Port District Council, he will state if the Minister is contemplating allocating the funds to other projects not approved by the Council and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has, for the time being, requested the District Council of Grand Port to put on hold the approved projects under the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund and the Local Development Projects given that two priority projects have jointly been identified for implementation, namely the construction of a food court at Rose Belle Market Fair estimated at Rs12 m. and the relocation of hawkers at Nouvelle France to the existing football ground at an estimated cost of Rs20 m.

With regard to the proposed Food Court Project at the Rose Belle Market Fair, following a joint site meeting held on 06 October 2020 at the Rose Belle Market Fair in the presence of the hon. Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance, the hon. Parliamentary Private Secretary and the hon. Government Chief Whip who are elected Members of the National Assembly for Constituency No. 11 and the then Chairperson of the District Council of Grand Port together with officers of the Council, it was agreed that there was an urgent need to have a proper food court for the market fair for health and safety reasons.

As a matter of fact, the District Council of Grand Port has proposed the project of food court at Rose Belle Market Fair on 12 October 2020 for funding consideration under the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Too noisy, this front bench there.

Dr. Husnoo: As for the relocation of the fair at Nouvelle France, the District Council of Grand Port had, on 04 January 2018, addressed a request to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund with respect to the relocation of the illegal fair usually held along Seegoolam Road opposite Phoenix Bev, Nouvelle France following an increasing number of representations.

Moreover, it is to be highlighted that the District Council of Grand Port had, at its meeting held on 20 December 2017, decided to relocate the illegal fair at Nouvelle France to resolve all the issues related to it. Therefore, it is not correct to state that the Council was not agreeable to undertake this project being proposed and for which reallocation of fund are under consideration. On the contrary, my Ministry is providing funds for this project, one of which dates back to December 2017 in order to resolve the long outstanding issues and for the benefit of the inhabitants of the localities concerned under the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund, Economic Recovery Programme and the Local Development Projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I reassure the House that for capital projects, my Ministry works in collaboration with the local authorities and the Members of the National Assembly for a better coordination and prioritisation of projects to ensure that the needs of the citizens are met.

Mr Ramful: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that projects approved under the COVID Projects Development Fund, is approved by an independent body chaired by the Financial Secretary under the Ministry of Finance? Is he not usurping the right, the responsibility of that Committee when he takes it upon himself to reallocate funds for projects that have not been approved under the COVID Fund?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, these projects, when reallocation is made, are referred to the Ministry of Finance for reallocation. So, I do not appropriate any authority from anybody.

Mr Ramful: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister is telling the House that he is depriving projects to no more than 22 villages. 22 villages are being deprived of projects because of him, because of his Ministry and benefiting only two villages.

Mr Speaker: So, what is the question?

Mr Ramful: Is he testifying this right and fair?

Dr. Husnoo: It is not my Ministry who decides, Mr Speaker, Sir. These projects are decided by the MPs in their constituency and as I mentioned earlier, in the first case by the then Chairman of the District Council and in the second case, by the District Council in 2017. So, I am not changing any project, this was decided by the council at that particular time.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Ramful: Those two Ministers from Constituency No. 12, hon. Hurreeram and hon. Toussaint, have they made representations to you that ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, this is not a question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ramful: Projects are being deprived.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry.

Quiet, please! This is not a question. You have another question, put it!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – WAGE ASSISTANCE SCHEME, SELF-EMPLOYED ASSISTANCE SCHEME, MAURITIUS INVESTMENT CORPORATION

(No. B/31) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the -

- (a) quantum of public funds disbursed as at to date under the COVID-19 related financial measures, in particular, the Wage Assistance Scheme, the Self-employed Assistance Scheme and the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd., for the preservation of employment;
- (b) number of job losses since the outbreak thereof, and
- (c) actual rate of unemployment.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, le monde est plongé dans la pandémie de la COVID-19 depuis maintenant plus d'un an. Dans ce contexte, le gouvernement mauricien n'a jamais lésiné ni sur les moyens, ni sur la rapidité de son action. Et cela, dans un seul et même but, celui d'apporter son aide aux ménages mauriciens et aux opérateurs économiques. Nous

avons, dès le premier cas de contamination confirmé sur notre territoire, mis en place des mesures d'assistance inédite. L'étendue et la vitesse d'implémentation ont été saluées au-delà de nos frontières par de nombreuses organisations internationales. Je pense notamment au Fonds Monétaire International ou encore au Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement.

Le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-employed Assistance Scheme* ont permis de préserver les fondamentaux de notre structure économique et aussi de notre modèle social. Et pour cause, cela a permis d'éviter le spectre de 100,000 chômeurs. Nous avons également pu empêcher la faillite de nombreuses entreprises. Ce faisant, nous avons protégé de notre mieux les moyens de subsistance de nos compatriotes.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, j'ai été informé par la Mauritius Revenue Authority que depuis l'introduction du *Wage Assistance Scheme* et du *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*, soit le 2 mars 2020 à ce jour, un montant total de R 18 milliards ont été déboursées. Dans le cadre de ces deux régimes, la répartition de déboursement pour la période allant de mars 2020 à février 2021, s'est effectué comme suit : premièrement au titre du *Wage Assistance Scheme*, R 12,5 milliards ont été versées à 273,120 employés travaillant dans 15,381 entreprises. Et deuxièmement R 2,5 milliards ont été versés à 204,050 travailleurs, indépendants au titre du *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*.

M. le président, compte tenu du confinement actuel, le gouvernement a décidé pour le mois de mars 2021, d'une part, de continuer à fournir une assistance financière sous les deux régimes précités, aux opérateurs du secteur du tourisme à Maurice et à Rodrigues pour le mois entier en cours et, d'autre part, d'étendre ces deux mécanismes d'assistance à l'ensemble des salariés et travailleurs indépendants opérant dans les différents secteurs d'activité à Maurice et cela pour une durée de deux semaines.

Nous estimons que l'assistance financière accordée pour le mois de mars 2021 aux opérateurs du secteur du tourisme, couplée à l'extension des deux régimes pour l'ensemble des salariés du privé et travailleurs indépendants pour la période allant du 10 mars au 25 mars 2021, aura un coût total des R 3 milliards.

Sur ce dernier point, je souhaite informer la Chambre que le versement de l'allocation aux salariés et aux travailleurs indépendants est actuellement en cours. En outre, et au regard du contexte actuel affectant particulièrement les travailleurs indépendants, le gouvernement,

sous le leadership du Premier ministre, a également décidé de leur verser une subvention exceptionnelle de R 10,000.

Cette aide exceptionnelle bénéficiera aux 204,050 travailleurs indépendants enregistrés auprès de la *Mauritius Revenue Authority*. Je précise qu'elle sera versée avant le 31 mars 2021 en sus de l'Assistance Financière reçue par les travailleurs indépendants sous le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne les fonds déboursés par la *Mauritius Investment Corporation*, je rappelle que la *MIC* est une société privée à responsabilité limitée. Par conséquent, je ne peux faire de commentaires sur ces opérations. En revanche, il m'est possible de communiquer les informations déjà publiques présentes sur son site web. D'après les informations disponibles en date du 8 mars 2021, la *MIC* a déboursé près de R 2 milliards, c'est-à-dire, R 1,947 milliards pour être exacte.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, j'ai été informé par le ministère du Travail, du Développement des Ressources Humaines et de la Formation qu'entre les mois de mars 2020 et février 2021, quelques 8,962 cas de licenciement économique ont été signalés.

Enfin, pour ce qui est de la partie (c) de la question, selon les informations qui me sont parvenues, les chiffres officiels du taux de chômage pour l'année 2020 seront publiés sur le site web de *Statistics Mauritius* le 18 mai 2021. Cela étant dit, selon les informations communiquées par le ministère du Travail, du Développement des Ressources Humaines et de la Formation, à la fin de l'année 2020, 30,371 personnes étaient enregistrées sur le registre du chômage du ministère et cherchant activement un emploi. À cette même date, 21,640 individus supplémentaires étaient enregistrés comme demandeur d'emploi alors qu'ils étaient à cette période déjà en poste.

Par conséquent, au 31 décembre 2020, au total 52,011 individus étaient enregistrés auprès du ministère du Travail, du Développement des Ressources Humaines et de la Formation comme demandeur d'emploi. Merci.

Mr Ramful: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister mentioned, I think, that Rs2 billion have been earmarked for the second lockdown. Can we know where the funds come from?

Dr. Padayachy: Ces fonds proviennent des provisions qui ont été faites pendant le Budget 2020-2021, donc du fonds du *Consolidated Fund*.

Mr Ramful: Given that the expected growth for this year has been far below what the hon. Minister has mentioned, does he still maintain that the budget deficit would be at 0% GDP?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je demanderai à l'honorable membre - il a posé des questions spécifiques concernant l'allocation sur le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* - pour des questions supplémentaires concernant la macro économie, de venir avec une question spécifique et je me ferai un plaisir de lui donner tous les détails.

Mr Speaker: Hon Uteem!

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, last year, in his Budget, announced that the Central Bank would be putting Rs80 billion to disburse through MIC. Today, almost one year later, only Rs2 billion have been disbursed. Can the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development explain this *faillite totale* of his plan, of MIC?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je n'utiliserai pas le terme 'faillite totale', c'est en fonction des demandes qu'ils sont en train de recevoir. La *MIC* est une société d'investissement publique. Ils ont quand même à respecter énormément de règles comme ils le font pour les investissements qu'ils font à l'étranger. Ils ont, selon les informations, déjà retenu des demandes à hauteur d'environ R 17 milliards mais ils sont en train de vérifier et ils sont en train de déboursier au fur et à mesure que les demandes se font.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MELBEES NURSERY SCHOOL - COVID-19 CASES - CONTACT TRACING

(No. B/32) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Melbees Nursery School, he will state the number of registered pupils thereat at the time of detection of the first two positive recent cases of COVID-19 thereat, indicating the number of –

- (a) registered pupils;
- (b) teaching and non-teaching staff members and;
- (c) parents thereof who were quarantined, and
- (d) quarantine centres where they underwent same and duration thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the first two cases of COVID-19 at Melbees Nursery School were detected on 07 March 2021. Following a contact tracing exercise, 316 persons consisting of –

- (a) 95 registered pupils at Melbees Nursery School;
- (b) 16 teaching and non-teaching staff members, and
- (c) 205 parents and siblings

were quarantined.

As for part (d) of the question, the following quarantine centres were used –

- (a) Lagoon Attitude;
- (b) Long Beach Hotel;
- (c) Le Mauricia;
- (d) Maradiva;
- (e) Constance Prince Maurice;
- (f) Beachcomber Trou aux Biches, and
- (g) Constance Belle Mare Plage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the last day of school at Melbees Nursery School was on 26 February 2021. As informed, the first two cases of COVID-19 at the school were detected on 07 March 2021. Consequently, the quarantine period for the children and parents other than the two positive cases was up to the 14th day from the last contact.

However, some parents who were quarantined at Lagoon Attitude Hotel breached the conditions of the quarantine. Hence, their quarantine period had to be extended.

Moreover, a group of 14 persons, who were quarantined at Le Mauricia Hotel also had to extend their stay as the last day of contact with the positive cases could not be ascertained.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform that as some rooms could not accommodate families of more than 2 persons and some children had difficulties to cope with the confined space, 31 persons were transferred from Lagoon Attitude to Constance Belle Mare Plage which had more spacious rooms.

Mr Speaker: Hon Juman!

Mr Juman: Merci, M. le président. M. le ministre, pourquoi une famille spécifique a-t-elle pu se rendre au centre de quarantaine par ses propres moyens alors que les autres ont été transportés par le ministère de la Santé et sous escorte policière, et pourquoi cette même famille, je vous parle de Monsieur le CEO du *Mauritius Telecom*, le *VVIP*, qui n'a passé que 4 jours en quarantaine contrairement aux autres, 14 jours?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, for this family I do not have the information, but once I will have the information I can reply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

Dr. Jagutpal: Now, why they have spent four days, I think the duration of the quarantine period was determined based on the last date of contact with the positive cases and was decided based on the advice of the technical expert of my Ministry. This is in line with the interim guidance of the WHO on contact tracing in the context of COVID-19, issued on 01 February 2021, which recommends supported quarantine for a duration of 14 days from the last contact with a confirmed case to minimise risk of onward transmission.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bérenger!

An hon. Member: M. le ministre, pour confirmer qu'il y a...

Mr Speaker: Wait! Hon. Ms Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci. Des recherches comme celles de Sprang and Silman en 2013 ont montré que les enfants isolés ou mis en quarantaine sont plus susceptibles de développer des états de stress aigu. Pourrait-on savoir si la quarantaine était la seule solution dans ce cas ? Si oui, quelle prise en charge axée sur l'intérêt de l'enfant ou quel soutien psychologique a été apportée à ces enfants en quarantaine ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I totally agree with the hon. Member because it is very difficult for children to stay in quarantine. But these children, they have been staying with their parents. At that time, Mauritius was having only a few cases and hardly a few days later, the number of cases rose to more than 60. My Ministry is trying to do everything that is possible to accommodate these children in better places and that is why they have been transferred in other hotels for their own good.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: M. le ministre, vous avez parlé de '*breach of quarantine*' par certains à l'hôtel Lagoon Attitude. Puis-je savoir, ce '*breach of quarantine*' concerne quoi?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are using as quarantine, hotels accommodating more than 200 at times, and sometimes 300 quarantined persons are serviced by one doctor, is one quarantine officer, one nursing officer. Can you imagine how difficult it is for those few staff working in quarantine centres to look after each and every quarantined person? In that case, for every person, we should have a quarantine officer and a Police Officer, and a Police Officer to supervise the other Police Officers.

Mr Speaker: Time is over, but I allow you one last question, short!

Mr Juman: M. le ministre, ce que vous venez de dire à l'Assemblée, c'est très grave. On est en centre de quarantaine sous la responsabilité du ministère. Voilà cette photo qui a été prise le 12 mars avec des enfants qui jouaient dans la cour. À qui la responsabilité ? C'est aux parents ou au ministère ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Member should understand the context children were admitted and it is the responsibility of the parents to look after their children.

Mr Speaker: Are you giving the answer?

Dr. Jagutpal: You want to...

Mr Speaker: Time over! I have to advise that PQs B/41, B/42, B/45 have been withdrawn.

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 Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.56 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER

COVID-19 RESURGENCE – GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two Statements to make. Firstly, I wish to make a Statement on Government’s response to the resurgence of COVID-19 in Mauritius since Friday 05 March 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is widely acknowledged that Government had acted proactively in addressing the serious threats posed by the outbreak of COVID-19 last year. It is a fact that Government had acted prudently and responsibly, and had taken the right decisions at the right time in 2020, in the face of an invisible enemy and of then unknown factors so as to restore our country to its COVID-SAFE status.

Mr Speaker, Sir, even the big and powerful nations have not had any respite from this invisible enemy since January 2020 when the virus started to cause havoc on our planet. As at today, there are more than 122 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 2.7 million deaths, across the world. Health experts agree that there is no such thing as ‘zero risk’ in the battle against this virus. The only and best way of combating it is to mitigate and manage the risk by responsibly and scrupulously following and abiding by all the health and safety measures and orders legally imposed for the common protection and for the common good.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in our response to the resurgence of COVID-19, our immediate priorities continue to constantly revolve around saving lives and livelihoods, and at the same time to implement a vaccination programme to achieve herd immunity.

We are ensuring that our hospitals are adequately equipped to provide the best possible treatment to those infected and also to other patients requiring medical attention and care. Government and our health authorities, Police and all other stakeholders continue to work tirelessly and relentlessly to contain the spread of the disease.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to ensure proper coordination, monitoring, and timely actions, the High-Level Committee on COVID-19 has been meeting, under my Chair, on a daily basis, since 06 March 2021. We have been taking some very bold and necessary measures, in order to stop the spread of the virus, including a national confinement. In particular, we have taken more stringent measures in Constituencies 15, 16 and 17, as well as in the village of Canot, where clusters have been identified.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the other containment measures which are being implemented include the following -

- (i) closing of all commercial premises and offices, except those providing essential services;
- (ii) extending all necessary resources to, and strengthening the overall preparedness and response of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to enable it to cope effectively with this threat;
- (iii) strengthening of the contact tracing teams of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to enable them to carry out screening and testing of a maximum number of persons, particularly in the Red Zones;
- (iv) re-activating all the 18 lines of the COVID-19 hotline;
- (v) inviting Public and Private Sectors employees to work from home, wherever possible;
- (vi) suspension of all passenger flights to Rodrigues so as to keep the Island free from COVID-19, and
- (vii) setting up of a National Vaccination Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are today fighting the resurgence with the hindsight and experience we gathered in containing the first onslaught. As a Government, our resolve and commitment to save lives and livelihoods remain unabated. Nothing matters more than Mauritian lives and Mauritian livelihoods.

Mr Speaker, Sir, any such confinement measure inevitably causes some hardship to the population. The Government is very sensitive to such adverse impact, particularly on the most vulnerable families. In order to mitigate the impact and reduce their hardship, the Government has come up with a host of measures, which include the following –

- (i) ensuring that commercial premises, including hypermarkets, supermarkets, pharmacies, among others, remain open so that people can obtain their basic necessities and urgent medical treatment, while observing all the necessary sanitary protocol;
- (ii) ensuring adequate supply of basic commodities;
- (iii) delivery of basic pensions at place of residence to around 13,000 beneficiaries – these are usually paid through Post Offices;

- (iv) providing Work Access Permits to carers looking after the elderly and persons with disabilities;
- (v) special arrangement for vegetable growers in Constituencies Nos. 15, 16 and 17 to sell their products in bulk in specific places;
- (vi) allowing all registered fishermen to carry out their fishing activities under specified conditions, and
- (vii) reactivating the hotline for victims of domestic violence and putting the Emergency Child Protection services on high alert.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to emphasize the fact that, once again, the Government has been managing the present crisis in a very transparent manner. The National Communication Committee has been holding daily press briefings to keep the population informed on the evolution of the COVID-19 situation at national level. For easily understood reasons, we have again decided, in the interest of one and all, to shift the Question and Answer session on a virtual platform. In addition, the *BeSafeMoris* Mobile Application provides updated information on COVID throughout the day.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we also decided to maintain the resumption of the National Assembly as scheduled and to subject ourselves to parliamentary scrutiny through PNQs and PQs. As a matter of fact, the PNQ and most of the PQs on the list of today's Sitting related to the COVID situation in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, which is at the forefront of our country's battle against the virus, has been leaving no stone unturned, and sparing no effort, to muster all its human and logistic resources on a 24/7 basis to not only detect and contain COVID-19 infections, but also to care for and cure infected persons. During the daily briefings by the National Communication Committee, details are also given of the number of contact tracings, locations of these contact tracings and immediate actions taken following detection of infected persons. Details are also provided on tests carried out in our flu clinics and random testing and on the number of persons in our quarantine centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now come to the issue of vaccination, which has been the subject of extensive debate during the PNQ of this morning and which has been the subject of disinformation and criticisms in certain quarters. I would like to inform the House that Mauritius was among the first countries to signify its intention to procure vaccines from different manufacturers and had even placed orders accordingly to ascertain that vaccines

were available on time to kick-start our vaccination programme soonest possible. However, as explained by the Minister of Health and Wellness this morning, because of the very high demand of COVID vaccines across the world and the reluctance by manufacturing countries to supply vaccines to developing countries, it is obvious that small countries like ours will encounter difficulties in procuring vaccines in sufficient quantities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would here like to place on record our deepest gratitude to the Government of India for the generous donation of 100,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine and also for its acceptance to supply to Mauritius a further 100,000 doses of AstraZeneca and 200,000 doses of Covaxin. Other friendly countries and institutions like China, the GAVI Vaccine Alliance facility and the African Union have also volunteered to donate or supply vaccines to Mauritius. I would equally like to express my heartfelt thanks to all of them. I would here also like to place on record the valuable assistance extended by the WHO in our fight against COVID.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Health and Wellness is pursuing the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, which is being conducted under strict sanitary conditions and in accordance with an established plan. We have also secured the assistance of private clinics in this exercise. The vaccination campaign is proceeding satisfactorily, in spite of the misapprehensions which may have been created in the media by some ill-intentioned persons, in instilling fear and doubts among the population about the vaccines and the consent form. As at 22 March 2021, more than 118,000 persons have already been administered with the COVID vaccine. The target is to vaccinate at least 60% of the population by July 2021 in order to achieve herd immunity and pave the way for a gradual return to near normalcy, including the reopening of our borders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government has also come up with a host of measures in order to provide financial assistance to SMEs in restructuring their capital requirements and to survive the crisis. SMEs that are negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the current confinement period, and which satisfy the established criteria, are eligible for support under five different Schemes. Moreover, Government has also maintained the Wage Assistance Scheme and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme introduced last year. This includes a one-off grant of Rs10,000 payable to all persons registered with the MRA under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme as at 15 March 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for the Education sector, especially with regard to the SC/HSC examinations as well as the PSAC and NCE assessments, the Ministry of Education and the MES, in collaboration with the authorities concerned, have made all necessary arrangements, including availability of public transport facilities, so as to enable all candidates, including those from the Red Zones, to take their examinations in the best possible conditions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to our compatriots who may be stranded abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a Communiqué on 17 March 2021 advising them to stay in the country where they are located and to keep in touch with their travel agencies in order to avail themselves of travel opportunities, once scheduled flights for passengers to travel to Mauritius are re-instated.

A helpdesk and a hotline have also been set up at that Ministry to provide guidance and assistance to those compatriots in difficulties overseas. Our diplomatic missions and consulates are giving a strong support in these efforts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an undeniable fact that COVID-19 has disrupted our lives and impacted severely on our economy. As we boldly face these unprecedented times, what is required are comprehension, a responsible attitude and above all, patriotism and solidarity. These are times to focus all our energy on winning the battle fast so that the nation can resume its COVID-safe status and move forward resolutely once again towards socio-economic advancement.

Finally, I must pay a very special tribute to the Police, medical personnel, and to all frontliners for their unflinching dedication to duty and service, while I commend our population as a whole for its due care and caution.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is convinced that, together as a mature and informed nation, we will overcome the COVID scare and consequences, while continuing to keep a premium on the protection of our population.

(Applause)

**JUDGMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE
SEA (ITLOS) ON THE MARITIME BOUNDARY DISPUTE BETWEEN
MAURITIUS AND THE MALDIVES**

The Prime Minister: I have another Statement to make and this relates to the recent Judgment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) on the maritime boundary dispute between Mauritius and the Maldives.

As the House is aware, on 28 January 2021, a Special Chamber of ITLOS delivered its Judgment on the preliminary objections raised by the Maldives in the case brought by Mauritius under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the delimitation of the maritime boundary between the two countries in the region of the Chagos Archipelago.

At the core of the Maldives' preliminary objections was the claim that there was an unresolved sovereignty dispute between Mauritius and the United Kingdom over the Chagos Archipelago. The Maldives argued that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019 did not resolve the sovereignty dispute over the Chagos Archipelago and is, in any case, not binding. The Maldives also argued that the United Kingdom was an indispensable third party and that its absence from the proceedings prevented the Special Chamber from exercising jurisdiction.

By a large majority – with only the *ad hoc* Judge appointed by Maldives dissenting – the Special Chamber of ITLOS rejected all the preliminary objections of the Maldives, and held that it has jurisdiction to delimit the maritime boundary between Mauritius and the Maldives in the Chagos Archipelago region. In so doing, the Special Chamber of ITLOS also confirmed that Mauritius has undisputed sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. It ruled that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice resolved the question of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago when the Court determined, without a single dissenting vote on the merits, that the Chagos Archipelago is and has always been an integral part of Mauritius.

The Special Chamber of ITLOS also ruled that the United Kingdom's continued claim to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is contrary to the determinations made by the International Court of Justice to the effect that the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius was unlawful, and that the United Kingdom's continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes an unlawful act of a continuing character entailing the international responsibility of that State. It further held that the United Kingdom has no claim, but only, I quote, "a mere assertion", and that such assertion does not prove the existence of a dispute.

The Special Chamber of ITLOS also held that the United Nations General Assembly was entrusted by the International Court of Justice to take necessary steps towards the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius, and that its Resolution 73/295 is equally relevant to assessing the legal status of the Chagos Archipelago. The Special Chamber considered that the Resolution's time-limit of 22 November 2019 for the unconditional withdrawal of the United Kingdom's colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago constituted one of the modalities for ensuring the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius pursuant to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. ITLOS ruled that, and I quote –

“The fact that the time-limit set by the General Assembly has passed without the United Kingdom complying with this demand further strengthens the Special Chamber's finding that its claim to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is contrary to the authoritative determinations made in the advisory opinion.”

With regard to the Maldives' contention that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice is not binding – an argument which the United Kingdom has also been advancing – the Special Chamber of ITLOS ruled that, and I quote –

“an advisory opinion entails an authoritative statement of international law on the questions with which it deals”.

In that regard, the Special Chamber of ITLOS held that, and I quote –

“judicial determinations made in advisory opinions carry no less weight and authority than those in judgments because they are made with the same rigour and scrutiny by the “principal judicial organ” of the United Nations with competence in matters of international law.”

The Special Chamber of ITLOS underscored that, and I quote –

“determinations made by the International Court of Justice in an advisory opinion cannot be disregarded simply because the advisory opinion is not binding. This is true of the International Court of Justice's determinations in the Chagos advisory opinion, *inter alia*, that the process of decolonization of Mauritius was not lawfully completed when that country acceded to independence in 1968, following the separation of the Chagos Archipelago, and that the United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible. The Special Chamber considers that those determinations do have legal effect.”

With regard to the claim that the United Kingdom was an indispensable third party, the Special Chamber of ITLOS ruled that, and I quote –

“it is inconceivable that the United Kingdom, whose administration over the Chagos Archipelago constitutes a wrongful act of a continuing character and thus must be brought to an end as rapidly as possible, and yet who has failed to do so, can have any legal interests in permanently disposing of maritime zones around the Chagos Archipelago by delimitation.”

The Special Chamber of ITLOS thus concluded that Mauritius is to be, and I quote –

“regarded as the coastal State in respect of the Chagos Archipelago for the purpose of the delimitation of a maritime boundary even before the process of the decolonization of Mauritius is completed.”

The Special Chamber of ITLOS also rejected the Maldives’ argument that the 2015 Arbitral Award rendered in the case of *Mauritius v United Kingdom*, and which had determined that the United Kingdom violated its obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea by purportedly establishing a ‘marine protected area’ around the Chagos Archipelago, has *res judicata* effect in regard to the existence of a sovereignty dispute between Mauritius and the United Kingdom over the Chagos Archipelago. The Special Chamber confirmed that the Arbitral Tribunal never recognised the United Kingdom as the coastal State with respect to the Chagos Archipelago.

Following its judgment that it has jurisdiction to delimit the maritime boundary between Mauritius and the Maldives, the Special Chamber of ITLOS has fixed the time-limits for the submission by the Parties of their written pleadings on the merits. Mauritius will have to submit its Memorial by 25 May 2021 and the Maldives, its Counter-Memorial by 25 November 2021. A judgment on the merits may be expected in late 2022 or early 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Judgment of the Special Chamber of ITLOS constitutes another significant milestone in our long-standing struggle for the completion of the decolonization process of Mauritius. It is further confirmation that Mauritius alone is the State lawfully entitled to exercise sovereignty and sovereign rights over the Chagos Archipelago and its maritime zones. It follows from this that the ‘marine protected area’ purportedly established by the United Kingdom around the Chagos Archipelago is illegal under international law and without effect.

Government will continue to take all actions that it deems necessary in order to allow Mauritius to exercise its sovereignty and sovereign rights fully and completely over the Chagos Archipelago and its maritime zones. In this regard, it will continue to challenge the United Kingdom's membership of regional and international organisations where it purports to represent the Chagos Archipelago, as well as the purported membership of the so-called "British Indian Ocean Territory" in international organisations, such as the Universal Postal Union.

Government also remains committed to implementing a programme for resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago, particularly with a view to enabling our citizens of Chagossian origin who were forcibly removed from the Archipelago by the United Kingdom to fulfil their aspiration to return to their birthplace in full dignity and with due respect to their human rights.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is deeply regrettable that in replies given to Parliamentary Questions in the UK Parliament and in statements made following the Judgment of the Special Chamber of ITLOS, the United Kingdom Government has shown blatant disregard for the authoritative determinations of the International Court of Justice and of the rulings of ITLOS.

The stand of the United Kingdom Government is all the more astounding, having regard to the fact that the United Kingdom participated actively in the proceedings that led to the authoritative determinations of the International Court of Justice and all its claims being rejected. It is significant that the arguments made by the Maldives were in substance similar to those made by the United Kingdom at the International Court of Justice, but were all rejected by ITLOS as well.

In this connection, I wish to commend hon. Lisa Nandy, the UK Shadow Foreign Secretary, for her strong condemnation of the United Kingdom Government's stand. In a letter which she addressed on 09 February 2021 to the UK Foreign Secretary, hon. Nandy deplored the UK Government's disregard for the Judgment of the Special Chamber of ITLOS. She pointed out that this is damaging to the United Kingdom's reputation, undermines its credibility and moral authority, and sets a damaging precedent that others may seize upon to undermine the national interests of the United Kingdom, and those of its allies, in other contexts or maritime disputes.

I urge the UK Government to stop being in denial of the legal reality and to bring itself into compliance with international law by immediately terminating its unlawful administration and occupation of the Chagos Archipelago.

I should like to reiterate that security and defence considerations cannot justify the United Kingdom's illegal occupation of the Chagos Archipelago. Mauritius has on several occasions expressed its commitment to ensuring the continued operation of the defence facility in Diego Garcia in accordance with international law. It stands by this commitment and is ready to enter into a long-term arrangement with the United States in respect of Diego Garcia.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at its last Summit held on 06 and 07 February 2021, the African Union adopted a Decision on the decolonization of Mauritius, in which it, *inter alia*, welcomed the Judgment of the Special Chamber of ITLOS and reiterated its calls to the United Kingdom to comply with international law by immediately withdrawing its colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago. The last AU Summit also called upon AU Member States and all partners to respect the UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 which expressly urged UN Member States, UN bodies, and regional and international organisations to refrain from any action that will impede or delay the completion of the process of decolonization of Mauritius in accordance with the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and the General Assembly Resolution.

I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate our deep appreciation to the African Union and all States which support Mauritius in its struggle towards complete decolonization.

I would also like to thank our external legal team led by Professor Philippe Sands, GCSK, QC, as well as our local team which includes the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, the Solicitor General and our Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

- (a) The Institute of Technical Education and Technology Bill (No. 1 of 2021).
- (b) The Mental Health Care (Amendment) Bill (No. II of 2021)

- (c) The Taxi Operators Welfare Fund Bill (No. III of 2021)
- (d) The Optical Council Bill (No. IV of 2021)

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Supplementary Appropriation (2018-2019) Bill (No. XII of 2020) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 30 March 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned. Adjournment matters!

Hon. Abbas Mamode!

MATTERS RAISED

(5.31 p.m.)

CEB – CONFINEMENT PERIOD – ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. With regard to the prevailing situation that our country is facing, I shall humbly request the hon. Minister to cater for special mechanism to help the CEB in their day to day running of business so that the consumers at large should not be called upon to bear additional cost due to the increase in the consumption of electricity during the confinement period. We are in a very difficult situation, there has been a *communiqué de presse* of CEB addressing the nation that there will be a rise of electricity due to units used being more than the usual unit outside COVID-19. So, I will urge the hon. Minister to help especially many poor people who are confined and who have children in this summer situation. So, please, if the hon. Minister of Finance can help.

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le président, je remercie l'honorable membre pour sa question. Je vais consulter mon collègue, le ministre des Utilités publiques.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

(5.32 p.m.)

RED ZONE – VEGETABLE PLANTERS & DISTRIBUTORS

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Je vous remercie, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre de l'Agro-industrie et de la sécurité alimentaire. M. le président, les planteurs des circonscriptions 15, 16 et 17 rencontrent de grosses difficultés en raison des fortes restrictions imposées dans la zone rouge. Je sollicite l'intervention du ministre afin d'abord de faciliter l'accès des travailleurs agricoles aux plantations pour permettre la récolte et la préparation de la terre avant la plantation et deuxièmement, d'autoriser les distributeurs et revendeurs de légumes de se rendre dans les plantations pour la collecte des légumes. Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Gobin): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for raising this matter. It is, indeed, a very delicate balancing exercise that you have to do between the sanitary confinement and the livelihood of the planters in the region, more specifically in the red zone but also including Canot. The situation is being monitored daily.

The House will appreciate that we cannot allow free movement of persons from the red zone outside and from outside into the red zone but we have, only this morning from 5 o'clock to 8 o'clock in the morning, authorised the selling to wholesalers of products of planters at specific Police control points. A first exercise was done last Friday, it was reviewed this morning and I am going to get the feedback from the FAREI and the Small Farmers Welfare Fund as well as the Police. The situation is being monitored daily. The House will also appreciate that we are facilitating the movement of planters without a WAP but with the planter's card only and for breeders, the breeder's card.

Furthermore, Government has also extended the validity of planters' cards which have expired in 2020 and the validity has been extended until June 2021. All this to say that, Government is monitoring the situation daily. I thank the hon. Member once again.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

(5.35 p.m.)

CLUNY, BANANE - LORRIES - TRIPS TO MARE CHICOSE LANDFILL

Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): My request is addressed to the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. Can I ask the Minister to see where matter stands in relation to the alternative route earmarked for the hundreds of lorries which pass through the village of Cluny, Banane on a daily basis while going to and from the Mare Chicose landfill. The frequent trip is becoming a real and direct threat to the villagers due to the sanitary problems they cause and the infrastructural degradation they are continuously doing. This is now causing a health and safety issue to the villagers on a daily basis.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the problem raised by the hon. Chief Whip. It is, in fact, that lorries coming from La Laura pass through the east and coastal road and Riche-en-Eau when proceeding to the landfill at Mare Chicose and lorries to and from the landfill via Cluny operate at a frequency of about 10 minutes and all of them pass through the village of Cluny and proceeding to and from Mare Chicose. Indeed, as rightly pointed out by the hon. Member, in view of the road safety problem posed to the inhabitants of Cluny, also in terms of air pollution, the NLTA had, in fact, proposed a new itinerary to be used by the lorries which is Nouvelle France roundabout, Ferney link road, Grand Bel Air roundabout, Riche-en-Eau to Mare Chicose landfill but the TMRSU was requested to carry out a traffic count and advise on the feasibility of using this alternative itinerary that is via Riche-en-Eau.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is another problem, the Solid Waste Management Division, scientifically worked out the cost to be incurred with respect to this new itinerary involving additional kilometres and it was observed that the Solid Waste Management Division calculated the cost of transportation to this new itinerary on a pro rata basis on the increased distance of 13 km one way and this met an additional cost of about Rs41 m. and I understand that no funding was available at that time in the budget when the whole matter was being addressed. Therefore, in light of the above, Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that the Solid Waste Management Division has been requested to seek necessary finances to be able to make this alternative itinerary become feasible.

(5.38 p.m.)

MUNICIPALITY OF BEAU BASSIN/ROSE HILL – BASIC WORK EQUIPMENT

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to draw the attention of the Minister of Local Government of an acute problem which is being encountered by public exposed employees of the Municipality of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, namely the scavengers and other gardeners. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, some of these employees have shared to me their fears by not being provided with basic equipment, gloves and masks for performing correctly their task. Will the hon. Minister look into the matter and request the CEO to abide by the law?

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will discuss it with the Chief Executive of the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

(5.39 p.m.)

SAINTE-CROIX COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE - SECURITY

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Minister of Health and Wellness. There is a request on behalf of inhabitants of Sainte-Croix *et les régions avoisinantes* to secure the yard of the Sainte-Croix Community Health Centre by upgrading maybe the wall as very often they come across syringes which could be very dangerous for those who visit that area health centre.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I remember this project is under consideration and it will be implemented in the months to come.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

(5.40 p.m.)

RODRIGUANS - LOCKDOWN - REPATRIATION

Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au Premier ministre qui, je précise, est aussi ministre de Rodrigues. C'est concernant les cris du cœur de plus de 150 rodriguais qui sont toujours bloqués à Maurice malgré qu'il y a eu un vol de rapatriement des Rodriguais à Maurice la semaine dernière mais les Rodriguais sont toujours bloqués ici à Maurice. Ils se retrouvent dans des situations financières difficiles, ils n'ont pas de quoi se nourrir, ils n'ont pas de logements et je sais qu'aujourd'hui il y a eu une réunion du *High-Powered Committee* à Rodrigues mais ils n'ont

pas pu statuer s'ils peuvent faire rapatrier les rodriguais qui se trouvent à Maurice pour Rodrigues. Je sais qu'il y a des facilités de quarantaine à Rodrigues, notamment à l'Hôtel Cotton Bay et Le Cocotier, je demanderai au Premier ministre s'il peut intervenir auprès de son collègue, Serge Clair, le Chef Commissaire de Rodrigues pour faire le nécessaire pour faire rapatrier les Rodriguais qui sont à Maurice. Merci.

The Prime Minister: M. le président, la décision d'imposer un confinement pose définitivement un problème, non seulement pour les Rodriguais mais aussi pour tous ceux qui se trouvent à l'extérieur de Maurice et qui veulent rentrer à Maurice et aussi pour les Rodriguais qui sont à Maurice et qui veulent retourner à Rodrigues. Je dois dire que j'ai discuté avec le Chef Commissaire, Serge Clair et notre souci principal, c'est de faire tout ce que nous pouvons pour continuer à garder Rodrigues *Covid-free*. Et bien sûr, qui dit *Covid-free* dit des mesures très strictes. Nous sommes en train de voir comment on peut faire pour que ceux qui veulent retourner à Rodrigues à l'avenir puissent le faire, bien sûr en toute sécurité pour eux-mêmes et bien sûr en protégeant Rodrigues pour que Rodrigues puisse continuer à être *Covid-free*, mais je dois dire que ce n'est pas facile parce qu'il y a beaucoup d'implications.

Mais, croyez-moi, nous comprenons la situation difficile dans laquelle se trouve les Rodriguais ici, les Mauriciens et résidents qui sont à l'extérieur, et nous allons bien sûr suivre la situation comment elle évolue à Maurice, et nous tenons en compte les difficultés auxquelles ces personnes font face.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

(5.43 p.m.)

PUBLIC & PRIVATE SECTORS – PREGNANT WOMEN - WORK FROM HOME

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to raise a matter to the Minister Hurdoyal and also Minister Callicurn. It concerns both employees in the public and private sector, most specifically employees who are pregnant. As we are aware, pregnant women cannot do the vaccine against COVID-19 and are thus very vulnerable in the pandemic situation that we are.

I am requesting the Minister Hurdoyal to consider the employees in the private/public sector to be able to work from home so that we can protect them.

I am also making a request to the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training to request Business Mauritius to assist employees in the private sector to work from home.

Thank you.

The Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (Mr T. Hurdoyal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am taking note of it and I will make the necessary arrangement, if possible.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

HAJJ PILGRIMS – WHO APPROVED COVID-19 VACCINE

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The matter I want to raise is addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade but it also concerns the Ministry of Health and Wellness. There is a tendency now for countries to require evidence of vaccination before granting a visa.

With respect to pilgrims who are going to travel for Hajj this year, a few days ago, the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia has stated that it would require external pilgrims to obtain two doses of WHO approved vaccine against COVID-19.

I would ask the hon. Minister whether he can, through diplomatic means, contact the Saudi authorities in order not to penalise any Mauritians who would not be vaccinated by WHO approved vaccines, so that they are not penalised if they want to perform Hajj this year.

Thank you.

The Minister of Health & Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, WHO approved vaccines for those who will be travelling, obviously, if we have the recommendation from the Saudi Government Authorities, we are going to make available those vaccines as approved by WHO and the Saudi Authorities.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

(5.45 p.m.)

POINTE-AUX-SABLES SEA - WASTEWATER

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci M. le président. Ma question s'adresse au ministère de l'Energie et des Utilités publiques. M. le ministre, le 9 mars dernier je me trouvais sur un bateau avec des pêcheurs pour me rendre à proximité du bateau de pêche chinois échoué sur les récifs de Pointe aux Sables. Au large de Cité Débarcadère, j'ai au départ cru à une marée noire d'huile en lien avec le bateau échoué, mais je me suis finalement rendu compte qu'il s'agissait en réalité d'un déversement d'eaux usées qui noircissent l'eau de mer, dégagent une odeur nauséabonde et qui nuisent certainement à l'écosystème sous-marin.

Puis-je demander au ministre de faire le nécessaire auprès de la *Wastewater Management Authority* pour mettre fin à cette situation?

Merci.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Merci, M. le président. Oui, je vais en parler au responsable de la *Wastewater Management Authority* et voir quel est le problème. Je comprends que la plainte date depuis le 9 mars. La prochaine fois je vais demander à mon collègue de me donner un coup de fil bien avant pour qu'on puisse réagir à une situation, qui, on sait, définitivement va nuire à l'environnement, mais de toute façon je vais passer le message et demander au responsable de faire le nécessaire le plus vite possible.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

(5.46 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCIES 15, 16 & 17 - MEAT SHOP - OPERATION

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am raising an issue which some inhabitants of the Constituencies Nos. 15, 16 and 17 have been complaining since the start of lockdown, that is, almost two weeks now. And I will address the issue to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness as I have been given to understand that it is the Ministry of Health and Wellness which is deciding on the conditions of the lockdown. So, the issue is that some inhabitants of the mentioned regions, they are not being able to buy fresh meat, be it chicken, be it fish, they are not been allowed for two weeks now and there are some inhabitants who do not consume frozen products.

My appeal to the hon. Minister today is that, at least two times per week, the meat shop, be it poultry or fish be allowed to operate in order to cater for those people who do not consume frozen goods and also respecting social distancing and all the necessary conditions.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr. S. Callichurn): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall attend to this request. The issue of opening of meat shop and fish shop in the Red Zones, actually they are not being allowed to operate. This is a decision of the High-Level Committee. However, I take on board what the hon. Member said and we will take it back to the High-Level Committee and make a decision as to the request.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Just wait a minute, please.

The Prime Minister: I shall give some information because I am chairing the High-Level Committee. I hope the hon. Member will appreciate, and people living in the Constituencies Nos. 15, 16, and 17 will also appreciate that the situation within that region is very serious. Outside those Constituencies, we have allowed those meat shops to operate and within that region, and Canot, of course, which is another cluster, we have to be strict and we have to try to see how best we can break the chain of contamination.

I understand there are some people who like to eat or, maybe, only eat fresh meat, but, please, let us first of all understand the gravity of the situation and let us make a bit of sacrifice, may be for two weeks, but I do not know whether it is going to be for some more time, but we have learnt from past experience that when we abide by the conditions that have been set by the authorities, we are more likely to win the battle against COVID-19.

So, my appeal to the hon. Member and to people in the regions of 15, 16 and 17, and now Canot for their collaboration, and I hope there is no other cluster where we shall have to delimit it as a Red Zone. As I just mentioned earlier, we need solidarity. We need understanding and we do need solidarity, and it is only together that we shall be able to get rid, - though to get rid, *c'est un grand mot* - only together we shall be able to fight this virus.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour!

(5.50 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 4 - ROADS RESURFACING

Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development regarding two classified roads which need resurfacing in my Constituency, namely Long Mountain, Crève Coeur Road, B19 and Camp Laboue, Les Mariannes Road, B169.

I would be grateful if the hon. Minister would kindly look into this. Thank you.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. We know that these two roads, as mentioned by the hon. Member, are long outstanding ones and I know that this is already on the list of projects by the RDA and budgeted amount of Rs15 m. I will make sure that matters expedite more rapidly. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(5.51 p.m.)

BOIS ROUGE, GOODLANDS - TREES - SECURITY HAZARD

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. I am making this request on behalf of the residents of Bois Rouge, Goodlands for I have repeatedly appealed to the Rivière du Rempart District Council regarding the lopping of branches of Peepal and Flame trees found along the lateral roads of the region as they represent a serious security hazard.

I thank the hon. Minister for doing the needful.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): I will pass on the message to the District Council.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Bérenger!

(5.52 p.m.)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - LOCKDOWN - SOCIÉTÉ DES

PROFESSIONNELLES EN PSYCHOLOGIE - HOTLINE NUMBER

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci. Ma requête s'adresse à l'honorable ministre de l'Égalité des Genres et du Bien-être de la famille. Lors du dernier

lockdown, la Société des Professionnelles en Psychologie avait mis en place volontairement une *hotline* d'écoute et d'accompagnement qui avait aidé 119 personnes. Les professionnels de la santé mentale ont observé et entendu une recrudescence des cas de dépressions, d'anxiété accrue, de comportements suicidaires. Face à cette recrudescence et aux recommandations de la société des professionnels en psychologie, et face à la situation difficile et exceptionnelle à laquelle doivent faire face nos compatriotes, je demanderai à la ministre de bien vouloir mettre en place une *hotline* pouvant apporter un soutien psychologique aux compatriotes en détresse. Merci.

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): I thank the hon. Member for putting forward this matter to my attention and I wish to reassure you that we do have hotlines operational on a 24/7 basis to offer support, be it psychological, legal advices or whatever may be the distress cases, but I will look into the matter and into the suggestion that you have put forward, whether we can have the collaboration of that association of professionals of psychology as you mentioned and look into how we can work collaboratively. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

CONSTITUENCIES 15, 16 & 17 – PLANTERS & BREEDERS - WAP

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre de l'agro-industrie, l'honorable Maneesh Gobin. Cela concerne les éleveurs et les planteurs des circonscriptions 15, 16 et 17.

Premièrement, je voudrais le remercier d'avoir intervenu promptement pour débloquer la situation. Juste, si on peut, en termes de *fine tuning*, donc on a des planteurs qui ont des travailleurs. Donc, ces travailleurs ont des problèmes pour avoir les WAPs, et deuxièmement aussi en termes de l'heure the transactions qui a été mise en place pour les encarteurs et les planteurs donc à la région de La Marie et dans la région de Surat. Donc, ces deux endroits, je pense en termes de l'heure, il y a toujours un petit souci, et aussi en termes des éleveurs et des planteurs qui ne sont pas dans la circonscription mais qui ont des intérêts dans la circonscription et inverse, donc des planteurs et éleveurs qui se trouvent dans la circonscription, mais leurs plantations et animaux se trouvent en dehors de la circonscription, donc ces gens aussi ont toujours des problèmes par rapport au WAP. S'il peut intervenir promptement comme il a déjà fait, et je le remercie.

Merci.

The Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Gobin): Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the hon. Member for raising this matter. I seize this opportunity to also thank the hon. Member for daily giving me updates of what is happening on the ground. I seize this opportunity also to thank hon. Dhunoo who also gives me regular updates and proposals concerning planters and breeders in the regions of the two hon. Members I have mentioned.

The situation, once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, is being monitored on a daily basis because the situation is evolving, Government is anxious to strike the right balance between sanitary confinement and livelihood of planters and breeders, and I should add that the matter is being monitored on a daily basis at the highest level. I should add that it was only this morning that the hon. Prime Minister, himself, raised the matter with me for the case of breeders in the regions of Dubreuil and Canot. The Ministry of Agro-Industry is working on a specific plan for these two regions, where the COVID situation is very serious and where breeders especially, are unable to feed their animals sometimes in situations where the farm is outside the red zone and the breeder is inside the red zone. We are working on a plan and I expect by tomorrow to have a plan for the regions of Dubreuil and Canot, but, on the whole, I reassure the House that the situation is being monitored on a daily basis. Where fine tuning is required, we will bring the necessary changes. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

SOUTH-EAST COASTAL REGION - HOTELS - TAXI OPERATORS - ALLOWANCE

Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have an issue which concerns the Minister of Finance, it relates to the economic operators who have been affected by the Wakashio shipwreck. They have made several representations to the Ministry of Finance to be given an allowance and I do place on record my appreciation to the fact that some of them have been given an allowance.

However, there is the case of taxi operators based at hotels and along the South-East Coastal region. They have, to the Ministry of Transport, made representations to be granted an allowance and their request, I understand, is at the level of the Ministry of Finance. Can I humbly request the Minister of Finance to kindly look into the matter? Thank you.

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le president, je remercie l'honorable membre pour sa question. Je vais regarder cette question et puis je reviendrai à l'Assemblée avec la réponse. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

MAURITIANS - MEDICAL TREATMENT OVERSEAS - REPATRIATION

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le president. Ma requête, ce soir, s'adresse au ministre de la Santé et concerne les cas des personnes qui veulent rentrer au pays après avoir subi une opération ou reçu des soins en Inde. Je vais vous citer rapidement deux cas, en particulier dans ma circonscription, celui de Madame Marie Joanna Jessica Carrim de Beau Bassin, atteinte de cancer et celui de Therry Louise, un jeune homme de 15 ans qui habite à Chebel, qui, après avoir subi une importante opération du cœur, avait dû retourner urgemment en Inde pour d'autres soins. Ces deux personnes, accompagnées de leurs parents, sont à court d'argent et leurs traitements étant terminés, veulent rentrer au pays. Merci à l'honorable ministre de la Santé de faire le nécessaire pour les rapatrier.

Merci.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I can recall, there is a flight scheduled on 27 this month and they will bring back the passengers and the patients.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

RED ZONES - CONSTITUENCIES 15, 16 & 17 – BANKS - REOPENING

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister. It concerns the same situation as hon. Aadil Ameer Meea raised with regard to the red zones, Constituencies Nos. 15, 16 and 17, but there are many inhabitants, they are requesting the reopening of banks at least twice a week because there are many people that do not have the facilities of using ATMs or even have credit card facilities. So, if this could be considered at the High Level Committee, at least twice a week, the opening of banks, especially at this period of end of this month.

The Prime Minister: Yes, you are right. Initially, banks also were not allowed to operate but we have taken a decision and I know that the Governor of Central Bank has

liaised with the banking institutions in the region and they have agreed to open certain branches, of course, with limited number of employees.

PUBLIC HOSPITALS – LOGISTICS

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you. The issue I would like to raise tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. I know we have had a long day, but bear with me. It is regarding logistics at public hospitals, more specifically SAMU service 114, COVID Hotline 8924, and Internal Rapid Response Team, all of which having their specific duties and responsibilities, but which at the moment in time, island-wide, there is an issue for people who are feverish and who call SAMU, there seems to be an utter confusion and SAMU and the other departments, they push the buck around, and meanwhile the life of the people can be at threat. So, this was a parliamentary question of mine today B/47, but time did not permit that it arrives for discussion. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has had a chance to look into this issue and enlighten the House about this?

Thank you.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a question on this, but briefly, I will say that the SAMU Service 114 is specifically dedicated to all emergency cases, while the Hotline 8924 is dedicated for everything concerning the COVID, be it vaccination, be it quarantine, be it those who have already done PCR test, so it is concerning COVID. Yes, once the call comes in, it might be that COVID patients or those who are concerned with COVID phone the 114 or *vice-versa*. Now, there is a triage that is being done at the level of the *permanencier*, and that triage, we will try to do it more effectively so that they can divert the calls. If ever it is a call for COVID reaching the 114, we can divert it directly to the 8924. That is being done at my Ministry's level.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell! Time is over!

At 6.02 p.m., the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 30 March 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

DIPLOMATS - QUARANTINE

(No. B/6) 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 diplomats, he will state if any of them has travelled to the Republic of Mauritius since the implementation of compulsory quarantine with effect from March 2020, indicating in each case, if the said person observed same and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the name of the Quarantine Centre where he/she underwent same, and
- (b) duration thereof.

(Reply not available)

INDIAN DELEGATION – VISIT – SANITARY PROTOCOL

(No. B/7) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Indian delegation headed by the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of India which visited Mauritius recently, he will state if the members thereof observed the quarantine protocol of 14 days and, if not, why not.

Reply (The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade): As the House is aware, H. E. Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India effected an official visit to Mauritius from 21 to 24 February 2021. He was accompanied by six officials.

As is the practice for official visits of such levels, a special sanitary protocol was prepared by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, which was strictly observed throughout the visit.

This protocol does not require quarantine on arrival but provides for strict sanitary measures, including the following –

- (i) a negative PCR test for each delegate 72 hours before boarding the flight;
- (ii) all members of the delegation to be swabbed on arrival;

- (iii) in case a single test of a member of the delegation is positive, no physical interaction would be possible with Mauritians, including VIPs. Only video conferences would then be allowed;
- (iv) compulsory wearing of an N95 mask at all times for guests and Mauritians participating in all events;
- (v) frequent disinfection of hands and no physical contacts – no handshake and no sharing of objects like pens;
- (vi) observing of social distancing at all times;
- (vii) training for drivers and hotel staff;
- (viii) no close interaction with the Mauritian population during visits to specific sites;
- (ix) crew members to be swabbed on arrival and to follow usual protocol for foreign crews, and
- (x) cleaning and disinfection of area prior and after working sessions with delegation.

All the PCR tests carried out on the delegates before and after arrival were negative. Moreover, our health officers were continuously providing their assistance to the delegation to ensure compliance with the protocol during the whole visit.

I wish to point out that similar protocols were observed during the recent official visits of the President of the Republic of Seychelles, the French Minister of Outer Islands and the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs.

COVID-19 - BREACH OF TEMPORARY RESTRICTION MOVEMENT - ARRESTS

(No. B/8) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of people booked and/or arrested, if any, since March 2020 to date, for –

- (a) breach of Temporary Restriction Movement, and
- (b) not respecting the sanitary rules.

Reply: With the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Mauritius in March 2020, and with a view to preventing and containing the spread of the disease, a new Quarantine Act was enacted in 2020. The Act empowers me to, *inter alia*, –

- (i) order that all persons shall remain indoors within such area and during such period; and under such terms and conditions, as I may specify; and
- (ii) order that commercial premises or offices specified in the Order shall remain closed for such period and under such terms and conditions that I may specify.

Moreover, the Prevention and Mitigation of Infectious Diseases (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 were made under the Public Health Act to, *inter alia*, allow me where I am satisfied that it is necessary or expedient for the purpose of preventing the spread of Coronavirus, by a curfew order, direct that, within Mauritius or within such area and during such hours as may be specified in the curfew order, no person or class of persons shall remain outdoors. The Commissioner of Police may, however, issue a permit to a person to be outdoors for such purpose and on such terms and conditions as the Commissioner of Police may specify in the permit.

In addition, the Prevention of Resurgence and Further Spread of Epidemic Disease (COVID-19) Regulations 2020 make provision for the wearing of protective mask and social and physical distancing as sanitary rules. Any person who breaches those rules commits an offence and is liable to a fine not exceeding Rs50,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years.

Moreover, following the detection of new local cases in March 2021, the Temporary Restrictions of Movement Order was made under Section 3 of the Quarantine Act 2020 to prevent the spread of the COVID-19. According to the Order, all persons shall remain indoors until 25 March 2021 at 8 pm, except the holders of a relevant permit issued by the Commissioner of Police. Any person who is found outdoor commits an offence and is liable to a fine not exceeding Rs500,000 and to an imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.

As regards part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that from 09 March 2021 to Monday 22 March 2021, 3,613 persons have been booked in breach of the Temporary Restrictions of Movement Order.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that since 09 March 2020 to Monday 22 March 2021, 3,020 persons have been booked for failing to wear a face mask and 47 persons have been booked for failing to observe social and physical distancing rules.

GIS - PRESS ACCREDITATIONS TO MEDIA & REVAMPING OF PRESS CARDS

(No. B/9) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Government Information Services, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) the number of press accreditations delivered to the media, indicating the criteria for acceptance and refusal thereof since 2015 to date, and
- (b) if a revamping of the press card is in process.

Reply: Press cards are issued by the Government Information Service (GIS) in order to facilitate access of press reporters, photographers and videographers to official functions organised by Ministries/Departments, as well as the National Assembly and the State House.

This press card issued by the GIS has become accepted at national and international levels as evidence of the holder being a recognised media professional.

The GIS issues four types of press cards, namely - Reporter, Photographer, Videographer and Reporter/Photographer.

A press card is issued to a Press Reporter or Press Photographer following request from the Editor of the paper, publication or news organisation. A press card is issued by the GIS only after obtaining police clearance on the prospective holder and remains valid for a period of two years.

Moreover, every application from a new publication must be accompanied by proof of registration with the Accountant General, under the Newspapers and Periodicals Act.

The GIS has informed that–

- (i) for the period August 2015 to July 2017 – 529 press cards were issued;

- (ii) for the period August 2017 to July 2019 – 521 press cards were issued, and
- (iii) from August 2019 to date, 487 press cards have been issued.

The GIS has further informed that it did not entertain three requests for press cards due to adverse police reports.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the GIS has informed that it has already initiated action for the revamping of the current press cards into a modern one with added security features, including the possibility of tracing the usage of the card. Consideration is also being given for the whole procedure for the application of press cards to be put online.

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN – POPULATION - NOTIFICATION

(No. B/10) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the notice to the population prior to current COVID-19 lockdown, he will state if other ways of giving notice thereof in terms of time were available.

Reply: Following the detection of the first local case of a resurgent COVID-19 on Friday 05 March 2021 and the subsequent rise in the number of such local cases, the High-Level Committee on COVID-19, at its meeting of Tuesday 09 March 2021, assessed the COVID-19 situation and concluded that, in the national interest, more strict measures were warranted in the given circumstances and decided that a national lockdown be imposed in order to prevent further spread of the virus.

In view of the extreme urgency of the situation, I considered that it was both desirable and necessary for me to act promptly and inform the nation directly regarding the decision of the High-Level Committee on COVID-19 for a nationwide confinement.

In the afternoon of Tuesday 09 March 2021, the Media was kept informed by the Government Information Service, about the impending statement by either a member designated by the High-Level Committee on COVID-19 or by myself. Moreover, an information scrolling text was aired on major MBC channels as from 20 30 hours on the same day stating that I would be addressing the nation on MBC 1, MBC 3, MBC Sat, Bhojpuri Channel, BTV, *Senn Kreol*, Best FM and Kool FM radio channels.

At 21 27 hours, I did address the nation explaining the circumstances leading to, and the need for a national lockdown, effective as from Wednesday 10 March 2021 at 06 00 hours. My address was broadcast on MBC TV and MBC Radio channels I mentioned earlier. My address was also relayed live by other private radios, including their digital platforms. Furthermore, my address was re-broadcast on MBC 1 at 23 00 hours. The information was also relayed in all the media the next morning.

Concurrently, I issued an Order pursuant to section 3 of the Quarantine Act, imposing temporary restrictions of movement from Wednesday 10 March to Thursday 25 March 2021.

It is indeed considered that, in the prevailing circumstances, this was the most effective method of reaching the maximum number of people and we consider that this objective was met to a very large extent.

COVID-19 - OFFENCES UNDER QUARANTINE ACT

(No. B/11) 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 offences under the Prevention of Resurgence and Further Spread of Epidemic Disease (COVID-19) Regulations 2020 and the Quarantine Act 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information to the number of persons

—

- (a) arrested;
- (b) prosecuted, and
- (c) convicted thereunder.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that since the coming into force of the Prevention of Resurgence and Further Spread of Epidemic Disease (COVID-19) Regulations 2020 until 21 March 2021, no person has been arrested. However, out of 3,067 persons found in breach of the provisions of the regulations -

- (i) 361 persons have been prosecuted;
- (ii) 18 persons have been convicted;
- (iii) One person has been administered a warning;
- (iv) One accused has passed away, and
- (v) 2,686 cases are under enquiry.

With regard to offences committed under the Quarantine Act 2020, Police has informed that as at 21 March 2021, 18 cases have been established, out of which –

- (i) 16 persons have been arrested;
- (ii) 4 persons have been prosecuted;
- (iii) one person has been convicted, and
- (iv) in 13 cases, enquiry is proceeding.

LU RONG YUAN YU 588 FISHING VESSEL – POINTE AUX SABLES - GROUNDING

(No. B/12) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the fishing vessel Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588 found drifted off the Pointe aux Sables coast, on Sunday 07 March 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Coast Guard, information as to the time –

- (a) when the first distress signals were registered by the coast guards, and
- (b) the crew was rescued.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that on Friday 05 March 2021 at 01 42 hours, the Chinese-flagged Fishing Vessel (FV) ‘Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588’ entered into the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius for a call to Port Louis Harbour for bunkering, provisioning and collecting baits, after obtaining the necessary clearances from the Mauritius Ports Authority and the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The movement of the vessel was being monitored by the National Coast Guard Operations Room, through the Seavision Automatic Identification System.

On Sunday 07 March 2021 at 04 14 hours, the vessel then entered into our territorial waters to sail towards the Port Area. At 06 10 hours, it entered the Port limits.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that, on 07 March 2021 at 17 21 hours, the National Coast Guard Operations Room received a phone call from the Port Louis Harbour Radio to the effect that the Vessel, with 16 crew members onboard, ran aground on the reef off Pointe aux Sables. Immediately after receiving the call, the National Coast Guard

Operations Room contacted the National Coast Guard Harbour Security, which is the nearest Unit to the scene of the incident for assistance.

At 17 35 hours, the personnel of National Coast Guard Harbour Security cast off on a Heavy Duty Boat (HDB) to provide assistance. In addition, a Fast Interceptor Boat (FIB) from National Coast Guard Harbour Security with divers onboard, the CGS Valiant, which was anchored in harbour, and an Avon Craft from Pointe aux Sables were cast off to render assistance. The Mauritius Ports Authority also deployed a tug to the site. Furthermore, the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, through the Scott Shipping Ltd, instructed Tug Ionian SEA FOS to provide assistance to the vessel.

However, as the sea was rough with high swells and due to the limited depth in the area as well as darkness, none of the vessels could approach the distressed ship.

Consequently, as an alternative to the rescue operations, at 18 10 hours, the services of the Police Helicopter were solicited. Police Helicopter DHRUV took off at 18 25 hours from SSR International Airport Helipad to carry out flying recce over the vessel. From 19 15 to 20 30 hours, the helicopter successfully evacuated the 16 crew in three batches to the Line Barracks football pitch.

From there, the crew members were taken over by an ambulance of the Ministry of Health and Wellness and conveyed to Quay 4, where they boarded sister vessel FV ‘Lu Rong Yuan Yu 599’. The local agent of the vessel ‘Lu Rong Yuan Yu 588’ caused the crew members of both fishing vessels to undergo PCR test on 08 March 2021, arranged by C-LAB of Wellkin Hospital. All the tests were negative.

Further information indicates that after the incident was reported, several actions were, in parallel, also immediately initiated by relevant authorities including, *inter alia*, the following

—

- (i) the Port Louis Harbour Oil Spill Plan was activated;
- (ii) the Mauritius Ports Authority Port Emergency Services mobilised the oil spill equipment during the night of 07 March 2021 at Port Louis given that it was not possible to deploy the equipment at that time due to bad weather conditions;
- (iii) a Crisis Committee, comprising, amongst others, representatives from the Mauritius Ports Authority, National Coast Guard, Police, Special Mobile Force, Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change was set up at the level

of the Mauritius Ports Authority. The Committee first met on 07 March 2021 at 20 15 hours and subsequently had daily meetings to monitor the situation;

- (iv) booms were placed in the lagoon to contain any risk of oil spill;
- (v) officers of the Mauritius Ports Authority Port Emergency Services, National Coast Guard and Special Mobile Force were posted at the Pointe aux Sables public beach to intervene in case of any oil spill;
- (vi) a Salvage Contractor was appointed by the owner of the vessel to carry out the oil pumping operation and the placement of booms;
- (vii) a landing zone was identified at Pointe aux Sables to receive pumped oil;
- (viii) the pumping of oil started as from 09 March 2021. Intermediate Bulk Containers were transferred from the casualty vessel to the landing zone by police helicopter. The operation was continued till 11 March 2021, where some 20.4 tons of oil were recovered;
- (ix) the refloating operation to remove the vessel from its grounded position was successful on 11 March 2021 at around 11 45 hours, following which the casualty vessel was towed off to Port-Louis Harbour, and
- (x) the vessel was closely monitored by the Mauritius Ports Authority, Port Emergency Services, before being taken to the *Chantier Naval de l'Océan Indien* for repairs on 16 March 2021.

It must also be pointed out that sea water samples along the shoreline of Pointe aux Sables were collected as from 08 March 2021. The test Report of Coastal Water Quality Monitoring at Pointe aux Sables for the period 08 to 12 March 2021 revealed that the sea water samples were compliant with the coastal Water Quality Guidelines.

Furthermore, the Commissioner of Police has informed that, on 08 March 2021, the Central CID started an enquiry into the circumstances and causes of the grounding of the

vessel. Officers from the CCID comprising investigators and SOCO Photographer/Examiner as well as from the Shipping Department and Polyeco, the local Salvage Contractor appointed by the owner of the vessel, went onboard the vessel by means of the Police Helicopter for investigation purposes. Enquiry is ongoing.

SSRN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - PRIVATE FLIGHTS - SANITARY PROTOCOLS

(No. B/13) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to private jets landed at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport since January 2021 to date, he will state –

- (a) if all quarantine procedures were followed by the passengers and members of the crew thereof, and
- (b) the measures taken by his Ministry, indicating the logistics put in place to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reply: The Department of Civil Aviation has informed that, according to its records, only two private flights landed at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport since 01 January 2021 to date.

As regards part (a) of the question, the Department of Civil Aviation has further informed that there were no incoming passengers onboard both flights. The first flight was a case of medical evacuation from Mauritius whereas the second one was operated for the repatriation of two South African passengers.

The Department of Civil Aviation has also informed that the crew members of the two flights remained onboard during the stop-over in Mauritius as both flights departed on the same day.

As regards part (b) of the question, measures taken by the Ministry to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic are in accordance with the sanitary protocols established by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The Officers of this Ministry put in place the logistics required and the protocols to be followed by all stakeholders and passengers. They also supervise all operations from the time of arrival of the passengers until they reach their quarantine centre.

COVID-19 SOLIDARITY FUND – FUNDS COLLECTED – LIST OF BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/33) 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 COVID-19 Solidarity Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom –

- (a) information as to the total quantum of funds collected as at to date, and
- (b) table the list of beneficiaries thereof, indicating in each case, the quantum of funds disbursed.

Reply: Les questions B/33 et B/56 seront répondues conjointement, étant donné qu'elles portent toutes deux sur le même sujet.

En ce qui concerne les fonds collectés dans le *COVID-19 Solidarity Fund*, j'ai été informé que, de mars 2020 jusqu'au 18 mars 2021, le total des contributions s'élevait à 765,2 millions de roupies.

Sur la même période, un montant de 668,9 millions de roupies a été déboursé par le Fonds sous forme d'assistance financière.

Les déboursements ont été effectués comme suit –

- Financement partiel du programme national de vaccination contre la COVID-19 pour un montant de 400 millions de roupies ;
- Financement partiel de l'allocation aux *frontliners* pour un montant de 149,2 millions de roupies ;
- Financement partiel des coûts de quarantaine encourus par le ministère du Tourisme pour un montant de 89,7 millions de roupies ;
- Assistance à 12 ONG pour 24 millions de roupies ;
- Soutien au ministère de la Santé et du Bien-être pour la désinfection de lieux publics et des campagnes de communication, entre autres pour un montant de 4 millions de roupies, et
- Assistance à 384 individuels pour 2 millions de roupies.

En ce qui concerne le solde du Fonds, j'ai été informé qu'à la date du 18 mars 2021, il était de 96,3 millions de roupies.

Une aide financière de 5 100 de roupies a été accordée à chacune des 384 personnes éligibles. Cela représente une somme totale de 2 millions de roupies.

Il ne serait cependant pas approprié de divulguer les noms des bénéficiaires individuels.

En outre, une aide financière d'un montant de 24 millions de roupies a été accordée à 12 ONG pour mettre en œuvre des programmes liés à la COVID-19, tels que –

- l'aide aux ménages vulnérables en termes de fourniture de denrées de base et d'articles sanitaires,
- la fourniture d'un soutien logistique et de colis alimentaires aux étudiants nécessiteux et aux enfants handicapés qui suivent des cours de rattrapage, ou encore
- la fourniture d'un abri à ceux qui n'en n'ont pas.

Cette aide financière, sous forme de subventions, est fournie directement aux ONG éligibles et non pas par l'intermédiaire de la *National Social Inclusion Foundation*.

Le Fonds a conclu un protocole d'accord avec la Fondation, qui a été mandatée pour suivre la mise en œuvre des programmes approuvés.

À ce titre, la Fondation soumet des rapports réguliers au Fonds.

Je dépose la liste des 12 ONG, avec le détail des fonds qui leur ont été versés et de leurs programmes respectifs, ainsi que les fonds mensuels collectés par le *COVID-19 Solidarity Fund* à la bibliothèque de l'Assemblée Nationale.

J'en profite enfin pour remercier l'ensemble des contributeurs au *COVID-19 Solidarity Fund* pour leur témoignage de solidarité.

PACK & BLISTER - DEFECTIVE VENTILATORS

(No. B/34) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the fifty defective ventilators procured from Pack & Blister, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed reimbursement thereof.

Reply: With your permission, I would reply to Parliamentary Questions B/34 and B/63 together as they relate to the same subject matter, that is, procurement and commissioning of ventilators from Pack and Blister.

In July 2020, the Independent Commission Against Corruption secured the procurement files for the purchase of ventilators at my Ministry. As such, in the absence of any record of the procurement exercise, I cannot provide any further details regarding the procurement aspect of the matter. Further, since that inquiry is under the jurisdiction of the

ICAC, by virtue of Section 81(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, I cannot divulge any further information.

I will enlighten the House in relation to other parts of the question in relation to which information does not pertain to matters under investigation at ICAC. At present, there are 28 ventilators at the ENT Treatment Centre. There are also 32 ports for ventilators thereat. Moreover, there are 110 ventilators in other public hospitals which may be utilised for treatment of COVID-19 patients in case of emergency. My Ministry has launched bids for the purchase of 10 additional ventilators.

With regard to the other parts of the questions, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Questions B/993 and B/1021, on 08 December 2020, whereby I informed the House about the 51 ventilators supplied by Pack and Blister.

Arrangements to return the ventilators to Pack and Blister are being made.

DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN - CASES

(No. B/35) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to domestic and family violence against women and children, she will state the number of reported cases thereof through hotlines number 139 and 119, respectively, since the implementation of the current lockdown, indicating the –

- (a) number of placements made by her Ministry, and
- (b) arrangements made available and accessible to the personnel of the institutions where these persons have been placed to give assistance thereto.

Reply: I am informed that from 10 March to 21 March 2021 -

- 670 calls were received on Hotline 139, out of which 107 cases of domestic violence were reported.
- 118 calls were received on Hotline 119, out of which 25 cases of family related issues were reported.

With regard to part (a) of the question, for the same period, 2 victims were placed in shelters.

With regard to part (b) of the question, My Ministry has made all arrangements for the personnel of shelters to be provided with a Work Access Permit and also to be vaccinated.

L'OISEAU DU PARADIS SHELTER - BABIES & CHILDREN

(No. B/36) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Cap Malheureux Relay Centre, also known as Shelter *L'Oiseau du Paradis*, she will state the –

- (a) number of babies and children accommodated thereat, since December 2020 to date, indicating the gender, age and date of admission thereof, and
- (b) preventive and sanitary measures put in place thereat against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reply: Since its coming into operation on 09 December 2020, the *L'Oiseau Du Paradis* Shelter has provided accommodation to 52 children, including 21 babies.

21 minors out of the 52 minors admitted at the *L'Oiseau Du Paradis* Shelter have been relocated to other shelters. There are presently 31 children placed thereat, including 16 babies.

Regarding part (a), a list of children accommodated at the shelter since December 2020 is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the following Preventive and Sanitary measures have been put in place at *L'Oiseau Du Paradis* Shelter –

- adequate provision, in terms of food and commodities, have been made available in sufficient stock at the shelter;
- transport facilities have been provided to employees from their place of residence to the shelter;
- all employees are being provided with face masks and hand sanitizers. Thermometer is used to allow access on a daily basis;
- employees residing in the RED ZONE are not attending the shelter;

- an isolation room has been put in place for staff or residents who suffer from fever; pending that the child or employee is transported to hospital;
- a roster is in place to ensure a 24-hour service;
- transport facilities made available for vaccination of staff of the shelter;
- the shelter is ensuring that babies are medically fit before admission, all babies who were admitted during the lockdown, possess a discharge ticket from the Ministry of Health and Wellness;
- cooks, handy-workers, watchman, administrative staffs, cleaners, child caregivers and Administrative staffs are on duty to ensure the normal running of the shelter;
- 2 additional Assistant Child Programme Officers (ACPOs) are temporarily posted at the shelter during the lockdown as support to the Officer in Charge;
- monitoring visits are being done by the Chairman of the NCC, Coordinators of the NCC, Enforcement Officers and CDU Officers during the lockdown, and
- residents have been sensitized on the COVID-19. They have been educated on the sanitary precautions to be taken during these times.

MRS S.K. – CYBER VIDEOS

(No. B/37) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the recent dissemination of several degrading and humiliating cyber videos against Mrs S. K., he will, for the benefit of House, obtain from the Information Communication Technologies Authority, information as to if sanctions have been taken imposed on the internet users involved therein and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - LEASING COMPANIES - MORATORIUM PERIOD

(No. B/38) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and the impact thereof on the economy, he will state if Government will consider taking measures to require leasing companies to grant a

moratorium period for repayment of capital and interests from, especially, the operators of the tourism sector.

Reply (Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance): The economy of this country as a whole, including operators of the tourism sector, in particular, has been seriously impacted by the consequences of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic since its outbreak in March last year.

Unfortunately, this year again there has been a resurgence of the Pandemic in the country and we have gone on lockdown since 10 March 2021 with the inevitable negative consequences on our economy.

It is to be recalled that, in the aftermath of the outbreak of the COVID-19 in the country, the Government had put in place a series of measures to support and assist businesses, employees and self-employed affected by the lockdown. These measures include

—

- (i) Wage Assistance Scheme;
- (ii) Self-Employed Assistance Scheme;
- (iii) “*Plan de Soutien*” by the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd (DBM) in terms of a COVID-19 Working Capital Loan Scheme with an interest rate of 1.5% per annum and a repayment period of 3 years, and a Loan Scheme to Distressed Enterprises with an interest rate of 0.5%, a repayment period of 7 years, and a moratorium period of 2 years;
- (iv) The DBM has also introduced, a COVID-19 Working Capital Loan Scheme to the Contract Car Operators and other Minibus/Van Operators, under which these transport operators are eligible for financial assistance of up to Rs3.0 m., to enable them meet their financial obligations to the leasing companies. The loan carries an interest rate of 1.5% p.a. and is repayable over a period of 3 years including a moratorium of 6 months;
- (v) Furthermore, the DBM grants Special Loans to Taxi Operators based in hotels. Under the scheme the taxi operators are eligible for a loan of Rs100,000 for subsistence. The loan carries interest at the rate of 2% p.a. and is repayable over a period of 5 years including a moratorium of 1 year. This scheme has been extended to Pleasure Craft Operators and Minibus/ Van Operators based at hotels;
- (vi) The DBM, through its subsidiary DBM Financial Services Ltd, also provides leasing facilities to entrepreneurs, and

- (vii) The Bank of Mauritius has, on its part, established a Special Relief Fund of Rs5 billion to meet cash flow and working capital requirements of economic operators in all sectors, including tourism, which are being directly impacted by the COVID-19. These facilities carry an interest rate of 1.5% per annum and is repayable over 48 months, with a moratorium of 9 months.

Over and above the foregoing facilities that have been put in place since last year, Government has come up with some extra assistance this year and announced by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, last Friday. These are –

- (i) A Self -Employed one off grant of Rs10,000;
- (ii) An Interest-Free Loan of Rs100,000 to all SME's with a moratorium of 5 years;
- (iii) Introduction of an SME COVID-19 Special Support Scheme of Rs1 m. for all SME's for a loan without guarantee at an interest rate of 0.5 % with a moratorium of one year;
- (iv) Payment of VAT to be extended from 31 March 2021 to 15 July 2021, and
- (v) An extension of the period of moratorium on all DBM's loan by one year.

The above measures are aimed at ensuring, *inter alia*, that entrepreneurs in general and those in the tourism sector have access to affordable financing to operate their businesses, and meet their obligations towards their suppliers and financing institutions, including leasing companies.

As regards leasing companies licensed by the Financial Services Commission (FSC), I am informed that they have been applying a voluntary rescheduling of repayments on a case to case basis. Moreover, the FSC has not received any representations from clients of the leasing companies licensed by them, requesting for a moratorium for repayment of capital and interest on their leases. On the other hand, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the matter is being studied at their level in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB - COMMERCIAL AGREEMENT

(No. B/39) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the commercial agreement of around Rs400 million signed

with the Liverpool Football Club, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to the –

- (a) process adopted for and the persons involved in the vetting thereof prior to signature;
- (b) terms and conditions thereof, and
- (c) number of additional tourists and extra tourism earnings expected to be generated following implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed that, in 2019, Liverpool Football Club (LFC) proposed a Commercial Partnership to Mauritius.

In this context, meetings were held at the level of the Government involving different Ministries, with the participation of various stakeholders.

On 7 February 2020, Government agreed to the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) entering into a Commercial Partnership Agreement with the Liverpool Football Club over three years.

Further the Attorney-General's Office and the Public Procurement Office were also consulted in the process, prior to the signature of the Agreement.

As the hon. Member, who has been a Minister in Government, is aware, it is not the practice to disclose the names of civil servants and other individuals who, in their normal course of duty, participate in the conduct of Government business.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am further informed that in exchange of monetary payment by the Government of Mauritius, for an amount of £7,500,000 over three years, Liverpool Football Club undertook to provide the following: sponsorship rights, tickets and hospitality, membership imagery, player and club access, partnership launch event, venue advertising, merchandising, pitch use, and monthly magazine.

Insofar as part (c) of the question is concerned, I am furthermore informed that –

- a) Liverpool football Club, with a fan base of 451 million supporters around the world, some 18 million of them are high net worth individuals who could be targeted in our main tourism markets;

- b) out of the 18 million supporters, 36% are estimated to choose a brand that partners with LFC for their holidays or for investment opportunities;
- c) 42% of the total fans take medium to long haul vacations and around 36% are potential visitors to Mauritius, and
- d) it is anticipated that this can accelerate the country's progress towards its stated objective of attracting 2 million visitors in the coming years which would correspond to additional revenue of over Rs40 billion to the Mauritian economy.

It is further to be noted that, subsequently, Liverpool Football Club entered into an agreement with Expedia, the leading online tour operator and Mauritius can position itself as a preferred partner destination.

The Agreement was to kick off in June 2020, but with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic the tourism industry, worldwide, is at a halt and Mauritius has not been spared.

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT, SANITARY EQUIPMENT & MEDICINES – PROCUREMENT - JUNE 2020 TO 23 MARCH 2021

(No. B/40) 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 procurement of protective equipment, sanitary equipment and medicines amid the Covid-19 pandemic since June 2020 to date, he will state the procurement procedures followed, indicating the -

- (a) dates of the launching of tenders therefor;
- (b) names of the successful bidders;
- (c) details of the emergency procurement exercises carried out, if any, and
- (d) details of the stock of PPE and COVID-19 test kits available as at to date.

Reply: I am informed that all procurement procedures followed for the procurement of protective equipment, sanitary equipment and medicines, since June 2020 to date, have been in accordance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act.

With regard to the other parts of the question, with your permission, I am placing the required information in the Library of the National Assembly.

HORIZON PARIS 2024 - MAURITIAN ATHLETES

(No. B/41) Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to Horizon Paris 2024, he will state where matters stand as to the preparation of the Mauritian athletes therefor –

- (a) indicating the criteria for the selection of the thirteen participating Mauritian athletes thereto and
- (b) giving details of the provision, if any, of complementary mental, nutritional and medical expertise thereto for the progress and performance optimization thereof.

(Withdrawn)

TOKYO OLYMPIC GAMES - MAURITIAN ATHLETES

(No. B/42) Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the forthcoming Tokyo Olympic Games, he will state the –

- (a) names of the athletes who will be participating therein, and
- (b) measures taken to ensure the safety of the Mauritian athletes during their travel and stay in the Olympic village abroad.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINE - DISABLED & BEDRIDDEN PERSONS

(No. B/43) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the disabled and bedridden patients, he will state the special measures taken, if any, for the administration thereto of the Covid-19 Vaccine under the National Deployment and Vaccination Programme.

Reply (Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity):
My Ministry has already made arrangements for carers attached to our 22 charitable institutions and 46 private homes to be vaccinated in our 14 vaccination centres across the island. Transport facilities have been arranged by my Ministry to facilitate the exercise.

Moreover, with a view to protecting disabled and bedridden persons, my Ministry has also issued a communiqué dated 19 March 2021 to invite individual carers looking after them

to apply for a Work Access Permit and to register themselves with the EDB Platform for an appointment to be vaccinated at the nearest vaccination centre.

The Medical Unit of my Ministry is currently liaising with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to find the best way forward for the vaccination of bedridden persons.

As for disabled and bedridden persons in charitable institutions and private homes, arrangements have already been made with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to set up regional mobile vaccination centres to administer vaccines to inmates of charitable institutions and private homes.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – CASES – JANUARY 2020-MARCH 2021 & LOCKDOWN PERIOD

(No. B/44) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the vulnerable man/woman/child victims of domestic violence, she will state the –

- (a) measures taken by her Ministry for the protection thereof during the lockdown period, and
- (b) number of reported cases thereof, since January 2020 to date on a monthly basis.

Reply: As soon as the country went in lockdown, my Ministry has developed a reinforced protocol to ensure the smooth running of its essential services. The following measures have been taken for domestic violence cases during lockdown -

- The Hotline 139 is operational on 24/7 basis through 4 parallel lines.
- Calls received are referred to 6 Family Welfare and Protection Officers (FWPOs) on-call for intervention in regions falling under the respective 6 Family Support Bureaux (FSBx).
- Depending on cases, FWPOs refer cases to Psychologists for counseling through phone.
- In emergency cases, Police assistance is sought.
- After thorough assessment, if there is need for victims to make application for Protection Orders, the FWPOs seek assistance of Police for an Interim Protection

Order to be issued by District Magistrates on-call, either through WhatsApp or through video-conference.

- Depending on cases, if victims and their children need to be admitted in shelters, FWPOs/Police Officers –
 - accompany victims and their children for PCR (Covid-19) Tests, and
 - accompany victims and their children for admission in shelters.
- In the event victims want to be discharged from shelters, FWPOs accompany victims to the nearest Police Stations to record a statement to that effect.
- FWPOs obtain a copy of the statement from the Police Station for record purposes.
- Follow-up of cases is also made by phone.

For part (b) of the question, the information is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – LOCAL EXPORT-ORIENTED ENTERPRISES – PERFORMANCE

(No. B/45) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the local export-oriented enterprises, he will state the performance thereof during the year 2020, indicating how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected same.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN - PROJECTS

(No. B/46) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the current ongoing public contracts for projects being managed by his Ministry and parastatals falling under the purview of his Ministry, he will state the contractual impacts thereof in terms of costs, if any, amid the present COVID-19 lockdown.

Reply: With your permission, I wish to reconfirm that, despite the serious economic downturn as a consequence of the last confinement, this Government, under the visionary leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, has prioritised the well-being of the population over financial and other economic considerations.

Since 10 March 2021, the Island of Mauritius has entered its second national lockdown/confinement up to the 25 March 2021 and the priority of this Government is still

the health and well-being of the nation. On this premise, all works on site were suspended as from 10 March 2021 and the workers have been requested to stay confined and strictly adhere to all sanitary measures.

During the last lockdown, construction activities were allowed to resume after some time, whereby construction sites were operating with social distancing restrictions and strict sanitary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The construction industry, as the hon. Member will agree, is a major pillar of our national economy. In this context and, in the light of the lessons learnt during the first lockdown, there is every reason to believe that the construction industry should be supported to ensure the continuity in the implementation of existing projects during the present lockdown.

Government has already initiated action to allow for resumption of works for all ongoing major road projects under specific conditions and in strict compliance with sanitary regulations in force. I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that the relevant Contractors are accordingly preparing for the resumption of work as from this week itself. A similar line of action is being adopted for all major projects of national interest, being undertaken by the National Development Unit (NDU) of my Ministry.

With regard to other current ongoing public contracts for projects managed by my Ministry, a decision regarding their resumption of work will be taken after analysing the implications, if any, which may arise following the resumption of work of the RDA and NDU's Contractors.

Less than two weeks have elapsed since the lockdown/confinement has started and we are now still in the lockdown period. It is, therefore, too early to determine the contractual impacts on ongoing projects, if any, in terms of cost or otherwise.

I wish, moreover, to highlight that any delay or disruption caused to the smooth progress of ongoing projects, whether on account of the COVID-19 lockdown or otherwise, can only be dealt with in strict conformity with the claims procedures laid down in the provisions of the corresponding contract. The burden of proof usually lies upon the Contractors concerned to establish any entitlement to claim extension of time and/or additional costs. In the light of the foregoing and until the claim particulars are actually received and determined by my Ministry for projects being managed by us, it is not possible to quantify any adverse time and cost implications of the lockdown on project delivery.

(No. B/47) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the logistics of the public hospital service, more specifically, the SAMU hotline 114, the COVID Hotline 8924 and the Internal Rapid Response Team, he will state the –

- (a) specific duties and responsibilities of each, and
- (b) measures taken to avoid confusion between same during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Reply: The two hotlines in operation, namely the SAMU 114 and the COVID-19 8924 operate on a 24-hour basis.

The SAMU 114 hotline is operated by Emergency Physicians and Permanenciers who attend to all incoming calls from the public at large. The calls are segregated into Vital Emergencies, Emergencies, Non-Emergencies and Medical Advice. A triage of all incoming calls is done and all vital emergency cases are attended by the SAMU teams on the basis of catchment areas.

Non-emergency cases are channeled to respective hospitals for “*Ambulances Non Médicalisées*”.

As regards calls received by the SAMU on Hotline 114 for information on COVID-19, the caller is requested to call the Hotline dedicated to COVID-19, that is, 8924.

The Hotline 8924 is in operation since last year to attend to all queries regarding COVID-19. At present, it operates 18 lines on a 24-hour basis and is manned by a pool of 49 staff. In the morning, there are 18 staff, out of which 10 are doctors and 8 Health Care Assistants. In the afternoon, as from 16.00 hrs, there are 13 staff out, of which 7 are doctors and 6 are Health Care Assistants. Moreover, 10 additional doctors from the newly recruited pool of doctors have been posted in the Hotline unit.

The operators of the Hotline 8924 provide information to -

- Persons having symptoms that can be related to COVID-19;
- Persons having been in contact with positive COVID-19 patients;
- Patients who have been admitted in Quarantine Centres and treatment centres;
- COVID-19 positive patients who have been treated in our treatment centres;

- Persons who have queries on COVID-19 vaccination, and
- Persons who have queries/symptoms after having been vaccinated against COVID-19.

Moreover, persons with any queries not pertaining to the above are requested to contact the SAMU on Hotline 114.

As regards the Rapid Response Team, there is no Hotline for the public dedicated to this team. This team attends to suspected COVID-19 cases under the instruction of the Regional Public Health Superintendents. There is one Rapid Response Team in each of the five regional hospitals which arranges for the conveyance of COVID-19 positive patients from COVID-19 testing centres and quarantine centres to the COVID-19 treatment centres. The team makes the same arrangements for persons who are positive from their place of residence to COVID-19 treatment centres.

DIRECTOR, HEALTH SERVICES – NAME, QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

(No. B/48) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the post of Director, Health Services, responsible for public health, he will state the name, qualifications and experience held by the present incumbent thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CHILDREN – VICTIMS OF ABUSE OR VIOLENCE

(No. B/49) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the children known by the services of her Ministry to be at risk of being victims of abuse or violence, she will state if regular checks are carried out by her Ministry and, if so, indicate the number thereof –

- carried out since the beginning of the lockdown to date, and
- which culminated into concrete actions to ensure the protection of child victims, indicating the nature of the actions taken in each case.

Reply: All cases of violence against children reported to my Ministry on Hotline 113 are provided with intervention in terms of assessment, counselling, psychological support,

referral, assistance in the provision of medical care and assistance for recording of statement and follow-up as appropriate till it is ensured that the children are no longer at risk.

Much work is also undertaken to support those parents in need of upscaling of their parental capacities through psychological therapies and follow-up and, if need be, referral is made to Psychiatrists of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. As regards children faring from poor families who are at risk due to poverty, the support of the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity is solicited through referrals.

As regards part (a) of the question, since the onset of the confinement on 10 March 2021 till 21 March 2021, there have been 143 cases reported on the Hotline 113 of my Ministry. The interventions carried out by phone by officers of the Ministry amounted to 171.

A total of 23 field interventions were carried out by CPS team comprising of FWPOs and Psychologists since the beginning of confinement and 10 children were removed under Court Order and placed in places of safety.

Regarding part (b), details thereof are being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – MEDICAL STAFF – SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/50) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the pressure and risks faced by the medical staff in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state if any special assistance, in the form of psychological support or otherwise, is being provided thereto and, if not, why not.

Reply: Last year, during the outbreak of the COVID-19 in March 2020, the cause, pathology and treatment were unknown to Public Health. Notwithstanding this fact, a number of our health sector frontliners who have been directly exposed to high pressure and risks in fighting the pandemic were provided with psychological support through our mental healthcare departments manned by Psychiatrists and Clinical Psychologists. As per our official records, 13 members of staff have been seen by Clinical Psychologists last year.

This year, COVID-19, in terms of occurrence of the disease and treatment, are known and vaccines are available. Moreover, our health personnel have been given training on COVID-19 and are prepared since they have been working in quarantine and treatment facilities.

Presently, there are 12 Psychologists and 21 Psychiatrists who are posted on a daily basis in the five regional hospitals. These Psychologists and Psychiatrists are available to provide assistance and support to all our health personnel, including our medical staff as and when required.

COVID-19 VACCINES – PROCUREMENT

(No. B/51) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the -

- (a) quantum of funds earmarked for the procurement thereof, indicating the quantum thereof disbursed as at 05 March 2021, and
- (b) number and type thereof available for the Mauritian population as at 05 March 2021, giving details, if any, of the pre-orders as at 05 March 2021.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, funds for the procurement of vaccines are being provided from the National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Fund which has been set up as a Special Fund under the Finance and Audit Act to finance the National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. The main objective of the Special Fund is to mobilise and manage funds required for the implementation of the Vaccination Programme, including amongst others, the costs of the vaccines, storage equipment, air freight and other logistics.

I am informed that so far, the Vaccination Programme Fund has funds to the tune of Rs431,916,998. As at date, an amount of Rs179,147,235 has been disbursed from the Fund for the procurement of vaccines.

With regard to part (b) of the question, following exchange of correspondence between my Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and the High Commission of India in Mauritius, my Ministry submitted an Emergency Use of Covishield vaccine to the Serum Institute of India through diplomatic channel. On 26 January 2021, a Safety Data Exchange Agreement was signed between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India. The purpose of the Safety Data Exchange Agreement was to describe the procedures and to define the responsibilities between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India. The Indian Authorities informed the Government that they would make a donation of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines to Mauritius to enable us to kick-start our vaccination programme.

On 27 January 2021, a firm order was placed on the Serum Institute of India for the purchase of 300,000 doses of Covishield vaccines i.e. 100,000 doses to be supplied in February 2021, 100,000 doses in Quarter 1 and 100,000 doses in Quarter 2. A Vaccine Purchase Agreement was thereafter signed between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India on 15 February 2021.

On 21 February 2021, the first consignment of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines reached Mauritius. The date of expiry of the vaccines is July 2021.

The second consignment of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines is expected in mid-April 2021 and the last consignment by end of June 2021. The 200,000 doses already available will cover 100,000 persons.

ASTRAZENECA (COVISHIELD) VACCINE – COMPOSITION – SIDE EFFECTS

(No. B/52) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the AstraZeneca (Covishield) Vaccine, he will state -

- (a) the composition thereof, indicating if his Ministry is in presence of data on possible allergies, side effects and hospitalization following the administration thereof to the population under the National Deployment and Vaccination Programme, and
- (b) indicate if Government is proposing to acquire other COVID-19 vaccines such as Covaxin Pfizer, Biotech or Moderna.

Reply: The composition of the AstraZeneca/Covishield Vaccine is as follows -

- L- Histidine
- L-Histidine Hydrochloride Monohydrate
- Magnesium Chloride Hexahydrate
- Polysorbate 80
- Ethanol (2 mg in one dose)
- Sucrose (synonym: Sucrose)
- Sodium Chloride
- Disodium Edetate Dihydrate

I am informed that, as at date, there has been no adverse effect following immunization, but only some mild side effects, such as fever and pain, as for any other vaccine.

With regard to proposal to acquire other brands of vaccines, in July 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade informed my Ministry that there was a proposal from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI Alliance) inviting Mauritius to submit a non-binding expression of interest for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines being developed by several international pharmaceutical companies. After consultation with all relevant stakeholders, my Ministry entered into an Agreement with the GAVI Alliance. The Agreement provides for the procurement of the vaccines to cover 20% of the population estimated at 253,600.

The African Union (AU) is also facilitating the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines for AU Member countries through the Africa Medical Supplies Platform. The latter has informed my Ministry that the allotment for Mauritius would be 199,682 doses, of which 48,451 from Pfizer and 151,231 from Janssen (Johnson and Johnson).

On 16 December 2020, my Ministry also approached other manufacturers namely AstraZeneca (Oxford), Pfizer, Moderna and Gamaleya Research Institute (Sputnik) seeking information in respect of the process and modalities for the procurement of each vaccine, the prices thereof, the supply chain, the temperature requirement and the scheduled delivery of the vaccines. Pfizer requested my Ministry to enter into a Non-Disclosure Agreement, which my Ministry did. Thereafter, a working session/webinar was held with representatives of Pfizer on 07 January 2021 and my Ministry was requested to make an official request.

The Ministry submitted a request for the procurement of 1 million doses of Pfizer vaccines and requested the manufacturer to inform about the terms and conditions, delivery schedule and pricing. Pfizer requested my Ministry to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement, which my Ministry did. However, no conclusive deal was reached with any of the manufacturers.

My Ministry, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, also approached the Russian Authorities with a view to securing supply of the Sputnik vaccines. My Ministry was subsequently advised to send our request to the Russian Direct Investment Fund, a Russian Government Agency responsible for the commercialisation of the vaccine. My Ministry, therefore, approached the Russian Direct Investment Fund through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and

International Trade on 16 December 2020 and we have been informed that the Russian Direct Investment Fund is agreeable to provide 250,000 doses of the Sputnik vaccine.

On 05 March 2021, the High Commission of India informed my Ministry that vaccines against COVID-19 manufactured by Messrs Bharat Biotech India Ltd and commercialised under the brand name COVAXIN was available for procurement by Mauritius and submitted relevant documentation regarding same.

The information was submitted to the National COVID-19 Vaccination Committee, which gave its approval for the use of COVAXIN. My Ministry submitted an emergency use authorisation to the company and a purchase order for 1 million doses. The company informed my Ministry that 230,150 doses of the vaccines were available immediately.

On 18 March 2021, my Ministry was informed that due to export restrictions on vaccines, the Government of India had authorised the sale of only 200,000 doses. The consignment was loaded on special Air Mauritius Flight scheduled on the same day and reached Mauritius on Friday 19 March 2021 at 04 20 hours.

The vaccine commercialised under the brand name COVAXIN has been approved by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for emergency use. In Mauritius, the Trade and Therapeutics Committee and the Pharmacy Board have also approved the emergency use of the vaccine.

COVAXIN has recently completed its 3rd phase of clinical trial and as per available data, its efficacy is 81%. The vaccine has already been administered to millions of people in India and in some other countries. As at date no Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI) has been registered in any country.

On 12 March 2021, my Ministry was informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade that the Government of the People's Republic of China has agreed to make a donation of 100,000 doses of vaccines to Mauritius. The National COVID-19 Vaccination Committee has given its approval to accept the brand Sinopharm.

QUARANTINE CENTRES – PROTOCOL & PROCEDURES

(No. B/53) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to each quarantine centre, for the past six months, he will –

- (a) state if –
 - (i) his Ministry had control over the implementation of the rules and regulations thereat, indicating the names and roles of the responsible officers of his Ministry thereat, and

- (ii) the incoming passengers have mandatorily observed the 14-day quarantine, and
- (b) give the list of the quarantined persons thereat, indicating the number thereof confirmed PCR positive and referred to the ENT or Souillac Hospitals and had a negative PCR test on Day-14 on discharge.

Reply: Outright, let me first point out that the whole gamut of rules and regulations pertaining to quarantine are encapsulated under the Quarantine Act 2020. The elements of answer to the question are already in the form spelt out in the different sections of the Act, *inter alia*, application of regulations and respective responsibilities and authorities.

However, I shall highlight some of the Sections of the Act and the accompanying protocols. The Quarantine Centre falls under the responsibility of the respective Regional Health Director and, therefore, it devolves upon this officer to ensure proper implementation, monitoring and control of the protocol.

However, the Regional Health Director does not work in isolation as he/she is assisted by a Medical and Health Officer, Nursing Officer (male and female) and support staff to whom tasks are delegated in order to ensure the smooth process of quarantine ranging from the arrival of the quarantines, carrying out of PCR Tests at Day 0, Day 7 and Day 14 till their discharge.

Let me stress on the general rule that a 14-day quarantine period as a minimum is mandatory.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, I will not circulate the list of quarantined persons, for the sake of confidentiality. However, I wish to inform the House that from 01 October 2020, some 15,833 passengers have been quarantined, out of which 247 have been tested positive.

All passengers who are tested negative on Day-14 are discharged from the quarantine centres.

COVID-19 - ATYPICAL CASES

(No. B/54) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the atypical COVID-19 cases, he will give details of the features thereof, indicating –

- (a) the number of reported cases thereof in Mauritius as at to date, and
- (b) if his Ministry proposes to review its local protocol to include further testing after Day-14 of those who have been quarantined.

Reply: All doctors know that, apart from the usual forms of diseases, there are unusual, atypical cases, which cannot be explained, and do not conform to the typical form of the disease. The multiplicity of clinical presentations, their possible disparities and the biological results constitute the art of medicine.

After a few months or years later, sometimes an explanation will be found in the light of new knowledge, and sometimes these atypical forms remain unexplained.

I am informed that at the end of last year, a patient returning from abroad was found positive upon his arrival in Mauritius. In line with the then protocol, after being tested negative after 2 PCR COVID test at least 24 hours' interval, the patient was discharged.

A few days later, this patient, after leaving the ENT Treatment Centre, showed clinical signs suggestive of COVID and was again tested. The test results were revealed to be positive. This patient had mild clinical symptoms of COVID, and after two consecutive negative PCR COVID tests about two weeks later, the patient was discharged.

In light of the foregoing, I am informed that the protocol was modified a few weeks later, and after being discharged from the ENT Treatment Centre, all COVID patients have to undergo 7 days of self-isolation.

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN – ECONOMIC GROWTH, UNEMPLOYMENT & BUDGET DEFICIT – IMPACT

(No. B/55) 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 Covid-19 lockdown, he will state the estimated –

- (a) impact thereof on -
 - (i) economic growth;
 - (ii) unemployment, and
 - (iii) budget deficit and
- (b) costs of the measures taken by Government in response thereto, indicating the source of financing therefor

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 SOLIDARITY FUND – BENEFICIARIES –NGOs

(No. B/56) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the

COVID-19 Solidarity Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the quantum of funds therein since the implementation thereof on a monthly basis, indicating the quantum thereof –

- (a) available as at to date;
- (b) disbursed as at to date, indicating the names of the beneficiaries, and
- (c) allocated through the National Social Inclusion Foundation to Non-Government Organisations, giving details of the projects implemented.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/33)

LOCKDOWN PERIOD - VULNERABLE PERSONS - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/57) 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 vulnerable persons, she will state the measures taken by her Ministry to provide assistance thereto during the lockdown period, indicating if consideration has been given to the people having no fixed place of abode and people on the Social Register of Mauritius.

Reply: With respect to the measures taken for persons with no fixed abode during the lockdown, I would like to inform the House that –

- (i) on 26 November 2020, the Commissioner of Police submitted an updated survey on persons with no fixed abode to my Ministry. The updated survey revealed that there are currently 103 persons having no fixed abode across the island;
- (ii) on Wednesday 17 March 2021, my Ministry made arrangements for persons with no fixed abode to be vaccinated at the nearest vaccination centres through Non-Governmental Organisations;
- (iii) I am informed that as at Monday 22 March 2021, some 51 persons with no fixed abode have already been vaccinated. The exercise is ongoing;
- (iv) I am also informed that APPEL has constituted a network of volunteers to arrange for the distribution of food to some 30 homeless persons on a daily basis, and
- (v) furthermore, CARITAS is collaborating with two organisations for the provision of meals to persons with no fixed abode on a daily basis

As regards households under the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM), for the month of March 2021, some 7,500 households under the SRM have already been paid Subsistence Allowance to the tune of Rs16.5 m.

ASTRAZENECA/COVISHIELD VACCINE - AVAILABILITY

(No. B/58) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the AstraZeneca Vaccine, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof available as at to date in the country, indicating the –
 - (i) brands available;
 - (ii) date received, and
 - (iii) expiry dates thereof, and
- (b) when the next consignment thereof is awaited for the administration of the second dose.

Reply: Following exchange of correspondence between my Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and the High Commission of India in Mauritius, my Ministry submitted an Emergency Use of Covishield vaccine to the Serum Institute of India through diplomatic channel. On 26 January 2021, a Safety Data Exchange Agreement was signed between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India.

The purpose of the Safety Data Exchange Agreement was to describe the procedures and to define the responsibilities between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India. The Indian Authorities informed the Government that they would make a donation of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines to Mauritius to enable us to kick-start our vaccination programme.

On 27 January 2021, a firm order was placed on the Serum Institute of India for the purchase of 300,000 doses of Covishield vaccines i.e. 100,000 doses to be supplied in February 2021, 100,000 doses in Quarter 1 and 100,000 doses in Quarter 2. A Vaccine Purchase Agreement was, thereafter, signed between my Ministry and the Serum Institute of India on 15 February 2021.

On 21 February 2021, the first consignment of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines reached Mauritius. The date of expiry of the vaccines is 04 June and 23 June 2021.

The second consignment of 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccines is expected in mid-April 2021 and the last consignment by end of June 2021.

The 200,000 doses already available will cover 100,000 persons. In order to achieve herd immunization, my Ministry has ordered one million vaccines from Serum Institute of India, which has requested us to submit a purchase order for only 300,000 doses.

COVID-19 POSITIVE PATIENTS - HEALTH STAFF - QUARANTINE PROCEDURES

(No. B/59) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the health staff working with COVID-19 positive patients, he will state the quarantine procedures set up therefor.

Reply: Presently, all COVID-19 positive patients are being treated in 4 treatment centres, namely, the New ENT Hospital and 3 hotels which are being used as treatment centres.

All COVID-19 symptomatic patients are being treated at the New ENT Hospital, whereas all asymptomatic patients are being treated at the 3 other Centres.

As regards health staff working with COVID-19 positive patients, my Ministry has two well-established protocols for health staff working in quarantine centres and treatment centres.

All health staff working in the treatment centres have to be quarantined for 7 days and to undergo self-isolation for next 7 days. PCR tests are carried out on all the staff on their seventh day of duty and last day of quarantine.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – SEROLOGY TESTS

(No. B/60) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state when the first local COVID-19 patient was reported at his Ministry, indicating the –

- (a) number of serology tests carried out, and
- (b) outcome thereof.

Reply: The first local case, with regard to the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, was detected on 05 March 2021.

With respect to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that Serological tests detect the presence of antibodies in COVID-19 infected patients. Contrary to PCR and rapid antigen tests done on swab samples, antibody test is done on blood samples. A positive

antibody test indicates that a person has been exposed to infection. It can be used as a surveillance tool for overall exposure of community to infection.

Serological tests are currently being done on patients diagnosed with COVID-19 infection to monitor seroconversion.

I am informed that as from 05 March 2021, a total of 581 tests, including 407 tests done on positive patients and 174 for surveillance of the first cluster, have been carried out. Out of those 581 tests, 95 been found to be positive.

ANIMAL HOME OF PORT LOUIS – DOGS – REHABILITATION

(No. B/61) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the dogs kept at the Animal Home of Port Louis, he will state the plan of action envisaged for the rehabilitation thereof, indicating the approximate timeline established for the successful implementation thereof.

Reply: At the very outset, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry is fundamentally in favour of the welfare and well-being of animals and is committed to find humane solutions to the plight of stray dogs in Mauritius.

In this context, I effected a site visit at the Animal Home Port Louis on 06 March 2021 along with the Chairperson and the Director of the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare. The building was found to be in a bad state. In fact, the then Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport had carried out a structural investigation on the building in April 2019 and had drawn the attention of the MSAW on the poor state of the building.

In view of the state of the building, I am informed that the MSAW is not proposing to proceed with the rehabilitation thereof which requires extensive and expensive strengthening works.

It has been decided that the dogs being kept at the Animal Home Port Louis be relocated. To this end, my Ministry has identified a building in Plaine Magnien which is presently unoccupied and which can be converted into Animal Home for the keeping of dogs by the MSAW.

The MSAW is proposing to carry out some minor works prior to the relocation of the dogs the soonest possible.

**COVID-19 – CAMBRIDGE SC & HSC EXAMINATIONS 2021 – SAFETY
MEASURES**

(No. B/62) 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 Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate Local Examinations for 2021, she will state the measures taken to allow all eligible students to take part therein, amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

(Vide reply to PQ B/16)

PACK AND BLISTER - VENTILATORS

(No. B/63) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the 50 ventilators purchased from Pack and Blister, he will state –

- (a) the total cost incurred, including freight;
- (b) if the installation thereof by foreign experts and commissioning thereof have been successfully completed and, if not, why not;
- (c) if same are under warranty, indicating the defect liability period for the replacement thereof, and
- (d) the provision that has been made to remedy this situation in case of emergency.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/34)

COVID-19 VACCINES – SECOND DOSE – BUDGET EARMARKED

(No. B/64) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Covid-19 Vaccines, he will state –

- (a) the budget earmarked for the procurement of the second dose thereof, indicating the –
 - (i) source of funds therefor, and
 - (ii) estimated cost thereof,
- (b) the agreement between the Government and the private clinics concerning the payment of Rs300 therefor, and

- (c) if delivery thereof to his Ministry is received without problems during the negotiations to get priority supply thereof and, if so, how.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, as I already informed the House in reply to the previous questions, funds to the tune of Rs431,916,998 have been provided from the National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Fund which has been set up as a Special Fund under the Finance and Audit Act to finance the National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. As at date, an amount of Rs179,147,235 has been disbursed from the Fund for the procurement of vaccines.

In regard to part (b), given the high response from several sectors, particularly those who are on the forefront, the Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccines for Emergency Use) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations have been promulgated to allow eligible persons to be vaccinated in a private health institution against payment of a fee. The fee of Rs300 which has been agreed by the private clinics and the Government is only to cover the administration fee of the private health institution, whereas the vaccine is provided free of cost.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the House may wish to be informed that due to export restrictions, prior approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is sought for the supply of the vaccines.

CONSTITUENCIES 15, 16 & 17 - SPECIAL PROTOCOL - MASS TESTING

(No. B/65) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Constituencies Nos. 15, 16 and 17, he will state the special protocol put in place, if any, to proceed with mass testing of the inhabitants thereof at the earliest and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the three Constituencies Nos. 15, 16 and 17 constitute a total population of about 205,000 inhabitants, spanning over an area of 240 km². A containment strategy has been implemented since 12 March 2021 to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 in these Constituencies.

As at date, 136 COVID-19 positive cases, that is, 65% of the total number of local cases (from 05 March 2021 to date), have been registered in the three Constituencies. Furthermore, 2,019 persons are in quarantine presently. The contact tracing and testing exercise are ongoing for all those who were in contact with the positive COVID-19 cases.

The contact tracing teams of my Ministry have been further strengthened to carry out screening and testing of frontliners in the three constituencies. The teams are deployed in strategic places, namely supermarkets (Winner's, Jumbo Express, Dream Price), places of worship, health centres and private sector organisations (CWA, SMF, Mauritius Telecom,

Emtel, etc.). Inhabitants in specific localities have also been screened and tested. The exercise is ongoing.

The most effective way for containment of the disease in these three Constituencies is for the public at large to respect the sanitary measures to avoid COVID-19, namely wearing of masks, use of hand sanitizer and social distancing as well as limiting social gathering.

In this regard, more emphasis has been laid on awareness and sensitisation of the public on the sanitary measures through the media.

COVID-19 VACCINE – NUMBER

(No. B/66) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 vaccine, he will state the number thereof that are expected to arrive in Mauritius, indicating the –

- (a) names thereof, indicating if same have been endorsed by the World Health Organisation;
- (b) countries of origin thereof;
- (c) cost involved, and
- (d) names of those received in donation.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that we are expecting the vaccines from different countries and different organisations such as –

COVAX Facility	- 507,200 doses, with delivery to be confirmed (All brands approved by WHO);
Serum Institute of India	- 100,000 doses (donation, already received) (Approved by WHO);
Serum Institute of India	- 100,000 doses (procured, already received) (Approved by WHO);
Serum Institute of India	- 200,000 doses (procured, on order) (Approved by WHO);
COVAXIN	- 200,000 doses (already received) (Approved by Director Controller General of India);
Sputnik	- 250,000 doses (on order);
African Union	- 48,451 doses (on order) Pfizer and 151,231 (on order)

	from J&J (Approved by WHO);
China (Sinopharm)	- 100,000 doses (Donation, awaiting delivery)
Total, excluding (J&J)	- 1,455,651 doses to cater for the vaccination of 727,825 persons, and
J&J vaccines	- 151,231 single dose vaccine.

With these numbers of vaccines, a total of 879,056 persons will be vaccinated.

NATIONAL AGRI FOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM - SHELTERED FARMING

(No. B/67) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to sheltered farming as proposed under the National Agri Food Development Program set up in June 2020, he will state the number of applications received therefor as at to date.

Reply: As announced in Budget Speech 2020/2021, one of the early lessons of the COVID-19 crisis is the need to be as self-sufficient as possible in what we consume and become more independent in our food supplies and for the inception of a National Agri Food Development Programme.

For this purpose, my Ministry has provided the relevant technical expertise for the setting up of sheltered farms and the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) has worked on a list of crops to be cultivated.

In view thereof, 20 netted farms have been built at Plaine Magnien of 4,000 m² each over an area of 0.5 arpent. Out of the 20 farms, 2 units have been reserved for the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF).

The works have been completed at Plaine Magnien and the structures have been handed over to FAREI on 05 November 2020.

My Ministry proceeded with an Expression of Interest for renting the units to potential growers.

Some 200 applications have been received and are being screened. However, due to the current lockdown some delays are being encountered. Once the screening process is completed, an interview exercise will be carried and the plots will be allocated.

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION - COMPLAINTS - HOTLINE 185

(No. B/68) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the complaint desk and hotline 185 set up at the level of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection, he will state the number of complaints received as at to date.

Reply: Let me at the outset inform the House, that there are presently several complaints resolution mechanism in place at the level of my Ministry. In addition to the Hotline (185), members of the public are able to log on their complaints through the Citizen Support Portal, Consumer Rights App (a mobile application), email as well as a WhatsApp messaging service.

Since 10 March 2021, my Ministry has received 619 complaints through the hotline of the Consumer Affairs Unit of my Ministry.

These complaints relate mainly to –

- (i) abusive pricing;
- (ii) non-availability of goods in some areas of the island, and
- (iii) non affixing of price tags for some products.

DOCTORS & NURSING OFFICERS - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/69) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the recruitment exercise of nurses and doctors on a contractual basis for the vaccination of COVID-19 vaccines under the National Deployment and Vaccination Programme, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: In the context of COVID-19 National Deployment and Vaccination Programme, my Ministry launched an Expression of Interest on 05 March 2021 for the enlistment of Doctors and Nursing Officers for the programme. 381 applications for doctors and 25 applications for nurses were received. After a screening exercise, interviews were carried out on 15 and 16 March 2021 respectively.

Following all necessary clearances and approval from all relevant Ministries and the Public Service Commission, 285 Doctors and 6 Nursing Officers have been enlisted. A training session was organised by my Ministry on 19 March 2021.

The recruits have been deployed to the various vaccination centres around the island. The Doctors are also deployed for our contact tracing exercises, for swabbing, as well as for quarantine centres, the Hotline 8924 at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and for data entry for vaccination.

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC – 10 MARCH 2021 TO 23 MARCH 2021 – WORK
ACCESS PERMIT – APPROVAL**

(No. A/1) **Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Work Access Permit, he will table the list of the applications received and entertained since 10 March 2021 to date, indicating the –

- (a) names of the companies that have sought and obtained approval for home delivery services, and
- (b) number of Non-Government Organisations that have sought and obtained approval for the distribution of food packs and other social services amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reply: By virtue of Section 3(1) (c) of the Quarantine Act 2020 (Act 2 of 2020), a Closing Down Order was issued on 10 March 2021 vide General Notice 469/2021 ordering that commercial premises or offices remain closed for such period and under such terms and conditions as specified, except for certain commercial premises and offices as specified at paragraph 4 of the same Order.

With regard to part (a) of the question, it must be noted that Home Delivery Services does not fall under the categories specified in paragraph 4 of the above Order.

As regards part (b) of the question, since 10 March 2021 to date, 35 applications from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) for Work Access Permits (WAPs) were sought and have been approved whereby permits have been issued to 470 persons.

**SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - PRIVATE FLIGHTS - MANDATORY
QUARANTINE PERIOD**

(No. A/2) **Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the private jets which landed at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport since October 2020 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Civil Aviation Department, information as to the number of persons who alighted therefrom, indicating the number

thereof who were exempted from undergoing the mandatory 14-day quarantine period in a dedicated quarantine centre and the reasons therefor.

Reply: 97 passengers arrived by private flights for the period October 2020 to date and none of the arriving passengers for the referred period has been exempted from undergoing the mandatory quarantine period.

PLAINE VERTE & ROCHE BOIS - DRUG PROLIFERATION - ARRESTS

(No. A/3) 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 drug proliferation in Plaine Verte and Roche Bois, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of arrests effected in connection therewith over the past two years, indicating the additional measures taken to address same, especially, in the Plaine Verte Garden.

Reply: Since year 2019 to Thursday 08 March 2021, 187 persons have been arrested in connection with drug cases in the region of Plaine Verte and 850 persons in the region of Roche Bois.

The Police, including the ADSU, have taken the following measures to combat the proliferation of drugs in these regions, especially in the Plaine Verte Garden-

- (i) ADSU is working jointly with other Units and branches of the Police Force such as ERS, DSU, Divisional CID, FIO local Police to carry out preventive patrol in the region;
- (ii) ADSU has adopted a zero tolerance and an intelligence-led approach, including drug mapping to combat the drug scourge in the country, including the region of Roche Bois and Plaine Verte;
- (iii) regular targeted crackdown operations are being conducted by ADSU in collaboration particularly with NCG Commandos, GIPM, Police Dogs Unit in the region of Roche Bois and Plaine Verte. The last crackdown operation was conducted in Roche Bois on 03 February 2021 whereby five drug dealing cases

have been established and about 2.9 kgs of suspected synthetic cannabinoids were secured. The value of drug secured is estimated at Rs14.9 m.;

- (iv) ADSU, Crime Prevention Unit and the local Police are conducting aggressive sensitisation campaigns to alert children in schools and colleges, youth clubs, local community, Community Centres, Senior Citizens, and Women Associations on the ill-effects of illicit drugs;
- (v) ADSU and regular police have increased their presence and are keeping surveillance in the affected areas and, based on intelligence, suspicious persons and vehicles are being systematically searched;
- (vi) ADSU is making use of modern equipment such as Remotely Piloted Aircraft (Drone), night vision binoculars and other sophisticated equipment for surveillance and identification of drug peddlers and prolific offenders suspected to be involved in drug trafficking offences, and
- (vii) besides ADSU Officers who are permanently engaged in the fight against the drug scourge, the Police is enhancing the capacity of frontline officers to fight against drug trafficking.

Additionally, the Ministry of Health and Wellness has, in collaboration with the National Drug Secretariat, NGOs and other stakeholders, implemented a Training Programme targeting young community leaders with a view to sustaining drug prevention in their respective localities. The Programme was launched in Roche Bois on Monday 01 March 2021.

ROSE HILL – PIPE-LAYING WORKS – COMPLETION DATE

(No. A/4) **Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the roads, drains and footpaths in the region of Rose Hill, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the expected completion date of the full reinstatement thereof, following the recent pipe-laying works carried out by the Central Water Authority.

Reply: I am informed by the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities that the project for the replacement of pipelines, including asphaltic reinstatement works in the region of

Rose Hill, was awarded to a Contractor and the works were expected to be completed in November 2019.

However, there have been considerable delays in the completion of works and the Central Water Authority (CWA) has, on various occasions, notified the Contractor to take remedial actions as per contractual provisions. The Contractor was also notified of the bad and deteriorating state of the roads, following temporary trench reinstatement.

In these circumstances, a Mediator was appointed in November 2020 and, on 29 December 2020, the CWA and the Contractor entered into a Mediation Settlement Agreement to complete the pipe-laying works only and for the asphaltic reinstatement works to be removed from the scope of work.

Subsequently, the Road Development Authority was entrusted the responsibility to carry out the final road resurfacing works at places where the Contractor would complete the pipe-laying works, including the region of Rose Hill.

In this respect, the RDA has already carried out surveys at these places and cost estimates for the full width resurfacing works have been submitted to the CWA, requesting for funding. The RDA would start the works immediately after satisfactory completion of the whole pipe-laying works by the CWA which, according to the Mediation Settlement Agreement would have been 29 March 2021.

In the meantime, however, the country has entered in a second lockdown period since 10 March 2021 and works have been suspended. It is understood that the Contractor will be granted an extension of time for completing the pipe-laying works.

TRÈFLES YOUTH CENTRE – VANDALISM & THEFT

(No. A/5) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Youth Centre at Trèfles, in Rose Hill, he will state where matters stand as to the taking of remedial measures regarding the damages caused thereat during the lockdown period last year.

Reply: During the national lockdown of 2020, the Youth Centre at Trèfles, in Rose Hill, was subject to vandalism and theft. Equipment and furniture were stolen. The water supply and the electrical installation were completely damaged. With no utilities available on site, the facility was, therefore, closed pending the repairs.

Following a bidding exercise, a contract for the repairs at the Trèfles Youth Centre was awarded on 27 November 2020. The works started on 18 January 2021 and are expected to be completed by 17 April 2021.

In light of the present lockdown, it is expected that the programme of works would be revised accordingly.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – PACK & BLISTER – VENTILATORS

(No. A/6) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the procurement of ventilators from Pack & Blister amid the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state –

- (a) who introduced and/or recommended this company to the High-Level Committee on COVID-19 and subsequently to his Ministry;
- (b) the number of ventilators which are fully operational, and
- (c) where matters stand with regard to any defective ventilator procured from Pack & Blister.

Reply: In July 2020, the Independent Commission Against Corruption secured the procurement files for the purchase of ventilators at my Ministry. As such, in the absence of any record of the procurement exercise, I cannot provide any detail regarding the matter. Moreover, in order not to cause prejudice to the ongoing investigation, it would not be in order for me to disclose any information at this stage.

With regard to the other parts (b) and (c) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Questions B/993 and B/1021, on 08 December 2020, whereby I informed the House that out of the 51 ventilators supplied by Pack and Blister, only 10 had been configured by the two engineers sent by the manufacturer.

However, the technicians could not complete the configuration of the ventilators and their commissioning before their departure.

Subsequently, following a full verification of the configured ventilators carried out by technicians of my Ministry, it was noted that none of the ventilators was working.

The technicians also drew attention to the fact that the equipment supplied was not the same as per the approved model. Moreover, no FDA certificate was provided, contrary to what had been claimed by the supplier.

In view of the above, my Ministry –

- (i) sought legal advice on any legal impediment for the return of the ventilators to Pack & Blister;

- (ii) approached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to discuss the issue bilaterally with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain for an arrangement to be made for the return of the ventilators, and
- (iii) requested the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection to liaise, through the State Trading Corporation, with Pack and Blister for the return of the ventilators.

On 13 January 2021, Pack and Blister was informed by the State Trading Corporation of the non-conformity with the specifications of the ventilators supplied as agreed between all parties. The company was further requested to take back all the ventilators and to refund the sum of EUR1,800,000 already paid for the ventilators by the State Trading Corporation.

On 26 January 2021, Pack and Blister wrote to the State Trading Corporation refusing the request for the return of the ventilators and the refund of the price paid for the ventilators. On 17 February 2021, it further suggested that one anaesthetist and one technician be sent to Turkey, with one ventilator, in order to be trained on its use.

Following further legal advice, on 09 March 2021, my Ministry informed Pack and Blister of our non-agreement to its proposal and that my Ministry was initiating procedures for the return of the ventilators to them. My Ministry also insisted for the refund of the sum of EUR1,800,000 paid for the said ventilators and for other costs incurred by the Ministry.

My Ministry is finalising the necessary arrangements to return the ventilators to Pack and Blister.

AIR MAURITIUS - CREW MEMBERS - SANITARY PROTOCOL

(No. A/7) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the existing sanitary protocol for pilots and cabin crew for both passengers and cargo flights on their return to Mauritius, he will give details thereof, indicating if there has been any representation for the review of the existing protocol and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: In October 2020, with the first phase of the reopening of our borders, a comprehensive crew protocol was worked out which comprises all sanitary measures that have to be taken on departure from abroad.

According to the protocol, crew members for passenger flights have to wear their full protective equipment on top of their uniform and they are required to go in self-isolation for 7

days. The same protocol applies for cargo flights where the crew leaves the aircraft onboard of the aircraft.

On the other hand, crew members for cargo flights where the crew stays onboard of the aircraft, a different set of sanitary protocols has been devised. Accordingly, they are required to wear their face masks at all times and there should be no physical contact with the personnel unloading the cargo. No quarantine is required.

Representations have been made by the Air Mauritius Cabin Crew Association for a review of the protocol for cabin crew for both passenger and cargo flights upon return. These representations are being considered and review of the existing protocol will be made in light of evolution of the COVID-19 situation across the World.

I am placing the document in the Library of the National Assembly.

TRIATHLETE J. H – DEATH IN AN OFFICIAL COMPETITION - 17 JANUARY 2021

(No. A/8) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the death of triathlete J. H., on 17 January 2020, while participating in an official competition, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Triathlon Federation, information as to if the Federation had taken all the medical and technical measures required as per the international rules during the holding of the competition and, if not, why not, and
- (b) state if his Ministry has caused an inquiry to be carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: I would like to begin by extending my deepest sympathy to Mr J. H.'s family and friends.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the *Fédération Mauricienne de Triathlon (FMTri)* that all necessary measures, as prescribed in the rules of the *Fédération Internationale de Triathlon*, had been put in place on 17 January 2021 to ensure the security of all participants.

For each competition, including the one that took place on 17 January 2021, the *FMTri* has recourse to two level-2 technical officials, eight level-1 technical officials, and 20 national officials.

In addition to that, an ambulance was requisitioned for the event, from start to finish, and the assistance of the National Coast Guard and a lifeguard was sought during the swim leg. Police officers, as well as Police riders were present during the bike and run legs.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Federation that the President has reported the matter to the Police on that same day.

ZIP-LINE ACTIVITY – ACCIDENTS & SECURITY CHECKS

(No. A/9) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to zip-line, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, the list of places where same is practised, indicating the –

- (a) names of the companies operating same and the terms and conditions imposed therefor
- (b) reported number of accidents which have occurred in connection therewith since 2014 to date, indicating the number of fatal ones, and
- (c) security checks carried out, indicating –
 - (i) the frequency thereof, and
 - (ii) by whom.

Reply: I am informed by the Tourism Authority that five companies offer the zip-line activity at the following places –

- (a) Compagnie de Gros Cailloux Ltée at Gros Cailloux, Petite Rivière;
- (b) Mare Anguille Farms Ltd at “*La Vallée des Couleurs Nature Park*”, Chamouny ;
- (c) Incentive Partners Ltd at “Chaza Ecotourim”, Saint Felix;
- (d) Casela Ltd at “Casela World of Adventures/Casela Nature & Leisure Park”, and
- (e) Terreoccean Concept Ltd at “*Domaine de L'étoile*”, Sebastopol.

As regards the terms and conditions that apply, the companies should firstly be holder of a valid Tourist Enterprise Licence (TEL) for Eco-Tourism Activities and the conditions attached to the Licence are as follows –

- (i) every licensee shall comply with every relevant enactment and in particular the Tourism Authority Act and by regulations made thereunder;

- (ii) every licensee shall comply with such standards as may be prescribed;
- (iii) every licensee shall obtain such insurance cover for its tourist enterprise as may be prescribed;
- (iv) every licensee shall have in his possession all permits or licenses issued under any other enactment in relation to the tourist enterprise;
- (v) every licensee shall give one month's prior notice to the Authority and obtain the approval of the Authority before making any change of ownership, legal status, name or location of its tourist enterprise;
- (vi) any change of address of licensee must be notified to the Tourism Authority within 15 days;
- (vii) this licence shall be void if not accompanied by –
 - (a) a receipt attesting the payment of the fees, and
 - (b) a valid insurance policy (where applicable).

Moreover, the licensee is also required to submit the following documents –

- (i) a Risk Assessment Plan;
- (ii) a Safety and Security Plan;
- (iii) an Emergency Plan, including rescue facilities, and
- (iv) a Maintenance Plan in case equipment is involved.

With regard to part (b) of the PQ, I am informed by the Tourism Authority that it had been made aware of two accidents as follows –

(i) Accident at Casela Nature and Leisure Park

An accident occurred on 13 August 2016 where two tourists were injured during a zip-line activity.

(ii) Accident at Chazal Ecotourism - Chamouny

On 13 February 2021, an accident occurred, involving the death of a person during a zip-line activity.

Regarding part (c), I have been informed by the Tourism Authority that routine inspections are carried out by Tourism Enforcement Officers of the Monitoring and Compliance Unit to ensure that the operators whose licences have expired are not operating.

COVID-19 - CONTACT TRACING EXERCISES –PERSONNEL & PROTOCCOL

(No. A/10) 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 contact tracing exercises carried out by his Ministry in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, he will state the –

- (a) number of personnel attached to the teams involved therein, and
- (b) protocol established therefor.

Reply: Contact tracing exercise is one of the most essential components in containing the spread of any contagious disease as per the WHO Guidelines.

Contact tracing is used to identify and provide supported quarantine to individuals who have been in contact with people who are infected with SARS-CoV-2 and can be used to find a source of infection by identifying settings or events where infection may have occurred, allowing for targeted public health and social measures.

The Contact Tracing Team of my Ministry has always been on the forefront, not only for the COVID-19 disease but also for other diseases such as Ebola, Dengue, Malaria, H1N1 and Tuberculosis. They have been mainly on field to identify persons who have been in contact with infected persons, to carry out relevant tests and to spot persons who need to be isolated or quarantined.

Upon confirmation of a positive test result, the patient is transferred by the Rapid Response Team to the New ENT Hospital for appropriate treatment. One Rapid Response Team is attached to each of the five regional Hospitals. Each Rapid Response Team comprises a Medical Health Practitioner, a Nursing Officer and a Driver.

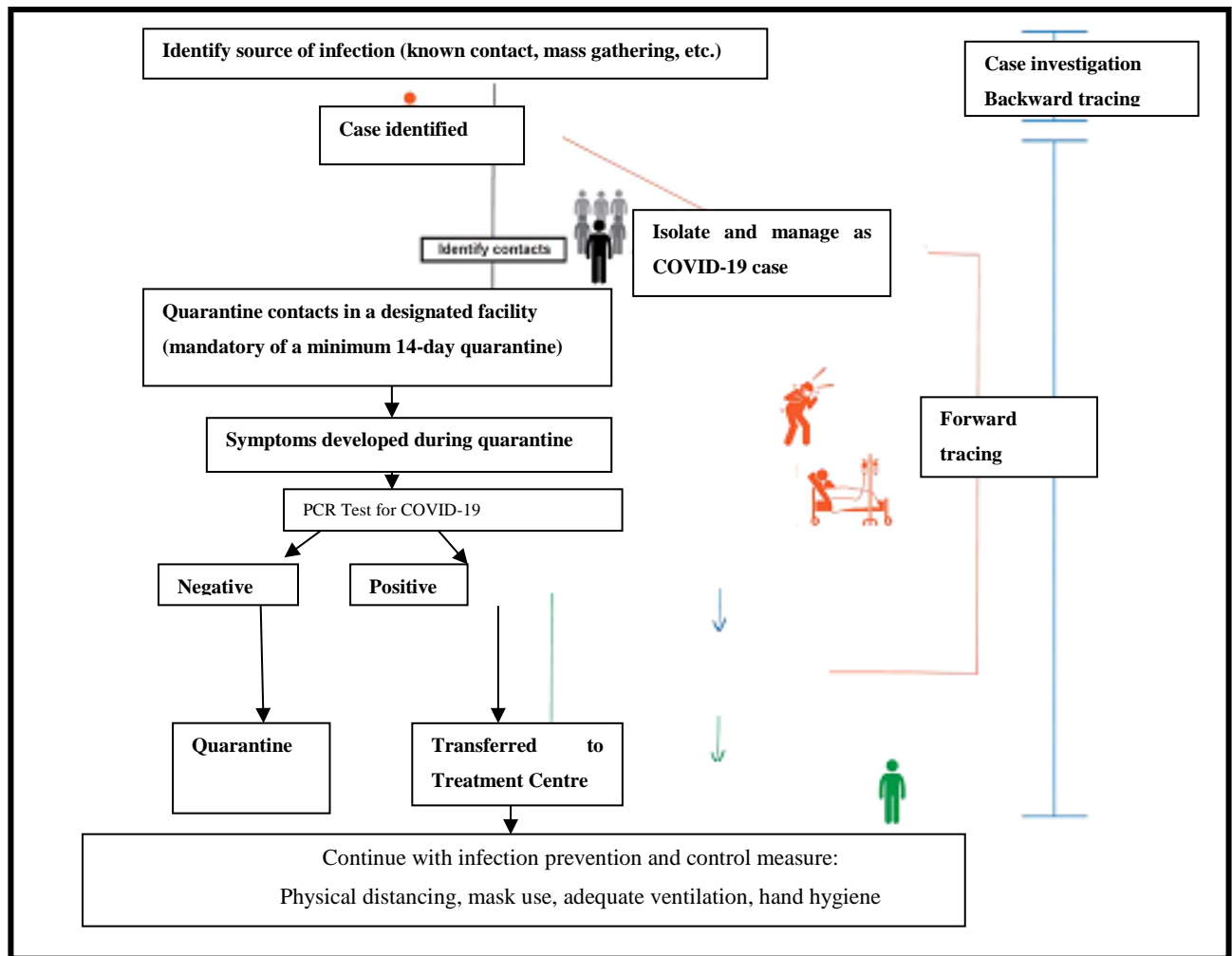
The Contact Tracing Team comprises 48 officers, of whom 23 officers are based at the Headquarters and the remaining 25 officers form part of the swabbing team who caters for the whole country. The team is reinforced by a pool of 10 trained swabbers and 20 other health officers in case of an upsurge of cases.

In addition, a team of Public Health and Food Safety Inspectors has been assigned the responsibility of monitoring and ensuring that each suspected case is transferred to a Quarantine Facility. The team also has a fleet of 18 vehicles for the transfer of persons who have been in contact with COVID-19 patients or persons suspected of being COVID-19 positive to treatment centres. The fleet is manned by one coordinator and 19 drivers.

Tests are carried out on persons who have come into direct contact with COVID-19 positive cases.

These persons are strongly advised to isolate themselves, pending arrangements being made for their transfer to quarantine centres. If through the contact tracing exercise, positive cases are detected, the persons concerned are admitted to a Treatment Centre.

In the light of the above, the established protocol can be illustrated in the flowchart below –



COVID-19 POSITIVE PATIENTS - TREATMENT PROTOCOL

(No. A/11) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to patients who have been tested COVID-19 positive, he will state the treatment protocol established by his Ministry therefor.

Reply: There is an established protocol for the treatment of COVID-19 positive patients which ranges from asymptomatic patients to symptomatic patients with different comorbidities.

The protocol also covers treatment for critically ill patients who are admitted in Intensive Care Units wherein indications for intubation and invasive mechanical ventilation have been specified.

Moreover, treatment guidelines have also been worked out in the established protocol for pregnant women and newborn babies infected with COVID-19.

I am placing the document in the Library of the National Assembly.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 12 – DRAIN WORKS

(No. A/12) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he will state if a timeframe has been set for the carrying out of drain works in the flood-prone areas where same are required.

Reply: Three regions, namely Trois Boutiques, Mare Tabac and Cité Paul Langlois at Plaine Magnien in Constituency No.12 have been designated as flood-prone areas by the Land Drainage Authority.

I am informed that the National Development Unit has awarded contracts for drain projects to be implemented at Mare Tabac and Cité Paul Langlois. Completion dates were 14 April 2021 and 17 July 2021 respectively and same will have to be extended in view of the COVID-19 lockdown. To date, 80% of works have been completed at both sites.

With regard to Trois Boutiques, I am informed that the construction of an intercepting storm water drain in the region of Beau Fond was completed on 17 February 2021 with a view to alleviating flooding problems within the area. A contract has already been allocated for the short-term mitigation measures and works have reached 90% completion and are expected to be completed by end October 2021.

COVID-19 - ABUSIVE INCREASE - REPORTED CASES - ACTIONS

(No. A/13) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the price of commodities, he will state the number of reported cases of abusive increases thereof amid the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating the actions taken by his Ministry to deal therewith.

Reply: For the period 10 to 21 March 2021, my Ministry received a total of 895 complaints, of which 458 complaints pertaining to abusive pricing by traders have been received from consumers through the hotline, 2 through email, 1 on the Citizen Support Portal and 28 on WhatsApp. All complaints were attended to by officers of the Consumer Affairs Unit. Wherever abuses are noted, traders were contravened. 533 contraventions were established as at 21 March 2021 for non-affixing of prices of commodities and selling at a higher price than prescribed.

MELBEES NURSERY SCHOOL - COVID-19 - QUARANTINE PERIOD

(No. A/14) **Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the families that have been put in quarantine following the detection of COVID-19 cases at the Melbees Nursery School, he will state why –

- (a) some families have been asked to stay in quarantine more than 14 days although the results of their PCR tests were negative, and
- (b) the home isolation and quarantine protocols recommended for children by UNICEF was not put in place.

Reply: In reply to part (a) of the question, 2 children attending Melbees Nursery School were tested COVID-19 positive on 07 March 2021. Consequently, all children attending Melbees Nursery School along with their parents were placed in quarantine centres.

Following the quarantine period of 14 days, all patients are subjected to an RT-PCR test. Although the test results of some patients were negative on the 14th day of their quarantine, their stay was prolonged as the date of discharge is dependent upon the date of last exposure with a positive patient. Consequently, if a patient was exposed to a positive patient on day 14 of his quarantine, his stay is prolonged for another period of 7 days and he is subjected to another RT-PCR test on day 21.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Ministry stands guided by the recommendations of the World Health Organisation which advises that the key intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 is the prompt isolation of people infected

with COVID-19. To be most effective at controlling spread, these strategies should be followed with contact tracing and a quarantine period of 14 days for individuals who have been exposed to a positive patient.

Consequently, all children tested positive are directed to the New E.N.T Hospital for treatment whilst all those who have been in contact with the positive patients are placed in quarantine centres under the care of medical professionals. They are regularly monitored for any sign and symptom and are subjected to RT-PCR tests at specific intervals. This measure allows for prompt medical intervention, should a child be tested positive which, otherwise, would not have been possible in the case of home isolation.

CAP MALHEUREUX - 'L'OISEAU DU PARADIS' RELAY CENTRE - CAREGIVERS

(No. A/15) **Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the shelter '*L'Oiseau du Paradis*' Relay Centre in Cap Malheureux, she will state the number of -

- (a) children staying thereat, and
- (b) caregivers on duty on-site to take care of the children during the current lockdown.

Reply: I am informed that as at 23 March 2021, there were 31 children at the Relay Centre.

Since the lockdown starting 10 March up to 23 March 2021, there were 31 caregivers on duty at the Relay Centre. There are 11 caregivers on duty during daytime and 7 caregivers during the night.

DBM – COVID-19 – DISTRESSED ENTERPRISES

(No. A/16) **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 loans granted by the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd. to distressed enterprises affected by COVID-19 at a concessional rate of 0.5 percent per annum, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank, information as to the –

- (a) number of applications received therefor, and

- (b) quantum of funds disbursed thereunder as at to date, indicating the number of beneficiaries and their respective sector of activities.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 29 applications have been received from distressed enterprises.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that DBM has, as at date, disbursed Rs 3 million to one beneficiary in the education sector.

STATE INVESTMENT CORPORATION – EQUITY PARTICIPATION SCHEME – COVID-19 – ENTERPRISES

(No. A/17) **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 Equity Participation Scheme to assist enterprises with financial difficulties in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) number of applications received therefor, and
- (b) quantum of funds disbursed thereunder as at to date, indicating the number of beneficiaries and their respective sector of activities.

Reply: The Equity Participation Scheme is being implemented by the State Investment Corporation Limited (SIC) and the SME Equity Fund Ltd.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 172 applications, consisting of 17 for SIC and 155 for SME Equity Fund, have been received.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that SIC has disbursed a total of Rs 37.6 million to one beneficiary in the tourism sector and one in the construction sector.

The SME Equity Fund Ltd. has disbursed a total of Rs 48.4 million to 24 beneficiaries as follows –

- eight in the manufacturing sector;
- three in the ICT sector, and
- thirteen in other sectors, namely trading and services.

**STATE INVESTMENT CORPORATION – EQUITY PARTICIPATION
COVID-19 LOCKDOWN - REGISTERED FISHERS - WAGES
ASSISTANCE SCHEME**

(No. A/18) **Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the registered fishers, he will state if they will be eligible for the Wages Assistance Scheme amid the current Covid-19 lockdown inasmuch as they are allowed to work only twice a week on alphabetical order and, if not, why not.

Reply: Initially, a communiqué was issued by my Ministry to allow registered fishers to operate in alphabetical order on 11 March 2021 to observe the COVID-19 sanitary protocols.

Following consultation with the National Coast Guard and the Mauritius Police Department, a monitoring plan was approved and subsequently, another communiqué was issued on 19 March 2021 to enable all the registered fishers to carry out their normal fishing activities by observing the sanitary measures.

As regards non-fishing days for the period from 11 to 19 March 2021, my Ministry will provide financial assistance based on bad weather allowance to registered fishers to compensate non-fishing days for the period from 11 to 19 March 2021, excluding Sunday and public holidays, and also taking into consideration the communiqué issued on 11 March 2021.

The question of Wages Assistance Scheme does not arise.

**NCE ASSESSMENT - SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS – NON-
PARTICIPATION**

(No. A/19) **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 National Certificate of Education examinations to be held this year, she will give a list of secondary institutions whose students will not participate therein.

Reply: The lists of secondary institutions whose students will not participate in the NCE assessment are as follows -

- 1) Schools designated to become Academies – **Annex 1**
- 2) Form VI Schools – **Annex 2**
- 3) Schools following the French Educational System – **Annex 3**
- 4) Schools following an International Programme – **Annex 4**
- 5) Some private Fee Paying schools – **Annex 5**

Annex 1**SCHOOLS DESIGNATED TO BECOME ACADEMIES**

SN	SCHOOLS
1	DR. MAURICE CURE STATE COLLEGE
2	DROOPNATH RAMPHUL STATE COLLEGE
3	FOREST SIDE SSS (GIRLS)
4	GMD ATCHIA STATE COLLEGE
5	JOHN KENNEDY COLLEGE
6	MAHATMA GANDHI INSTITUTE
7	QUEEN ELIZABETH COLLEGE
8	ROYAL COLLEGE CUREPIPE
9	ROYAL COLLEGE PORT LOUIS
10	S BISSOONDOYAL STATE COLLEGE
11	SIR A RAMAN OSMAN STATE COLLEGE
12	SIR L TEELOCK STATE COLLEGE

Annex 2**FORM VI SCHOOL**

SN	SCHOOLS	REMARKS
1	ISLAMIC CULTURAL COLLEGE FORM VI	

Annex 3**SCHOOLS FOLLOWING THE FRENCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

SN	SCHOOLS	REMARKS
1	ECOLE DU CENTRE PIERRE POIVRE	
2	ECOLE DU NORD	
3	LE BOCAGE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL	
4	LYCEE DES MASCAREIGNES	
5	LYCEE LABOURDONNAIS	

Annex 4**SCHOOLS FOLLOWING AN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME**

SN	SCHOOLS	REMARKS
1	BECKENHAM COLLEGE	
2	LIGHTHOUSE SECONDARY SCHOOL	
3	MORNING STAR SCHOOL	
4	WESTCOAST INT SECONDARY SCHOOL	

Annex 5**Some private Fee Paying schools**

SN	SCHOOLS	REMARKS
1	FULL DAY SCHOOL LTD	
2	MAURICIA INSTITUTE	
3	NORTHFIELDS INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL	
4	ST NICHOLAS GRAMMAR SCHOOL SECONDARY	

QUATRE BORNES - ALLEGED CHILD TRAFFICKING

(No. A/20) **Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, she will state if she is aware of a recent alleged case of child trafficking in Quatre Bornes and, if so, indicate if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto.

Reply: My Ministry was informed of the alleged case of child trafficking by an anonymous caller and an inquiry is being carried out at the level of the Police Department.

A Case Conference was held on 02.03.2021 at the level of my Ministry with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Mauritius Police Force, Forensic Science Laboratory, *Brigade Pour la Protection des Mineurs*, the Civil Status Office and the Attorney General's Office on this case.

The Police Force is carrying out an inquiry on this case.

COVID-19 PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT FUND – PROJECTS & COMMITTEE

(No. A/21) **Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) number of projects approved and financed thereunder, indicating the quantum of funds disbursed as at to date, and
- (b) names of the persons serving on the COVID-19 Projects Development Committee.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, 1,517 projects have been approved for financing under the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund. As at 23 March 2021, funds amounting to Rs 22.3 million had been disbursed.

As for part (b) of the question, the list of persons serving on the Committee is as follows –

SN	Name and Status
1	Mr D. Dev Manraj, G.O.S.K Financial Secretary (Chairperson)
2	Mr Ravi Shankar Sonea <i>Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office</i>
3	Mr Jogeshwur Ramyed <i>Lead Analyst, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development</i>
4	Mr S. D. Ramdeen <i>Accountant General</i>
5	Mr M. K. Yerukunondu <i>First Deputy Governor</i>
6	Mr Kritananda Naghee Reddy <i>Acting Assistant Parliamentary Counsel</i>
7	Mr J. P. E. Arouff <i>Senior Economic Adviser and Director of Strategy Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development</i>
8	Mr G. L'Ent��t�� <i>Chief Executive Officer, National Housing Development Company Ltd</i>
9	Dr Yousouf Ismael <i>Secretary-General, Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry</i>
10	Mrs Bibi Faranaz Islam
11	Mr Narainsamy Seeneevassen
12	Mr Veerapattren Chinapiel, Office Management Assistant (Secretary)

STC - NEETEESELEC LTD - CONTRACT

(No. A/22) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the contract awarded to Neeteeselec Ltd., he will state and, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, in each case, information as to the –

- (a) value
- (b) mode of selection and
- (c) scope thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the State Trading Corporation (STC) that in May 2020, in view of the resumption of work and other economic activities, employers were called upon to carry out a thorough cleaning and sanitizing of work premises. On 05 May 2020, the STC launched a tender for the decontamination exercise. The scope of the contract was the decontamination of STC Head Office building at Ebène, its warehouses at Mer Rouge and Roche Bois and its fleet of vehicles. Six bidders submitted their quotations. After evaluation, Neeteeselec Ltd was awarded the contract since it was the lowest substantially responsive bid for a contract value of Rs121,000.

In June 2020, a second decontamination exercise had to be carried out at the STC warehouse at Shed A, Roche Bois and in its vehicles. Since Neeteeselec Ltd has carried out the first exercise, the STC availed itself of the services of the company on the same terms and conditions for a contract value of Rs85,000 on a pro-rata basis.