



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 09 JUNE 2020

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Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 16 of 2020

Sitting of Tuesday 09 June 2020

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Mr Speaker: Prime Minister's Question Time!

The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions B/74, B/110, PQ A/33 have been rescheduled. PQ B/74 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development; PQ B/110 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister; PQ A/33 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Hon. Bhagwan!

Dr. Boolell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am raising a point of order in relation to paragraph 23 and I want to know from the Office of the Speaker the reason as to why my PNQ has been considered non-receivable. There has been no official communication in writing as to the grounds for refusal. As you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition will never put a question on the Order Paper for Oral Question. He is allowed to ask it by Private Notice Question. In the past, previous Leaders of the Opposition have been allowed to put question in relation to measures announced in the Budget.

Mr Speaker: Okay, you made your point.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir,...

Mr Speaker: One by one! I reply to your concern. According to the Standing Orders, if you have to raise this point, you should have done it privately in my office. I now move on. There is no point of order. I rule that there is no point of order to that point. I move to Prime Minister's Question Time. Hon. Bhagwan, you have the floor.

Dr. Boolell: This is a mockery of parliamentary procedures.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I be allowed to raise...

Mr Speaker: No, you are not allowed!

Mr Mohamed: I have a point of order which has not been raised!

Mr Speaker: You are not allowed!

Mr Mohamed: Am I being gagged?

Mr Speaker: No, you are not allowed! We move to Prime Minister's Question Time.

(Interruptions)

We move...

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not...

Mr Speaker: I suspend the sitting for some minutes.

At 11.35 a.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 11.45 a.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Prime Minister's Question Time!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a remark to make and I would...

Mr Speaker: No, you have no right to make any remark. Hon. Bhagwan, you have the floor!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, at least listen to me!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I have ruled; you have the floor! Take your floor or your turn!

Mr Bhagwan: But you can't shout at me!

Mr Speaker: I am not shouting at you. I am inviting you.

Mr Bhagwan: You are not shouting at me, yes.

Mr Speaker: Please! I am inviting you!

Mr Bhagwan: But can I, before coming to my question, ask why my PQ B/74 has been transferred? Is it not to have a reply as it will come last?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan,...

Mr Bhagwan: I am asking!

Mr Speaker: The transfer of question rests with Ministers. I am not responsible for it. Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: But, henceforth, we need your guidance when we send questions at least.

Mr Speaker: This is my guidance!

Mr Bhagwan: Now, when we send our question, you must give us guidance.

Mr Speaker: It is in the Standing Orders! I don't have!

Mr Bhagwan: Your Office must give us guidance.

Mr Speaker: We take the second question.

Mr Bhagwan: B/75. But you must give us guidance when we send our question. This is your work.

ICTA - EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS & DIRECTOR – SALARIES & FRINGE BENEFITS – REVIEW

(No. B/75) 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 Information and Communication Technologies Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if consideration will be given for a review of the salaries and fringe benefits of the Executive Directors and Director thereof in the wake of the financial difficulties amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Information and Communications Technologies Authority (ICTA) is currently composed of the following –

- One Director of Engineering who is also the Officer-in-Charge as the post of Executive Director is vacant;
- One Director of Finance and Administration, and
- One Director of IT.

I am informed that the management of the ICTA is considering different cost cutting measures, in view of the financial difficulties which have arisen in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes expenses related to the Top Management.

I am further informed that, as soon as the proposals are finalised, these will be submitted to the ICT Board for consideration.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether we have a full-time Chairman, Ag. Chairman and whether their conditions also are being reviewed in the whole process which is being undertaken?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has asked a question about the Executive Directors and Directors. So, I have information which has been gathered according to this question.

Mr Speaker: Next supplementary!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, as Prime Minister and former Minister of Finance also whether, in the wake of the COVID-19 financial difficulties, as pointed out by the Minister of Finance, Government is at least contemplating, considering seriously reviewing the conditions of part-time Chairperson, full-time Chairperson, as the Board there is doing? You, yourself...

(Interruptions)

I have not finished hon. Prime Minister. You have just stated that the Board...

Mr Speaker: A supplementary question should be short!

Mr Bhagwan: Yes, this is what I am asking.

Mr Speaker: Be short!

Mr Bhagwan: The Prime Minister has stated that the Management, the Authority is reviewing the conditions of service. So, can the hon. Prime Minister say as Prime Minister that he has given directive to the Board that same being done for the Board and other Boards?

The Prime Minister: I invite the hon. Member to put a substantive question in that respect.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: No, you have removed my question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No comments against the Chair! Do not refer to the Chair! You have no right to refer to the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Do not make any comment!

Mr Bhagwan: I am not making any comment.

Mr Speaker: You have to learn parliamentary manners!

(Interruptions)

It is very unbecoming!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: My question has been referred to Finance, unfortunately. *Pe sauver*. He is sitting there.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

ICTA & CYBERCRIME UNIT – FAKE NEWS CASES

(No. B/76) 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 social media, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Information and Communication Technologies Authority and the Cybercrime Unit, information as to the number of reported cases of fake news and disinformation posted thereat during the curfew period, indicating the outcome of the inquiries carried out thereinto, and
- (b) state if consideration will be given for the introduction of amendments to the ICT Act for the imposition of hefty fines and jail sentences in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, section 18 (1) (o) of the ICTA Act 2001 (as amended) provides for the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) to entertain complaints from consumers in relation to any information and communication service in Mauritius, and where necessary, refer them to the appropriate authorities. As such, ICT consumers are able to lodge their complaints and queries to the Authority. The Authority handles these in accordance with the provisions of the ICTA Act. It uses a complaints mechanism and supports consumers by virtue of the provisions of the ICTA Act. The complaints are examined and channelled to the appropriate authorities with a view to resolving same or providing appropriate guidance to the consumer. On the basis of legal advice obtained, the Authority refers these complaints to the Commissioner of Police for investigation. The public is also advised to contact the Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System, which is a national online system set up by CERT-MU that allows secure reporting of cybercrimes occurring on social media. It also provides advice to help in recognising and avoiding common types of cybercrime which take place on social media websites. The MAUCORS works closely with the Cybercrime Unit of the Police Department.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the ICTA that during the curfew period, that is, from Sunday 22 March to Saturday 30 May 2020, 31 complaints from members of the public

with respect to messages shared on social media, which were of the nature of causing annoyance, humiliation, inconvenience, distress or anxiety, in breach of section 46 (g) of the ICTA Act were received. Complainants were directed to refer the matter to the Police and also to the MAUCORS.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that four cases pertaining to breach of section 46 (g) of the ICTA Act have been reported thereat during the same period and one case was identified during the Cyber patrol by the Cybercrime Unit.

The authors of three of the cases are being traced and, in the remaining two, where the authors have been identified, four persons have been arrested. Three of them have been released on bail and one was allowed to go after enquiry. Enquiry is ongoing in all the six cases.

As regards part (b), section 47(1) of the ICTA Act provides for a fine not exceeding Rs1,000,000 and penal servitude for a term not exceeding 10 years for a person found guilty of breach of the Act. Being given that the penalty for breach of the provisions of the ICTA Act is already hefty, it is not proposed to impose heavier sanctions for the time being.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Puisqu'on parle des réseaux sociaux, peut-on savoir combien de cas ayant trait essentiellement à l'incitation à la haine raciale ont été rapportés durant la période de confinement et les actions prises à l'encontre des personnes, qu'ils soient *fake profiles* ou pas, à la base de *ces postes* sur Facebook?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, this question relates to fake news and disinformation. It is not about racial hatred. So, I will invite the hon. Member to come with a substantive question with regard to racial hatred.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Prime Minister whether he is aware, his attention has been drawn that there was one *animatrice de radio* posting a false *caricature* of the Prime Minister and whether that is being inquired into and what is the status?

The Prime Minister: I did not get the question. The hon. Member said one Mr?

Mr Bhagwan: One or two *animatrices de radio* have posted *caricatures* on you on Facebook; whether an inquiry is being done on that and where matters stand. I am refraining myself from what she or he said on you. Everybody knows. It is on Facebook.

The Prime Minister: What she said, what he said; I do not know what he/she said. I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You have another supplementary question?

The Prime Minister: But I have not finished!

Mr Speaker: You have not finished?

The Prime Minister: No. I, again, would refer the hon. Member to the question that has been asked. It is about fake news and disinformation. So, I have gathered all the information in relation to that, and I have answered the number of cases that are being investigated and in cases where the authors have been traced out.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Prime Minister whether it means that that comment, according to him, was not fake news? It was a *caricature* on you! Cartoon!

The Prime Minister: If you want to make a show in this House, please carry on!

Mr Bhagwan: You know what I am saying!

Mr Speaker: Let us move to the next question! Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: B/77, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, I have already asked!

DETAINEES – POLICE CUSTODY – DEATHS

(No. B/77) 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 police custody deaths in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof since December 2019 to date, indicating the outcome of the inquiry in each case, including the –

- (a) cause of death, and
- (b) if any Police Officer has been suspended in connection therewith.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, are you addressing me? Are you threatening me?

Mr Speaker: Are you threatening me? Are you threatening me?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I don't allow you to threaten me!

Mr Speaker: I don't allow you to threaten me!

(Interruptions)

You cannot threaten me, and I will not be intimidated!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: You are not allowed you to threaten me!

Mr Speaker: I am not threatening you and you don't threaten me!

Mr Bhagwan: I am elected to be here! Not you!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I have been elected to be here!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! Show decorum to the House!

(Interruptions)

Show decorum to the House!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: I have already put the question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/77 and B/84 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since November 2019 to date, three persons have died in Police custody. Details pertaining thereto are as follows –

- (i) On 10 March 2020, Mr M.D.M., aged 25, died at Vacoas Detention Centre, the cause of death being Asphyxia due to hanging;

- (ii) On 20 March 2020, Mr A.B., a Malagasy National, aged 48 years, died at Jeetoo Hospital of Subarachnoid Haemorrhage due to drug concealment in his body, and
- (iii) On 13 May 2020, Mr J.D.M.U, aged 29 years, passed away in a cell at Trou d'Eau Douce Police Station and the cause of death was Asphyxia due to hanging.

Police inquiry is ongoing in the three cases.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, le Premier ministre est-il en train de nous dire qu'il n'y a pas eu de cas de brutalité policière depuis décembre 2019 à ce jour ? Qu'en est-il de Monsieur Permes récemment?

The Prime Minister: You asked a question about detainees in Police custody. You should have asked a question about inmates in prison! So, address your question properly!

Mr Speaker: Any supplementary question? Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the light of cases of death in Police custody, will the hon. Prime Minister consider ensuring that all Police cells are equipped with working cameras, which are operational, so that we can know what happened in the Police cells and whether, genuinely, people are committing suicide or murders are not being disguised into suicides?

The Prime Minister: I can inform the House that there are actually four Detention Centres. I am informed that for the one at Line Barracks Detention Centre, there are already installed 59 CCTV cameras, that is, 30 CCTV cameras in cells and 29 CCTV cameras covering buildings and surrounding.

For Moka Detention Centre, there are 81 CCTV cameras; 36 CCTV for covering the cells and 45 cameras covering the buildings and surrounding.

For Vacoas Detention Centre, 97 CCTV cameras; 44 CCTV cameras covering the cells and 53 cameras covering inside and outside the building.

For Petite Rivière Juvenile Detention Centre, there are 8 CCTV cameras in total; 6 CCTV covering the cells and 2 CCTV cameras covering inside and outside the building.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether it is not high time to bring to this House the Police and Criminal Justice Bill that will contain a code of conduct with regard to what the Police do when they arrest somebody and what they do when they put them in a Police cell?

The Prime Minister: There is already a circular from the Commissioner of Police which gives in detail how policing should be done with regard to those who are in the Detention Centres. Of course, anything that we can do to reinforce security with regard to the detainees is most welcome. We need to continue to think about especially how we can prevent detainees from hanging themselves, and this has been the case in the past also. We have had so many cases, unfortunately. So, yes, we will consider any measure that can improve safety and security for the detainees.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Assirvaden!

MBC - DIRECTOR GENERAL - POST

(No. B/78) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the post of Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of incumbents thereof since January 2015 to date, indicating the –
 - (i) number thereof having held office in a substantive capacity, and
 - (ii) reasons for the said turnover, and
- (b) state if consideration will be given for a review of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation Act in relation to the appointment of the General Director and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation is appointed under section 13(2)(a) of the MBC Act, which provides that, I quote –

“The Director General shall be appointed by the Minister, with the approval of the Prime Minister on such terms and conditions as he thinks fit.”

In regard to part (a) of the question, since January 2015 to date, five persons were appointed successively as Director General of the MBC on a contractual basis, including the present one who has been appointed in an acting capacity.

In addition, three persons were appointed, at different periods, to act as Officer-in-Charge of the Corporation, as a temporary measure, pending the filling of the post of Director General.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a)(i) of the question, as I just mentioned, the terms and conditions of appointment of the Director General are determined by the Prime Minister, pursuant to section 13(2)(a) of the MBC Act. The appointment of the Director General of the MBC is normally made on a contractual basis for a fixed term of office and no appointment is made in a substantive capacity.

In regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, two out of the five Director Generals resigned from the post for personal reasons. One of the remaining three was invited to vacate his office on 24 August 2015 as he had already indicated that he would not be willing to continue for a further term. Another one left the post on 21 May 2017 to take up appointment as Chief Executive Officer of the MultiCarrier (Mauritius) Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, it is not proposed to bring any amendment to the provisions of the MBC Act regarding the appointment of the Director General.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, in or about September or October 2019, not less than the Electoral Supervisory Commission found that there was a *prima facie* breach of law by the MBC. Could the Prime Minister enlighten the House what action has been taken by the Board of the MBC or by the IBA against the Director General at that material time?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of the matter that has been mentioned by the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, c'est extrêmement choquant que la Commission Electorale ait rendu un rapport pour blâmer la direction de la MBC et le Premier ministre n'est pas au courant. Visiblement, M. le président, on veut protéger certains. Justement,

venez-en aux protégés. M. le président, je voudrais savoir du Premier ministre qu'est-ce qu'il a comme réponse à donner à la population ou du moins à une partie de la population qui s'est sentie humiliée par l'actuel directeur général par ses propos sectaires, et le Premier ministre trouve-t-il normal qu'une telle personne soit nommée après avoir tenu des propos aussi sectaires et fait subir ce qu'il fait subir à l'Eglise catholique de nos jours?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member has put a question with regard to the number of incumbents. If he has a question specific on the issue that he is mentioning, he should come with a substantive question.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président,...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: So, if you have no supplementary question, we move to the next question. No debate! Question time, no debate!

Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Assirvaden: Scandaleux!

(Interruptions)

Et l'Eglise catholique subit...

Mr Speaker: Behave yourself! Hon. Member, behave yourself! The floor is to honourable...

(Interruptions)

Behave yourself! Are you contesting my authority?

(Interruptions)

Are you contesting my authority?

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Non, mais ce que le Premier ministre dit...

Mr Speaker: Are you contesting my authority?

Mr Assirvaden: Non, jamais, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Then be quiet! You are paid of taxpayers' money; you have to be obedient to the Chair.

Hon. Ameer Meea! You start.

ROAD ACCIDENTS (FATAL) – JANUARY 2017-08 JUNE 2020

(No. B/79) 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 fatal road accidents, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof for each of the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and since January 2020 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the period January 2017 to 08 June 2020, 456 fatal road accidents have been reported as follows –

Year 2017: 152

Year 2018: 132

Year 2019: 130

From 01 January 2020 to 08 June 2020: 42.

A total number of 488 persons have, unfortunately, lost their lives during these accidents.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Ameer Meea: No, I have supplementary questions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Have you made a sign?

Mr Ameer Meea: I have two supplementary questions. There are numerous reasons for fatal road accidents and one of the reasons is drug consumption, and recently Police have been equipped to detect drug consumption amongst drivers. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he has the statistics in relation to accidents that have been caused by drug consumption? I will also understand if the Prime Minister does not have it with him now; if he can circulate it later on.

The Prime Minister: It is good that Government has taken a measure in order to equip the Police with equipment, with apparatus, so that we may be able to detect any driver who has consumed drugs. I must say, for the information of the House, that the Police Force had launched a tender for the procurement of 500 units of Urine Drug Testing Cup Kits and

1,000 units of Saliva Drug Testing Kits in December 2019. Unfortunately, there has been no responsive bid, and I am informed that there is going to be another bid which is scheduled to finalise the specifications anew and then a new tender exercise will be launched shortly in order to hopefully be able to equip the Police with the appropriate equipment.

Mr Speaker: Next supplementary!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Another reason for fatal road accidents is illegal racing. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what Government and the Police are doing to address this issue?

The Prime Minister: I can recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there have been cases which have been reported to me by the Commissioner of Police where, in fact, late at night and early morning, they have had information that some people have been carrying on with this racing. Of course, Police have immediately attended to these spots and have dispersed those people, but, of course, we need to keep on being vigilant and tracking. But I must say that not many cases have involved fatal road accidents with regard to illegal racing late at night and early morning. It is dangerous but, in fact, there are other causes of fatal road accidents like carelessness and reckless driving, non-observation of regulation; these are the most. And now, it has gone down a lot, drunken driving, but, of course, we need to see to it that we don't allow people to put at risk lives of other people.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

POLICE BRUTALITY – S. FAMILY

(No. B/80) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to alleged cases of police brutality towards members of the S. family on 24 March 2020 in Residence Vallijee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated therein, indicating the number of Police Officers involved therein and actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a Curfew Order was issued on 22 March 2020 so as to prevent and mitigate the spread of the disease. The Order, *inter alia*, stipulated that no person shall remain outdoors in Mauritius as from 23 March 2020 at 20.00 hours.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Tuesday 24 March 2020, at about 08.37 hours, a team of Police Officers from Bain des Dames Police Station was on mobile patrol at Residence Vallijee, Bain des Dames, in order to ensure compliance to the Curfew Order.

At about 09.30 hours, the Police Officers came across a group of persons at Corner Dahlia and Chopin Streets at Residence Vallijee, near the residence of S. family. The Police Officers cautioned them to remain indoors and requested them to disperse peacefully to their respective residence. However, they refused to comply, turned hostile and started addressing the Police Officers in filthy terms. Some of them, including Mr R. S. and Mr B. S. started throwing projectiles on Police Officers and the Police vehicle. Consequently, three Police Officers were injured and the Police vehicle was damaged. In view of the prevailing situation, the team of Police Officers left Residence Vallijee for Bain des Dames Police Station.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that, in view of the seriousness of this incident, on the same day, at about 11.00 hours, the Station Manager of Bain des Dames Police Station carried out an operation with the support of other Units of the Force to arrest the two suspects at the residence of S. family. In the course of the operation, the two suspects, namely Mr R. S. and Mr B. S. resisted and struggled with the Police. They were arrested and brought to Line Barracks Detention Centre. As they were injured, they were conveyed to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital at about 15.00 hours for treatment on the same day. Subsequently, Mr B. S. was detained at Line Barracks Detention Centre. Mr R. S. was detained on 25 March 2020 as he was discharged from hospital on that day. Two Police Officers were injured and received treatment at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 25 March 2020, both accused were provisionally charged with the offence of 'Damaging Property by Band' in breach of section 352 of the Criminal Code. Police objected to their release from bail and they were both remanded to Police cell until 01 April 2020. They were detained at the Line Barracks Detention Centre.

On 25 March 2020 itself, at about 20.30 hours, after Mr B. S. and Mr R. S. complained about their health, they were both conveyed to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital where they were admitted. They were discharged from hospital on 28 and 29 March 2020 respectively. They were again detained at Line Barracks Detention Centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 01 April 2020, both detainees appeared before Port Louis District Court and they were released on bail after having each furnished a surety of Rs5,000 and a recognizance of Rs20,000.

Subsequent to a video clip being shared on the social media showing some Police Officers using violence against these two individuals, the then Commissioner of Police announced during a Press Conference on 25 March 2020 that the Central Criminal Investigation Department has been entrusted the responsibility to conduct an enquiry into the matter.

In the course of the investigation, on 26 March 2020, one Police Constable was arrested. On 27 March 2020, he was provisionally charged with the offence of ‘Torture by Public Officer’ before the Magistrate of District Court of Port Louis and released on bail after furnishing a surety of Rs5,000 and a recognizance of Rs20,000. On 27 March 2020, he was interdicted from duty.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as at 05 June 2020, statements have been recorded from several Police Officers with a view to establishing the exact facts and circumstances of the case.

I am further informed that for the sake of transparency, Police have on its own initiative reported the case to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). A certified true copy of the Case File and a full report showing the status of the Police enquiry have been handed over to the Commission for investigation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, without prejudice to the investigation being conducted at the level of the IPCC, I severely condemn all acts of brutality, including those perpetrated by the Police. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated since Police Officers are supposed to be upholding the law and protecting citizens.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

Mr David: Puis-je savoir de l’honorable Premier ministre ce qui explique qu’un seul policier ait été visiblement sanctionné, alors que les vidéos qui ont circulé sur les réseaux sociaux, et que nous avons malheureusement tous visionnés, démontrent clairement que plusieurs officiers de police ont tabassé, brutalisé et torturé les deux suspects à leur domicile, puis dans ce qui semble être les locaux de la police?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the enquiry will reveal who are the officers who have participated in this act of brutality. In fact, it is not brutality. As I mentioned, it is torture. So, whoever has to be arrested will, of course, in the course of the enquiry, be arrested.

Mr Léopold: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can equip the Police with body camera so as to prevent Police violence as well as brutality against Police?

The Prime Minister: Well, this is a suggestion. We have to look into it and, of course, that will, I am sure, be one way of making sure that there is less brutality with regard to Police intervention.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr David: M. le président, ces faits dont nous discutons aujourd'hui se sont déroulés 11 semaines de cela; c'était le mardi 24 mars. Dans sa conférence de presse du 25 mars...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr David: ...le Commissaire de police a annoncé que l'enquête avançait déjà avec 75% d'avance. Faut-il, donc, 11 semaines pour avancer sur les 25% restants? Et je demande à l'honorable Premier ministre si l'enquête a révélé qui a filmé l'arrestation brutale au domicile des suspects; qui a filmé la séance de torture des deux suspects dans les locaux de la police; qui a diffusé les deux vidéos, et quel était le but de la diffusion de ces vidéos sur les réseaux sociaux?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that the enquiry will, of course, disclose who are the people. I mean, somebody has been filming, of course. I cannot say I have been provided with the information. And, in fact, now that there is an independent body which is enquiring into this matter, I join the hon. Member that all the light would be shed in this case. And I hope that all those who are at fault would be taken to task.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

Parliamentary Questions! I have to announce that the Table has been advised that PQ B/94 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training; PQ B/98 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail; PQ B/114 will be replied by the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community

Development; PQ A/36 will be replied by hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. PQ B/133, B/134 and B/135 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

**AREA HEALTH CENTRES – NEWBORN BABIES & CHILDREN –
VACCINATION**

(No. B/85) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the vaccination of newborn babies and children in the Area Health Centres, he will state if special

—

- (a) sanitary and social distancing measures have been taken thereat, and
- (b) measures are being taken to arrange for the vaccination of newborn babies and children who have missed the administration thereof, indicating if consideration will be given for the use of mobile health caravans reaching out thereto for the said purpose.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the vaccination of newborn babies and children are performed at 158 vaccination clinics, namely at Area Health Centres, Community Health Centres, Medi-clinics, Social Welfare Health Centres and Village Halls. Vaccination is carried out during dedicated time slot by vaccination team comprising of Senior Public Health Nursing Officer, Public Health Nursing Officer, Trainee Nursing Officers and Health Care Assistants. All necessary precautions are taken in order to ensure that vaccination is carried out in the best sanitary conditions. Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to avoid crowding and queuing, mothers are called at staggered hours.

As regards part (b) of the question, due to the lockdown, vaccination services were temporarily put on hold from 20 March to 11 May 2020. However, vaccinations for newborn babies and children have resumed as from 11 May 2020. As for those who have missed their vaccination, appointment is being given by phone. As I mentioned earlier, vaccination is being effected at 158 vaccination clinics. This arrangement is amply sufficient and the use of a mobile caravan is not contemplated.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Could the hon. Minister give us figures, as from 11 May until to date, the number of newborn babies who have been vaccinated?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a total number of 15,536 vaccines have already been done from 11 May 2020 to date.

Mr Aumeer: Will the hon. Minister consider domiciliary vaccination to avoid any risk of contamination of such fragile newborns in the light of still having the COVID-19 virus hanging around? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: As I have already mentioned, since we already have 158 vaccination centres and the number of babies attending vaccination centres are limited, so, for the time being, this is not envisaged.

Mr Speaker: Next question hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

HOTELS – QUARANTINE CENTRES

(No. B/86) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the hotels, converted as Quarantine Centres, he will state the number of persons who stayed thereat, indicating the –

- (a) facilities provided thereto, and
- (b) damages caused thereat as a result thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the global outbreak of COVID-19, and in an effort to contain the spread of the pandemic, Government, under advice of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, considered it necessary and expedient, in the interest of public health, to put in quarantine Mauritians coming from abroad. To this end, in addition to requisitioning the recreation centres for the elderly and other publicly-owned buildings and in consultation with *l'AHRIM*, 19 hotels were requisitioned and placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to be used as quarantine centres. I must also add that the decision to use hotels as quarantine centres was also motivated by the fact that some of the public buildings were not fit to be used for the purpose of quarantine as bathrooms and toilets had to be shared and were not adequate in numbers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from the figures compiled by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, 2,647 persons have been placed in quarantine in the hotels during the period 19 March till to date.

As regards, part (a) of the question, the House may wish to note that the persons who were placed in quarantine in hotels are being provided with towels and beddings by the hotels

and three meals, that is, breakfast, lunch and dinner, on a daily basis by the Government. In addition, each person is provided with a sanitary kit which contains some toiletries and cleaning material for the room. As regards medical facilities, I am advised that a Medical and Health Officer and two nurses, one male and one female for every 75 patients are posted in the hotels to look after the general health condition of these persons. In addition, a specialist is attached to these centres in case of emergency. Health Care Assistants and Hospital Attendants are also attached to these centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as part (b) of the question is concerned, I am informed that as at date, a sum of Rs6,736,324 has been claimed by some hotels in respect of damages caused on the premises and thefts reported. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister, currently how many quarantine centres do we have, bearing in mind the repatriation of our fellow citizens who were stranded abroad?

Mr Lesjongard: Right now, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have seven quarantine centres all around the island which are being used for repatriation of Mauritians stranded abroad.

Ms Foo Kune: Can I ask the hon. Minister what were the criteria taken into consideration for the choice of the hotels converted as quarantine centres?

Mr Lesjongard: As I stated in my main reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the problems we have had to face was that people had to share bathrooms and toilets. So, these were among one of the criteria where rooms needed to have annexed bathroom and toilets in the hotels, that's why we had chosen those hotels for Quarantine Centres, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Peut-on savoir combien le gouvernement a payé à chacun des hôtels qui ont servi de centres de quarantaine pendant la période de confinement ?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the list with me. I will table the list later because it is a long list.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the hotels which are concerned with the damages caused and can he give the quarantine cost on the State per person, please?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the damages, we have six hotels concerned and with regard to the total amount disbursed to date, Government has dispersed an amount of Rs94,601,613.25.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Doolub!

PRIVATE SECTOR – CURFEW PERIOD – EMPLOYMENT – TERMINATION

(No. B/87) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the workers of the private sector whose employment have been terminated since the implementation of the curfew period to date, he will state the number thereof, indicating if the employers thereof have benefitted from the Wage Assistance Scheme and, if so, indicate the actions being envisaged against the said employers, if any.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that some 1,035 complaints regarding termination of employment in the private sector have been reported to my Ministry since the implementation of the curfew period up to end of May 2020. The laid-off workers were employed in 164 enterprises. I am also informed that, as at today, some 150 employees have been reinstated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by MRA that a total amount of Rs205,440,657 has been paid under the Government Wage Assistance Scheme to some 109 employers for period March 2020 to 09 June 2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for those employees who have reported to my Ministry that during the confinement period, their employment have been terminated, an enquiry has been initiated by my Ministry to ensure that the employees are paid all their dues under the law and the MRA has also been informed about those cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is apposite here to remind the House that the Income Tax Act, as amended by COVID-19 Act, provides that where an employer terminates the employment of an eligible employee, the employer is not entitled to any allowance under the Wage Assistance Scheme in respect of any subsequent month. As at 05 June 2020, the MRA has not

paid financial support under the Wage Assistance Scheme to 207 businesses for any subsequent month after receiving complaints that the employment of the employees has been terminated, the employer has failed to pay the basic wage or salary of an eligible employee, or has reduced the basic wage or salary of an eligible employee. Furthermore, the employer is liable to refund the allowance that has been paid to an eligible employee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reassure the workers who have been laid off, that prosecution will also be initiated by my Ministry for unfair dismissal, and those unscrupulous employers run the risk of paying punitive rate to the tune of 3 months per year of service.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Minister, out of the number of people who have been reinstated, how many could have claimed severance allowance at punitive rate? Because, for example, the employers did not call them or did not refer the matter to the Redundancy Board. Did his officers advise those people that instead of being reinstated, they could have sued the employers for unfair dismissal?

Mr Callichurn: What actually happened is that the employers themselves, they came to the Ministry to state that they are willing to reinstate those persons. So, we deem it fit not to pursue the matter further and I am given to understand also that many of those employers have refunded the MRA the money they have taken under that scheme.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister advise whether actions will be taken by his Ministry or the MRA against those employers who have benefitted from the Wage Assistance Scheme, but still firing employees?

Mr Callichurn: Well, I have just mentioned that, indeed, actions will be taken by my Ministry. My Ministry intends to prosecute those employers for unfair dismissal and also action has already been initiated by MRA to recover the sum dispersed under the Scheme.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you. The hon. Minister has, on the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, during an interview, stated that employees are entitled to be compensated, not only for the one month before the Redundancy Board, but he said that the compensation would also include two weeks per year of service as compensation. Those are the words that he used. Could he, please, clarify for the Mauritians who are today watching us, and all the

workers, that this compensation that he refers to, the two weeks, is, in fact, not compensation, but is, in fact, gratuity which he is referring to, gratuity upon retirement, and is not severance or compensations and that he should not mix the issues of gratuity with severance, and when will he come up with the new regulation that will dictate the quantum of gratuity under section 127 of the Workers' Rights Act, as has been amended in clause 57 of the COVID-19 Bill 2020?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, when I was referring to the 15 days per year of service, indeed, I was referring to gratuity, which they are entitled to, because when someone is stayed off, who has worked for 'X' amount of years, he is entitled to be paid under the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund (PRGF), at the rate of 4.5%. We have temporarily postponed payment, so they are still entitled for those 15 days' gratuity, which will be paid to them, either by their employer or be put at the account at the MRA for them to benefit it later on.

(Interruptions)

The regulation is at the State Law Office. We will very soon come up with the legislation.

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members, I have to announce that PQ B/118 and PQ B/119 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

SQUATTERS – HOUSES – PULLING DOWN

(No. B/88) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning whether, in regard to the squatters in Pointe aux Sables, Cité Tôle, Curepipe and Riambel whose houses were recently pulled down, he will state the reasons for the said pulling down during the curfew period, indicating if consideration will be given for an inquiry to be conducted to identify those who qualify for the allocation of social housing.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of the hon. Member refers to squatters and it is important to know that section 22(1) of the State Lands Act provides that, I quote –

“No person shall take possession of, encroach upon, cultivate or put up any building or other structure on any part of any State land without the expressed authorisation in writing of the Minister.”

Now, all Governments have been confronted with the complex and recurrent problem of unauthorised occupation of State land, but in September 2015, the previous Government, under Sir Anerood Jugnauth, took a bold decision to regularise all cases of illegal occupation up to 01 July 2015. When I assumed office in November 2019, I immediately requested a status report on the issue and was informed that of 11,004 cases registered prior to 01 July 2015, some two-thirds had, indeed, been regularised, leaving a balance of some 450 cases, the most difficult ones.

I was also informed that between 01 July 2015 to November 2019, some 290 additional cases had been identified. However, before Government had the opportunity to spell out its strategy concerning long time squatters and social housing, we were affected by COVID-19 pandemic.

As from 23 March, the country was in lockdown with a Curfew Order providing that only persons performing essential services could leave their homes. It was a matter of life and death as all contravening persons could not only be contaminated, but could contaminate others in the event. As the hon. Member knows, hundreds of our compatriots were hospitalised and ten, unfortunately, lost their lives. At that precise moment, while officers responsible for safeguarding public land were in confinement and the Police were focussed on protection of the public, behind their backs, behind our backs, some persons deliberately chose to set up illegal structures on public land, in flagrant breach of the curfew and with total disregard for public safety. It was then that we were informed by anxious and concerned inhabitants of Pointe aux Sables and Résidence Malherbes that strangers were occupying State land, while others were confined to their homes.

Now, the hon. Member would have noticed that I said Résidence Malherbes. Let me pause to remark that there is no Cité Tôle at Résidence Malherbes and this term coined by the Opposition media is deeply offensive to local inhabitants.

Mr Speaker, further to the information conveyed by anxious inhabitants of Pointe aux Sables and Résidence Malherbes, a survey was carried out on 09 and 10 May, that revealed that some 29 structures had been erected during the lockdown, I stress, during the lockdown, 29 structures on five sites around the island of Mauritius, including Pointe aux Sables, Riambel and Malherbes. However, of the said 29 structures, only 9 were found to be occupied. Despite repeated request to vacate, including legal notices served on 22 May, the

number of illegal structures actually increased more than five-fold from 29 to 159 by 27 May, of which about half, 67 in fact, were by then occupied.

Now, quite apart from its responsibility to enforce the State Lands Act, the State had to act, and act fast for at least five reasons. One, the numbers were increased exponentially. Remember, within 19 days, we eventually had 142 additional cases. So, the numbers were increasing exponentially and without immediate and decisive action the situation would have rapidly got out of hand with the message spreading that taking advantage of the curfew, each and every one could seize a plot of State land of his own choice and to his own advantage.

Secondly, the situation was different from any previous one inasmuch as for the first time, since the late 1960s, there was a Curfew Order in force for the public good, providing that, I quote from the Regulations made under the Public Health Act –

“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 outdoor.”

Now, not to act or to postpone action to after an eventual lifting of the Curfew Order would have been tantamount to condoning a blatant violation of the curfew in a time of great danger to the population. Just imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, the consequences if only one of these squatters had carried the deadly virus.

Thirdly, Mr Speaker, Sir, experience teaches us that each day an illegal occupier is allowed to remain in occupation, the harder it is to get him to leave and the stronger is the moral case he will later put up to stay put.

Fourthly, moreover, in the particular case of Pointe aux Sables, the site squatted is classified as “a coastal fresh water marshy land”, that is, an environment sensitive area, according to the Ministry of Environment. As such, no building permission can be granted, and to do so, would be a serious risk for the dweller.

Fifth, squatting is a grave injustice to all the poor people experiencing housing problems and who have abided by the law and registered with either the NHDC or the National Empowerment Foundation and have been waiting in the queue for social housing, sometimes for several years. Does compassion demand that squatters be allowed to jump the queue at their expense? That, Mr Speaker, Sir, would represent a gross injustice indeed.

Now, as to an enquiry, mentioned in the question, the hon. lady should know that on 26 and 27 May, that is, before their eviction, each and every squatter received the visit of an

interministerial team, including officers of the Ministries entrusted with responsibility for Social Integration, for Health, for Education, for Family Welfare, for Housing, for Local Government, for registering applicants for the Self-employed Assistance Scheme as well as the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children to identify those genuinely in need of urgent assistance.

Moreover, the NHDC Ltd and the NEF are presently registering occupiers wishing to apply for social housing, if they are not already registered. In fact, we are proactively following up on each and every case with a view to addressing all live social issues. The challenge, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to distinguish between the genuinely homeless and squatters in general. To that end, we are already working with NGOs and social workers, including Caritas to identify those deserving of our immediate support.

In parallel, given the major commitment to social housing in the Budget, we are working on a plan to respond meaningfully and in an orderly manner to the housing problems not only of deserving families, among those having reached the Curfew Order, but of all poor people in Mauritius.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is playing on words when referring to Cité Tôle and Résidence Malherbes, as well as the word ‘squatters’. Nul n’est contre l’illégalité, mais le ministre pourrait-il nous dire quelles sont les raisons ayant motivé la destruction de ces maisons en plein confinement et avant même qu’une enquête ait été effectuée?

Mr Obeegadoo: I believe I should repeat what I just said. We are not playing on words. I would invite the Minister to visit Malherbes. There are no *maisons en tôle* generally at Malherbes and squatters are concentrated in one street and one street only, which is called Bernardin de St Pierre. So, I would invite the Minister to go...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member.

Mr Obeegadoo: The former Minister, because she should...

(Interruptions)

She is a former Minister and she should have a sense of responsibility on these matters. I would invite the hon. Member to go to Malherbes and visit, and the term

‘squatters’ is not playing on words. I quoted the State Lands Act and shall be very happy to provide the hon. Member with an extract of that piece of law, if she does not have it.

Now, again, before the structures at Pointe aux Sables were removed on Friday 29 May, that is, on the eve of the lifting of confinement, a thorough unprecedented social enquiry was carried out by all the Ministries I just mentioned - and I will not repeat - to check if there were any children who were not attending school, any persons whose health was affected and required immediate transfer to hospital, any battered woman or abandoned children who needed to be provided with immediate shelter, any persons not having claimed the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme and deserving to be assisted in registering themselves, checked for NHDC registration, for NEF registration, for SRM registration. When under any Government, has this been done before, Mr Speaker, Sir? This was before – I stress - before the removal of these illegal structures erected during confinement. But we have not stopped there. We are presently continuing to survey all the persons who have left and those who have refused to leave on a case-by-case basis proactively so that we can identify the genuine cases.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry has made an inquiry concerning the people, whether they have been registered with the NHDC or the NEF? Because many times people who are waiting could not afford to have a house either with the NHDC or the NEF. These people are forced to be squatters.

Mr Obeegadoo: Absolutely and I will speak slowly so that I do not have to repeat myself yet again. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, on 26 and 27 May, if the hon. Member would care to listen, officers of the NHDC, accompanied by officers of the NEF, went from one structure to another taking down the names of each of the persons present, which names were then checked against the register at the NHDC to see whether these persons were registered, whether they had been called for interviews before, where they had asked for housing because some people have asked for housing in Goodlands, others have asked for housing in St. Pierre, we also double checked with the NEF whether they had registered maybe not with the NHDC, but asked the NEF for housing and all those who have not done also we went to check whether they already held leases for State land. For instance, at Riambel a lady, who had a video done, already had been regularised in 2005 by the MSM/MMM Government, given 10 perches of land and she was in addition illegally occupying land belonging to the

State. There was another case of a person who had an NHDC apartment and who had sold the NHDC apartment a year ago and was now occupying land. This is why and I need to give credit to hon. David who had the courage of going live on radio and saying, he acknowledged that many of these cases were undeserving but then again what is important today is to identify the real genuine cases and to help those people in whatever way we can.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Est-ce que le ministre sait que sa réponse est, en fait, un aveu d'échec de la politique du gouvernement en matière de logement pour les plus vulnérables?

Mr Obeegadoo: M. le président, j'aurais tout à l'heure en réponse à une autre question l'opportunité de donner tous les chiffres. Le gouvernement sortant a construit dans les 2,300 maisons et maintenant nous avons annoncé la décision de viser les 12,000 maisons sur les prochains trois ans. Tout à l'heure, je vous donnerai les détails pour ne pas me répéter. Il y a une autre question qui a été posée concernant les chiffres et nous voulons agir concrètement parce que croyez-moi vous n'avez pas le monopole du cœur.

(Interruptions)

Vous n'avez pas le monopole du cœur et être au gouvernement c'est agir avec le cœur et la raison concrètement au quotidien pour porter secours à tous ceux qui sont dans le besoin et nous le ferons.

Mr Speaker: Hon. X. L. Duval!

Mr X. L. Duval: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that at this present day with the cold winds that there are families, women and children, living under tents at Riambel at this very moment in time. Given his previous statements that he made before he joined Government, what is he going to do today concerning these families living under tents under these terrible weather conditions today itself, please?

Mr Obeegadoo: I am grateful to the hon. Member to give me the chance to explain. Now, at Riambel, it was only on 19 May that 37 structures were identified on State lands and do you know how many occupants there were, Mr Speaker, Sir, on 19 May? *Zéro!* Not one of them was occupied. On 22 May, we had gone from 37 to 46 cases. Do you know how many occupied? *Zéro!* From 19 to 26, we had gone to 53 cases and suddenly between the 22 and the 26, half were occupied. Why? Because on 22, Government has served a legal notice to vacate! Now, we are working on this issue and I am grateful for the assistance of the three

MPs, Minister Ganoo and our two colleague MPs for their help, we are working with NGOs active in the region to identify the genuine cases.

Let me remind the hon. Member that if we speak of Riambel, it was the MSM/MMM Government in 2005 that regularised the squatters of African town. Let me remind the House that in 2015 the MSM/ML Government regularised all the squatters of Cité des Dieux at Riambel and it is this Government that will address all genuine cases in Riambel.

Mr Speaker: Now supplementary, hon. Nuckcheddy! Do you have a supplementary question? Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Is the Minister aware that camping tents are being provided by a foundation to encourage these families to occupy the State land illegally and what are the actions his Ministry will undertake?

Mr Obeegadoo: Let me reassure the House and the hon. Member that we are following on a case-by-case basis so as to act firmly but with compassion, as I said, the priority being to identify genuine cases.

Next question, hon. Ms Foo Kune!

HEALTH INSTITUTIONS - CURFEW PERIOD – PATIENTS – APPOINTMENT

(No. B/89) Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether in regard to medical outpatient appointments and surgical procedures in public health institutions which were stalled amid the COVID-19 lockdown, he will state the number thereof pending in each speciality, indicating the measures taken to clear the backlog.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, our health institutions continued to dispense routine services during confinement period. As such a number of patients - the little - attended the appointments as scheduled. Outpatients, irrespective of the nature of their illness or not on the appointment list, were seen by doctors at Accident and Emergency Departments in our hospitals and at various health care centres and Mediclinics.

On 18 May 2020, my Ministry issued a circular to all hospitals to schedule appointments for all new cases first and then for those who have missed their appointments due to confinement. I am told that routine cases were attended at OPD clinics or otherwise appointments were rescheduled. My Ministry has already re-programmed the appointments

and the patients have been informed accordingly. It is expected that all the backlogs will be cleared by end of July 2020.

From March 20 to 11 May 2020, 2088 surgeries were effected comprising of emergency cases including routine caesarean sections which were already scheduled. All cases not performed during COVID-19 are being rescheduled and new dates for operation have already been allotted.

As from 11 to 29 May 2020, 796 emergency cases have been operated and non-urgent surgical procedures have been re-programmed.

I am also informed that, as from 11 May to 31 May 2020, 784 routine cases have been attended to.

As at date, I am being informed that there are 3,367 cases awaiting surgeries in our five regional hospitals including the Cardiac Centre.

I am tabling a list of pending cases in each specialty.

Ms Foo Kune: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he is considering to request the assistance of retired specialists and the private sector towards addressing the issue of backlog?

Dr. Jagutpal: In the event that we have accumulated cases and it is getting too long to clear the backlog, this measure will be taken into consideration.

Ms Foo Kune: Can the Minister tell the House what are the criteria he will base himself on the choice of the doctors and the private sector?

Dr. Jagutpal: It all depends upon the speciality where there is a shortage of doctors. We will consider what are the specialities where operations are being delayed and from that on there would be a selection based upon advertisement and then from the interview onwards, we are going to have the speciality depending upon the field concerned.

Mr Speaker: At this stage, I will suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 1.00 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.04 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/95, B/96, B/97, B/98, B/124, B/131 and B/132 have been withdrawn. Hon. Ms Foo Kune!

HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE - STOCK

(No. B/90) Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Hydroxychloroquine, he will state the present stock thereof, indicating the quantity thereof –

- (a) purchased, indicating the –
 - (i) dates of purchase, and
 - (ii) cost thereof, and
- (b) received as donation from the Indian Government, indicating the date thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there is currently a stock of 1,384,400 Hydroxychloroquine 200 mg tablets at the Central Stores Department.

With regard to part (a) of the question, my Ministry purchased 1.8M tablets in August 2019 at the cost of Rs1.571 per tablet.

I am informed that my Ministry has, on 26 March 2020, awarded another contract for an amount of Rs2,538,000 for the procurement of 1.5M tablets to be supplied in two equal instalments. The first instalment is expected to be delivered in one month's time and the second consignment in two months' time.

As regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry has received 502,200 tablets of Hydroxychloroquine of 200mg as donation from the Government of India on 16 April 2020.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Foo Kune!

Ms Foo Kune: Can the hon. Minister tell us if, for all patients of Covid-19, Hydroxychloroquine has been used in a non-discriminative way irrespective of age and underlying conditions?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, but this question is not pertaining to the question that has been asked. Yet, yes, so far the information I have that all patients have been receiving Chloroquine tablets till lastly when we have another advice from World Health Organisation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Oui, M. le président. Je pense que ma question est pratiquement similaire à celle de l'honorable Ms Foo Kune, mais je la pose quand même. Peut-on connaître la position du représentant de l'OMS à Maurice par rapport à l'utilisation de hydroxychloroquine dans le traitement des patients infectés par le coronavirus?

Dr. Jagutpal: The Ministry, with the experts of the different specialities internal physician, chest physician and the WHO representative, has made a concerted recommendation on the use of Chloroquine. At present, Chloroquine is being used, but by the consent of the patient.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: Can the hon. Minister provide to the House the particulars of the contractor who has obtained the contract to deliver the Hydroxychloroquine medicine?

Dr. Jagutpal: I will table this information.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Assirvaden!

CÔTE D'OR NATIONAL SPORTS COMPLEX – INITIAL PROJECT VALUE

(No. B/91) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Côte d'Or National Sports Complex, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd, information as to the –

- (a) initial budgeted cost;
- (b) actual cost;
- (c) expected completion cost thereof, indicating the reasons for the variation cost and table copy thereof and, if not, why not;
- (d) expected completion date thereof, and
- (e) if fees will be charged for the use thereof and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that in August, 2017, the initial project value of the Côte d'Or National Sports Complex was estimated at Rs3.2 billion. The amount was reviewed to Rs3.9 billion in May, 2018 to include consultancy cost and off-site works.

This estimate was worked out on the basis of draft designs. At that time, the soil investigations were not yet completed and the international sports regulatory bodies such as the FIFA, the FINA and the IAAF had not yet submitted their construction standards.

With the final designs completed, taking into account the recommendations of the regulatory bodies, the project value was then again reviewed and had increased to Rs4.692 billion. This substantial increase was mainly due to poor soil conditions revealed by the geotechnical reports and soil improvement works were therefore required.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards parts (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd that in October, 2018, the civil contractor was instructed to fast track the construction of the sports facilities at Côte d'Or. The sports complex was to be used to host some competitions of the Indian Ocean Island Games 2019. The major building and infrastructural works were to be completed by June 2019.

It is common knowledge that a fast track execution of a project has a cost. The contractor had to mobilise additional resources in terms of labour and machinery. The Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd had to disburse an additional amount of Rs163 m. as acceleration cost in addition to Rs14 m. for mechanical and electrical works as well as the Rs114 m. to equip the facility for the IOIG 2019. The project value now stands at Rs4.983 billion. I am further informed by Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd that this amount can be considered as the final project cost. No variation works are foreseen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for part (d) of the question, according to the report of Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd, the construction schedule was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Works have resumed on site and a work calendar is being prepared.

Insofar as the fees that would be charged, the new Board is working on it and once finalised, it will be made public.

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. Merci, l'honorable ministre. Je suis sûr que le ministre va être d'accord avec moi que R 5 milliards dépensés pour ce complexe, il faudra impérativement rentabiliser cet investissement. Est-ce que le ministre peut informer la Chambre quels sont les événements sportifs qui sont prévus pour les 12 prochains mois pour qu'on puisse rentabiliser ce stade que certains appellent un stade fantôme ? Je sais qu'il y a un *business plan* qui a été préparé et que dans la réponse de l'ex-ministre Boissézon, dans cette même Chambre, il était convenu que R 250 millions en termes de maintenance. Est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire quels sont les événements sportifs prévus pour les prochains mois?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, en mars de cette année, il y a un nouveau *Board* qui a été mis en place, et d'après les informations que j'ai, le nouveau *Board* est en train d'étudier le plan qui avait été déjà préparé. Je ne l'ai pas avec moi et j'attends très bientôt qu'il soumette un plan pour nous dire quelles sont les activités qui pourraient être prévues au niveau du complexe. Néanmoins, bien sûr il y a eu les jeux des îles l'année dernière, donc le

complexe avait été utilisé pour les jeux. Nous avons aussi l'académie de football de Liverpool qui utilise le complexe.

Le 23 novembre de l'année dernière, le *Japan Karate Association, International Karate Tournament* a tenu sa compétition au complexe. Nous avons toujours en novembre, le *National Police Swimming Gala* qui avait été tenu à Côte d'Or. Le 21 décembre 2019, le *Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation* a tenu ses compétitions nationales toujours au complexe. Nous avons aussi, dans un premier temps prévu - bien sûr, dépendant de la pandémie – de tenir les jeux de la CJSOI l'année prochaine, si tout va bien, au complexe de Côte d'Or. Entre temps, les différentes fédérations ont pris contact - et c'est là que le *Board* va étudier le plan – avec les différentes fédérations internationales telles que la FINA pour tenir différentes compétitions sportives internationales au complexe.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, le ministre sera surement d'accord que pour rentabiliser un complexe de cette envergure, les petits évènements proposés ne rentabiliseront surement pas ce complexe avec un investissement de R 5 milliards. Ça a été dit la fois dernière, la maintenance va coûter autour de R 250 millions par an. Est-ce que le ministre peut informer la Chambre combien d'argent ont été déboursé jusqu'ici de mai de l'année dernière - le 7 mai où la question a été répondue - à ce jour pour la maintenance de ce complexe?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, je n'ai pas les chiffres au niveau de la maintenance parce que la question initiale parlait du projet dans la construction. Donc, je n'ai pas ce chiffre avec moi actuellement.

Mr Assirvaden: J'ai une dernière question, M. le président. Je comprends très bien qu'il y a un *business plan* en préparation avec le comité de Côte d'Or, mais en décembre 2018, le gouvernement a payé une compagnie, *Horta Consulting Ltd* - je suis sûr que le ministre connaît ce rapport-là - pour préparer un *business plan* pour exactement ce complexe, comment développer ce complexe en termes d'évènements sportifs. Est-ce que le ministre peut déposer sur la Table de l'Assemblée nationale une copie de ce rapport?

Mr Toussaint: Je n'ai pas ce renseignement avec moi, M. le président. Je le redis, la question initiale était sur la construction et non sur le *business plan*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful, last supplementary!

Mr Ramful: I hope the Minister has the answer. Can the Minister confirm that the monthly electricity bill for this unused complex is about Rs1.5 m.?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, je le redis, je n'ai absolument aucun problème à répondre à des questions, mais il suffit que les bonnes questions soient posées.

(Interruptions)

Laisse mo kozer!

(Interruptions)

La question initiale de l'honorable membre parle du coût de construction. Si la prochaine fois on vient avec une question sur...

(Interruptions)

Mo pas pe repone ar twa!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! No crosstalking! Order! The Minister has replied this question.

Mr Toussaint: *Si to envi poz mwa enn kestion, to poz mwa enn kestion. Pas nek asize to bla bla! Poz kestion si to envi!*

(Interruptions)

Ferme to labous!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden, next question! No crosstalking!

CEB – OPTICAL GROUND WIRE NETWORK PROJECT

(No. B/92) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CEB (FiberNet) Co. Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board (CEB), information as to the –

- (a) total investment made therein by the CEB, since the inception of the said company to date, and
- (b) total sale of wholesale fiber connectivity services for the period 14 November 2018 to date by the said company.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the year 2001, the Central Electricity Board initiated a project for the installation of an Optical Ground Wire network (OPGW) all along its transmission lines. This network is a tubular structure containing optical fibres surrounded by layers of steel and aluminium wires. That project was completed in 2003. The OPGW is now about 340 kilometres long. It is used for CEB's international communication and remote control of sub stations.

In the beginning of 2015, the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation formally proposed to the Central Electricity Board that the existing Optical Ground Wire network be optimised so as to provide ultimate backhaul network capacity to existing telecom operators.

At the time I stood advised, that the OPGW was being used at only 5% of its capacity and that, if accepted, the proposal would spur the new government strategy for the digital transformation of Mauritius.

Following approval of Government, it was decided to use the OPGW to promote the deployment of high speed broadband services. In 2015, a feasibility study was carried out by Arteria and in 2016 a business model evaluation was carried out by the consultant IDATE. The recommended technology was Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing Based Optical Transmission Network which, I am informed, is a well-known and tested optical transmission technology in the telecommunications sector.

On 07 September 2016, the CEB Act was amended so as to enable CEB to incorporate subsidiaries under the Companies Act.

Subsequently, on 11 October 2016, CEB incorporated CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd, as a fully owned subsidiary.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the CEB that it has invested Rs100,000 as share capital in CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd. Further, CEB has advanced amounts totalling Rs385 m. to that subsidiary. Those advances were subsequently formalised in a Shareholder Loan Facility agreement signed on 12 February 2020. The loan is repayable in 15 years, inclusive of a grace period of three years. It has also advanced an amount of Rs71,680,875 to that subsidiary for the period 01 July 2019 to 04 June 2020. This will be converted into a loan.

I am informed by CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd that to date, Rs207,789,646 have been paid to ECI Telecom, the designated contractor for backbone infrastructure development. For the METISS project, an amount of Rs214,508,008 has been disbursed.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the sale of fibre connectivity services can be envisaged only after all the stages leading to ultimate connection are completed.

This involves firstly obtaining a licence as well as tariff approval. CEB (Fibernet) obtained the network service provider licence from ICTA on 12 December 2018 and approval for the tariff was obtained on 12 April 2019.

Secondly and in parallel, backbone infrastructure works had to be completed and this was done in January 2019.

Thirdly, CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd is testing on a pilot basis. This is being carried out in about 500 households in the region of Rose Hill and in CEB's offices for communication purposes. This pilot testing is expected to continue until December 2020.

Fourthly, a critical component of the project is the ultimate connection to "METISS" which stands for Melting pot Indianoceanic Submarine System. The METISS project was initiated by the Indian Ocean Commission. It consists in the installation of a submarine cable of 3,000 km to link Mauritius, Réunion and Madagascar to Durban. I am informed that the cable has reached Madagascar and is expected to be commissioned in Mauritius by the end of this year.

Fifthly, CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd is in the process of appointing a system integrator to ensure connectivity from the fibernet shelter to the end users.

It is only after all these processes are completed that sales can be contemplated.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le président, en écoutant la réponse du *Deputy Prime Minister*, cela devient de plus en plus clair qu'il n'y a pas eu de *sale of wholesale* fibre connectivity?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Il a fallu quoi ? Je n'ai pas entendu.

Mr Assirvaden: Le *sale*, la vente des connectivités.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Il a fallu quoi?

Mr Assirvaden: *The wholesale fiber connectivity*, il n'y pas eu de vente.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Non.

Mr Assirvaden: Oui, c'est cela. Donc, on 03 April 2018, the Deputy Prime Minister stated in PQ B/78 et B/79, je lis la phrase sur ce projet: "*This is a very profitable initiative. The forecast is a cumulative revenue of 41.9 million USD in the first five years.*" Ceci dit, M. le président, après presque quatre ans où plusieurs centaines de millions de roupies de l'argent public ont été investies dans cette compagnie où le *forecast* était 41.9 millions de dollars. Aujourd'hui, le Deputy Prime Minister confirme à la Chambre qu'il n'y pas eu de vente, pas eu de revenu. Je voudrais savoir de l'honorable Deputy Prime Minister si après quatre ans où plusieurs centaines de millions de roupies ont été investies, s'il n'est pas mieux *that we stop this venture on this very risky project?*

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, the answer is no. On the contrary, this is a venture which is highly profitable, but not only highly profitable, for the country and that includes Rodrigues. There will be increase connectivity, there will be a lowering of cost and that is the policy of Government. We have invested about, I think, Rs385 m. plus Rs500 m. The business plan shows that it is going to be profitable; stopping the project now would mean selling it to the private sector. This is probably what the hon. Member would wish to obtain. But we are not in the business of selling something so valuable to the private sector.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, quand ce projet dans quelque temps, dans deux ans ou trois ans, là, on est à R 500 millions, le chiffre de R 1.2 milliards est cité concernant l'investissement dans ce projet. Le ministre veut continuer, le gouvernement veut continuer déjà à dépenser encore d'argent en ce temps difficile. But being given that the CEB has invested plus de R 500 millions, et le Deputy Prime Minister me donne l'impression qu'il veut continuer encore de ce projet, l'argent public. And in view of the difficult economic situation, will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether the contract of the actual General Manager will be reviewed on the same terms and conditions, that is, a salary of 13,000 dollars, R 500,000, en ce moment difficile, plus que la plupart des ministres ici? Est-ce que le contrat va être renouvelé sur les mêmes termes et conditions?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am not used to answering multiple questions. There are about 3 questions in this statement. Mr Speaker, Sir, could you ask the hon. Member to just particularise the question he wants me to answer?

Mr Assirvaden: Oui, j'ai compris. M. le président, *being given that CEB has invested some* - je suis sûr que le ministre a compris - plus de R 500 millions dans ce projet, qui est

l'argent public, et le ministre des Finances l'a si bien dit, on est dans des situations économiques extrêmement difficiles où il y a des coupes dans des salaires, où tous les *allowances* sont coupés. Est-ce que le *Deputy Prime Minister* peut informer la Chambre si le directeur général actuel du *CEB FiberNet*, qui a un salaire de 13,000 dollars par mois, Rs500,000, sera maintenu selon les mêmes termes et conditions?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Okay, there are two questions. One is on the difficult economic situation of Mauritius. Now, on that question, because that is what emerges from what I heard, on that question, I would say yes, we are in a difficult economic situation, we all know it, we do not need to be economists or whatever to understand that. We have listened to the Budget Speech of the Minister of Finance. We hope to be able to get out of that difficult economic situation.

As regards to the salary of the General Manager, well, I do not have it here but if the hon. Member tells me it is so many dollars...

(Interruptions)

Well, please, I cannot be interrupted like this! Heckling is not a solution in debates. If that is the figure that he wants to give, I am going to check, of course, what is the salary. I do not know if his contract needs to be renewed, but if his contract needs to be renewed, it will be renewed. But it depends on the Board of FiberNet, not on me.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: Une dernière question, M. le président. *I am given to understand that over and above the investment of nearly R 250 millions, comme vient de le dire le Deputy Prime Minister, 6 millions d'euros, in its METISS submarine cable, the CEB FiberNet is on the point to buy additional international capacity to the tune of R 50 millions.* Ça va se faire dans les jours à venir. Est-ce que le *Deputy Prime Minister*, pour la transparence, peut informer la Chambre si les *procurement procedures as set out by the PPO have been followed on this particular contract?*

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not understand what the hon. Member is asking. He speaks a bit confusing. Let me see what I understand...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Deputy Prime Minister: What I understand from him is why did we invest in METISS? That was a policy decision. We had to invest in METISS. There are other submarine cables which are nearing their survival date. We need to continue modernising our infrastructure. Then he asked me whether we are going to invest another Rs50 m. something. I am not aware of this. I have never heard of this. I will check. If he has the information, he will ask me but I will check whether that is correct.

Then, he talks of procurement. I mean, we did not invent exemptions for procurement regulations. The hon. Member must surely be familiar with GN 68 of 2009, when the Government of the day, when he was the Chairman, I believe, of the CEB, introduced an exemption for CEB by way of regulations, not by way of Act of Parliament, by way of regulations to exempt CEB from the Public Procurement legislation and then promptly signed a contract with SARACO. So, I mean, let's not talk too much about this. Then, who incorporated in 2007 the CEB Investment Company Limited, CEB/ICL, without going to Parliament, without having any approval? They incorporated a –

(Interruptions)

We went to Parliament. We got the sanction of everybody. We went to Cabinet. CEB/ICL was incorporated without any - and then to add additional - then CEB/ICL was for CT Power; to take customer's money to put in CT Power, 26% And exempt this company from procurement proceedings. Mr Speaker, Sir, *la boue mok la marre*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question! No more supplementary! Next question!

Mr Assirvaden: Last question?

Mr Speaker: No.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 15 – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/93) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to when water will be supplied to the inhabitants thereof on a 24/7 basis, indicating the number of complaints registered on the hotline in relation thereto, since September 2019 to date, indicating the cost incurred in relation to water supply through water tankers –

- (a) hired from private operators, giving the list thereof, and
- (b) owned by the Authority

The Deputy Prime Minister: May I ask your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, to reply to B/93 and B/116 of the First Member of the same constituency because they are more or less on the same subject matter. May I?

Mr Speaker: Yes.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I can. Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Central Water Authority supplies water on the basis of six District Water Supply Zones and not constituencies.

The regions in the Constituency No 15 form part of the Upper Mare aux Vacoas Supply Zone and receive water from Mare aux Vacoas Reservoir, through La Marie Water Treatment Plant.

I am informed by the CWA that some ten localities in that constituency are receiving 24/7 water supply and other areas receive 12-hour supply daily. Water supply in these regions is expected to increase by 2 to 3 hours by December 2020, following the full commissioning of the Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant.

The CWA informs me that it is implementing water pipe replacement around the island in a phased manner to achieve 24/7 water supply, with priority given to most critical areas. During the past five years, an amount of Rs6.6 billion has already been invested and about 500 kms of pipes have been replaced.

This includes in that area replacement of about 27 kms of pipes in John Kennedy Street, 30 kms in Solferino, 4 kms in Henrietta, 6.4 kms from Piton du Milieu to Hermitage and all this for a total amount of Rs502 m. Under the Highlands Sewerage Project, 386 meters of pipes have been replaced and 100 meters will be replaced under the Valentina Sewerage Project.

CWA's medium term plan includes a project to increase the treatment capacity of La Marie Water Treatment Plant from 130,000 m³ daily to 160,000 m³ daily. This will ensure 24/7 supply in the entire Upper Mare Aux Vacoas Supply Zone.

With regard to the number of complaints received, I am informed by the CWA that the hotline registered an average of less than 10 complaints daily since September 2019.

Now, as regards water tankers, I am informed by the CWA that it deploys three of its own CWA tankers in the region, those are supplemented by CWA tankers from other regions, whenever this is necessary.

For the period September 2019 to date, the cost of CWA tankers amounts to Rs2,336,680.77, that include fuel, maintenance and labour costs.

During that same period, the CWA had recourse to one private tanker, owned by one Mr M. on 31 December 2019, following a broken pipe in Petit Camp, Valentina. The cost incurred amounts to Rs17,275.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: B/94.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: I have a supplementary.

Mr Speaker: You have to raise your hand. You don't wait for me to give the floor to another Member, then you...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: I raised my hand.

Mr Speaker: I looked in that direction and you were not prepared.

(Interruptions)

Okay, I will allow you because...

(Interruptions)

But you are not important after asking more questions. The next Member is important.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he can give the names of those 10 localities that are getting water on a 24-hour basis in Constituency No.15?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, I can –

- Clairfonds;
- Morcellement Boucan;
- Palmerston;

- Caro Laliane;
- Belle Terre, and
- Closel.

Those are the regions where you are very strong I understand. So, we give you preferential treatment.

Mr Speaker: Now, you are happy. We give the floor to hon. Ameer Meea!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – INDUSTRIAL SECTOR – UNEMPLOYMENT

(No. B/94) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the unemployed, he will state the estimated number thereof, industry-wise, amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Speaker, Sir, with you permission, I will reply to this PQ. The number of unemployment industry wise amid COVID-19 cannot be quantified at this stage, as it is still too early to assess the damage done on the economic front. We shall have a better indication in the coming months and I will be glad to share the information sought for then.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, my question was addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance. The reason is because of his statement that 100,000 people would lose their job. This was a very serious statement. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister how this figure has been determined by his colleague. Has there been any study, any report rather, to substantiate this figure of 100,000 people?

Mr Callichurn: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, the assumption is based on industries that will be heavily affected by the effect of COVID-19. It is not just us that made assumptions. Forecasts have been made by different countries. Even the ILO has given figures regarding the number of persons that run the risk of losing their jobs. So, this is based on assumptions.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister just mentioned the ILO. Last year, the ILO published a report analysing our Workfare Programme and payment of transition unemployment benefit. It criticised that the Ministry does not publicise enough to people in the informal sector that become unemployed and, as a result, these unemployed from the informal sector don't get their Workfare Programme, don't get the transition

unemployment benefit. So, may I know from the hon. Minister what measures he will take to encourage people who are going to lose their job in the informal sector to come forward and register with his Ministry to get the transition unemployment benefit.

Mr Callichurn: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, the transition of unemployment benefit is applicable to those in the formal sector. The informal sector, hon. Shakeel Mohamed knows for a fact because in 2013 the Workfare Programme was introduced with a specific reason, that is, to target those who are in employment, who are working in the formal sector. We don't know how many people are working in the informal sector. It is very difficult to quantify those people. We have put measures in the past to encourage those people to come and register with the system that is in place at my Ministry but, unfortunately, they don't want to, we cannot do anything about it.

Mr Speaker: You invited hon. Shakeel Mohamed for a supplementary question.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you. I just wanted to pick up from where hon. Ameer Meea left off from his good question on the issue of the 100,000 people that the hon. Minister of Finance has made reference to. Now, since the hon. Minister of Labour has stated that this was a number, just like the ILO, *qui a été prévu*. There has been a calculation of some sort like other countries. Could he, at least, since his colleague - and together with him seated next to his colleague - has mentioned 100,000, table the report to which hon. Ameer Meea made reference that brings you to that 100,000. How does the hon. Minister reach that figure? I know the hon. Minister has said that it has been worked upon but give us the formal report, the physical report. Give it to us like other countries have the report. Does Mauritius have a physical report that the Minister could show us and share with the members of the public? How does he reach that figure?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that we have based our assumption on the industry...

Mr Speaker: No debate, question is being answered.

Mr Callichurn: ...that will be heavily impacted by COVID-19 and they are –

- the tourism industry;
- the manufacturing sector, and
- all those small businesses that work together with those two industries.

There is no formal report. To tell the hon. Member frankly, there is no formal report.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ittoo!

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – PHASE II

(No. B/95) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to Phase II of the Metro Express Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Ltd, information as to –

- (a) the amount of funds disbursed as at to date, and
- (b) if any financial assistance has been provided to Larsen and Toubro Ltd during the curfew period and, if so, give details thereof, indicating the source of funding.

(Withdrawn)

INTERCONTINENTAL SLAVERY MUSEUM

(No. B/96) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS SOCIETY OF AUTHORS – ARTISTS – PAYMENTS

(No. B/97) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the *redevances des artistes*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Society of Authors, information as to the quantum of funds collected and disbursed for the year 2019 and since January 2020 to date and payable to the artists, indicating the –

- (a) schedule of payments thereof, and
- (b) rate applicable, indicating –
 - (i) when same was last reviewed, and
 - (ii) if consideration will be given for a review of the 65 cents payable.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 – BUS SHELTERS

(No. B/98) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state if a survey has been carried out thereat to identify the places where the installation of bus shelters are required and, if so, indicate the timeframe set for the installation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

POST-COVID-19 LOCKDOWN – YOUTH ACTIVITIES – ACTION PLAN

(No. B/99) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to youth activities, he will state if any Action Plan is being envisaged in relation thereto post-COVID-19 lockdown.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for his question which enables me to inform the House on actions taken by my Ministry to ensure continuity of services to young people despite COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent sanitary restrictions.

During the lockdown period, my Ministry extended special support to vulnerable young and their families through its Special Outreach and Volunteer Mauritius programmes. Our team assisted Non-Governmental Organisations with the distribution of food packs in different localities. Moreover, physical exercise sessions were organised on a daily basis on the Facebook page of my Ministry. The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Programme also continued through online training and home based participation, as recommended by the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since May 2020, my Ministry has revised its programme of activities and reviewed the delivery methods by maximising the use of digital technology to reach young people as the Youth Centres are still closed. A series of programmes and activities have, thus, been scheduled for the next six months with the main objectives to empower the youth through online training, strengthen family ties and provide psychosocial support and counselling to the young people. The list of activities is being tabled.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that some of the activities have already started and have attracted the active interest of young people. For instance as at date, 408 young people have registered for the online training course being organised by my Ministry on

youth entrepreneurship. The two first online youth concerts known as ‘Le Live’ held on Saturday 30 May 2020 and Saturday 06 June 2020 got more than 18,000 views on Facebook.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

(Interruptions)

Are you serious, hon. Member? You should follow your own question.

Mr Ittoo: I was raising my hand for a supplementary question.

Mr Speaker: Never! You never raise your hand. Okay, I allow you.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. Is there a campaign to make the activities organised by your Ministry known to the public at large and to the youth. If yes, how are the young people supposed to register for the various activities?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, nous utilisons, bien sûr, tout ce qui est *social media* pour la campagne d’information. Je profite de l’occasion pour lancer un appel aux jeunes de la République de Maurice d’aller sur la page Facebook du ministère pour avoir tous les renseignements en ce qu’il s’agit des différentes activités et aussi comment faire pour s’enregistrer et participer aux différentes activités que mon ministère a préparé pour eux.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN

(No. B/100) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the additional amount of unecological materials generated in terms of masks and gloves amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, he will state if an assessment thereof has been made and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the setting up of a waste management plan accordingly.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, l’apparition de la crise du Coronavirus a eu un impact social et économique sans précédent dans presque tous les pays du monde et a mis à l’épreuve la résilience de notre société. Cette urgence de santé publique a exercé et continue d’exercer une pression sans précédent sur de nombreuses activités économiques y compris celles qui sont indispensables non seulement à notre santé mais aussi à notre bonheur, à notre prospérité et à notre bien-être. La protection de vie et des moyens de subsistance est donc au

cœur de toutes les actions et décisions prises par le gouvernement pour faire face à la crise tant au niveau individuel que collectif.

M. le président, une bonne gestion des déchets fait partie des services essentiels fournis à notre société. Il est primordial de prévenir les perturbations dans notre gestion des déchets pour la santé et la sécurité de nos citoyens pour l'environnement et pour l'économie. Par conséquent, notre priorité, durant le confinement et le couvre-feu sanitaire, a été d'assurer une continuité dans les services de gestion des déchets.

Je suis informé par le ministère de la Santé et du Bien-être, qu'en ce qui concerne l'élimination des masques et des gants provenant des hôpitaux et des centres médicaux où les patients du COVID-19 sont traités, ceux-ci sont bien rangés dans des sacs à déchets en plastique jaune et envoyés pour l'incinération à l'hôpital de Brown Séquard. Les masques et les gants des centres de quarantaine sont également envoyés pour être incinérés à l'hôpital de Brown Séquard.

En outre, le ministère de la Santé et du Bien-être envisage de mettre en place une installation nationale de traitement des déchets des soins de santé après une phase de faisabilité du projet une fois que le type de technologie à mettre en œuvre sera finalisé.

M. le président, dans ces circonstances exceptionnelles, aucune évaluation qualitative et quantitative de l'impact des masques et des gants utilisés n'a été possible. Toutefois, des campagnes de sensibilisation ont été diffusées à la télévision concernant l'utilisation et l'élimination appropriée des masques et des gants. Ces campagnes seront poursuivies conjointement avec toutes les parties prenantes afin d'éviter que les masques et les gants usagés ne soient jetés dans les lieux publics. En ce qui concerne la gestion des déchets municipaux soupçonnés de contenir des matières contaminées par le COVID-19, le département de *Occupational Safety and Health Administration, (OSHA)* du ministère du Travail des États-Unis déclare que cela ne nécessite pas de précautions particulières autres que celles déjà utilisées pour protéger les travailleurs, des risques qu'ils rencontrent lors de leur tâche de routine dans la collecte des déchets solides.

Il est à noter que pour les déchets municipaux générés par les ménages dans un certain nombre de pays, à savoir l'Italie, l'Estonie, l'Inde, l'Allemagne et la Turquie, aucune collecte séparée des masques et gants usagés n'est effectué au niveau des ménages. Ceux-ci sont stockés dans des sacs et collectés comme des déchets normaux.

M. le président, conscient des grandes quantités de ces matériaux qui continueront à être générés dans les mois à venir et considérant également toute pandémie future, mon ministère en collaboration avec le ministère de la Santé et du Bien-être et le ministère des Collectivités Locales, de la gestion des catastrophes et des risques envisage de mettre en place un comité interministériel pour étudier l'élaboration d'un plan qui traitera de la question de sensibilisation, de la manipulation, du stockage, de la collecte et de l'élimination, en toute sécurité, des masques et des gants usagés et d'autres matériaux contaminés.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

Ms Bérenger: Merci, M. le président. Pour une meilleure efficience, pourrions-nous savoir de l'honorable ministre de l'Environnement s'il compte accroître les pouvoirs de la Police de l'environnement et est-ce que l'honorable ministre pourrait divulguer le nombre et la nature des contraventions émises par la Police de l'environnement depuis le début de l'année?

Mr Ramano: Donc, l'honorable membre parle des déchets médicaux ou bien des déchets en général?

(Interruptions)

Non, si ce sont des déchets en général, malheureusement la question d'aujourd'hui concerne principalement les déchets médicaux. Mais en ce qui concerne les déchets d'ordre général, je n'ai pas ce renseignement là, mais en ce qui concerne les déchets médicaux, ce que je peux confirmer et aussi rassurer l'honorable membre c'est que la Police de l'environnement est très à cheval en ce qui concerne tout l'aspect *littering* et aussi *illegal dumping*. D'ailleurs, nous sommes en train de travailler sur des différents *Regulations* pour augmenter les pénalités en ce qui concerne l'*illegal dumping* et aussi le *littering*. Mais en ce qui concerne les déchets en général ou bien les déchets médicaux, je n'ai pas les chiffres avec moi en ce qui concerne les contraventions qui ont été entreprises par la Police de l'environnement, mais si l'honorable membre vient de l'avant avec une question substantive, je me ferai un plaisir de lui répondre.

Ms Bérenger: Merci, M. le président. Donc, si je comprends bien, l'honorable ministre de l'Environnement ne viendra pas de l'avant avec des poubelles spécialement dédiées aux équipements sanitaires dans les lieux publics?

Mr Ramano: Comme j'ai dit à l'honorable membre, c'est que toutes les recommandations que nous avons eues et aussi toutes les pratiques qui sont pratiquées dans

tous les pays étrangers, il n'y a pas à ce jour le tri des déchets en ce qui concerne les déchets médicaux, en ce qui concerne les ménages. Mais par contre, en ce qui concerne les déchets médicaux qui sont produits par les hôpitaux, les services hospitaliers ou bien les centres de quarantaine, là, il y a une collecte séparée qui est organisée, mais en ce qui concerne les ménages, non, il n'y a pas de tri des déchets tel quel.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Est-ce que je peux demander au ministre s'il y a une indication au niveau de son ministère en ce qui concerne le nombre de masques qui ont été fabriqués localement et qui ont été utilisés, le nombre global que le gouvernement ou son ministère a estimé *for disposal*?

Mr Ramano: Non, au niveau du ministère de l'environnement, nous ne sommes pas en présence de ces chiffres, mais ce sont des chiffres qui peuvent être communiqués par les autres autorités concernées.

Mr Speaker: We move to the next question!

INFRASTRUCTURAL WORKS – CONTRACTS

(No. B/101) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to infrastructural works, he will give the lists of the ongoing contracts and of those which are awaiting commencement of execution, indicating in each case the –

- (a) contract value thereof, and
- (b) expected impact thereon of the COVID-19 curfew period and aftermath thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question, my very first one.

The COVID-19 pandemic is, indeed, an unprecedented health crisis and a human tragedy that the world is going through since the beginning of March 2020. The Government of Mauritius decided to prioritise the well-being of the population of our economic considerations by imposing a sanitary curfew since 20 March 2020, to limit the spread of the deadly virus. As a consequence, onsite construction activities had to be suspended. Thereafter, following Government's decision to allow a phased resumption of activities in certain key sectors, the construction sector started its activities gradually as from 18 May

2020 and on announcement of the deconfinement with effect from 01 June 2020, activities are almost back to normal now.

The lockdown entails significant economic implications never experienced before. The construction industry, which is a driver of economic growth, is not spared by the crisis. It is expected that stakeholders in the construction sector, will adopt a suitable, sustainable strategy for the successful delivery of projects in order to safeguard the long-term viability of the construction community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that at the level of the Road Development Authority (RDA), several major ongoing projects worth billions of rupees had to be stalled due to the national lockdown. These include, among others, construction of great separated junction at Pont Fer-Jumbo-Dowlut roundabout and A1-M1 Link Road, project value: 4.2 billion; Fly-over across motorway M1 Hillcrest Avenue in Quatre Bornes, project value: 317.6 million.

Construction of A1-A3 Link Road, project value: 294 million; upgrading of B28 road from Deux Frères to Beau Champ, Phase 1 project: 109 million; improvement of bend at Nouvelle Découverte, project value: 83.1 million; construction of Cap Malheureux bypass, project value: 207 million; construction of La Croisette Link Road, project value 93.5 million. In addition, contracts for the following two projects were awarded just prior to the proclamation of the curfew, but works on site have not yet started. Upgrading of Choisy Bridge, Poste La Fayette, project value: 81 million; rehabilitation of Saint Marie Bridge, Bel Ombre, project value: 64 million.

As such, these two projects are not going to have any major impact apart from new completion dates to be mutually agreed between the RDA and the contractors. In addition, just prior to confinement, my Ministry had issued Works Order under the framework agreement for some 79 projects of a total value of 175.5 million for various Ministries/Departments. These projects were put on hold during confinement period. Works have now resumed for these projects. Any request for extension of time with or without costs will be determined on a case-to-case basis. The list of the project awarded under framework agreement is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the projects being implemented by the National Development Unit of my Ministry, the information is also being compiled, as there are hundreds of projects, and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that all projects of the RDA are governed by contract agreement with explicit conditions. Therefore, it is important to follow the procedure laid down therein. Following the announcement of the two weeks lockdown on 19 March 2020, which was subsequently extended to 30 May 2020, the RDA took various steps to protect the interest of the projects and to mitigate future claims while, at the same time, giving the contractors the opportunity to optimise their resources with clear indications from the employer.

Contractors were instructed via a notice to suspend all works on site starting from 20 March 2020 up to the end of the lockdown in line with subclause 8.8 of the FIDIC Red Book 1999. Conditions of contract during suspension, the contractor has the responsibility to protect store and secure such part of the works against any deterioration loss or damage. Contractors, thus, given the opportunity to mitigate losses with regard to their mobilisation and to keep per records thereof.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the FIDIC Red Book 1999, subclause 19.1 '*Force Majeure*' is defined as an exceptional event or circumstances –

- (a) which is beyond a party control, which such party could not have reasonably provided against before entering into the contract which having arisen such party could not reasonably have avoided or overcome, and
- (b) which is substantially attributed to the other party. In line with the above provisions, the RDA issued notices of '*Force Majeure*' to all its contractors as a general rule.

Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you very much, indeed. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether in light of COVID-19, the list of projects will remain the same or there would be prioritisation of projects, because of the economic impact that COVID-19 will likely have on the public finances?

Mr Hurreeram: As I have already answered, Mr Speaker, Sir, all the projects where contracts were already given, have already restarted again and there is a contractual agreement with the contractors. So, we have to pursue with the works on site.

Mr Osman Mahomed: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the COVID-19 confinement will impact on the contract value of these projects because of the lockdown and the likely increase in foreign currency rates? Because we know over the last few weeks,

tourism and textiles are not faring so well, dollar rate has increased considerably. Whether the contracts are fully secured to protect Government's interests against these currency fluctuations?

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Immediately after lifting of the sanitary curfew, the contractors were informed that they could resume work provided that they had the necessary work permit, etc., and the contractors have already notified the RDA of the claims under clause 19 '*Force Majeure*'. However, details are still being awaited. The claims are generally twofold, extension of time and costs associated with extension of time. So, the value of the contract will remain the same.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I will come with a question, maybe about the amount later. In the Budget Speech, provisions have been made to reduce the period of retention money disbursement from 12 months to 6 months. Can I ask the hon. Minister, being given that his Ministry handles a lot of Government projects, whether he has been consulted on this proposition, and whether he has agreed to this and, if so, the rationale behind giving his agreement to this proposition?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question does not relate to the main question.

Mr Speaker: Move on to your next question, hon. Member!

DESROCHES STREET, WARD IV, PORT LOUIS - DRAIN & ROAD SURFACING PROJECT

(No. B/102) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Upgrading of Drain and Road Surfacing Project at Desroches Street in Ward 4, in Port Louis, to be executed by the National Development Unit, he will state the

—

- (a) contract value, and
- (b) contractual start and completion dates thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the NDU is implementing a project for the Upgrading of Drain, Road Surfacing at Desroches Street, Ward IV, Port Louis.

With regard to part (a) of the question, following a bidding exercise, the NDU has appointed a contractor for the execution of the works for an amount of Rs42.9 m., inclusive of VAT, on 25 September 2018.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the contractual start date and completion date were 14 November 2018 and 14 August 2019, respectively. However, works could not start on site as expected way leaves for road closure and road diversion from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit was not obtained. There was also the need for relocation of services, which constituted of CWA pipes, underground CEB, and Mauritius Telecom cables. Moreover, the project was further delayed due to adverse weather condition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to reassure the House that we are doing our very best to cause less inconvenience to the inhabitants of the region. The major works have been completed and the remaining works, that is, part of the drain work and asphaltting of the road, are now expected to be completed by 30 September 2020 because as we all know, the confinement period due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has caused additional delays.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister whose responsibility was it to get the necessary way leave, whether it is the client or was it the contractor's responsibility?

Mr Hurreeram: It was the contractor's responsibility, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, as my hon. colleague knows, the road at Des Roches Street is quite narrow and there is a lot of traffic. So, there have had to be some consultation with the TMRSU, CWA - there was not property concern regarding that particular project. So, we wanted to start the projects with less inconvenience to the inhabitants.

Mr Osman Mahomed: But way leave has nothing to do with traffic. How does traffic impact on way leave? Way leave means you obtain clearances from other authorities to do your work. Can I ask the hon. Minister to clarify what way leave had to do with traffic and vice versa?

Mr Hurreeram: That's more than obvious, Mr Speaker, Sir. This project was to improve the fluidity of the traffic along the road, providing drain and pavement at the same time. We all know that Desroches Street is a one-way street where, very often, motor vehicles get stuck in the existing drain, which represented traffic hazard. So, we couldn't start that work onsite without making sure that we were doing all that it takes to improve security and that we don't indulge the inhabitants into hazardous situations.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, can I ask the hon. Minister what is now the expected completion date, and being given that the contractor is at fault, whether this contract will be

the subject of liquidated damages on behalf of the contractor, because the contractor is clearly at fault?

Mr Hurreeram: I have already said in the first part of my reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the completed date will be by 30 September, and I have never said that the contractor is at fault. All I have said is that we have had delays due to way leave issues. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Move to your next question!

INDEPENDENT POWER PRODUCERS - ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION - COAL USE

(No. B/103) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Independent Power Producers using coal for electricity production, he will, in each case –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –
 - (i) the total tonnage of coal used since 2015 to date on a yearly basis, and
 - (ii) if coal ash was discharged in conformity with the EIA license held, and
- (b) table copy of the Environment Impact Assessment license.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, j'ai été informé que des licences EIA ont été accordées à cinq Producteurs Indépendants d'Electricité pour la construction et l'exploitation des centrales électriques utilisant exclusivement ou partiellement le charbon comme combustible, à savoir –

- a) Omnicane Thermal Energy Operations (La Baraque) Ltd, anciennement connue sous le nom de la « Compagnie Thermique de Savannah Ltée »;
- b) Omnicane Thermal Energy Operations (St Aubin) Limited, anciennement connue sous le nom de la « Compagnie Thermique du Sud Limitée »;
- c) Terragen Ltd, anciennement connue sous le nom de la « Compagnie Thermique de Belle Vue Ltée »;
- d) Alteo Energy Ltd, anciennement connue sous le nom de « FUEL Steam and Power Generation Company Limited »; et

- e) Consolidated Energy Ltd, qui a quand même cessé ses activités en décembre 2018.

Concernant la partie (a)(i) de la question, j'ai été informé par le *Central Electricity Board (CEB)* que la consommation annuelle de charbon par les Producteurs Indépendants d'Electricité depuis 2015, est comme suit –

- a) 2015 – 654,893 tonnes;
- b) 2016 – 695,384 tonnes;
- c) 2017 – 711,860 tonnes;
- d) 2018 – 682,103 tonnes;
- e) 2019 – 625,296 tonnes.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a)(ii) de la question, j'ai été informé qu'en raison de l'utilisation croissante du charbon pour la production d'électricité, un *Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)* a été mis en place sous le Ministère de l'Environnement en septembre 2007 pour examiner les moyens de gérer les cendres de charbon. Les recommandations du rapport ont été approuvées par le Gouvernement le 06 août 2010.

A la suite des recommandations du rapport du *Technical Advisory Committee*, le Ministère des Collectivité Locales qui était alors responsable de tous les sujets ayant trait aux déchets solides et dangereux, a, au mois de mai 2013, demandé aux cinq *Independent Power Producers* de gérer les cendres de charbon conformément aux recommandations du rapport, à savoir, les deux recommandations principales –

- a) limiter l'application des cendres de charbon dans les champs de canne à sucre à un taux de 100 tonnes par hectare, et
- b) appliquer une zone tampon d'au moins 200 mètres entre les sites de stockage et d'utilisation des cendres de charbon, et les cours d'eau incluant les forages.

J'ai été également informé que les rapports de surveillance environnementaux soumis régulièrement par les cinq *Power Producers*, ainsi bien que les suivis indépendants effectués par les officiers de la division de la Gestion des Déchets Solides de mon ministère, démontrent que l'élimination des cendres de charbon se fait conformément aux recommandations formulées par le rapport du *Technical Advisory Committee* sur la Gestion des Cendres de Charbon (2009).

M. le président, avec votre permission, je dépose les informations relatives à la partie (b) de la question concernant l'*EIA* report.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I have two questions. The first one is, can I ask the hon. Minister - I know he says inspections and checks are done regularly - whether those checks and inspections are done randomly, because disposal in certain places like the sugarcane fields and all this, are done sometimes at very odd hours? You know, for people not to see. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether checks are done randomly and, whether as a consequence of this, there have been cases where surprisingly things are not done in conformity with what they are supposed to be doing in terms of tonnage per hectare and all these things?

Mr Ramano: Nous nous tenons aux deux conditions qui ont été imposées par le ministère des Collectivités Locales au mois de mai 2013, c'est-à-dire, que l'application des cendres dans les champs de canne à un taux de 100 tonnes par hectare. Donc, si l'honorable membre a des renseignements précis des cas où il y a violation de ces conditions, j'inviterai l'honorable membre de venir de l'avant et de nous donner des renseignements précis, bien sûr, les officiers de mon ministère prendront les mesures qui s'imposent, mais sinon les *checks* qui sont effectués par les officiers de mon ministère, je peux dire que ces *checks* sont faits de façon régulière et jusqu'à présent nous sommes satisfaits qu'il y a *compliance* en ce qui concerne les conditions.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: B/104.

Mr Speaker: Who is replying to this Question? Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, are you here?

Mr Sawmynaden: I am here. Present!

Mr Speaker: Answer!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – BASIC COMMODITIES – PRICE CONTROL

(No. B/104) **Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the basic commodities, he will state the measures taken to protect the rights of the consumers in relation to the control of the prices and supplies thereof amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, during the COVID-19 lockdown period, more than 1,600 complaints were received from consumers for the Hotline 185, the Citizens Support Portal and the Consumer Rights Mobile App, and by email against traders who resorted to unfair and abusive trade practices and profiteering.

No stone were left unturned to deal with these complaints and to ensure consumer protection as well as the supply of basic commodities. Officers of my Ministry have been on the frontline during the sanitary curfew in order to safeguard consumer rights by ensuring that prices are being duly affixed, prescribed prices are being complied with and that there is adequate supply of essential commodities on the market as required under the various consumer protection legislation.

As at 04 June 2020, 7,016 trade premises have been visited and 2,723 contraventions have been established mainly for non-affixing of prices and selling above prescribed prices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to also point out that, even before the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Mauritius, my Ministry brought face masks and hand sanitizers under price control with a maximum mark-up of 15% as from 20 June 2020, so as to make them affordable to the public at large.

Following massive complaints about the prices of onions and potatoes, my Ministry, after consultation with the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, fixed the price for these two widely used products at Rs20 per half kg as per the prices had gone up to unacceptable levels.

Thirdly, following further representations about disproportionate prices for a number of other essential commodities, my Ministry further brought 12 additional widely used items under price control with effect from 25 April 2020. I am tabling a list thereof. Mr Speaker, Sir, so as to further protect the rights of consumers, the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act has been amended for the COVID-19 (Miscellaneous Provision) Act to enable the issue of fixed penalty notice to traders who contravene in law.

As regards supplies, whether for rice, flour, LPG or fuel, I maintain that there is no in short supply of any of these products. It is true that during the early days of the lockdown, there was panic buying and overconsumption which created a temporary artificial shortage, particularly for LPG. However, adequate corrective measures were taken and the situation has been stabilised. I confirm that stocks levels are under control, overseas supplies are

arriving as expected and both the supply distribution chain and retail are working satisfactorily.

Mrs Tour: Can the hon. Minister advise if the measures thereof are being envisaged post-curfew lockdown period?

Mr Sawmynaden: Yes, I can confirm to the hon. Member. Yes, the Consumer Affairs Unit is presently on the ground every day to check whether all these regulations that we have put in place are being well-maintained.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour! Next Question!

MARJOLAIN BRIDGE, CITE LA CURE – RECONSTRUCTION

(No. B/105) Mrs J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed widening of the Marjolain Bridge in Cité la Cure by the National Development Unit, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. First, let me point out that this has been a long-standing problem affecting the inhabitants of Cité La Cure, and thanks to the hon. Prime Minister who was also the Minister of Finance and Economic Development...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Hurreeram: ...and responsible for the NDU in the various Governments, and who understood the urgency to resolve this issue that necessary funds were allocated to implement this project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the project presently being implemented by the NDU is titled ‘Reconstruction of Marjolain Bridge and Construction of Drain at Marjolain Royal Road’.

The scope of works for the project comprises the following –

- Demolishing of the existing bridge deck and wall;
- Raising of the bridge deck by 1.3 metres from its original level;
- Cleaning of approximately 150 metres of the river;
- Construction of road side drains;

- Providing rock revetment along part of the river near the bridge;-
- Reprofilng of about 70 metres of the road, and
- Relocation of the existing CWA, WMA and Telecom services.

As at present, all major works have already been completed and the bridge as well as the road have been opened to users as from 27 May 2020.

The only works that remain to be completed are the relocation of some services, namely, CWA pipes and WMA pipes which are minor pending issues which are not affecting users of the bridge and the road.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour! Next Question!

ATHLETE ASSISTANCE SCHEME – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/106) 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 Athlete Assistance Scheme, he will –

- (a) state the eligibility criteria for an elite athlete to benefit thereunder and
- (b) give the list of the athletes eligible thereunder.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, the Athlete Assistance Scheme is a result-oriented monthly financial package granted to an elite athlete who has recorded an outstanding performance at an international competition and who has the potential to improve his or her performance within a given period of time. I wish to point out that the financial assistance provided is not a salary. The exact quantum assistance within a category is determined by the importance of the medal won, results recorded, minima achieved, number of participating countries, number of participants, training requirements and ranking in accordance with technical criteria of the respective sports disciplines.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that this Scheme is a very transparent one and the conditions attached to it are publicly available on my Ministry's Website, together with the list of beneficiaries. I am tabling for the benefit of the House the eligibility criteria and the general conditions set for an athlete to benefit from the above Scheme and a list of athletes who are benefiting thereof.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Can the hon. Minister state whether there are athletes who don't benefit from the Scheme anymore and, if so, why?

Mr Toussaint: Yes, indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, the list is reviewed and for this period there are some six athletes who no more benefit from the Scheme as they have not been recommended by their respective federations. There are three athletes whose assistance have been withheld because of non-submission of the quarterly reports and we are still waiting for these quarterly reports so as to see if they can continue to benefit from the Scheme or not.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mrs Tour: Can the hon. Minister advise if there will be a review of that list of Athlete Assistance Scheme in the future?

Mr Toussaint: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned in the National Sports and Physical Activity Policy, *il y a la possibilité de revoir le Scheme pour le rendre beaucoup plus dynamique et aussi pour le rendre beaucoup plus simple et facile pour nos athlètes.*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have to inform you that Parliamentary Question No. B/120 has been withdrawn.

Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL 2020

(NO. III OF 2020)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 (No. III of 2020).

Question again proposed.

(3.27 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am addressing this august Assembly with an overwhelming sense of pride today. The Budget 2020-2021 presented by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, will without any doubt leave the mark on history.

- (a) The budgetary exercise done in a moment of great worldwide turmoil and crisis.
- (b) This Budget shows that this Government stands true to its commitment towards the nation.
- (c) This Budget shows that this Government stands true to its commitment towards the nation.

Our New Normal: The Economy of Life translates a perfect balance that will allow our Republic to pursue its economic development while at the same time, ascertaining that our Mauritian society continues to flourish in a context where social justice, compassion, discipline and empowerment remain key values.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to congratulate my colleague for presenting his maiden Budget Speech, the first of this Government since its clear and renewed mandate in November last.

Today, the whole world is in consultation on how to adapt to the COVID-19 situation.

- (a) The ongoing pandemic will change how we live, how we work, how we learn, how we do business and some are even foreseeing major alterations to the conventional global supply chains.
- (b) We are indeed at a crossroad and this year's Budget takes place under exceptional circumstances.

Let me seize this opportunity to extend my personal gratitude to the hon. Prime Minister for having taken bold, comprehensive and coordinated actions in dealing with the pandemic.

- (a) His leadership has been instrumental in achieving the result that we all know.
- (b) I wish here to remind the House that this Government has been closely monitoring the evolution of the COVID-19 situation from the very beginning, as early as January this year.

- (c) We have indeed been able to drastically curb the outbreak predictions calculated by International instances.
- (d) We sadly registered 10 casualties and our thoughts and prayers go towards the bereaved families.
- (e) Difficult but necessary measures were taken. All these actions were guided by one core consideration: the security and welfare of each and every citizen of our Republic.
- (f) Sanitary decisions and guidelines were not taken in isolation. The High Level Committee chaired by our Prime Minister on a daily basis also anticipated their repercussions on the very livelihoods of our citizens.
- (g) All these issues were addressed in a timely manner. The sanitary curfew which was put in place by hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth was an absolute necessity.

I will refrain from stating that hon. Members from the other side of the House are tending to be wise after the event, but the truth is that many of them are trying to milk out some political gain out of the whole situation.

Yesterday, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was stating in his speech that the Government was reluctant to stop flights.

Let me remind him, and the House, that in its surveillance strategy, Mauritius was among the first countries in the world to review, to impose quarantine, and later on, stop flights with China.

We did not hesitate to apply the same measures even before other countries and regions were flagged as high risk by the WHO. We were again among the first countries in the world to set up efficient quarantine facilities. Our contact tracing allowed us to curb down the potential outbreak. The Government acted with promptitude, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I guess our management of the situation is giving blurred vision to some Members of the Opposition who in their allocutions now downplay the ongoing pandemic situation.

The very fact that all of us are sitting here in this august Assembly is testimony to our efficient management of the ongoing pandemic unlike some who kept this House closed for some nine months on purely political and *cause causer* grounds. We devised a strategy

overnight to allow Parliament to meet while the pandemic is ongoing. This is a Government that works in the favour of democracy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we will, of course, face more complex challenges ahead, but we are in this for the long haul. We can only succeed if we continue to work together with the population

This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been conceived with a sense of seriousness, as well as short and long term planning. Our healthcare workers and frontline officers have worked day and night and have given their best to keep us safe. Their battle was not only on the COVID-19 front. Even during the sanitary curfew period, they continued to offer normal services to those in need of medical care. Just imagine for one moment the stress on these courageous men and women working among COVID positive patients. They have put their health and that of their families at stake for the country. They are indeed true heroes. This patriotic act has not gone unnoticed. I, therefore, once more congratulate the Government and the Minister of Finance for the Rs15,000 allocation given to the hospital staff and Police Officers mobilised during the confinement period.

Mauritius is probably the only country in the world where medical front line staffs were placed in quarantine after their initial shifts. We should, of course, take into consideration the degree of exposition to the deadly virus each staff member faces.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to place on record the Prime Minister's and this Government's unparalleled efforts to make sure that our health care personnel, as well as other officers in the front line were duly equipped to face the ongoing pandemic.

With disrupted air traffic, closed borders worldwide, and rocketing demands for PPE and medical equipment, we still managed to upgrade our existing preparedness level in the wake of this new threat, and beyond.

We are also thankful to friendly countries, NGOs, International Organisations, community groups, enterprises and many volunteers who have stepped forward. Everyone has had something to offer, and every action has made a difference in combatting the invisible enemy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if all goes well, we may have the first testing of a vaccine in people in the coming weeks, but this is a very optimistic timescale. Manufactured vaccines that are safe and effective are many months and years away, maybe 2021 or beyond.

In the meantime, the hon. Minister of Finance has enumerated many corrective measures and incentives to keep the country afloat so as to enhance the livelihoods of our citizens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are deep structural shifts taking place in the world today. All nations, big or small, will have to devise strategies and mobilise their people to navigate these changes and turbulence. There is no completely risk free way of lifting total lockdown, but we must mitigate the risks as much as we can. In spite of all our progress, the virus has not gone away. It continues to pose a significant threat to health and if we move too quickly or without proper care, it could run out of control very quickly. We should always bear in mind that we have to live this situation.

Continued high compliance with restrictions that are in place at any time, together with hand washing, cough hygiene, physical distancing and wearing a face mask, will continue to be essential. COVID-19 will not be the last challenge we will face. When this passes, we will continue to face the long term structural challenges of an ageing population, technological disruption, financial strains and climate change.

A responsible Government must ensure that the nation has the resources to meet these challenges, so that present and future generations of Mauritians can continue to thrive.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now elaborate on some of the measures announced by the hon. Minister of Finance; measures that will allow our country to weather the storms ahead, while shielding our citizens from adverse effects. One of them consists of being self-sufficient, particularly when it comes to our local consumption –

- (a) This current Budget has rightly set out a panoply of measures that will boost local food production and Mauritian enterprises;
- (b) More land will be made available for cultivation under the National Agri-Food Development Programme;
- (c) The Development Bank of Mauritius will besides make loans available to companies of this sector, that have suffered during the pandemic;
- (d) The sugar sector has also been taken onboard.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this same vein of protecting local enterprises, extensive support has been forwarded to our Small and Medium Enterprises –

- (a) Their survival is essential for they employ thousands and have a significant contribution to our economy;
- (b) The Made In Moris label will be given its *lettres de noblesse*. Government will facilitate local enterprises in complying with the label.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Tourism Industry has been directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic –

- (a) This Budget has rightly elaborated various measures to accompany the sector during challenging times. It also paves the way for new avenues which will need to be explored now that the very landscape of the industry has been altered;
- (b) We have been able to successfully prevent a massive and uncontrolled outbreak of COVID-19 in Mauritius;
- (c) Our sanitary protocols are robust and proven;
- (d) These are tangible assets for our destination and will certainly influence decisions when tourists will start to travel again.

The construction sector, Mr Speaker, Sir, will continue to drive our Republic towards the path of progress –

- (a) In these testing times, many doubted this Government's ability to pursue its vision, that is, a modern island that lives up to the aspirations of its citizens;
- (b) Some R 40 billion will be invested for the realisation of new infrastructural projects and continued modernisation of the facilities available island wide, instead of handing over stimulus packages to few that we all know.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the construction of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam is yet another example of Government's will to bring development in each and every corner of our island -

- (a) It is also testimony of the continued modernisation of our water supply system;
- (b) I am confident, that unlike the initial Bagatelle Dam we inherited from the past and had to completely rehabilitate, the Rivière des Anguilles Dam will bear no *fitte*. We still remember the budget proof that, in the past, has been;

- (c) It will on the contrary better the lives of thousands of people and this is what exactly a Government is mandated to do.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Boolell is accusing this Government of going on a spending spree. This Government makes sure that each penny invested is put to good use. The episodes of *réservoir fitte* and biscuit like crumbling ring roads are well behind us. There is no spending spree, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are rather moving towards more judicious investment for the benefit of the whole nation, investment that will, in turn, generate jobs both directly and indirectly. Of course, we should continue to invest; they are talking of *éléphant blanc*. What should we do? Stop investing for the country and fill coffers instead. They said the same thing when Sir Anerood Jugnauth gave life to the Ebene Cybercity. Imagine if he had not come up with this gain changing development for the country. Let us keep the term 'spending spree' for those who spent hefty amounts on cigars, Rolls Royce, high hand suits - mine was in La Flora village, Pierre Cardin like tailor-made but not the authentic one from London. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the situation.

This Government has always had a clear vision for the country that of continuous progress and development. These essential components have all along the way, evolved with strong and renewed social measures. The Basic Retirement Pension, that is, a monthly benefit of nine thousand rupees is guaranteed and will remain for all individuals aged 60 and above.

The introduction of the new concept *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* will inject more justice in the contribution system.

To further assist our elderly, the House will note that this year, some 130 thousand senior citizens and Mauritians from vulnerable groups were vaccinated against seasonal flu.

Allow me to point out that before the COVID-19 situation, an average of around 50 thousand Mauritians took advantage of the vaccination campaign. This current Budget makes provision for the acquisition of 150 thousand vaccines to satisfy the growing demand.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now elaborate on the measures pertaining to my Ministry.

With the pandemic spreading from country to country, borders closing, supplies drying up, consumers are asking a tough question: "Why can't we produce our own?" –

- (a) It's a question that began with PPE supplies and COVID-19 testing mechanisms, and one that will continue long into this pandemic's aftermath, as a vaccine is found;

- (b) The Minister of Finance, with farsightedness, mentioned that the Mauritius Investment Corporation will invest in the production of pharmaceutical products;
- (c) This will promote the development of a sustainable local pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity which will protect particularly fragile markets like ours in the face of other pandemics;
- (d) Such an innovative measure will also help in job creation in Mauritius and we can even become a leader in this sector in the region;
- (e) For my colleagues on the other side of the House who have indulged in cheap comments around this proposed measure, allow me to highlight that the sector will be properly regulated;
- (f) Any serious and any competent company which wishes to operate in this new industry will be given due consideration.

The House will also note that my Ministry is already working closely with the State Law Office in the preparation of regulations so as to fully proclaim the Human Tissue Removal, Preservation and Transplant Act of 2018.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the last two decades, our healthcare expenditure has grown rapidly but, as a caring Government, there has never been any compromise on that aspect.

The hon. Prime Minister stands testimony to this immutable line of conduct and we have all witnessed it in his management of the COVID-19 situation.

While recognising health as a basic human right, Government acknowledges that good health is a key driver to economic growth and investment in human development.

For these critical reasons, despite the unprecedented economic contraction, Government is sustaining the provision of free health services to the population.

For the current financial year, an envelope of Rs12 billion has been allocated to my Ministry.

This amount represents 6.3 per cent of total Government expenditure. Per capita public expenditure on health during Financial Year 2020-2021 will be of more than Rs9,000. I here wish to point out that last year, attendances at our healthcare institutions stood at Rs5.2

m. My Ministry is in the process of setting up state of art infrastructure around the island to cater for the whole population.

Mr Speaker Sir, it is alarming to note that as per latest statistics available, more than 2,300 new cancer cases were diagnosed. This is why Government made it a priority to set up a new specialised Cancer hospital. The new Cancer Centre that will cost around Rs1.1 billion will accommodate around 200 in-patients. It will also have its own Radiology and Radiotherapy Departments, Laboratory, Nuclear Medicine Department, Isolation Rooms, Stem Cell Transplant Unit, amongst others and will be equipped with High Tech medical equipment.

My Ministry is also coming up with the construction of a new Eye Hospital to replace the existing one at Moka. The new Eye Hospital will be constructed at Le Réduit Triangle at a cost of around 21 million US Dollars.

Mr Speaker Sir, the setting up of a state of the art full-fledged Teaching Hospital in Flacq will enhance the delivery and quality care of the hospital and also provide specialised health care services. The evaluation exercise for this project of around Rs4 billion is under process and works are expected to start towards the beginning of 2021.

As per the Health Statistics Report of 2018, more than 1300 patients are undergoing dialysis in various private and public hospitals in Mauritius. Hence, my Ministry has taken the decision to construct a new full-fledged Renal Transplant Unit at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital so that more patients could have a dialysis free life and eliminate the issue of renal transplant. My Ministry is presently working on a concept design and this project will be funded by the Government of India.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for a state of the art Health Laboratory to cater for such outbreaks. Currently, there is one Central Health Laboratory (CHL) at Victoria Hospital.

To cater for the growing needs of the country and enhance the current standards of safety and compliance, quality and the criteria for accreditation, my Ministry is embarking on the construction of a new National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) Centre. This will become a reference laboratory for the region with international norms and standards. The estimated cost of the project is of approximately Rs900 m. and the design has already been worked out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, as well as the vulnerability to emerging infectious diseases such as COVID-19, will place additional pressure on the current capacity of the health system.

Appropriate diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up for these diseases will require laboratory services that are accurate and timely which can be achieved through a modern system of Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).

The COVID-19 situation has also highlighted some issues that had to be addressed regarding our stock of medicines, the storage of pharmaceutical products, medical disposables and other medical equipment and instruments in a suitable, appropriate and adequate warehouse with a controlled temperature which is crucial for its effectiveness.

However, the actual capacity and condition of the warehouse located at Plaine Lauzun, is not sufficient and adequate to store drugs for the whole Island. Hence, my Ministry will initiate action for the construction of a modern warehouse with international standard for the storage of essential drugs, medical consumables, non-medical products and Medical Equipment. My Ministry is in the process of identifying suitable land to implement the project which would cost around Rs700 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to reduce workload in the five regional hospitals and to decrease patients' waiting time, my Ministry is further decentralising the services being offered at these facilities, by the setting up of additional Mediclinics and Community Health Centres at several locations around the island. Provision of some Rs152 m. has been made for the construction of new Mediclinics at –

- Quartier Militaire;
- Stanley;
- Bel Air, and
- Coromandel.

Construction works for the four Mediclinics have already started and the project duration is 18 Calendar months.

Community Health Centres will be constructed in the following regions –

- St Francois Xavier;

- Roche Bois;
- Pointe aux Sables, and
- Grand' Baie.

With regard to St Francois Xavier, Roche Bois and Pointe aux Sables Community Health Centres, a bidding exercise will be launched shortly. Tender has already been launched for Grand' Baie Community Health Centre and the closing date is 17 June 2020.

Furthermore, two additional Mediclinics and four Area Health Centres are in the pipeline and same will be funded by the Government of India as follows –

- (i) Cap Malheureux Area Health Centre;
- (ii) Chemin Grenier Mediclinic;
- (iii) Henrietta Area Health Centre;
- (iv) Plaine Magnien Area Health Centre;
- (v) Grand Bois Mediclinic, and
- (vi) New Grove Area Health Centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Finance Bill 2020 also provides for amendments on the conduct of Medical Entry Examinations and Pre- Registration Entry Examinations. On the coming into operation of the proposed amendments to the Medical Council Act, a person will no longer require to undergo an entry examination before being registered as a pre-registration trainee.

In 2013, a requirement of 21 points at HSC results was introduced in the Medical Council Act for temporary registration and the Medical Registration Examination was introduced again. No provision was made for those who had undertaken medical studies before 2013, hence the need to introduce the Pre-Registration Entry Examinations in 2016.

Since duration of medical studies is 5 to 6 years and now on, only students with a minimum of 21 points at HSC level are eligible for registration, the Pre-Registration Entry Examinations can be revoked. As for the Medical Registration Examination, they will be conducted by an Independent Body of International Repute on behalf of the Medical Council.

Mr Speaker Sir, NCDs are now recognized as leading threats to economic and health systems development and Mauritius is no exception. Despite all measures undertaken by my

Ministry to decrease the prevalence of non-communicable diseases and the decrease in mortality due to diabetes from 24.1% in 2015 to 22.1% in 2019, Mauritius still ranks among the first countries where prevalence of diabetes is the highest. I welcome the doubling of the existing tax on sugar as a measure to encourage reducing sugar contents in our products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, approximately 73 per cent of the population's healthcare needs to be provided by public health sector and the remaining 27 per cent by the private sector. This budget makes provision for Medical, hospital and dental services to be zero-tax rated, therefore taking into consideration the affordability of health services.

Moreover, I welcome the measures announced in this Budget 2020-21 to include a Health and Wellness Centre at the Côte d'Or Data Technology Park.

Mr Speaker, Sir, mosquito-transmitted diseases like Malaria, Chikungunya and Dengue pose an enormous economic and social burden and has direct impact on the Health, Tourism, and other economic sectors in general.

- (a) Early case detection is facilitated by universal and free access to health services and extensive network of health care units.
- (b) Planning forward, to effectively control infectious diseases, as announced in the Budget 2020-21, a National Centre for Disease Control and Prevention would be set up.

Allow me to remind the House that this Government also came up with the new Quarantine Act. A convenient legal tool that will allow competent authorities to effectively curb down potential disease outbreaks within our Republic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, consumers have the right to be aware of the nutritious value of the food they purchase and consume so that it is safe, healthy and of high quality.

- (a) Government has the responsibility to protect the health and welfare of consumers.
- (b) In Mauritius, Food Safety control is effected under different legislations, with my Ministry having the main responsibility to carry out such control.
- (c) Similar to labelling of Halal foods, I welcome the introduction of mandatory labelling to indicate vegetarian food products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is, at present, finalising the development of a five-year Health Sector Strategic Plan for the period 2020-2024.

- (a) Allow me to mention that in developing this Strategy, broad consultations with various stakeholders from both the public sector and the private sector were held.
- (b) The World Health Organisation has provided unflinching support to develop this five-year Strategic Plan.
- (c) The Plan takes into account Government's Vision 2030, Government Programme 2020-2024 and Budget proposals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before concluding, I wish to point out the following –

- (a) While we, on this side of the House, are tirelessly working for the benefit of each and every Mauritian, some irresponsible Members on the other side of the House are instilling fear and uncertainty in the country, and all this based on unfounded, erroneous and fabricated arguments.
- (b) This Government is being wrongly accused of mismanaging funds allocated by the Central Bank.
- (c) Some tend to forget, back in the 1980's this same Bank of Mauritius was at its lowest ever.
- (d) Reserves could only cover a couple of weeks. It is thanks to the vision and the hard work of Sir Anerood Jugnauth that the Bank of Mauritius has grown into such a robust institution.
- (e) Today, we should be grateful that back then, this visionary leader undertook what is turning out to be a lifeline to our current and future generations.
- (f) This Government is working with the same sense of responsibility.
- (g) We should also pay tribute to the men and women at the Central Bank who have contributed to maintain solidity of our National Reserves.
- (h) Mr Speaker, Sir, similarly, this Government with a visionary and dynamic Prime Minister at its helm, will also leave its mark in History. Years on from now, future generations will remember our management of this unprecedented

situation and how we took necessary steps to keep the country on the tracks of progress.

Those who genuinely work for this country have no time to ponder on such hallucinations and fantasies, coming from someone who only has experience in managing coffers and who has been ousted by electorate on two consecutive elections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is working relentlessly to address the many challenges ahead and I am confident that we will not falter from our mission.

Our reassurances are not based on mere words, concrete actions are already here and this current Budget outlines the way forward.

I, therefore, endorse the Budget 2020 -2021.

Going forward, I would like to assure the hon. Members that we will continue to invest in new healthcare infrastructure and facilities, to ensure that proper health care continues to be accessible and meets the needs of the population.

I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Bérenger!

(4.03 p.m.)

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci, M. le président. M. le président, je m'adresse, aujourd'hui, à vous pour mon premier discours, en tant que députée de la Circonscription No. 16, en tant que jeune, en tant que femme, en tant que mère, en tant que citoyenne de l'Ile Maurice et de la planète terre.

Permettez-moi, donc, d'abord de saluer et de remercier les électeurs et électrices de ma Circonscription de Vacoas/Floréal pour leur confiance. Je m'efforcerai de les représenter dignement et de servir mon pays en restant fidèle aux valeurs qui m'ont été inculquées.

M. le président, je regrette que malgré ma requête, les dispositions nécessaires n'aient pu être prises pour permettre aux sourds et malentendants de suivre les débats, et je tiens à leur exprimer ma solidarité.

M. le président, ce budget s'inscrit en pleine crise sanitaire mondiale. Cette crise n'est pas analogique avec celle de 2008. Nous sommes dans la remise en cause de la mondialisation même. Nous sommes, à un moment, où le cliché, faire de la politique

autrement, réchauffer à toutes les sauces par certains, à tel point qu'il en aura perdu son sens. Aujourd'hui, cette expression acquiert un sens réel.

Je vais, dans les minutes qui me sont allouées, parler des différents thèmes cruciaux à être abordés, selon moi, pour que nous traversions cette crise, en tant que peuple et en tant que pays. Il ne peut exister d'économie durable sans protection sociale et sanitaire des populations et de l'environnement. Ce principe de base est incarné par les 17 objets du développement durable adoptés en 2015 par l'ONU et trouvent, aujourd'hui, sa traduction concrète et dramatique dans la crise du COVID-19. Les systèmes de santé sont fragilisés, les inégalités sociales, économiques et de genres augmentent. S'aligner sur ces objectifs est d'autant plus important pour sortir de cette crise et poser les bases d'un avenir meilleur.

Qu'en est-il d'abord du bien-être de l'enfant et de la famille ? R 15 milliards sont alloués dans le budget pour la rénovation des écoles, mais il faudrait d'abord faire fonctionner les structures, avant de mettre autant d'emphasis sur les infrastructures. Il faut s'attaquer au contenu plutôt qu'à la façade. Investir dans l'être humain ! Voilà, le projet auquel nous devons nous atteler ! Encore plus, après la COVID-19, où davantage d'enfants sont en difficulté économique et ont besoin de soutien et d'accompagnement scolaire. Fournir la connexion Internet aux ménages démunis pour qu'ils puissent utiliser la tablette qui leur ait été fournie est une priorité. Investir dans les programmes qui développent les habiletés sociales, ou former les enseignants à la discipline positive¹ est une priorité pour le bien-être de nos enfants.

R 12 milliards seront investies dans le secteur de la santé, mais aucune mention n'est faite pour la santé mentale, aucune mention des enfants consommateurs de substance. Pas plus tard qu'hier, un enfant de 11 ans a été arrêté avec de la drogue synthétique. La drogue est un enjeu prioritaire qu'arrêtant un *health issue* et ne doit pas être considéré comme un acte criminel en ce qu'il s'agit des enfants.

Les recherches montrent que la dépression et le taux de suicide chez les jeunes est en hausse. Le ratio des psychologues en milieu scolaire est beaucoup trop faible actuellement, selon les experts. Un pour 4,500 dans les écoles. Etoffer les équipes des psychologues, psychiatres et pédopsychiatres et investir dans la santé mentale pour avoir des citoyens équilibrés et une économie stable est une priorité. Renforcer les équipes de la CDU et les former est une priorité, quand on sait que 463 cas de maltraitance infantile ont été rapportés

entre le 20 mars et le 13 mai dernier. Agir à titre préventif et permettre aux parents de bénéficier eux aussi d'une formation à l'éducation bienveillante est une priorité.

L'avenir économique de notre pays dépend de l'épanouissement de nos enfants dans le présent. L'Ile Maurice est signataire de plusieurs conventions concernant les droits des enfants et nous sommes tenus de les respecter. Et pourtant, plus de dix ans que le *Children's Bill* se fait attendre!

En ce qui concerne la violence domestique, j'accueille favorablement le fait de rendre obligatoire le *Perpetrators Rehabilitation Programme* et la volonté de renforcer la protection aux victimes. Dans ce sens, je suggère que les officiers de police fassent des patrouilles régulières chez ceux qui bénéficient de *Protection Orders* pour s'assurer que ces derniers soient bien respectés.

M. le président, 88.8% des victimes de violence domestique sont des femmes et dans la majorité des cas, leur dépendance économique les empêche de quitter leur conjoint violent. Je proposerai donc que le *Domestic Violence Act* soit amendé et que 10 jours de congés payés soient attribués aux victimes de violence domestique, comme cela est le cas en Nouvelle Zélande et qu'un accompagnement psychologique leur soit proposé.

M. le président, la cause féminine est intimement liée à celle de l'environnement. Les études montrent que le réchauffement climatique affecte les plus vulnérables en premier et malheureusement, les femmes en font partie de par les facteurs socio-économiques et culturels et le budget ne prévoit rien dans ce cas particulier.

M. le président, c'est avec regret que j'ai assisté ici même, il y a 2 semaines aux votes d'un certain nombre de lois liberticides. Cependant, il y a des lois que ce gouvernement ne pourra jamais amender et ce sont bien les lois de la nature. Si nous ne changeons pas notre rapport à la nature, il y aura non-seulement encore des épidémies mais nous irons droit vers le désastre. Le siècle dernier a été marqué par la compétition, l'individualisme et la consommation. Ce siècle-ci doit absolument être marqué par la modération, le partage et la coalition. Coalition entre gouvernements, PME, ONG, citoyens pour parvenir à la transition écologique.

C'est pourquoi dans les circonstances que l'on sait aujourd'hui, ce budget était l'occasion de considérer la crise écologique en même temps que la relance économique. La crise sanitaire ne devrait pas nous faire oublier la crise écologique. Bien au contraire, la crise sanitaire a été favorisée par d'autres crises, y compris la crise écologique. Il est impératif de

revoir notre manière d’habiter l’espace et de cohabiter avec des êtres vivants de cette terre. Si on enferme des animaux, si on fait de la surpopulation dans les élevages, nous créons les conditions de fabrication des virus. Si nous détruisons la nature qui nous entoure, nous nous détruirons avec elle.

Le budget annonce quelques mesures en ce qui concerne la politique de développement durable mais la parole n’est pas reliée à l’acte. Le budget prévoit un pays avec une bonne qualité d’air et l’introduction d’un *Air Quality Index*. Mais quelles mesures seront prises concrètement pour améliorer la qualité de cet air? Combien de sanctions ont été prises depuis le début de l’année contre les propriétaires des véhicules qui crachent chaque jour leur fumée noire sur nos routes et contre les usines polluantes? Des milliers d’arbres sont détruits pour faire place à du béton et au métro. Alors que l’on sait que les arbres purifient notre air et qu’ils sont nos principaux alliés dans le combat contre le réchauffement climatique. Où est la cohérence, M. le président? J’aimerais rappeler que le MMM, au gouvernement, avait déjà favorisé à l’époque, la mise sur pied de stations mobiles pour évaluer la qualité de l’air et avait introduit l’essence sans plomb et le diesel allégé en soufre pour ainsi améliorer la qualité de l’air. L’OMS estime aujourd’hui à 6,5 millions de morts chaque année dans le monde dû à la pollution de l’air. Il faut donc agir.

M. le président, le budget prévoit 34 projets de construction pour un investissement de 62 milliards. Le secteur de la construction est présenté comme étant, je cite –

« Le poumon de la relance »

Et je suis tombée des nues en entendant l’honorable ministre de l’Environnement s’en réjouir hier dans son discours. Est-ce qu’à travers le béton que l’honorable ministre entend promouvoir le développement durable? Le budget ne permet pas la promotion de bâtiments verts, de bâtiments écoresponsables. Je fais donc un appel pour que la relance à travers le secteur de la construction ne se fasse pas au détriment de l’environnement. Pour que les grands chantiers fassent plutôt place aux chantiers d’isolation, de rénovation, des mises aux normes énergétiques, il y a là un potentiel de création d’emplois.

Aucune mention n’est faite non plus de l’*Environmentally Sensitive Areas Bill (ESA Bill)* alors que l’emphase mise sur la construction risque de rajouter encore plus de pression sur les terres agricoles et les zones sensibles. Pour encourager les constructions, le gouvernement prévoit d’amender l’*Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal Act* en catimini pour restreindre ceux qui auront le droit de faire appel des décisions du ministère de

l'environnement concernant les *EIA*. Je dis bien en catimini car cette mesure ne figurait pas dans le discours du budget. Elle est dans l'annexe au discours du budget.

Le gouvernement cherche-t-il à empêcher les citoyens engagés dans la protection de notre environnement et de notre littoral d'utiliser la voie légale pour adresser leurs contestations? Tout citoyen doit pouvoir saisir les tribunaux pour contester une décision administrative qui les affectent ; que ce soit les habitants d'Albion pour contester le projet CT Power pour les habitants de Pomponette pour contester un projet d'hôtel. Faute d'avoir un organisme indépendant qui serait chargé d'assurer le respect des lois concernant l'environnement comme suggéré dans le dernier manifeste électoral du MMM, ce sont les citoyens qui doivent pouvoir assurer ce rôle de chien de garde et je vois donc d'un très mauvais œil ce changement dans la législation. De plus, l'agrandissement indéfini du parc hôtelier ne va pas de pair non plus avec le développement durable qui est préconisé dans le budget. Nous aurons à faire à des touristes de plus en plus avertis, écologiquement parlant et qui ne voudront pas rester enfermer dans leurs hôtels, mais qui ont soif de découvrir, qui veulent découvrir aux vivants; des poissons, une île Maurice propre et préservée, une nature florissante. Pouvons-nous aujourd'hui offrir tout cela aux touristes qui viendront bientôt nous visiter ? Nous avons une occasion en or de réinventer notre développement foncier et de promouvoir le tourisme vert. En effet, favoriser l'authenticité, les *eco lodges* ou autres formes d'habitats respectueux de la nature est aujourd'hui essentiel.

M. le président, 215 millions sont destinés à la protection de nos plages et lagons mais cela ne se fera pas sans la pratique de la pêche raisonnable, la création d'aire marine protégée et la limitation des passages de bateaux. Aussi je ne vois malheureusement rien prévoyant le traitement des eaux usées pour desservir les régions prioritaires de la zone côtière et ainsi protéger nos lagons. Ces mesures auraient un impact direct sur la santé de la barrière corallienne qui demeure la protection la plus efficace contre l'érosion côtière. Je salue le fait de condamner l'utilisation de sacs en plastique mais je déplore le manque de mesures pour promouvoir les alternatives au plastique, telles que le verre, les matières recyclées, réutilisables ou recyclables.

Je dois aussi faire ressortir le problème de la mise en application de nos lois environnementales. La police de l'environnement doit absolument être plus actif et voir ces pouvoirs être accrus. Ou alors pourquoi ne pas responsabiliser nos citoyens et leur permettre de prendre part au maintien du respect de nos lois environnementales. En effet, le ministre de l'environnement a aussi encouragé dans son discours hier les Mauriciens et Mauriciennes à

devenir des éco-citoyens. Mais comme dit précédemment, encore faut-il que le droit à agir pour protéger l'environnement soit reconnu et non davantage diminuer.

M. le président, le programme gouvernemental présenté en début d'année annonçait la mise en place d'un nouveau projet de loi sur le changement climatique et d'un conseil national de la jeunesse pour l'environnement que nous attendions avec impatience. Aucune mention n'y est faite dans le budget. Ma génération est la dernière à pouvoir agir pour l'environnement et faire changer les choses avant qu'il ne soit trop tard. C'était donc une bonne nouvelle que le gouvernement dise vouloir être à l'écoute des revendications des jeunes. Mais il faut qu'il aille sincèrement jusqu'au bout de son intention car cette génération est féroce déterminée à préserver la planète et l'humanité. En effet, je suis également ici pour représenter cette jeunesse qui se bat pour avoir un avenir. Cette jeunesse qui nous regarde a conscience de l'urgence climatique que personne ne peut ignorer et encore moins ceux qui gouvernent. C'est donc au gouvernement qu'incombe la responsabilité de dresser les grands axes pour que puisse se faire la transition écologique. Et c'est à nous tous ici rassemblés de donner l'exemple au quotidien, là où nous le pouvons. La politique des 4 'R', réduire, réutiliser, recycler, récupérer, doit faire partie intégrante de chaque foyer. La section 247 (a) du discours du budget fait mention d'éco-bacs et j'ai compris à travers le discours de l'honorable ministre de l'environnement qu'ils seront uniquement destinés à récupérer les déchets plastiques, mais quand est-ce que ces éco-bacs seront-ils installés? Pareillement, il a parlé de l'instauration du tri des déchets à la source, mais quand est-ce que cela deviendra une réalité? L'heure n'est plus aux beaux discours mais à l'action. Et comment ces déchets seront-ils traités? Seront-ils exportés? Qui sera chargé de les récupérer? Les camions seront-ils adaptés et modernisés? Autant de questions que se pose la population. L'actuel système de collecte, d'acheminement et de *landfilling* est complètement dessué. Les camions seront-ils adaptés et modernisés? Autant de questions que se pose la population. L'actuel système de collecte, d'acheminement et de *landfilling* est complètement désuet. Mare Chicose est une bombe à retardement sur notre sol et la collecte sélective est le seul moyen de désamorcer cette bombe. Nous avons créé 1479 tonnes de déchets par jour à l'Île Maurice en 2019. Quel avenir pour Mare Chicose? Nous avons maintenant commencé à entasser les déchets à la verticale et comme le dit l'expression *the sky is the limit*.

M. le président, une gestion durable des déchets nécessite aussi la mise en place d'une politique favorisant la réduction des déchets générés et d'une politique d'achat responsable que je ne vois nulle part dans le budget.

Je me réjouis des mesures visant à encourager le recyclage des pneus. Mais pourquoi s'arrêter là? Le traitement des déchets d'équipements électroniques et électriques pose problème et une solution est urgemment attendue. Il est estimé que, d'ici 2023, le nombre de déchets d'équipements électriques et électroniques dépassera les 20,000 tonnes par an à l'île Maurice.

Actuellement, les citoyens doivent payer les usines de recyclage pour qu'elles puissent les prendre en charge en recouvrant leurs frais. C'est ainsi que de nombreux citoyens préfèrent s'en débarrasser sauvagement et qu'on retrouve des frigidaires, des micro-ondes dans nos rivières et nos forêts qui pollueront ensuite nos sols et nos lagons. N'était-il pas temps de mettre les commerçants d'équipements électriques et électroniques face à leurs responsabilités en les obligeant à reprendre ces équipements en fin de vie pour les traiter et les recycler. Une meilleure gestion des déchets aura un impact positif sur la salubrité du pays en général.

M. le président, Maurice a trois fragilités liées à sa géographie –

- (i) les risques de catastrophes naturelles;
- (ii) notre dépendance aux énergies fossiles, et
- (iii) notre dépendance aux importations qui risquent de coûter de plus en plus chères.

En réalité, il n'existe pas de catastrophes naturelles mais uniquement des risques naturels.

C'est notre niveau de préparation qui déterminera l'ampleur de l'impact des calamités naturelles et qui en fera une catastrophe ou non. Mais tous les départements et institutions de l'État n'ont pas atteint le niveau de préparation attendue et je ne vois aucune mesure permettant cette harmonisation et mise en place de plans de réduction des risques.

En ce qui concerne les énergies fossiles, rappelons que nous dépendons aujourd'hui à 70% des huiles lourdes pour la production d'électricité. Au début de 2019, une étude parue dans *Energy Policy*, le fruit d'une collaboration de chercheurs Mauriciens, suédois et américains, confirmait la pertinence d'un objectif de 100% d'énergie renouvelable d'un point de vue économique.

J'apprécie l'effort de développer les énergies renouvelables mais les mesures annoncées ne concernent que l'énergie solaire. Qu'en est-il du développement des énergies

des industries, des énergies marines et éoliennes ou pourquoi ne pas encourager davantage la création d'énergie à partir de la bagasse ou le bio éthanol avec la fermentation des sucres? J'espère que cette dernière proposition pourra s'inscrire dans le cadre du *Cane Replantation Programme* annoncé par l'honorable ministre des Finances. Pour ce qui est de notre dépendance aux importations, nous devons faire fonctionner les processus de production locale et de consommation locale. Cela est valable pour l'alimentation, l'artisanat ou les industries. Il nous faut donner priorité au local, puis aux régionales et participer de façon plus dynamique à la consolidation économique de la région de l'Océan indien.

En effet, M. le président, cette crise a redéfini la logique de blocs géographiques et commerciaux. Chaque continent va privilégier son marché intérieur pour se réinventer. Nous devons donc absolument faire de même et miser sur la coopération régionale. Maurice a aussi le potentiel de redevenir ce pays avant-gardiste qu'il était entre 2000 et 2005 si les moyens nécessaires sont mis en œuvre.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne l'alimentation, j'accueille positivement la mise en place du *National Agri-Food Development Programme* visant à assurer notre sécurité alimentaire. Cependant, il ne faut pas oublier que de la qualité de nos sols dépend la qualité des aliments que nous consommons. La monoculture, autrement dit la culture d'une seule espèce par parcelle de terrain et les pesticides abîment nos sols. Il nous faut ici rappeler que 98% des pesticides atteignent une autre destination que leur cible explicite et ont des conséquences néfastes sur les humains avec des maladies congénitales ou encore le cancer. C'est donc dans cette optique que j'espérais que des mesures sévères dans le budget seraient prises concernant l'utilisation de pesticides et d'herbicides qui sont donc nocifs pour la santé de nos compatriotes.

A quoi bon produire localement si les Mauriciens ne peuvent pas consommer ce que nous produisons? Sommes-nous en train de construire encore plus d'hôpitaux ultramodernes pour y mettre nos citoyens et citoyennes malades faute d'avoir pu se nourrir sainement pendant trop d'années?

J'invite donc l'honorable ministre concerné à s'assurer que les *new cultivation techniques* à la section 55(f) du discours du budget puissent promouvoir celle de l'agriculture raisonnée, voire de la permaculture qui est considérée comme une méthode ancestrale mais innovante et qui s'articule autour d'un concept systémique qui vise à créer des écosystèmes pour pouvoir produire en abondance et sans produits chimiques.

La permaculture est en fait bien plus qu'une méthode de culture. C'est une philosophie, une démarche globale qui s'appuie sur une technique reposant sur trois piliers –

1. prendre soin de la nature;
2. prendre soin des humains, et
3. partager équitablement les ressources et des récoltes.

Nous espérons également voir la mise en place d'un comité national regroupant différents parlementaires et experts pour une mise en place d'un plan d'action claire et visionnaire.

Aussi l'éducation est un catalyseur du changement. Apprendre à nos compatriotes comment gérer leur capital santé leur permettra de comprendre comment la qualité de l'environnement influence la santé humaine et les motivera à consommer de manière plus responsable. Le producteur devra alors s'adapter à la demande; une réaction en chaîne qui ne pourrait qu'être bénéfique au développement durable. Les valeurs de l'écocitoyenneté doivent être inculquées à tous les échelons de la société et dès le plus jeune âge. Cette matière selon moi devrait faire partie intégrante du cursus scolaire et des cours de jardinage devraient également en faire partie. Les scientifiques sont unanimes concernant les bienfaits sur la santé mentale des activités liées à la nature qui est d'ailleurs le plus vieux laboratoire au monde comme le dit Pierre Rabhi. Partout dans le monde, l'*outdoor schooling* est aussi privilégié pour éviter la propagation du virus.

M. le président, le traitement infligé aux animaux dans notre pays, particulièrement les chiens, a souvent été l'objet de vives critiques y compris par les touristes de passage. Gandhi disait –

«The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.»

Une société humaine, moderne se doit d'accorder une attention particulière au bien-être de ses animaux et je ne vois rien dans le budget visant au renforcement des dispositions de l'*Animal Welfare Act*.

M. le président, les grands moments de notre histoire, tels que les revendications des étudiants en 1975, les grèves des années 80 et les actions syndicales et politiques étaient toutes fondées sur le travail. Aujourd'hui encore, il nous faut...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, you are disturbing the House.

Ms Bérenger: *Thank you.* Aujourd'hui encore, il nous faut libérer toutes les forces de création et de transformation, propres au travail humain, pour surmonter la crise car on peut améliorer la qualité de vie des enfants et de la famille, avoir un environnement sain pour s'épanouir mais sans un emploi et des revenus, l'écart entre les nantis et les moins privilégiés s'agrandira. Malheureusement, aucune mention n'est faite dans le budget pour la création d'emplois. Rien de concret n'est annoncé pour la création de nouveaux piliers économiques alors même qu'un quart de nos jeunes sont au chômage. Au moins 100,000 licenciements sont attendus selon l'honorable ministre des Finances, lui-même et que nos secteurs traditionnels sont en *ICU*.

Le *Transitional Unemployment Benefit* doit être accompagné de formation aux métiers de demain dont la finalité et les compétences requises doivent contribuer à prévenir, maîtriser et corriger les impacts négatifs et les dommages à l'environnement. Ces métiers verts peuvent être ceux des spécialistes dans la construction déco quartier, des électriciens spécialisés dans les panneaux photovoltaïques, etc. Les formations de l'Université de Maurice sont en déphasage avec les besoins du marché et il faut redynamiser l'école polytechnique en vue d'une vraie formation vocationnelle.

La crise a permis de mettre en lumière les professions qui n'étaient pas valorisées et qui apparaissent aujourd'hui comme essentielles. Je pense aux pompiers, aux policiers, aux éboueurs, aux aides-soignants, etc.

Ce sont ceux qui soulagent notre quotidien et sont au service de notre bien-être. Ces métiers méritent d'être revalorisés et il est regrettable que la prime de R 15,000 ne concerne que deux de ces catégories.

M. le président, le budget est censé s'attacher à la préservation de l'emploi, cependant le COVID-19 Bill facilitait déjà les licenciements, supprimait des congés payés, annulait le *Night Shift Allowance* et voilà qu'avec ce budget le rapport du PRB ne sera pas appliqué et les congés maladie des fonctionnaires ne seront pas remboursés. Le PRB avait d'ailleurs fait l'objet d'une promesse électorale de l'*Alliance Morisien*. Les travailleurs sont en colère et il y a de quoi l'être.

M. le président, le budget ne précise pas comment seront accordées les R 5,100 à ceux qui subissent un chômage technique. R 10 milliards étaient accordés à la DBM pour les entreprises et coopératives en détresse, est-ce que cet argent ira directement aux nécessiteux, à ceux du secteur informel, aux PME? Le secteur informel a été frappé de plein fouet par la

crise et a bénéficié jusqu'ici d'une aide bien moins importante que ceux du secteur formel. Il était important de rectifier leur tir et de leur accorder une attention particulière, mais au lieu de ça, le budget impose une taxe de 3% sur leur revenu pour la Contribution Sociale Généralisée, pour un même travail, même salaire, les professionnels étrangers seront maintenant taxés à 15% alors que les Mauriciens sont taxés à 40% pour une catégorie déterminée. Ces mêmes étrangers peuvent désormais venir habiter avec leurs femmes, leur enfants, sans besoin d'autorisation alors que les étrangers mariés à un Mauricien ou Mauricienne, doivent demander un *work permit*, c'est de la discrimination.

Le gouvernement est en train d'accélérer la fuite des cerveaux et de décourager la diaspora mauricienne à nous apporter leur expertise et leur savoir-faire d'autant plus que non seulement ce budget ne créait pas d'emplois, mais en plus invite les étrangers à venir avec leurs proches pour prendre les opportunités d'emploi des Mauriciens qui se feront de plus en plus rare. La NPF sera abolie sans qu'il y ait aucune - je dis bien aucune - consultation avec les syndicats.

M. le président, dans une telle crise, les meilleures décisions ne peuvent se prendre que dans le dialogue et le consensus. Le gouvernement de Jacinda Ardern en est un bel exemple, avec un comité de réponse à l'épidémie présidé par nul autre que le leader de l'opposition.

M. le président, bien que la femme soit le *driving force* de notre économie et représente 51% de la population, elle est trop sous représentée et son potentiel est loin d'être optimisée. Le progrès pour la femme équivaut au progrès de la société. Si on avait l'égalité du genre dans tous les domaines, le PIB aurait connu une croissance de 25% selon le rapport McKinsey, mais les stéréotypes de genre sont encore beaucoup trop présents dans notre société et nous empêchent d'avancer. L'annexe au discours du budget nous en donne d'ailleurs l'illustration à la page 19 en prévoyant un *loan* pour que les *housewives* puissent faire du *backyard gardening*. Pourquoi donc se cantonner au *housewives*?

M. le président, le rôle de la femme ne se résume pas à faire du *backyard gardening* et il est inacceptable que le budget ne contienne qu'une seule mesure pour promouvoir l'entreprenariat féminin. Il faut impérativement créer les conditions nécessaires pour favoriser un environnement qui permettra aux femmes en général mais aussi aux femmes mères de participer pleinement aux prises de décisions qui concernent notre pays. Dans cette optique, j'espérais que le budget de cette année ferait provision pour la mise en place des

crèches dans les ministères, les corps paraétatiques, les locaux de notre Assemblée nationale et apporterais un meilleur soutien aux mères en général pour leur permettre de participer activement au développement économique.

Mr Speaker, Sir, data is considered today as more valuable than gold. The hon. Minister of Finance has announced that Government will invest in a new Land Administration, Valuation and Information Management System based on blockchain technology. Its application has the potential to root out corruption on land registries, but without a well-planned policy, the blockchain technology may not always lead to socio-economic benefit. The Government of Honduras partnered with the blockchain start-up to develop a system that kept the land record on a transparent blockchain platform. This type of transparency keeps the Government officials supervised from abusing their power while imposing on land owners to officially register their lands on the publicly accessible blockchain network. It is important that Government comes forward with a well-planned policy to maximise the benefit of the blockchain technology usage and which takes into consideration data governance and privacy issues. The hon. Minister of Finance has announced a new data technology park at Côte d'Or, has there been any prior study to ensure the feasibility of this data technology park? The setting up of a technopole at Rose Belle has been done without any feasibility study. What are we seeing today? A white elephant costing in excess of more than Rs300 m. Landscape still has these difficulties to find clients but keeps spending millions of rupees in maintenance cost. Should there have been a feasibility study, so much money would not have been wasted. Since the Rose Belle Business Park is idle, why not convert it to a new data technology park?

M. le président, j'en arrive à l'accès à la propriété. Ce n'est plus un secret pour personne que de la construction des 10,000 logements annoncée en 2014, moins de 2,000 avaient vu le jour après cinq ans, espérons que cette fois ce soit différent et rappelons tout de même que le droit au logement est un droit humain fondamental. Au-delà de ça, je ne vois aucune mesure pour la création d'un *land Court*, qui était pourtant un engagement pris par l'*Alliance Morisien* pendant la dernière campagne électorale.

Des squatteurs ont récemment été brutalement expulsés de leur structure comme mentionné inlassablement par le ministre. M. le président, mon cœur de mère fait mal aujourd'hui quand je pense à tous ces enfants qui dorment à la belle étoile dans cette fraîcheur hivernale. On se pose alors la question, non seulement la question de l'humanité d'un gouvernement qui choisit de mettre à la rue en plein confinement et à la veille de la Fête

des Mères des familles en situation de précarité mais aussi, et cela est d'une grande importance, la question de la propriété privée et de l'accès à la propriété dans notre pays.

- (i) A Pomponette, le non-respect et l'échéance d'un bail n'ont pas valu au promoteur hôtelier d'être expulsé;
- (ii) Le rapport Justice et Vérité contenait des cas d'expropriation illégale dès la période de l'esclavage et aucune action s'en est suivie;
- (iii) Il y a deux semaines, le droit de rentrer au pays a été refusé à neuf Mauriciens Covid négatif dont le bateau de croisière était pourtant au large de notre île;
- (iv) acheter un terrain était déjà un rêve de plus en plus lointain même pour des Mauriciens de classe moyenne mais cela le sera encore plus désormais avec l'ouverture exagérée aux étrangers qui fera le prix de l'immobilier flambé.

Je doute que les Nations Unies apprécient cette politique arbitraire de deux poids deux mesures.

M. le président, permettez-moi de dire quelques mots sur ma circonscription avant de conclure. Les chemins et jardins d'enfants sont en piteux état. L'aménagement des trottoirs et drains fait défaut dans plusieurs endroits. La construction d'un pont à Camp la Savanne, permettant aux habitants et les enfants de rejoindre l'école de Henrietta, avait été promise depuis longtemps déjà.

M. le président, les activités sportives et extrascolaires permettent aux jeunes de socialiser, de se divertir, de s'évader de manière saine et pourtant les terrains de foot de Henrietta, Réunion ou Quinze Cantons ne sont pas entretenus convenablement. L'herbe sur celui de Quinze Cantons n'a pas été taillée depuis mars. On ne voit même plus le ballon tellement l'herbe y est haute. À Cité L'oiseau et Cité Mangalkhan, des jeunes de la localité doivent entretenir eux-mêmes l'espace des jeux dont plusieurs équipements sont en mauvais état. Pour mieux atteindre l'objectif de proposer des activités physiques et de loisirs à tous, comme annoncé au paragraphe 328 du discours du budget, il serait souhaitable que les collectivités locales retrouvent l'autonomie dont elles bénéficiaient jusqu'à 2005 pour pouvoir être plus efficiente dans l'entretien des infrastructures, des installations sportives ou de loisirs, au lieu de ça, le budget leur coupe les vivres en diminuant leur marge de manœuvre de R 400 millions.

Pour conclure, M. le président, tous parents qui a à cœur l'avenir de ses enfants leur apprend dès le plus jeune âge à ne pas dépenser plus que ce qu'il ne possède. Ici, le gouvernement enlève le plafond de la dette publique et prend l'argent qui ne lui appartient pas, comme si il n'y avait pas de lendemain. Quel signal envoie-il à cette jeunesse ? Cette jeunesse qui ne veut pas seulement d'un avenir durable, mais surtout d'un avenir désirable. Cette jeunesse qui ne souhaite pas rattraper le retard, mais qui souhaite que le *new normal* ne soit pas synonyme de croissance infini dans un monde fini.

Cette jeunesse qui ne veut pas du plus, mais du mieux; travailler mieux, vivre mieux, consommer mieux. Cette jeunesse qui ne veut pas de belles paroles, mais que l'on devienne enfin des acteurs du vrai changement. D'un point de vue écologique, nous étions déjà en train de détruire notre capital de départ et nous vivons désormais à crédit sur cette terre. Nous devons, donc, impérativement réinventer notre modèle de développement, autour du respect de notre environnement, de l'humain et nous recentrer sur ce qui nous lie.

Aujourd'hui, plus que jamais, nous devons avoir conscience de cette appartenance à la même communauté qui est celle de l'humanité. Qu'il s'agisse de crise sanitaire ou de crise écologique, nous ne sauverons pas les uns sans les autres et devons tous faire face au défi à venir. Nelson Mandela utilisait le terme '*Ubuntu*' pour décrire la fraternité, l'humanité, le fait que nos destins soient inextricablement liés et que cette coappartenance à un monde commun, constitue la seule manière de penser.

Enfin, je dirais que l'honorable ministre des Finances mise beaucoup sur la construction, mais cela n'en fait pas un budget béton. L'humain n'est pas la priorité de ce budget. Il ne faut pourtant pas oublier que le fondement même du développement durable et de la pérennité économique est l'humain. « A force de sacrifier l'essentiel à l'urgence, on finit par oublier l'urgence de l'essentiel », comme le dit si bien Edgar Morin.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon Ittoo!

(4.40 p.m.)

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci, M. le président. L'Ensemble des circonstances dans lesquelles ce budget a été présenté n'est plus un secret pour personne. Les discours budgétaires sont généralement préparés et ont souvent été préparés dans un contexte normal, voire prévisible, et dans un souci d'améliorer le quotidien

du Mauricien, d'assurer son futur, et celle des générations à venir. Ce budget 2021 sera déterminant pour notre survie économique et on n'a pas droit à l'erreur.

Le ministre des Finances a fait mention d'un budget en équilibre, vu les circonstances actuelles. L'équilibre, on le distingue, non seulement dans les calculs, mais aussi dans le fond. Dans la mission de ce budget, c'est d'équilibrer entre la survie, justice sociale, l'environnement, technologie futur et la relance, thématique même de mon intervention cet après-midi. En sus des dotations pour le ministère de la Sécurité sociale, et cela, malgré les temps difficiles, la somme de R 700 millions sera accordée comme soutien aux ONG, R 350 millions, plus précisément. C'est cela être un *caring government*!

Une mission de sauvetage et de préparation; c'est un budget conçu pour affronter le pire de ce qui nous attend plus devant, de préparer le pays et nos secteurs clés pour la transition par une des pires récessions mondiales de notre temps. M. le président, beaucoup de personnes innocentes, comme la plupart de nos collègues de l'autre côté de la Chambre, persistent à penser que ce qui vient de se passer ces trois derniers mois, peut tout simplement être résumé comme une situation de *pause and play*, comme un congé sabbatique où la personne reprend le travail normalement après s'être redynamisée. La situation est beaucoup plus complexe que cela. On peut comprendre la majorité des Mauriciens qui veulent se rendre à la plage, peut-être plus masqués que d'habitude, pour que tout redevienne normal. Mais la vérité économique est tout autre. 144,000 travailleurs directs et indirects dans le tourisme, avec une contribution au PIB de 7%, sont directement impactés, et personne ne sait si, ou quand, et combien de touristes vont voyager et venir à Maurice.

Nos plus gros fournisseurs en aliments de base et produits d'usage quotidien ont été gravement affectés. Il y en a même qui n'ont pas encore atteint le *peak* de la maladie, nous faisons craindre une crise alimentaire sans précédent. Nos marchés traditionnels européens et autres sont gravement affectés par la pandémie et obligés de reprendre le cours de la vie pour éviter des catastrophes économiques, subissent, en ce moment, une timide reprise, menant à une timide consommation qui affecte nos industries. Et le pire dans tout cela, c'est la frayeur ! Mondialement ressenti d'une nouvelle vague d'infection, il ne suffit que d'une seule personne infectée pour mettre tout un pays à genoux. Les marchés financiers opèrent sur la confiance et cette peur n'est pas de bonne augure pour nous, ni notre secteur de l'offshore.

M. le président, dans cette situation mondiale chaotique, avec un avenir incertain, qui ne voudrait pas être député de l'Opposition? But then, fortunately, we have a courageous,

hard-working Government with a focused Prime Minister who, as a leader, has prime objective, pass the storm, and leave the country towards new horizons once the sky is clear. Let me here command the Minister of Finance, his team and the Prime Minister for this Budget which everyone knows was not an easy job.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at this point in time, we find ourselves in a self-inflicted economic catastrophe as a necessary policy response to contain the spread of a deadly virus. The economy is faced with a number of immediate challenges and difficulties, productivities affected, investment is at its lowest, loss and underemployment of human capital. Government has been successful to contain the virus as well as with a phased deconfinement, reviving economic activity. The Budget Speech comes at the right moment where Government's intervention is now required to save livelihoods. I welcome the Buy Mauritian Programme, with ambitions to boost local entrepreneurship and industrial development.

There have been efforts in this direction before without expected results. I am happy to note that to accompany such a venture, appropriate legislations will be enacted and quota impositions have been sought. Furthermore, Government aid to local businesses in the acquisition of patents, franchises and certification costs to meet international standards, is but clear indication that Government has firm intention to strengthen the 'Made in Mauritius' brand. Other watchdogs to ensure local manufacturing businesses are protected like 30% minimum purchase of locally manufactured goods by public bodies. A margin of preference of 20% for local companies, 30% for local SME manufacturing companies in the public procurement, a guarantee for 10% share of space in supermarkets, payment to SMEs within 14 days are certainly commendable.

The pandemic is already affecting the entire food system. Restrictions on movement within and across countries can hinder food related logistic services, disrupt entire food supplies trains and affect the availability of food. Impacts on the movement of agricultural labour on the supply of inputs will soon cause critical challenges to food production, thus, jeopardising food security for old people and hit, especially, hard people living in the poorest countries, and we are vulnerable. A Centralised Digital Land Bank starting with 20,000 acres of abandoned land would be a great help to all those who want to start in the food production business. Promotion of inland aquaculture with incentive such as 8-year tax holiday, no VAT and duties on equipment, Rs10 billion provision to assist SMEs and cooperative societies in difficulties demonstrate Government's commitment towards food autonomy.

Throughout human history, crises have been pivotal in developing our societies. Pandemics have helped advanced health care systems. Wars have fuelled technological innovations and the global financial crisis helped advanced technology companies like Uber and Airbnb. The present Coronavirus Pandemic will arguably not be an exception. Entrepreneurs can be expected to rise to the challenge. Customers, both individual and businesses, are becoming accustomed to new forms of business such as online ordering for home delivery. Buying vegetables online and home delivery of groceries became the new normal during the lockdown. Established habits have been disrupted, changing attitudes and expectations.

The surge in video meetings creates comfort with the method of interaction and users learn how to be effective in meetings without face-to-face interactions. Local businesses which believed that we are too small an island to make use of such technologies have realised huge savings could be made in travel costs, CEB bills, as well as reduced carbon emission. As much as Rs1 million savings in energy costs have been recorded by some local companies working from home during these last three months. In the new normal, many people will expect more integration of online and offline offerings and be more at ease and open with new technologies.

It is clear that the post pandemic future will be different. What's happening during the crisis will have a lasting impact on society. Current signs of entrepreneurial initiative and goodwill give us some cause for optimism. Businesses play a key role in the helping of society for an economic crisis and creating innovations that shape society after a crisis. Government, through this budget, is doing its part and we rely on the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of the Mauritians for a better tomorrow. In an effort to digitise the country, to make public sectors available online and to develop Mauritius into a world renowned technology hub, a green tear for data centre will definitely be a huge advantage, delivering reliable robust data management and distribution networks with near zero downtime, 100% redundancy and industries' lowest Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE), in line with our ecological concerns. This facility will give competitive us advantage to position ourselves in the emerging technologies industry, and attract tech giants. This data centre, giving 100% uptime, would interest mission-critical businesses such as banking, insurance, telecom and internet providers.

The Chief Economist of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development stated that it is time we begin to rethinking of global value trains, more focused on resilience,

building in redundancy, moving away from zero inventory approach. Incentives for construction of warehouses and storage facilities from Government will eventually be of tremendous help during difficult times.

One of the threats highlighted during these times is the risk that the COVID-19 crisis will eclipse climate action, which is still a global concern, and a concern for this Government. The COVID crisis risks to a cause of dangerous pores in the drive to green economies. Government has shown its commitment to securing sustainable and inclusive development despite difficult times. Air quality index measurement and monitoring, targeting a 40% share of renewable energy in our energy mix, and many other measures covered by the hon. Minister of Environment yesterday, which I will not go through. The two common features of how companies reacted during the pandemic: first, companies are showing citizenship; they realised they have an interest in societal well-being and they may need to give up short-term profits for the benefit of the society. Second, they are showing resourcefulness. They are developing creative responses to emerging challenges with scarce resources. In combination, citizenship and resourcefulness can drive socially aware entrepreneurship. We have witnessed our local textile factories converting the production lines to produce masks and PPEs. Government will assist entrepreneurs in revealing their full potential and tap opportunities that arise in the aftermath of the pandemic. While Government is asking for sacrifices from corporates and individuals, it is also reducing costs associated with overseas missions, *per diem* and entertainment allocations, and extending the period after which official cars are renewed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not want to pretend to be a marketing guru or even less a Liverpool fan, but I feel criticism on the association with English Premiership football team needs to be re-actualised. Anfield Road, with a seating capacity of 60,000 during this year, plans to hold concerts and host Irish, Scottish and American football matches. It is interesting to note that football is the most watched sports league in the world and English Premier League has a TV audience of 4.7 billion, and Liverpool only has 34 million fans. The visit Wonder initiative, in collaboration with the Arsenal Team in 2018, has given interesting results and random officials have revealed increased overall tourism numbers by 8%, and Wonder Development Board claims to have recouped over 100% in marketing benefits.

M. le président, on a tendance à diminuer les efforts d'une relance basée sur la construction parce qu'effectivement ce secteur emploie beaucoup d'étrangers. N'oublions pas ces 44,000 Mauriciens directement employés, et les 10,000 à 20,000 indirectement.

N'oublions pas aussi leur contribution au PIB de presque 5%. Je salue la construction des 12,000 maisons pour les plus vulnérables et aussi pour le *lower middle class* touchant jusqu'à R 60,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, said, "We are doing whatever is necessary, and we won't be asking everyday what it means to our deficit."

Extraordinary measures in unprecedented times has led Japan's Central Bank announcing in late April that it was prepared to buy an unlimited amount of government debt and to double its purchase of corporate debt. In early April, the Bank of England agreed to directly finance government's spending during the crisis, freeing it from having to issue debt in the bond market, all told, the rescue efforts could see Britain spend upward of 400 billion pounds or about 15% of GDP. In March, USA's Federal Reserve indicated that it will do anything within its power to support the economy and provide liquidity. Among the Federal Reserves' historic actions, have been, cutting interest rates close to zero, reducing bank reserve requirements to zero, rapidly purchasing hundreds of billions of dollars in Treasuries and mortgage back securities, buying corporate debt and extending emergency credit to non-banks.

To conclude, I am convinced, this Budget is not simply a document drafted to please the ears or to gain public praise, but rather a series of clear and bold measures to save everyone, everything that we have achieved through the hard work and sacrifice of our forefathers. In the words of Stanford economist, Paul Romer, "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste".

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I will suspend the meeting for thirty minutes!

At 4.57 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.34 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Richard Duval!

(5.35 p.m.)

Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, nous nous sommes tous, à un moment de notre vie, posés de nombreuses questions existentielles, des questions concernant notre mode de vie, notre travail, nos familles, notre planète, nos institutions, ce gouvernement, qui bien souvent est mal compris, et même sur Dieu, parfois. Qui n'a pas connu des instants de doute, M. le président? Qui n'a pas ressenti le besoin de prendre du recul pour laisser la place à la réflexion? M. le président, les mots qui me viennent à l'esprit sont : inquiétude, frayeur. Le monde entier fait face à une situation sans précédent et l'avenir est incertain. Notre île n'a, hélas, pas été épargnée. Comme annoncé, il faudra s'attendre à près de cent milles chômeurs, comme prédit par l'honorable ministre des Finances lui-même - voire davantage, d'ici décembre. Cette situation incertaine entraînera l'exclusion de nombreux citoyens du tissu social. Des citoyens qui tenteront de survivre et de faire vivre leur famille comme ils le peuvent. Les autorités auront affaire à une hausse de criminalité, de vol, d'agression et dès lors le nombre de nos détenus grimpera en flèche. Evidemment, les prisons seront bondées.

M. le président, prenons conscience que nul n'est expert et que même les experts se sont trompés pour ensuite recadrer leurs positions et il n'y a aucune certitude concernant l'avenir, et ça, ni l'OMS, ni le FMI, ni les politiciens ne s'attendaient.

M. le président, les opérateurs dans le secteur des services financiers pointent du doigt une négligence stratégique sans précédent de la FSC. Ce carton rouge de Bruxelles représente un risque énorme pour le pays. Tous les transferts bancaires émanant de la juridiction mauricienne seront passés à la loupe par l'Union Européenne. Les banques pourront facilement rejeter les transactions soupçonnées de provenir d'un potentiel blanchiment d'argent, émanant de l'arbitre qui est l'Union Européenne, tout en sachant que des précédents bandits scabreux, braqueurs de banques au grand jour, tel que Sobrinho. M. le président, notre *credit rating* ne peut être que sérieusement contrarié. Cette classification de l'Union Européenne pourrait avoir des effets catastrophiques sur notre économie.

Croisons les doigts pour que les menaces qui pèsent déjà avec le carton rouge de Bruxelles ne fragilise pas notre secteur porteur qui est l'*Offshore* et qui génère 15,000 emplois, M. le président. 15,000 emplois ! Au risque que les investisseurs commencent à retirer leur capitaux et cela pourrait finir en catastrophe pour notre pays.

M. le président, autrefois, la pauvreté touchait les personnes au bas de l'échelle. Aujourd'hui, quand on dit que la classe s'est appauvrie, c'est un très mauvais signal pour le pays. Très mauvais, M. le président! Nous avons été témoin d'un drame humain durant la

période de confinement, *l'opération craz lakaz*. J'ai eu l'occasion d'écouter avec attention l'intervention de l'honorable ministre Obeegadoo et je dois vous dire que je suis choqué par cette arrogance intellectuelle qu'il utilise quand il fait son exposé sur le sort des squatters.

M. le président, nous sommes tous des êtres humains, des squatters sur cette planète. Nous sommes tous de passage sur cette terre. Pas plus tard que ce matin, à Riambel, 59 familles, c'est à dire 158 personnes, 50 enfants, ont encore une fois dormi sous les tentes aménagées pour ne pas passer la nuit à la belle étoile. Cela fait 9 jours, valeur du jour, qu'ils y sont. A cet effet, M. le président, je dépose à la Chambre les photos recueillies.

M. le président, qui rêve d'être squatter, qui se réveille un beau matin et choisit de vivre de telle condition en sachant que le lendemain il ne risque plus d'avoir de toit sur sa tête? Qui veut ça, M. le président? Qui veut ça dans cette auguste Chambre? M. le président, parmi ces gens exclus de la société, nous trouvons des parents. Comme chaque parent, ils rêvent d'offrir le meilleur à leurs enfants mais comment réaliser cela dans une telle précarité. Certains enfants naissent en tant que squatters dans ce pays. Ils naissent en tant que squatter, M. le président. Comment les faire sortir de ce système quand c'est tout ce qu'ils ont connu dans leur vie. Aujourd'hui, j'ai une pensée spéciale pour ces familles, je comprends leur désarroi. Je comprends leur souffrance, je comprends leur amertume et je tiens à présenter mes excuses à ces mères, à ces pères, à ces enfants, à notre peuple Mauricien pour cet acte inhumain. Pourquoi détruire leur maison et les mettre à la rue ? Pourquoi un tel empressement du ministre? Pourquoi? Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé dans la tête du ministre? Je n'ai pas compris.

M. le président, pourquoi ne pas mettre en place un encadrement éducatif et psychologique pour aider ces personnes en difficulté? Entre manque d'éducation et l'exposition aux nombreux fléaux qui font ravage dans ces milieux défavorisés, ils sont bien souvent pris dans une spirale et ne savent pas comment s'en sortir. M. le président, c'est inadmissible, la façon qu'ils ont été traités. C'est un gouvernement à double face, M. le président. D'un côté, ils clament la solidarité et l'apaisement et de l'autre, ils délogent les familles avec la *SMF* et la Police. Quelle fatalité pour ces familles, M. le président! Quelle fatalité pour ces malheureux!

M. le président, je le dis haut et fort que le ministre a fait preuve d'un manque de compassion et une attitude sans cœur aux problèmes de ces frères et sœurs Mauriciens en

détresse. Il faut le dire et je le dis avec vigueur. Donc, il est grand temps que le logement ne soit plus un privilège mais un droit pour tous dans ce pays.

M. le président, le gouvernement est complètement déconnecté de la réalité. Est-ce que ce gouvernement connaît la situation qui prévaut dans les faubourgs et les cités ? Donner de l'argent ne suffit pas, mais il faudrait un projet pour l'épanouissement de nos frères et sœurs qui se trouvent dans des situations précaires. Ils sont souvent victimes d'un développement à deux vitesses et injuste. Le tristement fameux *COVID Act* qui a empiété sur les droits des travailleurs et la cerise sur le gâteau, M. le président, ce projet de loi a enfoncé encore plus les travailleurs dans la pauvreté. Je croyais qu'il aurait eu un remord de conscience dans le budget, mais hélas, M. le président, je dirai comme Albert Camus, il y a une certaine honte à être heureux tout seul.

M. le président, les pêcheurs contribuent beaucoup à notre économie. Mais, malheureusement, le gouvernement les a insultés lors du dernier exercice budgétaire en les octroyant R 60 seulement alors que le gouvernement a reçu une manne de R 158 milliards de la Banque de Maurice. Investir 10 milliards en Afrique et laisser les gens dormir à la rue et à la belle étoile. Inadmissible! Imaginons, M. le président, une minute un pêcheur avec le changement climatique leur emploi devient de plus en plus incertain. Nous entendons beaucoup parler de changement climatique mais rien n'a été fait pour contrecarrer les séquelles. Le traitement des pêcheurs lors du budget est un exemple non seulement que leur travail est menacé par les catastrophes naturelles mais ils exposent leur vie en partant en mer. Nous constatons que le gouvernement dans son budget n'a prévu aucun plan d'encadrement pour les pêcheurs, tout comme les autres secteurs de l'économie je m'attendais à ce qu'ils bénéficient d'un *loan scheme* pour parfaire leur équipement, à l'instar des bateaux ou les casiers.

Le ministre des Finances a parlé d'une réforme de la *National Pension Fund* qui permettra selon lui aux travailleurs de bénéficier plus d'argent à leur retraite. M. le président, les pêcheurs sont aussi des travailleurs qui méritent d'avoir une pension et un *lump sum* comme il se doit afin d'avoir une vieillesse décente. Ils ont le droit. Pourquoi sont-ils toujours laissés-pour-compte à chaque exercice budgétaire alors que nous tous nous savons que c'est un métier à risque.

Mr Speaker, Sir, under the chapter of sports, it is sad to note that there are no measures to democratise sport activities through regionalisation. This has been a success in

Reunion Island and in Africa namely, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Nothing has been said about how to boost regional infrastructure, billions have been invested in Côte d'Or complex which is now unutilised when such money could have funded several complexes at regional level for all our youth. We should not only focus on elitism, but also spend money wisely on various programmes to uncover hidden talents among our youth throughout the island. The Côte d'Or complex has turned to be *un éléphant blanc*. We know. We have got to change the name. Too much *éléphant blanc* unfortunately. Mr Speaker, Sir, a new Sport Act needs to be promulgated as early as possible.

It is in order to regularise the Sports Federation. We have to focus on *sport de masse*, Mr Speaker, Sir, to give opportunities to our youth. Inter competition should be revisited at primary, secondary school levels where hidden talents can be identified.

M. le président, nous possédons beaucoup de potentiel et de talents cachés qui ont malheureusement besoin de support moral et structurel. Nous vivons dans un monde avec tant de problèmes qui touchent nos jeunes quotidiennement. Il faut impérativement des infrastructures régionales de proximité qui touchent nos quartiers sans oublier ceux des défavorisés.

The Minister must be in a position to inform the House regarding the construction of new complexes during his mandate. I would like to invite the Minister to go through the island and he will be surprised to see the state of the existing complexes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, where are those exchange programs with France, Germany or other European countries which existed in the past for the benefit of our athletes? It reminds me of those athletes like Judex Lefou, Désiré Périatambé and others who are clearly examples of such progressive development which existed in the past. It has been a complete failure due to non-existence of regional technical centres for all disciplines; reduction of *écoles de foot* at regional level due to lack of finance, lack of youth competition at regional and inter-regional levels for different age groups.

Mr Speaker, Sir, investment in our youth is the most important in the future. I find out from the Budget that no provision is made by the Minister of Finance for sports complexes at regional level, no financial support to ex-athletes, no *bourse d'études* for high-level athletes, no information in regard to allocations to clubs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a complete silence radio by the Government regarding the promises made prior to the General Election of 2019 for the payment of Rs2 billion to the

victims of the Super Cash Back Gold. The Government had promised to pay by two instalments with the first payment, as promised, in December 2019. In fact, on 28 October 2019, at Rabita Hall, Mr Salim Muthy stated that all the victims of Super Cash Back Gold of the BAI constitute a bank fraud, Mr Speaker, Sir, of 75,000. Now it has become as too clear that those 75,000 victims had been fooled and led to support the present Government with the hope of getting paid. Mr Speaker, Sir, where are the Rs2 billion promised? What will happen to the victims to whom electoral promises were made? Unfortunately, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, nothing was mentioned or earmarked in this Budget. Mr Speaker, Sir, again this has turned out to be a complete failure of this Government, total bluff again by this Government.

Before I conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot help to note that, on a macroeconomic level, the hon. Minister of Finance has failed to state the anticipated level of unemployment, the rate of inflation expected or even the economic growth rate forecast by his proposed measures.

M. le président, c'est un jour très triste pour notre pays. Je suis très affligé par la tournure des événements qui nous ont menés vers une situation économique catastrophique sur tous les plans. Je souhaite de tout cœur que ce gouvernement va œuvrer pour la justice et la paix sociale. Tous les Mauriciens sont unanimes à reconnaître que la politique doit être faite autrement à l'écart et que l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres doit être réduit.

M. le président, il y a un malaise qui sévit actuellement à travers notre pays et cela est très palpable au sein de la population. On doit prôner une politique de justesse afin d'éviter tout dérapage économique et social.

M. le président, le ministre des Finances a qualifié son budget d'un budget équilibré mais je dirai que c'est un budget simplement sans inspiration et injuste.

Pour terminer, M. le président, permettez-moi de citer Martin Luther King: "*Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere*".

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

(5.54 p.m.)

Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): M. le président, nous y voilà! Nous voilà entrés de plain-pied dans ce monde d'après dont nous avons du mal à cerner les contours il y a quinze jours encore. Nous y sommes et le monde est

déjà divisé en deux - ceux qui estiment, d'une part, que le monde post-COVID-19 sera celui d'hier en plus cartellisé, plus globalisé et plus technologique et ceux qui, d'autre part, entrevoient l'émergence d'une dé-mondialisation, d'une transition vers un modèle plus solidaire dans le cadre de système démocratique qui associe pleinement la participation de toutes et tous.

La crise mondiale liée au COVID-19 fut un choc et une épreuve pour le monde entier notamment pour les plus vulnérables. Elle a ébranlé nos habitudes, nos liens sociaux, notre économie, notre environnement et tout notre quotidien. Elle a aussi relevé les limites de nos différents modèles de pensée et de fonctionnement de toutes nos sociétés. Nous y sommes, M. le président, nous voilà tous ici en train d'inventer le monde d'après. Nous sommes en face d'une situation historique. Nous devons faire face à un défi immense, celui de relever une économie fébrile, de redresser un pays fragilisé et de faire entrer à nouveau notre pays sur la voie de la croissance inclusive et durable. Et c'est précisément l'objectif du budget 2020-2021 qui a jeté les bases d'une nouvelle économie accès sur l'autosuffisance, l'innovation et la collaboration.

La pandémie de la COVID-19 a bouleversé la société et le monde des affaires tel que nous le connaissons mais elle laisse entrevoir du moins aux plus optimistes, je le redis au plus optimistes, d'entre nous, un monde d'opportunités et une économie réinventée pour les entreprises qui devront adapter leurs stratégies, leurs opérations et leurs approches.

Touchée de plein fouet par la crise économique mondiale, l'île Maurice n'a d'autre choix, M. le président, que de prendre des décisions radicales. La conjoncture nous impose certes de voir des choix difficiles mais surtout de penser aussi différemment. Sans cela, nous ne parviendrons pas à mobiliser toute notre capacité d'action pour enfin travailler à ce qui nous rendra définitivement plus fort, à savoir la diversification de notre économie. Cette crise a mis en lumière le problème de notre dépendance aux produits étrangers. Tout le monde a vécu au cours des deux derniers mois ce que cela veut dire d'être dépendant.

Je ne peux que féliciter le ministre des Finances pour avoir inscrit dans son budget un ensemble des mesures pour relocaliser notre économie, la rendre plus résiliente face aux crises et assurer une certaine stabilité du tissu économique.

La crise nous a rappelé l'urgence de renforcer notre autonomie et notre résilience et donc de relocaliser l'activité économique dans les secteurs essentiels qui est l'alimentation. Cette prise de conscience nous rappelle que c'est maintenant qu'il faut passer de la parole à

des actes forts et responsables. Le constat est sans appel. La mondialisation qui a favorisé l'importation des denrées alimentaires à bas prix nous a fait perdre de vue au fil des ans la nécessité de maintenir un seuil d'autosuffisance alimentaire pérenne, ainsi, malgré la disponibilité des terres fertiles souvent abandonnées par des agriculteurs pour des raisons diverses et une agriculture plus ou moins modernisée ne semble plus à même de garantir la souveraineté alimentaire de notre population.

Maurice importe une bonne part de son alimentation. Le montant de la facture annuelle s'élève à plus de R 30 milliards et seule 25% de nos besoins sont assurés par nos propres productions. Notre pays dépend trop des importations d'étrangers. Mais même s'il est aujourd'hui quasi-autonome en poulet, en carotte, en pomme de terre et d'autres aliments, nous importons toujours toute une série d'aliments que nous saurions capable de cultiver chez nous et subissons une logique agro-industrielle absurde et dépassée qui bloque la diversification des cultures locales et la mise en place des pratiques agro-écologiques modernes.

M. le président, Maurice doit aussi faire face à de sérieux défis, vieillissement de la main-d'œuvre, désintérêt de la filière par les jeunes Mauriciens ou encore un appauvrissement de sol qui impact les rendements naturels et pousse à une utilisation croissante de pesticide. Certaines filières nécessitent par conséquent d'être repensées à plus large échelle car l'ampleur de notre dépendance actuelle fragilise notre système agro-alimentaire.

D'autres modes de production et de commercialisation plus diversifiée, autonome et localisée peuvent répondre aux variations et pressions de la demande. Ainsi, la relocalisation et la diversification de notre agriculture, couplée au développement massif de l'agro-écologie s'avère être une priorité pour transformer le monde de l'après et un monde résilient et durable.

Le prochain enjeu d'un retour à la normale sera celui de revenir à des pratiques agricoles adaptées à notre situation. Dans ce contexte, le budget 2020/2021 permettra de mettre en œuvre une transformation profonde de nos systèmes de production alimentaire vers la souveraineté alimentaire et la résilience en mettant notamment plus de terre sous culture.

Les mesures budgétaires posent des choix politiques clairs et cohérents en faveur de la relocalisation de l'agriculture vivrière. C'est la seule voie pour relever les défis urgents du monde agricole locale, nourrir la population au bénéfice de tous les citoyens tout en luttant

contre les effets de dérèglements climatiques et créer des emplois décents et rémunérateurs pour une nouvelle génération de cultivateur. Les métiers agricoles non valorisés en temps normal sont désormais la clef de voute de notre quotidien. Penser l'après c'est sanctuariser les terres fertiles et les mobiliser pour une agriculture durable. Le développement d'une agriculture autosuffisante locale est une urgence dans un contexte où il faut réinventer. Par exemple, des rapports nouveaux entre la restauration collective et les producteurs en créant notamment des circuits d'approvisionnements plus directs et durables.

La restauration collective est un secteur indispensable pour les filières agricoles et pour les populations les plus vulnérables qui vivent de celle-ci. La diversification des cultures, par ailleurs développe l'autonomie alimentaire d'un pays. Elle permet d'avoir des paysages hétérogènes qui favorisent la préservation de la biodiversité. A l'autre bout de la chaîne, il y a le consommateur, face aux géants de la distribution qui imposent des produits souvent moins chers venant de l'étranger, les petits producteurs locaux sont grandement désavantagés. Offrir à leur produit une plus grande visibilité sur les rayons de commerce de la grande distribution, c'est favoriser et installer un lien direct entre les producteurs et les consommateurs.

Les Mauriciens sont prêts à changer leur habitude, c'est peut être une des leçons que nous pouvons tirer du confinement. Les consommateurs ont appris à connaître en détails ce qu'ils achètent et à consommer local. Ils ont pris conscience que leurs achats peuvent et doivent être aussi citoyens. C'est-à-dire qu'ils sauvegardent l'emploi, développent l'économie nationale, respectent les normes sociales et minimisent l'impact sur l'environnement grâce à l'optimisation des transports.

Consommer mauricien est un état d'esprit, M. le président. Il est à la fois un élan de patriotisme et de fierté mauricienne, un gage de qualité et de savoir-faire et une envie de contribuer au développement de l'économie du pays. Deux études sont sorties dans ce sens, M. le président. Il y a d'abord celui de *speak up*, qui analyse les tendances de consommation. Elle a montré que les Mauriciens ont clairement privilégié les produits *Made in Moris* ces derniers deux mois. Il y a une autre, celle réalisée par l'*Association of Mauritian Manufacturers* (AMM) auprès de 2,000 répondants. Je cite la directrice de l'AMM –

« Nous sommes contents du saut qualitatif réalisé. 92% des Mauriciens pensent qu'il est important d'acheter les produits labélisés *Made In Moris*. »

Il serait non négligeable, M. le président, de considérer les opinions des porte-paroles des consommateurs publiées dans un quotidien à la veille du budget. Le porte-parole du *Consumer Advocacy Platform* nous dit c'est un budget *consumer-friendly*. Le plus important ce sont les dispositions qui seront prises pour promouvoir les produits locaux et ce en encourageant les consommateurs à acheter des produits fabriqués localement. Le gouvernement encourage les fabricants des produits alimentaires à se conformer aux normes internationales en rendant l'accès au laboratoire de certification plus facile. Cela permettra une amélioration de la qualité des aliments. L'annonce d'un *New Consumer Framework* était attendue depuis longtemps. Il est là finalement. En général, c'est un budget en faveur de la protection de l'emploi et *consumer-friendly*. Les mesures annoncées pour promouvoir l'économie circulaire sont aussi appréciable, porte-parole du *Consumer Advocacy Platform*.

Entretien de notre représentant des consommateurs, toujours dans un quotidien après l'apparition du budget –

« Dans l'ensemble c'est un effort d'équilibriste qui a été démontré dans ce budget. On y voit une volonté claire de soulager tous ceux au bas de l'échelle tout en évitant de punir à travers une augmentation de la taxe. Cela favorisera la croissance économique. La réduction du prix de la bonbonne de gaz soulagera certainement ceux au bas de l'échelle et aussi ceux du secteur informel. »

Domage que hier j'ai entendu un honorable Membre de l'autre côté de la Chambre nous dire qu'il y a une baisse sur les bonbonnes de gaz qui représentait 30 malheureux roupies.

M. le président, je peux vous dire que ces R 30 - je ne veux pas répéter le mot 'malheureux' - pour certaines personnes, ça représente quelque chose. Et le porte-parole de l'Association des Consommateurs nous le dit. Il faut aussi reconnaître que tout le monde n'est pas né riche dans ce pays, M. le président. Il est aussi question de la loi cadre sur l'e-commerce qui protégera les consommateurs car ceux-ci étaient dans une position de risque d'abus. A ce titre, il y a l'investissement d'au moins R 2 milliards pour maintenir le subside sur le riz et la farine, autre mesure qui va dans la bonne direction. C'est la première fois qu'on voit un budget aussi substantiel, les propos d'un représentant des consommateurs.

M. le président, je suis réaliste, le *Made In Moris* ne remplacera jamais complètement le *made in* ailleurs. Plus de 3,500 produits dont 250 marques issues des secteurs manufacturiers, agro-alimentaires, textiles, les industries culturelles et créatives ou encore les

services sont labellisés à ce jour. Plus de 90% des Mauriciens connaissent et font confiance au *Made in Moris*. Le contexte est favorable, M. le président, à la construction d'un patriotisme économique destiné à dynamiser l'industrie mauricienne. Les produits façonnés à l'île Maurice ont le mérite d'avoir des qualités que l'on ne trouve pas ailleurs. Ils mettent en valeur chaque protagoniste de la chaîne de fabrication, de l'agriculture à l'artisan, de l'ouvrier à la logistique. Les mesures contenues dans le budget 2020-2021, quoi qu'en disent les oiseaux de mauvais augure, sonne l'heure du renouveau de savoir-faire mauricien. Bien au-delà des motivations financières, c'est surtout la conscience sociale et patriotique qui poussera de nouveaux entrepreneurs à porter de nouveaux projets prônant une consommation locale, raisonnée et mettant en avant l'économie circulaire. De tous les secteurs, c'est probablement dans l'alimentation que nous allons voir le plus de changement dans le sens d'une relocalisation et cela a déjà commencé, M. le président. Il faut que nous puissions offrir des produits à des prix acceptables. Il y a moyen de le faire et de nombreuses mesures contenues dans le budget peuvent permettre aux producteurs locaux de réinventer leur méthode de production et d'aller beaucoup plus loin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as spelt out in the Budget 2020-2021, both our recovery and the future growth will be built on a strong commitment towards an inclusive economy, one which supports entrepreneurship.

M. le président, il faut sauver les entreprises pour pouvoir sauver les emplois. Pour le faire, un gouvernement responsable doit accompagner autant que possible les entreprises qui sont en difficulté jusqu'à ce qu'ils reprennent leur envol, et ce gouvernement le fait avec ce budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are in Mauritius at a historic moment where the people, young and old, men and women, citizens, migrant workers and expats, all should come together and contribute for advancement of that country. And this situation reminds me of the very famous, inspiring and historical words of President Kennedy, I quote –

“Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to make a patriotic appeal to all Mauritians. Let us not ask what is in the Budget for me, let us ask what we can do to get this country out of this deep recession which is approaching. We are at wartime, not against foreign enemies or missiles, but against a tiny invisible microbe. This is no less a time than a World War III and our people need to come together and ask what they can do to mitigate the devastating effect

of the economic and social crisis that is enfolding. As someone who has been working in the private sector, I ask the same of all the stakeholders involved in business and enterprises, small and large, NGOs and charities, private sector and public sector, small planters and farmers, trade unions, let us all be soldiers at wartime and come together to fight this global crisis. As we are coming out of this health crisis and across the globe, there is talk of a new normal, or as some are putting it is a nearly normal or the next normal these days. Let us face it.

The COVID-19 pandemic will leave a lot of psychological and mental trauma in many people. Fear and anxiety have been at the forefront ever since this pandemic unfold. Fear for our health, fear for our well-being, of our loved ones, anxiety for the future of our jobs, anxiety for our businesses, anxiety for our small enterprises and anxiety for the schooling of our children.

So, what does this new normal really stand for? Every citizen and every enterprise, it is going to back to where we were in the pre-COVID era, or do we as responsible citizens and cooperation spouse the new normal as a new era with a certain change of mind-set and attitudes, and be the drivers and actors of that change. In the spirit of true citizens of this country, willing to make small and big contributions as individuals and society, let us, for example, become more conscious of our health and well-being. Let us eat and drink healthily and responsibly. Let us challenge ourselves and aim to bring down the rate of diabetes in the country. Let us lead a healthier lifestyle and bring down the hard conditions, and hypertension problem so predominantly high in the country. Let us become more responsible on the roads and reduce the mortality rate. Mauritius has one of the highest rates of road accidents of which are caused due human error or negligence. Let us stop these tragedies of repeated death on our road. Let us show more compassion and respect to others. Let us have empathy for our friends and foes, for our neighbours and to the strangers. Let our business all spouse a sense of stakeholders' society when no one is treated unfairly, be it the employee, the suppliers or the service provider.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate my appeal. Let us change our consumer habits and start producing our own. Let us use our back garden to produce our vegetables which have the double advantage of giving us food and also keeping us fit and healthy. Let us minimise the usage of pesticides in our fruits and vegetables. Let us think how we, as individuals, can contribute to global climate disaster, whether it is using less plastics or

packaging in our everyday lives or being conscious of the tap running unnecessarily whereas water is probably one of the scarce resources.

Buying sustainable products, all these little act will combine together to have a big impact on the planet and live a better world for our children and next generation. Let us become less dependent on cars. Let us walk or cycle or use public transport. Let us breathe the air, exercise and go green in everything we do.

The new normal should not be: ‘Oh, there is a major economic crisis, what will the Government do for me? Or, how will the Government get me out of this crisis? It should be about what each and every one of us will do to make this new normal meaningful.

Let this economic crisis be a really check for a major shift in societal attitudes in general.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No talking, please!

Mr Doolub: Let us not fall into the trap of going back to the old normal and instead consider this crisis as a wakeup call. We, the people, need to take our destiny in our hands and be the drivers of change by making small changes in our lives and the way we do things. The Government is doing its best. The world has applauded the management of the pandemic in Mauritius. The Government works for the people, with the people. Let the lessons of this pandemic and the economic crisis that is enfolding be the driver of change, and let us all be the actors of this change to make this new normal meaningful and sustainable so that the world becomes a better place for the next generation.

M. le président, je le disais au début de mon intervention, nous sommes en face d’une situation historique. Il ne faut pas gaspiller cette crise, M. le président. Elle est l’occasion rêvée pour donner l’impulsion nécessaire à des changements historiques.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

(6.16 p.m.)

Ms S. Anquetil (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal): M. le président, le gouvernement nous a présenté, le jeudi 4 juin, son budget national 2020-2021, pour

supposément affronter les retombées du cataclysme économique et sociale provoquées par la pandémie du COVID-19.

Avant de rentrer dans le vif du sujet, permettez-moi, M. le président, de dire quelques mots sur les pertes de vie dues au COVID-19. En effet, cette pandémie a été responsable de la mort de dix Mauriciens et, en aucun cas, il ne faut que ces personnes décédées soient oubliées. Nous nous attendions à ce que le gouvernement rassemble les dix familles endeuillées afin de rendre un hommage national aux victimes décédées du COVID-19, surtout que ces familles n'ont pu organiser un deuil dit classique. Ces familles méritent toutes nos sympathies en ces moments difficiles.

Je souhaite ouvrir mon discours maintenant sur la prime exceptionnelle de R 15,000 octroyées aux *front liners* du personnel hospitalier et aux policiers. Ces hommes et ces femmes qui ont pris d'énormes risques en exposant leur propre vie pendant cette pandémie. Cependant, il faudrait étendre cette prime aux caissières des supermarchés, aux éboueurs des mairies et districts, aux facteurs, à certains employés de la CWA et de la CEB. Ces personnes le méritent pleinement car elles étaient aussi engagées quotidiennement sur le champ de bataille face à ce cauchemar de virus. Ce serait, à mon avis, totalement injuste de ne pas témoigner de la reconnaissance envers ces personnes.

M. le président, pour revenir au sujet de notre débat, ce budget est illusoire et trompeur et il accuse un lourd déficit de 160 milliards. Déjà l'économie du pays était à bout de souffle avant le COVID-19 et cela on le sait depuis 2015 quand le ministre des Finances d'alors élu sur la promesse d'un deuxième miracle économique avait déserté le bateau en quatrième vitesse sans crier gare. Tous nos secteurs productifs étaient en panne ; le secteur du textile pour commencer, était déjà sous respiration artificielle, le tourisme en zéro croissance depuis des années, le secteur *offshore* n'a aucun sens d'orientation, le secteur des petites et moyennes entreprises en décroissance, l'entreprenariat des jeunes et des femmes sans espoir et l'investissement direct étranger dans les secteurs productifs était inexistant sauf dans le secteur de l'immobilier pour les étrangers. Et ne soyons pas dupes, c'est un créneau qui ne peut pas résorber le chômage. On parlait déjà d'une imminente récession au niveau mondial avec le conflit commercial entre la Chine et les États-Unis, le Brexit, l'élimination de l'AGOA en 2024 et le combat contre le changement climatique.

Au niveau de l'Afrique, M. le président, l'accord de Cotonou tire à sa fin alors que des pays amis tels que le Sénégal ou le Kenya se positionnent comme de redoutables

compétiteurs. Concernant le Continental Free Trade Area, l'Ile Maurice n'a toujours pas de stratégie claire sur comment en tirer profit d'un marché commun africain de 1.2 milliards d'habitants.

M. le président, qu'elle est la philosophie de ce budget? Dans ce budget, le gouvernement tente de sauver l'économie mauricienne à travers certaines mesures dans la construction, l'agriculture, le tourisme et les PME entre autres, et à limiter les dégâts. Mais parviendra-t-il? Pas sûr car il ne pourra éviter l'inévitable, la multiplication des licenciements dans les entreprises qui ne résisteront pas à la plus forte récession depuis la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale.

Aujourd'hui, le pays est surendetté car notre budget 2020-2021 accuse un lourd déficit de R 160 milliards, dont 60 milliards provenant des réserves de la banque centrale. Certains diront que c'est une pratique normale mais il faut de la transparence dans le mécanisme. Par exemple, ce n'est toujours pas clair comment la *Mauritius Investment Corporation* va octroyer les fonds pour aider les entreprises en difficulté, surtout les petites et moyennes entreprises. Le pays s'enfoncé-t-il dans la misère? L'avenir fait peur. Est-ce que ces mesures annoncées seront suffisantes pour relancer l'investissement et l'économie après la pandémie? Trop tôt pour le dire, M. le président, car la seule certitude demeure l'incertitude.

M. le président, il est un fait que la crise économique historique ne fait que commencer. Sommes-nous conscient de ce que sera l'ampleur du choc avec les licenciements massifs, les pertes de revenus et d'investissements qui s'abattront sur nous dans les prochains mois et la crise sociale qui va enchaîner?

Pour ne pas arranger les affaires, depuis le 07 mai, en plein confinement, Maurice est inscrit sur la liste noire des centres financiers de la commission européenne pour blanchiment d'argent et financement du terrorisme et le gouvernement, déjà six ans au pouvoir, blâme toujours l'ancien régime.

M. le président, un seul mot résonne sur les lèvres de tous les Mauriciens et Mauriciennes : chômage. C'est la première préoccupation, voire la principale inquiétude de notre peuple. Le chiffre spectaculaire et effrayant de 100,000 chômeurs d'ici la fin de l'année, avancé par le ministre des Finances inquiète et traumatise. La question qui s'impose : quel sera le destin de ces 100,000 chômeurs quand le tsunami de licenciements frappera le pays? Ce chiffre, ne l'oublions pas, c'est un cinquième de notre *workforce*. Il y a le chômage,

le chômage technique, le sous emplois, le travail à distance avec un salaire plus bas. Le gouvernement a-t-il pris le soin d'analyser toutes les sous composantes de notre population active? L'inquiétude est d'autant plus forte par rapport à la main-d'œuvre qui travaille dans le secteur informel car ils n'ont quasiment pas de protection sociale. Ils font majoritairement de petits boulots et vivre au jour le jour, souvent payé au jour où a la semaine d'un emploi occasionnel. Le gouvernement a le devoir et doit être en mesure de publier les chiffres exacts du secteur informel et d'indiquer comment le budget va répondre aux défis que fera face au secteur qui comprend principalement des femmes et des jeunes.

En sus de ces futurs chômeurs, il y a un nombre de jeunes diplômés qui vont se déverser sur le marché du travail dans peu de temps. Ces jeunes se retrouveront en difficulté pour trouver leurs premiers emplois. Les nouveaux postes dans les nouveaux secteurs d'activités annoncés dans le budget, n'existent pas encore et ce n'est pas non plus pour demain. Comment motiver ces jeunes? Allons-nous nous enfoncer dans une dépression sociale et économique? Les jeunes, en général, ont été oubliés dans ce budget national.

M. le président, le chômage est souvent vécu comme un deuil. Quand on perd son emploi, c'est comme perdre son identité sociale. Je voudrais ce soir parler de la souffrance de ces personnes qui se retrouvent du jour au lendemain sur le pavé. Le chômage est une terrible épreuve, un traumatisme incroyable. Le chômage détruit la famille car les risques de séparation sont énormes. Quel sera l'impact sur l'avenir scolaire de ces enfants dont les parents se retrouveront au chômage? Inévitablement le tissu social de notre pays va se déchirer. Je suis très inquiète. M. le président, j'ai peur.

Après la mort, le COVID-19 va répandre la pauvreté dans beaucoup de pays d'Afrique subsaharienne et d'autres régions dans le monde, et nous ne serons pas épargnés à Maurice.

M. le président, je voudrais maintenant aborder le volet femmes, enfants et *seniors*. Concernant la violence domestique, il est un fait que les victimes de violence domestique sont les plus grands perdants de ce budget. Tous les gouvernements ont, dans le passé, contribué pour durcir la loi afin de protéger les victimes mais, aujourd'hui, le problème reste entier. À mon grand regret, je dois l'avouer que je suis profondément déçue car je m'attendais à un éventail de stratégies pour aider tous les acteurs de la société mauricienne à mieux agir en matière de violence domestique surtout que le ministre dispose de centaines de milliards, donc le budget requis pour apporter des mesures radicales.

M. le président, la violence domestique est un problème complexe et le pays ne peut plus attendre. On est dans l'urgence. Il faut s'attaquer, sans délai aux amendements de la loi sur la violence domestique sinon on va droit sur les récifs. C'est une priorité nationale.

Actuellement, le protocole pour les cas de violence domestique est dispersé. Chaque service agit chacun de son côté. Entre la station de police pour le signalement, les services de santé, le centre d'accueil et la Cour de justice. Trop souvent les victimes ne savent pas où chercher de l'aide et elles ne connaissent pas leurs droits. Il n'y a donc pas de structure homogène et une approche holistique pour s'attaquer à ce fléau silencieux.

Étant donné que les victimes se retrouvent à entreprendre plusieurs démarches en même temps, un *One Stop Department* est nécessaire, indispensable et s'impose. Ainsi, dès que la victime rapporte des actes de violence domestique sur sa personne, elle pourrait être immédiatement examinée par un médecin et pourra par la suite déposer plainte sur place et être acheminée vers un centre d'hébergement d'urgence ou vers un hôpital si sa vie est en danger.

Je fais un appel pressant, au nom du respect de la vie qui est sacrée à faire de la protection des victimes de violences domestiques, la priorité des priorités. Il faut que cela s'arrête. Cessons d'en parler et agissons.

Je pense, M. le président, qu'on est arrivé à un point où il faut cesser avec les slogans. On est arrivé à un point où il faut cesser avec la théorie mais mettre en pratique des mécanismes et des structures solides et efficaces et surtout mobiliser des moyens financiers conséquents pour lutter sérieusement contre les différentes formes de violence. Trop d'obstacles ralentissent cette lutte efficace.

Je voudrais faire quelques propositions, une dizaine, pas beaucoup –

- (i) cela passe par une campagne d'éducation et d'information agressive avec des hommes et des femmes de toutes les communautés avec l'aide du comité des sages, le gouvernement bien sûr, les ONG et les Forces Vives;
- (ii) la formation des jeunes dans les écoles primaires et secondaires. La sensibilisation se fait aujourd'hui qu'auprès des adolescents. À mon avis, il faudrait la faire beaucoup plus tôt et commencer à inculquer l'égalité du genre dès le berceau. Il va de soi que cela passe d'abord par la formation des enseignants;

- (iii) la procédure judiciaire dans le cas des violences domestiques est beaucoup trop longue, en moyenne deux ans et cela doit être revu;
- (iv) l'introduction du bracelet électronique anti-rapprochement pour les conjoints violents;
- (v) l'interdiction d'acquisition ou de détention d'arme à feu aux agresseurs;
- (vi) la digitalisation des informations sur la violence domestique; M. le président, tous les services des ministères concernés doivent d'être reliés tel que les ministères de la sécurité sociale, de l'égalité du genre, de la santé et le département de la police. Nous sommes une petite île, ne l'oublions pas et ce genre de mesures vient seulement si nous avons la volonté d'agir;
- (vii) la construction d'hébergements d'urgence pour les victimes dont la vie est en danger ou mises à la porte du domicile familial. Le pays ne dispose pas assez d'hébergements d'urgence;
- (viii) la galvanisation du *hotline* 139. Le numéro d'écoute nationale dédiée à la violence domestique est inconnu de beaucoup de Mauriciens et de Mauriciennes;
- (ix) la réhabilitation des agresseurs, c'est très bien que le budget fasse mention de rendre obligatoire le *Perpetrators Rehabilitation Programme*. On durcit la loi, on punit. Que se passe-t-il à la sortie de prison? Quel encadrement spécifique pour la réhabilitation vers la société et la réhabilitation vers la cellule familiale. S'il n'y a pas de suivi, c'est l'échec, l'agresseur récidive, et
- (x) enfin, il y a un déficit dans la formation des policiers et des magistrats afin de comprendre l'urgence d'agir. Il faut y remédier sans délai, surtout dans un environnement post-COVID très fragile.

M. le président, la féminisation de la pauvreté prend des proportions alarmantes dans notre société. Souvent les femmes hésitent à dénoncer le conjoint violent car elles dépendent de ce dernier économiquement.

Pas de doute que dans les quelques mois, la majorité des emplois perdus se trouveront dans les secteurs où les femmes sont les plus nombreuses. Les statistiques sur le chômage montrent que le ratio s'élève à trois femmes - un homme (3F - 1H).

Le financement bancaire de la banque de développement aux femmes entrepreneurs n'a pas fait sensation, M. le président, car, dans un passé récent, plus précisément en avril 2019, le *Women Entrepreneuriat Scheme* avait été lancé pour supposément permettre aux

femmes entrepreneurs d'emprunter jusqu'à R 500,000 à un taux d'intérêt de 3 % par an pour financer un projet. Ce serait intéressant que le ministre des Finances nous dise combien de projets ont été approuvés sous ce programme. Les femmes entrepreneurs dans les médias ont expliqué les multiples obstacles rencontrés pour accéder à ce type de financement. Concernant la DBM, pourquoi ne pas mettre un comptoir d'information et d'encadrement dédié aux femmes désirant monter un *business*.

Avant de clore sur le volet femmes, impossible de faire l'impasse sur le sort des familles squatters de Pointe aux Sables, Curepipe et Riambel. L'île Maurice a été choquée de voir ces images douloureuses et surréalistes en plein confinement. Alors qu'en Europe, des milliers de migrants, qui avaient investi plusieurs espaces, ont été pris en charge par les services de l'État en plein confinement; ils ont été hébergés dans des gymnases et d'autres locaux. Quelle contradiction quand le ministre des Finances disait l'autre jour à la télévision face aux journalistes que l'État, c'est la population. Ici le gouvernement n'a pas voulu trouver des solutions temporaires. Le gouvernement a préféré déployer les forces de l'ordre pour démolir les abris de fortune en plein confinement et en période hivernale. Voir des femmes et des bébés, dont certains dans un état de santé compliquée, dormir en plein air, c'est tout simplement déplorable de la part du gouvernement d'agir ainsi même si tout le monde sait qu'ils étaient dans l'illégalité.

Pourquoi n'avoir pas agi autrement? En mettant à leurs dispositions un abri temporaire comme cela se fait en période cyclonique ou de catastrophe naturelle. Je ne comprends pas la logique. D'un côté le gouvernement dit que ce budget, c'est justement pour protéger ceux au bas de l'échelle alors que plus loin, on jette les familles entières dans la rue.

Le *Children's Bill* tant attendu et annoncé depuis des années, n'a pas été mentionné cette fois dans le budget. J'ai cherché.

M. le président, il nous faut une véritable politique de l'enfance associant tous les partenaires au service de la protection des enfants afin de mieux coordonner les actions des services de la justice, de la Police, des services sociaux, de l'éducation, des ONG et d'autres associations intéressées et mettre en avant l'intelligence collective au service de la protection des enfants. C'est un grave problème national qui dépasse le cadre politique et je suis certaine que l'opposition n'hésitera pas à apporter sa contribution afin de trouver des solutions durables sur ce plan. Il y a urgence et nous sommes prêts à aider.

M. le président, je voudrais dire quelques mots sur les abris pour enfants communément appelés *shelters*. Dans ce budget, on apprend que le *Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter* pour les garçons de plus de 13 ans sera rénové. Ce que l'on ne dit pas, c'est que le contrat de ce même *Shelter* accordé par appel d'offres au *Human Service Trust* a été interrompu depuis 2015-2016 et le ministère a été incapable de trouver un autre gestionnaire pour faire opérer le *Shelter*. Dans le budget 2018-2019, mention était faite pour la construction d'un *Model Shelter* à Belle Mare au coût de R 60 millions. C'était une proposition valable et ambitieuse sachant qu'il y a un gros problème de surpopulation dans les abris pour enfants et qu'il fallait trouver une solution pour décongestionner ses abris. C'est triste que ce projet soit tombé à l'eau. Y a-t-il vraiment une volonté politique pour soutenir ces enfants dans nos abris?

Je voudrais ce soir parler des orphelins qui ont perdu leurs deux parents. Ces orphelins sont placés et encadrés par l'État jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans. Ne serait-il pas temps de s'inspirer du modèle du gouvernement indien qui offre un petit studio à ceux de plus de 18 ans le temps qu'il trouve du travail et puisse dépendre d'eux-mêmes financièrement?

Les enfants de rue font face à beaucoup de problèmes de violence, drogue et prostitution, il faut les soutenir.

M. le président, nous avons la responsabilité d'améliorer également la qualité de vie de nos enfants en situation de handicap. Les enfants en situation de handicap disposent de capacités différentes. Le très attendu *Children's Bill* devrait aussi permettre de lutter contre les nombreuses discriminations contre ces enfants qui méritent de mener une vie décente garantissant leur dignité et favorisant leur autonomie. Selon mes informations, M. le président, les normes et standards qui existent dans les établissements spéciaux gérés par le gouvernement ne respectent pas les principes de base de l'éducation spécialisée. Le gouvernement se contente d'un seul programme, d'un seul cursus pour tous les enfants à besoins spéciaux. Cette approche uniforme ne marchera jamais. Les obstacles sont donc multiples dans les écoles, dans les transports en commun et dans les lieux publics. Les enfants en situation de handicap méritent plus de considération. La formation des professeurs également pour pouvoir aider ces enfants s'impose.

Je voudrais, ce soir, faire un plaidoyer pour que l'État octroie des bourses également aux enfants en situation de handicap démarré sous le régime travailliste. Beaucoup de pays

comme la France, le Canada offre des bourses d'études aux enfants en situation de handicap, il est grandement temps d'en prendre l'exemple.

Concernant nos seniors, il ne suffit pas de maintenir la pension universelle et de doubler le nombre de vaccins. Le vieillissement de la population est un phénomène mondial qui touche le monde et notre pays n'est pas épargné. C'est un défi majeur que le gouvernement doit soutenir avec des politiques claires pour accompagner nos seniors dans leurs besoins quotidiens de santé, de sécurité, de la nécessité de vivre seul et de maisons de retraite. Par ailleurs, on ne peut pas faire l'impasse sur le problème d'Alzheimer, le budget 2020-2021 n'y fait pas mention. Il n'y a rien de nouveau pour les loisirs de nos seniors. Le centre de loisirs à Riambel date du budget 2014-2015 du gouvernement travailliste, juste en passant. *An Elderly Centre* situé à la Marie, flambant neuf, est resté fermé depuis 2015, soit cinq ans.

M. le président, avant de conclure, je voudrais dire quelques mots sur ma circonscription. Tous les habitants de Vacoas/Floréal vous diront leur grande déception en ce qui concerne le développement inexistant dans notre circonscription ces cinq dernières années. En effet, la circonscription a été tout simplement négligée et délaissée. En revanche, à la veille des élections, l'allocation des contrats s'est effectuée dans la précipitation pour les drains et les trottoirs entre autres.

Les mesures prioritaires au No.16. D'abord les travaux du Metro Express sur l'avenue Sivananda à Floréal ont fait beaucoup de dégâts. Les habitants de la région qui sont menacés d'expropriation de leur terrain attendent toujours une rencontre avec le ministre, l'honorable Steven Obeegadoo. Il y a un problème d'embouteillage monstre à la Croisée Diolle vers La Marie. Aux heures de pointe tous les matins et les après-midis, les habitants de la région perdent trop de temps dans les transports.

Suite aux inondations des dernières années, plusieurs régions ont été affectées comme La Marie, Glen Park entre autres, il reste encore des travaux à faire pour améliorer le système de drainage. Plusieurs routes n'ont pas été asphaltées depuis des années, les travaux à Pont La Savanne bloqués, proche du terrain de football à La Marie, les habitants demandent un trottoir car il y a un gros problème d'insécurité pour les piétons. Les travaux au Pont Lolo se font toujours attendre. A la veille des élections, ils se sont empressés de mettre un panneau pour informer le public que les travaux vont démarrer. Sept mois après les élections, le panneau est toujours là et rien n'a été entrepris. À Camp Belin, lorsqu'il pleut, les habitants

attendent sur l'arrêt du bus dans la boue. Un bâtiment, je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, pour les personnes âgées à La Marie, dont la construction a été complétée en 2014, est resté fermé pendant cinq ans. La liste est trop longue et le temps fait défaut.

Pour conclure, M. le président, des moments très difficiles et douloureux, voire désastreux, surtout sur le plan économique et social, nous guettent à l'horizon. Il serait important pour le gouvernement de se recentrer sur ses missions essentielles. La faillite observée dans plusieurs domaines dans son précédent mandat, devrait le rendre beaucoup plus innovateur, stratégique, réaliste et pointu dans la mise en œuvre de ses ambitions. Je fais un appel solennel au gouvernement pour rectifier le tir en prenant en considération les jeunes, les plus vulnérables et certains *front liners* qui ont été sacrifié dans ce budget. Il faudrait rappeler au gouvernement que nous avons eu deux années de contraction négative à Maurice et que depuis qu'ils sont en commande, il n'y a pas eu de croissance. Il ne faudrait pas que la pandémie du COVID-19 devienne une excuse nationale.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Koonjoo-Shah!

(6.47 p.m.)

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to first of all put on record my appreciation of the Budget which was presented in such a masterly fashion by our Minister of Finance, hon. Renganaden Padayachy.

Never before in our lifetime have we had to face this terribly damaging virus which is causing mayhem to the economy of the world, and claiming so many human lives. Hon. Padayachy has shown us with his budget, that our desire to overcome the daily struggle of life is largely dependent on our ability to persevere through even the toughest adversity-persevere with imagination, creativity, and the indomitable will to never give up. His budget is living proof of this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am fully aware of the fact that the Opposition will, as usual, seize this budgetary exercise as yet another opportunity to launch a volley of criticisms against the Government, which is fine, as this is what we have come to expect the Opposition to do. We nevertheless would welcome the few comments that could be constructive, but unfortunately, most of the comments will be of the hackneyed variety and designed to play to the gallery and to appeal to the basic emotions of people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the easiest thing in the world to just sit down and harp on all day long, whilst rarely providing a better alternative to the ones put forward by my hon. friend, the Minister of Finance. We are still waiting for someone from the other side to answer a very simple question: faced with the most dangerous and real threat to our economy in our lifetime, what would you have done differently? What we have heard so far, here, in this temple of democracy, this august Assembly, and at times outside as well, are the ramblings of people so hungry for power that they will cling to any straw of opportunity to only criticise whilst displaying their impotence and inability to provide any realistic alternatives.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me remind this House - and those watching these debates - of some facts, that the Opposition finds so inconvenient that it seems forced to have to camouflage them with cheap shots that got nothing to do and does nothing to address the fundamental problems that we are currently facing.

The facts, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, it was this Government, led by the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, that had the audacity to implement a scheme that many only paid lip service to but have never shown any desire or capacity to implement: a minimum wage scheme which has lifted many of our citizens out of the dire poverty they faced every day. This is one of the clearest examples of many, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of how our Prime Minister not only talks about poverty but has actually done something that no other political leader has ever done to bring real change to the lives of those at the bottom of the ladder.

Fact, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the near 300% increase in the pension of that generation that has contributed so much to create the wealth of this island. People tend to forget that only six years ago, our senior citizens, to whom we all owe so much, had to survive on a measly Rs3,000 a month. We were mocked by the Opposition that the first substantial increase in old age pension, which we promised before the 2014 general elections, could not be done, and the results, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, have conclusively shown how wrong they were. Even when this Government announced that it shall further raise the old age pension to Rs9,000 a month after the last elections, the Opposition again mocked us, but this time tried to copy our proposals by throwing a higher figure out of thin air. And let me affirm, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, that the population saw right through this desperate, pathetic and irredeemably crass attempt of the Opposition just to bag votes. Not very collegiate attitude, I am sure you would agree, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir!

Fact, when the Coronavirus galloped through the entire world, we could have done like many countries around us and do nothing for the poor and the unemployed. Instead, the Minister of Finance, with the complete support of the Prime Minister, implemented a scheme whereby everyone in need would at least receive the basic foodstuff that we all depend on, and, at the same time, topped that up with a monthly allowance of Rs5,100 for those who have lost their jobs since the outbreak of COVID-19. Of course, those on the other side would like to carp about the achievements of this Government would say, 'it is not enough, it was not enough'. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me ask them two simple questions –

First question: why didn't you on the other side offer any alternatives to the one proposed and implemented by my hon. colleague, Minister of Finance, and by this Government, in order to stave off the hunger faced by many of our citizens?

Second question: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the other side give us one example, just one, when you had implemented anything even vaguely resembling these measures during times of economic necessity? The answer clearly, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that they cannot.

We have often heard the Opposition parties mentioned 'unemployment allowance' whenever they are in Opposition, of course. But, history will recall that they have never offered even one cent to the unemployed. This Government, with the Budget presented with great professionalism and refreshing intelligence by our Minister of Finance, has shown once again that words mean nothing unless they are followed by concrete actions. I wholeheartedly welcome the scheme to give a monthly allowance of Rs5,100 to the unemployed for the next six months when hopefully the economic emergency would have run its course and more jobs are created. But, once again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the perpetually unsatisfied on the other side will moan, "it is not enough". We do live in a weird world where the unemployed who used to receive nothing will now benefit from Rs5,100 a month, and that is still considered unsatisfactory by those who complain all the time but never do anything substantial for the unemployed when they are in Government. As they say, words are cheap but what matters is when you match your words with tangible action, as this Government has consistently done to date.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my ministerial colleagues will speak about the budget proposals for their own mandates and I for one do not wish to over egg their puddings by mentioning them over here. But only the churlish and those of bad faith will refuse to applaud the tremendously innovative proposals by our Minister of Finance, for helping our planters,

either in terms of the substantial increase in subsidy for seeds, increasing the price for every ton of sugar cane, or the bringing into agricultural use the many acres of land that could serve to feed our population. My ministerial colleague and parliamentary partner in Constituency No. 7, hon. Maneesh Gobin, will be enormously pleased that projects that are dear to him will now come to fruition because of the combined efforts of the Minister of Finance and our Prime Minister. Lest we forget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister has himself previously handled with great efficiency, I must say, the Ministry of Agriculture, and he, therefore, knows better than most of us the problems faced by our planters.

The Budget proposals for Agriculture have been welcomed by all the planters and this will add more power to their elbows when they start digging and planting the food that we all need. We really need to stop depending or depend less and less on the importation of food, and the budget proposals will go a long way towards achieving the goal of planting and growing most of what we eat.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also welcome the Rs15,000 bonus given to those who, for 24 hours every day, have faced this virus with incredible courage, and we shed a tear for the unfortunate demise of Dr. Bruno Cheong who died in the line of duty. We also sympathise with the families of the other 9 persons who succumbed to this illness. Doctors, nurses, police officers were those who faced this deadly virus every day whilst performing their duty, which is to protect us from COVID-19, and it is only right that the people, as represented by this Government, have shown this token of appreciation by awarding this bonus to them.

With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I now come to my Ministry and the proposals in the Budget.

Putting our women at the heart of our socio-economic re-construct

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the preceding budgetary measures, including those enunciated in this present Budget, confirm the political will to invest intelligently in our human capital. The majority of this human capital is derived from our women, Mr Speaker Sir.

All the measures spelt out in this Budget, ranging from the massive investment in construction industry, provision of grants and loans, education, eradication of poverty, ICT to the public transformation strategy, they all have their gender dimensions. We all know that we have a long way to go to achieve gender parity in all the sectors of our economic life.

Hence, the need to take into consideration the gender dynamics so that interventions are effective in the attainment of gender equality.

As rightly said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary-General, I quote –

“If development is not engendered, development will be endangered”.

Government has done a lot during the past 6 years to reduce the gender gap. Our former Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, have always been firm advocates and proponents of gender equality.

My Ministry has been continuously working with all Ministries, Private Sector, Civil Society and Academia, in advocating and providing technical guidance for gender mainstreaming in policy formulation and interventions as a pre-requisite in ensuring sustainable development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the immediate initiatives will be to conduct a situational analysis of the impact of COVID-19 from a gender perspective. This will allow us to review our Gender policies, formulate more effective Gender sensitive evidence-based policy decisions and develop sustainable strategies for the future. This being said, my Ministry will come up with a revised National Gender Policy, which will set up the principal guidelines that will underpin the Government’s commitment to integrate gender into all development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in Post COVID-19.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry, as National Gender Machinery, will ensure the implementation of the main actions of the new Policy, through the National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming, which I am personally chairing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, emerging numbers indicate that the COVID-19 has been more lethal for men, but women are taking the bigger socio-economic hits from the global pandemic. According to the UNDP, the societal and economic consequences are not impacting everyone equally, but are hitting the most vulnerable the hardest and exacerbating existing social and economic inequalities.

Women are overrepresented in precarious employment, including in the informal sector, where their benefits and protection are inadequate. Therefore, I strongly commend and welcome the budgetary provision made for Rs200 m. for loans to women entrepreneurs at a concessional rate of 0.5 per cent per annum. This measure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is

unprecedented, but timely and most appropriate and is, in itself, a revolution to stimulate economic empowerment and the entrepreneurship of Women. This measure will, undoubtedly, enable many existing women entrepreneurs to adopt innovative ways and means to develop and maintain their businesses. On the other hand, it is considered as an incentive for potential women entrepreneurs to come forward with smart ideas for business development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that I will set up a Committee, to be chaired by the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry, and involving high officials of my Ministry to spearhead the successful implementation of this budgetary measure. This Committee will be enlarged to comprise representatives of other Ministries, Government Departments, Parastatal Bodies, the Development Bank of Mauritius, Associations of Women Entrepreneurs and other key stakeholders of the Private Sector. The aim, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to come up with a Blue Print on the successful achievement of Women Entrepreneurship in the Post-COVID Era. To that end, my Ministry will soon be hosting an “*Assise de L’Entreprenariat Féminin*”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Women Entrepreneur Council (NVEC) will spearhead a number of initiatives to promote women entrepreneurship. In a bid to ensure that the vulnerable women can stand on their own feet and be economically empowered, my Ministry will be implementing a project entitled “*Atelier des Métiers*”, which aims at equipping unemployed and vulnerable women with the relevant skills/tools and other related support so as to enable them to engage in income-generating activities. The project will be implemented on a pilot basis initially and women will be provided with the relevant space infrastructure to operate in clusters. The products manufactured by women entrepreneurs will be continuously promoted through the NVEC Facebook page on a regular basis. ICT-based capacity building programmes will be provided to Women Entrepreneurs in different batches to develop their competencies in e-commerce and e-marketing. Regional Small Sales Exhibitions will be organised in Strategic Locations. B to B Events will be organised with representatives of Hypermarkets/Supermarkets as a minimum shelf space of 10% will be reserved for local manufacturers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this will provide an opportunity for women entrepreneurs to promote their locally-made products and boost up their enterprises. Informative workshops will be organised on a regional basis in collaboration with various stakeholders such as the DBM, the MauBank, Made in Moris, FAREI to sensitise women on new budgetary measures

2020/2021 and new business opportunities. Of course, these initiatives will include women entrepreneurs from Rodrigues as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry will make provision for all-inclusive infrastructures, namely, at the levels of Community Centres, Women Empowerment Centres, Social Welfare Centres, across the country to provide opportunities for women be at the heart of small business development, social enterprising and community development in a wider spectrum of fields.

My Ministry will also be setting up a Virtual Learning and Dialogue Forum to connect as many women as possible from all walks of life, virtually for a constant dialogue on issues that affect them or are of interest to them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while considering to provide a number of market outlets for our women entrepreneurs locally, my Ministry will also explore market opportunities that the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), may offer to our women entrepreneurs.

Notwithstanding the above, I wish to highlight that my Ministry, with the technical support of the COMESA, is presently facilitating the implementation of the 50 million African Women Speak Project, a regional initiative funded by the African Development Bank. This project, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, aims at creating a dynamic networking digital platform for women entrepreneurs, which would enable them to connect with one another in ways that would foster peer-to-peer learning; knowledge sharing, mentoring and sharing of information as well. It also provides them with access to trade, finance and market opportunities amongst themselves and with women entrepreneurs of the African region. I wish to share that we are at the stage of uploading information on the Platform and it is expected that during the next few months, women entrepreneurs will be able to access this information.

Addressing Gender Based Violence

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, worldwide, with the outbreak of the pandemic of COVID-19, many people have been trapped at home with abusive partners due to lockdown. Projections show that if violence increases by 20 per cent worldwide during lockdown, there would be an additional 15 million cases of intimate partner violence in 2020 for an average lockdown period of 3 months, going up to 31 million cases for 6 months, 45 million for an average lockdown of 9 months, and a staggering 61 million if the average lockdown period were to be as long as one year.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, Mauritius was not spared from this global phenomenon. From 20 March to 13 May 2020, 349 cases of domestic violence were addressed. In spite of the high number of cases dealt with, it is good to note that Mauritius did not experience an upsurge in cases of reported Domestic Violence as compared to other countries. This may be accounted for mainly by the arsenal of targeted and timely customised measures deployed by My Ministry to address the problem of gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence during the period of lockdown. And, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as much as Opposition would have relished in a confirmation of a surge in domestic violence at the national level, I am pleased - as they should also be - that we were able to pre-empt and cater for this global ill during the past couple of months successfully.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the nation-wide confinement initially from 20 March 2020, my Ministry put in place a series of measures to ensure that there was no disruption in the effective service delivery to respond to cases of domestic violence which is not only an essential service, but it is also a national priority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Family Welfare and Protection Unit, therefore, operated on a 24/7 basis to ensure that all cases reported through our hotline were immediately attended to in terms of assessment of cases, ensuring of the safety of the victims, referral of cases to Police stations, referral of cases to psychologists for further support; accompanying victims in respective Police stations/Police Family Protection Units for application for protection order, for example, referring victims for accommodation in shelters as and when applicable. And I must add that Our sustained IEC campaign on family values and solidarity has also been effective.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I would like to point out and express my sincere gratitude to the Police Force and the Judiciary which spared no efforts, when needed, to ensure that our services were not disrupted during this confinement. It highlighted the effectiveness of institutional collaboration and solidarity to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The results that we, as a small nation, have achieved also confirm the strength of our family value system and the resilience of our families in the face of adversity. These, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are factors which my Ministry will use as building blocks for our post COVID-19 recovery strategies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Government Programme 2020-2024, it is stipulated that Government will be relentless in its fight against all kinds of violence, including

domestic violence. A High-Level Committee on Gender-based Violence, chaired by the hon. Prime Minister and comprising several Members of Cabinet, has not only been set up, but has already met to formulate new strategies to eliminate this social scourge, which includes, strengthening of the legal framework and providing victims of domestic violence with a wider range of help and support, amongst others.

The measures announced in the Budget 2020-2021 to address gender-based violence, in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, translates the vision of this Government. Gender-based violence is a phenomenon which is deeply rooted in gender inequality and considered to be one of the most serious human rights violations within all societies. Though, both women and men experience GBV, the majority of victims happened to be women. One of the most common forms of GBV affecting women is domestic violence. In 1997, the first time a specific legislation, namely, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act was enacted to protect spouses against domestic violence. We have seen during the meeting of the High-Level Committee on GBV that domestic violence cases not only cause breakdowns in a harmonious family life, but they also cost the economy loss of income of up to Rs2 billion and this is a call for action on a number of fronts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should not look at resolving GBV from a victim perspective only. It is also important to address the issue of perpetrators. Those persons most probably need help as well. However, no Intervention Order is provided in the Act to enable Magistrates to order perpetrators to attend rehabilitation programmes and as such, there is no legal obligation to report on compliance at the moment.

Given that there are other key stakeholders who are concerned with this legislation, my Ministry will shortly hold consultations in Mauritius and Rodrigues with regard to amendments that need to be brought to the Act. One of the major amendments required in the Act will be to make it mandatory for perpetrators to follow rehabilitation programmes as this can have a significant impact on reduction of GBV.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry, through the UNDP, has benefitted from technical assistance of an International Consultant from Australia for the elaboration of the Perpetrators Rehabilitation Programme. Consultations and training of facilitators have already been conducted both in Rodrigues and Mauritius. Pending the amendments to be brought to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, my Ministry, in collaboration with other stakeholders, is ready to pilot the Programme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the importance of having evidence-based information, gender disaggregated data and up-to-date readily available information on the status of GBV in Mauritius has been coined as being a vital aspect for informed policy making and monitoring and evaluation. Subsequently, as per its Strategic Plan, my Ministry, with the support of the UNDP again, is proceeding with the setting up of an Observatory on GBV in Mauritius. The setting up of this Observatory is seen as a much needed progression to strengthen the data capture on gender-based violence in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, due to lack of baseline indicators, no comparison is possible for monitoring and evaluation purposes to identify gaps in policy/programme implementation, with a view to achieving the target of “eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”, that is the Sustainable Development Goal No. 5.

The setting up of such an Observatory will lead to harmonised data collection for informed policy making and monitoring and evaluation of initiatives on GBV. This platform will enable the setting up of a holistic and transparent mechanism to strengthen collaboration and understanding of the actions carried out in matters related to care for victims; evolution of gender-based violence in Mauritius and subsequently elaboration of future public policies to eradicate this serious social problem which constitutes the worst example of the inequality suffered by women.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, IEC Campaigns are also important to sensitise the public at large on the scourge of domestic violence and to inform them on the services available. For a greater impact, my Ministry will sustain its IEC campaigns by making use of innovative IEC strategies, using different media platforms such as the TV, social media, radio and other technologies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the family is often considered to be the nursery of the next generation and with this Budget, we are confident that family will become an incubator of human flourishing of personal and economic success. My Ministry will also come up with a number of programmes that will build up on strengthening our family values and our family resilience.

My Ministry is also envisaging to launch a new initiative known as the “*Accompagnement des Familles*” Programme. It aims at strengthening individuals and communities by enhancing family values, improving ethics and character education while, at

the same time, equipping individuals with appropriate tools to enhance communication and improve human relationships.

Recognising the fact that religious organisations have all the necessary networks and structures for implementing interventions aimed at alleviating social ills, my Ministry is planning to launch the InterFaith Forum. This Forum will be called to contribute towards working together with a view of reducing the incidence of domestic violence as well as strengthening family ties.

Currently, temporary and emergency accommodation is provided to victims of domestic violence in shelters owned and managed by NGOs. It is high time for a Government-owned shelter, which will not only provide emergency accommodation to victims of GBV, but also empower victims through training and apprenticeship so that they can become economically viable and independent. The shelter would also cater for their medical and psycho-social needs as well as provide nursery facilities for working women victims.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government and my Ministry, in particular, is fully aware that the pandemic has created a situation, whereby due to the lockdown, children may be impacted negatively by increased emotional and psychological pressures and the call to protect their rights become a priority. Though human rights law exceptionally permits measures that may restrict the enjoyment of certain human rights in order to protect public health, our focus has been to protect the lives of our children first and also to ensure that access to health and education is not denied to them during this difficult period.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning access to education, provision of online learning should not exacerbate existing inequalities and should not pose challenges for children who have limited or no access to technology or the Internet. I am pleased to note that the Minister of Finance has made provisions to financing facilities to households for acquisition of IT equipment for educational purpose through the DBM. Moreover, some 2,570 tablets will be provided to students of Grades 10 to 13 for families in the existing SRM and free broadband internet facilities will be extended to an additional 5,000 families under the existing SRM, including 2,000 families in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government made provisions during the lockdown to ensure that the most vulnerable families, including children were fed with nutritious food, as many

of those children received their meals through school feeding schemes. Provision of basic services for children has been maintained.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, confinement may have exposed children to increased physical and psychological violence at home, or forced children to stay in homes that are overcrowded and lack the minimum conditions of habitability. My Ministry maintained its core child protection services and ensured that they remained functioning and available on a 24/7 basis, including home visits whenever necessary, and provided professional psychological services for children living in lockdown conditions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as you are aware, my Ministry is working to end violence against children and will continue to advocate for and invest in effective Child Protection Solutions and as rightly said, Government's Budget 2020-2021 has given notable importance to improving the rights of the child.

The Budget has emphasised on the setting-up of additional Child Protection Services outstations, in the Districts of Grand-Port, Moka, Pamplemousses and Plaine Wilhems.

In order to ensure Accessibility and Proximity Service Delivery in respect of Child Protection, the Child Development Unit (CDU) of my Ministry currently operates through a network of six outstations and a new outstation will further decentralise the services of the CDU and further promote service proximity and ensure the safety and well-being of children through prompt interventions in reported cases of child abuse. The new Outstations will further decentralize the services of the CDU and further promote service proximity, and ensure the safety and well-being of children through prompt interventions in reported cases of child abuse.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as stipulated in the Government Programme 2020-2024, children are the future of our country and the protection of their rights is a priority. To this end, a new Children's Bill will be introduced imminently. The aim of the Bill is to provide for a comprehensive Children's Act to consolidate the various pieces of legislation on children's rights and to harmonize all laws in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Bill would help promote better care, protection and services to the children of the Republic of Mauritius. The Bill would also promote the best interests, safety and well-being of the child and build-up improved and constructive physical, mental and emotional health.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, childhood is a critical period in any human's life, which marks the foundation of the personality and capacity for emotional resilience of any person.

In this difficult time, let us all commit to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on those who deserve protection the most and that is our children.

From the budget funds allocated to shelters for children, it is clear that the Government's priority is to harness the collective efforts of the population to achieve an inclusive Mauritius. By investing in children in shelters, it is made clear that Mauritius is a country that values its people as its main asset, through empowerment, enhanced social inclusiveness and equality of opportunity. Despite the difficult economic and pandemic situation, the budget allocated to shelters has remained unchanged, which depicts the commitment of the Government towards the children of this country.

My Ministry ensures that children in the institutions are provided with all necessary and age-appropriate care and facilities in a multi-disciplinary and holistic manner that promotes life skills, health, education, sustainable development, democracy and co-citizenship to offer coping strategies that will carry them into their adult lives.

By plugging in further investments, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, into infrastructure at a boys' shelter in Cap Malheureux and converting the Notre Dame Women Empowerment Centre into a relay shelter for girls, the Government is showing its commitment to tackling the main challenges in terms of reducing abuse including violence. In that vein, my Ministry is currently engaged in the licensing of the RCIs as Places of Safety (POS) to ensure high quality of care across the system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a quality day care is essential in order to protect and supervise the child in a healthy and jovial environment. My Ministry has found that there are many *crèches* that do not operate according to the established criteria of the law, which is a source of serious concern and for the Financial Year 2020/2021, an amount of Rs6 m. has been earmarked in the Budget to support Child Day Care Centres. And this budgetary provision will help the Ministry to pursue its efforts in raising the quality of many more of our child day care centres.

I also welcome the praiseworthy initiative of the Government to consolidate and scale up the Foster Care Programme by extending its services to cover all children, beyond just babies and little ones. My Ministry welcomes the Government's vision and we believe this is a good investment for the future of the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, time is of essence and I would like to also point out that the Covid-19 has disrupted the world order and the social order as well with serious repercussions on families, communities and the supporting institutions.

With a view to empowering the local community at grassroots level, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund of my Ministry will embark on a series of programmes and projects to empower women so as to assist them in their daily life and cater for their families.

We shall also address our productivity challenges and decline in competitiveness by digitalising our operations and creating new values stream.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Aristotle once said many centuries ago that there is only one way to avoid criticism: "Do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing".

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is now perfectly clear to everyone that our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, is not scared of criticism, even when it is unjustified and rather pedantic. Splitting hairs and playing up to the gallery might be an enjoyable hobby for the Opposition, but we, on this side, prefer to match our words with action.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people outside this august Assembly are wholly untouched by the Opposition's ruminations. They can tell the difference between wordsmiths who simply talk to raise a cheap laugh or to show how supposedly clever they are, and those who actually deliver on the promises that are made to them. The last elections, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, provided conclusive proof that windbags will get the laughs that they need to feed their egos, but people actually remember concrete actions and not vague, simplistic promises when it comes to marking their ballot papers.

And that is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we won the last elections democratically. People could see clearly that we always match our promises with actions to support those promises and this Budget falls in the same category. The times are hard for every country in the world, but when you listen to the Opposition, you would think that only Mauritius is facing this economic emergency, when, in fact, the foursquare leadership of our Prime Minister has been acknowledged in glowing terms internationally in the way he has dealt with this pandemic. The Opposition refuses to acknowledge the clear fact that, unlike many countries, the Government of Mauritius has ensured that no one starved during this crisis, and that the glimmer of light at the end of this tunnel, it will soon turn into a bright sunshine that everybody deserves.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we would never have achieved the stupendous results that we got during the pandemic if the population was not by our side. I would like, at this juncture, to acknowledge and thank the whole population of this *lepep admirable* for the unfailing cooperation with the Government to fight together the common enemy. And I have no doubt that we will succeed once again in meeting the economic challenges that are forthcoming with similar outcomes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will really conclude now. This Budget goes a long way towards ensuring that our current difficulties will be faced with the same vigour, with the same resilience that the Prime Minister has shown when facing many other difficulties in the past. With the Minister of Finance by his side, I have no doubt that this Budget will steer us in the right direction bringing hope and salvation to our people. It is time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to concentrate, knuckle down and work hard.

Should the Opposition choose to look back, reminisce, complain about everything under the sun, I wish them a good time doing so, but we are not looking back simply because we are not headed that way.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we will do it with or without the support of other parties because we have the support of those that matter the most and that is our people. In stormy weathers, the pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change but the realist adjusts his sails. Our Prime minister has shown that he is a realist and he will navigate this ship to safe harbour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, history is not made by coincidence, it is shaped and brought through strong and wilful decisions and I am convinced that we are treading firmly in that direction.

Long live the Republic of Mauritius.

I thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Speaker will resume the Chair.

At this stage, Mr Speaker took the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nagalingum!

(7.38 p.m.)

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): M. le président, la pandémie nous a rappelé que nous tous nous étions égaux devant le virus. Riche ou pauvre,

nos vies ont la même valeur. Nous sommes exposés aux mêmes dangers pour notre santé, aux mêmes besoins des traitements et de prévention. L'argent, les possessions matérielles, le statut social, rien de tout ça ne peut nous sauver quand arrive la maladie. C'est une extraordinaire leçon d'humilité, je dis bien d'humilité pour beaucoup d'entre nous. Cependant, M. le président, si nous sommes tous égaux dans notre condition humaine, on ne peut pas dire aujourd'hui, en cette Ile Maurice de 2020, que nous soyons vraiment égaux face aux difficultés de la vie. Et cela, le confinement l'a bien démontré. Durant ces dix semaines de *lockdown*, les réalités de tout un chacun ont beaucoup varié selon leur ressource. Comme quelqu'un le disait récemment : nous n'étions pas tous dans le même bateau. Non, en fait, nous étions tous dans le même océan à affronter la même tempête. Mais, M. le président, certains étaient dans des paquebots et d'autres dans des pirogues. Pour certains, il n'y avait même plus d'embarcation. Ils étaient dans l'eau à tenter de s'agripper à la moindre planche pour éviter de couler.

Nous les avons vus, ces hommes, ces femmes et ces enfants contraints de vivre enfermer pendant 72 jours dans des logements insalubres, les uns sur les autres, dans des maisons trop petites, se demandant comment ils vont faire pour manger à leur faim. Pas d'argent quand le père travaillait à la journée, ne veut pas sortir. Pas d'argent et pas de stock des nourritures non plus parce que pour faire du stock, il faut bien des économies. Pas de connexion à l'internet pour que les jeunes puissent continuer d'apprendre le temps. Fracture numérique, fracture sociale, ventre qui grogne, voilà réalité du confinement. Oui, il y eu l'aide de l'Etat pour ceux se trouvant sur le registre social, mais cela n'a pas été assez. En effet, on a bien vu comment les ONG – et je tiens ici à les saluer, M. le président – ont dû intervenir pour palier le manquement de l'Etat.

La solidarité mauricienne était belle à voir avec des centaines de citoyens se dévouant pour organiser des dons de vivre malgré le risque pour leur santé. Avec des milliers de Mauriciens qui ont partagé avec leurs voisins ici quelques poignées de riz, là-bas deux ou trois pommes de terre. Cette solidarité était belle à voir, M. le président. Mais, elle nous interpelle aussi. Serait-on arrivé là si l'Etat était à la hauteur, serait-on arrivé là si la pauvreté était vraiment comprise et traité à la racine. Quand on entend, au moment de la fermeture des commerces, le ministre dire que de toute façon les gens ont déjà fait leur stock parce que le supermarché était rempli au cours des jours précédents. On est en droit de demander dans quel monde vit-on? Est-ce qu'il est au courant qu'il existe des milliers de Mauriciens qui ne

peuvent pas faire de stock? Qui ont besoin de travailler au jour le jour pour nourrir leur famille ou qui peinent à réunir les deux bouts en attendant la fin du mois.

Le COVID-19 a créé à travers le monde une situation exceptionnelle et comme tout bon gestionnaire, il fallait pour surmonter cette situation exceptionnelle des mesures exceptionnelles, novatrices et imaginatives. Or, que propose ce budget ? Rien de plus que des mesures classiques, des solutions, des facilités mais qui demain peuvent ruiner notre économie.

M. le président, je vous parlerai aujourd'hui des attentes post-confinement de la population, de la pauvreté chez nous, des administrations régionales et des problèmes dans ma circonscription avant de terminer sur la démocratie. Ceci étant dit, permettez-moi, M. le président, de vous décrire en peu de mots ce que le peuple mauricien attendait de ce budget. Avant le COVID-19, le chômage était présent à Maurice. C'était un mal qu'il fallait combattre, mais avec les licenciements massifs ces jours-ci nous avons dépassé le seuil critique des taux de chômage. Nous vivons bientôt la situation où il y aura un chômeur par famille. C'est intolérable.

M. le président, le ministre des Finances a annoncé dans son discours du budget au chapitre de la sécurité alimentaire que le gouvernement aurait identifié quelque 20,000 arpents qui seraient destinés aux petits planteurs. Par ailleurs, M. le président, il y a aussi des planteurs qui, faisant face à beaucoup de problèmes, ont abandonné leur terrain. Ces obstacles sont principalement dus à l'inondation, la sécheresse, le vol régulier de leurs produits dans leurs champs, le manque d'encouragement de l'Etat. Ces planteurs sont disposés à reprendre la culture si le gouvernement voudrait bien les aider à surmonter ces obstacles. Je vous donne un exemple concret, M. le président. La *Chaumière Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Society* qui se trouve dans ma circonscription regroupe 80 membres. Cette coopérative, si le gouvernement leur aide à résoudre le problème que j'ai mentionné plus haut, est disposée à cultiver encore plus de terrain et aider ainsi notre autosuffisance en légumes. Donnez-leur plus d'incitation, M. le ministre des Finances.

M. le président, on peut aller plus loin et faire ici d'une pierre deux coups. Appeler les chômeurs à s'enregistrer pour faire partie d'un groupe en coopérative et bénéficier en bail d'une portion pour être mise sous culture. Ceux choisis bénéficieront d'une formation en agriculture et d'un budget non remboursable pour le lancement de leur business. Il est

entendu que ces terrains sont à bail pour un taux minime et doivent être restitué à l'Etat s'ils ne sont plus utilisés.

M. le président, on fait avec ce plan d'une pierre deux coups, on donne de l'emploi aux chômeurs et on assure notre sécurité alimentaire. M. le président, l'autre grand attente du peuple mauricien, c'est éviter dans cette période de post-confinement que les prix prennent l'ascenseur. Pendant le confinement, M. le président, des commerçants sans cœur et sans scrupules ont vendu des produits de consommation à des prix exorbitants. Et comme c'est toute l'économie mondiale qui est affectée par la pandémie et que la majorité de notre consommation vienne de l'extérieur, il aura automatiquement une hausse de prix à prévoir dont une partie, comme pour les médicaments, se fait déjà sentir. Le peuple souhaite un contrôle plus sévère des prix et que le gouvernement fasse le maximum pour contenir ces augmentations.

Au chapitre de la lutte contre la pauvreté, M. le président, ce budget propose la construction de logements pour les familles aux revenus les plus faibles. Nous connaissons le sort réservé à ce type d'annonce dans le précédent budget. Je souhaite que pour ces familles vulnérables cela se réalise. En effet, M. le président, il y a de quoi se demander si le gouvernement est vraiment sérieux dans la lutte contre la pauvreté. Prenons, par exemple, les logements sociaux annoncés dans le budget. Comment se fait-il que seulement 1,800 des 12,000 logements à être construits soient réservés à ceux au plus bas de l'échelle, et quelle paupérisation de la classe moyenne prévoit le gouvernement, quand il décide de construire des logements sociaux pour des ménages touchant jusqu'à R 60,000 par mois, ce que cela signifie.

M. le président, ce qui est désormais la tendance est à l'appauvrissement de la classe moyenne. Mais, M. le président, la pauvreté est multidimensionnelle. Ces causes ne sont pas uniquement d'ordre économique. Elle révèle du social, de la politique et du culturel. Permettez-moi de vous citer une réflexion de l'Abbé Pierre : 'Le contraire de la misère, ce n'est pas la richesse. Le contraire de la misère, c'est le partage.'

Il est vrai que seul, aucune institution ni gouvernement ne peut réussir un plan de réduction de la pauvreté. La lutte contre la pauvreté est l'affaire de toute la population. Méditations sur ce proverbe Africain : 'Elever un enfant est la responsabilité de tout le village'. Ou encore, l'ancien Président des Etats-Unis, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, qui dit : 'Il n'existe

pas de solution républicaine ou démocratique, il n'y a que la bonne solution. Ne jetons pas toute la responsabilité sur le passé. Assumons nos responsabilités vis-à-vis de l'avenir.'

Ceci étant dit, il faut reconnaître que la priorité de tout gouvernement doit être la lutte contre la pauvreté et cela passe invariablement par l'éducation. En dépit de l'éducation gratuite et obligatoire, beaucoup d'enfants sont exclus du système pour des raisons économiques ou familiales. Ces enfants issus de familles vulnérables doivent avoir toute l'attention du gouvernement, ils doivent bénéficier des facilités, des crèches, d'accès aux institutions pré-primaires, ne se soucie pas de ces enfants c'est les exposer aux fléaux qui rongent la société mauricienne, telle que la drogue synthétique. Or, M. le président, nous tous, ici, reconnaissons que la drogue est un fléau qui mine notre société, surtout nos jeunes.

Mais, M le président, le budget ne mentionne pas un seul mot sur ce mal social, ni n'indique de nouveaux moyens avec des dotations budgétaires pour le combattre. Que peut se vanter d'être immunisé contre ce cauchemar de voir un jour ses propres enfants victimes de cette mort lente mais certaine. Combien de familles ont perdu un enfant ou un voisin rongé par ce poison; la drogue *li pas guet figir*. Elle a envahi tous les territoires mauriciens jusqu'à nos écoles primaires et secondaires. Citons cet appel du recteur d'une prestigieuse institution secondaire : 'La direction du collège ainsi que les personnels enseignants et non-enseignants ont du mal à faire face au fléau de la drogue. Nous ne sommes pas vraiment équipés pour mener à bien ce combat. Il nous faut l'aide des autorités.'

S'il est vrai que beaucoup d'efforts sont entrepris pour lutter contre la drogue, il demeure qu'il faut donner encore plus de moyens aux ONG et autorités locales pour qu'elles soient plus proactives et efficaces. Quand je parle de la pauvreté, M. le président, ce n'est pas pour faire politiquement correct ni pour être dans le vent. Ce ne sont pas, ici, que de paroles, mais de vœux pieux.

Pendant cette période de confinement, j'ai été tous les jours présent avec mes mandats à Stanley-Rose Hill pour être un vrai soutien pour eux. Je suis encore écoeuré par ce que j'ai vécu. Des familles presque affamées, des personnes âgées laissées à elles-mêmes. Tout être humain qui se respecte ne peut pas laisser perdurer de telles horreurs, M. le président.

Dans son discours du budget, le ministre a annoncé une prime spéciale au personnel médical et aux policiers, des *front liners* du COVID-19. Nous nous réjouissons pour eux quand c'est amplement mérité, mais quid des autres *front liners*, les éboueurs des municipalités, *District Council*, ceux du secteur privé, les pompiers et les *cleaners* des

hôpitaux, ils se sont eux aussi exposés quotidiennement. Pourquoi pratiquer ici la politique deux poids, deux mesures? Souhaitons que cette erreur soit corrigée au plus vite!

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have previously said, the pandemic had been a litmus test for the organisation of society. And what matters most for me is how we can build back better ones. The initial emergency phase is over. What can be done and what should be done. The complete lockdown is a measure of lack resolve. It bears a huge economic and social cost. Confinement is stressful and has an impact on the physical and mental health of the population.

The COVID-19 emergency has allowed us to see what only the State can do: sanitary measures, lockdown, laws and regulations, additional resources for hospitals, and what only communities can do, mobilise and response quickly through solidarity network, pull collective resources, think creatively about what assets are available. And the role of local authorities comes to my mind. Rs1.3 billion are being allocated to local authorities and the National Development Unit for the completion of market fairs at Bel Air, Goodlands, Mahebourg and construction of new ones at Chemin Grenier, Bambous and the completion of District Council headquarters at Flacq and Pamplemousses. Fund for the completion of a multi-purpose complex at Camp Levieux and construction of new ones at Montagne Blanche, Rivière du Rempart and Abercrombie are provided.

As we all know, there is a dire lack of plan maintenance of buildings and other civic infrastructures due to shortage of fund and manpower in local authorities. I hope that provision is being made for the proper maintenance of these buildings. The construction and upgrading of 18 incinerators around the island are also envisaged, and I would welcome a report of the National Audit on these infrastructures.

In many countries, Community Empowerment Programme has been launched by local authorities to educate and actively communicate with the public about the Coronavirus disease, using multiple communication technique, ranging from media and social-media communication to mass communication and stakeholders and community engagement. Effective risk communication, not only saves lives and reduces illness, it also enables communities to preserve their social economic and political stability in the face of emergency. Defeating pandemic such as COVID-19 requires leveraging and unleashing the power of community action to implement prevention measures and to strengthen hygiene.

Empowering the community to take actions explicitly aimed at behaviour changed with the minimised to spread of viruses.

Community empowerment can only be achieved if there is a strong desire to be and work together both in the neighbourhood and also between communities and their local Governments. This has unfortunately not been the case here. How could it be otherwise when this Government decided to self-isolate itself in an Ivory tower and ignore valuable suggestions from various quarters? Let us not mention our local authorities. Local Government has been totally invisible during the lockdown except for providing the refuse collection service. Every single task was entrusted to the Police Force. Our Municipal and District Councils have become sub-offices of PPS and the Local Government Act, as it is presently, is a negation of local democracy. Local authorities urgently need to be revamped, empowered financially, consolidated and become more self-reliance and independent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before leaving the issue of Local Government, I would like to say a few words on our fire services. This is a sector which needs additional investment on the part of the Government. The fire services should be ready to face any situation at any time. Our fire brigade has up to now been efficient but our fire fighters are facing many difficulties in the performance of their duties. I know many of them and they have shared their grievances with me. I hope that opportunities will arise in the future so that they can elaborate more on this matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the effectiveness of an efficiency of fire services are raising concerns in developing countries. Mauritius is no exception. Construction is on the rise and high buildings are sprouting up. Government should ensure that our fire services are adequately equipped with the proper tools and equipment which will allow them to offer efficient services in case of accident and emergency. The fire-fighters must have the training. They need to safely and effectively respond to emergencies. Our fire fighters must be treated with due respect.

M. le président, le ministre des Financés a avancé certains chiffres pour la réfection des routes et autres infrastructures. Permettez-moi de vous rappeler quelques problèmes qui affectent la circonscription de Stanley/Rose Hill, et que j'espère peuvent être tenus en ligne de compte par ce budget. Après la construction du métro léger, le centre-ville a été transformé en béton et constituait un *eyesore*. D'autant plus que le Promenade Roland

Armand a disparu. Je fais un appel pour embellir le centre-ville et le parcours qu'emprunte le métro. Cela rendra plus supportable le nouveau paysage.

Un peu plus loin, le marché de Rose-Hill, je constate que le budget prévoit la construction de nouveaux marchés et autres centres dans certaines régions. Or rien sur le marché de Rose-Hill dont la nouvelle construction est *overdue*. Par ailleurs, c'est un vrai parcours du combattant pour se rendre à ce marché aujourd'hui. Les parkings sont inexistants.

M. le président, l'état des routes intérieures dans la ville de Rose-Hill est plus que déplorable et c'est là depuis trop longtemps des membres de cette Assemblée qui empruntent ces routes peuvent en témoigner. Nous n'avons pas le droit de laisser perdurer cette situation. M. le président, c'est une situation qui se détériore de jour en jour. Il faut tout de suite faire quelque chose qui soit durable.

Dans la même veine, M. le président, nous avons été témoins du problème épineux de drains et surtout dans la région de Plaisance et Roches Brunes où il existe une cuvette naturelle. Il ne s'agit pas de s'attaquer à ce problème bout par bout. Il est impératif d'avoir un *master plan* qui s'attèlera à résoudre le problème dans sa globalité. Il faut par ailleurs ne plus avoir recours à des puits d'absorption et adopter partout le système de canalisation des égouts, surtout dans la région exposée aux inondations. Faut-il assurer que ce drain soit régulièrement entretenu? Et, bien sûr, il y a aussi le problème de fourniture d'eau. Problème qui affecte toute l'île Maurice et quand ce sont les régions les plus pauvres qui y sont les victimes, vous imaginez, M. le président, la souffrance de ces familles.

M. le président, un budget post-pandémie ne doit pas nous faire oublier que nous travaillons non seulement pour l'immédiat mais que nous jetons les bases de progrès qui bénéficieront à nos enfants. Le COVID-19 pour son côté sanitaire est presque derrière nous. Ses séquelles sur notre économie et notre social vont perdurer encore quelques temps. Mais cela n'interdit pas ce budget, M. le président, de viser dès maintenant le plus haut et plus loin. Je parle ici de la modernisation de la société mauricienne.

En dernier lieu, M. le président, permettez-moi de terminer ce discours par un appel à tous les membres de cette noble Assemblée, et plus particulièrement à ceux qui ont la charge de nous gouverner. Redonnez l'espoir au peuple mauricien. Donnez-lui des raisons de rêver à un avenir meilleur, donnez-lui sa fierté de savoir honnête, responsable et juste. Le peuple mauricien se sent aujourd'hui perdu dans ses repères, que ce soit politique, moral ou social ?

Il n'a plus d'espoir en un avenir meilleur. Et comme le dit si bien ce proverbe – L'espoir est la chose la plus importante de la vie. Elle procure aux êtres humains le sentiment d'avoir un but et leur donne l'énergie d'aller de l'avant. Face à tous ces fléaux, manquements et autres faiblesses que j'ai exposés, il est urgent, M. le président, de bien établir nos priorités.

La première étant de laisser la démocratie s'épanouir. Et la démocratie ne s'épanouit pas lorsque le gouvernement ne donne pas des informations à la nation à travers des questions parlementaires qui ne reçoivent pas de réponses ou des réponses évasives. Ce gouvernement dirige les affaires du pays dans une complète opacité. Et la démocratie ne s'épanouit pas lorsque les élections villageoises sont renvoyées. Et la démocratie ne s'épanouit pas lorsque la méritocratie est violée. Le passe-droit, le favoritisme, le népotisme sont institutionnalisés. Et quand on remplit les postes de responsabilité par des personnes dont la qualité est seulement d'être proche des personnes au pouvoir, la démocratie ne s'épanouit pas lorsqu'un gouvernement s'arroge le pouvoir des institutions sur lesquels il n'a aucun droit juridique et constitutionnel quand on pile les réserves de la banque centrale. La démocratie ne s'épanouit pas lorsque l'argent est érigé en roi. La recherche de l'argent facile est devenue un norme acceptable pour tout le monde étant prôné par les dirigeants politiques. La démocratie ne s'épanouit pas lorsque la seule télévision nationale, la MBC, est devenue le paillason du gouvernement, un organe de basse propagande qui fait honte à la nation. La démocratie ne s'épanouit pas lorsque la corruption mine nos institutions les plus fondamentales, *Air Mauritius* étant un exemple dramatique. Et la démocratie ne s'épanouisse pas lorsque la drogue envahit tous les coins et recoins de notre pays.

M. le président, nous avons actuellement à Maurice un semblant de démocratie. Une démocratie qui ne porte pas ses valeurs essentielles mais ne l'oublions pas, pour reprendre cette phrase que nous a légué le Mahatma Gandhi –

« La démocratie devrait assurer aux plus faibles la même opportunité qu'aux plus forts. »

M. le président, j'ai commencé ce discours en vous parlant de la nécessité pour nous tous d'être humble en toutes choses et ici aussi dans cette auguste Assemblée.

Permettez-moi de terminer par une citation de Nelson Mandela –

« L'honnêteté, la sincérité, la simplicité, l'humilité, la générosité, l'absence de vanité, la capacité de servir les autres - qualités à la portée de toutes les âmes- sont les véritables fondations de notre vie spirituelle. »

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Diolle!

(8.08p.m.)

Mrs M. A. T. Diolle (Fourth Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to, first of all, congratulate the Minister of Finance - he is not around but - for the presentation of his first speech- I mean Budget. I think we were very happy to see how brilliantly he was able to, in many ways, help the country come with new tools to come out of what is coming and has been referred to by the World Bank yesterday, as a global recession and what I read was that it's coming very soon and that all countries have to be prepared for it.

And I think that the world has indeed learned several lessons, emanating from the Covid-19 pandemic. At the start of 2020, no one would have imagined that we would be facing such a challenge, a challenge of this global magnitude. Some compare COVID-19 to the Second World War not because we were in a war, but simply because of the consequences of COVID-19 in terms of economic recession - global economic recession. But it is important to keep in mind that we are fortunate enough that it was not a war. Some World Leaders use the word 'war' to appeal to their citizens' sense of duty; to appeal to their citizens' sense of collective memory, to appeal to a shared identity but by no means, we have to start from zero. The construction infrastructures were not destroyed. We still have our human capital and we still have enough willpower to continue and learn lessons from what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic. So, what happened was that COVID-19 has intensified what was a health crisis to an economic and social crisis. It has shed light to what matters the most; these sectors that have been defending life throughout the pandemic period. All around the world, we understood that there were essential sectors that defend life of our citizens and these sectors, when put it together, are what we call the economy of life.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, these sectors had difficulties to grow. They didn't have so much potential for growth because we are talking about sectors such as health, waste management, urban infrastructure, research, innovation, clean energy, agriculture and digital technology among others. They were not growing fast enough. But the pandemic and the lockdown, the confinement that many countries had to engage in at the same time shed light on these essential sectors.

And today, I am very proud to be part of a Government that has decided to take all these sectors and budget for it. That's why I am proud and I totally agree with this direction as a young citizen of Mauritius.

So, what are we doing right now? It's important that young people of this country understand. When we are talking about global recession, we are talking about very serious figures which were published yesterday and these figures talk about a 5.2% contraction in global economy by the end of 2020. The largest fraction of economies will decline per capita output and this is the biggest shrink since 1870. Advanced economies on which Mauritius, a small island developing State, is very dependent and we are talking about economies like the US, we are talking about the Euro Area, we are talking about Europe will shrink by 7% in 2020.

So, this means that several sectors of our economy will suffer from negative growth. However, a few will sustain growth and these are agriculture and construction as highlighted by the Minister of Finance.

So, when you do a budget, you have to allocate resources. Many people don't realise that the budgeting exercise is the core of Parliamentary life because when the Parliament started in the UK, in 1670, the Lord Barons were fighting to have a say on the collection of taxes and the spending of these taxes by the king because they perceived it as an abuse.

This Parliament has evolved and today, we have it in the form that we have it in Mauritius and we have parliamentary democracies.

Nevertheless, this exercise remains essential because it gives an indication to civil society organisation, to investors, to young people, to women of the direction that the Government is taking and where it is heading. It is the vision of a future.

So, in the context that I have described where you have several traditional sectors on which we were dependent, which are shrinking, not because of Government like many want people to think. Of course, like for example the tourism sector, how can a Government force tourists to come to a country? They can only promote. If there is a contraction, if there is a recession, this is not the doing of Government. But this Budget has brilliantly sustained the middle class; those who will be impacted the most by this pandemic, by this global recession.

I heard some Opposition Members talking about what is Government doing to sustain jobs. What can Government do to sustain jobs? What can Government do to force hotels to keep their employees when there are no tourists? What can Government do when the US has

a 7% contraction, recession in its economy and won't buy the textile of Mauritius? What can Government do when European tourists - the British and the French - are deep in the COVID-19 pandemic and can't travel to Mauritius and we can't travel to England and France, what can we do if they don't come to Mauritius?

There is not much, you can only help these industries sustained and this is what we call the recovery measures that were included in this Budget.

I was reading what other countries have been doing and I have to say that this Budget has been very bold because compared to other countries; it has invested much more in their economy of life and its middle class. The aim is to ensure that you don't have a contraction big enough that, afterwards when the world economies recover, you can't recover.

So, I will give you some examples of why I think that young people should engage in this philosophy. The philosophy is simple. From what I have read in this Budget; I have been through it and I see that there is a vision for young people, for entrepreneurs of this country to thrive locally in a global economy. The global economy is shutting down so you have to thrive here in Mauritius. It is here that you have to engage in local manufacturing. It's here that you have to engage in business. You have to start focussing on our people and our market and for this I have seen that this 2020-2021 Budget challenges the status quo, Mr Speaker, Sir. It challenges our risk exposure and dependency on global economy and international trade by encouraging and consolidating local production and local supply chains by expanding the local manufacturing sector and investing massively in SMEs. An example is the Rs10 billion earmarked to support distressed SMEs and corporative societies. Rs10 m. will be provided to enterprises at a concessional rate of 5% per annum.

In the budget, strong emphasis on the *Made In Moris* label which will be given a preference of 30% and 40% for SMEs. The buy Mauritian and the *Made In Moris* label, Mr Speaker, shows the focus this Government is giving to local production. So, the message is clear, if you are an entrepreneur, you are a young person and you want to know what do in the future, it is to thrive here in Mauritius. Don't look at external markets for the time being, construct and build. Many young people in this country are not aware that the wealth that we have today is the consequence and the hard work of all our parents and grandparents, who at a time of crisis themselves, innovated. They actually invested. They worked hard. It is our time, Mr Speaker, Sir. This means that today we cannot keep on living the same life. We cannot expect Government; we cannot expect MPs and politicians to tell young people what

you should do. What is expected is young people to do it, just do it. You have all the facilities given to you. The data park is being constructed. Digital, Government came with several measures such as the integrated single window for trade, the Mauritian single window cooperate, business resilience department, the NTA will go online, e-procurement system will become compulsory.

L'emphase sur l'économie digitale, les PME, le *Made In Moris*, le *Buy Mauritian*, l'introduction de l'économie circulaire dans le budget qui permet les entreprises de recyclage d'avoir le même statut que les entreprises de manufacturiers nous démontrent qu'il y a une vision concrète et claire par rapport à ce qu'un jeune peut attendre pour l'avenir et c'est ce qu'on appelle the *economy of life*, Mr Speaker. Mais nous sommes dans une période de transition, ce que le COVID-19 nous a appris, c'est que les secteurs traditionnels ont, pendant des années, échoué pour plusieurs raisons. L'opposition n'a pas arrêté de nous parler de tous ces échecs qui existent depuis belle lurette, je dirais. Tous les régimes ont eu à faire face à ces problèmes systémiques. Les gens qui ont été marginalisés, ont eu à gérer le chômage, ont eu à gérer les crises et les chocs économiques internationales, ont eu à gérer des récessions économiques mais qu'est-ce qui a été fait aussi courageusement que nous, ce gouvernement, pour aller vers ce qu'on appelle l'essentiel et l'*economy of life*, pas grand-chose, M. le président.

On ne peut pas reprocher à ce gouvernement de ne pas s'être engagé par rapport à la préservation de l'environnement puisque plusieurs mesures ont été annoncées. Le fait même que l'économie circulaire soit mentionné et qu'il y ait des provisions pour qu'il devienne un secteur important démontre un avancement, parce que je me souviens que quand il y avait le Maurice île durable, il y avait toute une stratégie justement pour apporter l'économie vert mais qui n'a jamais été implémenté. Il y a une différence entre avoir des idées et avoir le courage et la conviction d'implémenter ses idées. Implémenter ses idées veut dire qu'on ne plaira pas à tout le monde. Je pense que ce budget a, bien des façons, démontré que ce budget a été fait pour protéger la classe moyenne avec les mesures fiscales de taxation, qui augmente le seuil de taxation à R 80,000, qui augmente les investissements auxquels peut avoir accès les petits entreprises qui ouvre les nouveaux secteurs pour les jeunes comme la technologie digitale démontre qu'à aucun moment on peut reprocher à ce gouvernement et ses Membres de ne pas avoir la volonté de faire les choses.

Cependant, ce qu'il faut garder en tête, c'est que dans une période de crise tout ne dépend pas que des ministres et des fonctionnaires. Il y a la volonté de la population, M. le

président, c'est pour ça que je vous parlais de la rhétorique que les dirigeants d'autres pays utilisent justement pour motiver leur population. Motiver leur population à avoir une identité commune, motiver leur population à retourner vers les valeurs de responsabilité et du travail. Ici, le gouvernement, à sa façon, démontre ses valeurs par son action mais malheureusement nous avons à faire face à une négativité ambiante qui refuse de reconnaître la réalité de ce qui nous attend, qui fait la population croire que tout va bien, qu'il y a des milliards à dépenser et que ces milliards peuvent être dépensés sur tout et rien. La stratégie qui a été proposée par ce gouvernement doit être critiquée par rapport à la réalité et non par rapport à la situation économique avant le COVID-19. Il y aura des mesures difficiles à prendre. Elles ont déjà été prises et on continuera à prendre. Il est important que la population sache saisir ces opportunités. Je vous ai donné l'exemple des jeunes qui doivent comprendre que le label *Made In Moris* aura un taux préférentiel qui doit comprendre qu'il faut commencer sur le marché local, il faut se lancer. Il n'y a pas grand-chose à perdre. Nous sommes dans une situation de récession même si on ne le ressent pas tout de suite.

M. le président, dans ce budget il y a l'emphase sur le développement communautaire. Le développement communautaire, il y a, par exemple, en ce qu'il s'agit du sport, il y aura des programmes qui vont faire appel aux différentes forces vives pour augmenter ce qu'on appelle le *social capital*. On véhicule l'image d'une discrimination. Certains députés veulent faire croire qu'il y a des politiques discriminatoires et que c'est délibéré, cependant le développement communautaire est essentiel justement pour aller vers la justice sociale. Je vais vous donner un exemple simple. Si, par exemple, une personne, un jeune, d'un quartier de Quatre Bornes, je dirais Sodnac ou La Source ou Belle Rose, entend parler des mesures budgétaires mais n'a pas l'entourage qu'il faut, il ne pourra pas utiliser au maximum les ressources qui sont mises à sa disposition. C'est pour ça que, dans le budget, quand on parle de développement communautaire, il faut comprendre que toutes ces infrastructures qui sont mises à la disposition des jeunes et des quartiers, c'est pour assurer qu'il y a la collaboration et qu'il y a une entente. On appelle ça le *inter-connectedness*, M. le président et ça, ce n'est pas le travail que du gouvernement, c'est le travail de la société civile. Il est urgent que la société civile collabore avec le gouvernement et les municipalités et les *District Council* parce que cette crise, ces mesures ne pourront pas être implémentées sans eux. Il ne faut pas tomber comme je dirai dans la bassesse de tout critiquer et de ne pas avoir les outils qui sont mis à la disposition de la population.

L'autre point peut-être, M. le président, sur lequel je voudrais parler c'est sur la réforme du plan de pension. Cependant, je pense que ça devrait se faire en consultation avec les syndicats, ça a créé beaucoup d'angoisse mais cependant si on lit bien le budget on comprend que ça a été fait pour améliorer et soutenir le système de pension qui a plusieurs reprises a été justement l'objet des débats par rapport à la soutenabilité, par rapport à une population qui est en vieillissement.

Mais tout changement doit se faire graduellement et il est important que les syndicats et la population soient totalement informer et conscientiser par rapport aux nouvelles provisions qui seront prises pour éviter l'angoisse. Mais on peut être assuré qu'aucune décision n'est prise pour aller à l'encontre de la population. Donc les défis du secteur informel, M. de président, je pense que beaucoup de Membres ont parlé du secteur informel et il y a eu beaucoup de prises de position par rapport à ce secteur. Il y a une chose que peut-être on ne réalise pas, c'est que le secteur informel survit quand il y a une classe moyenne. Qui justement utilise le secteur informel le plus ? C'est la classe moyenne. À travers la préservation de la classe moyenne, à travers le fait qu'on s'assure que le pouvoir d'achat de la classe moyenne reste plus ou moins stable.

On assure que le secteur informel puisse continuer à rouler. Donc, ce n'est pas vrai de dire que quand on parle du secteur informel, que rien n'est fait. Ce n'est pas vrai ! Parce qu'en fait, dans un plan de budget, quand on planifie pour un secteur, on planifie aussi pour l'autre secteur, mais il est trop simple de s'imaginer qu'il suffit de distribuer l'argent sans vraiment avoir de retour dessus.

Je veux parler justement d'une critique qui a été faite, que j'ai eu à faire face personnellement où on me disait que R 5,100, ce n'est pas grand-chose. Ce n'est pas grand-chose pour peut-être ceux qui gagnent R 100,000 par mois dans le secteur informel, mais c'est beaucoup pour tous les petits métiers, tous ceux qui gagnent R 8,000 à R 10,000 dans le secteur informel. Ce sont ces personnes qui sont visés par le budget. Tous ceux qui se trouvent en haut, qui gagnent plus que de R 50,000, qui ont les moyens, qui ont des chiffres d'affaires de R 10 millions, ont les facilités des PME. Ils ont été pris en considération, ils ont les *loan* à leur disposition pour revoir leur business si leur chiffre d'affaire est plus élevé.

Donc, je ne comprends pas ces critiques, M. le président. Je trouve que les critiques sont injustifiées, puisqu'ils ne prennent pas le budget dans sa globalité. Et c'est pour cela que, personnellement, je trouve qu'il y a beaucoup de mérite, c'est que chaque composant de ce

budget a un seul but. Quand vous lisez tout au long, il y a un seul thème qui ressort, c'est justement de préserver la classe moyenne et les classes qui viennent au bas. Que ce soit à travers les mesures sociales, que ce soit à travers le développement communautaire, parce que les projets de développement communautaire ne sont pas faits pour ceux qui sont aisés. Ceux qui utilisent ces routes, ceux qui utilisent ces gymnases, ceux qui utilisent ces bazars, ce sont les gens de la classe moyenne.

Quand on parle de l'environnement, c'est toujours la classe moyenne, M. le président. Quand on parle du tri des déchets, quand on parle du recyclage, toutes les mesures qui ont été prises, c'est toujours pour la classe moyenne. Les PME, c'est pour faire circuler l'argent parmi la classe moyenne, c'est toujours pour ces personnes. Donc, si on trouve à redire du budget, c'est par rapport à une idéologie différente. Pendant la seconde guerre mondiale, il y a eu un grand débat économique entre Hayek et Keynes. Keynes pensait, justement, qu'il fallait investir massivement dans quelques secteurs et que ces quelques secteurs allaient faire rouler l'économie, même si ces secteurs n'engageaient pas toute la population, il n'y avait pas de problème. Il pensait que le gouvernement devait intervenir et investir dans les grosses industries. Hayek, lui, il disait autre chose. Il disait : 'Investissez dans les petites et moyennes entreprises'. Ce sont les petites et moyennes entreprises qui font rouler votre pays, qui font circuler l'argent et qui font circuler la machine de l'économie.

Aujourd'hui, nous nous retrouvons encore dans une situation de crise. Il y a des ressources qu'il faut allouer et il faut les allouer de façon juste, et quoi de plus juste que d'allouer les ressources à ceux qui vont les dépenser et les redistribuer dans l'économie avec leurs voisins dans leur communauté. Rien de plus juste, M. le président ! Ce n'est pas le moment de faire des profits et on le dit souvent, je le dis souvent. Nous sommes dans une situation où c'est la survie de la population qui compte. C'est pour cela qu'on parle de '*The Economy of Life*'. Ce n'est plus la période des profits, les profits c'est quand tout va bien. C'est en période de croissance.

Nous allons vers une période de récession. Donc, tous ceux qui ont comme intérêt l'investissement pour les profits, doivent comprendre. On assure la survie d'une majorité et c'est comme cela qu'on va sortir de la crise, parce qu'en assurant la survie de la majorité, nous assurons que la machine économique continue à rouler, et quand tout ira bien, ce sera plus facile de reprendre la croissance économique.

M. le président, il y a une chose en particulier dans le budget que je tiens à saluer, c'est la place des ONG. C'est le fait qu'il y a la possibilité maintenant pour les ONG de récolter des fonds à travers une plateforme en ligne. C'est essentiel puisqu'avec la crise qui nous attend, il est vrai que beaucoup de compagnies vont arrêter avec leur contribution aux ONG et les ONG doivent avoir les outils justement pour s'autofinancer. Et c'est vrai que c'est le moment où les ONG auront le plus de travail. Enormément de groupes seront marginalisés. Dans un Etat inclusif, la coopération se fait entre le secteur privé, l'Etat et les ONG. Chaque organisation a son rôle. Il est important de comprendre que le rôle des ONG est de s'occuper de ceux qui sont marginalisés.

L'Etat fait des politiques publiques pour une majorité. Et, malheureusement, M. le président, quand on choisit où on va allouer les ressources, il y aura toujours un groupe qui sera laissé pour compte. C'est pourquoi l'investissement dans les ONG est essentiel, parce que les ONG ont la capacité de faire ce qu'on appelle du '*micro-intervention*'. Donc, ils interviennent avec les groupes marginalisés. Par contre, l'Etat et la machinerie de l'Etat aura énormément de difficultés à s'occuper de dix personnes, par exemple. Donc, les ONG sont primordiales. C'est pour cela que je pense que beaucoup de critiques qui sont faites au gouvernement, par rapport à sa gestion des groupes marginaux, sont injustifiées.

Le gouvernement est là pour aider, pour faciliter dans beaucoup de cas. Mais ce n'est pas le travail d'un gouvernement de tout faire. Le gouvernement est là pour collaborer avec les députés de l'opposition, avec les ONG, avec les forces vives des différents quartiers. Donc, par exemple, quand je vois les critiques en ce qu'il s'agit des routes, des infrastructures par l'honorable membre, il y a la CSU, on attend qu'il faut savoir faire les plaintes, il faut savoir s'exprimer. Ce n'est pas qu'au parlement qu'on s'exprime. Il faut utiliser tous les mécanismes qui ont été mis sur pied justement pour cette collaboration et on ne peut pas dire qu'aujourd'hui il n'y a pas des plateformes de collaboration. Il y a plusieurs plateformes de collaboration qui tombent justement dans ce domaine qui est le développement communautaire, M. le président.

Et pour conclure, je voudrais avant parler de la femme et féliciter la ministre, Madame Koonjoo-Shah, pour l'introduction de cette mesure qui est de rendre obligatoire, qui est d'obliger les conjoints violents d'aller suivre des cours de *counselling*. Cette mesure est essentielle et je sais qu'à plusieurs reprises l'honorable Ganoo et moi-même avons demandé que cette mesure soit adoptée. C'est essentiel parce que souvent la violence domestique est considérée comme un problème qui est noir ou blanc.

La violence domestique a beaucoup de *grey areas*. La communication et la médiation et quelquefois un simple cours, un *counselling* peut changer la situation. Il ne faut pas toujours aller vers les extrêmes et adopter ce genre de mesure, démontre la détermination du ministre de la Femme pour résoudre le problème de façon durable et soutenable.

Donc, M. le président, pour conclure, je voudrais dire que le budget est un budget courageux, puisque il se concentre sur l'*Economy of Life*, donc, les secteurs essentiels, comme l'agriculture, comme la santé, comme il y a le *Waste Management*, il y a les *Clean Energy*. En même temps, il soutient les autres secteurs et tous ceux qui vont souffrir de la récession économique et globale qui nous attend.

Aucun de nos acquis sociaux n'a été enlevé. Dans ce sens, M. le président, c'est un budget courageux puisqu'il faut le faire. Il faut avoir la capacité de gérer toutes ses difficultés en même temps, et s'assurer qu'au moins l'économie continue à fonctionner. Et c'est pour cela que je félicite le ministre des Finances d'avoir fait la part des choses. Tout en assurant que nous ne sombrons pas, il a assuré que les nouveaux secteurs aient suffisamment d'investisseurs dans les nouveaux secteurs, comme je vous donnais l'exemple de l'*Artificial Intelligence* et le *Digital Economy*, pour qu'on puisse remonter la pente après. Il y a un investissement pour le futur quand l'économie ira bien. Ce que peut être doit retenir la population de ce budget, c'est que le contexte actuel ne permet pas au gouvernement de faire tout ce que la population aurait aimé qu'on fasse, simplement parce qu'il y a un problème de revenu qui va arriver bientôt.

Avec le peu qui est à la disposition du gouvernement, il y a eu un mélange de mesures sociales, d'investissement, et en même temps beaucoup d'innovation.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Maudhoo!

The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr S. Maudhoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to tomorrow, Wednesday 10 June 2020, at 11.30 a.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Adjournment Time! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

MATTERS RAISED

VALLEE PITOT – RAW WATER SEWER

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have an issue tonight that concerns the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. It has to do with a public health issue at Vallée Pitot, but it could be an issue for the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, and the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness as well.

It concerns suspected raw water sewer finding its way into a stream or drain that runs along several localities of Vallée Pitot. I here have in mind Crimea Street, Malakoff, Boulevard Victoria and Mamelon Vert. I had written to the Municipal Council of Port Louis on 23 December 2019. Several site visits have been conducted since then, but, so far, no results. I have a copy of the letter with me, which I am going to place for the attention of the hon. Minister of Local Government, hoping that needful will be done very soon.

Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have just been told about it, and as the hon. Member has said, several visits have been made, but maybe we will have to discuss again further and see if we have to rope in other agencies to look at the problem.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

(8.40 p.m.)

MIDLANDS – STREET LIGHTINGS

Mr K. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to raise a matter which concerns the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, and especially the District Council of Grand Port. The problem relates to the main road of Midlands, from the bridge till the Police Station of Midlands. The street lighting bulbs have gone out during the lockdown. Now, with the winter season, darkness comes in very early. I would request my hon. colleague if necessary action could be taken at his end.

Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will contact the Local Authority at Grand Port to look into the problem.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

JARDIN COCO & MAGON STREET – WASTES

Mr Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. It concerns hygienic and environmental issues. I am told by the residents living in the vicinity of Jardin Coco, la Rue Magon, near the Telecom Office, that the grasses thereat have become very tall and have not been trimmed since long, thus causing the proliferation of mosquitoes, where, especially, we are facing the Dengue fever in the region of Port Louis.

Wastes also have been accumulated along the bridge nearby, and I shall request the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to direct the Municipality of Port Louis in having these matters sorted out as soon as possible.

Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously with the COVID situation and

the lockdown, it was a bit difficult, but I am going to talk to the Local Authorities and Municipality of Port Louis to have a look at the situation.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

(8.42 p.m.)

CASE NOYALE – BUS STOP – LAY-BY

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management for the construction of a lay-by on the bus stop of Case Noyale, near the healthcare centre of the locality, and renovation, if possible, of the bus stop itself, which is near to collapse. It has become a threat for children and elderly persons living in the vicinity, so if the hon. Vice-Prime Minister could look into the matter.

Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will mention it to the Black River District Council to have a look at this bus stop and see what can be done to improve the situation.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

DES ROCHES STREET – SLAB DRAINS

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): My question is addressed to the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development. In line with a Parliamentary Question addressed earlier with regard to works being carried out at Des Roches Street and its proximity to primary schools, I request the hon. Minister to liaise with the relevant authorities and contractors to ensure that space that has been left unfilled between the concrete slab drains are covered speedily with the metal grids as it poses a serious threat and risk to small children, particularly those who are unattended after school on their way back home.

For your information, my son personally witnessed a small boy...

Mr Speaker: Raise the issue!

Dr. Aumeer: Yes. The issue is to see that it is speedily covered, but I just want to highlight the issue that last week my son personally witnessed a small boy who fell accidentally and injured his jaw and he was attended to. I can show a photograph after, if you so wish.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: We extend our sympathy for that.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr S. Hurreeram): We will look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(8.44 p.m.)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

LONG MOUNTAIN – PRIVATE MARKET FAIR – REOPENING

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My address tonight is to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. It is on behalf of the 200 vegetable sellers in the Long Mountain private market fair, that is, bazaar, who are actually enquiring about the reopening of this private market fair.

Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, as we know, we have opened the market last week. Now, we are working on the opening of market fairs. Here, we have different market fairs. We have those controlled by the local authorities and the private one. So, we are working on opening both groups of fairs, but obviously, we will have to apply the social-distancing to all markets, be it, those controlled by the local authorities or by the private one. So, we are working on it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(8.45 p.m.)

WOMEN – MUSLIM FAITH – WIDOWS’ PENSION

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise an issue addressed to the hon. Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity. It is a problem which widows of Muslim faith are currently facing, because as a condition to receiving widows’ pension, they are required to submit a copy of the register from the Muslim Family Council, and unfortunately, many of these religious marriages have never been registered. And although it was well-known to everybody that they were religious marriages, they don’t have this piece of paper.

I would ask the hon. Minister to see to it if these people can produce an alternative proof like an *affidavit de succession*, where there would be proof that the persons were religiously married so that these widows can get the widow’s allowance.

Thank you.

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of this issue and I am looking into it, but it is not that simple. But let me inform the hon. Member that I have started looking at this issue and we will try to see if we can come up with a solution.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(8.46 p.m.)

FOND DU SAC – STONE CRUSHERS – NUISANCE

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have an issue which is addressed to the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. I am referring to the two stone crushers found along the Forbach Road, which are causing a lot of nuisance to the inhabitants of Fond du Sac and the vicinity, because of the air pollution caused by dust emission.

As per the EIA, these stone crushers should have a green belt, barriers of filao trees, sprinklers, and they should submit a Dust Emission Report every six months.

Can the hon. Minister kindly look into the matter to ensure that they are fully in accordance with the existing laws so that my friends of Fond du Sac and vicinity can breathe fresh air, without any hindrance.

Thank you.

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): M. le président, je prendrai la question avec les officiers concernés, et bien sûr, je donnerai le feedback nécessaire à l'honorable membre.

Merci.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nagalingum!

(8.48 p.m.)

NHDC COMPLEX (GERANIUM) – SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE – MAINTENANCE

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): M. le président, ma question est adressée au ministre des Administrations régionales. J'ai reçu une pétition des habitants des complexes NHDC Gèranium pour attirer notre attention sur les problèmes suivants: pas d'entretien des espaces sportives, l'herbe n'est pas coupée, la prolifération des moustiques; tout près du terrain de foot et volley-ball il y a *dumping ground* qui est devenu un repère pour les usagers de la drogue. If I can ask the hon. Minister to look into the matter urgently; I have got the copy of the petition. Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): I have been told now that the Syndics would have to look at that. The Syndics of the NHDC will contact the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill. It's the Syndics.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Woochit!

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA – MAURITIANS – REPATRIATION

Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet): My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, if he could do the needful to speedily repatriate a group of Mauritians who are currently stranded in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia.

The Mauritian Embassy is not much of help to them. They are all in serious difficulties. So far, nothing has been heard about the repatriation for these Mauritians. Please, kindly assist.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Minister of Foreign Affairs!

The Deputy Prime Minister: I will endeavour to contact my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

(8.48 p.m.)

MAHEBOURG, ROSE BELLE & L'ESCALIER – BUS SERVICE

Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have an issue which concerns the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. It is with regard to passengers going home from work, those who go in the southern region. I am talking about villages such as Mahebourg, Rose Belle, L'Escalier. I know because of the need to keep social distance the service towards the South has been disrupted, but then, they are facing a very serious shortage of bus services along those routes.

Can I appeal upon the hon. Minister of Transport to kindly look into the matter?

Thank you.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): I thank the hon. Member firstly, Mr Speaker, Sir, for raising this issue. As he, himself, has just said, the question of social distancing is the cause of the complaint that we are receiving from the commuters. But we have, of course, impressed upon all the bus operators, including the individual buses operators to put all the buses which are available on the roads so that we might be able to provide as much as relief as we can to the commuters.

In the case raised by the hon. Member, I will certainly get in touch with the NLTA and see to it that the needful is done.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Mr Ameer Meea!

(8.50 p.m.)

ETIENNE PELLEREAU STREET, PORT LOUIS – WATER PIPES

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Marine & Port Louis East):
Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have another issue. Cela concerne la rue Etienne Pellereau à

Port Louis. Je m'adresse à l'honorable ministre des Utilités publiques et en même temps, peut-être, au ministre des Infrastructures publiques de la NDU.

Le chemin a été asphalté et cela a été bien fait. Mais, au passage, plusieurs tuyaux de la CWA sont cassés et, donc, finalement il y a trois endroits spécifiques - mais à différents endroits - où il y a une perdition d'eau depuis la semaine dernière. Donc, ma requête est qu'on répare ces tuyaux cassés. Etant donné que le ré-asphaltage a été bien fait et la rue est vraiment nickel maintenant, ma demande c'est que ça soit ré-asphaltée de façon convenable après la réparation.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Donc, on va recasser le chemin, on va retirer les tuyaux, on va re-réparer et après ré-asphalter. Je ne sais pas. Je vais voir de quoi il s'agit, bien sûr. Ce serait une bonne idée de faire une plainte sur la hotline 170, si cela n'a pas été fait.

Mr Speaker: Adjournment Matter is over! Thank you very much.

At 8.52 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 10 June 2020 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SBM BANK MAURITIUS LTD – BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(No. B/74) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to Mr N.K.B., G.O.S.K., Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, he will state if his good self had given approval thereto to serve as non-Executive Chairman of the Board of Directors of SBM Bank Mauritius Ltd. and, if so, indicate the period he served thereat.

Reply (Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development): J'ai été informé que la composition du conseil d'administration de la *SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd* a été approuvée par son actionnaire, la *SBM (Bank) Holdings Ltd*, en juin 2015.

Le conseil d'administration de la *SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd* a désigné M. N.K.B. comme son président.

M. N.K.B. a été président du conseil d'administration de la *SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd* du 30 juin 2015 au 13 mars 2020.

CURFEW PERIOD - INMATES - RELEASE

(No. B/81) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the release of inmates during the curfew period, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to the number thereof, indicating the –

- (a) dates and conditions of release thereof, and
- (b) number thereof having been re-arrested, indicating the reasons therefor.

Reply: The Commissioner of Prisons has informed that, in a bid to reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission in prisons, and following the approval of the President of the Republic, acting in accordance with the advice of the Commission on the Prerogative of Mercy, 453 detainees in the following categories were released –

- (a) all persons who were serving imprisonment exclusively in default of payment of fine;

- (b) all persons who had already served their term of penal servitude/imprisonment and were in prison serving imprisonment in default of payment of fine, and
- (c) all detainees, who were due for release on or before 31 December 2020, except drug cases excluding section 34 of the Dangerous Drugs Act, sexual offence (rape, sodomy, attempt upon chastity), murder (including manslaughter, wounds and blows causing death with or without intention to kill and any such offence where death has ensued except involuntary homicide) and money laundering.

The decision to grant the release was in line with the Advice of the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment relating to the Coronavirus Pandemic adopted on 25 March 2020 to reduce prison population given the “heightened risk of contagion between those in custodial and other detention settings”. In this respect, countries like England and Wales, France, Kenya and Sri Lanka had released detainees.

With regard to part (a) of the question, from 11 April to 30 May 2020, 453 convicted detainees have been released subject to compliance with the following –

- (i) The pardon granted by His Excellency, the President of the Republic shall not be a free pardon. It shall be subject to lawful conditions which shall include, among others –
 - (a) revocation of the release order;
 - (b) a recall of the detainee released where he has not complied with any condition of his release order;
 - (c) upon revocation of the release order, the detainee shall be made to serve all the remitted days of the sentence, and
 - (d) the remitted days shall not be served concurrently to any other sentence.
- (ii) A released person shall be deemed to have breached a condition of release where he fails to abide by the confinement/curfew order.
- (iii) No person who is on remand pending trial or pending appeal shall be released.

- (iv) No convicted detainee who is attending Court/BRC under a remand sheet shall be released.
- (v) The release shall be subject to a negative result of a rapid test/screening on their person to prevent any transfer of the virus from the prison into the community.

Non-compliance with these conditions would entail a revocation of the release order.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that 19 of the detainees who were granted remission have been rearrested for offences of larceny, assault or bearing offensive weapon. Police enquiry into these cases is ongoing.

SAFE CITY PROJECT - CAMERAS - FACE RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY

(No. B/82) 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 Face Recognition Technology component of the Safe City Project, he will state if measures are being taken to provide checks and balances in relation to the use by Government agencies, including the Police Force, of the data collected through same and for the implementation of a legal framework accordingly.

Reply: The Mauritius Police Force is the sole Government agency which is responsible for the collection of data related to the Safe City Project. All such data are stored on “Storage Servers” which have been installed and dedicated for that purpose. Access to these servers and the building which houses them are strictly controlled.

Face Recognition Technology is one of the components of the cameras installed under the Safe City Project. It is a biometric software application capable of uniquely identifying or verifying a person by comparing and analysing patterns based on the person’s facial contours. However, this component is not yet operational.

This technology will be used for tracking the movements of wanted persons, habitual criminals and missing persons. It will also be used after a crime has been committed. The pictures of these categories of people will be uploaded on the system database by trained and authorised Police Officers. Then only the Face Recognition Technology component of the Safe City Cameras will be put to use. Moreover, a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP)

acts as data controller and is responsible for the lawful processing of these data. The DCP, in his capacity as data controller, will also adopt policies and implement appropriate technical and organisational measures so as to ensure that there is no abuse of this surveillance technology and to demonstrate that the processing of personal data is performed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2017.

Furthermore, a Code of Practice is being finalised by the Data Protection Commissioner.

PHOENIX – FATAL ROAD ACCIDENTS

(No. B/83) 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 fatal road accidents, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof along the Royal Road in Phoenix since January 2019 to date, indicating where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out in the case of the death of Mrs B. N. M. in a fatal road accident in November 2019 along the said road.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police informed that since January 2019 to date, one case of fatal road accident has been reported along the Royal Road in Phoenix. It occurred on 11 November 2019 at around 19.30 hours, along the said road, involving a motorcycle and late Mrs B. N. M. who passed away the next day at Victoria Hospital as a result of the accident.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that the accident was a hit and run case.

In the course of the investigation, on 02 December 2019, Police arrested the motorcyclist, one Mr M.S.R.L., aged 37 years old.

On 03 December 2019, the motorcyclist was provisionally charged with the offence of involuntary homicide in breach of section 239 of the Criminal Code. He was remanded to Police cell up to 10 December 2019, date on which he was bailed out after furnishing a surety of Rs20,000 and entering a recognizance of Rs200,000. Statements have been recorded from the motorcyclist and Police Officers who have attended the case.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that the enquiry has been completed and the case file has been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions on 08 June 2020 for advice.

PAILLES GUIBIES SEWERAGE PROJECT

(No. B/107) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Pailles Guibies Sewerage Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, indicating the estimated impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on the implementation schedule and delivery thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that Phase 1 of the Pailles Guibies Sewerage Project was awarded to Contractor *Sotravic Ltée* on 23 September 2015 in the contract sum of MUR 253,372,460.85 (incl. VAT). Works on the Pailles Guibies Sewerage Project Phase 1 have been completed on 04 October 2018.

With regard to the Pailles Guibies Sewerage Project – Phase 2, the contract was awarded to Sinohydro Corporation Ltd (China) on 31 July 2019 in the contract sum of MUR 979,238,452.98 (incl. VAT). The commencement date of the project was 11 September 2019 with completion date fixed for 10 January 2023.

As at date, survey for trunk sewers has been completed and survey for reticulation network and house connections are ongoing. Excavation for trial pits has started at Morcellement Raffray. Excavation of trenches for laying of sewers at Avenue Perruche No. 6 started on 17 March 2020, but had to be stopped as a result of the sanitary curfew order on 19 March 2020. However, works resumed at Avenue Perruche No. 6 as from 05 June 2020.

The Pailles Guibies Sewerage Project Phase 2 is being supervised solely by the WMA in-house team.

Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, the contractor has submitted Notifications of Claims and Interim Claims for Extension of Time with associated costs due to restriction on import of resources from China and *force majeure* linked to

lockdown/sanitary curfew. Given that the COVID-19 event has continuing effects, submission of the final claims are awaited from the Contractor.

The impact on the schedule and delivery will be finalised after determination of claims and substantiations from the Contractor.

BAGATELLE DAM PROJECT

(No. B/108) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Bagatelle Dam Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to –

- (a) the date of issue of the Letter of Acceptance therefor;
- (b) if same was completed within the timeframe set in the Letter of Acceptance;
- (c) if the handed over dam was fit for purpose at the time of handing over, and
- (d) if the contractor had any past experience in similar projects.

Reply: It is the Water Resources Unit of this Ministry which is responsible for the Bagatelle dam whereas the Central Water Authority is responsible for the Bagatelle water treatment plant.

My reply may be read in conjunction with answers to PNQ of 12 April 2011, PQ A/216 of 28 June 2011, PQ B/186 of 23 April 2013, PQ B/967 of 17 December 2013 and PQ B/77 of 24 February 2015.

The Letter of Award for the construction of the dam was issued on 03 June 2011 providing for a construction period of 36 months. Works started on 01 December 2011 and were due to be completed by end November 2014. However, the project was delayed and works were completed in June 2017 mainly as a result of two major design changes.

At the start of the works, the Consultant, Coyne et Bellier, had requested for further geological investigations which revealed that the weathered basalt had poor strength to safely sustain the foundation of the massive “Ogee” concrete spillway. Accordingly, in July 2012, the Consultant suspended works related to the original “Ogee” spillway and designed a lighter “Morning Glory” spillway. Works on the new spillway started September 2012.

A second change in design was carried out in January 2013 to ensure the water tightness of the dam and its foundation. The original design of the dam provided for grouting. However, this method was found to be ineffective following trial grout tests and extended deeper grouting at shorter intervals of 75cms as recommended by the Consultant.

My Ministry sought the advice of an Independent Expert on the matter and the latter concluded that the risk of dispersivity of the soil cannot be entirely ruled out and the extended grouting instructed by the Consultant was not effective due to the clayey nature of the soil.

My Ministry convened a high-level meeting in January 2013, in view of the diverging opinions of the Consultant and the Independent Expert. At this meeting, the parties agreed that, on the “*Principe de Précaution*” a cut-off wall be constructed along the entire dam foundation in replacement of grouting as the safety of the dam should be the prevailing criteria given the location of the dam.

Accordingly, the grouting works were suspended in January 2013 to allow the design of the cut-off wall and the procurement of the services of a specialised sub-contractor for the construction of a concrete cut-off wall of 80cm thick and a maximum depth of 35 metres along the entire length of the dam.

In November 2013, my Ministry terminated the contract of Coyne et Bellier and appointed another Consultant, namely, Artelia (France) to take over the supervision of the construction works.

As for part (c) of the question, the dam was designed for the purpose of supplying water to the regions of Port Louis and Lower Plaine Wilhems after treatment. The CWA took possession of the Bagatelle water treatment in September 2019 on completion of the construction works. Since that date, the treatment plant is producing a volume of 31,000m³/day, which is being injected in the pipe network at Berthaud to supply the regions of Cité Trèfles, Stanley, Plaisance, Berthaud, Ste Anne, Camp Levieux, Hugnin, Labourdonnais, Buckingham, Roches Brunes, M.Ory and Réduit. Hours of supply in these regions have improved from 10 hours daily to a round the clock supply. Water from the dam is also being released in the Grand River North West to supply the region of Port Louis through the Pailles water treatment plant as and when required.

I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the full commissioning of the Bagatelle water treatment plant is expected in December 2020, following which the plant will start operating at its full capacity of 60,000m³/day. The additional volume of treated water will then be supplied to the regions of Lower Quatre Bornes, Belle Rose, Ollier, Mont Roches, Rose Hill, Beau Bassin, Coromandel, Belle Etoile, Crétin, Pailles, Guibies and Camp Chapelon, where hours of supply will be expected to increase from 10 hours daily to 24 hours supply. A volume of 10,000m³ will also be diverted to the La Marie system to improve supply to the regions of Tamarin, La Gaulette, Rivière Noire, Cotteau Raffin and Le Morne.

As for part (d) of the question, the construction of the Bagatelle dam has been financed through a concessionary loan from the Exim Bank of China with one of the conditions being that the works should be undertaken by Chinese contractors. Accordingly, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China was requested to submit the names of at least three contractors that would be invited to submit bids for the construction works.

After protracted discussions between the Chinese Embassy and the then Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, under delegated authority of the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, informed the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development that Messrs China International Water and Electric Corporation had been designated to proceed with bid negotiations with the Mauritian side for the implementation of the Bagatelle dam project.

The firm was invited to submit a proposal in line with the bid document prepared by the Consultant. The bid was examined by an Evaluation Committee chaired by a representative of my Ministry and comprising the Consultant for the project and a representative each from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.

The Evaluation Committee found the contractor's proposal to be acceptable. A Negotiating Team chaired by the State Law Office and comprising representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and my Ministry was then set up to negotiate with the contractor with a view to finalising the award of the contract.

Both the Evaluation Committee and the Negotiating Team found that the contractor satisfied the eligibility criteria and had the required experience in the construction of dams.

MINISTRY OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, SPORTS & RECREATION – COACHES

(No. B/109) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether in regard to the coaches attached to his Ministry on an informal basis, he will –

- (a) give the list thereof, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) sports discipline in which coaching is being given;
 - (ii) remuneration drawn, and
 - (iii) conditions of work, and
- (b) state if –
 - (i) they have received their remuneration during the curfew period and, if not, why not, and
 - (ii) any change in the conditions of work thereof is being envisaged post-curfew period and, if so, give details thereof.

Reply: There are no coaches attached to my Ministry on an informal basis.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – DEBTS

(No. B/110) 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 Air Mauritius Ltd, he will state –

- (a) the quantum of money owed by the said company to Government;
- (b) the aggregate amount of the debts thereof guaranteed by Government, and
- (c) if his Ministry is in presence of any application from the said company for financial assistance from Government prior to going into voluntary administration.

Reply (The Prime Minister): With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that, as at date, no money is owed by Air Mauritius Ltd to Government. Moreover, Government has not guaranteed any debt of Air Mauritius Ltd.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that Government has not received any request for support from Air Mauritius Ltd.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - FLU CLINICS

(No. B/111) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the flu clinics, he will state the procedures followed and procurement method used for the setting up thereof amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Reply: I am replying to both PQ B/111 addressed to me and PQ B/114 addressed to the Minister of Health and Wellness as they relate to the same subject matter.

As the House is aware, with the upsurge of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing threat to life of citizens, Government took a series of measures to prevent the proliferation of the corona virus in Mauritius. One of such measures was the construction of five flu clinics at each of the Regional Hospitals, namely at Sir Seewoosagur National Hospital, Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, Victoria Hospital, Jawaharlall Nehru Hospital and Flacq Hospital. This was deemed necessary in order to detect potential carriers of the corona virus at the earliest stage and segregate them from other patients attending the hospital.

The High-Level Committee on COVID-19 submitted a layout design for the clinics based on a template obtained from the World Health Organisation. The design was examined by a technical team from my Ministry comprising the Director, Architecture, the Director, Civil Engineering and the Director, Quantity Surveying. Taking into consideration that the usual construction materials were not available during the lockdown, the technical team, after consultation with representatives of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, reviewed the design and recommended the erection of the flu clinics in light structures of an overall area of around 120m² comprising four containers (6mx2.4m each) covered with proliferated zinc-alum sheeting fixed on steel structure. This option was found to be more cost effective, feasible and implementable within a short period of time.

Given that the Ministry of Health and Wellness was fully involved in health issues *per se*, that is, setting up of sanitary protocols, sensitization, tracking, quarantine and treatment of positive cases of COVID-19 and there was an urgency to implement the project before the start of the flu season, Government approved that my Ministry has recourse to emergency procurement under section 21 of the Public Procurement Act which stipulates that “*A public body may purchase goods, other services or works from a single supplier without competition in cases of extreme urgency.*”

My Ministry carried out a market sounding by informally contacting at least three potential contractors in this difficult time of confinement. Only one, namely Modern Jurassic Building Construction Ltd, which is, in fact, one of the contractors under my Ministry's Framework Agreement, expressed its willingness and capacity to implement the project. Subsequently, a Quotation was invited from the latter company on 21 April 2020, specifying all requirements of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Its proposal was received on 22 April and on the same day, in view of the urgency of setting up these clinics, a Bid Evaluation Committee (BEC) chaired by the Director, Architecture and comprising the Director, Civil Engineering, the Director, Quantity Surveying and the Deputy Director, Quantity Surveying as members assessed the bid. The BEC found the proposal to be substantially responsive and the price quoted fair and reasonable and, therefore, recommended the award of the contract to Modern Jurassic Building Construction Ltd for the sum of Rs22,902,900, inclusive of VAT and a contingency sum of Rs250,000.

The award was made on 25 April 2020 after approval of the High-Level Committee on COVID. The completion date for the project was set at 10 days as from handing over of sites. Each of the sites was thereafter identified in consultation with the respective Regional Health Directors and were prepared for readiness before handing over to the contractor.

I wish to point out that out of the five flu clinics, one is being sponsored by the World Health Organisation, one by the United Nations Development Programme and two by the IBL Ltd. I avail of this opportunity to convey my gratitude on behalf of the Government to the sponsors for their generous support in this difficult moment.

The works at each clinic were completed and handed over to the Ministry of Health and Wellness as follows -

	Site	Handed over
1.	Jawaharlall Nehru Hospital	11 May 2020
2.	Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital	14 May 2020
3.	Victoria Hospital	15 May 2020
4.	Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital	18 May 2020
5.	Flacq Hospital	29 May 2020

I am informed that all the five clinics are fully equipped and operational.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 3 – ST FRANÇOIS COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

(No. B/112) 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 construction of the St François Community Health Centre in Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, he will state where matters stand –

Reply: I am informed that St. François Xavier CHC (Eastern Suburb CHC) is currently housed in a rented building.

In March 2017, a decision was taken by the Ministry for the implementation of a new CHC at St François Xavier (at the location of the old CHC).

Tender for construction of the proposed CHC was launched on 26 July 2019, with closing date 04 September 2019.

A contract was awarded on 27 December 2019, with a project duration of 300 calendar days.

On 14 February 2020, the contract was cancelled due to non-submission of Performance Security and Insurance Cover by the Contractor.

On 04 March 2020, HSCC was requested to submit revised cost estimate for relaunching of tender.

On 05 May 2020, the HSCC submitted a cost estimate, which, according to the Civil Engineer of the Ministry, is on the high side. The Consultant was asked, on 06 May 2020, to justify the cost estimates. He has, so far, not submitted the required information.

NHDC LTD – SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS

(No. B/113) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning whether, in regard to social housing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the number of units thereof built and delivered since January 2015 to date.

Reply: I am informed by the National Housing Development Co. Ltd that from January 2015 to date, 2,221 social housing units have been built and 1,789 delivered. It is to be noted that, in addition, another 151 units have been built and 136 delivered by the National

Empowerment Foundation over the same period, which brings the total of units built by the State to 2,372, over the relevant period.

FLU CLINICS - BID EXERCISE/S

(No. B/114) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the flu clinics, he will state the –

- (a) date on which the bid exercise/s for the setting up thereof was/were launched;
- (b) name of the successful bidder/s, and
- (c) contract value/s thereof.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/111)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT - PROCUREMENT

(No. B/115) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to personal protective equipment, he will state if, amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, any procurement thereof was effected from local suppliers and, if so, indicate the names of the said suppliers and the corresponding contract value thereof, giving a breakdown of same.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), amongst others, face masks (N95), disposable surgical masks, disposable protective clothing, disposable gowns, surgical gloves, goggles, overshoes, nurses' caps, face shields and safety glass were procured from several sources since 06 February 2020 to date from various suppliers, including 19 local ones to the tune of Rs208,472,894.50.

I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly the names of the suppliers, the contract value and the relevant breakdown.

PUBLIC SERVICE – VACANCIES

(No. B/117) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the public service, he will state the number of existing vacancies, giving details thereof, indicating –

- (a) when same will be advertised, and

(b) the expected timeframe for the filling thereof.

Reply: Following an exercise carried out by my Ministry, the number of funded vacancies in the Public Service at 15 May 2020 stands at 6,379, out of which 3,246 are to be filled at entry level and 3,133 to be filled at promotional level. The details of the vacancies in Ministries/Departments are being tabled.

With regard to part (a), I am informed that 2,579 vacancies have already been reported to the appropriate Service Commissions and of which 1,935 vacancies have been advertised.

For posts which are filled under delegated powers, there are 1,810 funded vacancies, out of which 894 have already been advertised.

However, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a Circular was issued on 25 April 2020 by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service informing Supervising Officers of Ministries/Departments that all existing vacancies, whether or not already reported to the Service Commissions, should be frozen and that they should, as far as possible, make do with the existing resources.

Concerning part (b) of the question, in view of the fact that the exercise of filling of vacancies has been frozen in the Civil Service, the expected time frame for their filling cannot be determined at this stage.

I wish to point out that the filling of vacancies in Ministries/Departments is a matter that falls under the purview of Service Commissions and on Responsible Officers where delegation of power has been conveyed to them by the relevant Commissions.

It is also worth mentioning that as stated in the Annex to the Budget Speech 2020/2021, recruitment in the Civil Service will be limited to priority sectors. To that effect, a committee chaired by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service with representatives of my Ministry and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development will be set up to make recommendations on the posts to be filled.

SURINAM LOTUS SHELTER – WOMEN & CHILDREN

(No. B/118) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the shelter in Surinam, commonly known as Lotus, she will state the –

- (a) number of women victims of domestic violence, babies and children sheltered thereat since the coming into operation thereof to date, and
- (b) reasons for the transfer of the nine babies who were sheltered thereat on Thursday 14 May 2020, indicating where they have been placed.

(Withdrawn)

SHELTERS – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & CHILD ABUSE

(No. B/119) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the shelters for victims of domestic violence and child abuse, she will give the list thereof operating under the aegis of her Ministry and of the Non-Governmental Organisations to which her Ministry refers victims, indicating the –

- (a) addresses and dates of coming into operation thereof, and
- (b) monitoring and follow up actions undertaken by her Ministry for the rehabilitation of the victims in all the shelters.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINE

(No. B/120) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the eventual availability of a COVID-19 vaccine on the international market, he will state the level of preparedness of Government for the acquisition thereof at the earliest possible in terms of commitment of funds, contacts with laboratories and pharmaceutical companies presently involved in the development and manufacturing thereof.

(Withdrawn)

VULNERABLE GROUPS – NATIONAL DATABASE

(No. B/121) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the fight against poverty and vulnerability, he will state if consideration will be given for the database of vulnerable economic groups generated through the implementation of the Wage Assistance

Scheme and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme to be used as an effective tool therefor through the implementation of a centralised financing system for an optimum use of the financial resources.

Reply: J'ai annoncé dans le Discours du Budget qu'un *National Database for Vulnerable Groups* serait mis sur pied pour couvrir les cas de pauvreté absolue tout comme les cas de pauvreté relative.

Cette base de données comprendra les informations rassemblées au travers de l'implémentation du *Wage Assistance Scheme* et du *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*. Dans ce contexte, nous avons apporté les amendements nécessaires au *COVID-19 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020* afin de permettre l'échange d'informations au regard de ces deux régimes entre les ministères, les services gouvernementaux et d'autres agences gouvernementales.

NHDC – SOCIAL HOUSING – APPLICANTS

(No. B/122) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning whether, in regard to social housing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the number of applicants awaiting the allocation of a unit thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the National Housing Development Company that as at 04 June 2020, it had 17,502 registered applicants.

PSAC, NCE, SC & HSC – EXAMINATIONS

(No. B/123) 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, the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate, she will state the date of the holding of the examinations thereof for the year 2020 amid the modified school calendar due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Reply: With your permission, I will reply to PQs B/123 and B/128 together as they are related to the same issue, that is, the timing for examinations.

I had informed the House, in my reply to PQ B/32 made on 05 May 2020, that the closure of schools and the subsequent postponement of assessments and examinations is now an international reality, in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

We have reviewed the situation in Mauritius, particularly with regard to the school calendar and the timing of both national and international assessments and examinations.

As I had already informed the House, the priority upon resumption of classes would be to catch up on loss of instructional time, ensure that students complete the syllabus adequately and be provided with sufficient time to develop their preparedness for the assessments and examinations. As such, the school calendar has been adjusted, and will now run up to March 2021.

With regard to the Cambridge SC and HSC exams, I had already informed that these examinations would be conducted after March 2021. Discussions have been held with Cambridge regarding the rescheduling of the SC/HSC 2020 Examinations to next year and Cambridge has agreed to reschedule the SC and HSC Examinations starting mid-April 2021 up to June 2021.

The timing of the national assessments organised and conducted by the MES, namely the PSAC and the NCE, has also been reviewed to allow pupils to catch up with their studies and adequately cover the programme of study.

Thus, accordingly, the Modular Assessment in History & Geography and Science for the PSAC Assessment for Grade 6 pupils has been re-scheduled for the first week of December 2020. The remaining papers for the PSAC Assessment would be taken by pupils in March 2021.

As far as the NCE Assessment is concerned, taking into account the fact that it comprises both summative and school-based assessment for the core and non-core subjects respectively, it is planned to be conducted in April 2021.

It will be ensured that this first NCE Assessment takes place in the best possible conditions keeping in view the equity, fairness and inclusiveness considerations as well as the level of preparedness of the learners.

CAP MALHEUREUX – STATE LAND LEASE – JAN. 2015 TO 09 JUNE 2020

(No. B/124) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning whether, in regard to State Land, he will state the number of plots thereof located in Cap Malheureux which have been leased since January 2015 to date, giving the list of the lessees thereof and the corresponding rent payable.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL PENSION FUND – ACTUARIAL VALUATION REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(No. B/125) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the National Pension Fund, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom and table copies of the last –

- (a) Actuarial Valuation Report, and
- (b) Annual Report thereof.

Reply: The last Actuarial Valuation Report for the National Pension Fund as at 31 December 2013 was carried out by Feber Associates (in partnership with Deloitte) and same was ready in 2016. I am tabling a copy of the last available Actuarial Valuation Report as at December 2013.

As regards part (b) of the question, in accordance with Section 39 of the National Pensions Act, the National Pension Fund publishes annual financial statements (instead of Annual Report) that are duly audited by the National Audit Office. I am hereby tabling the latest audited annual financial statements for the National Pension Fund for January 2015 to 30 June 2016.

MRA – FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 – TAXES ON INCOME & PROFITS – SOLIDARITY LEVY

(No. B/126) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to revenue collected for fiscal year 2019-2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, a breakdown thereof in terms of taxes on income and profits and Solidarity Levy.

Reply: J'ai été informé par la *Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA)* qu'à la fin du mois de mai 2020, un montant de 19,9 milliards de roupies avait été collecté au travers de l'imposition sur les revenus et les profits, avec la répartition suivante –

- a) 9,96 milliards de roupies provenant de l'impôt sur le revenu des personnes physiques;

- b) 8,47 milliards de roupies provenant pour l'impôt sur le revenu des sociétés et des personnes morales, et
- c) 1,47 milliard de roupies de déduction fiscale à la source.

Sur les 9,96 milliards de roupies perçues au titre de l'impôt sur le revenu des personnes physiques, 787 millions de roupies concernent le *Solidarity Levy*.

GOVERNMENT DEBT SERVICING – FINANCIAL YEAR 2019-2020

(No. B/127) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Government Debt Servicing for financial year 2019-2020, he will state the quantum of funds disbursed in terms of –

- (a) Capital Repayments;
- (b) Interests and Management/Service Charges, and
- (c) Redemption of Treasury Bills and Treasury Notes, respectively, indicating the percentage that these sums represent out of the total Government expenditure for the said financial year.

Reply: Je dépose une déclaration sur le service de la dette basée sur les estimations révisées pour l'année.

Les chiffres réels du service de la dette publique pour l'année 2019-2020 seront disponibles lorsque l'exercice financier et les comptes définitifs du gouvernement pour l'exercice 2019-2020 seront clôturés.

PSAC, NCE, SC & HSC – EXAMINATIONS

(No. B/128) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the school year 2020, she will state the date of the holding of the examinations for the National Certificate of Education, the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. B/123)

BANK OF MAURITIUS – RS60 BILLION GRANT TO GOVERNMENT

(No. B/129) Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to

the Rs60 billion being provided by the Bank of Mauritius to Government, he will state if same is being provided by way of a loan or a grant, indicating how the Bank proposes to find the funds to repay same to the lenders thereof.

Reply: J'ai été informé que la Banque de Maurice a décidé d'accorder un montant de 60 milliards de roupies, en tant que contribution exceptionnelle, au gouvernement dans le but de stabiliser l'économie.

J'ai également été informé que la Banque de Maurice financera cette contribution en utilisant ses propres instruments pour un montant total de 60 milliards de roupies.

MAURITIUS INVESTMENT CORPORATION LTD – BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(No. B/130) Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the name of the members of the Board of Directors thereof.

Reply: Le nom des membres du Conseil d'administration de la *Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd* est –

1. Lord Meghnad Jagdishchandra Desai
Parlementaire, Royaume-Uni, en tant que Président
2. M. Mardayah Kona Yerukunondu
Premier Vice-Gouverneur, Banque de Maurice, en tant que Membre
3. Mme Hemlata Sadhna Sewraj-Gopal
Second Vice-Gouverneur, Banque de Maurice, en tant que Membre
4. Dr. Yousouf Ismael
Secrétaire Général, *The Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry*, en tant que Membre
5. M. Jean Michel Louis Rivalland
Directeur Général, Groupe *Swan Life Ltd*, en tant que Membre.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – VEGETABLE PLANTERS & CATTLE BREEDERS

(No. B/131) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the vegetable planters and cattle breeders, he will state –

- (a) the measures taken or to be taken to restore the confidence thereof in their respective activities and alleviate the hardships encountered following the loss in revenue and the cases of theft, including with violence, amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, and
- (b) if an assessment of the losses incurred and hardships encountered have been carried out.

(Withdrawn)

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD – IMPORTATION PERMITS – JAN. TO APRIL 2020

(No. B/132) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to potatoes, onions, garlic and ginger, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Agricultural Marketing Board, information as to the number of permits issued to individuals and/or companies for the importation thereof over the period January to April 2020, indicating in each case the –

- (a) quantity imported, and
- (b) country of origin thereof.

(Withdrawn)

PHOENIX BY-PASS REPAIRS – COST & DURATION

(No. B/133) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the repairs of the Phoenix By-pass, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, the –

- (a) total final cost thereof, giving a breakdown thereof;
- (b) duration of the delay that occurred in the completion thereof, if any, and
- (c) expected completion date thereof.

(Withdrawn)

GRAND PORT – REGISTERED FISHERS

(No. B/134) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the registered fishers of the District of Grand Port, he will table copy of the list thereof.

(Withdrawn)

LA PASSE OF MAHEBOURG – CREATION

(No. B/135) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the creation of La Passe of Mahebourg, he will state where matters stand, indicating the expected completion date thereof.

(Withdrawn)

HOSPITALS – ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAM MACHINES

(No. B/136) 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 Electroencephalogram machines, he will state the number thereof available in each hospital, indicating if same are operational and, if not, indicate if consideration will be given for the installation of at least one such machine in good working order in each public hospital.

Reply: I am informed that there is one electroencephalogram machine at Brown Sequard Hospital. The Electroencephalogram machine is used to detect abnormal electrical activities in the brain.

The machine was purchased on 10 December 2009 and commissioned on April 2010 costing Rs1,638,560.00. I wish to inform the House that there was no contract agreement for maintenance and the machine was maintained by the Biomedical Unit.

This machine is not functioning since 09 December 2019.

A new machine is being purchased. The equipment was supposed to be delivered by mid-March, but has been, unfortunately, delayed, for obvious reasons. It is now expected to be delivered by 30 June 2020.

A maintenance contract has been agreed with the supplier to maintain the new equipment after warranty period, on labour, spare parts and maintenance kit contract, which may be renewed upon satisfactory performance on a yearly basis for a further period of four years.

As regards the installation of such equipment in all public hospitals, it is not feasible in view of the low demand for the use of same and availability of skilled human resources.

STATE BANK OF MAURITIUS – BOARD – PUBLIC OFFICERS

(No. A/33) 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 public officers holding office on the Board of all the entities of the State Bank of Mauritius, since January 2015 to date, he will state if they have been duly authorized by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service therefor and, if so, indicate when and over which period.

Reply (Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development): Directors on the Board of any entity of the State Bank of Mauritius are elected, in their personal capacity, by a resolution at the Annual Meeting of shareholders regardless of whether the proposed candidate is a public officer.

As such, there is no representative of Government on the Board of any entity of the State Bank of Mauritius.

It is to be noted that, pursuant to section 11 of the Human Resources Management Manual, the authorisation of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service is required only when a public officer proposes to undertake private work for reward involving trading or commercial activities.

Serving on a Board of a State-owned Enterprise may not be considered as a trading and commercial activity. Besides, the officer is designated by the majority shareholder and is elected to serve as Board Director.

However, for officers of the Administrative Cadre, who undertake private work, the authorisation of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service as Responsible Officer should be sought and obtained.

PHOENIX - PROJECTS

(No. A/34) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Phoenix/Valentina Roundabout Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the work progress thereof, indicating the –

- (a) cost;
- (b) name of contractor;

- (c) contractual start and completion dates, and
- (d) expected completion date thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that there is no such project as Phoenix/Valentina Roundabout Project ongoing.

However, for the information of the hon. Member, I would like to point out that currently we have the following projects in progress in the region of Phoenix –

- (i) construction of grade separated junctions at Pont Fer/Jumbo/Dowlut Roundabouts, and
- (ii) construction of a flyover across Motorway M1 at Hillcrest Avenue in Quatre Bornes.

I would, therefore, request the hon. Member to come up with a substantive question as to which project he is referring to.

COVID-19 – NURSERIES & KINDERGARTENS – MEASURES

(No. A/35) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the nurseries and kindergartens, she will state the number of checks effected by officers of her Ministry to ensure that appropriate sanitary and precautionary measures are being taken thereat amid the COVID-19 Pandemic with the resumption of the activities thereof, if any and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that visits to the 394 existing Child Day Care Centres (including nurseries and kindergartens) as recorded at the level of my Ministry, are carried out on a regularly basis by officers to ascertain compliance with the Institutions for Welfare and Protection of Children Regulations 2000. Post confinement, my Ministry developed a protocol for the re-opening of the CDCCs with effect from 02 June 2020. The protocol and other relevant documents are available on the website of my Ministry.

Prior to the re-opening of the CDCCs, my Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness ensured that all personnel working with children in the Child Day Care Centres, as well as the drivers and helpers of vans transporting children, undertook the PCR-COVID test.

Checks to the CDCCs are ongoing by the Officers of my Ministry with a view to ensuring that all sanitary and precautionary measures are being taken.

SCHOOLS (SECONDARY) - BUSES - PHYSICAL DISTANCING

(No. A/36) 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 secondary schools, she will state the measures taken by her Ministry to ensure that a sufficient number of dedicated buses be allotted thereto to ensure social distancing therein.

Reply: (Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail): According to the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA), dedicated school services involving some 1,100 public buses and 63 contract buses were being provided to some 114 secondary institutions prior to the national lockdown.

The NLTA has started consultations with the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology to prepare the phased resumption of schools, planned for beginning of August 2020.

In that respect, the NLTA invited applications from interested owners of contract buses for a temporary variation of their Public Service Vehicle (Contract Bus) Licences to enable them perform dedicated school services. Twenty-nine (29) applications in respect of contract buses, with varying carriage capacity, have been received along with 23 applications from owners of private buses. The processing of these applications is underway.

It is estimated that, with the above arrangements, and the staggered way in which schooling would be held, physical distancing in school buses could be observed in line with the Road Traffic (COVID-19 Sanitary Measures) Regulations 2020.

In the meantime, Government is closely monitoring the evolution of the Coronavirus pandemic and will take such decisions as may be required, in due course.

COVID-19 PATIENTS – PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE

(No. A/37) Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the recovered COVID-19 patients, he will state if the mental health thereof have been assessed post COVID-19 to ensure that they be given appropriate psychological help and assistance if required and, if not, why not and, if so, indicate the number thereof who have benefitted from the required help and assistance and the nature thereof.

Reply: The COVID-19 positive patients discharged from treatment centres were followed up on a weekly basis for a period of three weeks.

The majority of patients were well and asymptomatic on their follow-ups. No complaint of psychological nature whatsoever was made. Any patient complaining of minor symptoms in the course of the follow-up was advised accordingly and monitored closely by a psychologist over the phone for a period of three weeks.

COVID-19 TESTS – CONSIGNMENTS TO DATE

(No. A/38) Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction and Antigen Tests, he will state the cost of the consignments thereof procured as at to date.

Reply: 213,000 Polymerase chain reaction tests were purchased from Proximed for a total sum of Rs65,852,290. 113,000 tests have already been delivered and the remaining will be delivered in a phased manner from August to December 2020.

As for Antigen tests, 212,500 were purchased from Ducray Lenoir for the total sum of Rs132,500,000.00.

INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS – DELAYS

(No. A/39) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the infrastructure works undertaken by his Ministry, the Road Development Authority and the National Development Unit which were stalled during the COVID-19 lockdown, he will state the measures taken or to be taken to make up for the accumulated delays, indicating if prolongation costs will be involved.

Reply: I would refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ B/101 which relates to the same subject matter.

ABDOOL RAMAN ABDOOL GOVERNMENT SCHOOL PROJECT, PHASE

II

(No. A/40) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to Phase II of the reconstruction of the Abdool Raman Abdool Government School Project, she will state where matters stand, indicating the

—

(a) cost involved, and

(b) expected completion date thereof.

Reply: With regard to part (a), the estimated cost is Rs70.5 m.

As for part (b), bids were initially launched on 25 April 2019. However, as no bids were received, the exercise had to be cancelled.

In view of the procedures involved in the procurement process after re-launching the bids, it is expected that the contract will be awarded by 01 November 2020.

Works are expected to start by 01 December 2020.

Expected Completion Date: June 2022 (Duration of Works – 18 months)

CURFEW PERIOD – FOOD PACKS – DISTRIBUTION

(No. A/41) **Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the distribution of food packs during the curfew period by her Ministry, she will state the number thereof distributed, constituency-wise.

Reply: In reply to Parliamentary Question B/21 of 05 May 2020, I informed the House that food packs were distributed during the curfew period to 19,779 beneficiaries of carer's allowance (one per beneficiary) as indicated in the table below –

DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD PACKS TO BENEFICIARIES OF CARER'S ALLOWANCE

SN	Regions	Packs Delivered	Total District Wise
1	PTE AUX SABLES	223	2506
2	PORT LOUIS	2064	
3	LONG MOUNTAIN	219	
4	MORC. ST. ANDRE	346	

Distri ct Number	Regions	Packs Delivered	Total District Wise
5	PAMPLEMOUSSES	361	1755
6	TERRE ROUGE	538	
7	TRIOLET	510	
8	GOODLANDS	560	1136
9	GRAND'BAIE	341	
10	GRAND GAUBE	235	
11	LE RAVIN (RIV- DU-REMPART)	654	930
12	PITON	276	
13	SAINT PIERRE	603	939
14	VERDUN(QUART IER MILITAIRE)	336	
15	BON ACCUEIL	504	1564
16	CENTRAL FLACQ	1060	
17	MONTAGNE BLANCHE	323	1170
18	BEL AIR	535	
19	CAMP DE MASQUE	312	
20	OLD GRAND PORT	122	819
21	ROSE BELLE	697	
22	MAHEBOURG	665	958

23	PLAINE MAGNIEN	293	
24	L'ESCALIER	197	1270
25	RIVIERE DES ANGUILLES	715	
26	SOUILLAC	358	
27	BAIE DU CAP (C Grenier)	82	828
28	CHEMIN GRENIER	369	
29	BAMBOUS	377	
30	PHOENIX	551	551
31	VACOAS	1172	1172
32	CUREPIPE	1129	1129
33	QUATRE BORNES	1028	1028
34	ROSE HILL	1017	1017
35	PETITE RIVIERE	277	1007
36	BEAU BASSIN	730	
TOTAL		19779	19779

Furthermore, 17,936 food packs were distributed to 7,900 households registered under the Social Register of Mauritius as indicated hereunder –

DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD PACKS TO SRM HOUSEHOLDS PER DISTRICT AS AT 04 MAY 2020
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SN	DISTRICT	TOTAL NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS DELIVERED	TOTAL NO. OF BOXES DELIVERED
1	Port Louis	1412	3090
2	Savanne	550	1298
3	Black River	948	2140
4	Pamplemousse s	871	2080
5	Moka	483	1091
6	Flacq	1110	2410
7	Rivière du Rempart	503	1109
8	Plaine Wilhems	1091	2474
9	Grand Port	932	2244
	TOTAL	7900	17936

It is to be noted that the information is not available constituency-wise but instead region wise and district wise.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC - CRUISE SHIPS - STRANDED STAFF ABROAD

(No. A/42) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the staff of cruise ships of Mauritian nationality who are presently stranded abroad amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, he will state the –

- (a) number thereof;
- (b) corresponding actual geographical location thereof, and
- (c) measures being taken for the repatriation thereof.

Reply: Regarding part (a) of the question, my Ministry has established, since the COVID-19 related lockdown in Mauritius, a database on all Mauritian nationals stranded worldwide due to the pandemic, including those among them who are members of the crews of the cruise ships. As at now, we have registered a total of 2,008 of Mauritian nationals who are members of the crews of the cruise ships.

It is to be noted that the repatriation of stranded Mauritian nationals has been based on the principles of orderly and phased repatriation through planned special flights, wherever possible and authorised, taking into account a series of relevant factors, including the prevailing quarantine and treatment capacities. Each of these planned flights is organised only after approval by the National Committee on COVID-19. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade is simply the implementation arm of the said Committee on decisions on repatriation.

It is to be further noted that Government is fully alive to the stressful conditions of stranded Mauritians who are crew members and has been exploring various options to ensure their well-being and safety. However, the case of repatriation of members of crew of cruise ships is different from that of other stranded persons considering that the COVID-19 pandemic has also spread to a number of cruise ships, with the nature of such ship, including crowded semi-enclosed areas, increased exposure to new environments, and limited medical resources, contributing to the heightened risk and rapid spread of the disease. This is one of the reasons why many Governments and ports have prevented cruise ships from docking and refused to allow disembarkation of crew members even for transit purposes.

With respect to part (b) of the question, the Mauritian members of crew of the cruise liners are in different geographical locations, either on ships which are docked or moving towards different pick-up points for their eventual repatriation. For instance, Royal Caribbean

Cruises Ltd, which employs 1,112 Mauritians on different ships, has already moved around 700 Mauritian nationals from Miami to Southampton in the United Kingdom. 90 other members of crews have been moved to Saint Nazaire, France, while some other 23 are now in Athens, Greece.

Regarding part (c) of the question, my Ministry has been constantly consulting with the representatives of the companies owning the cruise liners, reminding them of their contractual obligations on ensuring the welfare of the Mauritian crew members pending their safe return to Mauritius. In parallel, Government is working with representatives of cruise companies in Mauritius to finalise the modalities and timelines of the repatriation of our crews, in line with the above-mentioned principles of orderly and phased repatriation. In this regard, on Wednesday 27 May 2020, my Ministry convened a meeting with the local representatives of cruise ships to discuss repatriation plans and conditions attached thereto. The Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training were also present at the meeting. A working group consisting of local representatives of cruise companies, the Director of Shipping and officials of my Ministry has been set up to finalise a calendar for repatriation in accordance with the above-mentioned principles of orderly and phased return, with each flight carrying a batch of 150 passengers who must comply with the requirements of the health protocol, including –

- (i) producing a medical certificate proving that they have been found to be COVID-19 negative by a PCR test undertaken within 5 days prior to the departure date;
- (ii) in-flight social distancing, and
- (iii) automatic quarantine on arrival.

Thus, for the month of June 2020, three repatriation flights are already scheduled. A first batch of 150 Mauritian crew members is expected to reach Mauritius from London on 13 June 2020 as they have reached Southampton. A second batch is expected to depart from Rome on 23 June 2020. A third batch is expected to depart from London on 29 June 2020. All repatriation flights will be undertaken by Air Mauritius as the airline has the experience of repatriating Mauritians based on our health and sanitary requirements. We are also working on a repatriation calendar for July 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented global health challenge which has resulted in travel restrictions, closure of airspace, curfews, lockdowns, and confinement. The

virus has, so far, infected more than 6.6 million people worldwide and caused around 390,000 deaths. International travel restrictions have been implemented by most countries in the world as part of the global strategies to contain the spread of the deadly virus. These stringent restrictions are accompanied by national strategies that limit movements of people through lockdowns to prevent transmissions of the disease. Gradually, these travel restrictions are now being lifted.

Since the lockdown announced by Government on 19 March to contain the spread of COVID-19, all our efforts were geared towards containing the spread of the virus and protecting the health of the people on the island. With the rest of the world, we were engaged in battling an invisible enemy. Our country was under a sanitary curfew. Today, we can say that we have been able to contain the spread of the virus mainly because it reached us late and we had an early lockdown. For more than 20 days, Mauritius has not registered any new local infection by virtue of which we can now address the repatriation of Mauritian crews who are on different cruise ships. However, we need to continue to be extremely vigilant.

Since April, we have received several requests for repatriation from cruise companies and individuals working on these ships. With those conditions prevailing in April, it was difficult for Government to accede to these requests. My Ministry wrote to the cruise companies with a request for them to abide by their commitments and to keep our nationals safe. We informed the cruise companies that Government will be working on a well-defined roadmap for an orderly and phased return of our stranded nationals at the first most opportune time.

By late April, as we started having more visibility at the national level on the spread of the virus and we were more confident to contain it, Government started a phased repatriation of its nationals who were in distress abroad. The repatriation exercise is based on an established health protocol which is showing results.

As we now embark on a phased return to normalcy, and in line with our quarantine facilities, we are in a position to bring back our nationals working on cruise ships. Regarding part (a) of the question, as at now, we have registered a total of 2,008 Mauritian nationals working on cruise ships who have requested to be repatriated. We have worked with the local representatives of cruise companies and with our Embassies to build a database of the number and location of the crews.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I need to underline that our crews are in different geographical locations either on ships which are docked or moving towards different pick-up points for their eventual repatriation. For instance, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd which

employs 1,112 Mauritians on different ships has already moved around 700 Mauritian nationals from Miami to Southampton in the United Kingdom. 90 other crews have been moved to Saint Nazaire, France, while some other 23 are now in Athens, Greece.

Regarding part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that Government is working with representatives of cruise companies in Mauritius to finalise the modalities and timelines of the repatriation of our crews.

On Wednesday 27 May 2020, I chaired a meeting with the local representatives of cruise ships to discuss the repatriation plan. The Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training were also present at the meeting. A working group consisting of local representatives of cruise companies, the Director of Shipping and officials of my Ministry has been set up to finalise the repatriation calendar. Repatriation will be done in a phased, planned and orderly manner, consisting of batches of 150.

This month, three repatriation flights are already scheduled. A first batch of 150 crews is expected to reach Mauritius from London on 13 June 2020 as they have reached Southampton. The second batch is expected to depart from Rome on 23 June 2020. A third batch is expected to depart from London on 29 June 2020. All repatriation flights will be undertaken by Air Mauritius as the airline has the experience of repatriating Mauritians based on our health and sanitary requirements. We are also working on the repatriation calendar for July.

I wish to further inform the House that the cruise companies will bear the cost of repatriation and of quarantine.

STATE LAND – LEASES – CANCELLATION

(No. A/43) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning whether, in regard to leases over State Land which have been rescinded or cancelled, he will state, for each of the years 2015 to 2019 and since January 2020 to date, the number thereof, indicating in each case –

- (a) the name of the lessee;
- (b) the location and extent thereof;
- (c) the reasons for the rescission or cancellation, and
- (d) if same has been referred to the Police for investigation, indicating the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed that from 2015 till June 2020, 78 leases have been cancelled. The details are as follows –

S.N	TYPE OF LEASES	NUMBER OF CASES IN A CALENDAR YEAR						TOTAL
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (JANUARY TO 9th JUNE)	
	Agricultural			1	1	1	Nil	5
	Campe		1	1	1	1		2
	Commercial			1	1	1		4
	Educational			1	1	1		4
	General		1		1			5
	Industrial	4		3	6	5		33
	Residential		1		3	3		22
	Religious / Social / Cultural	1		1		2		3
L	TOTAL	5	0	4	2	7	Nil	78

As regards the details pertaining to name of lessee, location, extent and reasons, I am advised that I am precluded from providing those details without the consent of the parties concerned, by virtue of the Data Protection Act 2018.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 2 – NHDC LTD – SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS

(No. A/44) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning whether, in regard to Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South Port Louis Central, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the number of applications for the allocation of social housing unit thereat which are pending as at to date, indicating –

- (a) the number of housing units scheduled for construction and delivery in 2020, indicating the selling price thereof, and
- (b) if priority of consideration will be given to applicants who are registered on the Social Register of Mauritius.

Reply: I am informed by the National Housing Development Co. Ltd that information pertaining to social housing and applicants is not compiled constituency-wise but district wise or locality-wise.

The NHDC Ltd has further informed that for the district/locality of Port Louis, there are, as at 04 June 2020, 3,248 applicants registered at the NHDC.

I am further informed that there is no ongoing construction of social housing unit in Constituency No. 2 as no suitable State land is available as at present. However, applicants from Constituency No. 2 will be considered in the forthcoming allocation exercise in respect of Housing projects to the north of Port Louis, for instance in Baie du Tombeau, Montagne Longue, Calebasses and Petite Julie. The indicative price of one housing unit has not yet been determined.

As regards families found on the Social Register of Mauritius, 10% of constructed NHDC housing units across the island are generally reserved for the National Empowerment Foundation to be allocated to the said families, to the extent that they have applied for social housing and qualify for same.

MONTHLY SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE – BENEFICIARIES

(No. A/45) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Monthly Subsistence Allowance allocated to eligible households registered on the Social Register of Mauritius, he will state the –

- (a) number of beneficiaries thereof since 2016 to date;
- (b) conditions attached thereto, indicating the quantum for each type of beneficiaries, and
- (c) total sum disbursed in each financial year since the introduction of the said scheme.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the number of eligible households registered on the Social Register of Mauritius benefitting from the monthly Subsistence Allowance since 2016 to date are as follows –

Month	Number of Eligible Households
December 2016	7,993
December 2017	9,529
December 2018	8,712
December 2019	10,367
May 2020	10,149

As regards part (b) of the question, a household needs to register under the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) and if found eligible is paid a monthly Subsistence Allowance.

The quantum of the monthly Subsistence Allowance payable to eligible SRM households for both Mauritius and Rodrigues is as follows –

RANGE OF SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE (Rs)	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS AS AT MAY 2020		
	MAURITIUS	RODRIGUES	TOTAL
500 - 1,000	1,137	295	1,432
1,001 - 2,000	1,290	306	1,596
2,001 - 3,000	2,200	628	2,828
3,001 - 4,000	1,739	482	2,221
4,001 - 5,000	971	340	1,311

5,001 - 6,000	412	142	554
6,001 - 6,500	153	54	207
TOTAL	7,902	2,247	10,149

With regard to part (c) of the question, the total sum disbursed in each financial year since the introduction of the said Scheme is as follows –

Period	Total Amount Paid (MUR)
December 2016 - June 2017	106,508,689
July 2017 - June 2018	213,612,857
July 2018 - June 2019	238,181,004
July 2019 - May 2020	220,229,082
Total (Dec 2016 to date)	778, 531,632

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – DIGITAL TABLETS PROJECT

(No. A/46) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Allocation of Digital Tablets Project to students of the primary and secondary schools, she will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: With regard to the allocation of tablets to pupils of primary schools, I wish to inform the House that all pupils of Grades 1 to 4 in public and grant-aided schools are provided with tablets for use at school.

As for secondary schools, there is no project for the allocation of tablets to students at the level of my Ministry.

PUBLIC SERVICE – RESUMPTION

(No. A/47) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the resumption of normal activities in the Public Service, he will state if he has had meetings online or otherwise with the representatives of the main trade unions in relation thereto.

Reply: On 14 May 2020, I chaired a meeting at the seat of my Ministry with representatives of the three Federations having the highest representativeness in the Public Service, namely the Federation of Public Sector and other Unions, the Federation of Civil Service and other Unions, and the State and other Employees Federation.

During that meeting, issues regarding phased resumption of duty, sanitary measures put in place in Ministries/Departments, flexitime and work from home as mentioned in my Ministry's Circular letters No. 31 and 32 of 2020 respectively were discussed.

The representatives of the Federations who were present at the meeting are –

Federation of Public Sector and Other Unions

Mr R. Imrith President

Miss B. Brizmohun Secretary

Federation of Civil Service and Other Unions

Mr N. Gopee President

Mr M. Barosa Secretary

State Employees and Other Federations

Mr R. Sadien General President

Mr I. Amiran General Secretary

SANITISATION AND DISINFECTION OF PUBLIC BUSES AND LIGHT RAIL VEHICLES

(No. A/48) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to public transport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the measures being taken, if any, by the said authority to check whether the bus operators and the Metro Express Ltd. are carrying out the sanitization and disinfection of public buses and light rail vehicles in line with the recommendations of the World Health Organisations and, if so, if shortcomings have been reported, indicating the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Reply: As stated in replies to Parliamentary Questions B/38 and A/30, the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA), being the Regulator for land transport, has been in close

communication with the transport operators to urge them to abide by the sanitary measures aboard public transport vehicles since the decree of the national lockdown to avoid the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Road Traffic (COVID-19 Sanitary Measures) Regulations 2020 and the Light Rail (COVID-19 Sanitary Measures) Regulations 2020 were promulgated for that purpose. By virtue of these Regulations, bus operators and the light rail operator are mandatorily required to ensure that their vehicles are cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis. Fine not exceeding Rs50,000 and a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years have been provided for in the Regulations.

Enforcement is being carried out jointly by NLTA officers and the Police. For that matter, five squadrons at the level of the NLTA, comprising Road Transport Inspectors and Traffic Wardens, have been set up for crackdown operations. Meetings are also being held with bus operators to enlist their support by complying with sanitary measures for public transport during these testing times.

The National Transport Corporation has enlisted the services of a private contractor for sanitisation and disinfection service in respect of its operational fleet.

According to information obtained, Metro Express Ltd (MEL) has also appointed a service provider for the deep cleaning of the light rail premises and for regular disinfection of its light rail vehicles. All light rail vehicles are thus undergoing thorough disinfection and a cleaning regime involving the deep cleaning of the trains every four hours during the operation of passenger services and light rail amenities such as the elevator buttons, stairs handrails, door handles, benches, holding bars, seats, floors, automatic ticket dispensers and ticket card readers are being sanitised on a daily basis.