



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2020

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

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

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 34 of 2020

Sitting of Tuesday 17 November 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)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OBITUARY – MR KALYAN TAROLAH, FORMER MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT – DEMISE

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we learnt of the demise of Mr Kalyan Tarolah, former Member of Parliament, on 13 November 2020 at the age of 44.

Mr Tarolah was born on 16 July 1976 at Quatre-Soeurs. He attended the St Joseph College for his secondary education. He pursued his tertiary education in different fields and became the holder of a Group Diploma in Marketing, a Diploma in Religious Examination, a Teacher's Diploma and a Masters in Marketing and Business Administration. Mr Tarolah worked as Educator for children having special education needs.

He joined politics in 2005 and became a member of the *Mouvement Socialiste Militant*. In December 2014, he contested the National Assembly Elections under the banner of *L'Alliance Lepep* in Constituency No.10 - Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, and was returned Third Member to serve the Sixth National Assembly.

During his mandate, Mr Tarolah served as member on the Public Accounts Committee from 26 February 2015 to 22 October 2017. He became Parliamentary Private Secretary on 25 January 2017, a post which he held until 22 October 2017.

Mr Tarolah was well known for his contribution in social work in his native village.

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

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell): Mr Speaker, Sir, I associate myself to the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to the late Mr Kalyan Tarolah, former Member of Parliament. May I kindly ask you to direct the Clerk to convey to members of the bereaved family our deepest sorrows, sympathies, condolences. May God bless his soul and may he rest in peace.

Thank you very much.

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

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS - PROCEDURES
&
PRIVATE NOTICE QUESTION - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SITTING - TUESDAY
10.11.20

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have a second announcement.

I have an announcement to make with regard to Parliamentary Questions which are, in our legislature, in line with what obtains in all legislatures having adopted the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy, in principle and in fact, an important means available to Members of Parliament to ensure that Government is accountable to Parliament for its policies and actions and, through Parliament, to the people.

The Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius provides for the existence of Parliament in its Chapter V and for the National Assembly as one of its constituent. Pursuant to section 48, it also provides, I quote –

“Subject to this Constitution, the Assembly may regulate its own procedure and may, in particular, make rules for the orderly conduct of its proceedings.”

Hence, the establishment, by the Assembly, of Standing Orders and Rules and, in the case of Parliamentary Questions, Standing Orders 21 to 27 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly (1995), namely under the heading –

- Questions to Ministers (Standing Order 21);
- Contents of Questions (Standing Order 22);
- Private Notice Question (Standing Order 23);
- Notice of Questions (Standing Order 24);
- Manner of asking and answering Questions (Standing Order 25);
- Supplementary Questions (Standing Order 26), and
- Admissibility of Questions (Standing Order 27).

At this stage, may I bring to the notice of this Assembly, which stands governed by the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly (1995), that, prior to 1995, over our parliamentary history, the Assembly has been governed by other sets of Standing Orders and Rules.

Hon. Members, I am reiterating the above-mentioned principles, inasmuch as, over the past two weeks, regrettably –

- (i) firstly, this House has witnessed unprecedented and grossly disorderly conduct of its proceedings during Private Notice Question time, which have been the subject matter of adverse comments from several quarters, and
- (ii) secondly, I have received a letter from the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the tenor of which has been publicly revealed by his good self and which, in my opinion, is highly contemptuous, inasmuch as the Hon. Leader of the Opposition –
 - firstly, commented and criticised the ruling I gave when I ended the Private Notice Question time on 03 November, accusing me of preventing him from discharging his constitutional functions towards the people of this country, amongst others, and
 - secondly, threatening me of raising the matter at the judicial level and/or alert international authorities.

The House would appreciate that it is contrary to the Standing Orders and Rules of the Assembly for a Hon. Member to write to the Speaker to criticise his conduct in the performance of his functions, which he is entitled to do, if any, upon a substantive motion moved for that purpose, pursuant to Standing Order 40(5).

Moreover, the House would also appreciate that, in case a Member is dissatisfied by a decision/ruling of the Chair, the said Member is entitled to come with a substantive motion for a review of the said decision/ruling, pursuant to Standing Order 41(4).

As I stated in my ruling, the Private Notice Question time was curtailed for reasons I stated therein.

The House would appreciate that, the combined effect of the provisions of –

- firstly, Standing Order 25(4), wherein an answer cannot be insisted upon if the answer is refused by the Minister;
- secondly, Standing Order 26(1), wherein supplementary questions may only be put for the further elucidation of the information requested, and shall be subject to the ruling of the Speaker, both as to the relevance and number, and
- thirdly, Standing Order 40(5), wherein, the conduct of a Minister can only be criticised upon a substantive motion brought for that purpose.

And these were sufficient for me to rule accordingly.

Hon. Members, I now come to the Private Notice Question of 10 November, wherein I have been criticised for having prevented the Hon. Leader of the Opposition from putting his question in the form and tenor in which he tabled same initially.

As I had ruled, the procedure for the subediting of the Private Notice Question tabled by the Leader of the Opposition was strictly followed. Being dissatisfied by the amended version, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition was entitled to make representations to myself, pursuant to Standing Order 21(4), I quote –

“When a question has been refused or amended, and the Member concerned wishes to make representations to the Speaker on the matter, these must be made privately to the Speaker...”

I did inform the House that the hon. Leader of the Opposition came to my Office, but, unfortunately, he misbehaved and left. In fact, I deem it necessary now for me to qualify the said misbehaviour in the light of the adverse comments generated on the whole incident surrounding the said PNQ. I have to report to the House that, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, instead of making representations with regard to the wording of the PNQ when he came to my Office on that day, as he was entitled by the Standing Orders to do, outright accused me of partiality and of bias, amongst others, in the presence of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the Adviser of the National Assembly.

I had no option than to order him out of my Office. Thereafter, he did not give proper instructions to the Clerk as to the wording of the PNQ, except that he maintained his position of not being agreeable with the subedited version. The only option out was to finalise the PNQ, as amended. The hon. Leader of the Opposition refused to put the PNQ, as finalised during the proceedings of the House as attested by the Hansard and the broadcast thereof.

Now, in the light of the above, I am of the view that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has been consistently demonstrating continuing contempt against the Assembly and unduly obstructing the proceedings of the House. I have deemed it fit to bring the above to the attention of the House and wish to state, in no uncertain terms, that such attitude and conduct on the part of the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, or from any other Member for that matter, will henceforth not be tolerated.

I thank you for your attention.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills (In Original):
 - (i) The Supplementary Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill (No. XVI of 2020),
 - (ii) The Children's Bill (No. XVII of 2020),
 - (iii) The Children's Court Bill (No. XVIII of 2020); and
 - (iv) The Child Sex Offender Register Bill (No XIX of 2020)
- (b) The Financial Statements of the Chagossian Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2018.

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

- (a) The Annual Report 2017-2018 of the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE).
- (b) The Financial Statements of the Technical School of Management Trust Fund for the years ended 30 June 2008 and 2009 and for the period 01 July to 15 November 2009.

C. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2020-2021) of 2020.
- (b) The Customs (Export to China) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 274 of 2020)
- (c) The Customs (Movement Certificate EUR 1) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 275 of 2020)
- (d) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 5) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 276 of 2020)

D. Attorney General

Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security

- (a) The Law Practitioners (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2020.
(Government Gazette No. 271 of 2020)
- (b) The Law Practitioners (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2020.
(Government Gazette No. 272 of 2020)

E. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 29) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 269 of 2020)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 30) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 270 of 2020)

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

The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Licence and Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 273 of 2020)

G. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

The Annual Report 2018-2019 of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PAYMENT IN CASH IN EXCESS OF RS350,000 – REPORTED CASES

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the offences of making or accepting any payment in cash in excess of Rs350,000 under the Economic Crime Office and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2000 and the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of reported cases thereof as at to date, indicating –

- (a) the number of accused parties in relation thereto, further indicating the number of cases –
 - (i) in which convictions were secured, and
 - (ii) which resulted in acquittals;
- (b) the number thereof wherein inquiries are still ongoing, and
- (c) whether any offence/s in relation thereto were disclosed in regard to the purchase of properties located at Angus Road by his good self and his spouse.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of accused parties convicted or acquitted in making and/or accepting cash payments in excess of Rs350,000 under the Economic Crime and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2000 and the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002 stands, as at to date, as follows –

Number of convicted: 77

Number of acquitted: Nil

I am further informed by the ICAC that the number of accused parties convicted or acquitted for the offence of making and/or accepting cash payments in excess of Rs350,000 and thereafter Rs500,000 is as follows –

Convicted: 91

Acquitted: 16

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in one case the inquiry is ongoing and four cases are pending before the Court. I am further informed by ICAC that in eight cases investigations are ongoing into breaches of Section 5 of the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (c) of the question, I am further informed by ICAC that a first investigation started on 15 March 2011 and was discontinued on 09 May 2011 as no evidence for offences was disclosed under the Prevention of Corruption Act or the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act. A second investigation was started on 20 October 2013 and was discontinued on 27 June 2014. In light of new complaints received in 2020, investigation is ongoing in relation to possible offences under PoCA or the FIAMLA and since there is a new investigation ongoing, the requested information cannot be divulged by virtue of Section 81(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Prime Minister whether he agrees that breach of Anti-Money Laundering, and I refer to either the Act of 2002 or prior, and can he confirm that this breach is an arrestable offence?

The Prime Minister: I believe so. It is an arrestable offence!

Dr. Boolell: It is arrestable! Can I ask him if he is aware that there are people who have committed offences and, in fact, they were found to act in good faith by the Privy Council and the Privy Council has sympathised with the person, but, nevertheless, was found guilty of anti-money laundering?

The Prime Minister: To which case the hon. Member is referring?

Dr. Boolell: Privy Council versus Beezadhur.

The Prime Minister: Although I am a lawyer, I cannot recall all the details about the judgement in that case. Maybe I should be given time to have a look at the case so that, if possible, of course, I can make any observation on that case. And what is the issue with regard to that case?

Dr. Boolell: The relevance of the case is very obvious to one and all. Of course, I have in mind purchaser, vendor and banker. Is he aware that when there is a receipt of payment of cash, there should be an inquiry, and whether this inquiry is ongoing by law enforcement agency?

The Prime Minister: I think the Leader of the Opposition does not pay attention to my answer! I have stated from information that I have from ICAC that inquiry started on 15 March 2011, but was discontinued on 09 May 2011. A new inquiry started on 21 October 2013, and was discontinued on 27 June 2014. And I think it is good to highlight, Mr Speaker, Sir, who was the Director of ICAC at that time? Mr Anil Kumar Ujoodha! Who was the Prime Minister of the country at that time? Dr. the hon. Navin Kumar Chandra Ramgoolam. And who was in Government?

(Interruptions)

Kumar is me! Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. And who was in Government? All of them were in Government! Dr. Boolell, Leader of the Opposition, was in Government! So, why was it discontinued? Because there was no evidence of any offence. That is why!

Dr. Boolell: Okay. Is he aware that receipt paid in cash is circulated, certified by the Deputy Accountant of Bel Air Sugar Estate?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I witnessed the last show of the Leader of the Opposition in this House, branding receipts and so on. Why does he not go either to Police or to ICAC to make a declaration and to produce evidence? You are talking about evidence! I can show any paper and say this is evidence. But you, hon. Leader of the Opposition, you are not a Court of Law; you are not an institution which investigates. And ICAC is the institution that has investigated. And why is it that during all this time, during the time when you were in Government with Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam as Prime Minister, no declaration has been made to the Police?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, whatever the Prime Minister says, the fact remains. And is he aware that Rs4 m. of funds have been unlawfully accepted in 2002 in cash by the vendor for the purchase of the property?

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, I will stop you there.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: He has to withdraw!

Mr Speaker: Withdraw the word 'unlawfully'!

Dr. Boolell: Okay, 'was accepted'; presumably unlawful.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition has to withdraw, unless he can prove to this House that even I or anyone has committed an offence in regard to the acquisition of this property.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, before we proceed, please, withdraw the word and you may continue.

Dr. Boolell: Okay, if it pleases the Prime Minister that the word ‘unlawful’ be withdrawn, I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: No, no, no! No condition! Leader of the Opposition, I have read so many Standing Orders to you. Unconditionally, you withdraw the word and continue.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Listen who is talking! Is the Prime Minister aware...

An hon. Member: He should withdraw.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let me hear it.

Dr. Boolell: What I say...

Mr Speaker: Let me hear it.

Dr. Boolell: I have said ‘I withdraw’, to please the Members on the Government bench.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

Dr. Boolell: The public knows what the truth is all about.

Mr Speaker: No, but this is condition! Again, I will apply Standing Order! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you withdraw the word ‘unlawfully’ without any condition.

Dr. Boolell: Okay, I withdraw it.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, can I ask the Prime Minister whether he is aware that as per part payment for this property, Rs1 m. in cash receipt was accepted by the vendor? Is he aware of this?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, these are all frivolous allegations, and I have said that ICAC, under the Labour Government, had enquired in this matter and did not disclose any offence of money laundering or any payment of cash in excess of Rs350,000. So, it is like going round and round and saying the same thing.

Dr. Boolell: It's not going round and round. Can I hear it from the Prime Minister: was there cash payment made? Yes or no?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was no..., I can say and confirm what, in fact, ICAC found at that time; that no offence has been committed.

Dr. Boolell: Why is it the Prime Minister is unwilling to reply to specific questions put to him? Is he aware...

Mr Speaker: No, no! Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: ... that cash payments are being circulated in public?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I already stated so many Standing Orders. The conduct and character and asking why are personal things. State facts from your case, hon. Leader of the Opposition! Go ahead!

Dr. Boolell: Okay. Can I ask the Prime Minister, since his intention, according to him, is good, to make public his tax return to justify all the source of funds?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: Justify all the source of funds!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, don't shout!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker....

Mr Speaker: I am the loud Speaker! Don't shout! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, asking about tax returns or whatever,...

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker...

Mr Speaker: ...this is not the proper platform.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, let me...

Mr Speaker: Change....

Dr. Boolell: Alright. Okay.

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

Dr. Boolell: I will, let me come. Is he aware of what the former President of the Republic has stated that had she been informed of alleged corruption practices, she would have never...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: ...agreed to give assent...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: ...to the Prime Minister being sworn in? Is he aware of this?

The Prime Minister: Address this question to the former President of the Republic!

(Interruptions)

To kroir mo gagn les temps ale ecoute li mwa!

Dr. Boolell: You don't have time. Can I ask the Prime Minister when will the contract of the current Director General of ICAC expire? Can I know from him?

The Prime Minister: Well, it is good to know that Mr Anil Kumar Ujoodha was appointed on 31 January 2006, and, also, it is good to recall that prior to - if I am not mistaken - 2004, the Director of ICAC was appointed by three people: the Prime Minister, the President and the Leader of the Opposition. When the Labour Party came to power, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, Prime Minister, amended the law - I do not know if I have it. But then, the law was amended so that the Prime Minister - I can recall - could appoint the Director of ICAC. And thereafter, who was appointed in 2006? Mr Anil Kumar Ujoodha was appointed, and his appointment was terminated on 26 December 2014.

Dr. Boolell: If it was so bad, why didn't your Government change it? Can I ask the Prime Minister...

The Prime Minister: Ah! So, you admit it was so bad?

Dr. Boolell: I have put a question.

The Prime Minister: You are telling Dr. Navin Ramgoolam it was so bad?

Dr. Boolell: When does the contract of the present Director General of ICAC expire; when does it come to an end?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say one thing. I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition has no questions to put. He is running out of steam!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: This is in relation...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order on both sides of the House!

The Prime Minister: This is in relation to...

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, listen to your own question: “(...) whether, in regard to the offences of making or accepting any payment in cash in excess of Rs350,000 under the Economic Crime Office and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2000 and the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of reported cases thereof as at to date.” There is nothing to do about nomination of ICAC officers or Director, and termination of contract in this. Respect your question!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: I’ll ask...

Mr Speaker: You allow?

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister has referred to, on two occasions, when the enquiry had started and stopped. Now, he has also stated that the enquiry has restarted following certain allegations made in 2020. Could he please tell us, since in January 2015, under a Government to which he belonged and in which his father was Prime Minister and him, Minister, the then Attorney General wrote a letter to the Authorities in the United Kingdom requesting that the enquiry stopped in relation to an earlier letter of request and that it be discontinued; now that he has told us that the enquiry has started again, can he

confirm to the House and assure the public at large that since the enquiry has started again, he will ensure that the discontinuance of the enquiry made by the Serious Fraud Office of the United Kingdom will be *réenclenché* and that he will get his Attorney General, as the competent authority, to contact, now that the enquiry has re-opened again - I base myself upon what the hon. Prime Minister has just, himself, shared with us, which is good news...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Mohamed: Will he, therefore, because of those stringent clear change of circumstances re-ask that the enquiry be reconducted and that the letter of request be resent to the Serious Fraud Office in order for the matter to be totally transparent and enquired into, which I am sure he does not want to hide in any way?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member knows the law very well, he should be aware that it is ICAC the investigating body which decides.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Patrick Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le président, ma question est l'item (c) de la PNQ du Leader de l'Opposition. Est-ce que le Premier ministre peut informer la Chambre et la population en général, eu égard de la propriété d'Angus Road, puisqu'il a dit que plusieurs enquêtes ont été complétées, 2011, 2013, 2014 - est-ce que le Premier ministre peut confirmer ou infirmer qu'il a été convoqué jusqu'ici par l'ICAC ; oui ou non?

The Prime Minister: M. le président, ce n'est pas moi qui ai dit que l'enquête a été complétée. Ce sont les informations que j'ai eues de l'ICAC et, donc, ces informations sont telles que je crois que c'était approprié que je puisse dévoiler ces informations à la Chambre et à la population.

Mr Speaker: Next supplementary! Hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, from the reply given by the Prime Minister, is it right that, up to now, ICAC has not deemed it fit to convene the purchaser who is involved in paying cash in relation to acquisition of the property?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of the Opposition is asking me about the details, about those enquiries that were conducted. I have no detail about those enquiries. I can only say what information has been transmitted to me with regard to when it was opened, when it

was closed, and we have noted today that, on two occasions, there were enquiries and they were closed because there was no offence that has been disclosed.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, is that in order for the vendor to be convened to ICAC and the purchaser, who made the cash payment, has up to now not been convened? Is this in order?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member! You can't ask the opinion of a Minister. Your question amounts to asking the opinion. Change your question!

Dr. Boolell: I am asking why was the Prime Minister not convened.

(Interruptions)

I am asking why he was not convened. Why is it that the vendor was convened and why not the purchaser? Is that in order? Nor the bank where the money was lodged. Is that in order?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, can you imagine, in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, I have never been convened by ICAC with regard to this enquiry...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Ask Dr. Navin Ramgoolam!

(Interruptions)

Ask him!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: He knows, because there is the case!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order on both sides of the House!

An hon. Member: ... ICAC!

Mr Speaker: Who is shouting there?

(Interruptions)

Who is shouting there when I stand, I say order?

Dr. Boolell: Is this the reason why the Prime Minister chose to make payment *hors de la vue du notaire*? Is this the reason?

(Interruptions)

Is this the reason why he chose to make payment *hors de la vue du notaire*? Is this the reason, and let me tell him...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: ...making all sorts of allegations; frivolous!

Dr. Boolell: Frivolous? The nation is shocked...

The Prime Minister: You are frivolous yourself!

Dr. Boolell: The nation is shocked, appalled that, up to now...

Mr Speaker: Now, this is your opinion, Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: He has not been convened...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Your opinion and his opinion do not count in the Chamber. Come with statement of facts!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, this is the scandal of the century.

Mr Speaker: This, again, is against Standing Orders! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you are going too far.

(Interruptions)

Don't transgress the Standing Orders!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, I have asked a specific question. Why is it that, up to now, the Director General of ICAC...

(Interruptions)

...and I would like to ask the Prime Minister, why is it, up to now, he has not told us whether his contract has expired; whether he intends to renew the contract...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You come again hon. Leader of the Opposition! You come again with that!

(Interruptions)

You are losing the time of the House, Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Go ahead!

Dr. Boolell: Is he aware that, in relation to deed of sale, I am referring to acquisition of property and transfer of property made by a certain L. G. and if the matter is looked into, it tantamounts to transnational offence, crime? Why is it that up to now, Mr L. G. has not been convened by ICAC?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, again I say they are just making all sorts of...

(Interruptions)

allegations, here and there! The Leader of the Opposition is saying scandal of the century. I am getting used to that. Medpoint also was scandal of the century...

(Interruptions)

It went to the Privy Council, and we all know what happened. Now, they are again saying...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said one thing. At least I salute the hon. Leader of the Opposition, for last time when I said 'go and say that outside', he has been saying certain things outside. I wish he says outside whatever he has been saying, all those allegations he is making today, because very soon he will be hearing from me.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, I don't bow to any threat from somebody...

The Prime Minister: I am not threatening you. You will hear from me.

Dr. Boolell: I don't bow to any threat from somebody who is the...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! Leader of the Opposition, link your questions to your main question.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: ...the Prime Minister to threaten? Mr Speaker, as I have said, there are receipts. And I will say it; these receipts are being circulated in the public domain that Bel Air Sugar State, accepting...

Mr Speaker: Again, he already...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: He has not, Mr Speaker...

Mr Speaker: I cannot accept a question which has already been asked or refused to be replied! How can I do that? There are Standing Orders. I am bound by these!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: ...refusing to reply to the question.

Mr Speaker: I am bound by these. Try to understand my case!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Come on! I will come back again to the Director General of ICAC.

Mr Speaker: No, but then...

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker...

Mr Speaker: Then, you are challenging the authority of the Chair.

Dr. Boolell: I am not...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: And then, you are challenging the authority of the Chair and I already ruled. I made a long announcement, and you know what it means. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, continue!

Dr. Boolell: Since he has stated openly that he would make a public statement in the light of this controversy in relation to acquisition of property, and I know that, as I said, it is tainted, can I ask the Prime Minister when is he going to have the courage to make this public statement on this issue?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, on a point of order, the hon. Leader of the Opposition cannot say it is tainted unless he proves that it is tainted. So, he should withdraw this.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you withdraw that word 'tainted', and this is the very word that your last PNQ was refused. This is the very word! So, you continue state words which you cannot prove...

Dr. Boolell: You want me to withdraw? I will withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Withdraw it!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: I will withdraw, but we know what the public is thinking of...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: But this is again...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: How can I accept withdrawal with...

Dr. Boolell: Okay.

Mr Speaker: Unconditionally, withdraw it!

Dr. Boolell: Okay I'll withdraw if it...

Mr Speaker: Thank you!

Dr. Boolell:...makes you happy. I withdraw the word unconditionally.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Prime Minister whether it is not time for him to break his silence and come clean on this issue?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, I have given some information that has been imparted to me by ICAC and I have stated publicly that very soon I shall be giving all the information so that the people will see, and the authorities also will be informed about everything.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, M. le président. M. le président, de par la réponse de l'honorable Premier ministre, nous voyons que le Premier ministre n'a pas été convoqué jusqu'ici par l'ICAC. Est-ce que le Premier ministre peut prendre l'engagement ici, dans cette

Chambre, devant la population, de par les précédentes convocations de l'ICAC, que s'il est convoqué par une institution, l'ICAC ou la police, il démissionnera comme Premier ministre?

Mr Speaker: No, this is not a question!

(Interruptions)

This is shameful! This is a supplementary question that is shameful!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for allowing me to put this question. I come back to what I have asked the hon. Prime Minister earlier on, and I was happy that he, at least, gave me an answer. With regard to the letter that was written by the former Attorney General to discontinue the enquiry, can he confirm to the House that this letter was written...

Mr Speaker: May I just say something at this stage.

Mr Mohamed: Yes.

Mr Speaker: You are talking of a letter. Are you in possession of an official, authenticated letter or it is just hearsay?

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for the question. I am not in possession of any letter, and the Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

If I may continue...

Mr Speaker: And, therefore, hon. Member...

Mr Mohamed: The Prime Minister has answered on this letter already!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member...

Mr Mohamed: He has already answered on the letter on my last question. He has already answered!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, I am on my feet and explaining to you if the letter you are referring to is not official or authenticated, I cannot allow this question! Next question!

Mr Mohamed: I'll ask a question! Can I rephrase it, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the Prime Minister has stated that he is going to come clean on this issue, it is already nine years gone, and up to now, if he is decent, and I hope he is, can he inform the House as to when he is going to come clean on this issue?

Mr Speaker: Listen! Once again, your question is not linked! I already stated in my announcement, hon. Leader of the Opposition! Your question should be linked to your main question.

Dr. Boolell: It is linked to the main question...

Mr Speaker: This is your opinion; it is not the opinion of the Standing Orders! Unless you have your own Standing Orders! This is the official one!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am still waiting for a reply from the Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying I have not come clean for nine years. But for nine years, the ICAC was inquiring, and never have I been convened to ICAC. So, there was no issue!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Prime Minister why did the former Attorney General write a letter to the Serious Fraud Squad asking them to put an end to the enquiry? Why?

Mr Speaker: This is an insinuation!

(Interruptions)

This is an insinuation!

Dr. Boolell: I maintain! I maintain!

Mr Speaker: This is an insinuation! You cannot maintain!

Dr. Boolell: I maintain that...

Mr Speaker: This is an insinuation and you cannot maintain! I have said. Hon. Leader of the Opposition...

(Interruptions)

I don't stand guided by anybody!

(Interruptions)

I don't stand guided by anybody! I am the Chair!

(Interruptions)

I am the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: It is ridiculous!

Mr Speaker: I already stated that some questions...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Patrick Assirvaden, I am on my feet! And hon. Shakeel Mohamed, could you please walk out of the Chamber?

Hon. Members: *Dehors! Dehors!*

(Interruptions)

Dehors! Dehors! Dehors! Dehors!

Mr Speaker: Walk out from the Chamber!

(Interruptions)

Withdraw; withdraw from here! This is a better word for you! Withdraw from the Chamber!

Mr Mohamed: Why?

An hon. Member: *Dehors!*

Mr Speaker: I do not have to...

Mr Mohamed: Because the letter was...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do not argue!

Dr. Boolell: Why?

Mr Speaker: You are making contempt, do not argue!

Hon. Members: *Dehors!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Then, I suspend the sitting! Time is over for PNQ! And I will take care of hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

At 12.20 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 12.38 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please, be seated!

Hon. Members, hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East, Mr Shakeel Mohamed, in view of his conduct towards the Chair, I am naming him. Hon. Prime Minister!

MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East, I beg, under Standing Order 17(3), to take the time of the House for urgent business.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move, under Standing Order 29(1), to present a motion without notice.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East, I beg to move that the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's and the next four Sittings.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Mr Speaker: And let me remind the House that hon. Patrick Assirvaden has been suspended for today's Sitting.

The Serjeant-at-Arms will take care of the situation.

(Interruptions)

Precincts!

Prime Minister's Question time! Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

**CYBERCRIME UNIT/CENTRAL CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT-
REPORTED CASES – JAN. 2015-OCT. 2020**

(No. B/827) 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 cybercrime, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of cases thereof reported to the Cybercrime Unit/Central Criminal Investigation, since January 2015 to October 2020, indicating the nature thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2015 to October 2020, a total of 2,225 cases falling under the Information and Communication Technologies Act 2001 and the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act 2003 have been reported to the Central Criminal Investigation Department/Cybercrime Unit.

Under the Information and Communication Technologies Act 2001, the Police are investigating into cases related to –

- (i) knowingly sending, transmitting or causing to be transmitted a false or fraudulent message;
- (ii) using telecommunication equipment to send, deliver or show a message which is obscene, indecent, abusive, threatening, false or misleading, which is likely to cause or causes annoyance, humiliation, inconvenience, distress or anxiety to any person;
- (iii) using, in any manner other than that specified in the Act, an information and communication service, including telecommunication service –
 - for the transmission or reception of a message which is grossly offensive, or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character; or
 - which is likely to cause or causes annoyance, humiliation, inconvenience, distress or anxiety to that person, and
 - for the transmission of a message which is of a nature likely to endanger or compromise State defence, public safety or public order.
- (iv) using an information and communication service, including telecommunication service, to impersonate, or by any other means

impersonates another person, which is likely to cause or causes annoyance, humiliation, inconvenience, distress or anxiety to that person.

whereas under the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act 2003, the cases under investigation by the Police are related to –

- (i) unauthorised access to computer data;
- (ii) access with intent to commit offences;
- (iii) unauthorised access to and interception of computer service;
- (iv) unauthorised modification of computer material;
- (v) damaging or denying access to computer system;
- (vi) unauthorised disclosure of password;
- (vii) unlawful possession of devices and data, and
- (viii) electronic fraud.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling a breakdown of reported cases to the Central Criminal Investigation Department/Cybercrime Unit as well as their nature, for the period 2015 to October 2020.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In view of the actions being initiated on the international front, particularly the EU, as regards regulating online platforms, can the hon. Prime Minister state whether actions are being initiated to update our laws and institutions accordingly?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, with the signing of the Budapest Convention in 2013, this has allowed Mauritius to be part of the Global Action on Cybercrime Extended, the GLACY+ project driven by the Council of Europe and, through this project, the Council has extended its support to Mauritius as one of its priority countries in building capacity or to tackle cybercrime and providing assistance in aligning cybercrime legislations with the Budapest Convention.

I must also say that the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation is currently developing a new law on cyber security and cybercrime. The new law is being aligned with the provisions of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, which provides consistent definitions of conducts to be criminalised, procedural powers for investigations and prosecutions, the provisions for international cooperation. And the alignment of the new legislation with this European Convention will serve as a guideline and

framework of reference and will further provide law enforcement agencies and the Judiciary a clear understanding of cybercrime and electronic evidence, which will lead to an efficient investigation and prosecution.

Now, this exercise is also in line with the main objective of 2017-2019 National Cybercrime Strategy, which recommends to reinforce the existing legal framework on cybercrime, particularly in respect of investigation and prosecution of cybercrime and clarifying the role and the acceptance of electronic evidence. The reinforcement of the international cooperation on cybercrime is, of course, another important objective of this Strategy. Now, with regard to the online platforms, the draft law which caters for offences such as creation of fake profiles, publication of false information, cyber bullying, cyber harassment, cyber extortion and cyber stalking, and in addition, just to add that, at the level of my Office, a Committee under the Chair of the Secretary for Home Affairs has been set up to explore the possibility of providing within the ICT Act, mechanisms such as the establishment of an Ethics Committee to prevent the posting of abusive comments and pictures on the social media platforms, and the proposed Ethics Committee could also be a platform whereby aggrieved parties could make representations for redress.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether child sexual abuse internet sites are being filtered and access thereto blocked and, if yes, by what organisation or organisations?

The Prime Minister: The Child Sexual Abuse Online Filtering System has, since 2011, been deployed by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority and the CSA Filtering System which was established under Section 18 of the Information and Communication Technologies Act with a view to preventing internet users in Mauritius to have access to websites portraying child sexual abuse materials. The Filtering System is currently, in fact, being provided by a Canadian-based company called Netsweeper Limited.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Prime Minister has already answered.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy!

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister indicate the number of officers attached to the Cybercrime Unit of the Police and state whether they have relevant qualifications and/or have been adequately trained to deal with such cases effectively?

The Prime Minister: There are at present 25 officers who are attached to the Cybercrime Unit and 14 of them have qualifications in IT; five are knowledgeable in cybercrime and cyber security, and all the officers have been provided with tailor-made training aimed at honing their investigating skills. I must also say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that with the development of new technology, in fact, at a very quick pace, we need to see to it that our officers are regularly trained and this is, therefore, a very important aspect with regard to getting used to new techniques.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House of the measures put in place to combat cybercrime?

The Prime Minister: I think it will be probably appropriate for me to circulate the number of measures; there is a long list. But I can just briefly say that there are regular sensitisation campaigns to raise public awareness; also, the Police issue a bulletin on the number of persons who have been arrested, including the cybercrime offences. The ICTA Act that was amended in 2016 had increased the penalty from Rs10,000 to Rs50,000 to discourage people from making misuse of computer system. The Police IT Unit carries out cyber patrol on a 24/7 basis, of course, with a view to detecting online offences.

And then, important is the Cybercrime Unit which is working in close collaboration with the National Computer Board, the CERT-MU, in the effective fight against cybercrime. Then, we also have the online reporting system, the MAUCORS that has been put in place to encourage victims to report cybercrime and Police investigation is carried out accordingly. There are also numerable other measures also. It will take time of the House if I have to list all of them.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the officers of the Cybercrime Unit are working in very poor conditions, in small offices at the Central CID, and they are poorly manned. Will the hon. Prime Minister kindly visit them? You will see they are working in a very deplorable situation.

The Prime Minister: I shall enquire from the Commissioner of Police under what conditions they are working, and whether what the hon. Member is averring is true or not.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/839 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training.

Next question! Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

ELECTORAL REFORM - LEGISLATION

(No. B/828) 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 electoral reforms, in particular, for enhancing gender representation in the National Assembly, he will state if consideration will be given for the introduction of legislation in relation thereto in the Assembly.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, electoral reform, including better women representation in the National Assembly, has been on the political agenda of all governments for the last 25 years or so.

As a matter of fact, since the release of the Sachs Report in 2002, several other reports on electoral reform by experts and knowledgeable persons have been commissioned and published, including -

- (i) the Select Committee Report of 2004;
- (ii) the Carcassone Report in 2011;
- (iii) the Sithanen Report in 2012;
- (iv) the Consultation Paper on Electoral Reform, in March 2014;
- (v) the Electoral Reform proposals of the Mauritius Labour Party and the MMM, released in September 2014.

However, as the House is also aware, for one reason or another, none of these Reports has been implemented.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that on assuming office in 2014, the then Government reiterated its pledge to reform our electoral system and announced reform measures in its 2015-2019 Programme, which included, *inter alia*, a reform of our electoral system with the introduction of a dose of proportional representation in the National Assembly and guaranteeing better women representation.

Accordingly, in December 2018, the Government introduced, after extensive consultations, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, which embodied the electoral reform proposals of the Government, including better gender representation.

Our reform proposals required that every Party presenting more than two candidates at a General Election should ensure that not more than two-thirds of the total number of candidates, sponsored by that Party, was of the same sex. That provision would definitely have ensured more women representation in the National Assembly.

The proposed PR list and the Additional seats would equally have resulted in an increased number of women in the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, more than 18 years ago, the Sachs Commission observed that, and I quote –

“Mauritius can justly be proud of the admiration which its democratic life enjoys internationally. It cannot, however, hold up its head in terms of participation of women in political life..... a situation in which half the population ends up with only a one-twentieth share of representation manifests a grave democratic deficit which we believe, requires special attention in our report.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding this aspect of women under representation, we still cannot hold our heads high. The parliamentary representation of women in Mauritius is still very low. For the National Assembly Elections held in 2014, only eight women were returned as MPs out of 69, giving a representation of only 11.59%. For the last General Election, 14 women candidates were returned, giving a representation of 20%. Women representation in our National Assembly has ranged from 0% in 1967 to 20% in 2020. Mauritius has not even been able to fulfil the commitment taken at the SADC Summit in 1997 in Malawi to achieve at least 30% of women in political and decision making structures by 2005.

All the subsequent reports on electoral reform have highlighted the need to address this chronic deficit in female political presence and there is agreement across the political spectrum and beyond that we should do better. We have all been talking about that for a long time. The Bill which the Government introduced in December 2018 provided the first opportunity to address this issue in a decisive and effective manner and promote the active participation of women in public life.

However, as the House is aware, the Bill, regrettably, did not secure a consensus to obtain the required majority and consequently could not be put to vote. It was the first time

since independence that a Bill on Electoral Reform of that magnitude was introduced. There had been much talk about electoral reform and gender representation, but no one had dared to walk the talk. Mr Speaker, Sir, my Government had done its part and we were expecting Members of the Opposition to rise above party politics and stand up for democracy, unity and nationhood. However, it is a matter of deep regret and utter disappointment that the debates over the Bill failed to generate a consensus for the consolidation of our democracy and correcting the gross under representation of women in the National Assembly.

Had our reform proposals been passed by the Assembly, the composition of the National Assembly would have been different today in terms of gender representation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also pertinent for me to remind that, in 2015, the Local Government Act was amended to provide for every group presenting more than two candidates at an election of Municipal City Council or Municipal Town Council to ensure that not more than two-thirds of the group's candidates for election to that Council are of the same sex. As a result of this amendment, the number of female candidates increased significantly from 98 for the 2012 municipal elections to 166 for the 2015 elections.

Moreover, in December 2016, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act was amended to, *inter alia*, increase the participation of women in the political life of the Island. Concurrently, the Constitution was also amended to make provisions for ensuring adequate representation of each sex in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as enunciated in the Government Programme 2020-2024, Government will pursue its initiative to bring an electoral reform that will ensure political and social stability and higher women participation in the political life of the country.

And we can only hope that, this time, the Opposition will walk the talk.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. It is regrettable to learn that this Bill did not secure consensus in 2018. To correct this under representation of gender, does the hon. Prime Minister envisage coming up with a specific Bill with the objective to enhance gender representation in the National Assembly?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is, of course, my earnest wish that we can arrive at a consensus in this House. First of all, with regard to comprehensive electoral

reform legislation itself that will comprise a dose of proportional representation, and also address the issue of women representation. We shall see in due course, whenever such a Bill will be presented in the House, and there will be debates, what is going to be the outcome.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will Government adopt a consultative approach in the event a new Electoral Reform Bill is presented?

The Prime Minister: Well, as I have mentioned, there have been lots of reports, lots of studies that have been carried out; there have been lots of discussions and, in a way, I am also happy when I see present in this House Leaders from the Opposition who have also been involved in so much discussion with regard to electoral reform. It is a also good sign, but it could also be a bad sign because we all have taken position on the previous Bill that was presented before this House. So, anyway, whatever Government will decide, and as I say, if ever there is such a Bill that will be prepared, there are, of course, going to be consultations as we have done in the past, and we shall seek the views of each and every one, and then we shall try to see how far we can have a consensus in this House.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister referred to the debate on the Bill that he introduced for Electoral Reform in 2018 or 2019. Doesn't he agree that, during that debate, all Members of the Opposition were agreeable to enhancing gender representation and, in fact, if he was not able to enhance this gender representation, it is because of the Government's obstination not to come up with a separate Bill addressing only the issue of gender representation, which would have received the unanimous support of all the Members?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was the obstinacy of the Opposition at that time, which was not willing to vote for such an amendment so that, as I said, we would have a better gender representation in this House today.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether Government will introduce a new Electoral Reform Bill and, if so, when? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Well, this is in our Programme and we shall, of course, discuss about the preparation of a new Bill. In due course, Government will take a decision thereon.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval!

Mr X.L. Duval: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will commit and, if so, when, to bring in a separate Bill only on the issue of increasing gender representation in this House? And, if so, as my colleague just said, I can assure him that he will get 100% support from the House.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member, I think, will recall that in 2015, this is what we did for the Local Council; the amendment that was brought. So,...

(Interruptions)

You were not Prime Minister, anyway! You think you did!

(Interruptions)

So, what is good is yours and what is not good is ours!

(Interruptions)

You should stop with that kind of thing!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Anyway Mr Speaker, Sir, it is then for Government to decide what is the course of action we are going to adopt in the future.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/840, B/841, B/893 and B/894 have been withdrawn. Hon. X.L. Duval!

RAJCOOMAR LANE - LA SOURCE, QUATRE BORNES - DRUG TRAFFICKING

(No. B/829) Mr Xavier-Luc Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to drug trafficking, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a surge thereof has been observed along Rajcoomar Lane, at La Source, in Quatre Bornes and, if so, indicate the remedial measures, if any, taken in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the region of Rajcoomar Lane, Quatre Bornes, falls within the policing jurisdiction of Quatre Bornes Police Station in Western Police Division. The road links Berthaud Avenue to Palma Road, Quatre Bornes. It is a residential area with about 200 inhabitants situated in the region of La Source, Quatre Bornes.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since the year 2015 to date, no case of drug has been detected along Rajcoomar Lane in Quatre Bornes.

However, prior to year 2015, that is, for the period 2005 to 2014, four cases had been detected along Rajcoomar Lane, Quatre Bornes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that the following measures have been taken by the ADSU to fight against proliferation of drugs -

- (i) intensification of intelligence led and targeted operations, including regularly crackdown operations are being carried out in these areas;
- (ii) information gathering on drug and criminal activities through Field Intelligence Officers of ADSU and other sources in this region is being constantly reinforced;
- (iii) use of modern sophisticated equipment for surveillance and reconnaissance missions;
- (iv) close monitoring of the movements of known drug dealers who live in the surrounding areas of Rajcoomar Lane;
- (v) in addition to its operational role, the ADSU Education Cell carries out regular sensitisation sessions in educational institutions, youth clubs and other venues with a view to creating awareness on the ill effects of drugs and the legal implications which may arise, and
- (v) ADSU is working in close collaboration with the Crime Prevention Unit of the Police Force and Quatre Bornes Police Station to enhance its partnership with inhabitants of the region, including Rajcoomar Lane, with a view to addressing community concerns such as drugs and other illicit activities more effectively.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to forcefully reiterate my Government's unflinching commitment in the fight against drugs.

Thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, I would like to say that I have been contacted obviously by residents of that particular lane, but, generally, the feeling amongst the inhabitants of Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes is that there is now a proliferation of drugs, drug dealing and drug use, whether it is Belle Rose, Canal La Ferme and in La Source and that, obviously, what the Police are doing up to now is not effective enough. So, I would like to ask the Prime Minister is: can he discuss, can he get from the Commissioner of Police what more can be done; whether he has to look at the ADSU presence there; whether it is the normal Police? What more can be done? Because the general feeling is that drugs in Quatre Bornes is getting to an uncontrollable level.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should know what he puts in a question - he has in his question specified Rajcoomar Lane at La Source. Now, he is talking about Quatre Bornes generally, mentioning Belle Rose and so on.

If you had put the question, I would have requested all the information with regard to the other regions of Quatre Bornes. But I have replied for Rajcoomar Lane. This is the situation. We have not had cases recently. We have had cases in the past. Then, I would invite the hon. Member, if he has specific information, to please communicate it to me and, of course, I shall pass it on to the Commissioner of Police to see to it that if there could be policing, if there could be any investigation with regard to those cases.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: The Prime Minister has stated that there is an unflinching commitment. Yet, despite alleged waging war on drugs, there is an increase in the proliferation of drugs when you look at the incidents.

Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is being done in concrete terms to address the issue in a very forceful and meaningful manner? Because all the measures that he has spelt out have not been successful.

The Prime Minister: No, as the hon. Member should also say that there are numerous seizures and arrests of people who are involved either in drug trafficking or even in consuming drugs. I have statistics with regard to number of cases. Then, the fight must go on. I agree that the fight must go on. *Il faut être vigilant*; there should be no compromise. That is why I say, if there are Members who have information, and if, as I hope, they do trust me, well they can pass on the information to me and then I shall ask the Commissioner of Police to do the needful.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, at this point in time, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister - I presume he meets the Commissioner of Police on a daily basis - whether he would raise, on behalf of the Members of the Opposition of Quatre Bornes, our concern concerning drug proliferation in Rajcoomar Lane, but all across Quatre Bornes and Belle Rose, and whether he would do so? And, in doing so, I think he will render a tremendous service to the inhabitants of that Constituency.

The Prime Minister: Of course, I shall do so. I shall mention your concerns to the Commissioner of Police. It is also my concern. It is Government's concern and, in this fight, I think we should join hands. And, as I said, and I repeat again, this is what I can conclude from what you are saying. You have had representations from a number of people of the Constituency. Well, in all confidence, I can assure you, if you pass on the information to me, I shall pass it on to the CP to do the needful.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/831, B/843, B/852, B/898, B/899 have been withdrawn. Time is over by two minutes! I'll break the Sitting for one and a half hour.

At 1.12 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.46 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please, be seated!

ANNOUNCEMENT

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SITTING - TUESDAY 03.11.20 - PQ B/668

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make.

At the Sitting of the House, on 03 November last, the hon. Juman attempted to submit two documents in support of his supplementary question following PQ B/668.

A perusal of the first document, of which the hon. Member makes no specific reference, anyway, is a loose copy of the Notes of Meeting of the Mauritius Ports Authority of 09 October 2020.

The document is unsigned and has not been authenticated.

The second document is an extract of a correspondence by email dated 26 October 2020, purportedly sent by one Mrs H.T. of (MU PLU ECU World-wide), presumably, a private company, to her president, one Mr A.D.

Besides not being in a position to verify its source, there is no tangible proof of its contents which cannot be ascertained.

I rule that the documents are not admissible.

Thank you.

Question! Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

CARER'S ALLOWANCE – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/845) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Carer's Allowance, she will state the present number of beneficiaries thereof.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that presently there are around 25,000 beneficiaries in Mauritius and Rodrigues benefiting from Carer's Allowance.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Can the hon. Minister give us more details about specifications, about the eligibility criteria for Carer's Allowance.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, to be eligible for Carer's Allowance, the applicant should be in receipt of a Basic Invalidity Pension or a Basic Retirement Pension and the Medical Board should determine whether the applicant requires constant care and attention of another person for his daily activities.

Moreover, if the claimant cannot attend the Medical Board, then a medical practitioner visits the claimant at his residence for assessment.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you very much, hon. Minister .Can we have more details about the composition of the Medical Board also?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: The Medical Board is composed of two medical practitioners and an officer of the Ministry who acts as secretary.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

Ms Anquetil: Merci, M. le président. Est-ce que la ministre pourrait indiquer à la Chambre si son ministère est prêt à revoir, en ce qui concerne les personnes lourdement en situation d'handicap, est-ce que son ministère est prêt à donner des allocations sociales à vie?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, Carer's Allowance is awarded on a permanent basis only to beneficiaries who are hundred per cent disabled, for example, the loss of two limbs. However, if the person has lost only one limb, he is not considered to suffer hundred per cent permanent and as such, he will not be giving an invalidity pension and a Carer's Allowance on a permanent basis. It depends on the case itself.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci, M. le président. Depuis le confinement beaucoup de plaintes ont été reçues du fait que le *Carer's allowance* ait été coupé. Pourrait-on avoir à titre indicatif un chiffre de comparaison, l'année dernière à cette même période, quel était le nombre de bénéficiaires du *Carer's Allowance*, s'il vous plaît?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, I have the figure for this year, January 2020 up to date. We have around 9,000 cases. Around 1,000 applications are examined on a monthly basis. I must say that applications are processed at the earliest. I must also say that it usually takes one or two months before the application is being examined and get a result.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/892 would be replied by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, and that PQs B/882, B/883, B/888, B/889, B/901, B/902 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

QUATRE BORNES MARKET – INFRASTRUCTURE & OPERATION

(No. B/846) Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Quatre Bornes Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to if it is in presence of complaints as to the infrastructure and operation thereof and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) remedial actions being envisaged, and
- (b) timeframe for the implementation thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting. Chief Executive of the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that the Council is not in presence of complaints as to the infrastructure and operation of the Quatre Bornes Market.

The Council regularly carries out general maintenance of the daily market building which, as Members of the House may be aware, is a very old one dating back to 50 years. The Council also undertakes repairs upon complaints or requests from the stallholders. As at date, the Quatre Bornes Market is fully operational.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that a general upgrading of the market was carried out during the month of May 2020, prior to reopening of the market after the Confinement period, and works comprise of the following –

- washing and cleaning and disinfecting of the whole market;
- applying new coats of paint both internally and externally;
- repair of all broken tiles;
- repair of all electrical wires and securing same, fixing of wall fans, and
- cleaning of drains surrounding the marker building and changing of drain covers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, additionally, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that complaints received regarding the Quatre Bornes Fair during the course of this year have already been attended to by the in-house labour. The complaints concerned –

- (i) the rainwater downpipes for the steel structure (near the toilet block along Sir William Newton Avenue) which were not connected to a soak away. One soak away has already been constructed and a second one is under construction;
- (ii) one down water pipe for the rainwater gutter which had been subject to vandalism. Same will be replaced before the end of November, and
- (iii) foul smell coming from illegal dumping of carcasses in trailers thereby causing inconvenience to stallholders. These are being cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis. The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes has also informed that the trailers would be relocated, and a deodoriser would be used.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Quatre Bornes Market and Fair, include Municipal Food Court are under the supervision of one Senior Health Inspector posted exclusively at the market/fair. The latter is assisted by three Health Inspectors who ensure proper management of the Quatre Bornes Market and Fair, including the enforcement of market and fair regulations, cleanliness inside the market and fair, perform daily inspections of the market/fair and attend to complaints.

Mr X. L. Duval: Thank you hon. Minister. My question relates to Quatre Bornes Market which is opposite the Municipal Council, I don't know what you refer to as a fair...

Dr. Husnoo: No, no, I include both. I thought it was sometimes a confusion between the market and the fair. So, I include both of them.

Mr X. L. Duval: My question is the main market. I am surprised that there has been no formal complaints but perhaps you can pass this on. The issue is the yard behind the food court which is adjacent to the market, it is unasphalted. Firstly, there is a down water pipe which when it rains floods the whole yard and there is also a lorry there which collects rubbish, and you can imagine if meat, etc., is thrown there how many flies, etc., are there. So, these issues, if the hon. Minister could pass it on to the Quatre Bornes Municipal Council. I know that there have been complaints, although they say there haven't, but please, could they do it quickly. And also, I think the issue also of the meat shop, which is part of the market, is not air conditioned and you can imagine how the meat there which stays all day, how it can actually deteriorate. Perhaps, these things could be looked into, hon. Minister, and perhaps, you could use your good offices to have these passed on.

Dr. Husnoo: Okay, Mr Speaker, I will look into it, but the thing is that some of the minor things maybe we can repair now, but if any major thing is going to be involved, because we are working, trying to demolish this market and to put up a new building eventually,. That may take a few months, but we are working on that as well. So, if any major work will be needed, that will be coming later, but any minor work, we will look into it.

Mr X. L. Duval: Because these are fairly minor works. There is just one thing also, a last thing, it is apparently very, very hot during summer, summer is coming and the airflow has to be looked at.

Dr. Husnoo: I will look at it; I will inform them.

Mr Speaker: Adjournment matters?

Mr X. L. Duval: It's all.

CHARLES LEES STREET - FLOODING - RISK

(No. B/847) **Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the Charles Lees Street, in Quatre Bornes, he will state if he is aware of the dangers faced by pedestrians along

same and the heightened risk of flooding thereat resulting from the implementation of works in connection with the Metro Express Project and, if so, indicate the remedial actions being envisaged.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Metro Express Project is more than just a public transport infrastructure project. The Metro Express is all about access and travel choice for the modern commuter.

For a high income country like Mauritius, it is essential to have a healthy transport system. Under the visionary leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, ambitions to stay in the league of high income countries and such an ambitious target requires patience, dedication and strong willpower which is in line with the philosophy of my Ministry to revolutionise the public transport sector.

Sir, with regard to the dangers faced by pedestrians along Charles Lees Street, Quatre Bornes and the heightened risk of flooding in connection with Metro Express works thereat, I am informed that the Charles Lees Street is a one-way road located between the junctions of Remy Ollier Avenue and Boundary Road. From the junction with Remy Ollier, the road runs in parallel and adjacent to the Metro Corridor for about 150 metres. The road then divulges to the left away from the Metro Corridor towards the Boundary Road. The original width of the road approximately 4 metres has been kept even after the completion of the retaining wall along the Metro Corridor. The road also was recently reinstated with a new layer of asphalt as part of upgrading works.

Prior to the closure of the Gérard Bruneau Promenade, a public relations exercise was carried out to inform the inhabitants that the area will become a construction site where public access will not be allowed. Hence, pedestrian movement is also forbidden thereat. Since the start of construction, site barricades and fencing have been installed to prevent entry by pedestrians into the site. Signages have also been installed at appropriate places to guide the public. A weekly quality and safety patrol is carried out by the Metro Express Project team to ensure the safety of the works being undertaken and the safety of the public. A review of the safety measures and other related issues are also discussed in the weekly meetings at the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes which is attended by all relevant stakeholders.

The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes installed three LED lights along Charles Lees Avenue during the month of July 2020, to reduce the dark spots along the road. Sir, in

the very near future and once the Metro works are completed, pedestrians will be able to use a new 2 metre wide footpath on the right side of the Metro Corridor. This new footpath will allow a safe and convenient movement of pedestrians from Remy Ollier Avenue to Boundary Road.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the remedial actions being envisaged, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that a proper drainage network is available along Charles Lees Street which is connected to the drainage network along Boundary Road. The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes is ensuring that the drains are kept clean and clear at all times. Within the Metro Corridor itself, new drains have been constructed on the right hand side of the Metro track towards Rose Hill to ensure that any drainage water coming from the Metro Corridor does not affect the road and its surroundings.

Sir, I wish to assure the hon. Members and the House that the Metro works have not impacted on the existing drainage networks at Charles Lees Street and any rainwater within the Metro Corridor will be fully catered for by the new high capacity drains which have been completed recently by the Metro Express Project contractor Larsen and Toubro Limited ahead of the rainy season.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, with the construction of the Metro Project along that road, there is now an elevated section, an elevated wall. It's already a very small road and that's why it's one-way. So, what happens now, people are forced to walk on the road, whereas they would walk on the adjacent footpath before, that has now got a wall, so they can't walk on that. So, they are forced to walk, children and everyone are forced to walk on that very, very busy one-way street. There will be an accident there one day or another and site visit by the hon. Minister will completely confirm what I am saying. So, the first issue is, something must be done for the school children and the pedestrians walking along this busy road and it must be done quickly. So, if you can deal with that issue first and then, we come to the drainage. Will the Minister...

Mr Speaker: No, this is Question Time.

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes. Will the Minister - this is a question.

Mr Speaker: You could raise it at...

Mr X. L. Duval: No, no, why should I? I can raise it here. Why should I Mr Speaker, Sir? I can raise it as a question.

Mr Speaker: What's the question?

Mr X. L. Duval: The question is, will the Minister effect a site visit there to confirm evidently what I am saying? This is the question.

Mr Ganoo: Yes, I am prepared to carry out a site visit, Mr Speaker, Sir, with all the stakeholders and the Municipal Council, the PPS and the MPs, but, as I said, nevertheless, Mr Speaker, Sir, a weekly quality and safety patrol is carried out by the Metro Express Project team to ensure the safety of the works and Municipal Council also holds public meeting with regard to the possible potential dangers while the works are being undergone, but nevertheless, we will have the site visit.

Mr X. L. Duval: It's not so much the works, it is the fact that what is being constructed. It's so permanently there. Secondly, with this elevated wall it's clear now that this storm water has nowhere to go, so it will go right through like a canal into the houses of people. So, at the same time, as you are looking at that, could the Minister also consider what will happen if we have storm water? The danger is evident for everyone, all the houses and the inhabitants of that region.

So, thank you, hon. Minister, if you will have a look at these two issues for me, for the inhabitants.

Mr Ganoo: With regard to the drainage network also, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said in my reply, according to the information I have been given, a proper draining network is available along Charles Lees Street which is connected to the drainage network along boundary work. Nevertheless, I mean, I must say again, the Municipal Council has reassured us that it is ensuring that the drains are kept clean and clear at all times, but nevertheless, when we carry out the site visit we will look at the drains also. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CEB (FIBERNET) CO. LTD – CAPITAL & RECURRENT EXPENDITURE

(No. B/848) Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CEB (Fibernet) Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the amount of capital and recurrent expenditure incurred in connection therewith, since the date of incorporation thereof to date, indicating where matters stand as to the milestones to be completed prior to the commercial service thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that since 11 October 2016, date of incorporation of the Central Electricity Board (Fibernet) Co. Ltd, the company has incurred capital expenditure, amounting to Rs430 m. Recurrent expenditure over that period stands at Rs109.6 m., inclusive of accumulated depreciation charge.

With regard of the second part of the question, I had informed the House in reply to Parliamentary Question B/416, at our sitting of 28 July 2020, that three milestones had to be completed for the commercial service of the project, namely –

- (i) completion of pilot test with operators by December 2020;
- (ii) installation and commissioning of the METISS Submarine Cable System linking Mauritius to Reunion, Madagascar and Durban in South Africa, and
- (iii) appointment of a system integrator to ensure fibre connectivity from the Fibernet site to the telecommunication operator sites by first quarter 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that there has been progress on achievement of the above milestones. I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that the pilot test with operators have been conclusive with the implementation of eight key links around Mauritius while the two remaining links would be implemented by December 2020.

The METISS Submarine Cable System is now expected to be operational in the first quarter of year 2021, following delays caused by sanitary lockdowns in all the four countries where the cable is planned to be connected.

I wish to add that the vessel for the laying of the cable was scheduled to reach the Mauritian shores on 10 June 2020 to connect the cable to the landing station at Le Goulet, at Baie du Tombeau. In view of the sanitary curfew, the cable could not be connected, hence a delay in the project.

With regard to the appointment of a system integrator, CEB (Fibernet Co. Ltd.) has already launched a bidding exercise and the outcome of this exercise is being finalised. It is expected that the system integrator will be appointed in the first quarter of year 2021 to ensure last mile fibre optics connectivity from Fibernet backbone site to the telecommunication operator sites.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the immediate term, my Ministry is working with CEB (Fibernet) Co. Ltd. to provide connectivity for the utilities sector, particularly CWA and WMA.

Efficient monitoring of water and wastewater distribution networks has been a challenge for management and the introduction of real time data, communicated from remote sites to the control centre is one of the solutions to address this challenge.

The CEB Fiber Network is dimensioned to support SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) and DCS (Distributed Control System) based connectivity from the remote pumping stations and treatment plants to the command centre. The Fiber Network has enough port capacity to carry the sensitive censored data on its platform in a highly secured channel from different parts of the island on a standalone fibre optic private wavelength circuit. It is proposed to test and eventually roll out a SCADA/DCS system in a full scale with CEB Fiber Network for the CWA and WMA. Such an automated system is expected to contribute significantly to an improvement in services in the water and the wastewater sectors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to further inform the House that the CWA will be appointing a consultant to assist in the digitalisation and automation of its operation. The Board of the CEB Fibre Company Limited has on its part already agreed to the appointment of a Network Audit Agency to assess the backbone network connectivity requirements for CWA and action is on.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister the licence of the CEB Fibernet, delivered last year, says that the company will not be able to sell directly to the public but only to bandwidth services providers. Yet, in a recent PQ, the Minister said that the system was being tested with 500 consumers, I presumed in Rose Hill area. Can he tell me how it is that you are trying to sell directly to the consumers when, in fact, your licence, according to what I see on the ICTA website, does not allow you to do so?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me make it clear that the CEB Fibernet role is to act as a wholesale data network operator only on an open access policy model, that is, to provide large data bandwidth services to licence operators in the market. CEB Fibernet has dimensioned its strategy and business plan as the carrier of carriers and shall not compete directly in the retail market as per its licence conditions.

Mr X. L. Duval: Looking at the Hansard, there is a Question B/92, in fact answered by the then Deputy Prime Minister, and this is what it says –

“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...”

Mr Lesjongard: It was being tested on a pilot basis only, that is, tests were being carried out.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, I failed to see why you would carry tests on something that you cannot provide. I would like to ask the hon. Minister...

Mr Lesjongard: But to be able to assess the whole network, these tests had to be carried out, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I ask the hon. Minister how many years is the project now overdue, given that it is now 4½ years since you said yourself that the company was incorporated, and will he table a copy of the original business plan which apparently had been provided to the CEB?

Mr Lesjongard: I don't mind tabling the business model and business plan, but I would have to clear it with the Central Electricity Board. Now, I have stated in my last reply why there were delays in the implementation of the project, mainly due to two components of the project, that is, the connection of the METISS cable which was delayed because of COVID-19 and also because of the appointment of a system integrator which was also delayed because of COVID-19. I understand now that works will be carried out by the beginning of next year, that is, 2021 with regard to the connection of the METISS cable and discussions are ongoing for the appointment of a system integrator and I believe by the beginning of next year, the system integrator would have been appointed, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Osman Mahomed!

PORTS USERS' COUNCIL - VESSEL CLEARANCE PROCEDURES

(No. B/849) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the request of the Ports Users' Council, following a decision taken at its meeting of 15 December 2016, addressed to the then Board of Investment to assist in streamlining and improving the vessel clearance procedures, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to where matters stand.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, j'ai été informé par l'*Economic Development Board* que le *Port User's Council*, lors de sa réunion du 15 décembre 2016, a demandé l'assistance du *Board of Investment (BOI)* de l'époque de rationaliser les procédures de dédouanement

des navires. La *BOI* a mené des consultations avec les parties prenantes et a publié un rapport le 13 février 2017 mettant en évidence la soumission de multiples documents par un navire ou un agent maritime à diverses autorités à l'arrivée d'un navire. L'une des recommandations était de mettre en place un guichet unique national pour le dédouanement des navires.

En septembre 2018, la *Mauritius Ports Authority (MPA)*, en tant qu'agence responsable du port, a chargé *Global Maritime and Port Services (GMAPS)* de Singapour de mener une étude sur la rationalisation des procédures de dédouanement des navires. L'objectif de l'étude était d'élaborer des lignes directrices relatives au guichet unique et de formuler un cadre qui prévoit -

- ☐ des moyens électroniques simplifiés de dédouanement pour les navires faisant escale à Port Louis,
- ☐ des activités logistiques, une interface et des informations normalisées, et
- ☐ l'amélioration de l'efficacité de la logistique maritime.

La *Global Maritime And Port Services* a soumis ses conclusions et recommandations à la *MPA* en janvier 2019.

S'appuyant sur les recommandations du *GMAPS* et de la *BOI*, la *MPA* a fait appel aux services de *BDO IT Consulting Ltd* en juillet 2020 pour l'assister dans la mise en œuvre du projet de guichet unique maritime.

Les appels d'offres pour le développement du système ont ensuite été lancés le 24 septembre 2020 et la date limite pour la soumission des offres est le 24 novembre 2020.

L'attribution du contrat, après évaluation des offres, est prévue pour janvier 2021. Le développement du système devrait être achevé en septembre 2021.

Enfin un comité composé des parties prenantes concernées sera mis en place pour piloter le développement du projet de guichet unique maritime, y compris les modifications juridiques à apporter et les procédures administratives à réorganiser comme le recommande le *GMAPS*.

Merci.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. So, as at today, still 57 documents are required for port clearances at Port Louis when, in other countries of the world, there is a single window clearance. This is a fact and I think this is undeniable.

Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that, maybe due to miscommunication, the Board of Investment has again been advised of the *malaise* currently prevailing in the sector and I am going to table a letter whereby all major shipping companies are leaving Mauritius port going to other jurisdiction and the reasons being put forward are that they are not satisfied with the services at Port-Louis, the cost, the high attribution to ‘Semens’ dues and, most importantly, all correspondences to Minister and Ministries remain unattended. And I am going to table authenticated letter from the Custom House Brokers’ Association dated 22 July 2020.

Can I have a reaction from the hon. Minister: is this due to miscommunication because what the hon. Minister has just stated in terms of process, the stakeholders in the domain, they don’t seem to be aware of this?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je vais regarder le document qu’a soumis l’honorable membre et je ferai le nécessaire avec l’*Economic Development Board* pour voir où cela en est par rapport aux demandes de la Custom House Brokers’ Association.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes. One more question. Yet again after this letter, a few days later, the *Association Professionnelle des Transitaires* has returned to the hon. Minister of Finance, himself, personally and there, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has taken cognisance of this letter in which it has been stated –

“We kindly request the honourable Minister to look into the matter and open up discussions with all shipping lines and to address all issues that are motivating them to move their transshipment to other parts of the region.”

And I am going to table the letter.

Dr. Padayachy: Ce document est à l’étude au niveau de mon ministère mais comme vous le savez le port est sous l’administration du *PMO* et on travaille de concert avec le *PMO* sur le sujet.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON COOPERATION IN PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO MARINE SPILLS – MISSION REPORT

(No. B/850) 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 Regional Workshop on Cooperation in Preparedness and

Response to Marine Spills, held in Zanzibar, from 03 to 05 March 2020, he will state if the Republic of Mauritius was represented thereat and, if so, by whom and table copy of the mission report in connection thereof.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, en ce qui concerne le *Regional Workshop on Cooperation In Preparedness and Response to Marine Spills* tenu à Zanzibar du 03 au 05 mars 2020, la république de Maurice était représentée par une délégation de trois personnes. Les membres de la délégation étaient -

- (i) madame N. S., *Environment Officer* de mon ministère;
- (ii) monsieur R. L., *Environment Officer* de mon ministère ;
- (iii) monsieur J. H., *Maritime Officer* du ministère de l'Économie Bleue, de Ressources Marines et de la Pêche et du Transport Maritime.

De plus monsieur K. S., *Research and Development Officer/Senior Research and Development Officer, Department for Continental Shelf Maritime Zones Administration Exploration* a aussi participé dans ce *regional workshop* comme un représentant du *Mauritius/Seychelles Joint Management Area of the Extended Continental Shelf*.

M. le président, avec votre permission, je dépose une copie du *mission report* sur le *Regional Workshop on Cooperation in Preparedness and Response to Marine Pollution Incidents for Eastern Africa and Western Indian Ocean* soumis par deux officiers de mon ministère.

M. le président, ce *Regional Workshop on Cooperation in Preparedness and Response to Marine Pollution Incidents for Eastern Africa and Western Indian Ocean* de trois jours a vu la participation du International Maritime Organisation (IMO) et le point focal des dix États membres de la Convention de Nairobi responsable pour le *Oil Spill Preparedness and Response Issues* dans la région de l'Afrique de l'Est et l'Océan Indien de l'Ouest. L'objectif de ce *workshop* était d'aborder la question de la création d'un *Regional Centre* ou tout autre mécanisme pour la préparation, l'intervention en cas de déversement.

Les points importants abordés au cours de ce *workshop* ont porté sur –

- (i) le contenu de l'*Agreement on the Regional Contingency Plan for Preparedness and Response to major Marine Pollution Incidents in the Western Indian Ocean*;

- (ii) l'état de l'avancement des choses pour la création d'un *Regional Centre for Preparedness and Response to Oil and Hazardous and Noxious Substances Pollution in the Western Indian Ocean* en Afrique du Sud, comme recommandé par le *Project Steering Committee* du *Western Indian Ocean Highway Development and Coastal and Marine Contamination Prevention Project* et aussi,
- (iii) de voir si les modèles existants sur les centres régionaux, d'autres endroits constituent un modèle viable pour l'Afrique de l'Est et la partie ouest de l'océan Indien;
- (iv) les niveaux de financement requis et les sources de financement possible pour soutenir un centre de coordination régionale;
- (v) la possibilité pour les centres régionaux de coordination existants, par exemple, pour la sécurité maritime ou la recherche et le sauvetage d'intégrer les activités régionales de coordination de la pollution marine, et
- (vi) la possibilité que les activités régionales existantes telles que le *Southern and East African Islands Regional Group of Safety of Navigation and Marine Environment Protection* (SEAIGNEP) de contribuer à favoriser la coopération en matière de préparation et d'intervention régionale en matière de pollution.

M. le président, au cours du *Regional Workshop*, la délégation a présenté l'état de préparation de l'île Maurice en ce qui concerne les mesures d'urgence et d'intervention en cas de déversements d'hydrocarbures conformément aux *National Oil Spill Contingency Plan* de 2003.

La Chambre peut aussi noter que la délégation a indiqué que les autorités mauriciennes ainsi que les institutions privées sont prêtes à faire face à un déversement d'hydrocarbures de l'ordre de dix tonnes métriques, c'est-à-dire, Tiers 1 alors que Tiers 2, c'est-à-dire, un déversement d'hydrocarbures de 10 à 100 tonnes métriques et de niveau trois, un déversement d'hydrocarbures de plus de 100 tonnes métriques, et là dans ces cas de figure, Maurice sollicite l'aide régionale et internationale.

Par ailleurs, dans le cadre de la coopération régionale, la délégation mauricienne a également appelé au partage d'expertise et d'équipements en cas de déversements d'hydrocarbures dans la région. À cet égard, une liste d'équipements disponible à Maurice

pour lutter contre le déversement d'hydrocarbures de Tiers 1 a été communiquée aux membres.

Les recommandations et les actions proposées convenues lors du *workshop* comprennent, entre autres -

- (i) Le *Nairobi Convention Secretariat* devra assurer la coordination de la mise en œuvre de l'*Agreement on the Regional Contingency Plan for Preparedness and Response to major Marine Pollution Incidents in the Western Indian Ocean* ;
- (ii) La création d'un mécanisme à long terme pour la mise en œuvre de la coordination régionale;
- (iii) Identification et mobilisation de sources de financement pour soutenir la formation régionale et un programme d'exercices;
- (iv) La réalisation d'une évaluation des risques à l'échelle régionale, et aussi
- (v) Veiller à ce que les délais soient respectés.

Le Secrétariat de la Convention de Nairobi s'est engagé à mettre en œuvre les mesures proposées et à examiner les ressources disponibles pour prendre des mesures à court terme, ainsi que la façon dont ces mesures peuvent servir de base à un cadre pour établir le moyen et aussi le long terme. Donc, créer un mécanisme à terme pour la mise en œuvre et la durabilité de la coordination régionale. Mon ministère, en sa qualité de Point focal national de la Convention, en assure le suivi avec le Secrétariat de la Convention de Nairobi.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. I will certainly read the Mission Report with a lot of interest. The presentation that the hon. Minister has mentioned made by the officers there, I have had a chance to look at it because it is posted on the Nairobi Convention website. Can I ask the hon. Minister how does he reconcile with the fact that wherein in the report it is mentioned about all the capacity building and technical assistance that the Republic of Mauritius has benefitted, and I here have in mind International Maritime Organisation, United Nations Environment Programme, Global Environment Facility, I have in mind the Sapphire Project here and also the European Union for their massive project, how does he reconcile with the fact that when the Wakashio episode arrived, one of the first statements that was put forward is that the level of preparedness of Mauritius was very low?

Mr Ramano: M. le président, comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, il a été clair que la délégation mauricienne a émis comme opinion, lors du ce *regional workshop*, pour dire que les autorités mauriciennes ainsi que les institutions privées sont prêtes à faire face à un déversement hydrocarbure de l'ordre de 10 tonnes métriques, c'est-à-dire le *Tier 1*, alors que dans le cas de figure *Tier 2*, c'est-à-dire, les déversements de 10 à 100 tonnes métriques et aussi le niveau 3 de déversements de plus de 100 tonnes métriques, là, Maurice sollicite l'aide régionale et aussi internationale. Tel a été le cas lors du dernier événement du Wakashio. Donc, ce qui est dit par l'honorable membre, ce sont les articles d'opinions et aussi d'analyses qui ont été faites dans certains journaux, mais je tiens à préciser que selon le *Mission Report* qui a été présenté par les officiers qui étaient présents à la conférence, voilà les renseignements qui m'ont été soumis. M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The basis of the presentation made was the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan. This is the basis of the presentation made there in Zanzibar. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that this plan, which has been written in the 1990s and in that same document, it is stated, and I quote –

“A new contingency plan should be prepared at appropriate intervals to reflect changes in the legal and administrative framework, available equipment, respond methods, personnel, etc.”

And that for over a long time, the plan has never been updated. Can I ask the hon. Minister being given that all the facilities that are being extended to Mauritius, whether this plan is now going to be updated to reflect the reality of things in Mauritius?

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan is a dynamic process. In 1986, the Government of Mauritius approached the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Maritime Organisation for assistance in the development of a National Oil Spill Contingency Plan in Mauritius. Following consultations, the hon. Member is right, the Oil Spill Contingency Plan for Mauritius was drafted and commissioned by the UNEP through a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Maritime Organisation in 1990. The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan prescribes procedures and provides information required to implement the national plan. In February 2003, under the programme *de lutte contre le déversement d'hydrocarbure* of Indian Ocean Commission, the

Oil Spill Contingency Plan of 1990 was reviewed by my Ministry in line with international guidelines and a revised NOSCP was prepared.

The aim of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan is to maintain a National Integrated Government/Industry Organisational Framework capable of providing effective and prompt response to oil pollution incidents in the territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius. Being a dynamic document, the NOSCP is consistently updated taking into consideration policy changes and experience from past incidents and exercises. The contact list and the list of oil spill combat equipment are updated on a regular basis. Moreover, my Ministry is in the process of undertaking a comprehensive review of the existing NOSCP. In collaboration with the relevant stakeholders, a first meeting has already been held on 11 March 2020, at the level of my Ministry, whereby relevant stakeholders were present and it is good to mention that chapters 1 and 2 of the plan were reviewed. In view of the new lessons learnt following the oil spill of the MV Wakashio, my Ministry is working with the UNDP to hire the service of an international expert in view to assist my Ministry to review the NOSCP. The relevant stakeholders have been requested to submit their inputs regarding the lessons learnt from the MV Wakashio.

Mr Speaker: Before we move to the next question, let me announce that with regard to the two documents you tendered, the first one is authenticated and can be tabled. The second one is just a letter addressed to the hon. Minister already in his possession and we cannot introduce that letter ... Thank you!

We move to the next question!

RAOUL RIVET GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/851) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Raoul Rivet Government School, she will state if her Ministry is in presence of representations from parents of students thereof in relation to the administration thereof and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that representations had been received at the zone directorate level with respect to issues relating

to school uniform as well as the change in posting of one educator. I wish to inform the House that these matters have been sorted out administratively.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The basis of my question is the Press article which has had the chance to speak because it is sensitive matter to the hon. Minister. I am glad that the wearing of the hijab has been addressed. It is no longer an issue. And the second issue is the transfer of a teacher a few weeks before the PSAC exams. There must have been issues for this transfer. We do not go into the details, but can I ask the hon. Minister what arrangement has been made in order not to penalise the students who are about to take examinations? Because the parents have themselves manifested in the form of sittings in front of the school.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker , Sir, I wish to inform the House that, as I have just said in my reply, the matter has been sorted out, the teacher has been posted over there and all the students are back in class and following their classes without any problem.

Mr Speaker: Hon.Uteem!

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister used to be a teacher herself. May I know from hon. Minister who took the decision to transfer the teacher a few weeks before the exam, and whether the interest of the students was taken into account when the decision to transfer the teacher was taken?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already mentioned in replies to other PQs in the Assembly that the transfer of educators is done as administrative exercise and is normally carried out by officers of the HR Department of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you hon. Minister. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there have been representations by the Parents Teachers Association of that said school regarding the character and behaviour of two educators and, if so, would it not be proper for them to be sidelined? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, there are many issues that have been raised with respect to the teachers involved, but I would wish not to go into these matters here in the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister to ask the directorate to pay close attention to that school, because for a long time now, there have been so many issues going forward in terms of correspondences to MPs and in the Press so that, once and for all, these issues are trashed out?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House that with regard to the matters raised by the hon. Member, I have got letters from the parent concerned saying that he has seen an article in the Press and by no means had he been involved, in giving information either to the Press or Members of the Opposition.

EDB – MR K. P., ACTING CEO – TERMS & CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT

(No. B/852) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Mr K. P., Acting Chief Executive Officer, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to the terms and conditions of appointment thereof, including the salary and other benefits drawn.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NOTRE DAME VILLAGE HALL - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/853) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of the Village Hall of Notre Dame, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Village Council of Pamplemousses, information as to the –

- (a) date of award of the contract, indicating when same was handed over, and
- (b) cost thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Pamplemousses that the contract for the construction of the Village Hall at Notre Dame was awarded to the contractor on 27 April 2018 for a total contract amount of Rs1,670,000 and the contract agreement was signed on 16 May 2018.

The works started when the site was handed over to the contractor on 01 June 2018. The project was to be completed in a three-month period. However, there was a delay of 50 days by the contractor. So, it was completed on 20 October 2018.

Given that there was a delay of 50 days in the completion date of the project, the Council applied liquidated damages for the period of 01 September 2018 to 20 October 2018 at the rate of Rs2,000 plus VAT per day amounting to a total of Rs115,000 and also a penalty of Rs31,626 was applied for the minor deviation in height and size of the building. Therefore, the total cost of the project undertaken by the contractor came to about Rs1,523,374 inclusive of VAT and net of penalty and liquidated damages.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, the District Council of Pamplemousses has undertaken several additional works thereat, between October 2018 and May 2020, such as, the construction of septic tank and absorption pit, laying of crusher run and kerbs, construction of the boundary wall and fencing and fixing of metal gate and provision of a *pétanque* court all through its in-house labour, along with the tarring of the compound, which has been done by a contractor.

The Village Hall at Notre Dame was to be opened on 11 March 2020. However, same was postponed due to precautionary measures against COVID-19. Then, the opening of the new Village Hall was re-scheduled for 18 October 2020 and same has again been postponed due to Village Council Elections.

It is expected that by December 2020, the Village Hall of Notre Dame will be inaugurated.

Mr Juman: Can the hon. Minister state the defect liability period for this project?

Dr. Husnoo: Defect liability period is from 20 October 2018 to 19 October 2019.

Mr Juman: Hon. Minister, if I understand, the defect liability period is over and yet the hall is not operational to date?

Dr. Husnoo: I have explained. I mean, during the defect liability period there was some problem to the building and the contractor had to take care of that. That was because crack was happening on the suspended beam which was very important and cracks was occurring on the external wall. This has to be made good by the contractor and, as I mentioned, a list of work has to be done by the in-house labour of the Council.

Mr Juman: Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is already a year over now since the building has been handed over to the District Council and yet not in use and now we are expecting, as the Minister replied, to operate the building as from December. Now that we found some problem in the building, who will cater for the defect?

Dr. Husnoo: You know, the liability is for one year, after that the Council will have to take care of that.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

M1 MOTORWAY, PAILLES - FATAL ROAD ACCIDENT - INQUIRY

(No. B/854) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the bus accident which occurred at Sorèze, in Pailles, on 05 November 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to if the bus owner is the holder of a valid permit for the conveyance of workers.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, and in a *souci de transparence*, I am going to reply to Parliamentary Questions B/854, B/881, B/900 although these two questions are at the bottom of the list, together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Please allow me, Sir, first and foremost to present my deepest condolences to the bereaved families who lost their dear ones in the tragic accident which occurred on 05 November 2020.

I wish to inform the House that on 05 November 2020, at around 06:50 hrs, a fatal road accident occurred along M1 motorway, Pailles, involving a bus of make ISUZU with registration number DK 2373 (original registration No. 3626 AG 00).

The bus was being driven by one Mr Nishal Goorapah, aged 40 years. He was proceeding towards Pailles to the construction site of J. Kalachand Company Ltd. The bus was carrying Bangladeshi workers from their dormitory at Trianon, Ebene, and knocked against the bus shelter opposite Mauvilac. Unfortunately, four passengers lost their lives.

I am informed by the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) that the bus bearing registration No. DK 2373 which was involved in the accident that occurred at Soreze, Pailles, is not licensed for the conveyance of employees.

I am also informed that the bus was last examined at Autocheck Vehicle Examination Station, Plaine Lauzun, on 11 August 2020. The bus held a Certificate of Fitness, valid for six months, that is, up to February 2021.

On 01 July 2020, the bus was granted a short-term Public Service Vehicle (Contract Bus) Licence, valid for four months, for the conveyance of students of Dr. Regis Chaperon SSS from Henrietta to Belle Rose via Vacoas, Quatre Bornes and back. The licence was renewed for a further period of three months starting 30 October 2020. The licence was due to expire on 31 January 2021. The bus was also authorised to perform leisure and religious trips on public holidays and during weekends and school vacation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the NLTA has already initiated an in-depth enquiry into the matter. In this context, the licensee has been requested to call at the NLTA for a statement. In the meantime, I am informed that the NLTA has already initiated action for the cancellation of the Public Service Vehicle (Contract Bus) Licence as there has been a breach of conditions attached to the licence.

Mr Juman: I join the hon. Minister to present my deepest sympathy to the bereaved family.

The hon. Minister now tells us that the bus does not possess the appropriate licence. Is there any enforcement team at the level of the NLTA to inspect vehicles carrying students or workers to ensure regulations and if this is being done to adhere to these regulations?

Mr Ganoo: There is, of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, an inspectorate at the NLTA. There are inspectors who do go around in the morning and during the day to inspect as many vehicles as they can but, unfortunately, as we all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, we always have room for improvement in the sense that if we had more officers, more inspectors, I am sure the work would have been much easier.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Again, we see *après la mort, la tisane*. Will the hon. Minister inform the House about the seating capacity of the bus and the number of passengers it was carrying on that date?

Mr Ganoo: With regard to the seating capacity of the bus, Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that there is a discrepancy. According to information gathered by the Police from the Human Resource Department of the employer, it was reported that the bus was carrying 56 workers. Information obtained from the Ministry of Health and Wellness shows a different picture in as much as 64 patients attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Dr. A.

G. Jeetoo Hospital on 05 November. The Police are still enquiring on the matter to determine the exact number of workers in the bus at the very time of the accident, that is, to determine if the bus was overloaded, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Juman: Thank you. Hon. Minister, is there any contract signed between the construction company and the bus owner for the transportation of the workers?

Mr Ganoo: Yes, there is. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a contract which has been signed by both parties.

Mr Juman: The bus owner does not hold appropriate licence, but there is a contract signed for the transportation of workers?

Mr Ganoo: The contract is between the employer and the...

Mr Juman: The construction company.

Mr Ganoo: ...is between the NLTA and the bus contractor.

Mr Juman: I am asking if there is any contract between the construction company and the bus owner for the transportation of the workers?

Mr Ganoo: Well, the enquiry will determine that, Mr Speaker, Sir. What we can know from our end, that is, from the end of the NLTA is that there is a contract between NLTA and the bus contractor.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

EMERGENCY PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES - TOUGHER LEGISLATION

(No. B/855) **Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the emergency procurement procedures, he will state if consideration will be given for a review and toughening of the legislation in relation thereto.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, les marchés publics d'urgence sont régis par la section 21 de la *Public Procurement Act 2006* qui est entrée en vigueur en 2008, en vertu de laquelle un organisme public peut acheter, je cite « *goods, works, consultancy services or other services* » à un seul fournisseur sans mise en concurrence dans les cas d'extrême urgence.

« L'extrême urgence » est définie comme une situation dans laquelle -

- (a) le pays est soit gravement menacé par une catastrophe, un désastre, une guerre ou un cas de force majeure, soit effectivement confronté à une telle situation;
- (b) la vie, la qualité de vie ou l'environnement peuvent être gravement compromis;
- (c) l'état ou la qualité des biens, équipements, bâtiments ou biens d'équipement publics peut se détériorer gravement, à moins que des mesures ne soient prises d'urgence et nécessairement pour les maintenir dans leur valeur ou leur utilité réelles, ou
- d) un projet d'investissement peut être sérieusement retardé faute d'un élément de faible valeur.

Le *Public Procurement Office (PPO)* a publié la circulaire et les directives suivantes pour guider les organismes publics à utiliser la passation de marchés publics d'urgence dans des conditions spécifiques -

A ce titre –

- ☐ la circulaire n° 3 publiée le 20 décembre 2018 fournit des notes d'orientation sur les achats d'urgence en cas de cyclones;
- ☐ la Directive 41 publiée le 18 avril 2019 fournit des instructions sur les marchés publics d'urgence concernant la construction de canalisations et de travaux connexes, et
- ☐ la directive 44 publiée le 19 mars 2020 fournit des instructions pour l'utilisation des marchés publics d'urgence pour lutter contre la pandémie de COVID 19 à Maurice.

M. le président, dans le cadre d'une stratégie de nivellement par le haut du corpus législatif, j'ai été informé par le *PPO* que les dispositions existantes de la *Public Procurement Act* sont constamment en train d'être évaluées.

Dans ce contexte, en août 2019, une demande d'assistance technique a été adressée à la Banque mondiale.

L'objectif de cette assistance technique est d'évaluer le système de passation des marchés à Maurice, en vue d'identifier d'éventuelles faiblesses ou lacunes et de comparer nos procédures aux meilleures pratiques et normes internationales.

Des consultations sont en cours et une équipe de la Banque mondiale devrait se rendre à Maurice prochainement. La mission devrait être achevée dans un délai de 10 à 12 mois à compter de la date d'arrivée à Maurice.

En outre, le *PPO* procède actuellement à un audit de conformité des projets mis en œuvre dans le cadre des marchés publics d'urgence.

À la lumière des conclusions de l'audit de conformité et des recommandations de la Banque mondiale, des mesures correctives, y compris des modifications législatives, pourraient être apportées si cela s'avérait nécessaire.

Merci.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is very simple and very easy to understand. I am asking whether he is going to amend the law regarding emergency procurement and he is so right saying it is section 21 of the PPA. So, I want from him, yes or no, I do not want any story.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je suis désolé si l'honorable membre n'est pas content que j'ai fait une histoire. Ce n'est pas une histoire, je lui expliquais la loi et les procédures qu'il y a au niveau du *PPO* et concernant l'assistance technique de la Banque mondiale, et par la suite, je l'ai bien dit, on va s'appuyer sur les recommandations des consultants pour éventuellement faire les changements nécessaires.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the Minister he was not there in 2014. The Government promised to the population in paragraph 193 of the Government Programme -

“Government will revisit the Public Procurement Act so that projects are implemented faster, more efficiently, with greater transparency(...)”

Now, regarding the word, ‘transparency’, will the hon. Minister amend the law to make all information pertaining to emergency procurement public? I mean quotation, evaluation and approval.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, je l'ai dit et je le répète, il y aura des consultants qui vont venir de la banque mondiale pour évaluer cette législation et des amendements vont suivre si besoin est. Merci.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, my third point that I want to address him is accountability. Will he amend the law to make accountable Ministers or Ministry that use the emergency procurement and make it answerable in the august Assembly here?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, j'attends toujours. Je le redis, j'attends le rapport de la banque mondiale pour effectivement, si besoin est, faire les amendements nécessaires à la loi. J'attends. Comme je l'ai dit, j'attends le rapport des consultants qui vont arriver incessamment à Maurice.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NHDC HOUSING ESTATES - WATER LEAKAGES

(No. B/856) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the NHDC Housing Estates, he will, for the for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to if it is in presence of complaints of water leakages in several housing units thereof and, if so, indicate the remedial measures taken in relation thereto.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the mandate of the NHDC Ltd is, as the House is aware, to construct housing units for low and middle income families, but it does not own housing estates or units as the question seems to suggest.

I understand that, in fact, the NHDC Ltd is responsible for structural repairs, including related water leakages over the defects liability period which is of a duration of one year following the end of construction.

Structural repairs are also catered for under the ten-year guarantee provided by the contractor as per law. Otherwise, once the housing units have been sold, the responsibility of maintaining same rests with the beneficiaries and/or their syndic.

I am given to understand that it is the responsibility of the syndic on an NHDC Housing Estate to ensure security and the maintenance of common areas, including implementation of rehabilitation and minor works on the housing estate.

However, in view of the fact that since long, syndics often do not function properly for various reasons, Government has been providing funds every year for the NHDC to carry out rehabilitation works, which also include waterproofing and other leakage related works.

Now, I am informed by the NHDC Ltd that complaints are attended to on an ongoing basis and that, as at present, there are some 180 pending complaints regarding water leakages in respect of various housing estates.

According to the NHDC Ltd, water proofing works and remedial works related thereto are planned on several NHDC Housing Estates to an extent of Rs238 million.

Mr Armance: Thank you, hon. Minister. Can I know from the contractor that has done the water proofing work - now, I understand the job is over - whether the defect liability period is over as well?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am sorry, I am not sure I quite understand the question.

Mr Armance: From the contractor that has done the work, whether the defect liability period is over? Who is responsible now for the leakage?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am sorry, I am not sure I understand. Presumably, because I am not involved in the day to day running of the NHDC, recourse is had to different contractors for different works on different housing estates.

Mr Armance: From what I understand, a contractor is liable after he completed the work to make sure for a period of one year that there is no leakage. But, at La Tour Koenig, since the work has been completed, there still have many leakages and you have mentioned the number, 180 complaints received. So, I want to know now, whether the contractor is still liable to come and repair the leakage.

The Deputy Prime Minister: No, I am afraid the question did not relate specifically to La Tour Koenig, but if that is the concern of the hon. gentleman, I shall certainly try to obtain the information and communicate it to him.

Mr Armance: You also mentioned that the syndics are responsible for the daily maintenance of flats. May we know, concretely, if there is any specific procedure that the people can attend to? Because when they go the NHDC to complain after many weeks/months, no one comes and attends; sometimes, they have the visit of an engineer from the NHDC and the situation can go like this for years. So, do we have a specific procedure now that these people can go to the NHDC, is there a desk there where they can complain, someone can come and do a survey in the apartment?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My understanding is that syndics are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of common areas. Minor leakages within a housing unit would, outside the guarantee period, be the responsibility of the owner/ occupier of the housing unit. Now, because Government since long has had to provide funds year in and year out to the NHDC, to compensate for the fact the syndics are not always up to the task, the NHDC routinely receives and records complaints from occupiers of various units on various estates through the normal procedure, letters, telephone calls and there is a plan of work.

Now, again, if there are specific issues at La Tour Koenig, I will be very happy to help the honourable gentleman.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

JOB LOSSES – JAN. 2017-17 SEPT. 2020

(No. B/857) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to job losses, he will state the number thereof sector-wise, since January 2017 to date, indicating the measures taken in relation thereto.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that from January 2017 to September 2020, 42,174 cases of termination of employment have been reported to my Ministry.

With regard to period January 2017 to September 2020, I am, Mr Speaker, Sir, tabling the information sector-wise.

As for October 2020, the information is being compiled.

Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the 42,174 reported cases from period January 2017 to 2020, upon the intervention of my Ministry, 1,051 workers were reinstated in their former employment.

12,348 complaints were settled amicably, whereby Rs330,864,019 were recovered on behalf of the workers.

25,028 workers were admitted to the Workfare Programme and a total amount of Rs1,660,449,572 were disbursed from the Workfare Programme Fund for payment of the Transitional Unemployment Benefit to the laid-off workers.

And 3,384 cases were referred to the Industrial Court for determination, whereby a total amount of Rs170,641,226 were recovered on behalf of the workers.

The remaining 363 cases are still under consideration at the level of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has left no stone unturned to address the issue of job losses.

First of all, this Government has, with a view to protecting workers against abusive temporary or permanent reduction of workforce, set up the Redundancy Board under the Workers' Rights Act.

I wish to point out that, during the mandate of this Government, the unemployment situation was relatively stable until the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic which impacted adversely on the labour market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, the protection against termination of employment was further reinforced to make it mandatory for an employer to seek financial assistance from the Development Bank of Mauritius, the Mauritius Investment Bank Corporation Ltd. and the State Investment Corporation Ltd. prior to notifying the Redundancy Board of its intended reduction of workforce during period 1st June to 31st September 2020.

Furthermore, any termination in contravention with the above requirements is now deemed to be unjustified and gives the laid-off workers the right to be either reinstated or be paid severance allowance at the rate of three months per year of service. In addition, with a view to ensuring that workers are being paid their dues upon termination, the protective order provided under the Workers' Rights Act now covers severance allowance ordered by the Redundancy Board.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the right to a Transition Unemployment Benefit has also been extended to laid-off workers who have been paid a compensation under the Workers' Rights Act. Moreover, workers reckoning less than 180 days of continuous employment for period July to December 2020 are also entitled to a Transition Unemployment Benefit of Rs5,100 a month.

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, the Transition Unemployment Benefit payable has also been increased for period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, where the laid-off workers are actually being paid a Transition Unemployment Benefit of 90% of their basic

wage for the first six months, and 60% thereafter from the 7th to 12th months during their period of unemployment instead of 90% for the first three months followed by 60% from the 4th to 6th months and 30% from the 7th to 12th months of unemployment as it was provided previously.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to protecting jobs during the curfew period from 16 March to 31 May 2020, in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, Government also put in place the Wage Assistance Scheme to grant enterprises the equivalent of one month's basic wage bill to all their employees drawing a monthly salary of Rs50,000, subject to a cap of Rs25,000 per employee.

Following the lifting of the curfew on 30 May 2020, Government extended the Wage Assistance Scheme to enterprises, especially in the tourism sector and related sectors, which could not resume their economic activities normally.

As at date, an amount of Rs10.5 billion has been paid in respect of wages due to 273,000 workers.

Furthermore, 203,000 self-employed have benefited from Government a total of Rs2.5 billion under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to the above, this Government has moved a step forward by introducing a number of exceptional measures with a view to providing jobs to some 23,000 unemployed during the period November 2020 to June 2021, which is as follows –

Training will be dispensed by the HRDC for a period of 6 months to some 9,000 unemployed in the following sectors, namely -

- ☐ Construction;
- ☐ ICT-PBO;
- ☐ Agro-industry;
- ☐ E-Commerce;
- ☐ Social Care Services;
- ☐ Health Care and Medical Devices;
- ☐ Precision Manufacturing;
- ☐ Renewable Energy and Circular Economy, and

☐ Transport and Logistics.

An amount of Rs550 m. has been allocated for the Scheme. Government will also subsidise the wages of 11,000 new recruits by SMEs and micro enterprises to the tune of Rs10,200 monthly.

Furthermore, 2,000 persons who are on technical unemployment will also be recruited by Landscape Mauritius.

Finally, 1,000 fishermen will be recruited by the Mauritius Oceanography Institute and Albion Research Centre in connection with coral conservation and fish farming.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister whether the temporary measures introduced during the COVID-19 sequel prohibiting the reduction of workforce by enterprises unless the benefit is to go and try to get financial assistance; will that be extended beyond the scheduled expiration period?

Mr Callichurn: Actually, we have set the time for 31 December 2020. We will assess the situation and eventually, if we will have to extend, we will do so.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

RESIDENCE LUMIERE, POINTE AUX SABLES - FIRINGA-TYPE HOUSES

(No. B/858) **Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Firinga-type houses in Résidence Lumière in Pointe Aux Sables, he will state if the sales thereof have been completed and the beneficiaries thereof have received their respective title deed and, if not, why not.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, I owe an apology to the House and to the hon. gentleman. Allow me to explain.

The subject matter of the question, I am informed, historically relates to houses destroyed as a result of the passage of cyclone Firinga in or about 1999; more than 30 years ago.

The question, therefore, relates to matters quite distant in time and very complex in as much as, I am informed, occupiers of the houses destroyed by the cyclone Firinga were years later - that is, they were living on State land at the time without a lease - informed that they would be granted a lease over the State land they occupied.

Thereafter, more than 20 years ago, the NHDC constructed some 60 small houses. I think this is what the hon. gentleman refers to as Firinga-type houses. These houses were

built on site with the authorisation of the leaseholders. These houses are referred to as Résidence Lumière.

Now, I have requested the NHDC to provide the information requested in the question, but same is not as yet available. I regret, but I can only, therefore, undertake to lay in the Library any information that is communicated to me as soon as it is received.

I, therefore, once again, apologise to the honourable gentleman, but I do thank him for drawing my attention to this matter and I remain at his disposal if there is a specific issue that is troubling him.

Mr Armance: Thank you, hon. Deputy Prime Minister. In fact, I have done a survey regarding the houses - the people who have not yet received the title deeds. Most of them have already received it, but eight houses are concerned because they are very close to Pas Géométriques.

The problem is that since 2016 they already made the payment to the notary Etude Édouard Hart de Keating. I will give the hon. Deputy Prime Minister a copy of the receipt.

So, since 2016 to date, they never received their title deed. I am going to handle to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister all the documents pertaining to the eight families.

Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, certainly. I understand from the hon. gentleman that eight out of sixty have not received their title deed.

Mr Armance: Yes.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes. I shall be glad to look into the matter.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MV WAKASHIO VESSEL OIL SPILL - SEAFOOD CONTAMINATION

(No. B/859) **Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the seafood contamination resulting from the MV Wakashio Vessel oil spill, he will state if a recent assessment on the safety of seafood consumption has been conducted and, if so, indicate when and the outcome thereof.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to inform the House that following the grounding of MV Wakashio on 25 July 2020 and the oil spill on 06 August 2020, the Ministry of Health and Wellness issued a communiqué on 08 August 2020 to, *inter alia*, ban

the consumption of seafood from those affected regions. Moreover, by virtue of GN1148 of 2020, the affected regions have been proclaimed restricted areas. As at date, fishing activities are still not allowed in those regions.

In parallel, the Albion Fisheries Research Centre of my Ministry initiated an assessment to ascertain whether the seafood in the affected regions is safe for consumption.

The assessment comprises analysis of sediments, seawater and seafood. With regard to sediments, samples are being collected from 27 sites along the shoreline in the lagoon as well as at the mangrove sites. Samples for water are being collected from 27 sites both in-lagoon and off-lagoon within the affected regions.

With regard to analysis of seafood, the Albion Fisheries Research Centre is conducting regular surveys in the affected regions which comprise the collection of seafood samples, including, amongst others, fish, oyster, shellfish and squid, for analysis to detect the presence of total hydrocarbons, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals. The tests are being carried out by a private laboratory, namely, Quantilab Ltd.

Following the oil spill, a first round of seafood sampling was carried out from 14 to 27 August 2020. Samples were collected in-lagoon from 22 sites located both within and outside the affected region. Total hydrocarbons were detected in samples collected at three sites namely at Pointe d'Esny, Deux Frères and Mahebourg. The presence of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons was detected in samples collected at Mahebourg only.

A second sampling exercise has been effected from 02 September to 08 October 2020. Samples were collected in-lagoon and off-lagoon, submitted to Quantilab Ltd for analysis. The test results did not reveal any presence of total hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in the samples.

A third round of sampling has been carried out off-lagoon in the regions of Grand River South East to Mahebourg on 22 and 23 October 2020. The samples were collected and tested. Again, total hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons have not been detected in any of the samples.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the recent results obtained pertain to samples collected on 05 November 2020. Test results did not reveal presence of total hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in the seafood samples.

This assessment being carried out has revealed that total hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are not being detected in the seafood samples as from the second round of the sampling exercise.

However, the collection and analysis of seafood samples both in-lagoon and off-lagoon will be maintained during the month of November 2020 with a view to ascertaining that the seafood from these regions is safe for consumption.

Mr Speaker, Sir, monitoring in any unsafe area will continue until the risk assessment process reveals no risk.

In the light of the assessment, a decision will be taken to allow fishing activities in the affected regions.

I also wish to inform the House that the payment of the solidarity grant of Rs10,200 to the registered fishers, registered fishmongers and fisher applicants in the affected regions will be maintained until the resumption of the fishing activities.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Dans un article de presse, quelques pêcheurs du Sud Est témoignent pêcher et vendre illégalement leurs prises malgré l'interdiction qui pourraient s'avérer dangereux à la consommation. L'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire si des tests sont effectués dans des spécimens dans des points de vente de manière aléatoire partout sur l'île?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the fish sold in that region do not come from those regions. The fish they buy and sell are taken from other regions of the island and sold over there.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MV WAKASHIO VESSEL OIL SPILL - HEALTH PROBLEMS

(No. B/860) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the MV Wakashio Vessel oil spill, he will state -

- (a) the number of reported cases of patients suffering from health problems related to the oil spill, and
- (b) if an assessment of the short and long term effects thereof on the inhabitants of affected areas has been conducted and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as soon as the Wakashio Oil spill was confirmed on 06 August 2020, my Ministry took a series of measures to mitigate the plausible health effects and impact of the oil spill on inhabitants living in the southern coastal regions.

Outright a Press Release - In the same vein, my Ministry took a series of other precautionary measures, amongst others, a roaming ambulance with Medical Staff was put into operation from 08.00 hrs to 16.00 hrs from 09 August to 19 August 2020, with all the basic medications to assess the inhabitants' medical conditions at several places along the coastal regions. Besides, after 16.00 hours, an ambulance with medical staff was on standby at Mahebourg Hospital to intervene on any medical emergencies related to the Wakashio Oil Spill.

Likewise, the SAMU present at J. Nehru Hospital was on standby and ready to move to their affected areas in case of emergencies.

In parallel, an Oil Spilling Health Surveillance Programme was mounted. Surveillance for health issues like Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (URTI), conjunctivitis, allergic reaction and respiratory problems were monitored. The Records Department at Mahebourg Hospital was recording the statistics with respect to patients suffering from symptoms of the oil spill who attended the hospital and adjoining Community Health Centres.

The main objectives of the "Oil Spilling Health Surveillance Programme" were to –

- ☐ investigate further the cumulative effects of skin irritations;
- ☐ assess the ocular;
- ☐ look into neurological effects of environmental exposure among coastal residents;
- ☐ auscultate the persistent respiratory disease due to exposure to oil spill;
- ☐ evaluate short-term psychological effects;
- ☐ provide counselling about precautions to be taken, and
- ☐ distribute pamphlets to the people residing in the nearby and affected region to raise awareness.

I am also informed that the Nursing staff and medical officers attended a Continuous Medical Education held at J. Nehru Hospital whereat they were informed about symptoms and treatment for health problems associated with the oil spill.

Moreover, medical personnel posted at Rivière des Creoles, Old Grand Port and Bambous Virieux Community Health Centres held health talks on oil spillage to patients prior to start of consultations.

The Community Health Centres along the coastal regions extended their closing time from 16.00 hrs to 18.00 hrs to cater for any health issues related to oil spill.

Additionally, the School Health Programme for Secondary Schools was carried out by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology in and out of the multiple affected localities to raise awareness and sensitise the youth on the adverse effects of oil spillage and the precautions to be taken.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that a total of 552 patients attended our health institutions claiming that they were suffering from health problems related to the oil spill, of which 305 at Mahebourg Hospital, 82 at Old Grand Port Community Health Centre, 16 at Rivière des Créoles Community Health Centre, 132 at Bambous Virieux and 17 at Bois des Amourettes School, where health services were provided in an ambulance.

However, I wish to inform the House that there have been, so far, no confirmed cases of any health problem related to the oil spill.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that World Health Organisation carried out a robust public health risk assessment on the Wakashio Oil Spill and a draft report was issued on 13 October 2020. It emerged that the oil spill represented a negligible risk to public health. Had the analysis shown significant risk to public health, a long-term assessment would have been commissioned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am, further, informed that a delegation comprising of 13 experts from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is currently in Mauritius to carry out a health impact survey following the oil spillage and will come out with a report shortly.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie M. le président. Est-ce que le ministre pourrait soumettre à la Chambre la liste des bénéficiaires de soins? Merci.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to have the question again. La liste des bénéficiaires?

Mr Speaker: Can you repeat?

Ms Anquetil: Oui, les personnes, les habitants de la région qui ont reçu justement les soins du ministère?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a confidential information between a patient attending a health centre and the doctor. I have already given in my answer that there were 552 patients, who attended the health institution, who claimed to have suffered from health problems related to oil spill, but there have been no confirmed cases of any health problem.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if an air monitoring surveillance has been carried out by his Ministry? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed the air monitoring surveillance was carried out on a daily basis by the officers of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste and Climate Change as from 08 August, and that exercise covered round about 33 sites, including 17 schools, 12 residential areas in the coastal region of Mahebourg to Poste de Flacq, as well as four unaffected sites, namely Le Bouchon, Souffleur, Gris Gris and Poste Lafayette. I also wish to inform the House that an assessment was carried out to detect the presence of contaminants, such as volatile organic compounds and odour nuisance. All these have been assessed and the level of volatile organic compounds on those sites were compliant to the lowest observed adverse effects level set by the United States Environment Protection Act.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 20 – ALBION, SPLENDID VIEW – DRAINS

(No. B/861) Mrs E. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to Splendid View in Albion, in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin Petite Rivière, he will state if consideration will be given for the construction of drains thereat prior to the forthcoming rainy season.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, Splendid View is located along Albion Approach Road, B105.

I am informed by the Road Development Authority that there is an existing earth drain which is adequate for the surface runoff from the road and surrounding areas.

However, the pipe culvert where the water is discharged does not have adequate hydraulic capacity to cater for the runoff which eventually backflows and floods the surrounding areas of the region of Splendid View during heavy rainfalls.

To alleviate the flooding problems, the RDA is currently implementing a project to upgrade the existing pipe culvert into a twin concrete culvert of size 1.2 metres by 1.2 metres each.

The work is being implemented under the framework agreement of the RDA for maintenance and minor works. The Work Order to the tune of Rs5 m. has been issued under 28 September 2020 and works have started on 15 October 2020. The project is expected to be completed by 15 March 2021.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS - PREGNANT WOMEN - SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES - TREATMENT

(No. B/862) Dr F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to women having followed/following pregnancy treatment in public health institutions over the period 2015 to date, he will state the number thereof having been diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases, including syphilis and HIV, on a yearly basis, indicating the –

- (a) treatment centres and facilities available thereto for the treatment thereof, and
- (b) number of babies born to the said patients affected by same through vertical transmission.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to HIV, in 2015, 73 pregnant women were diagnosed HIV positive, 103 in 2016, 104 in 2017, 101 in 2018 and 124 in 2019. As for 2020, as at 30 June, there were 29 pregnant women diagnosed with HIV positive.

With regard to syphilis, in 2015, 132 pregnant women were diagnosed syphilis positive, 178 in 2016, 249 in 2017, 303 in 2018, 373 in 2019. As for 2020, as at 12 November, 375 pregnant women have been tested syphilis positive.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 8 Day Care Centres have been assigned to the Immuno-suppressed, which are located in the following hospitals and are providing services to People living with HIV. They are namely –

1. Volcy Pougnet at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital;
2. SSRN Hospital;
3. Victoria Hospital;
4. Nehru Hospital;
5. Mahebourg Hospital;
6. Flacq Hospital;
7. Souillac Hospital, and
8. Yves Cantin Community Hospital

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that all pregnant women who are diagnosed with HIV are referred to the AIDS Unit in their respective regions for treatment and follow-up; while those who are found positive for syphilis are referred to the Skin Department in the regional hospitals.

In line with the routine blood test, all pregnant women attending Antenatal Centres in our health care institutions are tested for HIV and syphilis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that in accordance with recommendations of the World Health Organisation, all pregnant women living with HIV are administered lifelong anti-retroviral treatment. A multidisciplinary approach is adopted to ensure that their HIV infection is under control. The HIV positive women are followed by the HIV doctors of the Day Care Centres for the Immuno-suppressed and Obstetrician/Gynaecologist. Blood investigations with regard to their immune system and other co-morbidities are carried out at the Day Care Centres for the Immuno-suppressed. Besides, psychosocial support is provided through the services of a Psychologist and the collaboration of NGOs.

I am also informed that as far as infected children are concerned, anti-retroviral is now available for treatment of HIV and antibiotics, such as, penicillin are being used to treat syphilis in both new-borns and adults.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that out of 534 pregnant women diagnosed with HIV, a total number of 16 babies have been born through vertical transmission from 2015 as at 30 June 2020. Out of the 1,610 pregnant women diagnosed with syphilis, a total number of 982 babies have been born through vertical transmission from 2015 to date.

Dr. Aumeer: I thank the hon. Minister for giving us the very dramatic data with regard to syphilis cases in pregnant women, where it is very clear from the figures he has just given us, there has been a trebling, three times fold of the number of pregnant women with syphilis from 2016 to up to date. Has his Ministry taken any specific action with regard to women infected with syphilis to curtail this rise besides the standard treatments that are being given to the infected patients?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that fortunately the Ministry is conducting mandatory tests for all pregnant women. That is why we have been able to arrive at these figures. You can imagine had we not done the test, we would never have detected these women and given treatment to them. So, all women attending our institutions are being tested. Both mothers and babies are treated.

Dr. Aumeer: My next question to the Minister, he mentioned 982 babies have been found to be infected through vertical transmission and it is well known that pregnant women affected with syphilis do have a very poor pregnancy outcome in terms of intrauterine deaths, low birth rate and bad congenital abnormalities over the last five years. Has his Ministry conducted a survey or will he consider conducting a survey? Because the figures are really, really high, more than the 40% that is usually accounted for pregnant women having syphilis. We are talking by the figures that you just mentioned 60%. Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that syphilis is a highly transmissible disease through sexual activity. As for conducting a survey, I don't know to what extent this is appropriate. To palliate the problem, besides testing pregnant women and test done at the blood bank, my Ministry has made the VDRL, TPHA, Filariasis Tests mandatory for all foreign workers over and above the test for HIV. Foreign workers who are tested positive are not granted provisional medical clearance from Ministry unless all medical

certificates are cleared. On arrival in Mauritius, foreign workers have to repeat those tests. So, these are the measures that the Ministry has already taken in order to detect to what extent the syphilis has invaded the community or if foreign expatriates are the main vectors.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/867, B/868, B/869, B/876, B/877, B/878, B/879, also PQ B/874 and B/875 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY - DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEES - PERIOD 2015-2019

(No. B/863) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Disciplinary Committees held at the Wastewater Management Authority, over the period 2015-2019, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) the quantum of fees paid to –
 - (i) the barristers whose services were retained therefor,
 - (ii) third parties in relation thereto, and
- (b) number of officers concerned therewith, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) length of suspension, and
 - (ii) outcome thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that for the period 2015 to 2019, Disciplinary Committees have been set up in respect of 19 cases, where officers have been suspended.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling the quantum of fees paid to Barristers whose services were retained and third parties in relation thereto.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am also tabling the information on the number of officers concerned, the length of suspension and outcome thereof.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you hon. Minister for your very brief reply, whereby you have tabled the answers which I don't have at hand at the moment.

Mr Speaker: No comments! Come with your supplementary question!

Dr. Aumeer: Can I have the paper laid so that I can ask my supplement?

Mr Speaker: Supplementary question!

Dr. Aumeer: Okay. Can the Minister see with the relevant authorities whether it is acceptable that for one case of alleged offence of drawing a cheque of Rs7,500 at the WMA, more than Rs1 m. is apparently, as I don't have the figures, spent to third parties to enquire into the matter dating since 2016, and nothing as today has been proven, so far? Thank you.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, it would be very difficult for me to react to, first, the statement and the question, because the hon. Member needs to be more precise with regard to the case he is referring to.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Dr. Aumeer: The precision of the case is one Mr S., a Divisional Commander of the WMA, who was based at the Roche Bois Plant.

Mr Speaker: Are you moving to your next question?

Dr. Aumeer: I have no other question, it is a supplement.

Mr Speaker: B/863, hon. Dr. Aumeer, next question!

Dr. Aumeer: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have just answered this question.

Mr Speaker: I think at one time for this time I am at a loss.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Rest trankil!*

Mr Speaker: No comments! Next question!

MV WAKASHIO VESSEL - WRECK & SINKING

(No. B/864) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the MV Wakashio Vessel, he will state the names of the experts who advised Government on the handling of the wreck and sinking thereof, respectively, indicating the quantum of fees paid thereto and source of the funds used therefor.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that no experts have been hired by my Ministry to advise Government on the handling of the wreck and sinking of the forward section of MV Wakashio and, therefore, payment of fees does not arise.

A notice was served in line with requirements of section 150 of the Merchant Shipping Act on 19 August 2020 by the Director of Shipping on Okiyo Maritime Corporation, owners of MV Wakashio, giving them instructions for the scuttling of the forward section of MV Wakashio at the planned sinking position.

The term planned sinking was then used instead of scuttling as it was a joint decision made by all stakeholders present at the National Crisis Committee chaired by Dr. the hon. Husnoo, Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management.

The conditions attached to the planned sinking were as follows –

- (a) before the operation, SMIT Salvage shall ensure that all hydraulic oil is removed from the equipment on the forward section of MV Wakashio;
- (b) SMIT Salvage shall provide evidence in terms of pictures and videos that the forward section of MV Wakashio does not contain any polluting elements, that is, fuel oil, gasoline and other oily products;
- (c) SMIT Salvage shall ensure that all precautions have been taken to ensure no parts, debris, gear loaded on forward section of the MV Wakashio float after the scuttling operation, that is, hatch covers, ruins, etc., and
- (d) the Salvage Master shall take pictures and make videos of the scuttling operation and stay on site to ensure that there are no floating parts which would affect the safety of navigation and any floating debris is to be collected and placed on the boat tugs expedition and submit for appropriate disposal.

Furthermore, the planned sinking operation shall be witnessed by Marine Mammal Observers, two from Marine Megafauna Conservation, a registered NGO in Mauritius and one officer from my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the new planned sinking position was determined following a meeting held on 19 August 2020, chaired by the Director of the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration and the designated position was agreed by all parties, including the French experts present.

The decision to carry out the planned sinking of the forward section of MV Wakashio was approved during the National Crisis Committee held on 19 August 2020, after consultation with all members present.

On 21 August 2020, the owners of the Vessel gave SMIT Salvage orders to carry out the planned sinking of the forward section at the designated position. The planned sinking of the forward section was completed on 24 August 2020 at 15 00 hours local time.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister has just mentioned that no expert advised the Government on the handling of the wreck. So, may I know from the hon. Minister how does he reconcile what he has just said and what the hon. Prime Minister said on BBC that they have not intervened and evacuated oil because they had been acting on expert advice?

Mr Maudhoo: As I mentioned in my answer, the National Crisis Committee, chaired by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister consists of so many authorities and in that Crisis Committee the Japanese experts were there, the French experts were there to give advice. The experts were not paid any money. They were just in the Committee. We recall here the visit of the French Minister following which the French experts came.

Mr Uteem: My question is very simple, hon. Minister. For 12 days, we did not do anything until 06 August when there was the oil spill. So, I am just asking a very simple question: on whose advice did Government act, not to act in this matter?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a PNQ and I have already answered this question.

Mr Uteem: In respect to the sinking of the front, the forward of the ship, may I know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry or the Director of Shipping had received advice that instead of sinking the forward of the ship, the ship should be sold as a wreck whether locally or in India because there were tonnes of steel that were worth millions of dollars?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been request, but being given the risk, nobody will allow such a wreck to be shipped, you know, to sail to India and we, here, the Government, we also decided not to allow to bring such a wreck for dismantling and bring ashore because it will be a big pollution. So, all the decisions have been taken in the Crisis Committee and the best option was to go for that sinking option.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, can I ask the hon. Minister what was the rationale and the urgency for the sinking of the MV Wakashio wreck? What was the urgency?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I would recall to the PNQ that was put to me. There was outcry everywhere, but that's the way it is. The rationale is that the notice was

served and most urgently the wreck should be removed. The most rapid method was to take it out from here. That was the rationale; it had to be taken out. It had to leave our sea here.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Mr Uteem: If this is the rationale that there is urgency, then can the hon. Minister explain why is it that, up to now, the remainder of the MV Wakashio is still on the coral barrier?

Mr Maudhoo: Let me explain. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me explain that also. The Aft part is still here, it is the scrap handling operation plan which is still here. I think the brand marine consultant has been appointed. They have appointed one – let me see. The contract for the wreck removal of the Aft section of MV Wakashio has already been awarded to Liangyungang Dali Underwater Engineering on 21 October 2020. The contractor has started mobilisation of resources on 21 October 2020.

So, the operation is scheduled to start by mid-December 2020 and will be dependent obviously on the Ministry of Health and Wellness for COVID-19 protocol. This is there and the complete removal and final survey is planned for end of February 2020...

So, this is for the Aft.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Maudhoo: Oh, sorry, 2021.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman, withdraw that sentence!

Mr Juman: I withdraw.

Mr Maudhoo: 2021, sorry.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table had been advised that PQ B/891 and B/892 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

DECAEN FLYOVER - REPAIR WORKS

(No. B/865) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development

whether, in regard to the closure of the Decaen Flyover, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

- (a) reasons therefor;
- (b) estimated costs thereof;
- (c) duration of the works, and
- (d) impact thereof on the traffic flow.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for this question. This will allow me to set the record straight on quite a few issues.

I am informed by the Road Development Authority that the Decaen Flyover was implemented under a design and build basis by Transinvest Company Limited, General Construction Company Joint Venture and the flyover was opened to the traffic on 28 November 2018.

However, after a period of eight months, during the defect liability period, cracks of width ranging from 05 millimetres to 12 millimetres appeared on the upward ramp of the flyover.

The evolution of the cracks was closely monitored by the RDA and the contractor. The monitoring exercise demonstrated that there was settlement of the mechanically stabilised earth wall. After a period of five months, it was observed that the settlement had attenuated.

With a view to determining the exact cause of settlement, the contractor invited several foreign experts to advise on the matter namely Franki, Maccaferri, Professor Magnan, Professor Wolfgang Wehr.

Upon advice of the experts, the contractor carried out extensive ground investigations so as to analyse the complete ramp structure and understand the source of the problem.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the investigation demonstrated that –

1. The audiometric modulus, that is, the strength of the clay is significantly lower than what was estimated in the initial design, leading to significantly higher settlements;
2. The permeability of the clay is less than that assumed during the initial design; this resulted in longer consolidation time and larger settlement after

construction. Thus the evacuation of ground water was slower than anticipated, and

3. A sloping bed rock surface made the situation still worse causing the embankment to move laterally.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what is important to note and I would like to inform the House that despite the environmental causes as I have mentioned, the experts confirmed that there was absolutely no risk of a structure collapse.

Mr Speaker, Sir, once the cause of the defect was identified, the contractor propose two options as long term remedial measures for the upward ramp namely: option 1, involving the removal and reconstruction of part of the mechanically stabilised earth wall and option 2, comprising the demolition and reconstruction of the upward ramp which is a suspended deck and pile foundation on bed rock.

After careful review of the two options, the RDA recommended the second option especially in view of the long term effects of climate change, this option would ensure the resiliency of the structure to withstand all conditions prevailing in Mauritius including ground water conditions. In view thereof, Government approved the second option.

Accordingly, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, the Decaen flyover had to be closed for the reconstruction works.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that since the cracks occurred during the defect liability period and given it was a design and build project, all associated costs for the remedial reconstruction works are being borne solely by the contractor in accordance with the conditions of contract. Let me make it clear and simpler, no cost to Government.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the repair works started on the 24 August 2020 and are due to be completed by the 23 February 2021, that I, for a duration of six months. However, I am pleased to inform the House that, with a more efficient methodology of works, the reconstruction of the ramp will, subject to favourable weather conditions be completed, before this Christmas.

As regard to part (d) of the question, with the coming into operation of the Decaen flyover in 2018, there was an improvement of traffic flow along the motorway M1 and entrance into Port Louis. However, with its closure, it was obvious that the impact was felt by

all road users. In respect with a view to minimising the effect of a traffic diversion, a scheme in consultation with the Police and Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit was put in place and is working satisfactorily. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The project was a design and built basis and, therefore, it was the responsibility of the contractor to ensure the necessary geotechnical survey before construction. Doesn't the hon. Minister agree that it is not good enough for the contractor simply to repair the bridge at its cost but he should also provide an indemnity and damages to the Government because as a result of the bad design, the bad construction, six months delay is being caused; six months closure resulting in cost for all users of the road.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, my hon. colleague will appreciate that, in an equation, you have variables and you have constants and sometimes the engineers do not get some of those variables. There is some kind of inexactitude. Thus, as I have already mentioned earlier, here in this case, the only thing that went wrong, it was the speed at which water would have travelled through the piles. This is the only thing they got wrong as I say. So, as the matter of this contract, they are bringing remedy in changing the design and we all know that this part of the island is a reclaimed land. So, in an *esprit* of fairness, I don't think the question of indemnity arises.

Mr Speaker: Time over by two minutes. Hon. Members, I suspend the sitting for half an hour.

At 4.51 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

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.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

MINOR AYAAN - DEATH

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. D. Koonjoo-Shah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement regarding the reported case of death of minor Ayaan aged 2 years. Like the whole country, I was shocked to learn that a child of 2 years old passed away in very strange circumstances. It was only on Saturday 14 November that I learnt of the death of the child. I immediately instructed my officers to obtain more information on the case. More details were, therefore, sought from the Police and the Jawaharlal Nehru and Victoria Hospitals. I must, at this point, inform the House that prior to this tragedy, no case of ill-treatment against the late minor was reported to my Ministry.

I am informed that the biological parents of the late child are separated. The biological father is presently serving a prison sentence. The minor was under the care of his mother and the latter's partner. According to the report of the Police and the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, the facts of the case to date are as follows -

On 12 November 2020, at 8.15 p.m., late Ayaan was brought to the Accident & Emergency Department of the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital in Rose Belle by his parents. The child was not breathing, was pulseless, with cold extremities, with both pupils dilated and fixed. He was pale and his abdomen was distended and there was a bruise over his left groin. Although resuscitative measures were done and an ECG was performed, the child was declared dead at 8.45 p.m.

Officers of my Ministry were able to gather more information on the actual circumstances of the death of minor Ayaan from the Midlands Police Station on 14 November at 7.20 in the morning. It was reported that in the night of 13 November, the maternal aunt of the child complained to the Police Station of Midlands that the child used to be physically assaulted by the mother and her partner. The Police immediately brought a halt to the funeral which was in progress and an autopsy was subsequently carried out at Victoria Hospital. The autopsy revealed suspicions of foul play. As this is a criminal case, it is being investigated by the Major Crime Investigative Team (MCIT). The criminal investigation is equally being undertaken against the medical practitioner who signed the death certificate of late minor Ayaan.

I am informed by the Police today that the provisional charge of murder has been lodged against the mother and her partner. As regards assistance provided by my Ministry on Monday 16 November, a visit was undertaken by psychologists of my Ministry at Midlands

Police Station to gather information on the minor's family members for psychological support. Thereafter, the child's maternal aunt and paternal grandmother were contacted and psychological assistance was provided upon their consent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a blatant case where the very people who should be providing care, security and love to their kids are accused of committing outrageous acts of ill-treatment and, unfortunately, in this case, leading to the death of an innocent and a defenceless child. As the House is aware, and it is on the Order Paper today, we are introducing three Bills for the better protection of our children, and in view of the atrocities allegedly committed not by another person but by those very people having parental responsibility themselves, I am proposing to come with some amendments to the Children's Bill at the Second Reading regarding offences against children by those with parental responsibility. In fact, I am proposing for the sentence to be made harsher for parents/guardians responsible either for an act or omission, that is, murder or manslaughter or serious harm.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to make a heartfelt appeal to all citizens who are aware of any case of ill-treatment, be it the school authorities, the neighbours, close relatives, to come forward and report any such cases to my Ministry or to the Police so that such tragedy can be avoided. In this particular case, the child could have been saved, as it appears that the close relatives were aware of the conditions of ill-treatment of the child, but, unfortunately, they did not report it before. And now it is, unfortunately, too late for baby Ayaan.

At present, only some professionals dealing with children have a legal duty to report cases of children in distress or with protection concerns, but the forthcoming Children's Bill lays responsibility of reporting on each and every one of us who is aware of a case of a child in distress or ill-treatment. It will, thus, become a legal obligation to report the matter to the Police for immediate support and assistance to the child in distress.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

- (a) *The Supplementary Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill (No. XVI of 2020)*
- (b) *The Children's Bill (No. XVII of 2020)*
- (c) *The Children's Court Bill (No. XVIII of 2020)*

(d) *The Child Sex Offender Register Bill (No. XIX of 2020)*

Second Reading

THE CLIMATE CHANGE BILL

(NO. XIV OF 2020)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Climate Change Bill (No. XIV of 2020).

Question again proposed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Diolle!

Mrs T. Diolle (Fifth Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): M. le président, j'interviens sur le *Climate Change Bill* et, d'emblée, j'ai suivi les débats la semaine dernière, surtout des membres de l'opposition concernant ce projet de loi. Je pense qu'il est nécessaire de rappeler à la Chambre que le *Climate Change Bill* ne peut être comparé au *Environmental Act*, simplement parce que le *Climate Change Bill* a un but précis. Le but précis - et ceci ne concerne pas que Maurice ; c'est un combat international, global - est de diminuer ce qu'on appelle les gaz à effet de serre. Les gaz à effet de serre sont associés à la production, et j'ai entendu plusieurs arguments venir de l'avant et comparer le *Climate Change Bill* au *Environmental Act*, ou même dire que le *Climate Change Bill* est une répétition du *Environmental Act*, mais c'est une méconnaissance de ce que ce projet de loi représente.

Je voudrais d'emblée féliciter le ministre de l'Environnement, l'honorable Ramano, puisque c'est un projet audacieux. Audacieux, parce que le *Climate Change Bill* vient dans un contexte, où, je dirai que la lutte contre le changement climatique a pris une tournure idéologique et la raison pour laquelle j'avance ce point est simplement, que nous constatons, observons l'élection de Joe Biden aux Etats-Unis, qui, lui-même, a été vice-président des Etats-Unis en 2008, et sous Barack Obama et Joe Biden, il y a eu énormément d'avancées quant à la lutte contre le changement climatique au niveau international et aux Etats-Unis, et cela parce que les Etats-Unis, La Chine, les gros producteurs sont responsables principalement de ce qu'on appelle la production de gaz à effet de serre. Ce qui s'est passé c'est qu'éventuellement il y a eu un changement de régime et nous avons vu que les Etats-Unis se sont retirés mercredi dernier de l'accord de Paris officiellement et ça c'était sous l'administration précédente.

La victoire de Joe Biden donne beaucoup d'espoir à ceux qui croient qu'il faut lutter contre le changement climatique, puisque les Etats-Unis est un leader dans la production de gaz à effet de serre. Rien que cette élection nous fait présager qu'il y aura un changement au niveau international quant au traitement du changement climatique. Donc, ce projet de loi vient à un moment très opportun puisque ce changement idéologique - j'appelle ça un changement idéologique simplement parce que s'aligner du côté de ceux qui veulent combattre le changement climatique, implique que nous adoptons une politique économique différente. Une politique économique où l'émission de *carbon dioxide* est au centre, c'est-à-dire, la diminution du *carbon dioxide* est au centre de la stratégie de développement. Si nous avons des puissances internationales qui s'alignent à ce combat, et Maurice, avec notre *Climate Change Bill*, je pense que nous avons pris la bonne décision et que les jeunes de ce côté de la Chambre sont du bon côté de l'histoire puisque nous soutenons totalement ce projet de loi dans un contexte international où le changement climatique est devenu une lutte idéologique.

M. le président, si vous me permettez, je vais rappeler c'est quoi le changement climatique. Le changement climatique implique le réchauffement de la planète à cause de la production de gaz à effet de serre, et pour lutter contre le changement climatique il y a deux stratégies qui ont été élaborées depuis l'accord de Paris : la stratégie de la mitigation et de l'adaptation. La mitigation concerne principalement les pays de gros producteurs de gaz à effet de serre. A l'île Maurice nous avons notre contribution à y apporter même si notre contribution à la production de gaz à effet de serre est minime comparée à la Chine, aux États-Unis, à l'Indonésie. Mais nous avons, néanmoins, notre part à jouer puisque c'est notre partie du monde qui souffre le plus du changement climatique. De l'autre côté, nous avons l'adaptation qui concerne énormément les petits états insulaires, les pays où comme on dit le trou dans la couche d'ozone se trouve, donc, cela concerne les pays de l'océan Indien qui inclut l'Australie. C'est pour ça qu'on dit souvent que l'Australie est un champion de la lutte contre le changement climatique puisque nous sommes affectés directement par le changement climatique. Donc, ce projet de loi est audacieux.

M. le président, j'ai entendu beaucoup de commentaires nous dire que par fanatisme politique, en 2015, l'île Maurice Ile Durable a été comme on dit *scrapped*, a été démantelée et que c'était mieux que ce que le gouvernement propose. Rien que ça, M. le président, démontre la méconnaissance et à quel point quelquefois on peut être de mauvaise foi. Maurice île durable était une institution qui travaillait sur les énergies propres, sur le *green*

economy. Ce projet de loi propose d'amender, à la page 28, le *Planning and Development Act*. M. le président, je vais citer la section 5 à la page 28. Le *Planning and Development Act* va être amendé «*for development to take into account climate change* ». Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, M. le président ? Ça veut dire que les projets de développement dorénavant doivent prendre en considération la production de gaz à effet de serre et cela implique que nous voulons continuer à développer notre pays en réduisant la production de gaz à effet de serre jusqu'à ce que nous arrivions à ce qu'on appelle le *zero carbon print*.

Aux États-Unis, Joe Biden a annoncé la couleur : jusqu'à 2035, son secteur de l'énergie va être *zero carbon*. Donc, tout ce qui est électricité sera renouvelable, tout ce qui est courant, électricité, énergie, c'est son ambition pour son pays, et nous, à l'île Maurice on annonce la couleur différemment. Un *High-Powered Committee* composé des ministres concernés va mettre au centre du développement le changement climatique, tout ce qu'on appelle *mitigation* et ça en elle-même c'est une première pour l'île Maurice. On ne peut pas comparer Maurice île durable à ce projet de loi, à cette ambition, puisque, dorénavant, aucun projet de développement ne va se faire sans prendre en considération le changement climatique. Nous avons entendu énormément de critiques – enfin, j'appelle ça des détails. On parle beaucoup de problèmes, qu'on peut dire 'mineures' quand on considère que tous ces ministères vont faire le planning par rapport à l'environnement, par rapport à l'écologie et ça veut dire, M. le président, que l'État mauricien change de structure, change d'idéologie et c'est peut-être pour ça que j'ai été moi-même très étonnée par les discours de la semaine dernière, parce que n'importe quel militant écologiste devrait applaudir ce projet de loi. Nous avons tellement entendu qu'il faut un *paradigm shift* pour pourvoir lutter contre le changement climatique. Aujourd'hui, on a des outils, des institutions, un *Climate Change Department* qui sera créé avec ce qu'on appelle un *Evidence-Based Approach*, aucune décision ne se fera sans une connaissance des données qui concernent le changement climatique et on vient nous dire que ce projet de loi est inutile, que c'est un *copycat* et que ça ressemble à l'*Environmental Act*.

Je pense que c'est la raison pour laquelle ma collègue, l'honorable Subhasnee Luchmun Roy a été choquée par ce genre de commentaire, puisque que nous les jeunes nous parlons systématiquement de ce besoin de changer notre modèle de développement, et dès qu'on amène un projet de loi au Parlement qui amène justement les outils, les institutions nécessaires pour changer notre modèle de développement, nous recevons une pluie de critiques. Donc, c'est pour cela que je répète, les jeunes de ce côté de la Chambre sont du bon

côté de l'histoire quant à la lutte contre le changement climatique. Il nous faut un ministre de l'Environnement - il a été beaucoup critiqué la semaine dernière - qui a des convictions, puisque n'oublions pas, quand on change le modèle de développement, quand on oblige que le développement de notre économie soit au centre, le *carbon dioxide* avec des *evidence-based*, puisqu'à la page 15, il y a un département qui sera mis sur pied, comme on dit pour *monitor* tout changement, variation dans le changement de climat implique que le secteur privé aura à s'ajuster, c'est ça peut-être le problème.

C'est peut-être ça qui va amener de la résistance parce que le gouvernement a pris la décision, de s'aligner du côté de ceux qui, dans ce combat global et au niveau international, luttent contre le changement climatique, ce qui implique que beaucoup seront dérangés, M. le président, simplement parce que les modèles de production auront à changer et, comme l'a dit ma collègue, la production d'électricité doit changer. J'ai entendu des critiques, M. le président, sur le *Waste to Energy Programme*. Mais ce projet de loi devrait enchainer les gens qui sont contre le *Waste to Energy Programme* parce que la difficulté, tous ceux qui ont évolué au niveau de l'État le savent, tout ceux qui ont été dans un gouvernement le savent. M. le président, c'est que le problème quant au combat contre le changement climatique a toujours été que vous avez différents ministères, le ministère de l'environnement va préconiser certaines mesures, alors que le ministère de l'énergie va essayer de survivre. Vous aurez le ministère de l'agriculture qui va essayer de son côté de survivre. Mais là, vous avez un *High- Powered Committee* présidé par le Premier ministre qui va prendre toutes les décisions quant au développement du pays dans ce comité. Et ce comité a été critiqué, M. le président, la semaine dernière. Vous pouvez imaginer le choc que j'ai eu en entendant ces critiques, ce qui veut dire qu'un projet comme le *Waste to Energy* pour ceux qui sont convaincus qu'il ne doit pas aller de l'avant, va être étudié dans un comité interministériel. Ce n'est pas un comité interministériel qui va ressembler au Cabinet, non, un comité interministériel qui a pour but d'amener notre pays à un *low-carbon economy*, un comité interministériel qui a pour seul agenda d'assurer que notre développement nous amène à un *low-carbon economy*.

Donc ces remarques que j'ai entendues m'ont un peu choquée, et me donne l'impression que peut-être beaucoup n'ont pas compris la portée de ce projet de loi. Et je répète que ce projet de loi amène le fameux *paradigm shift* que tous les militants écologistes attendent depuis des années dans notre pays.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne les *green jobs*, au fait, je vais vous dire franchement, à la première page, il y a que le pays va se développer *into a green economy* et j'ai entendu dire qu'il y a rien comme provision, *no policies for a green economy*.

M. le président, qu'on parle d'un *paradigm shift*, quand on parle d'un planning, on ne peut pas simplement, dans un projet de loi venir annoncer les mesures. Danemark, M. le président, qui a eu un gouvernement composé de militantes écologistes, nous dit aujourd'hui qu'elles n'ont pas la réponse à tout. Elles ont adopté un système similaire à celui qui est produit par ce projet de loi.

Pour ça, je m'explique, M. le président. Enfin, je dirais que ce projet de loi amène un système qui ressemble beaucoup à leur système, mais ça ne change pas le fait que nous ne sommes pas aussi avancés puisque c'est vrai qu'au Danemark, la conscience écologique de la population et du secteur privé est beaucoup plus avancée que celle que nous avons à Maurice. Mais disons que le gouvernement mauricien a décidé de prendre le taureau par les cornes et d'agir.

Dans le système que nous avons, M. le président, la plus grande crainte de tout gouvernement qui amène des politiques de changement climatique est le fait que nous durons cinq ans ; nous pouvons durer dix ans alors que le combat contre le changement climatique prend des années. Ce système, dans ce projet de loi, M. le président, oblige à n'importe quel gouvernement, - comparé à Maurice Ile Durable qui a pu être démantelé après quelques mois - à tout gouvernement qui vient après, peu importe son idéologie, à discuter le développement en prenant en considération le *carbon footprint*, en prenant en considération la production de gaz à effet de serre, puisque les institutions ont été mises sur pied, et qu'une unité spéciale qui va amener les évidences, qui va *monitor* ce changement, sera là et que le High Power Committee, présidé par le Premier Ministre, sera déjà *set up*. Même si un prochain gouvernement, un futur gouvernement ne croit pas dans le changement climatique, comme ça été le cas aux États-Unis, après Barack Obama, vous avez eu Donald Trump qui n'y croyait pas. Ici à Maurice, si ça nous arrive demain ou après-demain, les militants écologistes peuvent dormir tranquille puisqu'il y a un *safeguard*. Les deux institutions, qui ont été mises sur pied, qui sont le *Climate Change Department* au ministère de l'Environnement et le *Council* présidé par le Premier ministre, obligent la réflexion, obligent que le développement prenne le changement climatique en considération.

Donc, on ne veut pas venir critiquer ce projet de loi puisque nous avons une population; nous devons composer avec tous ceux qui sont là. Bien sûr, il y aura des gens qui seront contre, qui ne seront pas d'accord avec les changements puisque ça va amener un changement drastique dans l'économie, puisqu'il y aura des *regulations* qui vont arriver, qui vont bousculer, M. le président, la façon de faire de beaucoup, mais le changement climatique restera sur l'agenda. Rien que pour cela je pense qu'il faut féliciter l'honorable Kavy Ramano et le Premier ministre puisque ça demande un courage politique, ça demande une volonté politique pour amener ce genre de loi.

Enormément de pays n'osent pas, M. le président. Donc, venir critiquer quand on se dit convaincu étonne énormément. C'est pour ça que je comprends ma collègue, l'honorable Subashnee Luchmun Roy, qui est une jeune qui croit dans l'écologie. Je comprends sa colère et sa frustration elle a exprimé.

M. le président, pour revenir au projet de loi, en ce qui concerne la femme et les *public consultations*, j'ai entendu énormément de critiques qui disent que la société civile n'est pas consultée dans ce projet de loi. C'est une autre preuve qu'on n'a pas lu le projet de loi puisqu'à la page 18, la méthode de travail de toutes les institutions qui doivent rapporter au comité de changement climatique et au comité interministériel est obligée de *engage in public consultation*. La section à laquelle je fais référence, section 19 à la page 18, s'appelle '*Public Consultation*', M. le président. Ce qui m'a étonné quand j'ai entendu les commentaires par rapport au manque de consultation à la société civile. N'importe quel projet de loi qui touche le changement climatique ne peut se faire sans la *public consultation*, ce serait incomplet. Donc, M. le président, à la page 18 -

'Every Government department shall, for the purpose of developing strategies and policies in respect of climate change, undertake public consultations.'

Et on vient nous accuser que, dans ce projet de loi, on ignore la société civile complètement.

L'autre point, M. le président, que je voulais faire ressortir dans ce projet de loi, c'est l'accusation comme quoi les femmes ne sont pas prises en considération, et je voudrais souligner que dans cette loi, un tiers des *Boards* est constitué de femmes: de femmes professionnelles, de femmes fonctionnaires, de femmes expertes dans le domaine. Ainsi les femmes seront consultées. L'importance des femmes dans le changement climatique, M. le président, se trouve au niveau de l'adaptation, pas tant que ça au niveau de la mitigation. La mitigation concerne principalement le développement, la production, le secteur privé, les

entreprises, le secteur du transport, puisqu'à Maurice 73 % des gaz à effet de serre produits, c'est à travers le transport ; 23 % c'est le *solid waste* qui est responsable de la production de gaz à effet de serre. Donc tout ce qui concerne la mitigation, dorénavant devra suivre un modèle de développement spécifique qui est le *low carbon economy*.

M. le président, l'ambition internationale de ce genre de projet de loi, c'est qu'arrivé à un moment, graduellement, il y a ce qu'on appelle le *decoupling*. Le *decoupling* c'est quoi ? C'est qu'aujourd'hui, quand on a une croissance économique, la production de gaz à effet de serre littéralement a une relation de *one-to-one*. Donc, si nous avons une croissance économique de 3%, vous aurez une augmentation du gaz à effet de serre de 3%. De 2014 à 2015, nous avons témoigné d'un ralentissement. Donc vous aviez la croissance économique et le ralentissement, ce n'était plus une relation *one-to-one*. L'ambition, M. le président, à long terme, est de nous retrouver dans une situation où le développement/la croissance économique se fait sans que ça amène pour autant une augmentation de la production de gaz à effet de serre. C'est pour ça qu'il y a énormément de pays qui vous parlent de *zero carbon*. A Maurice, nous ne sommes arrivés à ce niveau puisque ce projet de loi met sur pied les institutions qui n'ont jamais existé pour travailler dessus, avec ce qu'on appelle l'*Evidence - Based Approach*. C'est l'ambition, M. le président, de n'importe quel pays qui s'aligne au combat du changement climatique. Donc, venir accuser qu'il y a un manque de définition, qu'il y a un manque de ceci, de cela, un manque d'ambition, M. le président, démontre une méconnaissance même du contexte dans lequel ce *Bill* est introduit. Nous avons encore énormément de gens qui ne croient pas dans le changement climatique. Ça reste le combat d'un petit groupe de personnes, dont les parlementaires de la majorité font partie, puisqu'à l'extérieur quand vous parlez aux gens, beaucoup ne réalisent pas encore l'importance de lutter contre le changement climatique. Et à Maurice aussi on peut comprendre pourquoi nous nous retrouvons dans cette situation, puisqu'à Maurice c'est l'adaptation qui nous concerne le plus. Et en ce qui concerne l'adaptation, les femmes ont un rôle primordiale à jouer puisqu'à Maurice nous nous retrouvons dans une situation où la moitié des femmes, à peu près 40%, ne sont pas dans ce qu'on appelle le *workforce*. Les femmes sont toujours responsables des foyers ; les femmes sont toujours responsables des comportements domestiques. Donc, les femmes ont un rôle primordial à jouer quant à n'importe quel changement d'habitude que nous devons adopter en tant que nation mauricienne. C'est pour cela que les nommés des *Boards* ont cette obligation, qui est essentiel, qu'un tiers soit des femmes. C'est essentiel puisqu'aucun changement de *mindset* ne se fera malgré cette loi si

les femmes ne sont pas *onboard*. Ce n'est pas une question de relayer la femme au foyer, c'est la réalité mauricienne, étant donné que nous avons la moitié des femmes qui ne travaillent pas, et qui sont en âge de travailler mais qui ne travaillent pas et qui se retrouvent femmes au foyer ou qui font des métiers en part-time.

M. le président, par rapport à ce projet de loi, j'ai pensé que c'était important de répondre à certaines critiques, puisque ces critiques allaient donner une fausse impression de ce projet de loi, et ce n'est pas juste. Nous avons trop longtemps attendu qu'un gouvernement ait le courage, qu'un gouvernement ait la volonté politique de prendre sur lui, malgré l'opposition que ça peut susciter dans la population pour amener un changement dans le modèle de développement. Les partis de gauche, qui n'ont pas arrêté de demander ce changement, auraient dû être enchantés aujourd'hui, mais malheureusement nous avons affaire à une crise de mauvaise foi. C'est pour ça que j'ai pensé qu'il était important de répondre aux arguments faux qui amènent une fausse perception de ce projet de loi.

En ce qui concerne l'avenir, j'ai beaucoup d'espoir. Ce qu'il nous faut maintenant, M. le président, une fois que ce projet de loi est passé, et j'espère que l'Opposition va collaborer et que nous n'aurons pas droit à une autre pluie de critiques infondées. J'espère que ce projet de loi va être adopté à l'unanimité puisqu'aucun changement de modèle de développement, aucun changement idéologique dans la méthode de production ne pourra se faire s'il n'y a pas un consensus - qui est nécessaire - et pour cela, il nous faut les parlementaires des deux côtés de la Chambre.

M. le président, pour l'avenir j'ai beaucoup d'espoir, mais ce qu'il nous faudra aussi, c'est que le changement climatique ne soit plus une cause partisane mais qu'on comprenne que réellement, au fond, le changement climatique concerne la survie de la race humaine. Le changement climatique concerne nos enfants, concerne ma génération, les générations qui viennent après, et que si nous ne faisons pas preuve de bonne foi et que nous ne collaborons pas avec le ministre de l'Environnement, avec les ministères qui sont en charge de l'Agriculture, de l'érosion des plages, avec les ministères qui luttent au quotidien pour assurer que tout ce qui concerne le ministère des Infrastructures publiques qui luttent au quotidien pour assurer que nous ne subissons pas que les dégâts par rapport au changement climatique ne nous affectent pas au point où il y a mort d'homme. Donc, si nous ne le faisons pas, M. le président, je pense qu'on ne pourra pas avoir ce *paradigm shift*. Si on échoue dans le combat du changement climatique, ce sera par la mauvaise foi de certaines personnes. Donc, moi, l'appel que je fais, si on croit fermement, si on a la réelle conviction qu'il faut ce

changement dans le modèle de développement, il faut, à partir d'aujourd'hui, reconnaître que c'est un projet de loi qui marque réellement l'histoire de notre pays, puisque comme on connaît tous les théoriciens politiques, Karl Marx, tous les libéraux, n'importe quel changement dans notre mode production nous amène un *shift* idéologique. Aujourd'hui, ce gouvernement, ce côté de la Chambre a dit oui, nous prenons sur nous, et nous imposons ce changement. Mais pour qu'il fonctionne, il faut que l'autre côté de la Chambre soit conscient que ce n'est pas une question partisane, mais c'est une question de survie. Donc, je fais un appel, arrêtons les enfantillages, c'est un sujet sérieux. Maurice Ile Durable n'est pas comparable à ça, ce n'est pas une guerre de qui a amené les meilleures institutions, puisque Maurice Ile Durable était un *think tank* qui devait amener des solutions, des rapports. Là, on vous parle de réforme de plusieurs lois en profondeur systématiquement et avec consistance. On vous parle de *Evidence* qui va être mis sur pied, on vous parle d'un changement de *mindset*. Acceptez que ce gouvernement ait tous les mérites dont il a droit pour avoir eu l'audace de venir de l'avant avec ce projet de loi.

M. le président, je voudrais conclure, en souhaitant à l'honorable ministre Ramano un joyeux anniversaire et je pense qu'il a droit à sa séance de photos historiques, rien qu'à lui, pour ce projet de loi.

Je vous remercie.

(6.18 p.m.)

Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start my speech by congratulating the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change on the legislation that he has brought forward as, first and foremost, it gives us the opportunity to talk about climate change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the most important thing we can do to fight climate change is to talk about it. As rightly pointed out by Dr. Kathryn Hero, Director of Climate Change Centre at Texas Tech University, I quote –

“I truly believe after thousands of conversations that I have had over the past decade or more, that just about every single person in the world already has the values they need to care about a changing climate. They just have not connected the dots and that's what we can do through our conversation with them.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Climate Change Bill has given the opportunity to many of us to express our concern to the fact that climate change is indeed a reality and we must act fast, and with

responsibility, to reverse the trend of impacts on the daily lives of our citizens and ensure a better and safer future for the generations to come. Many of us, mostly from the Government side, understood the fact that we can tackle climate change if we act now. Because while some of the effects of climate change, like temperatures rising, sea levels rising, wetter winters, extreme weather conditions will continue for the next 30 to 40 years no matter what we do now, we can affect what happens after that. We already know what should be done to attenuate the effects. It summed up by another two words that tend to make people switch off, but which also really matter: mitigation and adaptation.

Mitigation means addressing the causes of climate change by reducing or stopping the human activities which are affecting the climate system, for example, by cutting our emissions of greenhouse gases as stated by many of my friends. Most of the emissions come from the way we produce and consume energy from heating our buildings, driving our cars, manufacturing goods or watching our TVs. We can lower our emissions by becoming more energy efficient and switching to renewable or low carbon fuels.

Adaptation, on the other hand, means making changes to prepare for reduce and negate the effects of climate change, for example, by building strong defences to reduce the vulnerability of coastal communities. Other things we can and should be doing now include reducing water usage by cutting leakage and extending domestic metering, avoiding any unnecessary development in floodplains or on fast eroding coastlines and designing infrastructure that will be resilient to the more extreme weather we know is coming.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill's essence goes in that direction. The setting up of an Inter-Ministerial Council on Climate Change, comprising of all Ministers and having as objective to make Mauritius a climate change resilient and low emission country, eliminates the silos that may hinder policies. Together with adaptation and mitigation, it ensures cooperation and coordination between Government, local authorities and other organisations engaged in climate change projects and programmes. It ensures that climate change shifts from being theoretical pieces of observations to practical monitoring and reviews as we come up with recommendations that can be applied and vetted.

The Climate Change Bill ensures this real and factual shift from what we should do to what we can do and shall implement. So, referring to the question laid by hon. Lobine where he rightly addressed the accountability and transparency aspects, let me refer him to sections 6(b) and 7 of the Bill which indeed cast a novel approach. The Bill makes provision for

quantitative monitoring and evaluation which is the basis to shift from theories to practical and real-time measures formulation. He will agree with me that collection of data is the basis of good policy formulation. In the same breath, I will also address the questions by many from the other side of the House stating that, I quote -

- *‘la grande majorité de ce projet de loi se concentre sur une énième création de vagues structures plutôt que l’action concrète, or*
- the real saviours of our environment are not necessary those who sit in aircon offices and engaged in drafting (a) to (u) objectives and so on, or
- is it not the job of the Government to come up with policies’.

I will simply add that climate change is a science and science needs collection of data, evidence-based hypothesis, experimental and empirical data collection before the formulation of policies.

The Bill gives the framework and sets the structure for formulation of policies. Before turning it as *coquille vide* and stating *il se focalise sur la structure plutôt que la substance*, let me again remind the hon. Member that, in science, it is structure which determines function and lay the structure is the key to succeeding in action.

The Bill should be analysed as a whole and not as separate entities. Under this Bill, the Inter-Ministerial Council set national objectives, goals and targets. The Department of Climate Change develops policies, programs and action plans, and coordinate research. The Committee coordinates the preparation of reports and the Ministry acts as a national implementing entity, and there is a feedback loop at each level to ensure monitoring, adaptation, evaluation and change.

The Bill also caters for data collection, sharing of knowledge and national and international support programs. It adds credibility in managing climate change issues on the national, regional and global levels, and increases visibility to attract financial support from external donors.

As stated by hon. Diolle, section 19 of the Bill clearly states the undertaking of public consultations to develop strategies and policies, and takes on board local authorities, private sector, non-governmental organisations, youth, women, senior citizens, academics, research institutions, the civil society and community-based organisations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me now to substantiate the importance of the Climate Change Bill by living and practical evidences. Small Island Developing States have long been

recognised as being particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We are particularly at risk and face unique challenges in addressing impacts. Scientific research across disciplines is needed to understand how island nation will experience and respond to escalating challenges of climate change. The said structure presented in the Bill will help collect scientific evidence to consolidate the most up-to-date information about climate change impact which is unique to our country and spans over diverse fields of literature. We will be able to assess patterns of houses, exposure, vulnerability, impacts and risks, awareness and knowledge, loss and damage and climate justice. Hazards associated with ocean aqua sphere includes sea level rise. Tropical cyclones and marine heat waves are of particular concern for our country since we have close connections between human communities and the coastal environment. This is very obvious in the coastal region of my Constituency from Rivière des Créoles to Deux Frères where inhabitants living in Vieux Grand Port have witnessed and experienced the loss of the beach area by 50 metres during the past decades. Significant portions of communities and assets are located on the coastal zones resulting in high-level exposure to escalating hazards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the coastal wet lands in Mauritius spans over 402 hectares of which marshes comprise of 240 hectares, estuaries 95 hectares, mangroves 49 hectares and marine coast 118 hectares. These wetlands are one of the most important ecological units of the environment. They act as natural filters trapping metals and other toxic elements in the sediment. We find these natural and virgin wetlands extensively in the south east coast at Rivière des Créoles, Vieux Grand Port, Anse Jonchée amongst others in *numéro onze*.

The proper framework will allow the protection of these sensitive and rich regions as their environmental, economic and socio cultural importance is great. They prevent flooding, trap pollutants and improve water quality and physically protect the coast of Mauritius. Many marine species require the unperturbed sediment of mangroves to hatch and grow during their juvenile stages. In fact, most fish species develop in this way. As the fishing sector is very important in Mauritius, healthy mangroves determine the fate of the fish stocks.

The Climate Change Bill is the proper tool and starts to ensure that environmental programmes are more comprehensive and they reflect the up to date needs and we get the modern technologies to adapt and innovate in the field of conservation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, vulnerability is the complex concept which is hard to assess, but we may refer to the current disastrous impacts in the Small Island Developing States around the

world. Sea level rise has caused the loss of several low-lying Pacific Islands along with severe erosion. Coastal aquifers often the primary source of fresh water for islands are facing decreased water quality from salinisation due to both sea level rise and increase flooding from coastal storms. Extended periods of drought threaten water security in the Caribbean. Changes to ocean have led to declines in fisheries across the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China seas region.

Mauritius is no exception to the climate change rule. We are also witnessing an increase loss of land from sea level rise, flooding ecosystem degradation, fresh water stress to extended tropical storm seasons and extreme water level events that may double by 2050. All these impacts will have significant negative repercussions with larger economic impacts than the global average and increase risk for sectors dependant on coastal ecosystems. This is why we need gross and the strengthening of adaptation planning and implementation.

Basically, the new Bill improves connectivity by ensuring sectoral planning, strengthening governance and institution, enhancing monitoring, evaluation and learning in relation to the Action Plans, an improvement of flows of decision, relevant information through knowledge brokering.

After having painted a real picture of the climate change realities, I will conclude by saying the fight against climate change is and should be one with optimism. I will quote former US Vice-President Al Gore. I quote –

“We have everything we need. Some still doubt that we have the will to act. But I say the will to act is itself a renewable resource.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I realise that the conclusion of my speech from the Bill that I have had a very scientific approach to the Bill as climate change is the science and not an art or fashion. So, to shift from my science background and take up a more common approach, as Members from the other side decided that they had to prove the Bill as shallow, hollow and with no depth or concern, I will end with the poem which I hope will present the essence of the Bill and give a more accurate and pertinent conclusion to my debate. It is entitled ‘Making the Change’ by Roger McGough –

“This is truth, not science fiction.

Ordinary people whose suffering is real

speak of their fears, the struggles they face

when survival becomes an ordeal.
Landslides do not require sub-titles
Hunger gains nothing in translation
Parched fields, failed crops
Drought and devastation
Everything touches, life interweaves
Chainsaw and dust storm, ashes and leaves
Exhaust pipe and chimney, acid and rain
Everything touches, unbroken chain
Here's proof, if proof were needed
The evidence builds up day by day
Big business, fuelled by oil and greed
Cries wolf and looks the other way
Tweet and shout, turn up the volume
This is truth not science fiction
Shame on the nay-sayers, the blind-eyers
who deny the pain, the dereliction
Climate change affects us all
Whether impoverished or well-to-do
Today a village in Bangladesh
Tomorrow a town near you
This is truth not science fiction
Related by women, daughters and wives
Change is needed, for the climate is changing,
Changing the world and changing our lives
Everything touches, a planet in pain

For the sake of the children repeat the refrain:

Join in the chorus, let's make a difference

Together we can make the change.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do think that the poem will make us all think about this Bill with the more positive approach as it sums it all in a nutshell. It is time to act and not cry *au loup*.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Padayachy!

(6.30 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le président, c'est avec un enthousiasme non contenu que je prends aujourd'hui la parole dans cette auguste Assemblée pour aborder un sujet auquel j'attache une grande importance, celui de la lutte contre le dérèglement climatique.

Alors que le mois de septembre 2020 a été le plus chaud jamais enregistré dans le monde, il est clair que ce projet de loi porté par mon collègue ministre arrive à point nommé.

Le sujet est éminemment d'actualité. Mais il ne faudrait pas croire que nous avons attendu de tels événements pour se mobiliser en faveur de l'environnement. Bien au contraire. La question climatique est un des nombreux enjeux dont ce gouvernement s'est saisi avec le plus grand des sérieux. En comparaison, le gouvernement travailliste précédent n'a quant à lui jamais songé à introduire au Parlement pareil projet de loi.

M. le président, en plus d'être un drame humain et écologique, le dérèglement climatique coûte cher à notre économie. Au sens littéral du terme.

Diminution du PIB, perte de compétitivité, usure des infrastructures et vulnérabilités agro-alimentaires sont quelques-unes des conséquences palpables du dérèglement climatique.

En effet, les institutions internationales s'accordent toutes sur cette relation de cause à effet des plus néfastes, tant pour notre planète que pour notre prospérité.

En 2018, le FMI a publié un document de travail qui indique que pour les pays émergents, tel que Maurice, une augmentation d'un pour cent de la température fait baisser la croissance la même année de 0,9 point de pourcentage. Alors que nous savons que Maurice a vu sa température moyenne augmenter de 1,32 degré Celsius entre 1951 et 2014, il y a de quoi vouloir agir.

L'OCDE, dans une étude intitulée "Les conséquences économiques du changement climatique" est tout aussi pessimiste. Et pour cause. Les projections de l'OCDE tablent sur des pertes de consommation par habitant de l'ordre de 4% à horizon 2060 pour l'Afrique subsaharienne, dont nous faisons partie, et cela uniquement en raison de la hausse des températures. Ces chiffres ne trompent pas, et doivent faire revenir les climatosceptiques à la réalité. Je dirais même à l'urgence de la situation. Ils doivent aussi calmer les véhémences de certains qui, dans une perspective uniquement politicarde, osent assimiler ce projet de loi à une coquille vide.

C'est regrettable de voir jusqu'à quel point et avec quels sujets l'Opposition se gangrène dans la démagogie, alors qu'elle aurait tout intérêt à se rassembler derrière un enjeu qui devrait pourtant transcender les différends politiques.

M. le président, laisser filer le réchauffement climatique n'est pas une option. Il ne suffit pas non plus de titrer la sonnette d'alarme. Il faut agir avec force et conviction. C'est exactement ce que nous faisons avec un tel projet de loi.

M. le président, sous le leadership de notre Premier ministre, nous avançons sous un nouveau paradigme, celui du développement durable. Grâce à ce courageux parti pris, nous avons cessé d'opposer enjeux climatiques et croissance économique.

En effet, en matière de lutte contre le dérèglement climatique, la stratégie de ce gouvernement est claire et bien établie. Elle consiste à assurer un développement durable, robuste et inclusif qui préserve nos ressources tout en créant de nouvelles opportunités. Nous avons la volonté de faire de Maurice un pays plus vert, à faibles émissions et résilient aux risques climatiques croissants. Derrière cette vision se dressent nos engagements et nos actions. Dois-je rappeler qu'en 2016, Maurice a été l'un des tous premiers pays au monde à avoir ratifié l'accord issu du sommet de la COP21 de Paris? Les «Assises de l'environnement», lancées par le Premier ministre en décembre dernier, ont d'ailleurs largement consacré cette prise d'engagement en appelant clairement à une accélération de la transition écologique à Maurice.

C'est dans cette perspective que nous avons provisionné quelque R 100 milliards dans le Budget 2020-2021 pour assurer une transition vertueuse vers un modèle de développement durable efficace et inclusif.

M. le président, à ceux qui siègent de l'autre côté de la Chambre et qui tentent déplorablement d'accabler ce gouvernement, permettez-moi de leur rappeler les principales

mesures budgétaires prises en faveur du développement durable et de la lutte contre le dérèglement climatique. Il s'agit en tout premier lieu de la mise en place par la Banque de Maurice d'un cadre réglementaire pour l'émission d'obligations vertes et bleues. J'ai été informé que les progrès vont bon train et que ce nouveau cadre législatif sera prêt d'ici la fin de l'année 2020.

Nous avons également annoncé la construction de 12,000 logements sociaux intégrant les technologies respectueuses de l'environnement. Cette initiative permettra à 12,000 ménages mauriciens à travers l'île d'accéder à la propriété dans une enceinte intégrée, pensée et construite selon les bonnes pratiques de l'écologie urbaine. Par ailleurs, en vue de financer les actions identifiées durant «Les Assises de l'environnement», R 2 milliards ont d'ores et déjà été transférées au *National Environment Fund*. Ce montant participe à accélérer l'implémentation des projets d'adaptation et d'atténuation pour notre pays. De plus, des investissements importants sont actuellement planifiés pour contenir les effets du changement climatique. Ainsi, nous comptons enclencher plusieurs grands projets d'infrastructures urbaines, tels que –

- Le barrage de Rivière des Anguilles pour permettre un accès à l'eau facilité et constant pour les habitants des régions du grand Sud, soit de Rose Belle à Tamarin;
- La construction d'infrastructures de drainage des eaux dans les zones inondables de Maurice et de Rodrigues pour un montant de R 1,2 milliards, et
- La conduite de travaux de stabilisation des zones sujettes aux glissements de terrain le long de nos routes, pour un coût de R 314 millions.

215 millions de roupies seront également utilisées pour la protection de nos plages, lagons et récifs coralliens.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne les énergies renouvelables, nous avons opté pour des stratégies incitatives proactives. Ainsi, dans le but d'atteindre un taux de 40% d'énergies renouvelables locales d'ici 2030, il y a de nombreux projets qui vont être mis en place dans les prochaines années.

Quant au *Central Electricity Board*, l'institution est désormais chargée de conduire plusieurs programmes visant à encourager l'utilisation des énergies renouvelables.

M. le président, au-delà de ces importantes mesures budgétaires, et à l'échelle de mon ministère, nous conduisons un grand nombre d'initiatives ayant pour finalité de mesurer,

d'atténuer et de nous adapter au dérèglement climatique. Ainsi, pour financer des projets à fort impacts sociaux et environnementaux, nous avons signé en juillet de cette année un prêt de contingence d'un montant historique de 300 millions d'euros. Ce prêt, accordé par la France, couvre notamment les dimensions clés de la résilience environnementale à long terme de Maurice, en accompagnement du nouveau cadre légal et institutionnel en matière d'atténuation et d'adaptation au changement climatique.

Enfin, car gouverner c'est prévoir, je suis fier de pouvoir annoncer qu'une cellule de planification économique est en cours de création au sein du ministère. Dans cette dernière, un économiste des questions climatiques sera tout spécialement dépêché grâce au soutien de l'Agence française de développement.

M. le président, tout au long de ce cheminement, celui de la transition environnementale et énergétique, il existe des opportunités à saisir. A ce titre, je me permets d'emprunter au chercheur René Dubos le concept d'«éconologie». Cette doctrine qui réconcilie économie et écologie en opérant une transformation créatrice respectueuse de ce que nous avons de plus cher, l'environnement. Car derrière nos efforts d'adaptation et d'atténuation du dérèglement climatique, se trouvent des bénéfices économiques et sociaux certains.

En effet, un nombre croissant d'études montrent que les mesures visant à faire face au changement climatique sont un levier d'accélération de la croissance économique. Comme le démontre la Commission mondiale sur l'économie et le climat dans un rapport publié fin 2018, l'adoption à l'échelle mondiale de mesures climatiques ambitieuses pourrait générer des bénéfices de 26 milliards de dollars d'ici 2030, créant ainsi 65 millions de nouveaux emplois à faibles émissions de carbone. A Maurice, nous devons créer de telles opportunités au travers notamment de l'économie circulaire. Je suis convaincu que le «*National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan*» et le «*National Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan*» qui feront suite au vote de ce projet de loi donneront des indications claires dans ce sens.

M. le président, pour conclure, permettez-moi de reprendre les célèbres mots d'Antoine de Saint-Exupéry –

“Nous n'héritons pas de la terre de nos parents, nous l'empruntons à nos enfants”.

Il n'y a pas de Planète B, il n'y a qu'une seule Planète Terre. Ensemble, protégeons-la!

Merci.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Seeruttun!

(6. 43 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): M. le président, merci de me donner l'occasion de contribuer à ce projet de loi qu'est le *Climate Change Bill*.

Le climat ou le temps est un sujet qui nous concerne tous. C'est un sujet de conversation au quotidien de par le monde. Et, Maurice n'est pas en reste. D'ailleurs, à Maurice, le temps, le foot anglais et la politique sont des sujets sur lesquels on a tous toujours un mot à dire, et quand il s'agit du changement climatique, cela devient encore plus préoccupant.

Le changement climatique, le sujet de ce débat, M. le président, est une affaire qui nous concerne tous : jeunes, vieux, hommes, femmes, enfants, toutes les espèces vivantes, animales et végétales, tous les pays du monde. En un mot, M. le président, c'est tout l'écosystème de la planète terre.

M. le président, cela fait 40 ans que le réchauffement climatique préoccupe la communauté internationale. En fait, la première conférence mondiale sur le climat fut organisée à Genève en 1979 sous l'égide de l'ONU.

En 1992, la Convention-cadre des Nations Unies sur le changement climatique, adoptée à Rio, au Brésil, inaugure le cycle des Conférences des Parties (COP). Et en 1997, c'est lors de la troisième COP qu'est rédigé le protocole de Kyoto, premier engagement mondial de réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre.

L'accord de Paris, M. le président, issu de la COP 21 est entré en vigueur le 04 novembre 2016. Il fixe pour objectif de contenir d'ici à 2100 le réchauffement climatique bien en dessous des 2 degrés Celsius par rapport au niveau préindustriel et si possible de poursuivre les efforts pour limiter la hausse des températures à 1,5 degrés Celsius.

M. le président, nous constatons déjà les effets désastreux du changement climatique sur tous les continents, avec notamment la fonte des glaciers, les ouragans, les typhons, les cyclones de forte intensité, la montée des eaux, les inondations, la déforestation, la destruction des forêts par des incendies, l'humidité extrême, vague de chaleur, le mouvement des habitats dans lesquels vivent des espèces animales et végétales et la sécheresse. Sans compter, M. le président, l'insécurité alimentaire, la pauvreté et la malnutrition.

M. le président, nombre de pays subissent de plein fouet les effets néfastes de ce phénomène du changement climatique. Et selon le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat, il est probable que le réchauffement atteigne 1,5 degrés Celsius, entre 2030 et 2052, s'il se poursuit à son rythme actuel. Cela ne se fera pas sans bouleversement de notre monde. C'est une très grande menace pour notre vie, notre biodiversité et notre écosystème, plus grave que le COVID-19, M. le président.

Le paradoxe dans tout cela, M. le président, c'est que les pays qui contribuent le moins à cette situation seront les plus touchés, notamment les petits états insulaires comme Maurice. À noter que notre émission de gaz à effet de serre est de 0,0.1% de l'émission mondiale mais nous subissons déjà de plein fouet les effets du changement climatique et raison de plus que ce projet de loi est primordial pour renforcer le cadre légal et se mettre en conformité avec les accords et conventions signés par Maurice, afin d'agir d'une manière cohérente et responsable pour lutter contre les effets néfastes qu'engendre le changement climatique.

M. le président, un secteur qui est touché directement par le changement climatique, c'est le secteur agricole et, par conséquent, la sécurité alimentaire. D'après l'Organisation mondiale de l'alimentation, la FAO, la population mondiale passera de 6,8 milliards à 9,1 milliards d'ici 2050, c'est-à-dire, une augmentation de 34%. Et durant la même période, la production agricole connaîtra une baisse de 30%. Or, il faudrait augmenter la production agricole par 70% pour arriver à nourrir toute la population mondiale sinon ce sera catastrophique du point de vue alimentaire.

L'impact du changement climatique résulte en une baisse de rendement de la production agricole causée par, entre autres, bien sûr, des conditions climatiques extrêmes, la propagation de nouvelles maladies et des nouveaux ravageurs, la désertification des terres agricoles, entre autres, M. de président.

Tenant en compte ces risques, le gouvernement en place depuis décembre 2014 a déjà initié un certain nombre de mesures, d'une part, pour atténuer l'impact du changement climatique, et d'autre part, pour s'adapter à ce changement.

À entendre les membres de l'Opposition dire que rien n'a été fait depuis 2014, je crois, M. le président, que c'est de la pure démagogie. Je voudrais citer quelques exemples pour démontrer ce que j'avance. Vous savez, M. le président, dans un souci justement d'atténuer et de s'adapter aux changements climatiques, le ministère de l'Agro-industrie et de

la Sécurité alimentaire, dans son plan stratégique 2016-2020 pour le secteur non-sucre, avait initié de nombreux projets pour aller dans ce sens. Et je suis fier de dire que j'étais associé à ce projet de shifter les planteurs/ agriculteurs du système agricole conventionnel pour passer à un mode d'agriculture raisonnée et organique. Bien sûr, il y a eu plusieurs mesures incitatives qui ont été accordées et je dois dire qu'aujourd'hui de plus en plus de planteurs/agriculteurs s'y intéressent et ça démontre encore une fois la volonté de ce gouvernement de mettre en place des mesures pour atténuer l'impact du changement climatique.

On a aussi développé une norme locale, le MauriGap, pour la certification des produits sous ces normes contrôlés. Il y a une zone d'environ une soixantaine d'arpents à Britannia qui a été allouée justement pour faire de l'agriculture organique.

Il y a eu aussi un projet comme le *Climate Smart Agriculture*, financé par l'Union européenne dans le cadre du *Global Climate Change Alliance Plus* qui avait démarré pour la formation des agents et des agriculteurs sur le concept de *Smart Agriculture*.

Un autre projet dans le cadre du programme *Switch Africa Green* a été approuvé pour le financement d'un projet pilote, le Biogaz à la station de recherche de Curepipe pour les éleveurs.

M. le président, dans le but de réduire l'utilisation abusive des pesticides, une loi, *The Use of Pesticide Act* a été adoptée, avec pour objectif la protection des planteurs, du sol et aussi de l'environnement. Nous sommes un pays tropical, M. le président, et on a toujours, d'une manière intensive, appliqué des pesticides dans nos champs et on connaît les dégâts causés aux sols qui impliquent par la suite une baisse du rendement. On connaît les dégâts que ça cause à la nappe phréatique et, bien sûr, cette loi est très importante, et aujourd'hui, c'est déjà là et ça permet justement d'avoir un cadre beaucoup plus respectueux de notre environnement.

Bien sûr, pour faire cela, il a fallu proposer des produits alternatifs et le ministère avait justement mis en place d'autres produits biologiques afin de protéger les champs des planteurs. Afin de s'adapter aux changements climatiques, il y a eu des projets de *Sheltered Farming*. On a vu plusieurs fois dans des occasions où il y a eu de grosses averses, des planteurs perdent toute la récolte et on ne pouvait plus continuer avec ce genre de risques et le gouvernement avait mis en place des mesures incitatives pour inciter les planteurs à aller vers ce qu'on appelle le *sheltered farming*. Aujourd'hui je suis content de voir qu'il y a au

moins deux villages dédiés, un à Plaine Magnien et l'autre à Ville Bague où il y a un certain nombre de planteurs qui ont bénéficié de ce projet mais, en plus, il y a, à ce jour, plus de 450 planteurs sur une superficie de 87 arpents qui cultivent sous ce qu'on appelle, la culture protégée.

M. le président, la forêt joue un rôle important dans la protection de notre environnement en terme de sécrétations du carbone. Il y avait un projet qui était financé par le PNUE qui devait prendre fin en 2016. Le projet était de justement enlever les plantes envahissantes dans les forêts afin que les plantes indigènes puissent continuer à exister. Alors, le ministère avait mis en place un projet pour continuer cet exercice de protéger ce qu'on appelle le *Protected Area Network* afin que des forêts soient mieux protégées contre, ce qu'on appelle, les plantes envahissantes. Aujourd'hui, on a perdu beaucoup en terme de forêts, dû à plusieurs raisons bien sûr mais il faut préserver ce qu'on a. J'ai créé un mini forêt dans le village de Bel Air et là je voudrais rendre un hommage à quelqu'un qui est parti, je parle là de feu Kalyan Tarolah. C'est un projet qu'on a travaillé ensemble, qui était dans sa circonscription. On a pu mettre en place ce projet, ce qu'on appelle un *mini forest* dans le village de Bel Air. On avait aussi créé un espace de loisirs sous le pont de la Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest qui aujourd'hui est au bénéfice des habitants de la région.

Alors, il y a tous ces projets pour démontrer que ce gouvernement, le gouvernement de 2014 à 2019 et le gouvernement actuel, sous cette même philosophie dans le but de protéger l'environnement et d'empêcher ce qu'on appelle l'impact du changement climatique.

On avait aussi démarré un projet de planter 100,000 plantes par an sur cinq ans. Ça avait démarré en 2016 et de 2016 à 2019, 400,000 plantes ont été mises en terre. Donc autant de projets par un ministère.

Ce projet de loi qui est devant nous aujourd'hui, M. le président, parle de la mise en place d'un comité, a *High-Powered Committee* présidé par le Premier ministre lui-même parce que le changement climatique concerne plusieurs ministères, plusieurs autorités. Pour s'assurer qu'il y ait une meilleure coordination, une meilleure cohérence, il fallait avoir quelqu'un à la tête du pays qui s'implique personnellement afin de s'assurer que tous ces projets se réalisent dans un délai raisonnable. Donc, on entend certains dire - encore un comité ou encore un autre - ce qu'on appelle - éléphant blanc. Alors je trouve ça inacceptable que l'on puisse faire ce genre de remarques car on veut impliquer tout le monde surtout au

plus haut niveau pour s'assurer que les choses se fassent d'une manière responsable, cohérente et rapide.

M. le président, il n'y a pas qu'au niveau du ministère de l'Agriculture qu'il y a eu des projets qui vont dans ce sens à protéger notre environnement. En 2016, le ministère de l'Environnement avait banni l'utilisation des sacs en plastique à usage unique et déjà ça démontrait que la volonté était là pour démarrer quelque chose. Je crois comprendre que, graduellement, on va aller vers l'interdiction totale des sacs en plastique.

En ce qui concerne les fermes solaires, M. le président, le constat que je fais depuis 2015 il y a eu une augmentation constante du nombre de fermes solaires et la production énergétique à partir des sources renouvelables est sortie de 25,8 GW en 2014 pour passer à 143,7 GW en 2019 et je sais aussi que Maurice est un membre actif au niveau de ce projet international qui est le *Solar Alliance Project*.

Un autre projet déjà initié concerne le projet de la protection de notre zone côtière. Je peux en témoigner dans ma région, dans la circonscription no. 11 (Vieux Grand Port/Rose Belle). D'ailleurs l'honorable Ramyard en a parlé. L'honorable Jutton aussi en a parlé dans son intervention. C'est un projet qui est déjà en place et ça va transformer toute la région et aussi protéger notre zone côtière. Ça ne concerne pas seulement la région qui nous concerne mais autour de l'île je sais qu'il y a tout un projet valant plusieurs centaines de millions de roupies pour s'assurer que nos côtes soient préservées.

Il y a un autre projet, M. le président, et là, j'ai écouté certains membres de l'Opposition étant de grands défenseurs de l'environnement et voulant tout faire pour que le changement climatique ne nous affecte pas. Nous savons tous que l'embouteillage sur nos routes coûte des milliards de roupies chaque année et l'impact sur l'environnement avec la pollution que ça engendre est inimaginable, M. le président.

Le gouvernement est venu avec un système de transport en masse propre qu'est le Metro Express. Voilà un projet qui va encore une fois dans le sens d'atténuer le problème du changement climatique. On a vu toutes sortes de démagogies faites sur ce projet, toutes sortes de résistances de la part des membres de l'Opposition. Aujourd'hui ce projet est là entre Port Louis et Rose-Hill et bientôt tout le réseau entre Port Louis et Curepipe deviendra une réalité.

Donc, tout ça pour démontrer, M. le président, tellement de choses qui ont été réalisées ces dernières années. Aujourd'hui ce projet de loi vient recadrer ce qu'on peut faire ensemble au niveau de plusieurs ministères et plusieurs autorités.

Le ministre des Finances avait parlé un peu plus tôt sur l'émission des obligations, ce qu'on appelle les *green and blue bonds*. Cette année-ci en mars, mon ministère et la Standard Chartered Bank a signé un MoU pour mettre en place un cadre, pour justement faire le développement de ce genre de missions d'obligations, pour bien sûr financer les projets durables. Donc, autant des projets qu'on a en tête pour aller dans ce sens, pour, n'est-ce pas, lutter contre le changement climatique !

Comme je le disais, M. le président, les membres de l'Opposition n'ont trouvé rien sur ce qu'on a fait depuis 2014. Certains ont parlé du projet 'Maurice Ile Durable'. J'ai été voir un peu ce qu'il y avait dans le rapport. Il y a un certain nombre de projets qui devaient être réalisés par le gouvernement d'alors. Parmi, il y a deux projets qui ont retenu mon attention. Un projet, c'était concernant les ampoules LED. Vous demandez à n'importe qui aujourd'hui, lorsqu'on parle de ce projet des ampoules LED, on parle de ce scandale avec le CEB, et on sait qui sont ceux qui étaient à la tête de cette institution à l'époque. Il y avait d'autres projets mentionnés dans le rapport du projet 'Maurice Ile Durable', d'avoir ce mélange d'éthanol et de l'essence pour les véhicules ; un projet dont l'étude devait être financée par les mesures d'accompagnement de l'Union européenne, et le financement devait être décaissé par l'Union européenne à hauteur de presque R 200 millions. Mais le projet n'a pas été réalisé et, de ce fait, le gouvernement a perdu ce financement. Donc, c'est pour dire, lorsqu'on parle de ce projet phare qu'est 'Maurice Ile durable'. Je ne vous ai cité que deux projets qui étaient énumérés dans ce rapport. Voilà un peu le résultat de ce gouvernement qui était à la tête de ce pays à l'époque.

J'ai écouté aussi le discours de l'honorable Madame Bérenger. Elle parlait des gens qui ont les moyens qui sont les plus polluants ; les gens roulant dans les grosses berlines, utilisant la clim dans leurs voitures. On dit toujours que la charité ordonnée commence chez soi-même, M. le président. Il serait bon de voir ces mêmes personnes rouler en voiture, les vitres baissées. Comme cela, nous allons tous pouvoir apporter notre contribution pour contrecarrer ce qu'on appelle les effets de ce changement climatique.

L'honorable Anquetil parlait d'une étude dont elle fait référence que les hommes émettent plus de gaz que les dames. J'ai essayé de chercher cette étude, je n'ai pas pu la voir, mais j'aurais bien aimé voir cette étude où c'est dit clairement que les hommes sont plus polluants que les dames. J'aurais bien aimé voir ça un jour!

M. le président, pour conclure, je voudrais bien sûr féliciter mon collègue l'honorable Kavy Ramano d'être venu avec ce projet de loi qui va poursuivre, bien sûr, la philosophie du gouvernement 2014-2019 ; un projet de loi inspiré de lois existantes dans des pays tels que le Royaume-Uni, l'Inde, l'Australie, l'Afrique du Sud, les *SIDS countries* aussi. Et aussi, après consultation bien sûr avec toutes les parties concernées, les acteurs locaux, s'ensuivit par la suite les Assises de l'Environnement qui ont eu lieu fin de l'année dernière ; plusieurs ateliers de travail organisés par son ministère et, aujourd'hui, on est là avec ce projet de loi.

Le *Leader* de l'Opposition parlait qu'il n'y avait pas assez de consultation. C'est un sujet qu'on peut débattre pendant des années et des années, mais ce gouvernement est un gouvernement qui est là pour agir, et on ne peut pas attendre encore. C'est un sujet qui demande des actions concrètes, et je crois qu'avec ce projet de loi aujourd'hui, nous apporterons notre contribution à l'échelle mondiale dans cette lutte contre le changement climatique.

Donc, c'est pour ça que je voudrais encore le féliciter, M. le président, d'être venu avec ce projet de loi et, ensemble, on va faire tout ce qui est possible pour faire à ce que notre contribution soit comptée à l'échelle mondiale.

Je vous remercie M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

(6. 56 p.m.)

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Je prends aujourd'hui la parole sur ce projet de loi sur le changement climatique après que la plupart des membres de notre Assemblée aient donné leur point de vue sur la question. J'ai écouté avec attention les différentes interventions des deux côtés la Chambre et peux affirmer qu'il n'y a pas de débat réellement nécessaire sur la question en elle-même, car le changement climatique représente le plus grand défi auquel l'humanité est confrontée depuis les trois dernières décennies, et chacune de ces trois décennies a été successivement plus chaude à la surface de la Terre que toutes les décennies précédentes depuis 1850. C'est pour dire l'ampleur du dérèglement climatique que nous avons causé, car le pire est bien le fait que l'homme soit le premier responsable de ce déclin climatique.

Tous les rapports d'évaluation du GIEC, le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat, qui, je le rappelle, est l'organe de Nations Unies chargé d'évaluer les travaux scientifiques consacrés au changement climatique, sont unanimes. Les changements

du climat sont dus aux activités humaines et, en premier lieu, aux émissions de gaz à effet de serre. Les concentrations atmosphériques de dioxyde de carbone, de méthane, de protoxyde d'azote, entre autres, ont augmenté pour atteindre des niveaux sans précédent. La concentration du dioxyde de carbone a augmenté de 40% depuis l'époque préindustrielle, et cette augmentation s'explique en premier lieu par l'utilisation de combustibles fossiles et, en second lieu, par le bilan des émissions dues aux changements d'utilisation des sols. Et s'il nous fallait une preuve de plus que nous sommes les premiers responsables du changement climatique, nous n'aurions qu'à regarder cette année 2020 tragiquement marquée par la pandémie de Covid-19.

Selon l'Organisation météorologique mondiale, lors du strict confinement au début du mois d'avril 2020, les émissions quotidiennes mondiales de CO₂, dues aux combustibles fossiles, ont chuté de 17% par rapport à 2019 ; ce qui est sans précédent. La plateforme de données *carbon monitor* démontre que les émissions mondiales de CO₂ ont diminué de 7,74% au premier semestre 2020 par rapport au premier semestre 2019.

Or, selon le dernier rapport du Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement, *Emissions Gap Report 2019*, le monde doit diminuer ses émissions mondiales de gaz à effet de serre de 7,6% par an, entre 2020 et 2030, pour limiter l'augmentation des températures à 1,5°C fixée par l'accord de Paris. Autrement dit, il faudrait des conséquences équivalentes à une pandémie de COVID-19 tous les ans pour que nous puissions prétendre au respect de l'accord de Paris. Personnellement, je trouve ce constat glaçant. Voilà que ce virus invisible, imprévisible et cruel, qui a tué plus de l'équivalent de la population Mauricienne à travers le monde, vient nous ouvrir les yeux sur le fait que nous sommes en train de tuer ce que nous souhaitons protéger. Alors, évidemment, rester confinés, immobiliser tous nos moyens de transport, arrêter tous nos outils de production ou stopper tous les projets de développement n'est pas une solution viable pour lutter contre le changement climatique. Il existe, en fait, deux principales stratégies complémentaires pour répondre au changement climatique : l'adaptation et l'atténuation. La première s'attaque aux conséquences du changement climatique en réduisant la vulnérabilité sociale et écologique et la seconde traite ses causes en limitant les émissions de gaz à effet de serre.

Deux stratégies complémentaires que les projets ont tout intérêt à combiner pour améliorer leur efficacité et surtout pour éviter les incohérences et les conflits. Notre pays doit évidemment s'inscrire dans cette double dynamique d'adaptation et d'atténuation car tout en émettant, comme l'a dit le précédent orateur, que 0,01% des gaz à effet de serre à l'échelle

mondiale, l'île Maurice subit de plein fouet les conséquences directes du dérèglement climatique : augmentation de la fréquence et de l'intensité des catastrophes naturelles, cyclones, inondations, sécheresse, hausse du niveau de la mer, blanchissement des coraux, acidification de l'océan, perte de diversité et érosion côtière, entre autres.

Selon l'Édition du *World Risk Report* publié en 2019, Maurice était classée au 47^{ème} rang des pays les plus exposés aux aléas naturels et à la 10^{ème} place des pays les plus à risque face aux catastrophes naturelles. Dans un contexte d'urgence climatique pour notre pays, le *Climate Change Bill* était, évidemment, attendu avec impatience et espoir et je vous avouerai, M. le président, qu'en recevant le document, avant de le parcourir en détail, j'ai regardé la table des matières et après avoir vu que trois des sept parties était consacrées à la création de nouvelles structures, j'ai d'abord commencé par la partie 5 qui s'intitule *Climate Change Measures*, espérant y trouver les mesures pour lutter contre le changement climatique. Je dois avouer que ma déception a été aussi grande que mon impatience : aucune mesure concrète, aucun objectif chiffré, aucun plan d'action, aucun calendrier. J'ai alors cherché dans le document entier pour y découvrir que le mot '*measures*' est mentionné 25 fois, sans qu'une seule ne soit décrite de façon spécifique. Quant à ces nouvelles structures créées par le *Climate Change Bill*, permettez-moi de me poser la question quant à leur réelle nouveauté et à leur pertinence par rapport aux organes existants. En quoi le *Inter-ministerial Council on Climate Change*, décrit en partie 2 du projet de loi, diffère-t-il réellement du *National Environment Commission* prévue par l'*Environment Protection Act*?

En ce qu'il s'agit du *Department of Climate Change* présenté en partie 3, comment va-t-il se positionner par rapport au *Climate Change Division* du ministère de l'Environnement, de la Gestion des déchets et du Changement climatique? Et quant au *Climate Change Committee* prévu à la partie 4 du projet de loi, je cherche à comprendre quel parallèle établir avec le *National Network for Sustainable Development* sous l'*Environmental Protection Act*? Ce projet de loi, ce *Climate Change Bill* donne, vous le concéderez, l'impression d'être un véritable millefeuille administratif qui vient alourdir tout le processus décisionnel. Sur le fond du projet j'aimerais attirer l'attention de notre hémicycle et du ministre de tutelle sur quelques points et quelques propositions suivantes.

En tant que membre du *Parliamentary Gender Caucus*, je note que le mot '*gender*' ne figure qu'une seule fois dans ce projet de loi, partie 3, clause 8 paragraphe (m), hormis deux autres apparitions pour décrire le ministère de tutelle. Or, nombreuses études démontrent clairement que les femmes sont touchées de manière disproportionnée par les

conséquences du changement climatique. Soyons donc attentifs aux stratégies d'adaptation et d'atténuation qui seront mises en place afin qu'elles reflètent la notion de justice climatique. Cette notion d'ailleurs n'est pas mentionnée dans notre projet de loi. Et j'insiste sur cette notion de justice climatique car la crise climatique n'est pas seulement liée à un phénomène scientifique, elle a des sources et des conséquences sociales, économiques et politiques. Nous ne sommes pas toutes et tous égaux devant les impacts de la crise climatique car nous n'avons pas les mêmes moyens techniques, financiers et matériels pour y faire face. Exiger la justice climatique, c'est donc demander que les gouvernements comme les entreprises honorent leurs engagements internationaux et prennent des mesures pour que le fardeau de cette crise ne repose pas sur les personnes les plus vulnérables. Je propose également que soit inscrit au projet de loi, l'engagement pris par notre pays en 2015 à réduire ses émissions de gaz à effet de serre de 30 % d'ici 2030. Je rappelle à ce sujet que l'un des secteurs prioritaires identifiés pour notre stratégie d'atténuation est celui de l'énergie qui représente à lui seul 62 % de nos émissions de gaz à effet de serre. Rien d'étonnant quand nous savons que les énergies fossiles que nous importons fournissent environ 80% de nos besoins énergétiques, sans parler des risques écologiques et sanitaires que la manipulation de tels produits génèrent et j'en veux pour preuve le déversement d'huile lourde il y a quelques jours dans ma circonscription à Les Salines, suite à une fuite d'un *pipeline* reliant visiblement une cuve de Fort William à une centrale du CEB dans un marécage à proximité de la mer. Qu'en est-il de l'objectif gouvernemental annoncé dans le budget 2020-2021, d'augmenter la part d'énergie renouvelable à 40 % dans son mix énergétique d'ici 2030? Pourquoi ne pas l'inclure dans le *Climate Change Bill*? Je note d'ailleurs que la notion de transition énergétique n'apparaît pas une seule fois dans ce projet de loi. L'autre absent du *Climate Change Bill* est l'appellation explicite d'*Environmentally Sensitive Areas*, les ESAs? Certes, j'ai bien noté à la partie 7, *Miscellaneous* du projet de loi à la clause 30, *consequential amendments*, les amendements proposés aux *Pas Géométriques Act* et au *State Lands Act* afin d'insérer la sous-section suivante –

«*A person to whom a lease is granted under this section shall not alter or change any marsh, lake or sand dunes and mangroves.* »

Insertion incomplète car il faut évidemment rajouter: «*to whom a lease is or has been granted*» pour s'assurer de l'application rétroactive de cette obligation. J'ai bien relevé dans le discours du ministre de l'Environnement que des fonds ont été mobilisés pour générer de nouvelles cartographies d'ESAs afin de les intégrer dans l'*Outline Planning Scheme* et dans

le processus de l'attribution des *Buildings and Land Use Permits*. Alors, s'il ne s'agit pas, M. le ministre, d'un *green washing*, alors je recommande fortement à ce que soit clairement inscrit au *Climate Change Bill*, la nécessaire prise en compte des *ESAs* dans la *National Development Strategy* qui est en cours de révision actuellement et j'en appelle au soutien du Premier ministre adjoint et du ministre du Logement et de l'Aménagement du territoire dans ce sens. Je rappelle que les *ESAs* tels que les *coastal wetlands*, les marais, les dunes de sable et les *mangroves* jouent un rôle crucial dans la lutte contre le changement climatique, et cela à deux niveaux –

- (i) ces zones écologiquement sensibles sont des puits de carbone car elles stockent du dioxyde de carbone et d'autres gaz à effet de serre à des taux proportionnellement bien plus élevés que les forêts. C'est la notion désormais connue du 'carbone bleu' qui renvoie au carbone retiré de l'atmosphère par les écosystèmes océaniques et côtiers, et
- (ii) les *ESAs* sont des barrières naturelles protégeant nos côtes contre la montée du niveau de la mer.

M. le président, l'Accord de Paris, ratifié par Maurice en 2016, vise à son article 4, la neutralité carbone en 2050. La neutralité carbone, autre notion introuvable dans le *Climate Change Bill*, implique un équilibre entre les émissions de carbone et l'absorption de carbone de l'atmosphère par les puits de carbone.

En 2050, très peu, voire aucun d'entre nous aujourd'hui ne sera présent dans cet hémicycle, peut-être que cet hémicycle aura même déménagé à cause de la montée de la mer. Par contre, celles et ceux, qui nous auront succédé d'ici là, regarderont dans le rétroviseur de l'histoire pour juger la première loi sur le changement climatique que nous leur aurons laissée et qui probablement, évidemment, aura été révisée entre-temps. Quelle Ile Maurice allons-nous léguer aux générations futures? Quelle génération future allons-nous sensibiliser et former pour notre pays ? Il est urgent d'agir aujourd'hui pour éviter le pire demain car le prix de l'inaction sera plus important que le coût des actions que nous devons prendre pour lutter contre la dérive climatique.

Et je termine, selon le site *Climate Change Laws of the World*, à ce jour, 2079 lois existent dans le monde sur le changement climatique, et la nôtre, le *Climate Change Bill*, qui, à priori, deviendra le *Climate Change Act*, s'apprête à être la 2080^{ème} loi sur le changement climatique dans le monde, et j'espère très sincèrement et très humblement que les différentes

propositions faites de ce côté de la Chambre seront prises en compte par la majorité car face à la menaçante réalité du dérèglement climatique, il n'y a ni minorité, ni majorité, mais une seule et même responsabilité politique pour préserver notre pays et notre monde.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

(7.27 p.m.)

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): M. le président, je vous remercie de me donner la parole afin d'intervenir sur ce projet de loi, c'est-à-dire le *Climate Change Bill*.

M. le président, je pense que ce soir il y a beaucoup de jeunes qui suivent les débats parce que c'est un sujet de grande importance qui les passionne. Alors, M. le président, je vais essayer de pas être hors propos comme stipulé dans les *Standing Orders* quand on participe dans les débats sur un projet de loi.

J'ai écouté, M. le président, avec beaucoup d'attention, l'intervention de l'honorable David. Je pense honnêtement que, dans le fond, il est d'accord sur les grandes lignes de ce projet de loi. Il a évoqué certaines différences d'opinion dans ses argumentations et, pendant mon discours, je vais essayer de répondre à ses arguments.

M. le président, tout d'abord, permettez-moi de saluer le Premier ministre pour son engagement dans le domaine de l'environnement et, dans la même foulée, de féliciter mon collègue, le Ministre Ramano qui pilote ce *Climate Change Bill*.

Ce projet de loi était une des mesures annoncées dans le programme gouvernemental, et aujourd'hui nous faisons un pas en avant dans la mise en pratique des mesures afin de lutter contre le réchauffement climatique. Indistinctement, M. le président, tous nos citoyens sont concernés.

Nous débattons aujourd'hui sur un projet de loi qui touche directement notre existence. Le changement climatique est une longue tragédie écrite par l'espèce humaine. Ce gouvernement fait un pas important afin de définir une stratégie de réduire les risques de catastrophes dues aux changements climatiques. C'est le cadre légal nécessaire afin de faire face aux calamités naturelles dues au changement climatique. En se faisant, nous apportons, M. le président, aujourd'hui, notre contribution aux organisations internationales pour limiter

les émissions de gaz à effet de serre. Je pense que c'est un projet de loi, et c'est le cas, qui a été accueilli favorablement par tous les membres de cette auguste Assemblée.

Le changement climatique est devenu, depuis une vingtaine d'années, le sujet qui interpelle les populations mondiales. Tous les peuples du monde sont vulnérables aux effets climatiques, que ce soient les pays développés qui sont souvent victimes d'inondations, des ouragans ou de fortes chaleurs ou les *Small Island Development States*, comme Maurice, qui sont les plus affectés face aux catastrophes naturelles.

M. le président, selon le rapport mondial sur les risques, rapport publié par l'université des États-Unis en 2014, l'île Maurice est classée septième nation la plus vulnérable au monde aux effets du changement climatique. Du reste, nous ressentons actuellement les effets avec la sécheresse qui nous affecte, alors que, pendant ce temps, dans d'autres pays, ils font face à des inondations.

M. le président, le *Climate Change Bill* est la base de nos futures actions contre les effets du réchauffement climatique, et comme mentionné par l'honorable David avant moi, c'est le cadre légal afin de prendre les mesures d'atténuation et d'adaptation nécessaire, non seulement pour notre génération, mais aussi pour les générations à venir.

Jusqu'à présent, M. le président, le problème a été que l'approche a été fragmentée. Plusieurs institutions indépendantes ont pris des mesures sans qu'aucune stratégie nationale ne soit dégagée. Le *Climate Change Bill* vient corriger tout cela et nous devons travailler ensemble pour mieux avancer. Les effets du changement climatique est une tragédie pour l'humanité. Nous payons aussi les conséquences de l'évolution économique dans notre pays qui englobe plusieurs secteurs, l'industrie, le tourisme, la production énergétiques, le transport et l'agriculture, En tant que nation, nous sommes aussi coupables que victimes. Victimes d'un modèle économique mondial, M. le président, basé sur le développement et la production, cela au détriment de la nature. Coupables, puisque nous avons toujours ce mindset d'égoïsme envers la nature, un comportement que je qualifierai de 'je-m'en-foutisme' envers l'environnement.

M. le président, ce projet de loi prévoit la mise en place d'un Conseil interministériel sur les changements climatiques. Et ce Conseil aura la tâche de fixer les objectifs au niveau national. Objectifs, M. le président, qui nous permettront d'être un pays à faible émission de gaz à effet de serre. Toutes les mesures susceptibles d'avoir un impact sur le changement climatique devront être alignées sur la position de ce Conseil interministériel. De même, le

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Cette disposition particulière de ce projet de loi, avec le Premier ministre en tant que président du Conseil interministériel sur les changements climatiques, et c'est là où nos opinions diffèrent avec celles de l'opposition qui est intervenue sur ce projet de loi. Cette disposition envoie un signal fort que le gouvernement mauricien est pleinement dévoué à la lutte contre les effets néfastes du changement climatique. Je pense, M. le président, que nous devons aussi saluer le Premier ministre pour avoir mis sur pied le *National Youth Environment Council*, une organisation qui va donner plus d'opportunités aux jeunes pour apporter leur soutien dans la protection de l'environnement.

Nous voulons faire de Maurice, M. le président, une économie plus verte, tout en s'acquittant de nos obligations en vertu de la Convention Cadre des Nations Unies sur le changement climatique du Protocole de Kyoto et aussi de l'Accord de Paris. Le *Climate Change Bill* est le maillon manquant qui regroupera les efforts des parties prenantes, tant dans le secteur public que dans le secteur privé. Il nous permettra, M. le président, de répondre aux divers engagements pris en faveur du changement climatique sur la scène internationale. Ce projet de loi est l'instrument nécessaire afin d'ajuster les mesures en vue d'une action cohérente en matière de changement climatique et en accord avec l'objectif du gouvernement de réduire les émissions de CO₂. L'accent est mis sur l'accès des données et d'information par les ministères, les autorités locales, les institutions privées et les chercheurs. Et c'est de la plus haute importance, M. le président, car les données sont une condition première si nous voulons comprendre où se situe actuellement le pays, c'est-à-dire, définir une base de référence et par la suite de pouvoir vérifier si nous avançons dans la bonne direction afin d'atteindre les objectifs fixés. Nous avons des obligations internationales à respecter et il est important que tout un chacun, du citoyen lambda ou

politiciens ou aux directeurs de grandes entreprises puisse apporter sa contribution pour que nous puissions atteindre nos objectifs.

M. le président, après la préparation et la présentation de ce projet de loi, la prochaine étape sera la mise sur pied du Conseil interministériel, par la suite du département et du comité sur le changement climatique. Ils auront alors la responsabilité de venir de l'avant avec une stratégie nationale et un plan d'action.

M. le président, permettez-moi, dans mon intervention, d'aborder le secteur eau dans un premier temps, et par la suite, le secteur de l'énergie. Le changement climatique pose un défi important à la gestion des ressources en eau, particulièrement pour les petits Etats insulaires. Entre autres prévisions, on sait que le changement climatique aura pour effet de réduire grandement la disponibilité en eau, diminuant les pluies, provoquant des périodes de sécheresse estivale plus longues.

M. le président, l'augmentation du nombre de crues et de sécheresses posent un problème aux autorités chargées de la gestion de l'eau dans le monde. En étant un état insulaire, M. le président, on est définitivement vulnérable au changement climatique. L'augmentation constante de la demande d'eau, combinée aux menaces du changement climatique et l'augmentation de la pollution ont entraîné des problèmes d'approvisionnement en eau pendant les périodes de sécheresse.

Depuis les années 30, on a observé que les précipitations annuelles moyennes à Maurice ont diminué d'environ 7 à 8% et, tout récemment, le phénomène des *flash floods* nous interpelle aussi. Et dans certains cas, M. le président, ce phénomène peut avoir des graves conséquences sur la vie humaine, comme cela a été le cas tout récemment à Maurice.

M. le président, les défis du changement climatique doivent être relevés par l'augmentation de la capacité de stockage des réservoirs, afin de répondre à des plus longues périodes de sécheresse. Il faut souligner que nous faisons aussi face à une demande croissante dans le secteur résidentiel, touristique et industriel. Donc, M. le président, une meilleure gestion de nos ressources en eau est primordiale. La perte d'environ 50 à 60% dans nos systèmes de distribution n'est pas acceptable.

En 2020, on est toujours incapable de dénombrer le nombre de fuites sur notre réseau, mais nous continuons à investir pour remplacer les vieux tuyaux datant des dizaines d'années. Il faut faire plus. La CWA enclenche actuellement un programme afin d'automatiser son

réseau de distribution. L'ouverture des valves et la détection des fuites à travers la technologie moderne nous permettront de diminuer la perte dans nos réseaux de distribution.

Mais, en même temps, M. le président, nous devons changer nos habitudes. Le changement climatique apporte son lot d'imprévus. L'eau étant une ressource limitée, c'est pourquoi nous devons mettre plus d'accents sur l'économie de nos ressources en eau. Le captage des eaux de pluie par chaque ménage sera important afin que nous réduisions notre consommation des eaux des réservoirs et des nappes souterraines.

Permettez-moi d'aborder un sujet important dans le domaine du tourisme. Je pense que les permis autorisant de nouvelles installations ne devraient être délivrés que si celles-ci seront autonomes en consommation d'eau et n'auront pas d'impact négatif sur les usagers existants. Et, je pense, personnellement, qu'il nous faut considérer sérieusement l'installation d'unités de dessalement d'eau de mer pour chaque permis de développement alloué sur le littoral. Ces mesures nous permettront, M. le président, de relever les défis de notre gestion en eau pour les prochaines années.

Tous les événements qui frappent notre planète nous envoient le même avertissement. Nous devons accélérer nos actions pour faire face aux défis du changement climatique. Une sécurité dans nos ressources en eau nous mettra aussi à l'abri d'une crise alimentaire.

M. le président, permettez-moi maintenant d'aborder le domaine de l'énergie en relation avec le projet de loi. L'une des stratégies, qui devra être définie, concerne la production nationale de l'énergie et sa consommation. D'après les données soumises à la Convention-cadre des Nations Unies sur le changement climatique en 2016, les émissions de gaz à effet de serre en 2013 s'élevaient à environ 5,1 millions de tonnes contre 4,3 millions de tonnes, équivalent de dioxyde de carbone en 2006. Ce qui représente une augmentation de 18%.

Le secteur de l'énergie demeure la principale source d'émission de gaz à effet de serre, représentant 77% des émissions en 2013, suivi du secteur des déchets 19% et les activités agricoles ont contribué à la hauteur de 2,7% aux émissions totales.

M. le président, depuis la signature de l'Accord de Paris en 2015, de nombreux progrès ont été réalisés pour accélérer l'action climatique à l'échelle mondiale. Selon l'Agence internationale de l'énergie en 2016, le volume mondial d'émissions de dioxyde de carbone liées à l'énergie est resté stable pour la troisième année consécutive malgré la croissance économique mondiale. C'est aussi très encourageant de noter une baisse dans les

coûts de l'énergie solaire et de l'éolien. L'avancée des technologies de stockage permettra aussi de mieux équilibrer l'offre et la demande en termes d'énergie renouvelable.

M. le président, la production énergétique à base du charbon est depuis longtemps très critiquée à Maurice comme à l'étranger. Par exemple, l'Allemagne a fixé à 2038 l'arrêt des centrales thermiques qui tournent à base du charbon. Ce gouvernement a démontré sa volonté de réduire considérablement l'utilisation du charbon dans la production énergétique avec les différents projets à base d'énergie renouvelable.

Il est triste de noter qu'actuellement 35,65% de notre production d'électricité est à base de charbon. Notre ambition est définie avec le *Renewable Energy Roadmap for the electricity sector* publié pour 2030, récemment lancé d'après un rapport de l'*IRENA*, c'est-à-dire, l'*International Renewable Energy Agency*, rapport en date du mois de septembre de 2019. L'île Maurice se trouve parmi les 23 sur 36 pays du *SIDS* qui ont élaboré une feuille de route ou plan d'action dans le secteur.

Avec 192 mégawatts de capacité en énergie renouvelable installée à cette période, notre pays se classe 5^{ème} parmi ses pairs du *SIDS*. Ce classement, M. le président, va s'améliorer davantage car nous avons fixé l'objectif de production d'électricité à base des énergies renouvelables à 35% d'ici 2025 et 40% d'ici 2030.

Il faudrait comprendre, M. le président, que la production des énergies renouvelables est au centre des solutions pour lutter contre le changement climatique. Pour atteindre ce palier, M. le président, nous devons toutefois prendre en considération le coût de la technologie. L'objectif de cette feuille de route est de réduire la dépendance aux combustibles fossiles pour la production de l'électricité.

À l'heure actuelle, le niveau d'intégration de l'énergie renouvelable a atteint 20%, la production d'électricité à partir de la bagasse étant prédominante. La part restante provient de l'hydroélectricité, du solaire, d'un faible pourcentage du *landfill gas* et de l'éolien.

L'augmentation de l'énergie renouvelable de 20% à 35% d'ici 2025 nécessite une augmentation de la production d'énergie à partir du solaire, de l'éolien et de la biomasse. Mais il faut noter que le potentiel hydroélectrique est à son maximum avec les opérations de dix centrales hydroélectriques ayant une capacité installée cumulative de 60 mégawatts.

Nous étudions en ce moment, M. le président, la possibilité d'ajouter une 11^{ème} centrale hydroélectrique avec l'avènement du Rivière des Anguilles *Dam*. Une étude est actuellement en cours pour connaître la viabilité de ce projet.

Depuis 2015, le CEB lance un certain nombre de programmes pour promouvoir la production d'énergie renouvelable. D'ailleurs, depuis 2019, la *Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA)* en collaboration avec le CEB et la *Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC)* a lancé le *National Scheme for Emerging and Innovative Renewable Energy Technologies*. Cela dans le but d'identifier des projets innovants et ouvrir la porte pour l'implémentation des installations pilotes pour la production d'électricité à base d'énergies renouvelables. Conformément à la politique énergétique actuelle, les *Independent Power Producers* sont appelés à s'éloigner du charbon.

M. le président, d'un point de vue personnel, Maurice doit arrêter l'utilisation du charbon dans quelques années; un objectif qui peut être atteint avec les avancées technologiques et la volonté de tout un chacun. Les *Independent Power Producers* doivent se tourner vers les énergies renouvelables pour leur production.

Il y a des alternatives très encourageantes. Maurice se positionne déjà sur le marché de la production de biomasse. L'Agence française de développement a fait une étude sur l'utilisation de l'arundo donax pour la production de l'électricité. En ce moment-ci, nous explorons la possibilité de son utilisation à Maurice.

Ce projet qui a été effectué avec la participation de la *FAREI*, du *MSIRI*, de l'Université de Maurice et de la *Mauritius Research and Innovation Council* a beaucoup avancé. Les recherches et les études ont pu déterminer la viabilité technique et financière d'un développement soutenable de la culture d'arundo donax. Cela permettra à Maurice de produire une quantité importante de biomasse pouvant remplacer le charbon dans les centrales de production d'électricité.

Mais, je comprends, M. le président que des essais à l'échelle commerciale sont en cours avec des sociétés européennes spécialisées, afin de rendre la matière fibre sortante totalement compatible pour être utilisée dans les chaudières. Les résultats finaux de ces essais seront disponibles d'ici la fin du mois de novembre. Un rapport final du mois d'octobre de 2020, préparé par le ministère de l'Energie par les consultants retenus par l'Agence française du développement sur la feuille de route pour la bioélectricité à Maurice jusqu'en 2030, mais également en avant, l'arundo donax comme solution de biomasse viable par d'autres sélectionnés.

M. le président, quoi qu'étant le secteur qui a connu un plus grand progrès de pénétration de l'énergie renouvelable sur le plan global, l'électricité n'est pas le seul secteur

concerné par cette transition. La climatisation, le transport sont aussi concernés. Comme annoncé dans le budget 2019-2020, une étude a été effectuée pour faciliter l'utilisation des voitures électriques à Maurice. L'étude a été concluante et le gouvernement travaille actuellement sur les modalités pour permettre une meilleure utilisation et qui sera faite par phase.

Je comprends aussi, M. le président, que le ministère de *Land Transport and Light Rail* travaille en collaboration avec les Nations Unies pour promouvoir les autobus électrique. Actuellement, nous n'avons, M. le président, que 400 voitures électriques et que deux stations de service qui peuvent recharger les batteries. Avec la volonté du Premier ministre et du gouvernement, ce nombre est appelé à augmenter considérablement dans les années à venir.

M. le président, je vais conclure, en disant que le changement climatique est l'un des plus grands défis de notre temps. Il change déjà nos vies. L'impact de ce changement, M. le président, nous le vivons au quotidien. Avec ce projet de loi, nous démontrons à la population, premièrement, que nous avons le courage et que nous avons la volonté de nous attaquer avec force et vigueur à ce problème qu'est le changement climatique. M. le président, nous croyons fermement que la population sera à nos côtés dans cette lutte.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 8.00 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.31 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please, be seated! I call hon. Ivan Collendavelloo, please!

Mr I. Collendavelloo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill came before this House on 03 November 2020 and that gives me the opportunity to congratulate our colleague, Minister Ramano, for his excellent introduction to the Bill, for having simplified the subject and opened the door to the debates.

On the next day, 04 November, the United States officially became the first and for the moment the only country to officially withdraw from the Paris Agreement of December

2015, refusing to honour its multilateral engagements and refusing to participate in the global climate efforts. That is on 04 November.

On 05 November, on the next day, we learnt that 0.5% of the electorate in Pennsylvania had voted Vice-President Biden to be the President-elect of the United States. And two days later, 0.3% of the State of Georgia confirmed that decision, confirmed that vote.

This shows us how our fate was hanging on minority electorates in two States of the United States. It is not very difficult to imagine what the debate would have been like, how pessimistic our tone would have been if Pennsylvania and Georgia had decided the other way round. Because, today, the debate would have been on the fate of climate change on our country, because all these clauses calling us to follow the international protocols, conventions and agreements would have been in the balance. But there is still hope. One week ago, on 09 November 2020, the 26th Conference of the Parties was to be held in Scotland, but, because of COVID, it has been postponed to November 2021, and now we know that the United States is going to re-join the Paris Agreement, and that gives us room to be optimistic. Like all Small Island States, as many interveners before me have pointed, but it is good to stress it, we are the lowest contributors to greenhouse emissions. But we are the ones to face the more serious risk. There have been mention of flash floods, torrential rains, prolonged dry periods, rising waves, coastal erosions, and this has been with us for 30 years, and now, the threat of cyclones of an unprecedented force.

In its 2019 Report, Statistics Mauritius noted that greenhouse gas emissions increased by 2.9% from 2018 to 2019. The energy sector accounts for the largest share of emissions, 74.2%; followed by the waste sector, 23%. In its later summer outlook, the Meteorological Services have underlined that it is likely that extreme weather events in the form of heavy torrential rainfall and rapid intensification of tropical cyclones would occur during the coming summer 2020/2021. They point out that cumulative summer rainfall is expected to be below the normal. Mean air temperature will be slightly above by 3° Celsius and our intermediate dry season will be longer. The World Bank already classifies Mauritius as a water stress country and we are expected to fall under the water scarce category in the years to come.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my introduction, I shall be dealing first of all with the Inter-Ministerial Council on Climate Change, on which much has been said, and then I shall deal with energy, waste management, before concluding briefly on the water sector.

The Inter-Ministerial Council is proposed under clause (4). It is, in fact, a mini Cabinet, but with a specific statutory duty, that is, and those are the important words, “to set national objectives, goals and targets with a view to making Mauritius a climate-change resilient and a low emission country.”

The Leader of the Opposition is not very happy about this. He says this is a copycat of the National Environment Commission which exists under section 5 of the Environment Protection Act, and he describes it as an unpalatable feature of this Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Environment Commission, of which he says Government has copied the format, was setup in 1987. It was chaired by the then Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and finally the Environment Protection Act was enacted in 1991 and the National Environment Commission was established formally under the Act. The NEC has a much wider object than the Inter-Ministerial Council. The NEC looks first of all at the recommendations of the Minister and then it sets objectives for the protection of the environment, whereas we know what the Council deals with; two bodies with almost the same composition, but the Council being specific to climate resilience.

I am wonderstruck by what the Leader of the Opposition states. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, between 1987 up to 2005, the National Environment Committee met on 20 occasions. The last meeting was chaired by the then Prime Minister, hon. Bérenger, on 28 February 2005. Then, under the Governments of 2005-2010, between 2005 up to 2014 under the Prime Ministership of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, not one meeting was held. Not one meeting and, today, you shed crocodile tears over what is happening? That is not very serious. In 2015, Sir Anerood Jugnauth took the cudgel and put in the Programme that the NEC would be revived and, in the Budget Speech, at paragraph 115 of 2015/2016, the revival of the NEC was also advocated and we have had the meeting of the Commission chaired by the present Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, on 03 May 2018 and a second meeting on 17 September 2018 and, now, with this Act, we will follow up with a strong meeting to specifically deal with the objectives set out under this legislation.

I have dealt briefly with the arguments made by the Leader of the Opposition, but let me deal with some more cogent arguments very ably put forward by the hon. first Member for Constituency No. 1, hon. David. What he says is a little more fundamental. He says -

“I expected to see measures, objectives and targets written in the Bill, and when I ran to part 5 of the Bill, I was disappointed because I saw no measures.”

Well, it's a policy decision. It is true that this Act, contrary to certain other legislations in the world like the UK, does not specifically state objectives. In Australia, they say that by 2050 it's going to be zero. But many other countries have decided that their legislation would be to set up a legal framework, an institutional legislation for the purpose of setting the objective. It is unfortunate that our young colleague rushed to part 5, because had he read the Explanatory Memorandum, in paragraph 2 he would have seen that the Bill establishes a legal framework towards making Mauritius a climate-change resilient and low emission country by providing, *inter alia*, for the setting up of several institutions, and that that is the basic philosophy behind the Bill.

Of course, one may have a different point of view, like the hon. Member had, the point can be validly taken but that is the fundamental aspect of the legislation put before this House by the Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2014, when the new Government was put in place at the end of 2014, climate change, until then, had been a mere collection of words. From the start, in January 2015, I remember very well, Sir Anerood Jugnauth calling Minister Dayal and myself, and entrusting us with the task of preparing COP-21 in Paris. We worked, we benefited from expertise of the *Agence française de développement*. We consulted our counterparts in South Africa and in Kenya, and finally, in September 2015, we submitted our INDC to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and we set the national target for abatement of our gas emissions by 30% by the year 2030. And also, one of our targets was the enactment of the Climate Change Act and indeed most of the countries, parties to the Convention to the Paris Agreement had set this as a fundamental objective of their INDC.

And we pursued our strategy. It is good to remind ourselves that while I was at the Ministry, we obtained the support of the UNDP to approach the Green Climate Fund for funding and we obtained a grant of Rs1 billion for a project entitled ‘Accelerating the transformational shift to a low-carbon economy in the Republic of Mauritius’. We were one

of the first countries to receive the loan. Then, this loan has helped us in promoting solar energy through ARENA, through URA. We now have 11 solar farms, one wind farm, several thousands of small scale photovoltaic systems operating at residential level, in commercial enterprises, educational institutions, NGOs and Small and Medium Enterprises.

The hon. Minister who intervened before me, hon. Lesjongard, has given the figures and it's good that we repeat them. Electricity generated from coal has decreased by 6.8% from 2018 to 2019. Electricity generated from renewable sources, including hydro-electricity increased by 8.2% and now coal utilisation will be perhaps one of the priorities of the Inter-Ministerial Council.

Another surprising stand of the Leader of the Opposition relates to waste-to- energy and that is the second part of my intervention. The Leader of the Opposition is rather emotional, well, the Labour Party is rather emotional about waste-to-energy, thinking that we are going to create a huge bonfire at Mare Chicose to convert waste into energy; that is not so. We produce a lot of waste and Mare Chicose is full, not nearly full, it is full. The Leader of the Opposition was to leave it like at that, overfilling Mare Chicose, letting leachate permeate to our ground water and poisoning our water, our aquifers, this what we want? Let us not try to set the alarm.

Under the Labour Party Government, in 2009, it talks of the Gamma-Coventa project. We did not get hysterical and we are hysterical about this project. In 30 May 2009, Dr. Beebeejaun, the then Minister of Energy had stated, quoting Professor Joël de Rosnay, that -

“...should be appropriate - (according to Dr. Beebeejaun) - filters incorporated in the project with state-of-the-art technology and this should be mandatory.”

And that is the point. What sort of project do we want? The Gamma-Coventa project was not pursued because the promoters felt that it would be too expensive to follow Professor Joël de Rosnay's advice. That is what they felt and that is why it never came to fulfil.

And the Leader of the Opposition gives the impression that it is a sort of personal project of mine; I have no project in waste-to-energy. This is a Government project.

In the Budget 2016-2017, paragraph 133, it was announced that Government would instal a major, I quote –

“...a major waste-to-energy project which was expected to add up to 30 MW of electricity on the grid by 2019.”

Nobody stood up and said we are going to make a bonfire in Mare Chicose. And this is why the CEB, in 2016, issued a request for proposals in implementation of Government policy. Waste-to-energy is one of the means of reducing carbon emissions. If we look all over the world, even in the United States which is so fossil fuel friendly, you have about 100 waste-to-energy projects which have been implemented.

In the European Union, more than 500 such plants, and in Maldives, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development is currently financing two projects. One is a small scale waste-to-energy plant with integrated desalination plants to bring clean electricity and 500,000 litres of drinking water per year to free island air gas. The second project is another waste-to-energy facility. So, all over the world, but there is now, here, a formidable lobby led by the Labour Party to try to convince everyone that this is a dirty project. Now, we should be guided by the European Union which has a waste framework directive and in the European Union with more than 500 plants, there is a strong hierarchy to direct member States how to deal with waste-to-energy. Having said that, I believe we should have an intelligent bipartisan discussion before going into trying to go into emotions on this project. I am sure the Inter-Ministerial Council will be looking avidly at this aspect.

I need to have a word on the water section and this will be by way of conclusion. Right now, we are starting a drought season which, according to the Meteo, is going to be a very serious drought. Let us hope that it is not so. Let us hope that we will have water to fill up our reservoirs and replenish our aquifers so that we get sufficient ground water. We will need the collaboration of the private sector, of private borehole owners in order to have adequate and fair distribution of water. Of course, that will lead to some unhappiness, but we will ask the population for solidarity and for comprehension. The last time we had such a drought was in 2014, I believe.

Water sector reform will need to be on the agenda. Again let us not go into emotions and into hysteria, let us deal with this matter dispassionately. We have witnessed great developments in the water sector. There have been several statements by myself and others on infrastructural works and this has contributed to the reduction, on a small scale, but a reduction nevertheless, of non-revenue water.

I shall finally conclude by putting in a word not only for Minister Ramano but also for the Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth and Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who spearheaded all that vast program of infrastructural works to our water sector, whether it be in Rivière des

Anguilles - perhaps Sans Souci in some years, whether it be through renewal of pipes. There has been a vast change in our infrastructure, therefore, our thanks to the Prime Minister, to Minister Ramano with our gratitude for having come with such a serious program.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Paul Bérenger!

(9.55 p.m.)

Mr P. Bérenger (First Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): M. le président, la présentation du *Climate Change Bill* a été, de mon point de vue, une occasion ratée ; une occasion ratée de fixer de nouveaux objectifs pour le pays, et de prendre et d'annoncer de nouvelles mesures concernant l'environnement et le *Climate Change* ; une occasion ratée aussi de revoir et d'harmoniser les structures du ministère de l'environnement.

Et pourtant comme l'a dit le ministre lui-même dans son discours, le *Climate Change Bill* était attendu depuis longtemps. De plus, des amendements pas du tout mineurs, comme décrit par le ministre de l'environnement dans son discours, ont été circulés aujourd'hui parce qu'on avait complètement oublié le *Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol* et aussi parce qu'on avait aussi oublié d'inclure le ministre de l'Environnement lui-même et le ministre du Transport sur le *Inter-Ministerial Council on Climate Change*. Il faut se réjouir par contre que ce *Climate Change Bill* soit présenté au moment où les États-Unis réintègrent le *Paris Agreement* de 2015 qu'ils avaient été le seul pays à quitter.

M. le président, je commencerai mon discours en rappelant qu'il y a eu ces derniers temps une triple prise de conscience mondiale concernant le *climate change* –

1. il y a eu une prise de conscience profonde qu'il y a en cours un réchauffement dramatique de la planète;
2. que ce réchauffement est *man made*, c'est-à-dire le résultat d'activités humaines, et
3. qu'il faut agir d'urgence si l'humanité veut éviter une catastrophe planétaire.

C'est d'ailleurs pourquoi le Secrétaire général des Nations unies a dit du réchauffement de la planète que c'est, *I quote* –

« *The defining issue of our time.* »

Alors que le pape, lui, a parlé d'un *quote* -

« *global 'climate emergency'* »

et que Joe Biden vient de parler du

'number one issue facing humanity'.

M. le président, je commencerai mon discours en rappelant aussi une insupportable injustice à laquelle se sont référés plusieurs orateurs avant moi.

En effet la Chine émet 28% des gaz à effet de serre, premier responsable du réchauffement de la planète et les États-Unis 15%, ce qui veut dire qu'à eux deux, ils émettent presque la moitié des gaz à effet de serre alors que 175 pays émettent chacun moins de 1% et que 50 pays parmi eux dont Maurice, les Seychelles, les Comores, les Maldives et les autres SIDS (*Small Island Developing States*) émettent moins de 0.01% chacun mais ce sont eux qui souffrent le plus du *climate change*.

M. le président, l'adoption en 1992 au *Earth Summit* de Rio, le *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* avait été un tournant, un *turning point* dans le combat contre le réchauffement de la planète comme l'a été en 2015 l'adoption au sommet du *Paris Agreement* dans le but principal d'ici 2100 de limiter l'augmentation de la température de la planète à 2°C par rapport au niveau pré industriel et, si possible, de limiter cette augmentation à 1.5 °C.

Mais le fait est que les scientifiques pensent qu'au rythme actuel où vont les choses, nous allons vers une augmentation de 3°C ou plus ce qui serait véritablement catastrophique. Heureusement, ces jours-ci, la Chine, l'Union européenne, le Japon, et Joe Biden au nom des États-Unis prennent de nouveaux engagements beaucoup plus ambitieux que jusqu'à présent. Les mauvais élèves restent l'Australie, la Russie, le Brésil, l'Arabie Saoudite.

Avant le *Paris Agreement* de 2015, M. le président, il avait eu en 1997 l'adoption du Kyoto Protocol qui visait à mettre en pratique le *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* de 1992 et qui visait à imposer - je dis bien imposer dans la loi - aux pays riches des diminutions de leur émission à effet de gaz, à effet de serre. Le Kyoto Protocol avait prévu deux *commitment periods*. Le premier de 2008 à 2012 avait imposé à 37 pays industrialisés et en transition économique de réduire leurs émissions de gaz à effet de serre par 5% en moyenne. Le deuxième *commitment period* adopté à travers le *Doha Amendment* de 2012 avait proposé aux mêmes pays une réduction de 18% de leur émission de gaz à effet de serre sur la période allant de 2013 à 2020. Pour diverses raisons, le *Doha Agreement* n'entrera en

force que le 21 décembre 2020 alors que le deuxième *commitment period* prend lui-même fin à la fin de 2020.

A noter que les États-Unis, le Canada, le Japon et la Russie n'ont pas pris d'engagement pour ce deuxième *commitment period* du Kyoto Protocol alors que certains pays ont menacé ces derniers temps de quitter le Kyoto Protocol lui-même. La question se pose maintenant de savoir s'il y aura un troisième *commitment period* du Kyoto Protocol à partir de janvier 2020 ou si le Kyoto Protocol va être absorbé, si je peux dire, dans le *Paris Agreement*. Beaucoup dépendra des États-Unis.

M. le président, je le répète, la présentation du *Climate Change Bill* et le discours du ministre de l'Environnement ont été une occasion ratée de fixer de nouveaux objectifs pour le pays et d'annoncer de nouvelles mesures concernant l'environnement et le *climate change*. Le point le plus important dans le Paris Agreement de 2015, est que chaque pays doit afficher ses *nationally determined contributions*, c'est-à-dire ses objectifs et les mesures à prendre pour les atteindre pour combattre le réchauffement de la planète. Ce que fut fait en 2015, mais le Paris Agreement prévoit aussi que ces *nationally determined contributions* doivent être revus et améliorés tous les cinq ans. Ce jour-ci, à l'occasion de la COP 26, le prochain sommet de Nations Unies sur le climat qui se tiendra à Glasgow en Novembre 2021, chaque pays doit améliorer ses *nationally determined contributions* et les soumettre aux Nations Unies avant Glasgow.

En 2015, l'Ile Maurice s'était engagée dans ses *nationally determined contributions* à réduire ses émissions de gaz à effet de serre par 30% d'ici 2030, mais de 2000 à 2016, nos émissions de gaz à effet de serre ont plus que doublé. En 2016, elles ont augmenté de 3%. L'Ile Maurice prépare, en ce moment, avec l'aide de l'UNDP et de l'Agence française de développement, les nouveaux *nationally determined contributions* qu'elle doit soumettre avant la conférence de Glasgow de l'année prochaine. Le 29 juillet dernier, la représentante à Maurice de l'UNDP a souhaité, je cite –

“...that the next Mauritius nationally determined contributions demonstrate a higher level of ambition while ensuring a green recovery from the current COVID-19 pandemic”.

Dans le *Climate Change Bill* et le discours du ministre, il n'y a pas eu un mot sur les *nationally determined contributions* que Maurice est en train de préparer et sur l'évolution de nos émissions de gaz à effet de serre depuis 2016. Je le répète aussi, M. le président, la

présentation du *Climate Change Bill* a aussi été une occasion ratée de revoir et d'harmoniser les structures du ministère de l'Environnement. Il y avait déjà dans l'*Environment Protection Act* de 2002, un *National Environment Commission* présidé par le Premier ministre avec 22 ministres. Le *Climate Change Bill* y ajoute maintenant un *Inter-Ministerial Council on Climate Change* présidé par le Premier ministre, là aussi, avec 23 ministres, quand on n'oublie pas le ministre de l'Environnement et le ministre du Transport. Le *Climate Change Bill* crée un *Climate Change Committee* avec 16 représentants des ministères et un seul représentant de la société civile. Le *Climate Change Bill* crée un *Department of Climate Change*, mais ne nous dit pas - et le ministre pourrait nous éclairer - s'il agira, ce *Department of Climate Change* d'un simple *redeployment* des employés existants ou de nouveaux staff. L'*Environmental Protection Act* 2002 prévoit déjà un *National Network for Sustainable Development* présidé par le ministre avec au moins cinq ONG. Le *Climate Change Bill* garde cela et prévoit seulement à la section 19 que, je cite –

“Every Government department shall, for the purpose of developing strategies and policies in respect of climate change, undertake public consultations.”

Par ailleurs, le *National Youth Environmental Council* n'est mentionné nulle part dans le *Climate Change Bill*. Le résultat de tout cela, de mon point de vue, est un galimatias, qui ne donnera pas de résultat. De mon point de vue, il faut une seule loi, un *Climate Change and Environment Protection Act*, une seule loi et des structures harmonisées.

M. le président, le *Climate Change Bill* préconise, et je cite –

“establish links, and cooperate, with Small Island Developing States”.

Et dans son discours, le ministre a souhaité que Maurice devienne, je cite, “un modèle pour les *Small Island Developing States*”. Je me permets de rappeler M. le président, qu'en janvier 2005, une conférence des Nations Unies sur les *SIDS* se tint à Maurice, en présence de Kofi Annan, alors secrétaire général de Nations Unies, et cette conférence adopta le *Mauritius Declaration*. Et je rappelle aussi que l'ambassadeur Jagdish Koonjul présida au nom de Maurice l'*AOSIS*, l'*Alliance of Small Island States* de 2002 à 2005. Malheureusement, Maurice perdit ce leadership des *SIDS* après 2005. Rappelons aussi qu'entre 2000 et 2005, des mesures avant-gardistes et courageuses furent prises. Comme, par exemple, l'arrêt du *sand extraction* des lagons. Et rappelons que Rajesh Bhagwan fut certainement le meilleur ministre de l'Environnement que Maurice ait connu!

La députée Joanna Bérenger a proposé, l'autre jour et avec raison, que le respect et la défense de l'environnement soient inscrits dans la Constitution du pays, ce que réclament les jeunes, surtout. Et je me réjouis de constater que cela a été repris par le député Francisco François de Rodrigues. Rappelons dans ce contexte, M. le président, que depuis 2019, les *Small Island Developing States*, le Pape, lui-même et Greta Thunberg réclament que l'écocide, c'est-à-dire les crimes contre l'environnement, soit reconnu comme des crimes sous la loi internationale et puisse être poursuivi devant la Cour criminelle internationale. L'ambassadeur du Vanuatu a d'ailleurs proposé cela à la Cour criminelle internationale en décembre 2019. Il est, par ailleurs, à noter, M. le président, que dans son discours, le ministre n'a rien eu à dire sur la bagasse et le rôle de la canne à sucre dans la protection de l'environnement, alors que 90% de sources d'énergies renouvelables chez nous, viennent de la bagasse. Heureusement, que d'autres ministres se sont prononcés là-dessus, aujourd'hui même. Il n'a rien eu à dire non plus, ni sur le charbon et le *Liquified Natural Gas*, ni sur les énergies renouvelables, elles-mêmes, ni sur le reboisement, ni sur les véhicules électriques. Encore une fois, heureusement que d'autres ministres se sont prononcés là-dessus.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne Rodrigues, le *Climate Change Bill* prévoit un *Rodrigues Climate Change Committee* présidé par le Commissaire responsable de l'Environnement et prévoit qu'un représentant du *Rodrigues Regional Council* siège dans le *Climate Change Committee National*. J'ai écouté attentivement le député Francisco François et pris note des amendements au *Climate Change Bill* qui ont été proposés par les représentants de Rodrigues pour Rodrigues. Rodrigues où tant de choses formidables sont faites pour l'environnement.

Pour terminer, M. le président, le ministre a souhaité à la fin de son discours que le *Climate Change Bill* fasse l'unanimité, ici, au Parlement. La présentation du *Climate Change Bill* a, malheureusement, je dis bien, a malheureusement était une occasion ratée mais nous ne voterons pas contre en attendant mieux.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

(10.10 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, listening to the debate, I think despite all the criticisms we hear from time to time from the different speakers, I do not think

fundamentally there is much difference between the Members on both sides of the House because we all agree that there is urgent need for this Bill.

Okay, we can disagree on some points, but I feel that *au fond* we all agree to this Bill. In the Explanatory Memorandum, 2(a) sets the Inter-ministerial Council on Climate Change which will be chaired by the Prime Minister himself.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that shows the importance the Government attaches to this Bill. It may be 22 or 23 Ministers, but for me the fact that the Prime Minister himself chairs this meeting shows the importance that this Government gives to this problem of climate change.

Secondly, 2(b), there would be a department of climate change which is going to develop policies, programmes and action plan. What I would like to say is that this Bill is not *limitative*. I mean, this will have these bodies who are going to develop the policies as we go along, if needs be, it is going to be reassessed and it is going to be brought up to the Council. There were programmes and the action plan would be developed. So, okay, I take the points which some Members have made, but that does not mean that if it is not mentioned exactly in the Bill, it is outside the Bill, it does not exist, no. That is why we have these different Committees. There are two Committees especially I am going to mention: the Inter-ministerial Committee Council and the Department of Climate Change. As far as the National Youth Environment Council is concerned, if it is not mentioned in the Bill, it does not mean that it does not exist. I know that the Government is working on it and soon we are going to have the National Youth Environment Council.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Climate Change is with us now and we have to live with it. On 28 March 2008, a flash flood at Mon Goût claimed the life of a thirteen years old school girl. Before we never used to hear about flash floods. On 30 March 2013, again following a flash flood in Port Louis, 11 people lost their lives at Caudan. In April 2016, cyclone Fantala, a category-5 cyclone which had an explosive intensification, developed in the south-west Indian Ocean. It is the first of its kind in our region; though it spared Mauritius, it caused massive damage to surrounding countries. A category-5 cyclone is a very destructive one with typical gusts of more than 280 kms per hour. It is extremely dangerous and cause wild spread destruction as sometime we have seen on TV on the east coast of USA.

All the countries in the world are, nowadays, facing this disastrous effect of global warming, and Mauritius, being a Small Island Developing State, has and will be

disproportionately affected. Though Mauritius contributes, as mentioned by the earlier speaker, 0,01% of greenhouse gases emissions, the effect on the country in the future will be much, much more catastrophic. Mauritius is already affected by severe weather event as well as natural disasters. Increases in temperature and changes in rainfall pattern are all really affecting various social and economic sector of the country. In fact, at this very moment, we are suffering from a severe water shortage.

The growing impact of climate change is expected to increase the intensity and frequency of cyclone, torrential rain and the resulting flash flood will thus adversely affect our peoples' lives and livelihood as well as economic activities in different sectors, for e.g., tourism, agriculture, health, infrastructural sectors just to name but a few. According to World Meteorological Organisation, the four years period from 2016 to 2019 was a warmest temperature on record with an average mean global surface temperature of 1.1C above pre-industrial era and 2020 is on track to be one of the hottest in the year on record, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. According to the World Risk Report 2020, out of 181 countries, Mauritius now ranks 53rd as a country with the highest disaster risk, as compared to 2018 ranking, whereby we were the 16th country with the highest disaster risk. This shows a substantial improvement in our endeavour to make our country safer and more disaster resilient. As we see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, action taken so far has been productive. The present Climate Change Bill follows the previous Bill we brought to this august Assembly in the last five years –

- (i) In 2016, we passed the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act;
- (ii) In 2017, we passed the Land Drainage Act;
- (iii) In 2018 we amended the Local Government Act, and
- (iv) In 2019, we amended the Mauritius Meteorological Service Act.

To align Mauritius with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, the Minister of Environment has brought the Climate Change Bill with the main objective of addressing the adverse effect of climate change, whilst at the same time, developing Mauritius into a green economy. The Bill establishes the legal framework towards making Mauritius into a climate change resilient and low emission country.

The provision of the Bill will allow Government to identify gaps in climate change policies and challenges facing policy makers in their effort to create an effective and

integrated climate policy that contributes to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the Paris Agreement and the Agenda 26 History of the African Union.

At the level of my Ministry, we have been proactive. A number of measures have already been taken to decrease the risk of these adverse conditions to the population. In this regard, the National Multi-Hazard Emergency Alert System is being implemented by the National Risk Reduction & Management Committee at the cost of Rs48 m. The system will disseminate warning and alert to a maximum number of people and stakeholders within an acceptable timeframe with the use of modern technology and through a number of communicable channels including TV, radio, mobile applications and internet portals like email, websites and social media sites. This project is in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and it is at an advanced stage of implementation.

Furthermore, the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan, which will be based on the identification of vulnerabilities and risks associated to climate change, and specific adaptation needs and measures, will help in devising appropriate disaster risk reduction and response action to face the increasing impact of global warming and climate change.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Policy Strategic Framework and Action Plan is being aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the implementation of the National Strategic Framework is being done through a National Action Plan structured around action taking place in the near term, that is, 2020-2023, during the mid-term 24-27 and the endpoint 28-30.

Together the National Action Plan and the National Strategic Framework, provide a single approach to disaster risk reduction. Measures to address the gap and issues as well as other required disaster risk reduction and management activities form the basis of the Action Plan and have been grouped into five focus areas and working groups as follows –

- (i) institutional arrangement;
- (ii) warning and alert;
- (iii) risk reduction and preparedness;
- (iv) disaster response, and
- (v) disaster recovery.

The document, which is expected to be finalised by the end of November 2020, will provide the necessary policy guidance for whole of the institution and whole of society coordinated and harmonised approach to further strengthen our resilience to increased risks due to climate change and disasters.

In the same breadth, our country has benefited from the assistance of the United Nations to prepare the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative, that is, the CADRI report. This report was handed to my Ministry on the 13 of October 2020. It confirmed the strength of the Disaster Risk Management System in Mauritius in terms of cyclone preparedness and its community-based disaster response team. The report also stipulates that reducing exposure and vulnerability of the population and economy will require additional effort, ranging from increasing access to risk information to creating incentives for the enforcement of the regulatory framework.

At the level of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre, with the advent of the increasing climate change impact, several measures are being implemented, one of which is the Community Disaster Response Programme.

Training is being delivered to the members of the community by resource persons from the Police, Special Mobile Force, National Coast Guard, Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, the Mauritius Meteorological Service, Police de l'Environnement, Ministry of Health and the Mauritius Red Cross amongst others. The programme has rapidly gained in importance as a requirement to train committee members to response to emergency situations in terms of relief and assistance to vulnerable people, disaster survivors and victims. Additionally, by way of simulation exercise, a culture of disaster risk reduction, including enhanced preparedness for effective response, is promoted as called for by Sendai framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

The Climate Change Bill also presents a systematic framework where people from different walks of life and all levels of Government are given the opportunity to participate in addressing climate change. The Paris Agreement, which belongs to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, requires all nations to reduce greenhouse gas emission rapidly to strengthen the resilience and adapt to the impact of climate change. To achieve the UNFCCC goal for limiting global temperature rise to below 2°C over the preindustrial level, the world must consider transforming economic sectors to control net carbon emission.

To become resilient to the current unexpected future impact of climate change, companies should contribute to this SDG, that is, SDG no.13 by decarbonising the operation and supply chain through continuous improving energy efficiency, reducing the carbon footprint of the product, service and processes, and investment in the development of innovative low carbon products and services.

In this regard, I will call upon all stakeholders, be it in public and private, to undertake climate risk assessment and develop customised climate change response strategies which take local circumstances into account. To enable such initiative, the Local Government Act is being amended in section 117(3) to provide that every application for a building and land use permit should be in accordance with any guideline issued under the new climate change legal framework.

The Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management which comprises of the Meteorological Service, the National Disaster Risk Management Council and the local authorities are working seamlessly to enhance our early warning system for extreme weather and climate event, and through Municipalities and District Councils to improve the readiness of our citizens to address and avert climate induced disasters. However, for the foreseeable future, climate change and global warming will continue to be an unfortunate occurrence with devastating impact worldwide. In the next several decades, storm surges and high tide combined with sea-level rise and land subsidence will further increase flooding in many regions. Sea-level rise will continue because the ocean takes a very long time to respond to warmer conditions at the earth's surface. Ocean water will continue to warm and sea-level will continue to rise at rate equal or higher than those of the current century.

In some studies, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has been mentioned about 50 years' time, the sea-level may go up by one metre and countries like Kiribati, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands and even some islands of the Maldives may disappear. Climate change represents one of the single biggest threats to sustainable development and its widespread impact burdens the poorest and the most vulnerable in a disproportionate manner. Those effects have a direct bearing on the other sustainable development goals.

Through the Bill before this House, the Government has chosen to pursue climate action and sustainable development in an integrated and coherent way. Bold action is being taken to address climate change and deal with its impact comprehensively to successfully achieve the sustainable development goal to which we, as a nation, are committed to.

With these remarks, Sir, I would like to thank my colleague for bringing this important Bill to the House. This Bill has the potential to change our life in the years to come. It will help us to leave a better world for our children and for the generations to come.

With this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Nando Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

(10.23 p.m.)

MOTION OF DISALLOWANCE

CONTRIBUTION SOCIALE GÉNÉRALISÉE REGULATIONS 2020

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name -

“This Assembly resolves that the Contribution Sociale Généralisée Regulations 2020 published under Government Notice No. 214 of 2020 and laid on the Table of the Assembly on 03 November 2020, be disallowed.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not know whether it is going to be a night of daggers drawn, but let me, right from the outset, make it quite clear that as holder of a constitutional post, I cannot remain unmoved, insensitive, when an utmost injustice is being done to a majority of the citizens of our country.

Secondly, this Motion of Disallowance is largely due to the outcry of hundreds of thousands of taxpayers, entrepreneurs, and a large segment of the population who do not want a divided country, but want to be part of a nation where burdens are shared equitably. Responsibilities are collective, albeit differentiated and rights are equal. In one word, we all agree that we have rights and obligations. However, there is a rallying call for effective dialogue and consultation among partners to face the daunting challenges. Confrontation with the private sector when we are facing an insipid, invisible enemy is unnecessary. The key word is fairness, but as opposed to the current regime being a credible partner, it has been acting as a real bully in the manner in which it has imposed the *Contribution Sociale*

Généralisée on our citizens. What is it that we want? We want a fair pension system for our nation. And this is what the country needs, and I will demonstrate to the House and the nation that the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is just anything but fair.

Universal non-contributory pension for all was indeed a landmark decision. As for those who are self-employed or in the formal sector, contribution to the NPF cap at the threshold of Rs18,740 brings an additional revenue after retirement, while those who have subscribed to a private pension are paid more; they have their individual accounts. What is the agenda of this Government? To many people, not only the private sector but also those in the public sector, they say that the agenda of Government is an agenda of bad taste. Employees of the public sector will certainly perceive the benefits of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* without any contribution from their pocket, and this, in addition to benefits payable under other statutory schemes. In other words, the new recruits in the public service will perceive the benefits of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* as well as the entitlements under the Civil Service Pension Scheme or the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds. On the other hand, new recruits in the private sector will -

- (a) perceive the benefits of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* only in their Basic Retirement Pension after the age of 65;
- (b) will see their taxes used to pay the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* of their public sector counterparts, and
- (c) will have no entitlement at all to payments from the National Pension Fund.

The *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is, in fact, divisive, colourable, unnecessary, and it is a false start.

The Minister of Finance, unfortunately, has acted impulsively and I still can't understand how he has been able to convince his Cabinet colleagues of the alleged merits of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, when France, the cradle of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* has decided to revisit the latter and introduced a system of taxation which is fair and easy to collect and a system of pension scheme which is just. The wide protests organised by the *Gilets Jaunes* in France were largely due to the unfairness of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*. There are, indeed, lessons to be learnt.

The Minister of Finance, shortly after a Cabinet meeting on 22 October last month, announced a *Plan de Relance Economique*, and in a reply to a question from the Press, stated

that the CSG has been introduced to narrow the budget deficit of Government. *Pour équilibrer le budget*, he said. This is the naked truth and this is the blunt truth!

COVID-19, the insipid, invisible enemy has enabled the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) to collect maximum data to submit to the Minister and impose the collection of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* as and when required. Professionals, skilled or non-skilled individuals in the informal sector will have a short respite, but, sooner or later, it can be expected that they will be equally fleeced. The *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* contribution of Rs150 per month will, indeed, be short-lived for those in the informal sector. This will be a summer of discontent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and if you recall, we intervened forcefully in the debates on the Budget and in the Finance Bill to draw the attention of those sitting on the Government bench and the country at large, that the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is, first and foremost, a tax and an additional burden on income-earners in the private sector as compared to their counterparts from the public sector.

The middle-income group, more than anybody else in the private sector, will walk between the anvil and the hammer. Job losses may be coming in battalions and the number of persons on the dole will rise while additional changes will be unbearable for many enterprises.

The Wage Assistance Scheme is going to an end and tens of thousands of unemployed are desperate for unemployment benefits or the Wage Assistance Scheme. They are for closures, and the number of houses going for sale is on the increase. The victims are mainly from the private sector and include both the formal and the informal sectors. As I have said, we can expect a summer of discontent. Wait and you will see what may happen in January.

The *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* has rocked our pension system aside. And in my intervention on the Budget debates on 04 June 2020, that is, more than five months ago, I told this House and the nation as a whole, that the issue of Pension Reform in the Budget Speech of the Minister of Finance was an instance of half-truth or no truth, an example of opacity which could mislead the average Mauritian. I explained that the Minister's averments might well mark the end of the non-contributory universal pension, at least, as you have known it until his appointment as Minister. And I was right, because the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, a contributory measure will be used to top up all the increases to the benefits of it, up to now non-contributory pension of those aged 60 and above as from July 2023. I said it then, and I repeat it now. Our pension system has been rocked aside. Under this

Government, it appears that old-age pension will no longer be universal but will be targeted. What did the hon. Prime Minister promise on World Elderly Day in October 2019? A progressive increase in the non-contributory pension from Rs9,000 to Rs13,500 before 2024.

Yet, at paragraphs 165 to 168 of his Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance announced that the additional guaranteed monthly income generated through the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* will only be paid to citizens above the normal retirement age of 65. In other words, those pensioners in the age bracket between 60 and 64 will not receive the progressive increase in the basic retirement pension from Rs9,000 to Rs13,500. But then, what is exactly the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*?

Unfortunately, the Government shamelessly kept the CSG in a sort of nebulous cloud for months and not many really knew what it was. Here, I must pay tribute to the Association of Actuaries for a clear campaign of explanation in which they unfolded brilliantly the ins and outs of what is, in fact, an unfair and arbitrary taxation measure. They explained, through one Mr Richard Lee, that Basic Retirement Pension is like bread and butter; the National Pension Fund like cheese, and the Civil Pension Fund like jam. Thus, at retirement, the public sector has bread, butter and jam, while the private sector has bread, butter and cheese, but, with the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, the CSG has been devised by the hon. Minister of Finance to top up bread and butter for everyone nationally, that is, for those in the public and private sectors.

However, as from now, with the advent of CSG, any new recruit in the private sector will have no cheese while a new recruit from the public sector will still have the top-up bread and butter, which everybody will have, and will have his jam also. In other words, the hon. Minister of Finance has arbitrarily and unfavourably changed the pension regime of the members of the private sector while maintaining that of the public sector; reducing the pension returns of the employees of the private sector while maintaining the pension returns of the public sector.

Furthermore, originally, the Government saw that only the private sector was going to contribute to the CSG. So, only the private sector was going to contribute to the topping up of the bread and butter for the whole nation. The public sector was not going to contribute to the CSG, but is still going to benefit from the topping up of bread and butter as the additional monthly funds generated through the CSG will be used to pay the additional retirement pension of citizens above the normal retirement age of 65 nationally.

This is outrageous. While the private sector will only get bread and butter and the public sector will retain bread, butter and jam, Government added insult to injury by adding that only private sector would have to contribute to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*. This revolting partiality was decried by those who understood what this despicable Government tried to hide at Budget time.

Devant la levée de boucliers, confronted to the public outcry regarding this discriminatory aspect of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* whereby only the private sector contributes to the CSG, this arrogant minority Government tried to come up with a solution which is, in fact, even more unfair, arbitrary and insulting to the workers of the private sector. It decided that the CSG will apply to the public sector, but that it is the Government which will pay for. Shocking, indeed! The *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* will be made to apply to the public sector, but it is to be paid from public funds, from the taxpayers' money, from the earnings of the private sector employees. What kind of despicable Government is this?

Mr Speaker, I am not going to drop the names of those who are trying to divide the country, but is the Government itself knowingly embarking into divisive policies with such an arbitrary, unfair and possibly unlawful measure as the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*? A regime needs to have a conscience. The private sector does not only comprise of fat cats but of a wide cycle of micro, small and medium size operators, who account for more than 60% of employment in Mauritius. To many of these micro, small and medium size companies, the reduction of their pension returns through the phasing out and the cessation of contribution to the National Pension Fund is a hard blow and will result, for some, in shortfall in their contributory pension and, for others, in the absence of a contributory pension altogether.

According to the Association of Actuaries, the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is unsustainable and will collapse like a pack of cards after a few, if not after the first payment. How much will be collected in a year from the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*? Rs3.5 billion. How much will be needed for the disbursement? About Rs6 m. will be disbursed to meet the needs of our ageing friends in 2023, that is, in the first year of payment. What will happen the following year and in subsequent years? Who will fork out the payments and where will the money come from? It can only come from taxpayers. It is more controversial than the white elephant at Cote d'Or; the infamous stadium which cost more than Rs5 billion and is today an exhibit of fraud and corruption at the expense of the taxpayers' money.

Spend, spend, spend, but who will pay? Asking for more and more from the Bank of Mauritius, which the IMF has reminded us, money taken from the Bank of Mauritius is a debt and not a gift. Unbearable debt is their mantra and their answers: tax, tax, tax first and foremost those in the private sector. And I appeal to Government. As I have stated earlier, the private sector does not only comprise of fat cats. You have many people in the private sector who are not rent seekers but people who have a culture of innovation; people who have learnt to take the rung of social and economic ladder; people who have invested time and money to make sure that they can turn things round and contribute to the socio-economic status of this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if, as anticipated by the Association of Actuaries, the CSG is unsustainable after one payment and after just a few years, imagine what will happen then, in 2024, when there will be only 2.4% persons working to pay for the pension of one retiree. Yet, a recent IMF study mentioned that the National Pension Fund would be sustainable at least until 2050 compared to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, which probably is unsustainable after one payment.

As I said earlier, Mr Deputy Speaker, to add insult to injury, employees of the private sector are called upon to subsidise those in the public sector and fund the Rs4,500 difference between the current Rs9,000 basic retirement pension and the electoral promise of Rs13,500 by 2023. Although we now know that the increase in basic retirement pension will be paid only to those aged 65 or above, as I stated earlier, no increase, therefore, for those aged between 60 and 64 years old. The electoral pledge has become a false electoral promise, and this Prime Minister certainly would claim that he is a man of principles. Even disbursement will depend on the capacity to pay. The country is sitting on a time bomb. Putting our senior citizens first is a ploy, deceitful and opaque lie; a colourable device used by an indecent regime which is becoming increasingly provocative. A highly controversial, unfair, unjust and arbitrary measure has been implemented to do away with the National Pension Fund which was introduced in 1978 by the Labour Government to help workers in the private sector to be dignified with a pension when they reach the age of retirement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me refer to the reply given by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development following the PNQ on the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*. Of course, known for his talent to be full of sound and the reply, unfortunately, signified nothing to justify the introduction of the *Contribution Sociale*

Généralisée. How can we forget the inconsistencies in the replies to the PNQ from what was said in the Budget? What I now know is that according to Business Mauritius, and I quote –

“The employees and employers stand to be prejudiced inasmuch as the funds standing to credit in the individual accounts at the National Pension Fund will be used to pay its outstanding liabilities with no possibility of secured long-term investment, resulting in dilapidation of National Pension Fund assets and funds. With the cessation of payment to the National Pension Fund as from September 2020 and the intended start of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, which we are told by experts, is highly likely to collapse. Future private sector retirees will be worse off. On the other hand, the public sector retirees will have their civil service schemes and Government has created a complete and unacceptable *déphasage* between those in the public and private sector.”

Furthermore, as I stated earlier, it is the State, in other words, the taxpayer who will need to pick up the pieces from the aftermath of an anticipated financial collapse. This will inevitably happen under poor economic conditions when *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* tax receipt from the poor performing economy will be even more grossly insufficient.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the post-Budget Speech breakfast meeting of the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, it became clear that contribution to the National Pension Fund will be discontinued, although he insisted that the National Pension Fund is not being abolished. In effect, whatever the hon. Minister pretends, the blunt reality is that the National Pension Fund will be phased out. The hon. Minister went as far as to say that the monthly payment of Rs4,500 to those aged 65 and above will be made only and only if the economic climate is conducive. Yet, all the workers in the private sector will be worse off.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for once, I congratulate Business Mauritius, which has circulated a well-illustrated pamphlet to highlight the far-reaching consequences of *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*. And in trying to justify the arbitrary, unfair, unjust, inequitable imposition of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development insisted that the great majority of companies, enterprises and individuals will pay less under the CSG than they are actually paying under the National Pension Fund. They even spoke of 81% or 87% of companies paying less contribution under the CSG as compared to the National Pension Fund.

To recap, we were always aware that both employees and employers make contribution to the NPF of the order of 3% and 6 % respectively. What used to be less known is that there is a maximum figure from which those contributions are taken. In other words, there is a salary threshold, that is, a cap on National Pension Fund contribution at the salary threshold of Rs18,740. This means that the maximum monthly contribution to the NPF can never exceed Rs562.20 monthly, that is, 3% of Rs18,740, whatever be the monthly salary of the employee.

The *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, for its part, would require 1.5% contribution from an employee and 3% from the employer, for employees earning up to Rs50,000. Thus, for all employees earning less than Rs37,480, it is true to say that they will pay less contribution to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* than to the NPF. It is also true to say that employers paying employees in that salary bracket will also pay less under the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* than under the NPF. It would seem that the hon. Minister is right and that since a majority of the working population earn less than Rs30,480 per month, a majority of companies and individuals will pay less under *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* than under the NPF. But this is exactly where the hypocrisy and the betrayal of this Government lie.

When people contribute to the NPF every month, at retirement age, they get a contributory pension, which Mr Richard Lee called ‘the bread and butter’. They will contribute more to the NPF, but they will get a contributory pension which will add to their non-contributory basic retirement pension, which Mr Lee called ‘bread, butter and cheese’. Now, in lieu and stead of their contribution to the NPF, for those earning less than Rs37,480 per month, both employers and employees will pay less in terms of contribution to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*. However, at retirement age, they will get no contributory pension under the NPF, as the hon. Minister has told the nation that the contribution to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* will be used to add to the current basic retirement pension. In other words, there will be no cheese. The *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is not only unfair, unjust, arbitrary, inequitable; it amounts to a real rip off from the pockets of the National Pension Fund payees.

Government tried to make out that people and companies would pay less, but, in fact, it failed to mention that they will lose the benefit of what used to be the contributory pension under the National Pension Fund. The hon. Minister and the whole Government should be ashamed of this masquerade. And some, on the other side, have tried to argue that things are

in order, because the contributions made to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* will be used to make up the Rs4,500 of added benefits which will be paid to those aged 65 and above as from July 2023 under what is, up to now, the basic retirement pension. This is a flawed argument since Government will be taking what would be otherwise the National Pension Fund money to fund what is normally Basic Retirement Pension, and some will pay for all. Even if the comparison was appropriate, it should be observed that in terms of return, indeed, the potential monthly pay out under the National Pension Fund is at Rs6,240 for an employee earning Rs18,740 and above, whereas the stated benefit for the same employee earning Rs18,740 and above under the CSG will be Rs4,500 per month in July 2023 when this amount will hopefully be added to his retirement pension benefit if he has reached the age of 65 and above, an amount which is almost 30% less than he would get under the National Pension Fund.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe that the collateral damage will be far-reaching since the contribution to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* as opposed to the contribution to the NPF is taken from the full salary of those concerned. It is unlikely that enterprises will invest in a private pension fund for employees. The possibility of a private pension plan to complement contribution to the NPF as it used to be before the termination of contribution to the NPF, therefore, is unlikely. What happens when the burden becomes unbearable? A responsible Government is expected to act intelligently and with integrity to protect all citizens and vow for an equitable sharing of the burden. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my appeal is: don't stop the contribution to the NPF; don't phase out the NPF. It needs some polishing by responsible and responsive Government. Stop this arrogance; stop being provocative. We have to put our best endeavour to improve quality services and widen our economic base to improve the wealth and health of the nation.

Let us look at affordability and resilience. When I recall the unprecedented and scandalous manner in which I was not allowed to put my PNQ on pension reform and the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* during the period of the Budget debates and the comments I have heard from enlightened observers and experts on this issue, it appears that the financing of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* has not been put through any sort of rigorous economic or mathematical model to test its affordability and sustainability. It seems to be largely based on the whimsical decision by the Minister of Finance and Government, for whatever reason. Just to gage how unaffordable the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is, one just need to look at the UK basic pension, which is approximately Rs30,000 per month

for a country with a GDP 200 times that of Mauritius and a per capita income 4 times higher than that of Mauritius.

This Government, unfortunately, has manipulated, I would say shamefully, our sacrosanct *pension de vieillesse* and started targeting. There was a Technical Committee which was set up and a High-Powered Committee. But what has been their recommendation in relation to pension reform? Have they made any reliable proposal, any valuable proposal And yet, what was expected? At least they would have told us that there will be an increase in the level of percentage contribution or raising the contributory salary ceiling; at least we could have understood. At least these would have been some proposals. Could these tweaks have helped enhance the long-term standard of living rather than go back to the regime of reduced disposable income for the majority of the working class? We would have expected that Committee to tell us. Come, call it a blue print, but, at least tell us what are the alternative proposal, what need to be done to secure long-term investment, to ensure that appropriate dividends are going to be reaped in respect of investment to be made. Did the Technical Committee, Mr Deputy Speaker or the High-Powered Ministerial Committee on pension reform consider whether the termination of contribution to the NPF would not adversely affect the monetary policy alignment of Government with its fiscal objective?

The NPF has been, for years, a significant buyer of long-term Government bonds at the rate of up to Rs15 billion a year, and with this requirement gradually winding down, the State may no longer be able to raise funding from capital markets in the long-term quite as easily as it used to be. Has the Technical Committee and the High-Powered Ministerial Committee on pension reform considered all these aspects?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, time will tell and time is telling us that you cannot turn the clock backwards, but a responsible Government can make a U-turn for the betterment of its people. As matters stand, with such disincentives to be in employment, it is likely to precipitate employers to fall in stressed economic conditions where the salaried staffs are in the middle income bracket, for which pension contributions are higher, and they are the ones which tend to pay more in terms of *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*.

What would be the consequences if Government doesn't reverse policy? There is hardly any redeeming feature for the CSG; it is 'pay as you go'. It will increase the contribution rate for pension funding, decrease actual pension payments made during retirement and aid to further usher in a vicious circle of poverty for private sector employees.

Middle income workers will end up with less disposable income and are likely to struggle to make alternative savings to fund for their retirement needs. It may even deprive the State of the ability to raise taxes in the future, as workers could revolt and leave the country due to the long-term psychological effect of reduced prospect of social mobility at work.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by saying that there have been many untruths from this Government on the issue of pension reform and the imposition of the CSG. I have come with, of course, the motion that the CSG Regulation 2020 must be disallowed and have put across arguments very forcefully based on reasons which are highly justified. I have stated that neither the Technical Committee nor the Ministerial Committee has come up with alternative solutions and to press upon Government that what is broken should not be mended, but if it needs to be polished, please, by all means, do it. But what Government has done? It has chosen to unnecessarily be in a confrontational state at a time when there is a rallying call to bring all the stakeholders together.

And let me remind also the House what the hon. Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity said in relation to the Technical Committee on pension reform and High-Powered Ministerial Committee. It is not that she deliberately tried to mislead us, but I would have expected her to say that the Committee hardly met and, in fact, did not meet between the period starting November 2019 to the date of announcement of the CSG in the Budget Speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me finally say that the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is a clandestine form of taxation which constitutes a rip-off in the pockets of employees of the private sector. And I have stated earlier that under the CSG, they will pay less money than under the NPF, but certainly they will be worse off. What the Minister did not tell them is that in the return for *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* money, they have lost all their entitlements to a contributory pension.

I would impress upon Government it's never too late, to think twice but to think wisely, to reverse a decision which is doing a lot of harm and if anything, it's a harm that maybe irreparable and it will be difficult for those who are struggling, especially those who are victims of this insipid, invisible enemy, who are finding it difficult to turn things round despite concessionary loans being extended to them. Let me impress upon Government, it's time to bring everybody to have frank discussion, to highlight what are the issues, what are the challenges, how to turn challenges into opportunity. Government has to put an end to its

culture of opacity. It cannot forever continue to promote a culture of opacity and postpone the day of reckoning. There is a limit to human endurance; beyond a certain endurance, be careful of the summer of discontent.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Motion need to be seconded!

Mr Uteem seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. May I request Members to be mindful as to the time they take to debate on this matter. I shall now call upon hon. Minister Callichurn.

(11.16 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you for allowing me to intervene on this debate following the motion of disallowance tabled by the Leader of Opposition, which I must say is totally unwarranted and I shall explain why in the course of my debate.

First of all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although debating on this motion today is not against the rules of parliamentary debates, however, it is my duty to remind the House that we should not lose track of the fact that a case has been lodged before the Supreme Court whereby the constitutionality of the new provisions of the National Pensions Act introducing the CSG is being challenged. In my opinion the issue should have been left to the Supreme Court for determination.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listen carefully to the Leader of the Opposition. He has formulated many critics regarding the CSG. Listening to him, I understand that tonight he is the voice of the private sector in this august Assembly. He has been voicing out the apprehension of the private sector but did not propose any solution to the problem. We all have been talking about the unsustainability of the National Pension Fund and since decades. They were in Government for nearly 10 years. What has been done to correct the injustice which will be done to the future generation? Nothing! It's very easy to come and speak out on behalf of some quarters without getting facts and figures right.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand we are in a democracy and we are free to defend whoever we want.

I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we, on this side of the House, we are not at war with the private sector. We have never been. We consider them as a stakeholder. We have in the past held several consultations on different important issues of national interest and we shall continue to do so. It is just that we are in disagreement on certain fundamental issues and when we are in disagreement, we need to make it heard, like they did.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some associations within the private organisations want us to review the Workers' Rights Act. Let's not forget when we were debating in this House on the COVID-19 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, when amendments were being brought to the Workers' Rights Act, to give a breathing space to enterprises so that they can sustain in these difficult times, what was not said by the Opposition? What kind of campaign was not staged, done by the Opposition? They even incited workers of this country to go and march on the street of Port Louis against this Government because the Government amended certain provisions of the Workers' Rights Act. Now, they are the very persons defending the private sector when they want the Workers' Rights Act to the detriment of the workers to be amended. I am sure the population out there is taking good note.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand they want to stage a war between employees of the private sector and that of the public sector. They are making us believe that public sector employees will not be called to contribute. We never said that public sector employees will not contribute. When did we say that? I hope interveners after me give us a date and time when we mentioned that public sector employees will not contribute. The Pay Research Bureau which regulates the pay and conditions of private sector employees is mandated to look into the issue. It is an independent institution under the Ministry of the Civil Service and Administrative Reform. They have the mandate to dictate what to include, what not to include and, for that, there need to be a reform in the first place for them to decide on the contribution of the employees of the public sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come to the debate. Since the presentation of the Budget 2020-2021 by my colleague the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, the hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, there have been critics mainly from the private sector against this reform of our pension system.

Let me state, here, in this august Assembly, that the Government is once again defying all odds in coming up with a solution rather than adopting a *laissez aller faire* attitude like I have just pointed out earlier.

Reform of our pension system is something long overdue, other Governments including that of the Labour party Government had since long identified the unsustainability of our pension system. However, no one dared to bring in-depth reform to correct a wrong which would inevitably have an incidence on the economy and the future generation.

I must say that in politics unpopular measures are always postponed for later but not with this Government under the able leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have all been listening to the mantra Mauritius is an ageing population since many years. At the same time, we are proud of the fact that our old citizens are living longer, in better conditions, with a monthly pension now at Rs9,000 and with better healthcare. However, we do acknowledge the fact that the pressure on the active population in terms of contribution to the pension system is becoming unbearable.

In its form, the National Pension Fund (NPF) was funded by mandatory contributions from employees and employers, as well as by returns from investments of the fund.

Allow me to remind the House that the NPF, created in 1978 following the proclamation of the National Pensions Act 1976, is currently one of the main established investors in Mauritius, holding some 8% of the stocks listed on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius and the fund is currently equivalent to 25% of the GDP of Mauritius.

As I said before, with the phenomenon of an ageing population, something had to be done at once as the previous pension scheme was no more sustainable. Hence, we had the responsibility to come up with reforms and changes so as to prevent the whole contributory system to crumble in the near future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at paragraph 166 of the last Budget Speech, there is mention of the introduction of a contributory, participative and collective system which is now known as *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG).

M. le président, permettez-moi de vous citer les explications données par le Grand Argentier le 16 Juin dernier lors de son *summing-up* sur les débats budgétaires au Parlement. Il a dit –

« L'un des objectifs du Finance Bill 2020 est de créer les conditions nécessaires pour le maintien des acquis sociaux obtenus par des Mauriciens à travers les années. Et l'introduction de la CSG demeure une étape majeure pour assurer la durabilité de notre system social. Nous introduisons un nouveau mécanisme, celui de la CSG, pour

répondre aux limites à moyen et long termes du National Pension Fund (NPF). Ce fonds, soit le NPF, est depuis des années déficitaire ».

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, effective as from September 2020, la *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) is replacing the National Pension Fund (NPF) contributions.

Whilst the standard Basic Retirement Pension of Rs9,000 will continue to be paid to individual aged 60, any increase in benefits will be paid through CSG to individuals aged 65 and above.

M. le président, cette réforme de la pension universelle n'est pas un caprice du gouvernement. Elle a été maintes fois suggérée, notamment par le FMI (Fonds Monétaire International) qui avait indiqué dans un précédent rapport que le maintien de notre système actuel de pension aurait une incidence importante et négative sur les finances publiques.

Parmi les options que nous avons, il y avait notamment celle de réduire le *Basic Retirement Pension (BRP)* à Rs7,000 qui est à Rs9,000 actuellement ou le ciblage de la pension, avec un *BRP* destiné qu'à ceux ayant un revenu de Rs25,000 par mois ou d'augmenter la taxe. Et finalement, monsieur l'honorable leader de l'Opposition cette proposition émanant du secteur privé de payer la pension à l'âge de 65 ans au lieu de 60 ans.

M. le président, un *caring Government* comme le nôtre ne pouvait considérer ces options, car elles auraient été injustes.

D'autre part, nous sommes inévitablement confrontés au phénomène démographique du vieillissement de la population mauricienne. Le nombre de citoyens âgés de plus de 60 ans devrait presque doubler dans les prochaines décennies, passant de 226,000 en 2019 à 410,000 en 2068 avec pour conséquence déjà palpable que le ratio de la population active par rapport à la population de retraités se décline drastiquement.

Je ne me ferai pas l'oiseau de mauvais augure aujourd'hui, mais les projections donnent froid dans le dos.

Les experts affirment que le nombre de personnes en âge de travailler va inévitablement connaître un infléchissement passant de 825,000 en 2019 à 395,000 en 2100, soit une diminution de plus de 50%.

Il est ainsi clair que ces indicateurs auront un effet certain et néfaste sur notre système de pension. Contrairement à Maurice, la plupart des pays, connaissant un vieillissement de leur population, ont fondé leur système de pension sur un modèle collectif comme la CSG.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote Michael Drexler who is the Head of Financial and Infrastructure Systems at the World Economic Forum. He stated –

“The anticipated increase in longevity and resulting ageing populations is the financial equivalent of climate change. We must address it now or accept that its adverse consequences will haunt future generations, putting an impossible strain on our children and grandchildren.”

End of quote.

We all know by now the effect of climate change is having in different parts of the world and different countries are putting in place measures to counter its effect. The MSM-ML Government led by hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is one which has always worked for the benefit of the population. Needless for me to remind the House that it was during our mandate that this country has witnessed major social measures being introduced: for example, the minimum wage, negative income tax, Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund and others.

We do remember that some employers did raise concern when our Government wanted to introduce the first abovementioned ground-breaking measure, that is, the national minimum wage. They were saying, like today, that they would not be able to pay such an increase in salary and that many people would lose their jobs as a consequence.

However, when the national minimum wage came into effect in January 2018, what did we see? All the qualms of the private sector were simply unfounded. *Je parle en connaissance de cause*. According to a report of the National Wage Consultative Council, it was found that the introduction of the national minimum wage did not impact negatively on business and on employment. Our Government also came with the negative income tax. Instead of paying taxes, employees who were earning below a certain amount received financial support from the State and are continuing to do so.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me also mention one of the measures we are all proud of, that is the substantial increase of the Basic Retirement Pension (BRP). Allow me here to remind the Leader of the Opposition that from 2006 to 2014, under the Labour regime, the BRP went only from Rs2,802 to Rs3,623, that is less than Rs1,000 in eight years of Labour Government reign which represents barely an increase of 6.5% per year. And when we were campaigning for an increase in the BRP in 2014, the same party in alliance with the MMM criticised -

“you will not be able to pay. You are making false promises. *Zot p couyon ban vieux dimoun la! Malédiction pour lor zot!*”

Where are we today? From Rs6000 to Rs9000!

In comparison, from 2014 to 2020, under the MSM-led regime, the BRP was increased by 148%, increasing its amount from Rs3,623 to Rs9,000. An increase of Rs5,377 in six years, or almost Rs900 per year. Today, as a matter of fact, the Mauritian BRP is 20% above the relative poverty line which is approximately Rs7,000 which is recommended by the OCDE (*Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques*).

M. le président, permettez-moi de revenir sur une analyse de mon collègue, le ministre Renganaden Padayachy dans le sillage de l'introduction de la CSG.

Lors de sa conférence de presse le 23 octobre dernier, le ministre des Finances a affirmé que 81% des entreprises paieront moins avec la CSG. C'est vrai, M. le leader de l'Opposition. On ne peut que se réjouir de cela, car nous vivons des moments difficiles avec la contraction économique due au COVID-19. En ayant moins à contribuer, une grande majorité des PME se retrouveront avec une meilleure compétitivité.

De plus, il faut dire que ce sont avant tout les grosses entreprises, à l'instar de celles qui font des chiffres d'affaires à partir de R 1 milliard, qui paieront plus. Ce qui est plus juste et permet un rééquilibrage tel que le ministre des Finances l'a déjà dit et qui est résumé en une seule phrase. 'Notre philosophie vise à prendre un peu avec ceux qui ont de l'argent pour donner à ceux n'en ont pas'. Suivant cette réflexion, il est ainsi prévu que les entreprises engagées dans l'exportation et le tourisme paieront moins.

M. le président, nous savons que les petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) sont les plus gros employeurs à Maurice, elles représentent environ 52% de l'emploi total sur l'île. Ainsi, 84% de ces entreprises soit 12,584 sur les 15,054 PME ayant un chiffre d'affaires inférieurs à R 50 millions paieront moins sous la CSG que sous le *NPF*.

La majorité de ces entreprises se trouvent dans des secteurs, tels que l'agriculture, le secteur manufacturier et le commerce de gros et de détail. Les employés actifs dans ces secteurs sont plus susceptibles de se retrouver dans la fourchette de revenus inférieurs à R 50,000. Alors, parlant d'injustice *which is being done to the majority of the population, as mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, is purely not sustainable*. Ça ne tient pas la route.

Par conséquent, la CSG pourrait aider les PME à réduire leurs coûts opérationnels et à être plus durables, en particulier celles qui ont été profondément affectées par la pandémie COVID-19.

Elle devrait aussi conduire à une redistribution des revenus de ceux qui se situent à l'extrémité supérieure de l'échelle salariale à ceux qui sont à l'extrémité inférieure. Cette nouvelle formule peut, donc, potentiellement réduire l'écart d'inégalité des revenus à Maurice à long terme.

M. le président, under the CSG, employees with a monthly salary of less than Rs50,000 would be contributing half the rate they were contributing under the NPF. It is good to know that presently, and this is very important, out of the 120,000 beneficiaries under the NPF, 53% are receiving a monthly pension of just Rs1,000 or less. Whereas these people under the CSG will be receiving Rs4,500 in 2024 once they reach the age of 65 which represents an increase of more than 300%. So, how can this system be unjust? I do not understand!

Also, under the CSG the purchasing power of 89% of employees which represent approximately 271,224 workers will increase. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is undoubtedly that the Current Contributory System, that is the CSG is by far a fairer one. Fairer one to the employees!

M. le président, avant de conclure, je tiens à réitérer mon soutien au Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, le ministre des Finances, qui est un homme d'action, quelqu'un qui a à cœur une société où la justice sociale n'est pas un piètre mot. Il incarne les valeurs du socialisme. Quels sont ces valeurs? A ceux qui l'auront oublié, je me permets de leur rafraîchir la mémoire. Ces valeurs sont l'égalité des chances, la justice sociale, la répartition équitable des ressources, la solidarité, la lutte contre l'individualisme, l'intérêt général partagé et prévalant sur les intérêts particuliers. M. le Leader de l'Opposition, l'honorable Dr. Boolell, je doute fort que le Parti travailliste d'aujourd'hui incarne toujours ces valeurs. Par contre, le Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien (MSM), les incarne toujours et mieux que jamais.

M. le président, c'est un fait que la crise COVID-19, notamment son impact dévastateur sur l'économie, a agi comme un *wake-up call* et elle nous pousse à affiner nos prédictions et nos calculs. Il était grand temps d'agir, nous ne pouvions plus remettre à plus tard ce qui était déjà essentiel à la pérennité de notre système de pension. C'est pourquoi on ne devrait pas reculer sur la mise en place de la CSG. De ce fait, je dirais que la motion du

Dr. Arvin Boolell, Leader de l'Opposition, me parait irréfléchie, illogique et dénuée de bon sens.

Merci de votre attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. We shall break for some 20 minutes.

At 11.46 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 00.28 a.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please, be seated. I call upon hon. Reza Uteem.

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):

Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. At the outset, let us be clear about one thing, *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) is a tax; it is a tax because section 30(b) of the NPF Act provides that any amount collected by the Director General of the MRA from the CSG plus interest and penalty shall be credited to the Consolidated Fund. So, *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is not a fund. Money collected from CSG is not invested. It is placed in the Consolidated Fund. Once it is in the Consolidated Fund, it is not segregated from the other monies that sit in the Consolidated Fund. There is nothing earmarked in the Consolidated Fund to the effect that CSG will be used for a specific purpose. There is nothing provided under the law that CSG money would be used for investment purposes to generate income from which pensioners would be paid.

Now, when the Finance Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 2020 was voted in August of this year, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development was given power under section 30(b) of the National Pension Act to prescribe by way of regulation, the category of participants and employers who will have to contribute CSG and the amount they will have to contribute and the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, acting under this power, made the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* Regulation 2020 on 08 September 2020 and it is this very Regulation which is today the subject matter of the Motion of Disallowance. In this Regulation, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development sets out the list of people who have to contribute to this CSG and the amount they need to contribute. So, we see it is set out in Regulation 3, we see every employee of the private sector will have to pay CSG whether he is employed on a full-time or part-time basis, domestic workers, cooks, drivers, gardeners, *gardes-malades* and maids will have to pay CSG. Masons, cabinetmakers, plumbers,

hairdressers, artists, they all have to pay CSG. The poorest of workers earning the minimum wage will have to pay CSG. Self-employed will have to pay CSG even if their income is less than the minimum wage. Even non-citizen employees will have to pay CSG.

But how much CSG will the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development pay? How much CSG will the hon. Prime Minister pay? How much CSG will the Deputy Prime Minister pay and all the other Members of this Cabinet pay? How much CSG will the PPS pay? How much CSG will Members of the Assembly pay? I have perused through this Regulation, cover to cover, I do not see anything.

Does it mean that Ministers will not pay CSG? Surely, that cannot be the case! So, I tried again and I saw, maybe, under the definition of Public Sector Employee, Public Sector Employee means a public officer or other employee of a Ministry or Government Department. Is the Minister a public officer? Probably not, because section 89 of the Constitution provides that public officers are appointed the Public Service Commission (PSC). So, I want to know and the population wants to know, how much contribution is the Prime minister, is the Minister of Finance, is the Minister of this Government going to pay because all other employees have started to pay *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, and I hope I am really wrong.

I hope that somewhere in these Regulations, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, will show me where it is provided that he is going to pay CSG because if this is not the case, then, let us pause and think what he has just done. The law gives him, the hon. Minister of Finance, the power by regulation to determine who has to pay a tax, *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*. The Minister of Finance uses his Office as Minister of Finance and passes a regulation whereby he is not going to pay CSG, his colleagues of Cabinet will not pay CSG, his colleagues of Party who are sitting as PPS and other Members of Parliament will not pay CSG.

I really think, I really hope I am getting it wrong because if I am not getting it wrong, what does that mean? It means a Minister, who is a Public Official, has used his Office as Minister to pass a regulation to exempt himself and other Ministers from having to pay a tax. A Minister has used his Office as Minister to obtain an advantage for himself and his colleagues. A Minister has made use of his Office to obtain gratification. Now, what does that mean?

Section 7 (1), Prevention of Corruption Act provides, and I quote –

“...any public official who makes use of his office or position for a gratification for himself or another person shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to penal servitude for a term not exceeding 10 years.”

Subsection (2) of Section 7 –

“...a public official shall be presumed, until the contrary is proved, to have made use of his office or position for a gratification where he has taken any decision or action in relation to any matter in which he, or a relative or associate of his, has a direct or indirect interest.”

Does the hon. Minister of Finance have a direct interest in the amount of CSG that he has to pay? Did he take part in the decision-making when he issued the regulation, *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* Regulation 2020, which says here, “made by Minister on 08 September 2020”?

And we are not talking about misdemeanour, we are talking about a serious corruption offence under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act; we are talking about 10 years imprisonment. I wonder if the hon. Minister had consulted his fellow Cabinet Members before he made that regulation. Was it a decision of Cabinet? Was the Prime Minister privy to it? Were the Deputy Prime Minister, the Vice Prime Ministers, the Ministers? Did all of them come together and took the decision that they are not going to pay any *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*?

And if ever they argue that they are Public Officials, then let us see what Regulation 3 says. Regulation 3(c) says, “a participant is a public sector employee earning remuneration which exceeds Rs50,000 in a month,” and I’m sure all these hon. Gentlemen earn much more than Rs50,000, “his employer,” meaning us, tax payers, “shall on his behalf and, in respect of that month, pay CSG at the rate of 9% of that remuneration.” So, even if a Minister is a public sector employee, the Minister of Finance has passed a regulation so that he does not have to pay, he does not have to contribute CSG. His employer, meaning the State, the Government, the tax payers, will have to pay 9% of remuneration on his behalf. Now, is that not gratification? By doing so, has he not received an advantage? Has he not derived a direct interest? The hon. Minister Callicurn is not around. He was talking about private sector/public sector. He was saying: ‘where is it said that public sector workers are not going to pay CSG?’ It is in section 3. Section 3 says public sector employees will not pay. It is their employer who will pay on their behalf, 9 %, not them. I have nothing against public sector

employees. I admire and respect public sector employees, but the regulations are the regulations, the law is the law. The hon. Minister of Finance has passed a law so that he does not have to pay CSG. Even if he was deemed to be a public sector employee, still he will not have to pay, it will be the Ministry, it will be the Government, it will be taxpayers who will have to pay CSG on his behalf.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this alone is sufficient ground to quash the CSG regulation. This alone is so bad, where you have someone, who is both judge and party doing a law to exempt himself from having to pay any tax is anti-constitutional, in itself. It should be set aside before a court of law. Now that the hon. Ministers know what this CSG regulation is about, I hope that all the hon. Ministers, PPS and everyone will say that they do not agree that they do not have to pay anything. I hope that they will say that they do not agree that tax payers, *ti dimoun, lepep*, have to pay on their behalf. I hope they would agree that the hon. Leader of Opposition was absolutely right to bring this Motion of Disallowance to have this shameful regulation set aside, this shameful regulation which prevents Ministers from paying CSG, which requires public funds to be used to pay for their CSG.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they are also equally telling reasons to disallow the CSG, and I will try not to repeat what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said. I am going to give some examples. Why do we say the CSG is unfair and discriminatory?

Let us take the example of a family which has three sons or three daughters. They are all accountants, they could be lawyers, they could be doctors. One accountant works in the private sector, he is employed by an accounting firm. The second works in the public sector, he works in a Ministry, in Local Government. The third is self-employed, he is on his own. Let us say that all of them earn the same amount of money, Rs50,001. Now, how much CSG should one pay? The brother, the accountant, who works for an accounting firm ends up paying 3%; so Rs1500, he has to pay CSG and his employer would pay 6%, which is Rs3000. So, in total, Rs4,500 is paid. The brother, who works on his own, for himself, although he may be earning Rs50,001, he will pay only Rs150, not Rs4,500 whereas the brother who is in the Civil Service, he pays zero. He is earning Rs50,000, it is not his fault, he did not make the regulation. It is the hon. minister who decided that a civil servant, a public sector employee, is not going to pay CSG, it is his employer who is going to pay the 9% on his behalf. So, the Rs4500 for the accountant in the public sector will be paid by us, tax payers' money will be used. So, how can it be fair that, for the same work, for the same pay, you have three different

sanctions; one pays tax, one does not pay tax, the third one pays a minimal tax. What is the justification?

The Constitution provides guarantee against discrimination. Discrimination is only permissible where it is reasonably justifiable in a democratic State. Now, can someone explain to me why is it democratically acceptable that an accountant, who is in the private sector should pay Rs4,500; the accountant who is in the public sector does not pay anything, and if he is a self-employed, he pays only Rs150. What is the basis? The hon. Minister has to explain what is the rationale for it? Why is there this discrimination? If you want to have CSG, you have taken a policy decision, you are going to abolish NPF and you are going to replace it by CSG, but, at least, treat everyone equally: same work, same pay, same penalty.

Now, this Regulation does not make discrimination only among the employees, it also creates discrimination amongst the retirees, the pensioners. It creates three categories of pensioners. The first category would be the retired civil servants. The retired civil servant will get his *pension de vieillesse*, which is what we call commonly the Basic Retirement Pension, non-contributory, he gets his Civil Service Pension Scheme and he will get the additional pension which is going to be paid out of CSG. So, this is the first category, he gets three pensions.

Then, the second category are the retired private sector employees who have contributed to NPF, they are already retired, they will get basic pension, *pension vieillesse*, they get contribution under NPF, and they get the additional pension under the CSG. So, they also get three pensions.

Now, the third category of pensioners, retired people from the private sector, the self-employed and those who have not worked, have not contributed to the CSG. This third category of people, they will get only the Basic Retirement Pension and the additional pension. So, we have a situation where the group of people who are going to get the most money when they retire is the civil servant who will get three different pensions. And yet, the civil servants are the ones who are going to contribute the least, they contribute zero to CSG, thanks to the hon. Minister of Finance in the Regulation. Zero contribution and they get the most, lucky them, I wish I was like them! But what about the private sector? They are the ones who contribute most, they are the ones who have unlimited contribution, 9% of unlimited amount of salary and, at the end of the day, they will get only the Basic Retirement Pension and the additional pension under the CSG. Now, is that fair? Is that what we talk

about equality, equal distribution? Everybody, when retiring, should have the same right. They all work hard for this country. We all have to pay tribute to them. So, why create discrimination by way of Regulation amongst retired people? Why treat people from the private sector differently from people in the public sector?

The next question is: how much will we get out of this CSG? The Minister of Labour, hon. Callichurn mentioned that we will get Rs4,500 as soon as we reach 65, retirement age; he said it. Section 30(e) of the National Pension Funds Act provides that, by way of Regulation, the hon. Minister of Finance will provide for the benefit. He is already telling us how much we have to pay, but how much are we going to get? Let's go through the Regulation, nothing, section 2, definition; section 3, rates of CSG; section 4, deduction by employers; section 5, monthly return; section 6 annual return; section 7, payment of CSG; section 8, arrears; section 9, maximal penalty; section 10, waiver of penalty; section 11, cessation of business; section 12, commencement. Where is it stated in the Regulation that when a person reaches the age of 65, he is going to receive Rs4,500? Why is it not in the Regulation? We are told pay now, contribute now and the Minister does not provide in the Regulation that we will get Rs4,500 when we come to retirement age? So, we just contribute and we don't know what we are going to get out of it?

When there was the National Pension Fund, everybody, every worker who contributed, they knew how much they will get, they had points calculated and they knew how much they will get when they come to retirement. In fact, even before they came to retirement, they could withdraw some money out of this National Pension Fund, for example, if there was an injury, if they needed money for medical expense, but with the CSG, nothing, it's a tax, there is no fund. So, if you are injured, you can't get money out of CSG because there is no Regulation. There is actually no Regulation telling you how much you can get and when you can get it.

Answering to a PNQ on 12 June 2020, the hon. Minister of Finance was not even able to commit to pay the Rs4,500. This is what he said, I quote –

“...au vu de la situation actuelle, où on est en train d'affronter une des pires crises économiques, nous, nous maintenons l'essentiel à R 9,000, et nous avons le courage de le dire, oui, c'est à partir de 2023 qu'il y aura des augmentations pour la pension pour ceux qui partent à l'âge de la retraite et que ce sera la CSG qui va payer cette augmentation.”

So, first he says that CSG is going to pay for the increase. The increase will only kick in 2023 and it will only be paid to people at retirement age, meaning 65 years old. But then, he goes on to add, I quote –

“Donc, oui, on va maintenir la BRP à R 9,000 et qu’à partir de juin 2023, si la situation économique le permet, je dis bien, si la situation économique le permet en fonction - là, c’est l’économiste qui parle, ce n’est plus le ministre des Finances, parce qu’un économiste sait très bien que dans n’importe quel scénario on peut se retrouver dans un scénario pire. Je ne vais pas dire quelque chose que je ne pourrais pas tenir.”

During the electoral campaign, there was never this “*si la situation économique le permet*”. When hon. Minister Callicurn spoke before me, he never said “*si la situation économique le permet*”, he said that the CSG will be used to pay Rs4,500 when you reach retirement age as from 2023. So, why is that not in the Regulation? I will tell you why. It’s mathematics. If we take the number of pensioners, let’s round it to 225,000 pensioners today, we multiply it by Rs4,500, then, we multiply it by 13 to get one year, 13 months, you will get a sum of around Rs13.1 billion. So, to pay Rs4,500 a month, the Government every year needs to get Rs13.1 billion from the CSG. And how much does the Government anticipate to get from the CSG? Let’s turn to the hon. Minister of Finance himself, again, when answering to the PNQ on 12 June 2020. This is what he said, I quote –

“Le NPF rapportait R 3,6 milliards à l’Etat dans le Fonds. La CSG, selon les estimations qu’on a fait pendant la période budgétaire, va rapporter R 3 milliards, donc, moins qu’avant.”

I am not saying it. The hon. Minister of Finance is telling you that he is going to get only Rs3 billion from the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) and he needs Rs13 billion to pay Rs4,500 to the pensioners as from 2023. Is he a magician, is he going to convert these Rs3 billion to Rs13 billion? How is he going to do it? There’s only one way he can do it, he will increase the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) or he will increase the group of people who have to contribute.

So, this is why it does not take a rocket scientist, it does not take a PhD holder to see that what the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has proposed is simply unsustainable not even for one year. Why 2023? Do you know why? Because he expects, for 2021-2022-2023, to get, at least, 9 to 10 billion rupees and then that would be

enough to pay one-off Rs4500 increase by 2023 and by 2024 what happens? By 2025, what happens? He expects to get only 3 billion from CSG, how is he going to find Rs13 billion?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has justified his decision to introduce the CSG, to replace the National Pension Fund because, according to him, NPF was unsustainable. He said so in his Budget Speech; he said so in answer to the PNQ; he said so in his summing up of the debate on the Financial (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

I know the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development is an expert in his own rights, but let me refer to what other experts have to say about the National Pension Fund. So let me start by the Report of Deloitte. Deloitte was asked to make a Report by the Ministry of Social Security.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Reza Uteem, I do not want to interrupt you. I am sorry for that, I just want to draw your attention, you have been about 27 minutes. I have been wanting to limit the interventions to about 30 minutes. So, try to be concise and precise. Try, I am not stopping you.

Mr Uteem: Yes. I am going to finish in five minutes. I am going to finish. The Report of Deloitte which has been tabled by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development himself. Do you know what the report says? Let me tell you what the report says.

The hon. Minister said that this report says that the NPF is unsustainable and do you know what is the conclusion reached at page 24 of the report -

“Currently, the fund is in a deficit amounting to Rs2.7 billion. The result of Section 6 indicates that the current contribution rate of 9% is sufficient(...)”

“(...) sufficient to support the current level of benefit under the central financial assumption. This suggest that if the central assumption underlying the review were to be borne out in practice then over the longer term the funds current asset together with future contribution income would be sufficient to meet the future benefit expenditure. This would suggest that there is no need to take action to improve the financial position of the fund.”

This is what Deloitte says, Deloitte never said that NPF is unsustainable. In fact, it says the contrary. Now, I know this is English it is not French but I am sure that has the same meaning in French.

So, let us turn to the famous working paper of the IMF again referred to extensively by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to justify the abolition of the National Pension Fund. What did the IMF say about the NPF at page 4? The NPF appears relatively sound until 2050, but it is projected to show a substantial deficit over the longer term. So, until 2050 it is relatively sound. 30 years to go and did the IMF recommend that we abolish NPF? No, quite the contrary. What IMF recommended is that the Civil Service Defined Contribution Scheme should be merged with the National Pension Fund. The National Savings Fund should be merged with the National Pension Fund and there should be an increase in the contribution rate because this will have a positive outcome on national savings.

So, in short, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no one in Mauritius other than the hon. Minister of Finance has ever advocated the abolition of the National Pension Fund. We all know the National Pension Fund is the largest investor on the Stock Exchange and in treasury bonds. Its assets are worth around Rs164 billion. Has the hon. Minister of Finance cared to evaluate the impact which the abolition of the National Pension Fund will have on the Stock Exchange; the impact which the abolition of the National Pension Fund will have on his ability, on the ability of the Government to raise funding through the issue of treasury bonds? No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to conclude by making an appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance and to all Members of this august Assembly.

La Contribution Sociale Généralisée is a tax that is unfair, that is discriminatory, that is unsustainable. Please set aside your ego, go back to the drawing board, go back to the NPF Fund, go and talk to experts, go and talk to actuaries, improve the system, improve the NPF. If you need to increase the contribution, increase the contribution. If you need to better manage it, better manage it, but please do not replace a pension fund by a tax, a tax which hon. Ministers will not have to pay.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(00.59 a.m.)

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

It is always a privilege to address the House when the opportunity arises particularly to participate in the discussion of any motion and I thank you for allowing me to do so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the implementation of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* since early September has been the subject of wide discussions between the private sector and stakeholders involved in the regulation of salaries and pensions fund and, sadly enough, their concerns and recommendations have fallen on deaf ears.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before setting out the potential drawbacks and shortfalls of this innovative form of contribution or pension, I would like to somewhat set the scene in relation to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* and to whom and how it will be applicable. While such specific financial matters are not my expertise, I will, however, share the opinion and views of the people outside and, as a parliamentarian, ensure that this forum will, if anything, echoes the apprehension and largely the disquietude of the employees, employers of the private sector and the self-employed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, consultation of the reform was unilateral without any meaningful interaction with all stakeholders concerned. Various factors that affect our pension system such as the ageing of the population and the successive increases of the universal pension have surely compelled the Minister of Finance to address this serious threat of the sustainability of the National Pension Fund despite major Audit Office Reports have not proven so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a major component of the Welfare State, the National Pension Fund, a legacy of the Labour Government, our pension funds provided many generations of retired Mauritians, a decent life. Truly, this system has shown, over the last few years, certain frailties that question its long-term sustainability for the future generation and it is in this context that the proposed CSG came as the novel approach to pension reform.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, reform of the system is welcoming but the CSG does not meet the expectation of stakeholders of how this can be achieved in order for our pension scheme to be sustainable in the long-term. In its current form, the CSG is not viable, unfair to all those in the private sector and self-employed and, as it stands, disbursement of the CSG as from 2023 will increase inequalities between private pensions and civil servants.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the CSG tax, as many and I are calling it now, in its current form, and it is only to pay the person during his or her retirement with no additional income as was the case with funds of the NPF. Future tax payers will carry the burden of paying the pension of current tax payers. Incidentally, this will affect our economic development with entrepreneurs having more difficulty in recruiting or retaining good employees with higher salaries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, change has never been a straight trodden path, surely it demands adjustment to former practices; but when change comes without consultation or discussion with major stakeholders, it is a recipe for ongoing unsettlement and disquiet having end result, major destructive mechanism that we are already seeing happening.

M. le président, la Contribution Sociale Généralisée à son origine, son introduction en 1991 par le Premier ministre français d'alors, Michel Rocard et c'était pour combler les déficits d'assurance-maladie, ce qu'on appelle 'la mutuelle' aujourd'hui, en frappant l'ensemble des revenus que ce soient les salaires, les revenus fonciers, les pensions de retraite. Ce taxe n'était pas variable, comme on le propose, était très faible à 1.1 % et la CSG du style mauricien n'est pas une contribution mais, au fait, un impôt affecté à la protection sociale, qui varie en fonction du salaire.

M. le président, la Contribution Sociale Généralisée, comme décrite dans le budget 2020, est qu'un petit entrepreneur et les employés du secteur privé à tous les niveaux, financera en partie ce qu'on appelle le '*Basic Retirement Pension*' du grand commis de l'État. Comment cela peut être juste envers les *ti dimouns* du secteur privé ou ceux qui travaillent à son compte ?

L'honorable ministre du Travail faisait référence dans son discours plus tôt, qu'on défendait le patronat ou le grand patron du secteur privé. Il a très mal compris l'importance que l'implication du Contribution Sociale Généralisée aura sur la vie des gens, les petits gens, qui travaillent dans le secteur privé, le secteur informel, et à leur propre compte. M. le président, cette même Contribution Social Généralisée, en France, est aujourd'hui à 19.2%. La distinction part salariale et part patronale, des cotisations sont trompeuses, car c'est un impôt sur le travail effectué et il n'est pas difficile de comprendre que dans ces retenues, d'une part salariale et d'autre part patronale, l'entrepreneur aurait pu accorder des salaires plus élevés ou même des augmentations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, the CSG with the Mauritian version is imposed on a salary. It is, in fact, very discriminating and based on a progressive increase as per salary scale rather than being proportional to salary earned. Private sector accounts for around 60% to 70% of the working force and should have the same rights and obligations as every other employee in the country. Any Government that respects individual rights leaves it to the employee, his choice of pension plan, which in many cases are invested funds that guarantee a minimum pension return and depending on how well they invest fund performed, the return may be significantly higher.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while every employee and employer of the private sector will pay what is called 'the CSG tax', the benefit will accrue to every single person above the age of 65. Sadly, none of these employees will benefit a pension proportional to their contribution, but will also pay for those who have not contributed a cent directly. This is an arbitrary decision taken by the Minister of Finance. It is, in my opinion, unfair, baffling and insulting, to quote paragraph 162 of the Budget that such a discriminating novel system is 'fair and equitable'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would now comment briefly on the four aspects of the CSG namely –

1. Governance;
2. Sustainability;
3. Equity, and
4. The cost and impact on employment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me explain myself on the issue of governance. The CSG which is payroll tax, will replace the National Pension Fund which is a contributory scheme. Surely, the NPF had some lacking, but the Fund was managed according to a Tripartite system between Government, employees' representatives and employers. However, in its current form the CSG will be collected and managed by the authorities only, without the managerial contribution of its social partners.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, contrary to the NPF, the CSG will be managed solely by Government. In the previous National Pension Fund system, there were different stakeholders who had their say in the way the contributions are to be collected, and subsequently, managed. However, the new CSG does not provide for the same good governance and

dialogue. It will be restricted only to Government, and potentially, to the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is no news that different actors in the private sector have already voiced out their concern with regard to this system of management, but it appears that, as to date, those concerns have not been given any consideration, and no viable solution, nor discussion has been entertained by the Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to sustainability, this is another blurry point. Unlike the National Pension Fund, which collected contribution from taxpayers to finance their own pensions, the CSG will collect contribution from current employers and employees to pay current retirees. It is important to note that the Mauritian population is an aging one; approximately 215,000 persons, more than over 60 years old, making 18% of our population and coupled with a decrease birth rate, this would become quite alarming in not so far a future. There are more and more retirees in our population, coupled with a less and less active population.

It is common sense, therefore, to infer that more people are heading towards an age, where they will no longer be in employment, thereby reducing the working class in the population, and as a result, more money will be required by the Government of the day in order to cater for their pensions and retirement benefits.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question remains what will happen when there are no longer enough contributions from the working population to pay the pension for all retirees. The tax does not contain a precise plan showing how the CSG Fund could be invested and grown. It is contrary to common sense for such a huge fund to remain dormant and without any investment being made to grow the fund. As I have mentioned before, no plan has been put forward by the Government on the investment, which may be made to fructify the CSG Fund.

As regards equity, one of the main differences, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the previous NPF is that the CSG will not be payable by all working Mauritians, as is the case with the NPF, but rather the CSG will only be funded by private sector employees and self-employed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for those retiring after the abolition of the NPF, the benefits will be reduced, since the Fund is scheduled to disappear over time. Again, those who will be

subject to their pension during the transition period, from the National Pension Fund to the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, will be prejudiced by this reduction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is somewhat an indirect discrimination, which will automatically be made base on the current form of the CSG. The Government has nevertheless not catered for this issue, so far. To put into context, a person, who is self-employed and earning a monthly remuneration Rs75,000, will be subject only Rs151 as contribution to the CSG, while an employee in the private sector, earning the same amount, will be liable to a contribution of Rs2,250, 15 times more.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the cost and impact on employment is very serious. This variable tax being levied on salaries as it gets higher, directly implies that the CSG penalises, so as to speak, companies that will pay better for their high earning individuals. How is that in line with the Government so-called policy making Mauritius a high-income economy when, in fact, persons who are earning more money at the end of the month will be, one can say, penalised and be made to contribute more in a Fund. This is contrary to the common vision of a high-income economy and will subsequently, unfairly, disadvantage companies in Value Added Service sector, such as the ICT.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since this tax is an additional cost for employees, the CSG could also dissuade companies from recruiting at a time when it would be crucial to boost employment. Again, it would be an inhibitor rather than a catalyst in the country's vision to increase the rate of employment and attract the best brains to come back to work.

M. le président, en guise de conclusion, aux pays où la Contribution Sociale Généralisée furent introduits en 1991 et quand le Président actuel, Emmanuel Macron, en 2018 décida d'augmenter la CSG sur les pensions, cela a eu pour effet de déclencher une vive manifestation des Gilets jaunes. Le Président français n'avait d'autre alternative que d'annuler l'augmentation du CSG et procéda ainsi au remboursement de primes perçues. Cette écoute et prise de conscience de la colère de la société civile l'aura-t-on à l'Ile Maurice? Et de surcroît reconnaître les manquements et apporter les ajustements nécessaires. A bon entendeur salut.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo!

(1.14 a.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Tonight, in this August Assembly we are being called upon to debate on the Motion of disallowance tabled by the hon. Leader of the Opposition against the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* Regulations 2020 published under Government Notice No. 214 of 2020 and laid on the Table of the Assembly on 03 November 2020.

In other words, we are being called upon to support the scheme proposed by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance. In an era where we are heading towards innovative measures to promote economic development and social welfare, on this side of the House, we have been bold enough to open to changes in our contributory pension system for a better future.

Allow me, at this stage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although there are currently four cases lodged before the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, we are allowing this Motion of disallowance to be debated tonight in this August Assembly for the sake of fairness and transparency. Moreover, I wish to reassure the private sector that this reform is in no way arbitrary and unfair. I make an appeal to the private sector to join us in our endeavour to restructure our contributory pension system for the welfare of all employees.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has painted a very bleak picture of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*. He has, unfortunately, chosen to ignore the benefits that would come out of this reform, benefits which would be, I am of the opinion, in the best interest of all employees. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is insisting on keeping the existing system, that is, the NPF in place. But, how can we do this when we are in presence of report from expert stating clearly that the NPF will not be sustainable in the future? As a responsible Government, we have to act and we need to act now.

In reply to hon. Uteem, the Actuarial Evaluation Report of the NPF submitted by RisCura Solutions Ltd, does state that the NPF will exhaust its fund by 2063. It might have been sustainable in the short-term, but not in the long-term. It is our duty, on this side of the House, to come up with a solution. So, we are of the opinion that pension reform was hence important. We could not have waited for the last minute to take appropriate action.

Having said that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very true to say that since 2014, we have seen a significant commitment by our Government towards improving the lives of the

most needy. My colleague, hon. Callichurn, has already mentioned a series of measures taken by our Government to help families in need. All these measures are significant measures and I cannot do otherwise, but to lay emphasis on them again, the more so as my Ministry is the implementing arm of social protection policies of the Government. I am here referring to the introduction of the minimum wage, negative income tax, subsistence allowance for families below poverty line have been taken to help those at the bottom of the ladder. And how can we forget the substantial increase in basic pension? Today, the minimum wage, as we all know, stands at Rs10,200, the basic retirement pension was increased from Rs3,623 prior to 2014 to Rs5,000 in December 2014 and then to Rs6,210 in January 2019 and, eventually, to Rs9,000 in December 2019.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. Hon. Minister Ganoo, please, get your mask. I am sorry.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes. The basic invalidity pension was also increased from Rs3,267 prior to December 2014 to Rs5,000 in December 2014 and then, as we all know, to Rs6,210 in January 2019 and, eventually, to Rs9,000 in 2019. The Carer's Allowance also was increased from Rs2,286 prior to December 2014 to Rs3,000 in December 2014 and then to Rs3,500 in 2019. So, from the time we took office in 2014 to date, the budget of the Ministry of Social Security has undergone massive increases from Rs13.9 billion in 2014 to Rs36.7 billion. Today, an increase of 163%, around 94% of our budget is allocated for the payment of different pensions and social aid.

I must also add that in 2016, in an attempt to alleviate poverty, our Government elaborated the Marshall Plan and the Social Register of Mauritius was created. Families living in absolute poverty are provided with a subsistence allowance to enable them to have a decent living; they also benefit from other schemes, such as child allowance, social school materials, Crèche Scheme and so on. So, these families are provided with appropriate training to enable them to come out of poverty. So, all these measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, have been taken with a view to reduce social inequalities. We need, therefore, to continue striking the right balance and give equal consideration to economic development and social welfare. Our vision, of course, is to create an inclusive society where all citizens are at par and enjoy a decent living.

During his Budget Speech 2020/2021, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance announced a number of measures to maintain the right balance between *la relance*

économique et l'aspect social. One of those measures is, of course, the introduction of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* as a reform to the existing contributory pension system. There are good reasons and I will be coming to those reasons in a few minutes.

The aim of this reform, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to ensure a higher contributory pension to citizens on their retirement while at the same time, maintaining and guaranteeing the Basic Retirement Pension to citizens at the age of 60 years and above. This universal monthly Basic Retirement Pension of Rs9,000 will continue to be paid to each and every one. This reform is in line with our Government policy to bring social justice and to allow those at the bottom of the ladder to have a decent living. It is with this spirit that our Government has introduced the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG).

As has been mentioned by my colleague, hon. Callichurn earlier, the growth in the population of its elderly is faster than the increase in its birth rate. We all know that the phenomenon of an ageing population will have a direct impact on our Social Protection System. Therefore, with a decreasing birth rate, increasing life expectancy, the sustainability of the pension reform represents a real challenge.

So, once again, I wish to reassure the House that the National Pension Fund will continue to operate until it pays out all benefits due to its contributories. The money contributed by beneficiaries to the NPF belongs to them and they will be paid all of their dues. The NPF will continue to pay out the Contributory Retirement Pension, the Contributory Widow's Pension, the Contributory Invalidity Pension and the Contributory Orphan's Pension to beneficiaries who have, so far, contributed to the NPF.

It seems that some Members of the House are under the impression that universal pensions are being phased out, which is certainly not the case. The Budget Speech 2020-2021 of the Minister of Finance makes no mention of any such things. On the contrary, paragraphs 163 and 164 of the Budget Speech state, I quote –

“We are maintaining and guaranteeing the Basic Retirement Pension (BRP) to all individuals at the age of 60 years and above. This universal monthly benefit of Rs9,000 will continue to be paid to each and every one.”

So, under this new mechanism, contribution will no longer be capped against a ceiling of Rs19,900, as is the case under the NPF.

Under the NPF, whatever the salary of an employee, his employer was required to make a contribution of 6% and the employee 3%, applied on a maximum ceiling of Rs19,900.

With the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, employees earning up to Rs50,000 will contribute 1.5% and their employers 3% on their monthly salary. As for employees earning more than Rs50,000, the contribution will be 3% and that of their employers 6%. This new System will also include self-employed individuals.

Under the NFP System, an employee earning Rs10,000 would have contributed Rs300, whereas under the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* he will pay Rs150, thereby making a monthly saving of Rs150.

A person earning a monthly salary of Rs39,800 would have contributed Rs597, that is, 3% of Rs19,900 which was the maximum ceiling. Under the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, he will still pay Rs597, that is, 1.5% of his salary of Rs39,800.

All employees earning a salary of up to Rs19,800 will, therefore, pay less. I am informed that around 271,224 employees will fall under this category.

Presently, there are around 120,000 persons who are beneficiaries of the Contributory Retirement Pension from the NPF. Around these 120,000 beneficiaries, more than 62,000, that is, representing more than 50% of the beneficiaries, received a monthly Contributory Retirement Pension of less than Rs1,000.

Around 40,000 beneficiaries receive a monthly Contributory Retirement Pension, ranging from Rs1,000 to Rs4,000. The System of NPF was such that, employees who were earning low salaries were making low contribution, thus resulting in lower benefits being paid to them.

Therefore, with the introduction of CSG, by 2023, the life of this category of beneficiaries will improve. For example, let me explain, the Contributory Retirement Pension of the 62,000 persons who are currently receiving a monthly Contributory Retirement Pension of less Rs1,000 will benefit from an additional Rs4,500 from CSG in 2023.

As for the 40,000 beneficiaries, currently receiving a monthly Contributory Retirement Pension, ranging from Rs1,000 to Rs4,000, they will also benefit from an additional Rs4,500 from CSG in 2023. So, I can't understand how this measure is not fair and equitable.

Another major justification to introduce the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) is the findings of the Actuarial Evaluation Report of the NPF. Presently, the assets of the NPF is estimated at around Rs139 billion which is quite significant, but we have reports from

Actuaries who have evaluated the future viability of the NPF. In March 2020, RisCura Solutions Ltd. submitted its Actuarial Evaluation Report for the period January 2014 to 30 June 2017. According to its findings, the NPF is having a deficit of 33%, that is, Rs67 billion. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what do we do? Do we sit and wait for the present Pension System to crash? Or do we act now for a better future? No responsible Government could have ignored this major challenge. We have had to act and this is, in fact, what we have done through the introduction of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG). This reform is a must. This reform is a fairer one to the employees. If we were to continue with the same Contributory Pension System, that is, the NPF, several measures would have had to be taken to make it viable.

First of all, the retirement age would need to be extended. The contribution rate to the NPF would need to be increased. The value of pension points would need to be increased and the ceiling of Rs19,900 would need to be removed. So had all these measures been adopted, low income earners would have seen a reduction in their salary due to more NPF deductions. Would this have been fair and equitable to them? So, I would also like to make reference to the International Monetary Fund Report 2015 which stated that the NPF is not sustainable over this century and that it will exhaust its fund by the year 2063.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, let us deal with this matter of our pension system reform in a rational manner. As a responsible Government, we could not have waited for the problem to be at our doorsteps to find a solution. We could not have waited for the NPF to crash to do something. We needed to be pro-active. It was, therefore, important for our Government to undertake a major reform in our contributory pension system.

So, allow me to conclude by saying that this reform is warranted as it will ensure that our present and future generations continue to benefit from a decent contributory pension. I, therefore, believe that the motion of the Leader of the Opposition does not stand and should be set aside.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Kushal Lobine!

(1.35 a.m.)

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important motion put by the Leader of the Opposition. I will not take much of the time of the august Assembly because my learned friends: the hon. Leader of the Opposition, hon. Uteem and hon. Dr. Aumeer from this side of the House have amply provided valuable arguments as to why this motion should be considered. However, I will be very legalistic in my approach during my intervention.

My arguments are as follows, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The scenario, that unfolds when the motion was laid on the 03 of November 2020, has taken a twist when Business Mauritius and other parties have, on the 05 of November 2020, took the decision to knock at the door of the Supreme Court in order to seek firstly, leave to apply for judicial review and the following remedies are being sought, namely : a declaration that the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* Regulations 2020 published under Government Notice No.214 of 2020 are unlawful, Wednesbury unreasonable and that same were adopted in breach of the legitimate expectations of many stakeholders and the population at large. They are also seeking an order of certiorari of the decision of the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to adopt the CSG Regulations.

And secondly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is also pending before the Supreme Court an application for a constitutional redress challenging the amendment of the National Pensions Act brought by the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 including the introduction of a new Part V A establishing the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*.

What is that constitutional redress all about, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The constitutional redress being sought: Section 1 of the Constitution which enshrines the principles of a sovereign and democratic State; Section 2 which qualifies the supremacy of our Constitution; Section 3 which provides for the principle of prohibition of discrimination and of equality before the law; Section 8 of the Constitution which affords protection against the deprivation of property and, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Section 45(1) which empowers Parliament to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Mauritius are being evoked and it is now up to the Supreme Court and eventually may be an interpretation of the Law Lords of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council if it goes to that instance shall be the protagonists to rule, determine and give a finality to the debates surrounding the applicability of the CSG Regulations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is worth pointing out that serious issues of discrimination are on the table with this regulation in place. The abolition of the NPF Contributions and the introduction of the CSG will fundamentally affect many citizens of this country.

The universal Basic Retirement Pension payable from the age 60 will remain unchanged, but, henceforth, all increases to our elderly will be paid through a completely new mechanism, that is, the CSG. As from July 2023, as rightly pointed out by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and hon. Uteem, the CSG benefit, yet to be prescribed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but announced publicly by the hon. Minister at Rs4500 will be paid as a top-up to the Basic Retirement Pension as from the age of 65.

Unlike the NPF, the CSG benefits will be paid irrespective of the individual's contributions and will even be paid to those who have never been employed and in respect of whom no contribution has ever been made to the CSG, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. For example, employees of the private sector, notwithstanding their years of service, are being placed on the same level as other pensioners who have not contributed to the CSG, whilst the whole NPF Scheme was intended to provide additional pension rights to those employees based on contributions made by or for them.

Insured persons of the NPF will lose the opportunity to secure further contributory retirement benefits. By contrast, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, employees of the public sector, who are not contributing towards the CSG from their remuneration and whose contribution is being unfairly subsidised by taxpayers of this country, will perceive benefits under the CSG in addition to the benefits payable under the statutory schemes.

It is, in my humble opinion, clear that the introduction of the CSG as a replacement of the NPF is discriminatory and will have catastrophic impacts on our economy. It is also unfair, unsustainable, and economically not feasible at all and it goes against the principles of equality and proportionality as enshrined in our Constitution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall take my example. As a barrister, under the regulations, I am classified as a self-employed and the rates of CSG applicable to me shall be a mere Rs150 per month. However, a fellow learned friend, an in-house lawyer working for a law firm, for example, he or she shall for the purpose of the National Pensions Act, Section 30B(1) as detailed in the regulations, if he or she earns remuneration exceeding Rs50,000 in a month, he or she shall, in respect of that month, pay CSG at the rate of 3% of that

remuneration, and the employer or law firm, shall on his or her behalf and in respect of that month, pay CSG at the rate of 6% of that remuneration.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this situation is untenable and defies logic because this is where the discrimination lies. Other main concerns about the CSG is that it will be an unfunded system as opposed to a funded system, like the NPF. And we all know, in an unfunded system, contributions from employers and employees will be used each year to pay for people who have already retired.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, instead also of those contributions being paid into individuals' accounts of the participants, as was the case under the NPF, Government will now be collecting the contributions and same will be injected into the Consolidated Fund in order to finance the recurrent expenditure in terms of retirement pension. This was the argument of hon. Uteem rightly pointed out before this House.

Thus, since the CSG is unfunded, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, its sustainability will invariably depend on whether the balance between the working population and the retired population is maintained.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned in my speech during the debates on the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which thereafter was enacted, CSG is a disguised tax and has been described as an unsustainable scheme and will operate more as a Ponzi like structure. No studies or report elaborated by professionals in the sector have been undertaken to see to it whether the terms of fairness and the impact it will have on the cost of doing business in Mauritius will change for the better or for the worse.

Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as at date, no national consultation exercise was held in relation to such an important change in our pension schemes. In fact, even the NPF Board nor were its Investment Committee, established under the NPA, consulted prior to the decision taken to abolish the NPF and to introduce the CSG. And same applies to other bodies like the Actuarial Society of Mauritius whose comments and recommendations were never even taken onboard by the hon. Minister.

On this side of the House, we are utterly disappointed that despite the call for wider consultation from the *Association of Actuaries*, from Business Mauritius, from trade unions and the civil society, at large, the hon. Minister went ahead with the regulations and now, we have an unprecedented situation whereby it is now in the hands of the Judiciary.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, taking into account the doctrine of separation of powers, at this point in time, it shall be only just and reasonable that the applicability of the regulations in question be put in abeyance at very least, in view of what I have described earlier on, with regard to the cases lodged before the Supreme Court.

In the meantime, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall propose that a Select Committee of this House be set up to address the important issue of pension reforms.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, taking into account that there are cases before the Supreme Court and that our Judiciary will give their ruling, their determination, their interpretation as to the constitutionality involved in this particular debate in this House and before the Court, I shall move the House that the *Contribution Sociale Generalisée* Regulations 2020 laid on the table of the Assembly on 03 November 2020, be disallowed purely and simply.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

Mr Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much! Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(1.48 a.m.)

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am happy to share my humble views on the Disallowance Motion of the Leader of the Opposition which reads as follows –

“This Assembly resolves that the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* Regulations 2020 published under Government Notice No. 214 of 2020 and laid on the Table of the Assembly on 03 November 2020, be disallowed.”

After listening to the different hon. Members, on this side of the House, those who are following this debate must have been convinced that the CSG is unfair, discriminatory and unjust.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I fail to understand as to why there is such a haste to abolish the NPF. With just a stroke of a pen, the Minister of Finance has eliminated and abolished the NPF. I look for the reason why the Minister of Finance came with the abolition of the NPF. The justification comes in paragraph 173 in the Budget Speech 2020-2021 where the reason for this abolition has been spelt as follows –

“We are abolishing the NPF as it is not only unsustainable but also unfair and regressive.”

If the NPF is unsustainable, unfair and regressive, then I expected it to be replaced by something sustainable, fair and progressive. But the NPF reminds me of a famous proverb whereby a dog is given a bad name and is hanged. The Finance Minister justifies the CSG on the ground that we are abolishing the NPF as it is not only unsustainable, but also unfair and regressive.

Outside this House, there are thousands of professionals who are claiming that it is the CSG, which is blatantly discriminatory, unjust and unfair. I wonder if there were proper consultations with the appropriate stakeholders and proper feasibility studies were carried out. If, yes, I would like the Minister of Finance to table findings of such prior consultations and studies which had been carried out.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to specialists and professionals, the CSG is neither viable nor sustainable. Simple logic tells us that the number of workers will decrease in forthcoming years and, conversely, the number of CSG beneficiaries will keep on increasing, and that is why the CSG will be unsustainable. The CSG may even put at stake, not only the economic stability of our country, but may even seriously hamper and jeopardise the Welfare State which we cherish so much.

In paragraphs 180 and 181 of the Budget Speech 2020-2021, it is noted –

“Today’s generation will contribute towards ensuring higher benefits to our elders. And tomorrow, our children will contribute to ensure that we enjoy a decent retirement.”

Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today’s generation, our children will contribute to ensure that we enjoy a decent retirement. This is the newfound recipe by the Minister of Finance to replace the NPF by the CSG.

I would like to highlight paragraph 160 of the Budget Speech where we note –

“(…) our demographic trend, with an ageing and decreasing population, as underlined by various international institutions, make our pension system unsustainable for the future.

Despite that, you leave it to our children and today’s generation to contribute towards ensuring higher benefits to our elders. On this side of the House and thousands of independent observers like actuaries and other professionals claim that the CSG is a very poor attempt to reform the pension scheme. How come you expect our children to clean up

the economic mess, the economic deficit, the economic disarray and chaos in the years to come to sustain the CSG?

In the face of the current precarious macroeconomic conditions, coupled with recurrent economic cycles with economic slumps and crises and even depression, the CSG is set to fail. Why? Because its rationale of sustainability is based on ideal economic conditions which are inexistent. How can we condone it? How can we vote for such a pension scheme, which is glaringly discriminatory, conspicuously regressive, utterly unfair and economically unviable? Would it not have been wiser to review, revisit and revamp the NPF? Definitely! I am not going to make an apology for its weaknesses, but how far is it advisable to replace the NPF by the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) which will gobble and swallow around Rs4 billion without generating any funds.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the CSG is a pay-as-you-go system implying that there is no link between the CSG contributed by the individual and the employer. The accrued amount is subsequently available as benefits to that same individual from the age of 65. The Government will be free to decide how to use this additional revenue. There is no guarantee that the funds collected will not be withdrawn, overdrawn for other purposes and depleted away. How can we protect the rights of workers to their hard-earned pensions? There are serious risks that we shall be throwing good money after bad. For example, we have often helplessly witnessed in this very House, how the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development is unwilling and reluctant to explain how public funds are used by the Mauritius Investment Corporation, for example.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sceptical regarding the rationality of the self-employed in the informal sector paying only a nominal contribution of Rs150, irrespective of the level of remuneration. In effect, those earning Rs10,200 per month and those earning Rs300,000, for example, or more per month, will both pay Rs150 as CSG contribution on a monthly basis. Put simply, the lowest income earner will pay Rs150 just like the highest income earner.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also wonder whether the full effect of the CSG in its current form on the private sector has been considered and analysed. Did you gauge the pernicious impact of the introduction of the CSG on the employees and employers in the private sector?

Admittedly, employees on basic salaries of less than Rs38,480, would have a higher take-home pay due to the lower rate of contribution to the CSG compared to the NPF contributions. As such, companies in which the majority of their employees earn basic salaries of less than Rs38,480, such as SMEs, will be called on to pay lower CSG contributions. However, employees with basic salaries higher than Rs38,480 will have to contribute more to the CSG than under the NPF. Similarly, the employers too will have to make a higher contribution to the CSG than under the NPF. It should be noted that contributions to the CSG would not be restricted to any salary ceiling as was the case under the NPF. Has the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development considered the impact of the CSG on our aspiration to become a high-income nation? Employers will be increasingly reluctant to grant salary increases as these would imply higher contributions. The danger is that salaries will tend to stagnate at around Rs38,480. Beyond that level, the contributions of both employees and employers are higher under the CSG than under the NPF. This may incite employees to look for better job prospects in other countries, further exacerbating the brain drain problem of our country. I do not understand how this Government intends to reconcile, on the one hand, to position the country as a high-income one while implementing counter-strategies on the other hand. As our economy increasingly relies on the tertiary sector, it is obvious that labour intensive businesses will be hard-hit, and employers may start considering relocating to other jurisdictions to avoid the rise in labour cost.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have also heard the private sector employees and the representatives decrying the great divide between them and the public sector employees. For one thing, there is no ceiling on contribution on the CSG unlike the NPF system. Another new element in the CSG system is its applicability to public sector employees contrary to the NPF system. However, no contribution is payable by these employees. This implies that an employee earning Rs60,000 in the private sector will contribute Rs1,800 whereas an employee in the public sector earning a similar package will not be contributing. The effect on the take-home salaries of employees from private and public sectors is clearly lower, thus unfavourable for the former category.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, yes, we agree that the NPF needs to be revisited. Yes, the NPF has its shortcomings; yes, it has to be actualised, adapted to the economic realities of the present needs. But when we compare notes what do we find? Don't we realise that the CSG is worse than the NPF? It is a clear case where the remedy seems to be worse than the

disease. Had the bitter pill been a genuine antidote to combat economic challenges facing our country, it would have been most welcome. What the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development considers to be a remedy, a solution and a panacea for our pension system is, in fact, an attempt to suffocate it because the CSG is going to plunge the country in an economic abyss.

A sound pension system is a balancing act between social protection and fiscal sustainability, but you are failing on both counts. The CSG is a failed attempt to reform the pension scheme. The CSG is going to end up doing exactly the opposite of what it had proposed to do, that is, we are abolishing the NPF as it is not only unsustainable, but also unfair and regressive.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I reiterate that the CSG is unequivocally discriminatory, blatantly unfair and undeniably unjust. It never got the approval of the public because it was never canvassed in the electoral manifesto of this Government. The CSG is neither sustainable nor is it financially acceptable pension reform. It is heartrending that the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has failed to come up with a dynamic, viable and sustainable pension reform to meet the many economic challenges facing our country, especially in the post COVID-19 period. Wrong signals are being sent to the private sector and self-employed. At a time when we should focus on job creation, saving jobs in different sectors, combatting the spectre of unemployment looming ahead and the non-stop drop in purchasing power of many families, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development is serving the financially stressed population the most unpalatable CSG. How will the imposition of a tax like the CSG help to revitalise the morale of local and for any investors? The CSG is not going to salvage the pension system, but will end up strangulating it sooner than later. The CSG is neither forward looking nor progressive, neither in its conceptualisation nor in its rational.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I fully support the Motion of Disallowance by the Leader of the Opposition.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea!

(2.00 a.m.)

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):
 Merci, M. le président. Avec l'introduction de la Contribution Sociale Généralisée (CSG) qui

vient remplacer le *National Pension Fund*, rarement a-t-on vu des réactions aussi soudaines et spontanées. Toutes les pontes de la haute finance et de l'économie ne se sont pas fait prier pour donner leurs points de vue contradictoires, des anciens ministres des Finances, des économistes, des directeurs des entreprises et même des syndicalistes se sont fait bousculer pour se faire entendre.

La réforme du système de pension était nécessaire et aurait dû être lancée depuis longtemps mais les acteurs économiques sont catégorique. Le CSG est une taxe additionnelle qui va impacter le coût salariale des entreprises et cet impact financier sera immédiat. Pour l'employeur, l'impact sera de 3 à 6% dans un contexte post COVID-19 où on parle de sauvegarde de l'emploi. Le coût salarial des entreprises vont augmenter automatiquement. Cela veut aussi dire moins de compétitivité. Donc, ça va sans dire que cette mesure va mettre la pression sur l'emploi, décourageant tout recrutement et accentuant le risque de licenciement. Les entreprises qui ne pourront payer vont réduire leur masse salariale en supprimant des postes, voir même des licenciements. Encore une fois, dans le contexte actuel, il y aura beaucoup de chamboulements. Comment se passera l'interaction de la CSG, d'autres plans de contribution légalement constitués et les employeurs qui ont déjà contribué? J'aurais cru avoir plus de renseignements lorsque le ministre du Travail avait intervenu sur ce sujet-là, mais il n'a rien dit à propos de plans existants.

Donc, M. le président, ce sera un méli-mélo dont on aurait bien pu se passer vu le contexte actuel. Pour les employés qui contribuent déjà dans un plan de pension avec un somme prédestinée selon les clauses du contrat, l'impact de la CSG serait alors un décaissement additionnel des fonds. Certaines entreprises vont carrément arrêter leur contribution et ça va affecter beaucoup de personnes qui ont misé là-dessus pour leur retraite. Ce sera vraiment un beau gâchis, M. le président.

Et puis, il n'y a aucune visibilité dans quoi on contribue car il n'y a pas de plafond de contribution. Quelqu'un peut contribuer R 100 par mois, et d'autres R 10,000 par mois. Arrivant à la retraite, un individu touchera-t-il le même montant que tout le monde ; c'est-à-dire pour quelqu'un qui a contribué R 100 et quelqu'un qui a contribué R10,000, est-ce qu'ils vont recevoir le même montant ?

M. le président, on peut contribuer plus mais il faut qu'il y ait une meilleure pension. Je pense que c'est assez logique, M. le président. Donc, si le bénéfice ultime n'est pas lié au taux de contribution, la CSG serait alors un impôt. La contribution à la CSG serait-elle

déductible pour les employés? Non, M. le président. La contribution de l'employeur serait-elle déductible pour les employés ? Encore une fois, non, M. le président, alors que la *NPF* était déductible dans le calcul de profits pour une compagnie, une organisation ou même pour un *self-employed*. Là-dessus, encore une fois, on a rien entendu.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Finance Minister has been given wide powers under the CSG, the more so, by way of regulations. Such a major amendment to our pension landscape has been dealt through regulations. We are talking about billions of rupees of retirement of hundreds of thousands of Mauritians, and, more importantly, about tax payers' money. This is being done through regulations. In my view and in the view of many of my friends in this House and everyone with a sound mind will agree that this should have been introduced as an Act of Parliament, through a Bill, fully debated by Members of this House and involving all experts and stakeholders. The fact that the CSG is pooled in the consolidated fund and that the contribution made by the participant does not influence his financial benefits, this implies that it is, in substance, a tax.

As I said earlier, it will not be tax-deductible neither for the employer nor for the employee. I will explain how this is unfair. It is not tax-deductible, but, at the same time, when the participant will be on receipt of the retirement pension, the retirement pension will be taxable. So, your contribution is not allowed as an expenditure, but when you receive retirement pension, this will be taxed. This is another element of unfairness, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Additionally, it is important to highlight that the CSG will be pooled in the consolidated fund and not a dedicated pension fund, and, the more so, its management falls under the Ministry of Finance and not the Ministry of Social Security. The interaction of the CSG with the income tax should be considered so that employers and participants assess its full impact. There is far too much uncertainty around the CSG.

Apart from the tax administration angle, there is a discriminatory part to its proposed measure and, in my view, unconstitutional. The private sector and the self-employed are called upon to make a contribution towards the CSG while the public sector, although they will reap the same benefit, will not have to contribute a cent. This in my view, Mr Speaker, Sir, is very unfair, and it is good that it is being challenged in court.

Also, why would a company pay its additional tax when they are already paying private pensions, as I said earlier? This will, in turn, affect insurance companies and pension

funds surely. This measure will have a ripple effect on the economy. It will have a ripple effect in downgrading our economy. Before introducing such a measure, the Finance Minister should have taken into account the fundamentals of the Mauritian economy, its workforce and its social fabric. I stress gain: engaging with the stakeholders is a must and this has been the practice of past Finance Ministers.

M. le président, l'Association des Actuaires s'est, par ailleurs, évertué à démontrer que la CSG ne tiendra même pas la route au-delà de 2024, les contributions étant, à partir de cette date, largement dépassées par les retraites envisagées. En effet, les retraités vont augmenter inexorablement. Les salariés payant pour les retraités vont aller en augmentant et les retraités vont diminuer, ce qui fait que le seul moyen de trouver un équilibre sera soit d'augmenter massivement les contributions, soit encore de convier le contribuable à la caisse payante.

Le minimum que doit le ministre des Finances à son pays est désormais de tenter de justifier, avec tous les détails requis, comment la CSG va rester sur les rails sur les prochaines cinquante années. On a entendu beaucoup orateurs du gouvernement dire que le *NPF* va être insoutenable, mais, M. le président, je n'ai pas entendu les orateurs du gouvernement nous expliquer comment la CSG va être soutenable. Là-dessus, il y a un *blackout* total, M. le président et j'espère vraiment que le Ministre des Finances, qui interviendra après moi, éclairera nos lanternes.

C'est d'autant plus injuste que les prestations découlant de la fusion du *BRP* (*Basic Retirement Pension*) et le *National Pension Fund* seront égales pour tous les retraités, qu'ils aient contribué plus ou moins ou rien ou qu'ils aient été actifs, inactifs ou chômeurs.

M. le président, même Charles Ponzi n'aurait jamais pu imaginer un tel scénario dans lequel les entrants financent les sortants. Un petit tour d'histoire, M. le président, si vous me le permettez.

Charles Ponzi became noted in 1920 in Boston for his supposed arbitrage scheme which ultimately proved to be merely a masquerade for paying off early investors with the deposit of later investors. The Ponzi scheme is named after him.

M. le président, l'introduction de la *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) et son fonctionnement, c'est rendre hommage à Charles Ponzi et ça a été possible grâce à l'honorable Renganaden Seeneevassen, *sorry*, Padayachy.

Donc, M. le président, j'ai expliqué comment Charles Ponzi a fait pareil à Boston dans les années 1920s.

Donc, au paragraphe 162 du Budget 2020-2021, et je cite –

« (...) nous proposons une réforme de la pension qui soit juste, équitable et durable pour notre économie. »

M. le président, il n'y a rien de plus faux et laissez-moi vous démontrer, et démontrer à la Chambre, comment la CSG est injuste, inéquitable et surtout pas durable et, donc, éphémère.

Peu de citoyens ont réalisé la discrimination incompréhensible et inadmissible. La CSG, en alimentant le budget du gouvernement directement à travers le *Consolidated Fund*, vient donc forcer les employés du privé à donner le moyen au gouvernement de financer, par exemple, le *PRB* des employés du secteur public. Et pourtant les employés du secteur privé sont ceux qui peuvent perdre leur emploi. Ils peuvent perdre leurs bénéfices, voir leur salaire réduit, alors que les employés du secteur public, eux, ne sont jamais licenciés, ne se voient jamais diminuer leurs conditions de travail. Cela ne peut pas être juste, n'est-ce pas, M. le président. D'autant plus, ne l'oublions jamais que c'est le secteur privé qui, à travers ses taxes payées directes ou indirectes, permet au secteur public d'exister.

Si dans un système de pension il n'y a pas de relation entre la contribution et les bénéfices, cela revient à un système d'impôt. C'est quoi l'impôt? Les gens payent et le gouvernement dépense, et donc, la même chose.

M. le président, pour conclure je dirais qu'il n'est jamais trop tard pour bien faire. Il faut se réunir autour d'une table et discuter. Ce genre de réforme ne se fait pas du jour au lendemain. Il faut parvenir pas nécessairement à un consensus mais d'un accord général, il faut écouter tous les partis. Dans le dialogue, on pourra trouver la lumière. On ne peut faire une telle réforme de manière unilatérale. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'il y a beaucoup de rapports d'experts là-dessus. Donc, je lance un appel au gouvernement, il est grand temps de se ressaisir et surtout le ministre des Finances.

J'en ai terminé. Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. We will break for 10 minutes.

At 2.18 a.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.36 a.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

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

Hon. Minister of Finance, please!

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le président, cette motion présentée par le Leader de l'Opposition me donne l'occasion de revenir une nouvelle fois sur cette réforme d'envergure, la Contribution Sociale Généralisée (CSG), qui mérite, pour bien la comprendre, d'être replacée dans son contexte.

Le contexte de la CSG, c'est celui d'une lutte acharnée contre les inégalités dont notre Premier ministre a fait son cheval de bataille.

A cet égard, permettez-moi de débiter mon propos en détaillant le cheminement intellectuel et économique nous ayant conduit à augmenter graduellement le montant de la pension depuis décembre 2014, pour d'une part, réduire les inégalités, et d'autre part, favoriser la croissance économique.

M. le président, il n'est un secret pour personne que les inégalités socio-économiques ont explosé sous l'ère travailliste.

En effet, l'agenda économique prôné par l'ancien régime avec des réformes économiques ultra-libérales et une systématisation des cadeaux aux plus fortunés a entraîné une montée inexorable des inégalités de revenus à Maurice.

Plus grave encore, cette politique contre-productive a même conduit à un affaiblissement des niveaux de croissance économique, à la fois potentielle et réelle.

Alors que l'ensemble des institutions internationales, de l'OCDE au FMI en passant par la Banque mondiale, n'ont eu de cesse de répéter qu'une stratégie de réduction des inégalités avait un effet positif tangible sur la croissance économique, l'ancien gouvernement Parti travailliste/PMSD s'est obstiné à faire la sourde oreille.

Cette dangereuse politique de l'autruche s'est matérialisée à Maurice par l'augmentation du Coefficient de Gini qui est un indicateur qui mesure les inégalités de revenus.

De 2006 à 2015, le Coefficient de Gini est ainsi passé de 0,388 à 0,42.

Ce phénomène d'accroissement des inégalités a aussi été confirmé par la Banque mondiale dans son rapport de 2017 démontrant que les inégalités des revenus des ménages se sont accrues entre 2008 et 2015.

M. le président, selon l'étude de l'OCDE intitulée « *Trends and Income Inequality and its Impact on Economic Growth* », il est clairement établi que les inégalités de revenus ont un impact négatif significatif sur la croissance économique.

Ainsi, il est estimé qu'une augmentation des inégalités de revenus de 0,03 point de Gini entraîne une baisse de la croissance économique de 0,35 point de pourcentage par an.

À Maurice, cela s'est vérifié par une baisse de la croissance réelle et potentielle du PIB entre 2006 et 2015 en raison de l'augmentation des inégalités de revenus.

En effet, la croissance économique potentielle, qui était de plus de 6% en 2006, a chuté de manière significative à moins de 3,7% en 2015.

En conséquence, entre 2009 et 2015, les chiffres montrent que la croissance économique réelle est tombée en dessous de la croissance économique potentielle, ce qui indique en même temps une baisse des niveaux de productivité.

M. le président, outre ces piètres performances économiques, l'ancien gouvernement Parti travailliste/PMSD, aujourd'hui dans l'Opposition, a conduit une dangereuse campagne contre les plus démunis, contre les plus faibles, contre les sans-voix.

Résultat des courses à la fin du mandat Parti travailliste: les riches étaient devenus plus riches, les pauvres étaient devenus plus pauvres.

C'est aussi cruel et injuste que cela.

Ce ne sont pas des allégations que j'exprime ici mais bien une réalité concrète qui doit être exposée à la population.

Ainsi, entre 2006 et 2012, la part du revenu total revenant aux 20% des ménages situés au bas de l'échelle, c'est-à-dire, les plus pauvres, a diminué, passant de 6,1% en 2006 à 5,4% en 2012.

En revanche, la part des 20 % des ménages situés dans la tranche supérieure, c'est-à-dire, les plus riches, est passée de 45,6 % à 47,4 %.

M. le président, le leader de l'Opposition se demande quel est l'agenda de ce gouvernement.

Permettez-moi de lui retourner la question.

Quel était l'agenda du gouvernement Parti travailliste/PMSD lorsqu'en 2006, dans un contexte économique plus que favorable, où la croissance mondiale affichait +4%, il n'avait

pas hésité, *with the stroke of a pen*, à arracher le pain de la bouche des écoliers tout en optant, sans une once de scrupule, pour une politique fiscale des plus avantageuses pour les plus fortunés avec la baisse de la taxation directe.

Avait-il consulté la population avant d'enlever ces acquis sociaux et de promulguer ces mesures pro-riches ?

De plus, ces mesures étaient catastrophiques pour notre économie.

Il devrait savoir que la taxation est le meilleur outil pour la redistribution des richesses et la réduction des inégalités et ainsi une amélioration de la potentialité économique.

Il me semble difficile de croire que l'agenda du Gouvernement de l'époque était alors de travailler au service de la population.

Tout cela est bel est bien la conséquence du parti pris économique ultra-libéral, appliqué à cette époque, qui consistait à favoriser les très hauts revenus au détriment de ceux au bas de l'échelle.

Cela a d'ailleurs conduit à la fuite de capitaux, et plus précisément à des dépenses annuelles de 503 millions de dollars US, soit 17 milliards de roupies, de la part de ces riches Mauriciens vers d'autres pays entre 2011 et 2015.

Ce chiffre représentant environ 5% du PIB ont donc été dépensés à l'étranger plutôt que localement.

C'était ça votre stratégie économique. Prendre au plus pauvres pour le donner aux plus riches.

Et aujourd'hui, le leader de l'Opposition continue avec cette stratégie en défendant cette petite poignée d'ultra riche, qui gagnent des millions et qui sont contre cette mesure. Mais, le Leader de l'Opposition n'a jamais élevé la voix pour défendre ceux et celles qui touchaient un salaire de moins de 5000 roupies par mois. Il n'a jamais interpellé ces ultra riches pour leur demander de réparer cette injustice.

M. le président, c'est en éprouvant le sentiment d'injustice que nous connaissons le désir de justice.

C'est à la suite de cette douloureuse expérience, de 2006 à 2014, que la population mauricienne a choisi de faire confiance en 2014 et de confirmer en 2019 à un gouvernement responsable, bienveillant et progressiste avec un Premier ministre qui tient sa parole.

Ainsi, au regard de la situation socio-économique délétère dont nous avons hérité en décembre 2014, il a fallu très vite renverser la tendance avec des mesures fortes et courageuses.

Grâce à l'introduction du *Negative Income Tax*, du *National Minimum Wage* et de l'augmentation du *Basic Retirement Pension* de 3623 roupies en 2014 à 6210 roupies en 2019, le gouvernement a largement contribué à remédier à la baisse des inégalités de revenus et à empêcher une nouvelle baisse du niveau de croissance du PIB dans l'économie.

Cette politique a produit les effets escomptés. En effet, la part du revenu total revenant aux 20% des ménages situés au bas de l'échelle, elle est passée de 5,3% en 2012 à 5,7% en 2017. Alors que la part des 20% de ménages situés dans la tranche supérieure a diminué de 47,5% à 46,0% au cours de cette période.

En conséquence, le coefficient de Gini est passé de 0,42 en 2015 à 0,4 en 2017 et selon les dernières estimations de la Banque mondiale, le coefficient de Gini devrait encore diminuer pour atteindre 0,342 en 2020.

M. le président, nous avons choisi de rendre justice à ceux qui ont été trop longtemps laissés de côté par un duo Travailleiste/PMSD égoïste. Ceux qui ont été oubliés car leur voix ne se faisait entendre.

C'est en s'appuyant sur cette même philosophie que le gouvernement a décidé fin 2019 d'augmenter encore davantage le montant de la pension pour l'amener à 13,500 roupies d'ici 2024. Cette promesse faite représente une avancée sociale majeure puisqu'elle place le montant de la pension à 150% du seuil relatif de pauvreté qui devrait s'établir en 2024 aux alentours des 9,000 roupies par mois en tenant compte de l'inflation combinée.

C'est d'ailleurs sur une recommandation de l'OCDE, indiquant que le montant de la pension minimum devrait être nettement supérieur au seuil de pauvreté relative, que le gouvernement a pris cet engagement.

Imaginez-vous qu'en 2012, sous le gouvernement Travailleiste/PMSD la pension représentait à peine plus de la moitié du seuil de pauvreté relative. Trouvez-vous cela décent de faire vivre nos aînés avec 3350 roupies par mois?

M. le président, je tiens également à rappeler que l'augmentation de la pension s'inscrit également dans le cadre d'une stratégie économique.

En effet, nous savons pertinemment que les personnes âgées ont une plus grande propension à consommer et donc à soutenir la croissance économique. Preuve s'il en est, l'augmentation graduelle du Basic Retirement Pension entre fin 2014 et 2019 de 3623 à 6210 roupies a permis de stimuler les dépenses de consommation dans l'économie grâce à un effet multiplicateur de 0,56%, contribuant ainsi à un peu plus de 10 milliards de roupies dans le PIB.

L'amélioration des droits sociaux est en phase avec la vision de justice sociale et d'efficacité économique portée par le Premier ministre.

M. le président, le gouvernement mauricien a dépensé quelque 23 milliards de roupies en 2019 pour les dépenses liées au *BRP*. Avec l'augmentation du *BRP* à 9000 roupies à la fin de 2019, puis le paiement de l'allocation supplémentaire de 4500 roupies d'ici 2024, les besoins supplémentaires de financement de la pension vont être croissants, soit plus de 20 milliards de roupies.

Parallèlement, en raison de la pandémie de la COVID-19, nous assistons à une contraction de la croissance économique qui a pour corolaire une baisse des recettes du gouvernement, d'environ 28 milliards de roupies. Face à ce constat, il était donc nécessaire de disposer de sources de financement complémentaires afin de pouvoir financer le *BRP* à 9,000 roupies à 60 ans et l'allocation additionnelle de 4500 roupies à 65 ans à l'horizon 2024.

M. le président, pour financer la pension, le gouvernement aurait pu tout simplement diminuer le montant du *BRP*, repousser l'âge du versement du *BRP* à 65 ans ou encore ne l'accorder qu'à une certaine frange de la population.

Toutes ces options ont été proposées au gouvernement en amont du Budget 2021 par des parties tierces. Cependant, elles auraient toutes eu des conséquences sociales et surtout économiques dramatiques.

A titre d'exemple, diminuer le montant du *BRP* à 7000 roupies aurait fait immédiatement chuter le revenu de 270,000 individus entraînant de ce fait une diminution des dépenses de consommation de 7 milliards de roupies par an, soit une baisse potentielle de 1,0 point de pourcentage de PIB par an. Repousser l'âge du versement du *BRP* à 65 ans, au lieu de 60 ans, aurait fait diminuer de 36% le revenu de quelques 85,000 personnes âgées de 60 à 65 ans. Cela aurait de surcroît conduit à une baisse de 9,9 milliards de roupies de dépenses de consommation par an, soit une baisse potentielle de 1,2 point de pourcentage du PIB par an.

M. le président, le gouvernement aurait également pu augmenter certaines taxes existantes comme la TVA ou l'impôt sur les sociétés. De même cela n'aurait été ni juste, ni efficace.

En effet, une augmentation de 5 points de TVA entraînerait une baisse de 3,4% de la croissance de la consommation, soit une diminution potentielle de 1,9 point de pourcentage de PIB par an.

Pour pallier aux lacunes de ces différentes options, nous avons choisi d'opter pour une stratégie multicanale associant une réforme fiscale, l'étalement du versement de la pension à travers le BRP à 9,000 roupies à 60 ans et l'allocation supplémentaire de 4500 roupies à 65 ans et l'introduction d'une charge sociale obligatoire : la Contribution Sociale Généralisée.

M. le président, la Contribution Sociale Généralisée, la CSG, a été introduite comme un modèle durable, équitable, contributif et surtout intergénérationnel.

La CSG sera ainsi utilisée comme une source de revenus supplémentaires pour financer en partie la pension et mettre fin au déficit actuariel du *National Pension Fund*. En effet, compte tenu entre autres du vieillissement rapide de la population, la non-durabilité du système du *NPF* a été mise à nu, et il était nécessaire de procéder à des réformes.

Cela a notamment été souligné par les institutions internationales, qu'il s'agisse du FMI ou de la Banque mondiale. Au niveau local, les derniers rapports actuariels font état d'un déficit actuariel croissant. Le FMI avait d'ailleurs avancé en 2015 que l'insoutenabilité du *NPF* devrait, à terme, être supportée financièrement par l'État ce qui aurait eu un impact délétère sur les finances publiques.

A ce titre, permettez-moi d'être très clair sur ce point qui semble mystérieusement échapper aux membres de l'Opposition.

Si les contributions au *NPF* avaient été maintenues, une augmentation du taux de contribution à 19,2% à moyen terme aurait été inévitable.

Ce doublement du taux était une catastrophe non seulement pour la compétitivité des entreprises qui auraient dû supporter un énorme fardeau en termes de charges patronales, mais aussi pour le pouvoir d'achat des travailleurs qui auraient vu leurs revenus disponibles réduire comme peau de chagrin.

Ainsi, quand j'entends l'honorable Duval prétendre que ce n'est pas le moment d'introduire la CSG, permettez-moi de lui dire qu'il se trompe doublement. Il se trompe une première fois en faisant abstraction des lacunes au long terme du *NPF*.

Et comme si cela ne suffisait pas, il se trompe une seconde fois en omettant de prendre en considération les conséquences de la COVID-19 sur les finances de l'Etat.

Pour ce qui est de la métaphore du fromage proposée par l'honorable leader de l'Opposition, je souhaiterais lui rappeler que ce fromage qu'est le *NPF*, comme il le dit, représentait moins de R 1,000 par mois pour plus de la moitié des contributeurs au *NPF*, 53% d'entre eux pour être très précis.

M. le président, la CSG, en étant contributive, équitable, intergénérationnelle et soutenable, est une manifestation concrète de la philosophie et des engagements de ce gouvernement.

Ce gouvernement souhaite que nos aînés puissent vivre décemment, et cela peu importe ce qu'ils ont contribué en tant qu'actifs.

Car tous nos concitoyens ont le droit à une retraite paisible; la CSG s'inscrit dans la philosophie de justice sociale, d'équité et de progrès social portée par le Premier ministre.

M. le président, comme vous l'aurez compris, réforme de la pension et introduction de la CSG sont intimement liées. Cette réforme s'intègre dans la stratégie présentée au travers du Budget 2020-2021 qui fait la part belle à la justice sociale.

A ce titre, la redéfinition des contours du *Solidarity Levy* va dans ce sens et permet également à l'État de garantir des revenus supplémentaires pour assurer une croissance robuste et une lutte efficace contre les inégalités.

M. le président, l'introduction de la CSG qui va permettre à notre système de pension de se maintenir dans le temps, prend tout son sens dans le contexte actuel, tant du côté des employés que des employeurs, puisque l'immense majorité de ces deux catégories paieront moins sous la CSG que sous le *NPF*.

Je rappelle aussi que si les contributions au *NPF* sont supprimées à partir du 01 septembre 2020, le paiement des bénéfices au titre du *NPF* est lui bien maintenu.

Ainsi, toutes les contributions accumulées dans le *NPF* restent dans le fonds et les paiements se feront en conséquence.

Voilà de quoi rassurer ceux qui ont jusqu'à présent cotisé au *NPF* et qui ont été inutilement inquiétés par la démagogie de certain.

M. le président, je me saisis également de cette occasion pour rappeler quelques chiffres clés, qui je n'en doute pas, mettront immédiatement d'accord les membres de l'Opposition et certains pseudo-détracteurs de la réforme.

En ce qui concerne la compétitivité des entreprises, je l'ai dit et redit, la très grande majorité des entreprises, c'est-à-dire 81% des entreprises du secteur privé, soit 16,403 sur 20,150 sociétés vont payer moins par le biais de la CSG.

Même constat au niveau des secteurs d'activité où 15 sur un total de 21 secteurs paieront dans l'ensemble moins sous la CSG que dans le cadre des *NPF*.

Plus encore, 100% des secteurs ont une majorité d'employés qui vont payer moins. C'est-à-dire, 100% des secteurs ont une majorité d'employés qui sont gagnants avec la CSG.

En termes de pouvoir d'achat, 89% des employés, c'est-à-dire tous ceux dont le salaire de base est inférieur à R 39,800 par mois, paieront moins sous la CSG par rapport au *NPF*.

Et l'honorable Duval a pourtant eu l'effronterie de dire que la CSG était, je cite –

“une insulte” faite aux travailleurs.”

Alors que nous savons que 9 employés sur 10 vont payer moins sous la CSG que sous le *NPF*, je me demande si ce n'est pas cet ancien ministre des Finances qui est en train d'insulter les mauriciens.

Combattant farouchement les affabulations formulées par ceux assis de l'autre côté de la Chambre, le gouvernement d'aujourd'hui est aux cotés des travailleurs.

Preuve s'il en est, pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, le représentant syndical du secteur privé a, sur un plateau radio, fustigé le brouhaha inutile créé autour de l'introduction de la CSG.

Excusez-moi du peu, il a même qualifié de honte et de lâcheté la guerre ouverte menée contre la CSG par une infime partie du patronat.

Au leader de l'opposition, qui quant à lui qualifié la CSG d'injuste et de bombe à retardement social, je souhaiterais lui demander, au regard de ces chiffres, s'il n'est pas lui-même embarrassé par ses propres propos teintés d'hypocrisie et de démagogie?

Je lui rappelle également que le secteur public est lui aussi assujetti au paiement de la CSG.

M. le président, j'espère que ces chiffres auront également réussi à convaincre les autres honorables membres de l'Opposition. Si cela n'est toujours pas le cas, peut-être que les conclusions du dernier rapport du FMI sauront enfin les mettre d'accord.

En effet, dans son dernier rapport d'octobre 2020, le FMI plébiscite les choix politiques et économiques portés par ce gouvernement et prévoit une croissance économique de 9,9% en 2021.

Notre économie est bel et bien sur les rails pour connaître une reprise soutenue et durable dans les prochaines années.

Alors quand je lis l'honorable Uteem s'esclaffant dans les médias que l'objectif de ce gouvernement n'est pas de gérer efficacement le pays mais de rester au pouvoir, je reste pantois.

De plus, j'aimerais lui rappeler que les employés du public contribuent déjà à hauteur de 6% de leurs salaires pour leur pension. Et je le rassure que les ministres et autres parlementaires sont bien assujettis à la CSG. J'ai déjà donné des instructions dans ce sens pour que les représentants de l'Etat paient de leurs poches.

Le processus administratif est en train d'être finalisé afin que tous les parlementaires contribuent à la CSG dès le mois de septembre 2020 comme tous les autres employés.

Je tiens aussi à lui rappeler que c'est le ministère des Finances, et par conséquent, le ministre des Finances, qui accorde les exemptions fiscales aux parlementaires pour l'achat de leurs voitures neuves.

La réussite de la politique de ce gouvernement ne plait pas à tout le monde, c'est évident, certains préféreraient voir le pays plonger dans le marasme économique et social. C'est pourtant l'inverse qui se produit.

Preuve s'il en est, selon le FMI, le PIB de Maurice augmentera donc de 9,9% en 2021 et de 6,5% en 2022, *ceteris paribus*.

Le PIB reviendra à son niveau de 2019 à la fin de 2021, soit à 502 milliards de roupies.

Qui plus est, toujours dans ce même rapport, le FMI tient compte des différentes réformes menées par ce gouvernement et prévoit ainsi que les recettes publiques, qui étaient de 101 milliards de roupies en 2019, passeront à 150 milliards de roupies en 2024, toutes choses égales par ailleurs. Lorsque nous parlons de la viabilité du système de retraite et de soutenabilité des finances publiques, ces réformes visant à accroître les recettes de l'État sont d'une importance capitale. Et la CSG fait partie de cet ensemble.

Grâce aux réformes menées par le gouvernement sous le leadership de notre Premier ministre et en tenant la promesse faite aux Mauriciens, nous diminuerons la part des dépenses de pension tant par rapport aux recettes de l'État que par rapport au PIB. C'est pourquoi la CSG rend le système de retraite viable, soutenable et juste.

Je suis fier, avec le soutien du Premier ministre et de mes collègues de la majorité, de porter cette avancée sociale de premier plan qui est aussi un incontestable levier de croissance et d'assainissement des finances publiques. M. le président, permettez-moi de terminer mon propos avec une réflexion de l'Abbé Pierre:

« L'injustice, ce n'est pas l'inégalité, c'est le non partage. »

Voilà qui devrait donner à réfléchir et à rejeter cette motion.

Merci.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Leader of the Opposition!

(2.56 a.m.)

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance should be grateful that there is no levy of tax on verbal diarrhea or on nightmares. I have listened to him intently, but he has failed to convince us on the merits of *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* and I would advise him to interface with those who are losing their jobs on a day to day basis. And if he wants to know what absolute poverty and poverty is, I would advise him to go to the nook and corner of this country. Then, he will understand the harsh reality and the undue hardship that people are paying because of false dawn and false policies of this Government.

Let me thank all those who have participated in the debate. I think, notwithstanding what the Minister of Finance has said, the debate has been relatively healthy; debate on the Motion that *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* Regulations 2020, published under Government Notice No. 214 of 2020 and laid in the Assembly on 03 November 2020, be disallowed.

For the sake of brevity at this early hour of the morning, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will say that honesty is the best policy, and I would have expected our friends sitting on the Government bench to say loud and clear that, today, we are paying the price of over promise and under deliver. This is the price that we are paying, and if I have to substantiate what I have said, I will refer to what I stated earlier in relation to what the Prime Minister promised on the World Elderly day in October 2019. Progressive increase in non-contributory pension from Rs9,000 to Rs13,500 before 2024. This is a false promise; this is a false dawn and, today, we have to bear the consequences of all these false promises.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is every reason for the private sector on behalf of all employees to challenge the constitutionality of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* and this issue has been canvassed by our good friend who is well endowed in law, and he has put across his points very forcefully. Let me also convey my appreciation to our friends from the Opposition bench, hon. Aadil Ameer Meea and Uteem and all our friends who have intervened very forcefully to rebut the arguments put across by our friends, arguments which hold no water. And nobody has dared to spell out the harsh realities on the Government bench. The problem is an ageing population and an ageing workforce, and this is an issue that has to be addressed. I have not heard anything from our friends on the Government bench in respect of influx of foreign workers and the consequences of the influx. What is it that we need to do to address the issue of ageing workforce frontally?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, failure to come with concrete proposals, they had no choice but to introduce *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, and arguments have been put forward very clearly by hon. Uteem on the demerits of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, which is a clandestine tax. And who are those who have to bear the consequences? First of all, the employees of the private sector. A tax upon the gross income of employees in the private sector; a tax which is divisive, which is retrograde, which is unnecessary and discriminatory, and it is not sustainable. We have given facts and figures to prove that it is going to collapse like a pack of cards, and all your dreams that you cherish, hon. Minister of Finance, all your dreams will be shattered.

You can afford to pay the price of a shattering dream, but what about those workers, those who have to work hard to eke out a living, those on the dole, those who are trying to earn a living temporarily on Wage Assistance Scheme? In the meantime, nothing is being done to take corrective measures to address sectoral reform, and I advise my friend to have a talk with those in the private sector. I am not talking of the fat cats or what we call rent

seekers, but I am talking of those who work hard, who know what endurance means, who know what the culture of innovation is, who know how to harness energy and to turn energy into socioeconomic achievement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance stated earlier that he has paid heed to all stakeholders. Let me remind him; in a PNQ which I addressed to him on 12 June, I asked the Minister of Finance what consultations, if any, he had had in relation to his pension reform and the Contribution Sociale Généralisée and, if so, with whom and when. He never answered with whom nor when. In his usual pompous arrogance, he stated that the Ministry had proposed what he called a form of dialogue. This is the way that he deals with stakeholders of this country, and I can remind him that this arrogance has a price, and the price of arrogance is confrontation. A Minister of Finance is responsible to rally all the stakeholders, identify the problems, address them frontally and see what is the best solution, and the best solution comes when there is consultation, when there is harmonious blending amongst all the stakeholders to come up with concrete proposals. Let me ask him - and he knows very well when I say that this is a clandestine taxation. He knows very well the reasons as to why I say this is a clandestine taxation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Several reports have been produced, but when the Minister says that they dared to take corrective measures to address an issue, which I grant him is a very difficult issue because you have to sustain our pension scheme, we have an ageing workforce; but to sustain it, you don't come with a measure which is not palatable, a measure which is not acceptable, a measure which is damaging to the economy, and a measure which will run down the economy and is adverse to socioeconomic development, because it impacts first of all on the mobility of the workers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was rather disappointed also when the hon. Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity replied, again, to a PNQ which I put to her. And what was said then? That measures are being taken; that there have been good interactive sessions with all stakeholders; that the measures being proposed are measures that will give satisfaction to all the stakeholders. And I challenge the hon. Minister to submit reports or minutes of those reports. Let it be ventilated; let those proposals be ventilated. Let them be circulated, because we want to know what are the contents of the findings of the report.

Let me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, tell our friends on Government bench: selling a dream is easy; translating dream into achievement is a difficult task, and the only way to do so is to rally all the stakeholders, which they have failed to do so, and they have failed abysmally. On the issue of *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, it's a curse, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It's a curse and it will collapse like a pack of cards because you have a Government which is totally irresponsible. And this is the consequence of their irresponsibility, and those who have to bear the brunt of it are the workers of the private sector. This is why I say this Motion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has its *raison d'être*. And I will invite our friends sitting on the Government bench to think twice, to think positively, to make a U-turn and see to it that *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is set aside till the Court pronounces on the constitutionality of the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*.

Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: You commend the Motion and it has to be seconded as well. Thank you very much.

The Motion of the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell) was, on question put, defeated.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Ganoo seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

(3.17 a.m.)

MATTER RAISED

ALBION - AVENUE DES CYGNES, *MORECELLEMENT* TERRES D'ALBION - NOISE POLLUTION

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Let's hear hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: M. le président...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, ma requête s'adresse aux honorables ministres de l'Environnement et du *Local Government*, qui malheureusement ne sont pas dans l'hémicycle, et a trait à une pétition adressée au Conseil de district de Rivière Noire et à la police de l'Environnement et qui concerne une maison située à l'Avenue des Cygnes, morcellement Terres d'Albion, à Albion, qui a été transformée en une salle des fêtes, club privé, opérant de surcroît sans permis.

M. le président, les résidents du morcellement en question vivent un véritable cauchemar à chaque week-end avec tout le bruit infernal qui provient de cette maison, qui est louée à des familles qui viennent pour célébrer des anniversaires entre autres.

Merci, donc, aux honorables ministres à qui j'ai déjà remis copie de cette pétition et merci à eux de s'assurer qu'aucun permis d'opération ne soit octroyé à un certain monsieur T. M. et, bien sûr, que ces activités illégales cessent sur le champ.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall forward the request to my colleagues Ministers of Environment and of Local Government.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. I understand I should be wishing everybody a good day.

At 3.20 a.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT & CONTROL CENTRE - MAIN FEATURES, CAPABILITIES, DUTIES & DELIVERABLES

(No. B/830) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in

regard to the Traffic Management and Control Centre operating under the Safe City Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the main features, capabilities, duties and deliverables thereof.

Reply: The Safe City Project is being implemented for the purpose of safeguarding National Security and Public Security as well as to enable the Mauritius Police Force to effectively discharge its duties under the Police Act and such other duties as may be conferred upon it under any other enactment. It incorporates a wide array of technology driven subsystems where their integration and inter-operability are fundamental in obtaining better intelligence for decision makers to be proactive and also to optimize responses, thus enhancing the safety and security of Mauritian citizens and visitors.

The project comprises the following –

- (a) supply, installation, testing and commissioning of 4,000 Intelligent Video Surveillance (IVS) cameras over 2,000 sites;

supply, installation, testing and commissioning of 300 Intelligent Traffic Surveillance (ITS) cameras over 75 sites;
- (b) supply, installation, testing and commissioning of 45 Enterprise/Enhanced Long Term Evolution (eLTE) sites, including 4,500 Multimedia Radio Trunking and 500 vehicular mounted terminals, and
- (c) Centralised Command and Control Centre, including –
 - (i) a Main Command and Control Centre;
 - (ii) a modern Integrated Emergency Response Management System (999);
 - (iii) 7 Sub-Command Centres for the Police Divisions;

- (iv) a Traffic Management and Control Centre, and
- (v) a Monitoring Bay at each of the 71 Police Stations and one at Grand Bassin Police Post.

The Traffic Management and Control Centre (TMCC) is one of the deliverables of the Safe City Project. It will be located at the former Police Information and Operations Room (PIOR) building at Line Barracks, Port Louis, and will be under the charge of the Traffic Branch. The TMCC is presently under implementation and is expected to be operational by the end of December 2020.

The TMCC will be equipped with the following features –

- (a) monitoring consoles for Intelligent Traffic Surveillance (ITS) and Intelligence Video Surveillance (IVS);
- (b) video wall for traffic viewing, and
- (c) dispatching console for Radio Communication System.

These features will provide the following capabilities –

- (a) live traffic viewing;
- (b) automated Number Plate Recognition;
- (c) vehicles searching by number plates;
- (d) vehicles route mapping at the ITS sites, and
- (e) traffic statistics, such as vehicle count and traffic flow reports.

The main duties of personnel based at the TMCC will comprise the following –

- (a) monitoring of the traffic movements at all sites where the ITS and IVS Cameras are located;
- (b) managing the traffic flow through live communication with personnel of Traffic Branch on ground equipped with the handheld radios (EP 820);

- (c) carrying out vehicles count through the Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System, and
- (d) providing statistics on traffic flow and number of vehicles passing through an ITS site.

POUDRE D'OR - AIR-SEA RESCUE OPERATION - 31 AUGUST 2020

(No. B/831) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the air-sea rescue operation at Poudre d'Or in the night of Monday 31 August 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) rank of the officer of the Police Helicopter Squadron responsible therefor;
- (b) number of helicopters requisitioned therefor;
- (c) reasons why a helicopter capable of effecting night rescue operations was not requisitioned therefor, and
- (d) time at which the bowser was requested to attend to the refuelling of the helicopter/s at Poudre d'Or, indicating the time taken therefor.

(Withdrawn)

PREVENTION OF RESURGENCE AND FURTHER SPREAD OF EPIDEMIC DISEASE (COVID-19) REGULATIONS 2020 - OFFENCES

(No. B/832) Mr C. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the offences under the Prevention of Resurgence and Further Spread of Epidemic Disease (COVID-19) Regulations 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, in each case, information as to the number of persons –

- (a) arrested;
- (b) prosecuted, and
- (c) convicted thereunder.

Reply: While many countries across the world are relentlessly struggling to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, here, in Mauritius, as a result of the several measures taken proactively by Government, the country has been able to prevent the pandemic from spreading in the local community for more than six months. Unfortunately, a local transmission of the disease has been registered on Thursday 12 November 2020.

One of the measures taken to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Mauritius is the promulgation of The Prevention of Resurgence and Further Spread of Epidemic Disease (COVID-19) Regulations 2020 pursuant to section 79A of the Public Health Act. These Regulations provide for sanitary measures that have to be observed by the population with a view to preventing a resurgence as well as further spread of COVID-19 and came into operation on 17 May 2020.

Regulation 4 provides for the mandatory wearing of protective mask whereas Regulation 5 makes provision for social and physical distancing rules to be observed by the population.

Regulation 8 provides that any person who breaches Regulation 4 or 5 shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 50,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that since the coming into operation of these Regulations till 12 November 2020 -

- (i) 1,915 persons are being investigated for failing to wear protective mask; of whom, 213 are being prosecuted and one person has been convicted. Enquiry is ongoing with regard to the remaining 1,701 cases, and
- (ii) 7 persons are being investigated for failing to observe social and physical distancing rules. Enquiry is ongoing in these cases.

It is to be placed on record that, in general, the Mauritian population has been very cooperative and has collaborated with the authorities in a disciplined manner, thereby contributing to contain the spread of the disease in the country. The population is urged to strictly continue to observe the sanitary measures that have been put in place and to be more vigilant.

MBC - ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/833) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Acting Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the -

- (a) terms and conditions of appointment thereof, and
- (b) outcome of the internal inquiry initiated in relation thereto, under the responsibility of Ms Sandrine Valère, Permanent Secretary.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation has informed that the Deputy Director General, who is presently acting as Director General of the Corporation, is being paid a monthly acting allowance of Rs115,000 representing the difference between the contractual salary of the Director General, which is presently Rs225,000 and the contractual salary of the Deputy Director General, which is Rs110,000.

The acting allowance is being paid to the Deputy Director General for shouldering the additional responsibilities as Director General, in line with the recommendation of the 2016 PRB Report.

The other terms and conditions of his acting appointment, such as car benefits, travelling, leave and passage benefits and gratuity are equally in line with the recommendations of the 2016 PRB Report.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the MBC has informed that the Report of the internal inquiry has been remitted to the Chairperson of the Board of the MBC. A Board meeting will be scheduled to examine the Report.

IBA & ICTA – PROPOSED MERGER

(No. B/834) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in

regard to the proposed merger of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: In the reply to Parliamentary Question B/139 on Tuesday 30 June 2020, it was stated that the draft Bill submitted by the Consultant on the merger of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority had been referred to the Attorney General's Office for vetting.

However, after careful and in-depth consideration by all the concerned stakeholders, information has been received that it may not be in the best interest of the Sectors to go ahead with the merger exercise for the following reasons, *inter alia* -

- (a) there are wide disparities in the technical and legal mode of operation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority;
- (b) the telecommunications and the broadcasting sectors have different regulatory traditions and the proposed merger may lead to unclear regulatory principles;
- (c) the services offered and the functions of the two Institutions are distinct and separate, and
- (d) complex administrative procedures and bottlenecks in the decision making process may arise as a result of merger as both institutions have been working independently of each other and are significantly experienced in their own fields of expertise.

This being so, it is not proposed to go ahead with the merger exercise.

CARGO HANDLING CORPORATION LTD – LORRIES & TRUCKS - PURCHASE

(No. B/835) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain

therefrom, information as to the number of lorries and trucks of orange colour recently purchased thereat, indicating -

- (a) in each case, the cost and purpose thereof;
- (b) who prepared the specifications, and
- (c) if they are in good running condition.

Reply: The Managing Director of the Cargo Handling Corporation Limited has informed that the Corporation does not operate lorries and trucks but terminal tractors and trailers. These equipment items are used for the transfer of containers from the Ship-to-Shore cranes on the quays to the storage area on the Mauritius Container Terminal of Cargo Handling Corporation Limited. It is, therefore, presumed that reference in the question is being made to tractors and trailers.

The Mauritius Container Terminal operates eight Ship-to-Shore cranes along a quay of 800 metres and has a yard area of 22.5 hectares. The main equipment items and machinery which are used for handling of containerised cargo are, *inter alia* -

- (i) Ship-to-Shore cranes;
- (ii) Rubber Tyre Gantry cranes;
- (iii) Reachstackers;
- (iv) Forklifts, and
- (v) Tractors and trailers.

On information received, the most recent purchase of tractors and trailers was made in 2018. 14 tractors and 14 trailers comprising 11 standard trailers and 3 low-bed trailers were purchased along with 2 Super Post Panamax Ship-to-Shore cranes, 6 Rubber Tyre Gantry cranes and other yard equipment for a total project value of Rs1.2 billion.

Regarding part (a) of the question, information received indicates that the total cost of the 14 tractors and 14 trailers was to the tune of Rs82 m. excluding VAT. As mentioned earlier, these equipment are used for the transportation of containers on the terminal.

As regards part (b) of the question, further information received indicates that the specifications for the purchase of these tractors and trailers were prepared in-house by the Technical Manager who is a registered Professional Engineer, in consultation with the

Maintenance Engineering Officer. The preparation of the specifications was based on the previous purchase of tractors and trailers and updated with technological development and user needs as is the standard practice for such procurement at the Cargo Handling Corporation Limited.

In regard to part (c) of the question, out of the 14 tractors, 10 are in good running condition, 4 tractors under repairs at the workshop of the Corporation. As regard trailers, out of the 11 standard ones, 8 are in good running condition and 3 are under repairs at the workshop. The 3 low bed trailers are in good running condition.

The Cargo Handling Corporation Limited is an organisation which operates round the clock and, as such, the equipment items are used extensively. They are rotated for maintenance in accordance with the maintenance plan recommended by the manufacturer. They are also sent for repairs as and when required.

It is to be noted that one additional Super Post Panamax Ship-to-Shore crane was procured in 2019, which has necessitated the purchase of another 13 tractors and 17 trailers by Cargo Handling Corporation Limited. The tractors and trailers will be used in support to the new crane and as replacement to the old ones. This procurement exercise is ongoing and has reached the testing and commissioning stage.

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT & SEAPORT – DRUGS SEIZURE

(No. B/836) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the seizure and discovery of drugs at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport and the Seaport since January 2020 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of arrests effected in connection therewith.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that during the period January 2020 to date (12.11.2020), 12 cases of drugs have been detected at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport and four such cases have been detected in the Harbour. All these cases are still under investigation.

As regards the number of arrests effected in connection with these drug cases, 28 persons have been arrested. 17 of them were arrested at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport and 11 in the Harbour.

The Government, it is reassured, remains unflinchingly committed in the fight against drugs.

LIQUID CHROMATOGRAPHY - HIGH RESOLUTION MASS SPECTROMETER SYSTEM - DRUG DRIVING TEST

(No. B/837) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) 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 Liquid Chromatography – High Resolution Mass Spectrometer System, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof acquired by the Mauritius Police Force to carry out Drug Driving Testing, indicating –

- (a) the number of Police Officers trained to use same, and
- (b) when same will be used.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that the Mauritius Police Force (MPF) is not procuring any Liquid Chromatography – High Resolution Mass Spectrometer (LCHRMS) apparatus. Instead, it is the Forensic Science Laboratory which has acquired the apparatus. The purpose of this equipment is to carry out analysis to detect the presence of drug or any other intoxicating substance in a person's body fluids while he is driving a motor vehicle or riding a cycle.

Section 123G of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 provides, *inter alia*, that where a Police Officer has reasonable ground to suspect that a person is under the influence of a drug pursuant to an offence under Section 123D (Causing death by careless driving when under influence of alcohol, drug or intoxicating substance) or Section 123E (Driving or cycling when under the influence of alcohol, drug or intoxicating substance), the Police Officer shall require that person to undergo a field impairment test, either at or near the place where the requirement is made or at the nearest Police Station where the test may be carried out.

Where a field impairment test is carried out and the Police Officer has reasonable grounds to suspect that the person's physical state is impaired, he shall require the person to provide a specimen of saliva for a preliminary drug test either at or near the place where the requirement is made or at the nearest Police Station where the test may be carried out. The Police Officer may also require the person to provide a specimen of urine for a preliminary drug test at the hospital. Where a preliminary drug test indicates that a person is under the influence of a drug, the Police Officer shall require that person to provide, at a hospital, a specimen of blood or urine which will be analysed by the Forensic Science Laboratory.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that, in order to carry out the preliminary drug tests (for saliva or urine), the Mauritius Police Force will have to procure the Road Side Kits for saliva and urine drug testing. On 29 July 2020, the Mauritius Police Force launched a tender for the acquisition of 1,000 units of saliva drug testing kits and 500 units of urine drug testing kits. The first batch of 500 units of saliva drug testing kits is expected to be delivered on Monday 07 December 2020 and the remaining 500 units will be delivered after six months. In regard to the urine drug testing kits, there have been no responsive bids and a new tender will be launched in due course.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has further informed that, after delivery of the saliva drug testing kits, the supplier will provide a 'Train the Trainer' course to 40 Police Officers, which will include the theoretical and practical aspects on the use of the kits.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has also informed that the preliminary drug tests will be carried out once the drug testing kits would have been delivered and the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2019 would have been proclaimed.

SAFE CITY PROJECT - CONSTITUENCY NO. 17 - CAMERAS

(No. B/838) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Safe City Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of surveillance cameras installed thereunder in Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, indicating the –

- (a) number thereof which are operational, and
- (b) additional number thereof to be installed, if any.

Reply: It is emphasised that the Safe City Project is an integrated and advanced technological system for ensuring safety and security of the public in general in Mauritius. It will act as a powerful and effective tool to combat crimes and drug proliferation and also assist in more effective traffic road safety management.

As at date, 132 Intelligent Video Surveillance (IVS) cameras and 14 Intelligent Traffic Surveillance (ITS) cameras have been installed in Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands.

These cameras have been installed in order to deliver an efficient and effective policing service to the residents of Constituency No. 17 and meet the public needs and expectations. Prior to the installation of these cameras, the Mauritius Police Force conducted a survey to identify strategic sites where these cameras could be installed. The following factors have been considered during the exercise -

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

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that, out of the 132 IVS cameras installed, 117 are operational. The remaining 15 will be operational once these are connected to the CEB grid. The 14 ITS cameras are all operational.

With regard to part (b) of the question, surveys are being carried out for the installation of additional IVS cameras in Constituency No. 17 subject to clearance from the local authorities and other stakeholders involved in the project.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD - AIR HOSTESSES - SALARY REDUCTION

(No. B/839) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, he will, for the benefit of the

House, obtain from Air Mauritius Ltd., information as to whether there has been any recent case of alleged discrimination in regard to four female pregnant cabin crew and, if so, indicate if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto, indicating the outcome thereof.

Reply (Ministry of Labour, Human Resource, Development and Training): I am informed that no formal complaint has been received at any Labour Office of my Ministry. However, in the course of a meeting held on 17 September 2020 at the Conciliation and Mediation section of my Ministry, whereby issues relating to conditions of employment of employees represented by the Air Mauritius Cabin Crew Association (AMCCA) were discussed, the issue of the reduction of 50% salary for the months of August and September 2020 in respect of the four Air Hostesses was also raised.

Subsequently, at a meeting held on 08 October 2020 with the Administrator of Air Mauritius Ltd and AMCCA, the Administrator was informed of the representation made by the four Air Hostesses regarding the reduction of their salary.

I am further informed that, during a meeting held on 05 November 2020 with the Administrator of Air Mauritius Ltd and AMCCA, my Ministry was apprised that the outstanding 50% salary for the months of August and September 2020 in respect of the four Air Hostesses had already been refunded.

I wish to assure the House that all representations made by workers are being duly attended by my Ministry, which also ensures that the provisions of the labour laws are strictly being complied with.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL

(No. B/840) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the proposed Freedom of Information Bill, he will state where matters stand as to the in-house consultations process initiated thereinto, indicating the expected date of introduction thereof in the House.

(Withdrawn)

LATE MR K. S. – DEATH – POLICE INQUIRY

(No. B/841) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to late Mr K. S. whose body was found on or about 18 October 2020, 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 thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

SYNTHETIC DRUGS - CLASSIFICATION

(No. B/842) 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 synthetic drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, since 2018 to date, information as to the -

- (a) number of suspects arrested in connection therewith, indicating the number thereof
 - (i) being minors, and
 - (ii) having been provisionally charged
- (b) quantity thereof seized, and
- (c) measures taken as at to date to combat the proliferation thereof in Mauritius.

Reply: Synthetic drugs form part of New Psychoactive drugs (NPS) and are also known by a number of other names, such as bath salts, herbal highs and legal highs. The most common types of synthetic drugs are -

- (i) ‘herbal highs’ or ‘party pills’;
- (ii) synthetic cannabinoids, and
- (iii) synthetic cathinones.

The most common form of synthetic drugs that is being abused of in Mauritius is synthetic cannabinoids. These are cannabinoid receptor agonists which produce effects similar to those of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the principal psychoactive component in cannabis. Synthetic cannabinoids are often laced onto herbal products and sold under different appellations, such as spice, k2, kranic and Black Mamba. In Mauritius, the common names used by drug addicts for synthetic cannabinoids are, amongst others, “*C’est Pas Bien*”, “*Rambo*”, “*Batte dans la Tete*”. However, the Dangerous Drugs Act does not classify drugs by using such given names. Instead, they are classified in accordance with their components.

Regarding part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that, since 2018 to Thursday 12 November 2020, the Police have arrested 3,646 persons in relation to cases of synthetic drugs. Out of the 3,646 persons, 88 are minors, and 86 of whom have been provisionally charged.

With regard to part (b) of the question, information received indicates that the quantity of synthetic drugs seized is as follows -

- (i) Synthetic Cannabinoids (locally): 7 kgs 982.578
- (ii) Synthetic Cannabinoids (imported): 3 kgs 207.800

Regarding part (c) of the question, the following repressive and preventive measures have been taken to combat the proliferation of synthetic drugs in Mauritius -

Repressive measures

- (i) since 08 October 2001, the Dangerous Drugs Act has been amended to include “Synthetic Cannabinoids and their derivatives” in part II of the First Schedule of the Act;
- (ii) the laws have been further amended on 11 September 2015 to include among other drugs, synthetic cathinones, their chemical diversities and derivatives in part II of the First Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs Act;
- (iii) on 25 May 2019, further amendments have been brought to the existing Laws and Synthetic Cannabinoids and Synthetic Cathinones and their chemical diversities and analogues have been included in the DDA;
- (iv) regular ADSU/FSL interactions with regard to analysis of synthetic drug seizure are held with a view to obtaining information/intelligence on the type of synthetic substance, possible linkages with other seizures and possibility of identifying the source of the drug and suspects associated with importation thereof;
- (v) security has been tightened at points of entry at the Airport and Harbour. ADSU, MRA, AML, ATOL, PATS and DCA are working jointly to prevent the entry of psychoactive drugs into the country;

- (vi) the Police and Customs are cooperating for more enhanced vigilance over cargo, postal packets and parcels reaching Port and Airport, especially those arriving by targeted routes and from targeted countries. The objective of Police and Customs operations aims at going well beyond pure drug interaction and to identify, track down and bring to justice the leaders of the criminal organisations involved in drug trafficking;
- (vii) the participation of Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and Private Security Companies are sought for the investigation of drug cases as well as identifying potential suspects involved in drug dealing;
- (viii) ADSU has consolidated its bilateral cooperation with Interpol since it operates in an international capacity as well as cooperation with other friendly countries in the region such as Reunion, Madagascar, Seychelles, South Africa, Mozambique, among others, in the investigation, sharing of intelligence on drug trafficking and other related offences;
- (ix) ADSU is investing massively in the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment to the tune of MUR 25 m., which will be used in the prevention and detection of drug related offences, and
- (x) Police Officers posted to ADSU have attended courses sponsored by friendly countries and workshops organised by agencies such as the Southern African Region Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (SARPPCO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), African Union, Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Interpol.

Preventive Measures:

- (i) ADSU personnel are participating actively in prevention and awareness campaigns, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness (Hare Reduction Unit) and the Ministry of Education, and
- (ii) one of the priorities of ADSU is to increase public awareness and educate them on ill-effects of drug abuse. Regular interventions at education institution, in the Press/radio and television, are made to reach a larger audience.

The Government is assuredly fully committed in the fight against the drug scourge.

**ROAD ACCIDENTS – DRIVERS UNDER INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL - JANUARY
2019-17 NOVEMBER 2020**

(No. B/843) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to 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 wherein the drivers involved were found to be driving whilst being under the influence of alcohol, on a monthly basis since January 2019 to date, indicating the number of fatal ones.

(Withdrawn)

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – MAURITIUS SOVEREIGNTY

(No. B/844) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the sovereignty issue over the Chagos Archipelago, he will state if Government proposes to renew discussions with the incoming President of the United States of America.

Reply: To remind, in its Advisory Opinion of 25 February 2019, the International Court of Justice made clear that the Chagos Archipelago is, and has always formed, an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. The Court also found that the decolonisation process of Mauritius was not lawfully completed upon its accession to independence in 1968 since the Chagos Archipelago was illegally excised from the territory of Mauritius. The Court further concluded that the United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible and that all Member States are under an obligation to cooperate with the United Nations in order to complete the decolonisation process of Mauritius.

In Resolution 73/295 which was adopted by an overwhelming majority of votes, the UN General Assembly endorsed the findings of the International Court of Justice and, *inter alia*, demanded the United Kingdom to withdraw its colonial administration unconditionally from the Chagos Archipelago within six months, that is, by 22 November 2019. The United

Kingdom failed to meet that deadline and remains an illegal occupier of the Chagos Archipelago.

In line with the Government Programme 2020-2024, Government will continue to pursue all political, legal and diplomatic avenues to achieve the completion of our decolonisation process so that Mauritius can effectively and fully exercise its sovereignty over the totality of its territory, including the Chagos Archipelago.

In this regard, Government proposes to engage with the incoming President of the United States of America and his administration to seek support for the respect of the obligations under international law by all countries concerned in order to ensure the completion of the decolonisation of Mauritius, while reaffirming the assurance which we have already given on several occasions to the United States for the continued operation of its military base in Diego Garcia.

In the message of congratulations which I addressed on Tuesday 08 November 2020 to His Excellency Mr Joseph Biden on his election as the President of the United States, I renewed the offer of Mauritius to enter into a long-term arrangement with the United States to ensure the continued operation of its military base in Diego Garcia. I also underscored that such an arrangement would be consistent with the common vision and shared principles of Mauritius and the United States in respect of the rule of law and the United States historical support for decolonisation.

GRADE 9 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT – SYLLABI - DELOADING

(No. B/867) 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 Grade 9 National Assessment, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if the deloading of the syllabi thereof has been undertaken, indicating the pedagogical impact thereof on the students.

(Withdrawn)

FISHERMEN REGISTRATION CARDS – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(No. B/868) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping

whether, in regard to Fishermen Registration Cards, he will state the number of fishers who have been issued therewith, indicating the –

- (a) eligibility criteria therefor, and
- (b) number of pending applications therefor.

(Withdrawn)

POINTE AUX CANNONIERS BEACH - PUBLIC ACCESS PATHWAY

(No. B/869) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Pointe aux Cannoniers beach, he will state if any development project for the creation of a public access pathway thereto has recently been approved and, if so, table all documents in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

A1-M1 LINK ROAD PROJECT - CONSULTANT

(No. B/870) 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 A1-M1 Link Road Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the name of the consultant therefor, indicating the –

- (a) fees payable thereto, and
- (b) if the services thereof have been or will be retained for the construction of the viaduct of 330 metres in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that the Consultant for the A1-M1 Link Road, as well as the construction of Grade Separated Junctions at Pont Fer/Jumbo/Dowlut Roundabouts is the Korea Expressway Corporation (KEC).

On 11 November 2016, under a Government to Government Agreement, the RDA awarded a contract to the KEC in respect of the Engineering Design, Project Management and Supervision of Works for the A1-M1 and Pont Fer/Jumbo/Dowlut projects.

Regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that the contract has been awarded for a lump sum of USD12,457,950, inclusive of VAT. As at date, an amount of USD9,732,752.95 has been disbursed.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that, as part of its assignment, KEC is overseeing the design and supervising the works for the A1-M1 Link Road project, which include the construction of the 330-metre bridge or viaduct.

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN - INFRASTRUCTURAL WORKS - ADDITIONAL CLAIMS

(No. B/871) 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 infrastructural works undertaken by his Ministry which were stalled during the COVID-19 lockdown, he will state if –

- (a) additional claims have been received therefor since July 2020 to date and, if so, indicate if consideration is being given thereto and
- (b) the extension time for the completion thereof is being respected in each case and, if not, why not.

Reply: As the House is aware, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown which lasted 72 days, all construction activities were suspended. As a result, delays were noted in the implementation of several projects and some Contractors have submitted claims for Extension of Time and in some cases, with costs.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling a list of six claims for Extension of Time with costs received in respect of projects undertaken by the Road Development Authority and the status thereon.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the extended time has been respected in respect of the construction of the La Croisette new link road & Improvement of Bend at Nouvelle Découverte while for the other four projects; works are still ongoing within the extended time.

As regards projects undertaken by the National Development Unit of my Ministry, I am informed that it is presently implementing 667 projects, including 224 roads, 351 drains and 92 amenities projects all over the island. Delays in implementation of some of these projects have been encountered due to the confinement period.

For some projects, extension of time has been granted due to delays because of the pandemic. For other projects, notifications and claims for extension of time have been

received from contractors and same are under assessment. Details thereof are being compiled and will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITAL - CHEMOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT - PARKING FACILITIES

(No. B/872) 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 Chemotherapy Department of the Queen Victoria Hospital, in Candos, he will state if consideration will be given for a transfer thereof to a place with sufficient parking facilities to ensure the convenience of the patients availing themselves of the treatment dispensed thereat when attending same.

Reply: In 2012, my Ministry proceeded with a decentralisation of its chemotherapy services to regional hospitals. Despite the decentralisation, the Queen Victoria Hospital in Candos is still receiving 200 patients on appointment and attending to 70 cases for chemotherapy treatment on a daily basis.

I am informed that the Chemotherapy Department of the Victoria Hospital in Candos has already been partly localised to the newly renovated building, housed in Phase I of the New Cancer Hospital, since 23 October 2020. At present, some 50 patients undergoing chemotherapy are already attending the New Cancer Hospital at Solferino, Vacoas. To avoid disruption of the service, other activities of the Radiotherapy Department will shortly be shifted to the New Cancer Hospital, in a phased manner.

I wish to inform the House that the New Cancer Hospital entails 2 phases. Phase I involves the renovation of the existing building and Phase II - the construction of a new building, which is expected to be completed by June 2021.

In order to alleviate the hardship of cancer patients who have to commute from Victoria Hospital to the New Cancer Hospital, two shuttle services are attached to the New Cancer Hospital from 08 00 hrs to 17 00 hrs for their transfer to and back.

I am informed that, at present, the parking capacity of the New Cancer Hospital can cater for 20 vehicles at most and a plot of land has already been identified opposite the New Cancer Hospital for additional parking slots.

I am further informed that upon completion of the new Cancer Hospital, 70 additional parking slots would be available.

WORKERS – ROAD ACCIDENTS – JANUARY 2020 TO NOVEMBER 2020

(No. B/873) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the workers who are victims of accidents while being conveyed to and from their place of work by buses and minibuses, he will state the number of reported cases thereof to his Ministry since January 2020 to date, giving a breakdown in terms of number of local and foreign workers, indicating in each case the outcome of the inquiry carried out thereinto.

Reply: At the very outset, I wish to inform the House that it is with great regret that we took cognizance of the road accident which occurred at Pailles on Thursday 05 November 2020. This accident cost the lives of four Bangladeshi workers and injured several others who were employed in a construction company. I would thus invite the House to pay tribute to the four deceased Bangladeshi workers and express our deepest sympathy with the bereaved families in Bangladesh.

With regard to the workers who were victims of such accident while being conveyed to and from their place of work by buses and minibuses, I am informed that since January 2020 to date, only one case of such accident has been reported to my Ministry, that is, the one which occurred on 05 November 2020 at Pailles involving the death of four Bangladeshi workers.

Immediately after the accident, my Ministry started an enquiry into the accident in accordance with the provisions of the OSH Act 2005. All foreign workers who were travelling by the bus and who were injured were conveyed to the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital. Five Bangladeshi workers and the injured bus driver, a local citizen, were admitted to the hospital for treatment.

As at 16 November 2020, the five foreign workers and the driver are still admitted at the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital.

I am given to understand that enquiry into the accident is also being carried out by the Police Department. Furthermore, I have also been informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the period January to 13 November 2020, six cases of road accident involving local and foreign workers, whilst being conveyed to and from their place of work by buses/minibuses and lorry, have been reported to the Police. Thirty-five (35) local workers and fifty-four (54) foreigners have been injured, and four foreigners have been killed. All these cases are still under Police investigation.

On 05 November 2020 itself, immediately after being apprised of the accident, I chaired a meeting with all stakeholders concerned, including the employer, in the presence of Her Excellency, the High Commissioner of Bangladesh, the Chief of Protocol and the representatives of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions.

Following the meeting I had, the company agreed to meet the repatriation costs as per obligations by virtue of the provisions of the contract of employment. The employer further agreed to pay a death grant of Rs5,000 and at least twice the amount of gratuity payable in case of death as provided for in the Workers' Rights Act. The outstanding wages for the month of November 2020, end of year bonus (on a pro rata basis) and annual leaves not taken will also be paid.

I am further informed that –

- a) the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions is doing the needful for refund of payment of contributions relating to National Pension Scheme and the National Savings Fund to the heirs of the deceased workers;
- b) the deceased workers were each covered by an insurance policy, which would entitle their beneficiaries to a compensation of approximately Rs1.1 m., and
- c) the dead bodies are expected to be repatriated on Sunday 22 November 2020 and the company will bear all the costs.

All payments will be made through the High Commission of Bangladesh.

The enquiry at the level of my Ministry to determine the circumstances and cause of the accident is ongoing.

I wish to assure the House that my Ministry will spare no efforts to ensure that the victims of the road accident are duly compensated as per the provisions of the law.

LA BRASSERIE FOOTBALL GROUND PROJECT

(No. B/874) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the La Brasserie Football Ground Project, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

EAU COULÉE BRIDGE – WIDENING

(No. B/875) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed widening of the Eau Coulée Bridge at the level of Pont Ramdin, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CAMP CHAPELON - PANEL BEATING, PAINT & UPHOLSTERY WORKSHOP - EIA

(No. B/876) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the panel beating, paint and upholstery workshop operating at Philippe Rousset Road, in Camp Chapelon, he will state if his Ministry –

- (a) carried out an Environmental Impact Assessment prior to giving clearance for the issue of the operating permit thereto, and
- (b) is in presence of complaints from inhabitants of the vicinity regarding health and environmental nuisances emanating therefrom and, if so, indicate the measures taken by the *Police de l'Environnement*, if any, in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

FOREIGN WORKERS - LIVING CONDITIONS - INSPECTIONS

(No. B/877) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the foreign workers, he will state the number of inspections carried out by his Ministry to verify the living conditions thereof and facilities extended thereto, since January 2020 to date.

(Withdrawn)

MV WAKASHIO VESSEL OIL SPILL - PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

(No. B/878) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the proposal for the extension of psychological support and follow-up to the people living in the South Eastern part of Mauritius having been affected by the MV Wakashio Vessel oil spill, she will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 16 - METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - PHASE 2

(No. B/879) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the works implemented in connection with Phase 2 of the Metro Express Project in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floreal, he will state the number of –

- (a) households affected therewith, and
- (b) compulsory acquisitions effected as at to date, indicating the amount of compensation paid in each case.

(Withdrawn)

LOLO BRIDGE - RECONSTRUCTION

(No. B/880) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed reconstruction of Pont Lolo at Rivière Sèche, in Floréal, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that presently there is a steel bridge called Lolo Bridge connecting the regions of Floréal and Eau Coulee, over the Rivière Sèche. The bridge, spanning over 20 metres, with a width of 2 metres, is currently used by only pedestrians and motorcyclists due to its narrowness.

With a view to allowing vehicular movement between the two localities, Government has decided to construct a new bridge of 6 metres wide, over a span of 20 metres with a footpath of 1.5 metres on both sides.

In September 2019, a Works Order to this end has been awarded to Gamma Construction Ltd under the approved Framework Agreement Contract of the RDA.

As part of the Contract, the Contractor had to carry out extensive geotechnical and hydrological investigations prior to the design stage in view of the complexity of the works. Subsequently, a period of four months was required for preparation of drawings and methodology of works.

The construction works have been delayed in view of the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am now informed that construction works, namely excavation works for the casting of the foundations and bridge piers have already started on site. Concurrently, precast elements such as concrete beams of the bridge are being manufactured in the Contractor's precast yard.

The works are expected to be completed by March 2021.

PAILLES - ROAD ACCIDENT - INQUIRY

(No. B/881) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the bus accident which occurred on 05 November 2020, at Pailles, wherein four persons lost their lives, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to if the bus involved therein was –

- (a) roadworthy with a valid fitness certificate, and
- (b) issued with a valid permit for conveyance of workers or school children.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/854)

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD – INVESTMENT

(No. B/882) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CEB (Facilities) Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, since the inception thereof to date, information as to the –

- (a) total investment made by the Central Electricity Board therein;
- (b) cost of the plant, machinery and equipment procured, and
- (c) number of employees recruited.

(Withdrawn)

COMBINED CYCLE GAS TURBINE PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/883) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Combined Cycle Gas Turbine Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ESCALADE SPORTIVE FEDERATION

(No. B/884) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Fédération d'Escalade Sportive, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Registrar of Associations, information as to the –
 - (i) date of registration;
 - (ii) composition of the Executive Committee and club to which each member thereof is affiliated, and
 - (iii) list of clubs registered therewith and composition of their respective Executive Committee, and
- (b) state the competitions organised since 2018 to date, indicating if his Ministry –
 - (i) has provided financial support thereto, and
 - (ii) recognises same as a National Federation.

Reply: I am informed by the Registrar of Associations that the “Escalade Sportive Federation” is not registered under the Registration of Associations Act.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has not been made aware of any competition carried out by the said organisation since 2018 to date. Hence, no financial support has been provided by my Ministry. Moreover, the Sports Act 2016, as subsequently amended, does not provide for the official recognition of National Sports Federations by my Ministry.

SOCIAL REGISTER OF MAURITIUS – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/885) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the agreement entered between the National Housing Development Corporation Ltd. and the National Empowerment Foundation, he will give a list of the beneficiaries, registered under the Social Register of Mauritius, of a housing unit region-wise, during the recent allocation thereof in St-Julien d'Hotman, Camp Levieux and Calebasses, respectively.

Reply: On 02 October 2019, the NHDC Ltd and the NEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) whereby the NHDC Ltd shall sell 10% of housing units of an area of up to 50 m² in all new NHDC housing projects to the NEF. According to the MoU, the NEF shall sell these housing units to its beneficiaries as per the terms and conditions approved by its Board. The objective of this policy is to allow households on the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) to acquire a decent lodging.

As regards the housing project at St-Julien D'Hotman, 206 housing units have been constructed and 20 housing units have been allocated to the NEF.

For the housing project at Camp Levieux, 60 housing units have been constructed and 6 housing units have been allocated to the NEF.

With respect to the housing project at Calebasses, 43 housing units have been constructed and no housing unit has been allocated to the NEF because, according to the NHDC Ltd, it is an old project for which beneficiaries of the NHDC Ltd had already been earmarked prior to the abovementioned MoU being finalised.

In view of the fact that the NHDC Ltd is now constructing housing units of more than 50 m², the MoU will have to be reviewed in due course.

The hon. Member may be interested to know that apart from the NEF, the NHDC Ltd also allocates housing units to households on the SRM.

In that regard, the NHDC Ltd has already allocated 31 housing units at St-Julien D'Hotman, 28 housing units at Camp Levieux and 13 housing units at Calebasses to such households.

As regards the registered list of relevant SRM households, I stand advised that I am precluded from providing same without the consent of parties concerned, by virtue of the Data Protection Act 2018.

LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB - COMMERCIAL AGREEMENT

(No. B/886) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the economic and financial situation actually prevailing in Mauritius, he will state if his Ministry is considering to review the commercial agreement of around Rs400 million signed with the Liverpool Football Club for the promotion of Mauritius as a global tourist destination.

Reply: The answer is in the negative.

MAURITIUS SOCIETY OF AUTHORS (MASA) – CHAIRPERSON

(No. B/887) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Mauritius Society of Authors, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) if a new Chairperson has been appointed thereat and, if so, indicate the name of the incumbent, indicating the terms and conditions of appointment thereof and
- (b) composition of the Board thereof, indicating the date of appointment of each member.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, Mr Gérard Daniel Louis, OSK, has been appointed as Chairperson of the Board of the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA) for a period of three years with effect from 15 September 2020, in accordance with section 43(3) of the Copyright Act.

The Chairperson is eligible to a monthly all-inclusive fee of Rs29,925. In addition, a commuted travelling allowance of Rs230 is paid to the Chairperson for each sitting of the Board. No other benefits are payable to the Chairperson.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am with your permission tabling the composition of the Board of MASA, indicating the date of appointment of each member.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD - FOREIGN OFFICES

(No. B/888) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Economic Development Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of foreign offices thereof, indicating the names of the representatives thereof in the said offices, indicating in each case, the remuneration and other allowances drawn and the input thereof in attracting foreign buyers as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

STATE TRADING CORPORATION - PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - TENDERS

(No. B/889) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation,

information as to the particulars of the bids for period 01 February to 31 January 2021, indicating the –

- (a) names of the bidders and of the successful bidder, indicating the basis upon which the said bidder was retained, and
- (b) prices, premiums and freight rates in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES - FAIRS

(No. B/890) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the Small and Medium Enterprises Fairs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from SME Mauritius Ltd. –

- (a) the list thereof held since July 2019 to date, on a monthly basis, and
- (b) proposed list thereof to be held from now on to June 2021.

Reply: SME Mauritius organises an average of 3-4 fairs known as *le Salon des PME's* on a yearly basis. Whether in Mauritius or in Rodrigues, these fairs represent an excellent platform for SMEs to create awareness and promote their products, increase their visibility and are exclusively meant for local products. On average, the *Salon des PME's* is held over six days in Rodrigues and over three days in Mauritius where they are held in prime catchment areas which are well connected, have parking facilities and enough space to welcome some 100 SMEs and an average 14,000 visitors.

Since July 2019, the following four fairs have been organised in Mauritius -

- (1) August 2019 at Vieux Moulin Shopping Centre Rose Belle;
- (2) February 2020 at Taxi Stand Flacq;
- (3) September 2020 at Vieux Moulin Shopping Centre Rose Belle, and
- (4) November 2020 at Farmers Service Centre Goodlands.

In Rodrigues, SME Mauritius in collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly organised the mid-year fair in August 2019 and the end of year fair in December 2019.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that from now on to June 2021, SME Mauritius is planning to organise the following -

- (1) Last week of February 2021 at Flacq;

- (2) April 2021 in Upper P. Wilhems; (most probably Phoenix)
- (3) At Rose Belle in June 2021, and
- (4) the mid-year fair in Rodrigues.

ANIMALS – CRUELTY CASES

(No. B/891) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to cruelty to animals, he will state the number of cases thereof reported to his Ministry, since January 2020 to date, indicating the number of contraventions booked and nature thereof.

(Withdrawn)

VACOAS FAIR – STALLHOLDERS

(No. B/892) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the Vacoas Fair, he will state

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- (a) if consultations with the stallholders thereof have been held for their integration in the Vacoas Urban Terminal and, if not, why not, and
- (b) how will the allocation of stalls in the Vacoas Urban Terminal be decided.

(Withdrawn)

MAHEBOURG & ROSE BELLE HOSPITALS - PATIENTS - SEVERE CHEST PAIN

(No. B/893) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Mahebourg and Rose Belle Hospitals, he will state the number of patients having been treated thereat for severe chest pain, since August 2020 to date.

(Withdrawn)

SOUTHERN REGION & POINTE D'ESNY - SEAFOOD CONTAMINATION

(No. B/894) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to seafood contamination in the southern region and at Pointe d'Esny, he will state if an assessment of the safety of seafood from the said regions has been conducted and, if so, when was the last test carried out.

(Withdrawn)

L'ABBATOIR BRIDGE, VACOAS - UPGRADING

(No. B/895) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of a bridge at Abbatoir Road, in Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if the initial contractor is still in possession of the site and works are in progress and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) expected completion date thereof;
- (b) costs thereof, and
- (c) amount paid to the contractor as at date and, if not, indicate –
 - (i) when the initial contractor left the site and why, and
 - (ii) if a new contractor has been appointed for the completion thereof.

Reply: In my reply to Parliamentary Question B/586 on 11 August 2020, I informed the House that a Works Order to the tune of Rs12.1 m. for the enlargement and upgrading of l'Abbatoir Bridge had been issued to Pad Co. Ltd in April 2019. I also informed the House that the Contractor had undertaken some preparatory works but, in the meantime, had gone under voluntary administration.

I am now informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that, following a meeting with the Administrator of Pad Co. Ltd in August 2020, the latter informed that the Company is not in a position to complete the works due to financial constraints and a Freezing Order by the Court. Accordingly, parts (a) and (b) of the question do not arise.

With regard to part (c) (i) of the question, I am informed that the Contractor left the site in September 2020. The site has subsequently been secured and no payment has been effected to the Contractor for this Works Order.

With regard to part (c) (ii) of the question, I am informed RDA has now approved the reallocation of the Works Order to the second lowest Framework Contractor, namely Gamma Construction Ltd and a Works Order is being issued. The duration of the project will be five months.

CLOSEL, VACOAS - STATE-OF-THE-ART SWIMMING POOL

(No. B/896) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether,

in regard to the proposed construction of a state-of-the-art swimming pool at Clairfonds, in Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas and Phoenix, information as to the –

- (a) costs thereof;
- (b) who shall be vested with the maintenance and management thereof, and
- (c) if the Council has entered into an agreement with the Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Pool Foundation in relation thereto and, if so, table copy thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that the project for the construction of a state-of-the-art swimming pool at Closel, Vacoas had been initiated since 2018. As it was short of funding, Emirates Airlines showed its interest to fully sponsor the project. In 2019, a Foundation, known as the Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Pool Foundation was set up under the purview of the then Ministry of Youth and Sports, following consultations between the then Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for financing and managing the construction of the swimming pool and amenities.

The Municipal Council has provided the necessary plot of land to the Foundation. Eventually, the swimming pool will be passed on to the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix.

The project comprises the following facilities and amenities –

- an 8-lane swimming pool of size 25m x 20m;
- a learner's pool of size 12.5m x 4m and depth 0.8m;
- an administrative building comprising fitness centre, cafeteria, changing rooms, family gym, offices, toilets, etc.;
- sitting accommodation for 300 persons;
- parking facilities;
- heating system for swimming pool;
- provision of photovoltaic solar panels for heating of the pool;
- storage room, including for chemicals, and
- photovoltaic solar panels for lighting system.

Concerning part (a) of the question, I am informed that construction of the swimming pool has been awarded by the Foundation to Beijing Construction Engineering Group Co. Ltd for an amount of Rs158,744,983, excluding VAT.

As regards part (b) of the question, the maintenance and management of the swimming pool and its associated amenities will be vested in a Government-Owned Company which will be set up shortly.

With respect to part (c) of the question, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Pool Foundation and the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix on 30 May 2019 for construction of the state-of-the-art swimming pool and other amenities. In view of a non-disclosure clause contained therein, it would not be appropriate to table a copy thereof.

WMA – OFFICERS – DISMISSAL – JANUARY 2015-NOVEMBER 2020

(No. B/897) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Wastewater Management Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of officers having been dismissed, since January 2015 to date, indicating in each case the -

- (a) date of dismissal;
- (b) reasons therefor, and
- (c) name of the Chairperson of the disciplinary committees, indicating the quantum of fees paid in connection therewith.

Reply: I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that since January 2015 to date, seven officers have been dismissed on grounds of failure to perform assigned duties; excessive and unauthorised absences, and breach of trust.

I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly the information relating to the reasons for the dismissal in each case, the Chairperson of the disciplinary committees and the fees paid.

SIR SEEWOOSAGUR RAMGOOLAM BOTANICAL GARDEN – UPGRADING

(No. B/898) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden Trust, information as to if the upgrading of the garden and of the parking area thereof are being envisaged.

(Withdrawn)

PHARMACY BOARD - UNUSED & EXPIRED DRUGS - STOCK

(No. B/899) Mr R. Woonchit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the present stock of unused and expired drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pharmacy Board, the list thereof, indicating the –

- (a) procurement date thereof;
- (b) expiry date thereof, and
- (c) value thereof.

(Withdrawn)

PAILLES - ROAD ACCIDENT - INQUIRY

(No. B/900) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the road accident which occurred at Pailles, on 05 November 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to if the Authority has initiated an inquiry thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/854)

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION ASSESSMENT - DATE

(No. B/901) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the National Certificate of Education Assessment, she will state if the date of the holding thereof has been finalised and, if so, indicate same.

(Withdrawn)

EXTENDED PROGRAMME - WORLD BANK - STUDY

(No. B/902) 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 Extended Programme, she will state if any study has been conducted by the World Bank in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and table copy of the Report submitted in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

YVES CANTIN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - RENOVATION WORKS

(No. B/903) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Yves Cantin Community Hospital in Rivière Noire, he will state where matters stand as to the renovation works to be carried out thereat for the proposed conversion thereof into a full-fledged hospital.

Reply: I am informed that Dr. Yves Cantin Community Hospital, located at Rivière Noire, occupies an extent of land of 7,239m². An additional plot of land of an extent of 671.53m², presently accommodating the National Coast Guard (NCG) post, has been vested in my Ministry on 29 August 2018.

I am further informed that WHO has proposed to finance the construction of a COVID Testing Centre at Rivière Noire to the tune of Euros 200,000. My Ministry is planning to use the funds to upgrade the existing infrastructure at Rivière Noire and at the same time make arrangements for a COVID Testing Centre.

My Ministry is presently conducting a feasibility study with a view to enhance the following services, amongst others –

- (i) Casualty, outpatients and pharmacy;
- (ii) General medicines, NCD, ENT;
- (iii) Maternal and child health services;
- (iv) Dental services;
- (v) Paediatrics, ophthalmology, psychiatric services;
- (vi) Physiotherapy, X-Ray and Lab services, and
- (vii) For emergency cases, my Ministry will make provision for SAMU services to be made available to transport patients requiring urgent treatment to Victoria Hospital.

SPEED CAMERAS - CALIBRATION EXERCISE

(No.B/904) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the speed cameras, he will state –

- (a) where matters stand as to the recent calibration exercise carried out on 50 units thereof, and
- (b) the number thereof operational around the island.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the 63 existing speed cameras were sent to South Africa for calibration, maintenance and repair during the period mid-September and same have been completed successfully.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that at present, 60 speed cameras have been installed throughout the island and are operational. The recording of speed violations has started as from 01 November 2020.

With regard to the remaining 3 speed cameras, I am informed that these were removed from Avenue Sivananda due to Metro Express works and will be relocated to other sites identified as black spots. Investigations are presently being carried out in order to determine the most appropriate locations.

LOCAL ARTISTS – LIVE & VIRTUAL CONCERTS

(No. B/905) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the local artists, he will state if measures will be taken to assist them for the holding of live concerts instead of virtual ones.

Reply: In a bid to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, stimulate artistic creativity and the cultural heritage industries, my Ministry came up with a Post COVID-19 Action Plan 2020, to provide support artists, creators and performers.

Amongst the 13 schemes which comprised the Post COVID-19 Action Plan 2020, my Ministry had launched a Virtual Concerts Scheme consisting of recorded musical concerts on Friday 05 June 2020. Established individual artists/groups were invited to submit proposals for recorded musical concerts of

a maximum duration of 30 minutes. The aim was to create a platform for artists to perform and to keep the artistic scene buoyant during these trying times.

My Ministry had selected 69 established individual artists/groups with proven track record in the field of music under this project. Given the lifting of sanitary restrictions in terms of public gatherings, it is now being proposed that these selected artists/groups be invited to perform in live events, including events being organised by the Ministry.