



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 07 MAY 2024

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

	Integration and International Trade
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
Dr. the Hon. Mrs Marie Christiane Dorine Chukowry	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Anjiv Ramdhany	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms
Hon. Ms Naveena Ramyad	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Ashley Ittoo
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 05 of 2024

Sitting of Tuesday 07 May 2024

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

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS – DRAWING OF LOTS – MODALITY

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have a few announcements.

Firstly, regarding the incident of Tuesday last which arose in the Office of the Clerk pertaining to the modality for the drawing of lots for Parliamentary Questions.

I wish to clarify that the process for the drawing of lots of Parliamentary Questions has always been and is still being conducted as per the terms of the Agreement signed between the Whips on 18 March 2022 which specifically makes mention of numbers. At no point in time does the said Agreement make mention of the names of hon. Members or the subject matter of the PQs.

Hon. Members will recall that the said Agreement was laid on the Table of the Assembly on Tuesday 29 March 2022.

Moreover, I wish to confirm that the drawing of lots is purely an administrative exercise over which the Speaker does not exercise any control whatsoever, the more so that the Speaker is not present during the balloting.

I also wish to highlight that regarding the allegations levelled against me to the effect that I have a secret code to manipulate the results of the balloting exercise, I wish to inform hon. Members that the existence of any secret code is only fictitious and purely a creation of the imagination of the hon. Member.

Should any Member in this House have any doubt about the process, I humbly invite any Member to go to the nearest Police Station or to the Court to address the problem.

HON. ASSIRVADEN'S MEDIA STATEMENT – PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS – DRAWING OF LOTS & RANKING

My second announcement is in regard to the statement made in the Media by some Opposition Members, in particular, hon. Assirvaden on Tuesday 30 April 2024 following the

incident which arose in the Office of the Clerk regarding the modalities for the drawing of lots for the ranking of Parliamentary Questions for today's Sitting.

Hon. Assirvaden is reported to have insinuated that there was "*trucage*", "*mardaye*" and "*magouille*" in the balloting process.

As Speaker, I strongly condemn the manner in which the hon. Member publicly attacked the integrity of the Acting Clerk and the officers of the National Assembly...

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame! *La honte!*

Mr Speaker: ... in particular lady officers, in the performance of their duties.

I leave this highly condemnable behaviour on the part of the hon. Member to the appreciation of hon. Members and the public at large.

HON. ASSIRVADEN'S LETTER – 'DRAWING LOTS FOR PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS'

Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that I have received a letter from the hon. Assirvaden entitled 'Drawing lots for Parliamentary Questions.' I am tabling a copy of the letter.

In that letter, the hon. Member has accused me of, I quote –

"Unilateral and hijacking of the drawing of lots exercise", and in so doing, "having turned the transparent exercise into an opaque and undemocratic stratagem destined to relegate Opposition PQs in favour of Government PQs".

I just want to highlight that the first Question for the Prime Minister Question Time (PMQT) is from a Member of the Opposition and the first Question for other Ministers is from a Member of the Opposition also.

In that same letter, the hon. Member, in a most threatening manner, in an attempt to intimidate or intimidate me in the functions of Speaker, is calling on me, I quote –

“to put an end to [my] unlawful acts and doings (...) and to forthwith restore and implement the terms of the Agreement, failing which legal action will be taken against [me]; and denunciation letters will be sent to parliamentary democracies across the world.”

To that effect, hon. Members, I can only reply that there is no question of restoring or implementing the terms of the Agreement as the drawing of lots is being carried out in accordance with the same terms which the hon. Member has in his possession and as stated in my first announcement.

Finally, I consider the letter to be threatening and the accusations made therein are unfounded, malicious, vile, and of bad faith, made intentionally to cast doubt on my character and personality in the discharge of my functions as Speaker.

It is worth noting that there have been suspensions in the House of Commons in respect of the terms of a letter addressed by a Member to the Speaker and of his conduct in the House on preceding days, and this is in Erskine May, the 25th Edition.

I am tabling a copy of the letter, as I said. Now, I would ask the hon. Member, hon. Patrick Assirvaden, if he still maintains whatever he said in the press, in the letter, if he is still maintaining his declarations or written letter or if he is prepared to apologise.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, il est clair que l'*Agreement* qui a été signé dans le temps, entre le *Chief Government Whip*, l'honorable Ms Ramyad, et l'*Opposition Whip*, l'honorable Patrice Armance, n'a pas été respecté. Ceci dit, je peux déposer à l'Assemblée nationale...

Mr Speaker: No! Excuse me! Excuse me!

Mr Assirvaden: Vous me permettez ? Vous m'avez demandé de...

Mr Speaker: Excuse me, I have not asked for your explanation. This is an announcement.

Mr Ameer Meea: *Les li koze!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: This is an announcement. There is no debate! I am asking you: do you maintain what you said in your letter or are you withdrawing the content of your letter?

Mr Assirvaden: Mais...

Mr Speaker: Do you maintain or you are withdrawing? You have a chance!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, je n'ai pas besoin de chance ! Je maintiens ce que j'ai dit, parce que l'allocation est faite dans l'opacité totale !

(Interruptions)

Une opacité totale !

Mr Speaker: I am satisfied that this goes in Hansard, that in the Assembly today, 07 May at 11.40 hrs, you maintain whatever you said in your letter.

Mr Assirvaden: Vous avez raison!

Mr Speaker: That goes in Hansard!

Mr Assirvaden: Je le maintiens. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Therefore, hon. Members, in the circumstances, I leave the matter in the hands of the House.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Office of the President

The Representation of the People (Allowances of Chairperson and Members of Commissions) Order 2024. (Government Notice No. 75 of 2024)

B. 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 Merchant Shipping (Liability and Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage) Bill (No. II of 2024). (In Original)
- (b) The Annual Report and the Audited Financial Statement of the Mauritius Ports Authority for the year ended 30 June 2023.

C. Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management

- (a) The District Council of Pamplemousses (Traffic Centre and Mini Market) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 74 of 2024)
- (b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the District Council of Black River for the year ended 30 June 2022. (In Original)

D. Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail

- (a) The Motorways and Main Roads (Amendment) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 78 of 2024)
- (b) The Motorways and Main Roads (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 79 of 2024)
- (c) The Roads (Fixed Penalty Notice) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 80 of 2024)
- (d) The Roads (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 81 of 2024)

E. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Annual Report of the Bank of Mauritius for the year ended 30 June 2023.

- (b) The Finance and Audit (COVID-19 Solidarity Fund) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 83 of 2024)

F. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 77 of 2024)

G. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Recovered Assets Fund for the year ended 30 June 2023.

H. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training

The Workers' Rights (Social Plan) (Income Support to Workers) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 76 of 2024)

I. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care for the year ended 30 June 2023.

J. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

The Annual Reports and Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Islamic Cultural Centre Trust Fund for the years ended:

- (i) 30 June 2018;
- (ii) 30 June 2019; and
- (iii) 30 June 2021.

K. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 8) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 82 of 2024)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**COVID-19 PANDEMIC OF 2020 – MEDICAL EQUIPMENT, SANITARY PRODUCTS
& RELATED ITEMS – CONTRACTS AWARDED – INQUIRIES**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr S. Mohamed) (*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 inquiries instituted by investigative authorities on the contracts awarded during the COVID-19 period of 2020 for medical equipment, sanitary products and other related items, he will –

- (a) state if Members of the High-Level Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic, including his good self have been questioned in relation thereto, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the investigation has revealed the involvement of late Mr S. K. and other persons as intermediary thereinto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the world had to face an unprecedented health crisis following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in the death of more than 7 million persons. In regard to Mauritius, I must say that thanks to the foresight and proactive measures taken by the Government, we were able to save lives and livelihood and minimise casualties. The success of our COVID-19 management strategies was acknowledged even by the World Health Organisation in its September 2020 Report on Best Practices and experience of Mauritius' preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to quote from the concluding remarks of the Report which stated as follows, and I quote –

“Within less than two months, Mauritius moved from sporadic cases to clusters to local transmission to eventually reach the containment of COVID-19 with its whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. The country had the combination of capacities, resources, strong political commitment and community engagement to halt the local transmission of COVID-19. Robust experience in surveillance and contact tracing and the systematic quarantining of repatriated Mauritians as well as the massive scaling-up of testing were vital to this success. The relatively low prevalence of COVID-19 in the

country has reduced the burden of case management from the public health system (...) Using its strong diplomatic ties and rallying all concerned stakeholders, Mauritius has mitigated the threat of disrupted supply chains for medical products (...) With a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the livelihood and vulnerable populations, the government had promptly implemented several socio-economic measures to reduce financial hardship and ensure food security (...)."

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is in the context of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic that the High-Level Committee was set up by Cabinet as early as January 2020 to coordinate and monitor Government response to the pandemic. The High-Level Committee was composed, amongst others, of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Minister of Labour, Human Resources Development and Training, the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, the Minister of Health and Wellness, the representative of the World Health Organisation in Mauritius, Dr. Gaud, the Technical Adviser at the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Commissioner of Police, other senior officials and Advisers of Ministries and Departments concerned. Other Ministers and officers were co-opted as and when required.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to remind, it was under the stewardship of the High-Level COVID-19 Committee that many bold and decisive measures were taken, including –

- (i) timely implementation of quarantine measures and designation of new quarantine facilities;
- (ii) posting of medical and non-medical staff from the Ministry of Health and Wellness to all quarantine centres;
- (iii) extension of the total ban on travellers to enter the territory of Mauritius;
- (iv) suspension of all flights to Rodrigues so as to keep the island free from COVID-19;
- (v) taking preventive measures to also protect the island of Agaléga;
- (vi) making of numerous and relevant legislation to deal specifically with the COVID-19 pandemic;

- (vii) concurrent closing of all trading premises as an additional measure to prevent the spread of the virus;
- (viii) maintaining strict control and monitoring at port level, including systematic checks for all cruise ship passengers entering the Mauritian territory while applying entry restrictions that were ongoing for various countries and parts of the world;
- (ix) ensure the timely procurement of medical supplies and protective equipment;
- (x) targeted screening campaign for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Tests;
- (xi) creation of a Hotline 8924 for all matters related to COVID-19 and health issues;
- (xii) undertaking massive education and sensitisation campaigns in the media on preventive and hygiene measures, including the creation of a dedicated web page and mobile app, and
- (xiii) putting into place a home visit system for urgent cases necessitating medical intervention.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as highlighted in my reply to the Private Notice Question on 06 April 2021, the High-Level Committee had been mandated by Cabinet to coordinate and monitor actions taken by Ministries/Departments and other stakeholders in relation to our national response to the pandemic. Cabinet was apprised on a weekly basis on the prevailing situation and of the actions taken by the concerned institutions, and policy decisions were taken by Cabinet as appropriate. I also underscored the fact that the High-Level Committee, being a coordinating body, each Minister forming part of the Committee was required to ensure that recommendations pertaining to his Ministry and Departments falling under his portfolio were documented and submitted to Cabinet for further consideration and approval. All decisions taken at the level of Cabinet were recorded and transmitted to the relevant Ministries for necessary actions at their respective end.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is in the public domain that the former Independent Commission Against Corruption had initiated an inquiry into the issue of procurement of medical supplies and equipment during the COVID-19 period.

As the House is also aware, following the coming into effect of the Financial Crimes Commission Act, all ongoing investigations by the defunct ICAC have been taken over by the Financial Crimes Commission.

Section 161 of the Financial Crimes Commission Act provides as follows, and I quote –

“Confidentiality

- (1) The Director-General, every Commissioner, every officer, every member of the Parliamentary Committee, every member of the Operations Review Committee, every member of the National Coordination Committee and every member of the Public-Private Partnership Task Force shall take the oath of confidentiality in the form set out in the Second Schedule.
- (2) No person referred to in subsection (1) shall, except in accordance with this Act, or as otherwise authorised by law or directed by a Court of law –
 - (a) divulge any information obtained in the discharge of his functions or exercise of his powers under this Act;
 - (b) divulge the source of such information or the identity of any informer or the maker, writer or issuer of a report given to the Commission.
- (3) Every person referred to in subsection (1) shall maintain the confidentiality and secrecy of any matter, document, report and other information relating to the administration of this Act that becomes known to him, or comes in his possession or under his control.
- (4) Notwithstanding subsections (2) and (3), the Director-General may disclose, for the purpose of publication in the press, or to a law enforcement authority, such information as he considers necessary in the public interest.

- (5) For the purpose of an investigation in respect of an offence committed in Mauritius or abroad under this Act, or for any asset recovery investigation, the Director-General may impart to any authority in Mauritius or abroad, such information, other than the source of the information, as may appear to him to be necessary to assist the investigation.
- (6) Any person who, without lawful excuse, contravenes this section shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that, by virtue of section 161 of the Financial Crimes Commission Act, no information relating to any investigation can be divulged, and the exception for the disclosure of information provided for under section 161 (4) of the Financial Crimes Commission Act, would not apply to Parliamentary Questions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I am concerned, I can say that I have not so far been questioned by any investigating body. In regard to the other Members of the High-Level Committee, I am not in a position to state whether any of them has been questioned by the defunct ICAC or the Financial Crimes Commission.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 18 October 2020, the Criminal Investigation Division of Quartier Militaire and Police of Moka carried out an inquiry into the cause of death of Mr S. K. On 12 November 2020, the case was referred to the Major Crime Investigation Team, being a specialised unit dealing with cases of homicide. The Police inquiry is still ongoing.

As regards the aspects of the Police inquiry regarding procurement during COVID-19 pandemic, that part of the inquiry had been forwarded to the defunct ICAC for further investigations as it fell within its mandate and again, by virtue of section 161 of the Financial Crimes Commission Act, no information can be disclosed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to point out the fact that, since 2015, Government has taken a series of initiatives to fight fraud, corruption and other financial crimes in all aspects of public life and restore our national values. These initiatives included the following –

- (i) the enactment of a new Declaration of Assets Act;

- (ii) the introduction of electronic procurement system in the public sector;
- (iii) the implementation of the National Open Data Portal to enable citizens to freely access information on what the Government is doing;
- (iv) the implementation of the Public Sector Transformation Strategy;
- (v) the implementation of a host of measures to comply with the requirements of the Financial Action Task Force, and
- (vi) the enactment of the Financial Crimes Commission Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is already aware, Government has also circulated a draft Bill on Political Financing, the objective of which is precisely to introduce transparency and accountability in political finance. It is, however, a matter of regret that the Opposition is once again opposing the proposed legislation. I will leave it to the population to judge.

Thank you.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Could the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether any of the members of the High-Level Committee that he has made mention of, including himself, has been contacted by potential suppliers during that period referred to in the question?

The Prime Minister: Well, I am not aware. If any member has been contacted by potential suppliers, I would not know.

Mr Mohamed: If the Prime Minister has been contacted personally, he would be aware, if at all, not the other members, but, you, personally, would be aware.

The Prime Minister: Well, if I have been contacted personally, of course, I will be aware.

Mr Mohamed: So, the answer is yes or no.

The Prime Minister: Whether I have been contacted personally? Well, I can recall that at the level of the High-Level Committee on COVID-19, we had received communication from - I cannot recall the exact number - several suppliers. Those communications have been referred to the Ministries concerned for them to look into the content of the communication and to see whether any appropriate action has to be taken.

Mr Mohamed: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that hon. Dr. Jagutpal, hon. Yogida Sawmynaden, including himself, have been contacted through email? And deceased S. K., there

is an email trail that shows that for COVID-19 equipment, there has been contact, where he is also involved with one Mr S. M. - certainly not me! Is he aware?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot answer for other people. I can answer for myself. Yes, I have received a communication, I can say through email dated 21 April 2020 from one company that I cannot recall. Anyway, I have the email and that email was communicated to my Private Office on 21 April, and my Private Office has forwarded that email on 22 April to the Ministry of Health because it concerned medical equipment. I cannot say what the outcome of this communication to the Ministry of Health was. Also, whatever communication we had received at the level of my Office had been communicated to the Ministries concerned.

Mr Mohamed: Does the hon. Prime Minister know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this communication is from one Mr S. M. and the company from which he received it is IOPL? This has been produced before the District Court of Moka during the judicial inquiry by the way. Is he also aware that his then Minister, hon. Yogida Sawmynaden, using his personal mail 'yogida@intet.mu' was contacted by the deceased S. K. and Yogida Sawmynaden himself asked for details pertaining to the equipment that was being proposed?

The Prime Minister: Well, again, I cannot reply for...

Mr Mohamed: I have a copy for the Prime Minister. Need someone give it to him before I continue?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have that copy!

Mr Mohamed: Do you have a copy of...

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have that copy! It has been published. Anyway ...

Mr Mohamed: Not this one!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe I can have a copy of what the hon. Member is mentioning.

Again, if I can say, with regard to communication that has been received at my Office, it has been forwarded to the Ministries concerned. Now, it will be for the inquiry to establish what has been the outcome with regard to this communication.

Mr Mohamed: This...

The Prime Minister: Let me... I am having a look at this...

Mr Mohamed: Time is running out!

The Prime Minister: But you ask a question and you don't want me to answer and you say time is running out? What is this? You want to make a ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

The Prime Minister: Well, first of all, I myself cannot vouch for this document which you are producing. I cannot say whether it is, in fact, a communication to Mr Yogida Sawmynaden, but from what I can see in the mail, it says –

“Can I have the full and technical details of the test kits? Then, I will submit same to the Ministry of Health for their comments.”

So, don't only mention that there has been a communication from one to the other. Be of good faith and mention also what Mr Sawmynaden has been saying in the email for onward transmission to the Ministry of Health, just as what we have also done at the level of my Ministry.

Mr Mohamed: Can the hon. Prime Minister also confirm that, in this mail that he is holding in his hand right now and that he is standing by, it is also the deceased S. K. who is involved in the mail trail as a middleman?

The Prime Minister: I do not see Mr S. K. as the middleman.

Mr Mohamed: Rainbow Construction?

The Prime Minister: I see: “Kind regards, Mr S. M., Procurement and Logistics Manager of IOPL International Ltd.” Maybe I can add, to enlighten the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that I was looking at the list of suppliers that have been awarded contract for medical equipment and I do not see anywhere – I need to check further because I have been trying since this morning, with the time that was allocated to me – IOPL having been awarded any contract whatsoever.

Mr Mohamed: The issue is not about the award of contract. Is it normal within his Cabinet that Ministers use their personal email and go and flout Directive 44 which was issued during COVID-19 period for procurement?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can say one thing. At that time, during the pandemic, there was a situation where, in fact, we had to purchase medical equipment, test kits and so on, and there were suppliers who were willing to supply probably and they were communicating with different ministries and governments. Then, they have been making representations with regard to the products that they wanted to sell. It was not only in Mauritius; it was like that all around the world. So, those offers that were being made were, of course, looked into by the Ministries concerned and the proper procurement process had to be adopted.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Prime Minister, if he is not aware – I mean I am sure he is – that Directive 44, issued by the Procurement Policy Office, paragraph 2(iv) says that –

“All proceedings relating to the emergency procurement shall be recorded.”

Now, have those exchanges where that person, Mr S. M., refers to: “Dear Mr Jagutpal, Yogida, [and yourself as] Dear Mr Pravind” been submitted in the proceedings of the High-Powered Committee for the procurement process?

The Prime Minister: Again, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition would have listened to me carefully, I had stated that – that was also to a reply that was put to a PNQ of the former Leader of the Opposition – the High-Powered Committee was not a committee to take decisions for acquisition of equipment and medication and so on.

The High-Powered Committee was a platform first of all to coordinate issues with regard to COVID-19, and also to gather all the information locally and internationally in order for us to be able to strategise our action against the COVID-19 pandemic. There were recommendations that were made and it was, of course, left for the Ministries concerned to eventually take the matter to Cabinet, and for Cabinet to take the final decision on those measures that had to be taken.

The hon. Member has mentioned Directive 44?

Mr Mohamed: Yes.

The Prime Minister: Let me read it because...

Mr Mohamed: Paragraph 2(iv)!

The Prime Minister: Okay, it says –

“To combat the spread of COVID-19 virus in Mauritius, public bodies may resort to emergency procurement to procure goods, works and other services (...) which has as objectives to safeguard life (...).”

Mr Mohamed: I do not want you to read the whole lot! Go to paragraph 2(iv)!

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am looking at it! What do you think?

Mr Mohamed: 2(iv).

The Prime Minister: But I have to look at it! Do you think I have it in my mind?

Mr Mohamed: My time is running! People are waiting!

The Prime Minister: So, this Directive sets the following procedures –

“The items to be procured must be for the use of (...).”

Of course, the Ministries that have undertaken the procurement would have had to abide by all the conditions that have been laid down by Directive 44.

Mr Mohamed: The Director of Audit Report as well as the Second Report to the Public Accounts Committee, published on 10 March 2022, states therein at page 4 that –

“No record was kept in respect to the choice of suppliers and the reasonableness of the prices quoted by them in breach of Directive 44 and of the Public Procurement Act.”

They go on to say in that particular report that –

“Officers of the Ministry said they only acted upon instructions received from their Minister.”

Here, referring specifically to hon. Yogida Sawmynaden who, *en passant*, used his personal email address to try to act as a middleman.

Therefore, can the hon. Prime Minister say how does he reconcile what he is saying today with what is in the Director of Audit Report and the Second Report of the Public Accounts Committee of 10 March 2022? Because it does not make sense! He is giving a giving a different version.

The Prime Minister: I am not giving any different version, Mr Speaker, Sir! What I am saying is that there is an inquiry which is ongoing and it will be for the inquiry to determine any matter or anything with regard to either the legality or the regulations that are in place. The investigating body will have to see whether there has been any omission or not and by whom also.

Mr Mohamed: Four years have passed, Mr Speaker, Sir - the hon. Prime Minister can tell us. Four long years have passed and we are at the eve of General Elections! Will the hon. Prime Minister, therefore, tell us why is it that they are so slow to act when it comes to reports of *maldonne*, corruption, malpractice by Members of his Government but so fast pour *dégainer* when it comes to Members of the Opposition and those who oppose him?

The Prime Minister: Totally unacceptable!

Mr Mohamed: Totally true!

The Prime Minister: I reject these comments of the Leader of the Opposition! The investigative bodies are carrying out their investigation. Of course, there are certain cases that take time. For example, the case...

Well, he is talking about corruption? How dare he talk about corruption when his Leader has been caught...

Hon. Members: *Coffre-fort!*

The Prime Minister ... with a coffer of Rs230 million and 3 million dollars coming from a foreign bank? And he dares talk about corruption? And he is going to give us lesson about corruption!

(Interruptions)

Enfin, M. le président! They have to look at themselves first of all!

(Interruptions)

We will see later on what will come out also!

Mr Juman: *Koz pou Medpoint!*

The Prime Minister: There is an investigation! As I said, it will be for the FCC and for the Police to continue with the investigation. Ultimately, if there is anyone who has gone against the law, that person or whoever will be taken to task.

Mr Speaker: Time over!

An hon. Member: *Mo krwar Arvin mem bizin retourne!*

Mr Mohamed: *Personn pa tap latap pou Premie minis? Tap lataab pou li!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Ferm kofre la tomem!*

The Prime Minister: *Vini lot kou!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Mil fwa Xavier!*

Mr Speaker: The Chair is very happy with the good mood in the House!

MP Uteem!

RAVE PARTIES - POLICE RAID - DRUG SEIZED & ARRESTS

(No. B/270) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in

regard to Police raid carried out at rave parties since May 2023 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) quantity of drugs seized, indicating the nature and market value thereof, and
- (b) number of persons arrested in connection therewith, indicating if the police have objected to the grant of bail thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the term ‘rave party’ is neither defined nor covered in our domestic legislations. I, therefore, presume that the hon. Member is referring to unlawful public gathering.

As regards the holding of public gatherings, meetings and entertainment, the Commissioner of Police has to be accordingly notified by virtue of the Public Gatherings Act (PGA) 1991.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that by the Commissioner of Police that from 01 May 2023 to 02 May 2024, there has been one unlawful public gathering detected, where dangerous drugs were suspected to be consumed. Details pertaining to the case are as follows.

On Saturday 11 November 2023 at 22 45hrs, following information received that an unlawful public gathering was taking place on a private premises found along Fond du Sac Branch Road, Triolet, Police Officers of the Special Striking Team (SST) and the Flying Squad of the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) effected a raid thereat.

On the spot, Police searched several persons present and different substances suspected to be dangerous drugs were secured from five of them. The nature, quantity and estimated street value of the drugs seized are as follows –

- (i) 28 units of handmade cigarettes containing cannabis of a street value of Rs5,600;
- (ii) 2.12 grams of cannabis leaves of a street value of Rs2,544;
- (iii) 5 units of cannabis seeds of a street value of Rs500;
- (iv) 2.17 grams of cocaine of a street value of Rs32,550;

- (v) 0.01 gram of hashish of a street value of Rs100;
- (vi) 5 grams of Methylenedioxy Methamphetamine (MDMA) of a street value of Rs75,000, and
- (vii) a certain quantity of colourless liquid.

The substances were, thereafter, sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) for examination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, during the raid, five persons were arrested and brought for enquiry after being found in possession of substances suspected to be dangerous drugs as follows –

- (i) Mr M.R.A., 33 years, Event Organiser. He was found in possession of the following –
 - (a) 12 handmade cigarettes containing tobacco mixed with suspected cannabis leaves of a street value of Rs2,400;
 - (b) 1.1 grams of a white substance suspected to be cocaine of a street value of Rs16,500;
 - (c) 3.6 grams of a pink substance suspected to be MDMA of a street value of Rs54,000, and
 - (d) 1.1 grams of leaf matter suspected to be cannabis of a street value of Rs1,320.

He was detained at Moka Detention Centre. On Sunday 12 November 2023, a provisional charge for Drug Dealing – ‘Possession of Dangerous Drugs for the purpose of distribution’ was lodged against him before the Weekend Court. Police objected to his release on bail.

His Defence Counsel moved for a bail hearing on the same day. During the bail hearing, Police objected to the release of the accused on bail. The Magistrate allowed him bail, provided that on Monday 13 November 2023, he would appear before the District Court of Pamplemousses.

On Monday 13 November 2023, he appeared before the District Magistrate of Pamplemousses Court on a fresh provisional charge for the same abovementioned offence and he was bailed out after furnishing a surety of Rs25,000/- and a recognizance of Rs100,000/- with the condition that he should report to Trou-aux-Biches Police Station every Friday between 06 00hrs and 21 00hrs. His next Court appearance was fixed for 02 April 2024.

On Tuesday 02 April 2024, he appeared before the Pamplemousses Court where his bail has been enlarged up to 08 October 2024.

- (ii) Mr M.F.J.N., 32 years, Graphic Designer Freelance. He was found in possession of the following –
- (a) 1.02 grams of leaf matter suspected to be cannabis of a street value of Rs1,224;
 - (b) 0.01 gram substance suspected to be hashish of a street value of Rs100, and
 - (c) 16 handmade cigarettes containing tobacco mixed with suspected cannabis leaves of a street value of Rs3,200.

He was detained at the Police Cell of Rose Hill Police Station. On Sunday 12 November 2023, a provisional charge for Drug Dealing – ‘Possession of Dangerous Drugs for the purpose of distribution’ was lodged against him before the Weekend Court. Police objected to his release on bail. He was remanded to Police Cell and his statement was recorded on the same day.

On Monday 13 November 2023, he appeared before the District Magistrate of Pamplemousses Court on a fresh provisional charge for the abovementioned offence. He was bailed out after furnishing a surety of Rs20,000/- and a recognizance of Rs100,000/- with the condition that he should report to Grand Bay Police Station every Thursday between 06 00hrs and 21 00hrs. His next Court appearance was fixed for 02 April 2024.

On Tuesday 02 April 2024, he appeared before the Pamplemousses Court where his bail has been enlarged up to 08 October 2024.

- (iii) Mr A.Y.B., 33 years, self-employed. He was found in possession of 1.0 gram of a substance suspected to be MDMA of a street value Rs15,000.

Following preliminary enquiry by Police, he was released on parole on the same night on condition to report to Police on Monday 13 November 2023 for Court procedures.

On Monday 13 November 2023, a provisional charge for 'Possession of Dangerous Drug' was lodged against him before the District Magistrate of Pamplemousses Court. He was bailed out after furnishing a surety of Rs25,000/- and a recognizance of Rs100,000/- with the condition that he should report to Plaine des Papayes Police Station every Thursday between 06 00hrs and 21 00hrs. His next Court appearance was fixed for 02 April 2024.

On Tuesday 02 April 2024, he appeared before the Pamplemousses Court where his bail has been enlarged up to 08 October 2024.

- (iv) Mr M.S.H.S., 29 years, food delivery rider. He was found in possession of the following –
 - (a) 1.07 grams of substance suspected to be cocaine of a street value of Rs16,050, and
 - (b) 0.4 gram brown solid mass suspected to be MDMA of a street value of Rs6,000.

He was detained at the Police Cell of Midlands Police Station. On Sunday 12 November 2023, a provisional charge for Drug Dealing – 'Possession of Dangerous Drug for the purpose of distribution' was lodged against him before the Weekend Court. Police objected to his release on bail and he was remanded to Police Cell.

On Monday 13 November 2023, he appeared before the District Magistrate of Pamplemousses Court on a fresh provisional charge for the abovementioned

offence. He was bailed out after furnishing a surety of Rs25,000/- and a recognizance of Rs100,000/- with the condition that he should report to Plaine des Papayes Police Station every Thursday and Saturday between 06 00 hrs and 21 00 hrs. His next Court appearance was fixed for 02 April 2024.

On Tuesday 02 April 2024, he appeared before the Pamplemousses Court where his bail has been enlarged up to 08 October 2024.

(v) Mr T.F.H, 19 years, Machine Operator. He was found in possession of the following –

- (a) A blue glass bottle of a capacity of 22 ml half filled with a liquid suspected to be dangerous drug, and
- (b) 5 cannabis seeds of a street value of Rs500.

He was allowed to go after his defence statement had been recorded.

On Sunday 12 November 2023, a certain Mr H.K.L., 36 years, mechanic and owner of the private premises along Fond du Sac Branch Road, Triolet was brought for enquiry in connection with the abovementioned cases.

Enquiries into the above cases are still in progress.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on several occasions, I have already mentioned the plethora of measures taken by relevant authorities, Ministries and Departments to fight the drug scourge. The huge seizure of drugs by the Police demonstrates the sustained and successful crusade under my Government against drug trafficking and drug abuse. During the period January 2015 to 02 May 2024, 28,708 cases have been detected and 24,973 suspects were arrested. Regarding drug seizures, the estimated street value of drugs seized in respect of these cases stood at around Rs16 billion.

We, as a responsible Government, are very much aware that this scourge is one of the most complex problems of our time and that it can be more effectively addressed only when we pull

together our efforts regionally and internationally to foster better cooperation and act collectively.

We, as a committed Government, have engaged ourselves in a relentless war against the drug scourge. A lot has been done and we are pursuing our efforts, as the world of drugs is ever-changing as the horrendous business of drug keeps on expanding and flourishing at the cost of human lives. This situation calls not only for concerted reflection but active collaboration at different levels, starting right from policymakers, programme implementers and the public at large.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with this objective that my Office organised a first preparatory Conference on Substance Abuse for Countries of the Western Indian Ocean Region in April 2023. The Conference recommended a holistic, integrated, transversal approach and regional cooperative approach to address illegal drug trafficking and consumption through four main strategic intervention areas, namely –

- (i) prevention;
- (ii) breaking the supply chain by tracking drug traffickers and their networks;
- (iii) improving health and social services, and
- (iv) strengthening regional and international cooperation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in April this year, my Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and the Indian Ocean Commission, organised a first Ministerial Conference on Drug Trafficking and Substance Abuse in the Western Indian Ocean in April 2024.

A Ministerial Declaration for enhancing regional and international cooperation against drug trafficking and drug use in the Western Indian Ocean has been adopted by some 180 participants from 24 countries, 12 international organisations, concerned Ministries and Departments and local non-governmental organisations and civil societies which participated in the Conference.

The Conference provided a platform for high-level policy dialogue to forge collective actions for improving the Western Indian Ocean capabilities to deal with the demand and supply side challenges relating to illicit drug trafficking and to work on the recommendations made by the Regional Conference in April 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the United States has launched the Global Coalition against Synthetic Drugs and is working with over 130 interested countries, and key international organisations, to respond to this major public health challenge. The Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats will help accelerate efforts against illicit synthetic drugs and employ coordinated approaches to prevent illicit drug manufacturing, detect emerging drug threats, disrupt trafficking, address illicit finance, and respond to public safety and public health impacts. Mauritius is fully committed to the US-led initiative and forms part of the Coalition. Mauritius has joined the Coalition since November 2023.

The Mauritius Revenue Authority, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the National Drug Secretariat of my Office, ADSU and FSL form part of the three Working Groups which have been set up under the US Global Coalition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to strengthening regional collaboration in our fight against illicit activities, my Office has renewed its bilateral collaboration with Reunion Island, through the *Groupe de Contact*, with a view to combatting, amongst others, drug trafficking, illegal immigration and money laundering, around our two borders and within our Exclusive Economic Zones.

On 20 February 2024, a Technical Agreement on the Fight against Drugs and Psychotropic Substances between the Government of Mauritius and the French Government was signed with a view to –

- (i) strengthening of professional competencies and operational expertise;
- (ii) promoting the mutual support at regional level, and
- (iii) enhancing the mutual knowledge of methodologies and procedures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to bring to the attention of the House that Mauritius is the pioneering nation in Sub-Saharan Africa to have instituted a Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme for individuals injecting drugs. In an effort to streamline access to drug-related services for drug users, an Addiction Unit has been established within each of the five Regional Hospitals across the island.

Furthermore, specialised drug-related services have been implemented for minors, adolescents and women. We recognise that drug addiction is a disease and those afflicted are grappling with a medical condition necessitating treatment, care and support. Individuals using drugs are guided towards a Drug Users Administrative Panel to undergo a suitable treatment and rehabilitation programme, rather than being immediately referred to the criminal justice system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to apprise the House that as the National Drug Control Master Plan was approaching its conclusion in 2023, Government sought the cooperation of the United Nations agencies to conduct an independent evaluation of the progress made and the new challenges encountered. This evaluation will serve as the foundation for the next course of action. The goal is to devise an evidence-based and effective strategic response to the drug menace in Mauritius.

The evaluation endeavour has been commended for its commitment and transparency by the independent evaluation section of the United Nations, as well as by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). A side event was organised during the 67th Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna, held between 14 and 22 March 2024, to showcase this exemplary initiative undertaken by Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Government has made significant strides in tackling the drug issue. We are fearlessly pursuing the combat against this scourge by adopting a multi-faceted approach that encompasses all aspects of the problem, including actions in the domains of health, education, and public safety, amongst others.

Protecting our citizens and ensuring their safety and security remains one of our top priorities. Accordingly, this Government has allocated and will continue to provide the necessary resources required to provide modern security logistics, equipment, trained human resources and infrastructural facilities on land and sea to meet the expectations of the population. We have

demonstrated our strong political will to do whatever is required to relentlessly track the drug traffickers and other criminals and bring them to justice.

Thank you.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister, while referring to the rave party of 11 November 2023, mentioned that the total street value of the drugs seized was approximately, when I compute everything, Rs120,000. How does the hon. Prime Minister reconcile this statement with what ASP A.J. of the Special Striking Team stated on radio following the seizure, and I quote –

« Nous avons été surpris par la quantité de drogue saisie. »

So, Mr A.J. said that there were a lot of drugs. Is the Prime Minister today confirming that, in fact, there were not so much drugs seized on that day?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of what Mr J. has been saying and where he said that. What I am aware of is what I have been provided with as information. This is what I have and I have replied to the hon. Member.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Prime Minister started by saying that rave party is more like an unauthorised public gathering where there are drugs circulated. I agree with him that there is no definition in law about rave party. So, doesn't the hon. Prime Minister find it odd that in that unauthorised gathering where there were many people, only five people were arrested? Is it because, as stated by ASP Mr A.J. in the press, *il y avait des personnes de très haut de la société*? Is that the reason why these people were not arrested?

The Prime Minister: May I know who the hon. Member is referring to?

Mr Uteem: You have to ask ASP A.J. He said it!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: You come and you quote anything!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Asim to responsabilite!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: M. le président, l'honorable membre qui est un juriste...

An hon. Member: *Kapon!*

The Prime Minister: ... sait pertinemment bien ce qu'est un *hearsay* ! Vous savez, je peux moi aussi venir à la Chambre et dire qu'un tel a dit ceci. Qu'est-ce que vous avez à dire ? Enfin, soyons sérieux !

(Interruptions)

Quand vous parlez de très haute personnalité, dites-nous ce que vous savez ! Qui est cette personnalité ? Vous n'êtes pas capable de le dire ! Vous n'êtes pas capable de le dire !

(Interruptions)

Je vous mets au défi ! Je vous mets au défi de venir dire dans cette Chambre qui est cette personnalité !

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: *Dimann A.J. !*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state the number of applications in respect to public entertainment events under the Public Gatherings Act 1991, registered since 2015 to date, indicating the number of applications that were approved and rejected?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 2015 to 04 May 2024, there have been 592 applications for public entertainment under the Public Gatherings Act, out of which 542 were approved, 28 rejected, and 12 cancelled.

“Public entertainment” is defined in the Act as meaning –

“dancing, singing or music, a charity bazaar, a stage play or performance, a cinematograph exhibition given or held indoors or outdoors, to which the public [or any section of the public] has been convened or has or is entitled or permitted to have access, whether on payment or otherwise;”

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

POLICE OFFICERS – RECRUITMENT & PROMOTION – 2015 TO MAY 2024

(No. B/271) Mr A. Ittoo (Third 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 Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof on a yearly basis since 2015 to 2023 and from January 2024 to date –

- (a) recruited, and
- (b) promoted grade-wise.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Police Force being the main law enforcement agency in the country needs to have an adequate pool of officers to maintain a congenial climate of peace and harmony within our territory.

Accordingly, human resources is considered as the most important asset of any organisation. The Mauritius Police Force should therefore align its workforce with the organisation’s needs to ensure the latter has a sufficient number of trained and experienced Police Officers at every operational level to deliver service to the community in an effective and efficient manner.

Two essential components of organisational growth and success are recruitment and promotion.

Regular recruitment in the Mauritius Police Force ensures that the Force stays updated with the latest skills, knowledge and technologies in law enforcement. As new recruits come in, they bring new blood in the organisation, which benefits the entire Force.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the power for recruitment and promotion in the Mauritius Police Force is vested with the Disciplined Forces Service Commission (DFSC) which, in accordance with Section 118 (4) of the Constitution, is not subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority, in the exercise of its function.

As per regulation 14(1) of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations, the Commission shall have regard primarily to the efficiency of the Force in selecting candidates for appointment and promotions.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that recruitment in the Mauritius Police Force is made at two entry levels, namely –

- (a) at the level of Temporary Police Constable, and
- (b) at the level of Cadet Officer.

For the post of Temporary Police Constable, candidates have to meet the set criteria and have to undergo a series of tests and interview by the Disciplined Forces Service Commission. Thereafter, the list of selected candidates is communicated to the Commissioner of Police for enlistment.

The Temporary Police Constables then have to undergo a Foundation Course comprising six months training either at the Police Training School, the Special Mobile Force, the Special Support Unit or the National Coast Guard, followed by six months on-the-job training prior to their appointment as Police Constable.

The Disciplined Forces Service Commission also initiates procedures for the enlistment of qualified candidates to the post of Cadet Officer in different fields in the Mauritius Police Force. After recruitment, the Cadet Officers have to undergo local and overseas training courses in general policing duties, as well as in their respective specialised fields.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that between 2015 to date, 3,461 Trainee Police Constables and 28 Cadet Officers have been recruited in the Mauritius Police Force as follows –

- (i) For the year 2015, 666 Trainee Police Constables (male) were recruited;
- (ii) For the year 2016, 561 Trainee Police Constables were recruited, out of which 472 were male and 89 were female;
- (iii) For the year 2017, 219 Trainee Police Constables were recruited, out of which 195 were male and 24 were female;
- (iv) For the year 2018, 3 Cadet Officers were recruited, out of which there were 2 male Officers and 1 female Officer;
- (v) For the year 2019, 488 Trainee Police Constables were recruited, out of which 391 were male and 97 were female. In the same year, 23 Cadet Officers were recruited, with 19 male Officers and 4 female Officers;
- (vi) No recruitment was made in the year 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (vii) For the year 2021, 464 Trainee Police Constables were recruited, out of which 370 were male and 94 were female;
- (viii) For the year 2022, 406 Trainee Police Constables were recruited, out of which 308 were male and 98 were female, along with 1 Cadet Officer (male), and
- (ix) For the year 2023, 657 Trainee Police Constables were recruited, out of which 548 were male and 109 were female, along with 1 female Cadet Officer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the year 2024, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that procedures have already been initiated for the recruitment of Police Constables (male and female). The post was advertised on 15 March 2024 and the selection exercise is currently underway at the level of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards promotion, I wish to highlight that it offers opportunities to officers for career progression and personal development and allows them to take on greater responsibilities, acquire new skills, thus contributing to their professional growth and job satisfaction.

Promoting qualified individuals to leadership positions enables the Mauritius Police Force to develop a strong cadre of experienced leaders who can effectively manage and guide their teams/subordinates. These leaders play a crucial role in shaping the organisational culture, implementing strategic initiatives and ensuring the effective delivery of Police services.

Effective promotion practices facilitate succession planning within the Force, ensuring that there is a pool of qualified candidates ready to fill leadership positions as they become available.

It boosts morale and motivation among personnel of the Mauritius Police Force, by demonstrating that their hard work and dedication are valued and recognised and fosters a sense of pride and loyalty, enhancing commitment to the mission of the Police Force.

However, as highlighted in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/1441 of 14 November 2023, it is unfortunate that promotion in the Mauritius Police Force prior to the year 2014 was minimal, leading to demotivation and low morale of Police Officers and thus, impinging on service delivery and efficiency.

For this reason, in our Government Programme 2015-2019, we undertook to provide the Mauritius Police Force with, *inter alia*, a more conducive environment, modern equipment and new technologies. Moreover, in our manifesto of 2019-2024, we pledged that Police Corporals and Police Constables reckoning at least 20 years of service would be promoted to the grade of Police Sergeant upon vacancies occurring.

Promotions based on merit and achievements, evidently encourages Officers to strive for excellence in their duties, ultimately leading to a more efficient and effective Police Force.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a total number of 4,351 Police Officers have been promoted to higher ranks between 2015 and 2023 as follows –

Year		No. of Officers Promoted to Higher Ranks
2015	-	228
2016	-	354
2017	-	710
2018	-	203
2019	-	349
2020	-	9

2021	-	494
2022	-	322
2023	-	1682
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>4351</u>

Furthermore, a total of 2,000 Police Officers have been promoted to higher ranks from January 2024 to date.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information sought by the hon. Member pertaining to promotion grade-wise, in the Mauritius Police Force, on a yearly basis since 2015 to 2023 and from January 2024 to date due to the numerous grades involved.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/273 and B/278 have been withdrawn. Also, the Table has been advised that PQ B/305 will be replied by Dr. the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management.

Time over! We move to the next item. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha! Absent? We move to the next question.

Mr Speaker: We move to the next question! Hon. Ms Tour!

VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES – MORCELLEMENT RAMLUGUN – FLOODING – BRIDGE UPGRADING

(No. B/280) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to works for the upgrading of the bridge along the main road in Vallée des Prêtres with a view to mitigating flooding in Morcellement Ramlugun, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the bridge located along the main Road B (143) in Vallée des Prêtres is called the Bernardin de St Pierre Bridge. Following the torrential rainfall which occurred on 13 March 2022, Morcellement Ramlugun at Vallée des Prêtres was severely impacted.

A site visit was subsequently carried out on 22 March 2022 by the hon. Prime Minister and myself, accompanied by the local MPs and other stakeholders. It was noted that the existing capacity of the Bernardin de St Pierre Bridge, which is 5 metres wide and 3 metres deep, is inadequate to cater for the rise of the river level during heavy rainfall, thereby resulting in an overflow at the bridge location.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to addressing this issue, the Land Drainage Authority has recommended the upgrading of the Bernardin de St Pierre Bridge under the National Flood Management Programme. The aim of the project is to provide a new bridge of adequate hydraulic capacity, with footpath on both sides to ensure safe passage of pedestrians and flow of vehicles during heavy rainfall.

The RDA, to whom the implementation of the project has been entrusted, has awarded the contract to Gamma Construction Ltd for a sum of Rs27.8 m., inclusive of VAT.

The scope of works comprises the following –

- (i) demolition of the existing Bernardin de St Pierre Bridge;
- (ii) construction of a new bridge of 21 metres wide and 3 metres deep;
- (iii) traffic diversion and relocation of services, and
- (iv) provision of miscellaneous road equipment such as road marking, traffic signs and handrails, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the RDA that unfortunately the project has encountered some delays due to land acquisition issues. Four portions of land had to be acquired, among which, three plots fall within the reserve of Lataniers River. Following several negotiations held with these private land owners, entry on the lands was finally secured on 02 March 2024.

I am advised that site preparatory works and felling of trees are currently ongoing and concurrently the Wastewater Management Authority is undertaking temporary rerouting of the sewer pipe which is expected to be completed by the third week of May. Works on the bridge itself are expected to start by the end of May 2024. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Ms Tour: Thank you. The hon. Minister mentioned that the works will start by the end of May. Can he give us an indication of the estimated completion timeframe for the project?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am being informed that the works will last for 8 months. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MORCELLEMENT RAFFRAY, PAILLES – RIVER ST LOUIS – ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/281) Mr R. Uteem Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the illegal construction on River St Louis at Cardinal No. 5, Morcellement Raffray, Pailles, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Conservator of Forests, information as to the actions taken for the removal thereof.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQs B/281 and B/283 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that at the request of the Forestry Service of my Ministry, Mr B.W.M. was on 8 May 2008 prosecuted before the District Court of Moka, with Cause Number 6928/07, for the illegal construction of a concrete poultry pen of about 48 metre square on the reserve of Rivulet St Louis at Avenue Cardinal, Morcellement Raffray, Guibies, Pailles.

The judgement was delivered on 22 May 2008 and Mr B.W.M. was sentenced to pay a fine of Rs2000 and cost Rs100. He was also ordered to remove the illegal concrete structure within a delay of one year.

However, Mr B.W.M. failed to do so. A new case was, therefore, lodged by the Forestry Service against him for non-compliance with the court order. The case was heard on 18 November 2009 and Mr B.W.M. was sentenced to pay a fine of Rs3500 and cost Rs100. However, the then District Magistrate of Moka did not order the pulling down of the illegal structure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Attorney General's Office was consulted and following its advice, Mr B.W.M. was prosecuted for a third time before the District Court of Moka for non-compliance to court order. He was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of Rs3500 plus Rs100 as cost.

However, the District Magistrate again did not order the demolition of the illegal structure. On 02 May 2013, the advice of the Attorney General's Office was sought anew on the course of action to be taken against Mr B.W.M., the more so as a site visit carried out by Forest Officers at that time revealed that only ten hens were reared in the poultry pen and which according to Mr B.W.M. were meant for his own consumption. The House may wish to note that for poultry rearing to be classified as trade under the Local Government Act 2011, 25 to 500 birds are required.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Attorney General's Office reiterated that the Forestry Service should proceed with the penalties under sections 15(4) and 15(5) of the Forests and Reserves Act which respectively provide for, I quote –

- (1) "Any person who fails to comply with an order made under subsection (2)(c) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 5,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years.
- (2) The Court before which a person is convicted of an offence under subsection (4) may, in addition to any penalty imposed, authorise the authorised officer to remove the plant, structure, article, thing or rubbish at the expense of the offender."

Furthermore, the matter being of a criminal nature, the Attorney General's Office advised the Forestry Service to refer the case to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for assistance. On 30 August 2013, the DPP requested for a new case to be lodged against Mr B.W.M. for failing to comply with the Court order of 22 May 2008, that the pulling down of the structure built, in breach of Section 14(1)(c), 15(1), 2 (c), 4 & 5 of the Forests and Reserves Act of 1983.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the case was lodged and called before the District Magistrate Port Louis on 29 June 2019. The accused pleaded not guilty and added that he had been prosecuted several times for the same offence. As a consequence, the case was postponed for 12 August 2019 on

grounds that confirmation from the Attorney General's Office was required as to whether the accused was indeed prosecuted several times.

Thereafter, upon request of the Attorney General's Office, the case was postponed for 01 October 2019, 28 November 2019 and 20 January 2020 respectively. On 20 January 2020, the Police Prosecutor informed the Court that he was instructed by the Attorney General's Office to withdraw the case and consequently same was dismissed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as you will note, the Forestry Service left no stone unturned to have the illegal structure erected by Mr B.W.M. removed. Unfortunately, this could not happen. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is good for the House to note that following a latest site visit carried out by Forest Officers, it has been observed that the illegal structure is still there and due to erosion, the structure now stands partly on the river reserve and partly on the river bed. Furthermore, the structure seems to have now been converted into a residential block.

In view thereof, the Forestry Service has solicited the Municipal Council of Port Louis, for necessary action to be initiated against Mr B.W.M. under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2018.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister who just mentioned that the matter has been referred to the local authorities for actions, when was that referred to and whether consideration will also be given to refer the matter to the Construction Industry Authority which now has the power, given by Parliament, to pull down the building that is causing a nuisance and is being dangerous for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated in my reply, we have exhausted all the legal avenues with regard to this particular issue and now we have been discussing with the Ministry of Local Government to see what are the legal provisions that exist at their level to see whether they can take some actions at that level.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. In his preliminary remarks, the hon. Minister did mention of the Forest and Reserves Act. Does he not think that the time has come for this law to be revised to empower his own Ministry to act in such cases because this illegal construction is creating a lot of havoc in the locality there, especially with regard to inundation?

Mr Seeruttun: Yes Mr Speaker, Sir, it is indeed true that this Act needs to be reviewed. In fact, we have been working on a proposed Forest Bill. And, in fact, some of the provisions that we have already been looking at to reinforce the power of the officers of the Forestry Department, would include revocation of permits or clearances and expected to ensure strict compliance to permits and authorisations issued to applicants, including those structures illegally extended from legal structures. Offences under the new Forest Bill will lead to revised fines and imprisonments and also provisions to include upon conviction. The law will provide for the automatic removal of built structures and will no longer depend on the discretionary powers of the Magistrates. These are provisions that we are undertaking to include in the Forest Bill that we want to propose eventually.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour.

At 1.04 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.43 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

MOTIONS – S.O 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of your announcement in regard to the form and tenor of the letter addressed to your good self by hon. Mr Assirvaden, which has been tabled this morning, and in particular, the elements of threat contained therein, namely protesting vehemently against this unilateral alteration and hijacking by you of the drawing of lots exercise, turning the transparent exercise into an opaque and undemocratic stratagem destined to relegate opposition PQs in favour of Government PQs, putting an end to your unlawful acts and doings and to forthwith restore and implement the terms of the Agreement, failing which legal action will be taken against you, Mr Speaker, Sir, and denunciation letters will be sent to parliamentary democracies throughout the world.

Moreover, when given the opportunity to withdraw the allegations, the hon. Member stated in the Assembly that he maintains the contents of his letter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the above, 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 announcement and in terms of the provisions of Standing Order 49(8), I beg to move that the hon. Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix, Mr P. Assirvaden, be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next six Sittings unless unreserved apologies are tendered to you and to the House.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Mr Assirvaden: *Pa pou atann longtemps sa !*

An hon. Member: *Dimann eskiz!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: *Trikaz! Trikaz! Trikaz! Trikaz!*

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PUBLIC SERVICE – LEAVE SCHEME

(No B/282) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Leave Scheme in the Public Service, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of representations from trade union representatives as to the issues encountered thereon

together with proposals for the improvement thereof and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto.

Dr. Ramdhany: Mr Speaker, Sir, as per Section 21 of the Worker's Rights Act, an employee is expected to work for a period not exceeding 8 hours daily. This caters for other segments of 8 hours in a day to be dedicated to his family and personal development, leisure, respectively.

In the public service, the terms and conditions of employment of public officers put emphasis on the need to have a right work-life balance. Leave schemes in the public service consist of more than a dozen different types of leaves to cater for a different number of occasions for which public officers have to be away from work. This is in line with the fundamental principle governing management of human resources in the public sector which is to reconcile the professional life of public officers with their private and personal life.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Human Resource Management Manual defines 'leave' as an authorised absence from work. An officer, who is on authorised leave, enjoys all the privileges attached to his post. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, leave is normally granted, subject to the exigencies of the service and upon the recommendation of the immediate supervisor and the approval of the responsible officer.

Most of the parastatal bodies and state-owned enterprises tend to follow what is provided in the public sector, as far as the leave schemes are concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since my taking of office as Minister responsible for Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms in August 2023, I have adopted an open-door policy and have been meeting representatives of Trade Unions and Federations on a regular basis.

Up to now, I have already met with 210 Unions out of the 310 registered Unions/Federations of different grades and cadres, including Federations and other Trade-Unions at departmental level.

There have been, so far, some very pertinent representations made by them which are of direct concern to public officers regarding their career paths, welfare, health and safety and conditions of service. In relation to leave schemes, two main issues were raised. Firstly, the

casual leave for short duration warranting absences of public officers for less than a half day. Public officers were formerly not authorised to apply for casual leave half a day. Secondly, the grant of study leave for part-time courses followed by public officers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that Government has agreed to enable public officers to avail of two hours of casual leave to cater for short absences from duty. A Circular to that effect was issued by my Ministry on 21 November 2023.

The provisions regarding the grant of study leave to public officers willing to embark on part-time self-financed courses have also been enhanced and two Circulars have been issued on 15 March 2024 and 17 April 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a caring Government, we are committed to improving the conditions of service, including leave entitlement of our public officers in order to boost their morale to perform better and smarter.

Improvement in the management of leave to public officers is an ongoing process. The leave schemes are updated as soon as new regulations and new policies come into force. Further, my Ministry has made submission to the PRB for its next report due in 2026 for further enhancement of the existing leave provisions. Thank you.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister elaborate on the 2-hours for casual leave that are now granted to public officers?

Dr. Ramdhany: Mr Speaker, Sir, these types of casual leaves are authorised paid absences from duty to cover short absences to attend to urgent personal matters, including religious obligations and family commitments. It caters for short and unexpected absences in foreseen and unforeseen circumstances. On many occasions, public officers have been made to apply for half-day casual leave to cater for short period absences of 1 hour or 2-hours to attend to urgent personal matters.

These officers could have more conveniently applied for 2-hours of leave instead of half-day casual leave. This is in the interest of both the officer and the Ministry or department. The need to have more flexibility in the management of casual leave by allowing eligible officers to apply 2-hours casual leave to cater for short absences has been examined by my Ministry and it

is considered that this arrangement may be applicable in all Ministries and Departments, subject to the exigencies of the services.

In view thereof, it has been decided that where less than half-day leave is required, eligible officers will henceforth be allowed to apply for at least 2-hours leave for the causal leave entitlement.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Minister inform the House under which circumstances, special leaves are granted to public officers?

Dr. Ramdhany: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to paragraph 5.6.1 of the Human Resource Management Manual, special leaves in the form of 2-hours' time off may be granted to public officers in respect of any two religious festivals of their choice during a year subjected to the exigencies of the service.

On 22 January 2024, subject to the exigencies of the service, a one-off special leave of two hours was granted to public officers of Hindu faith in the context of the inauguration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, India, which is a landmark event as it symbolises the return of Lord Ram. Thanks to the hon. Prime Minister, this was granted to allow officers to follow the event live and participate in the prayer.

Moreover, on Friday 29 March 2024, subject to the exigencies of the service, a special leave of two hours was granted to the public officers of Christian faith for Good Friday from 14 00 hrs in the context of Easter Celebrations 2024. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MORCELLEMENT RAFFRAY, PAILLES – POULTRY PEN – ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/283) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the case of Forestry Service v/s B. W. M., in connection with the illegal construction of poultry pen at Cardinal No. 5, Morcellement Raffray in Pailles, wherein judgement was delivered on 22 May

2008 ordering the demolition of the illegally built structures, he will state the actions taken in relation thereto.

(Vide reply to PQ B/281)

CYCLONE BELAL & 21 APRIL 2024 HEAVY RAINFALL – AFFECTED FAMILIES

(No. B/284) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the cases of flooding which occurred during the passage of cyclone Belal on 15 January 2024 and heavy rainfall of 21 April 2024, he will, state if consideration will be given for the affected families thereof, namely in Canal Dayot, Sable Noir, Richelieu, Debarcadere in Pointe aux Sables and other affected areas in Constituency No.1 Grand River North West and Port Louis West to be exempted from payment of their electricity and water bills for the said months and, if so, indicate the procedures to be followed to benefit therefrom and, if not, why not.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to PQ B/284 and PQ B/288 together as they relate to the same subject.

My colleague, hon. Hurreeram has, in reply to a Private Notice Question on 23 April 2024, provided much detail to the House on the extreme weather conditions that are being witnessed globally due to climate change, and Mauritius is not spared. The House was also informed of sustained efforts by the Government to address the flooding issue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity that in the event of Cyclone Warning Class III or heavy rainfall declared by the National Emergency Operations Command (NEOC), the following are payable –

- (a) cyclone allowance of Rs250 per person per night spent at the Evacuee Centre, and
- (b) flood allowance of Rs250 for damaged stuffs per person per day for a maximum of 3 days upon presentation of a Police Memo.

In the wake of Cyclone Belal, the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity has effected payment amounting to Rs338,750 and flood allowance to 3,709

families to the tune of Rs6,437,700. In addition, food packs were provided to 3,880 families affected by the cyclone.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a one-off financial assistance of Rs2,000 was also granted to households that have faced power cuts for 12 consecutive hours during the passage of Cyclone Belal. Some 43,502 households have benefitted from this assistance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for heavy rainfall on 21 April 2024, I am informed that the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity has effected payment to 351 families who had spent the night at the evacuee centres to the tune of Rs349,000 and a flood allowance to 3,149 families to the tune of Rs3,264,750.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the CWA and CEB that there have been no major disruptions in water and electricity supply during the heavy rainfall on 21 April 2024.

In light of the above, I will make an appeal to the CWA and the CEB to take into account hardship cases following the recent flooding and extend payment facilities to households on a case-to-case basis.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Le ministre sera d'accord avec moi que ces familles ont tout perdu pendant ces inondations et elles n'ont rien touché comme compensation, contrairement à ce qui s'était passé en 2013 où les familles et résidents de Canal Dayot avaient eu une compensation de R 100,000. Ne pense-t-il pas que ces personnes méritent mieux ?

Mr Lesjongard: *Oui, je pense qu'ils méritent mieux, M. le président.* This is why I have stated at the end of my reply that the CEB and the CWA will consider on a case to case basis whether they could extend payment facilities to those families. That is what we can do at the level of these two organisations.

Mr David: Lors de nos visites auprès des victimes de ces inondations, plusieurs familles se sont en effet plaintes de la nécessité d'utiliser le nettoyage à l'eau pressurisée pour enlever, gratter et laver la boue qui s'est accumulée chez elles. C'est dans ce sens qu'une demande a été faite, à travers nos questions parlementaires, pour qu'il y ait une considération spéciale pour

soulager ces familles déjà en difficulté, un peu comme cela a été fait, je dois le rappeler, lors de la crise sanitaire et alors que nous faisons face à une crise climatique, pour réduire les factures d'eau et d'électricité qui sont liées spécifiquement à ces opérations de nettoyage qui sont indispensables.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do understand the situation but then, let me give some information to the hon. Member with regard to the regions which he has mentioned in his question. The Central Water Authority has analysed the water consumption, not only for that month where we had flooding, but from the month of November 2023 to March 2024, in order to determine the volume of water consumed during each of these months. Now, the result is that the consumption has been higher for the month of November 2023, as compared to the month of January 2024. So, there has not been any excessive consumption of water.

With regard to electricity, how can the organisation determine that the excess electricity was used for cleaning purposes? If we have a formula to determine that, then we can give due consideration. But, how can the organisation determine, if there is excess consumption, whether this can be related to cleaning purposes?

Mr Speaker: Next question!

DRAINS INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION LTD – TENDERS

(No. B/285) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain and table a list of the tenders launched for implementation of works by the Company since its incorporation to date, indicating, in each case, the –

- (a) name of the bidders and the bidding price therefor, indicating the name of the successful bidder, and
- (b) status of the project awarded thereto.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd (DICL) was incorporated on 16 November 2021 with the primary objective to fast-track the implementation of drain projects under the National Flood Management Programme.

I wish to highlight that although the DICL is a State-owned company and does not fall under the purview of the Public Procurement Act, for the purpose of procurement, the principles of good governance and transparency are observed. Bidding exercises are carried out by the Company in all fairness to bidders.

In this respect, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the DICL that all tenders are launched either under the Open National Bidding method or the Open Advertising Bidding method. I am further advised that the opening of tenders is attended by bidders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information requested for by the hon. Member.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The hon. Minister made mention that the procurement exercise is not subject to the Public Procurement Act. Can I ask him, in the light of this, if he can tell the House the number of tenders that have been cancelled since the existence of the DICL and re-floated thereof?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have tabled the information that was required in the question. I would answer the hon. Member if I am given notice of the question. I am not holding all that information at hand.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister consider including DICL in the Public Procurement Regulations of the PPA in order to promote better accountability and transparency?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the DICL is run by a board. It has a Chairman; it has members. They decide about how to operate the Company and everything is done according to the law.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Hon. X. L. Duval!

**MAURITIUS MULTISPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE LTD – COTE D'OR
STADIUM – INCURRED LOSSES**

(No. B/286) **Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Côte d'Or Stadium, he will state the total amount of losses incurred by the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Limited since its incorporation to date, indicating how same are being financed.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Limited (MMIL) was incorporated in 2016. It is a State-owned company to promote Mauritius as a world-class facility for professional sports, for the organisation of major sporting and recreational events and to be a hub for future sports developments. For the Financial Year 2022-2023, an amount of Rs57 million was provided in the budget for the operation of the MMIL and for the current financial year, an amount of Rs91 million has been provided. The MMIL does not operate on a profit-making basis. So, the question of losses incurred by the MMIL does not arise.

Thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the MMIL is a company, it produces accounts. The last account it produced in 2021, made a loss of Rs102 million. Since that date, the company has not published and produced any accounts. So, the taxpayer who has invested Rs5 billion has probably incurred further losses of about Rs400 million since that date. This is why I am asking the hon. Minister in view of the Report of the Director of Audit which has criticised his oversight, why this company has not produced accounts for the last three years? Therefore, will he give the amount of losses that have been incurred since that time? I hope I am clear that it is a company producing accounts and the last time, the account showed a loss of Rs102 million.

Mr Toussaint: *M. le président, comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse.* The MMIL does not operate on a profit-making basis. It is a service provider. *Et dans mon introduction, j'ai expliqué la philosophie et l'objectif de Mauritius Multi-Sport Infrastructure Ltd. Je crois que c'est assez clair ce que je suis en train de dire.*

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, *ce n'est pas clair du tout mais* anyway. Let me, I will say I think the hon. Minister does not understand what is at issue here. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am

going to ask the hon. Minister – this stadium was constructed by the Government in spite of most of the other sports facilities being severely underutilised as mentioned by the Director of Audit. Therefore, in view of the lack of revenue and therefore the losses from that stadium, will he not agree that the stadium was a total and shocking waste of public funds?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, certainement pas. Je comprends que l'honorable membre soit un peu désespéré en ce moment. Pour commencer, *it is not a stadium, it is a Multisports Complex*. Alors, si vous me permettez, M. le président, permettez-moi de faire – pas la leçon – mais d'expliquer à la Chambre, au public et à l'honorable membre c'est quoi le complexe sportif de Côte d'Or. Une piscine olympique de 50 mètres où les compétitions internationales peuvent et ont déjà été faites. Pas plus loin que l'année dernière, nous avons accueilli le Championnat Junior d'Afrique de natation. Un stade d'athlétisme *approved by the International Federation of Athletics*. Un terrain de football *approved by FIFA* et un gymnase multifonctionnel.

À part de cela, M. le président, nous avons implémenté à Côte d'Or un *high performance centre* qui sert à préparer nos athlètes et aussi d'autres athlètes internationaux qui viennent s'entraîner ici. Je ne vais pas prendre le temps de la Chambre. Nous avons en janvier 2022 le champion olympique, médaillé d'or olympique de saut en hauteur Gianmarco Tamberi qui était venu faire une formation ici chez nous. L'équipe d'Angleterre qui se prépare pour les jeux olympiques de Paris est venue se préparer ici chez nous. Là, à l'heure que je vous parle, actuellement du 4 au 15 mai, nous avons la double championne olympique d'heptathlon, Nafi Thiam qui est en stage chez nous ici à Côte d'Or.

Alors, c'est un investissement dans le sport local, c'est un investissement pour nos athlètes élités et les résultats que nous obtenons en ce moment font suite de leur préparation au *HPC* qui se trouve à Côte d'Or. Cela n'a pas de prix.

Mr Speaker: Question sufficiently canvassed! Hon. Ittoo!

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES SURVEILLANCE – MEASURES

(No. B/287) **Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to public health, he will state the measures taken to strengthen communicable diseases surveillance in Mauritius.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, surveillance of communicable diseases is effected by the Communicable Disease Control Unit (CDCU), the Public Health and Food Safety (PHFS) Inspectorate Unit, the Vector Borne Control Division and the Central Health Laboratory. So, four units doing different tasks and different activities.

With the advent of emerging and re-emerging of diseases and climate change, several outbreaks of epidemics and the recent COVID-19 pandemic, my Ministry has taken various measures to review and reinforce the Surveillance System to better prepare, prevent and respond to the Public Health threats and Emergencies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as part of the National Action Plan for Health Security 2024-2029, my Ministry has been working on strengthening the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) in collaboration with the World Health Organisation, to better coordinate and integrate surveillance activities by focusing on preparedness and the response function of the disease surveillance system.

The aim of the IDSR is to improve surveillance and sharpen the Early Warning, Alert and Response at all levels in the African Region. It also allows for real time data sharing and reporting while optimising resources.

Capacity building was conducted in 2023 so that the number of reporting sites for IDSR has increased from 45 in 2023 to 141 in 2024 covering all the public health care facilities. My Ministry is currently working on the finalisation of the 3rd Guideline of IDSR and the Implementation Plan 2024-2029.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all officers of the Public Health Unit of my Ministry are involved in the surveillance of communicable diseases falling under the Public Health Act. The Communicable Disease Control Unit works closely with the Central Health laboratory for detection of communicable diseases so that immediate action is taken upon notification of any confirmed case. Data from multiple sources such as regional hospitals, health records department, health statistics units, points of entry and laboratory are triangulated and analysed for evidence based decision making.

In the same line, Preparedness and Response plans have been developed for diseases such as COVID-19, Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika, Malaria, Plague, Ebola, MERS CoV, Influenza AH1N1, while plans for Cholera and Marburg are in the pipeline. In addition, Protocols were also developed for the surveillance of suspected case of mPox.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, several actions have been initiated by my Ministry to strengthen surveillance in Mauritius.

Firstly, in January 2024, following the outbreak of Dengue in December 2023, the Public Health (Testing of Infectious or Communicable Diseases) Regulations 2024 were promulgated so that any person, including any incoming passenger, who is suspected to be infected with, or suffering from, an infectious or communicable disease will have to undergo a medical examination mandatorily as requested by the Sanitary Authority.

Secondly, surveillance at points of entry has been reinforced through mandatory filling of the Health Declaration form or the digital Mauritius All-In-One Travel Form by all incoming passengers.

Thirdly, health centres have been equipped with IT infrastructure and equipment to enable rapid transfer of surveillance data and for easy data entry.

Fourthly, sharing of data on the platform of DHIS2 with the World Health Organisation and the CDC Africa in very factual basis and confidential manner.

In addition, the laboratory services have been provided with additional logistics, equipment and reagents so the capacity of laboratory has been increased, while Rapid Antigen Test for dengue has been procured so as to obtain immediate result after testing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, other disease surveillance for Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV are being strengthened in line with the Action Plan developed, respectively. My Ministry is also currently working on a COVID-19 Transition Strategy in collaboration with the World Health Organisation.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can hon. Minister inform the House whether there exists at the level of his Ministry a defined protocol to detect cases and to contain infectious diseases?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, all the action plans have been developed for surveillance. If a patient has been suspected or detected with a communicable disease, the Public Health Division is going to treat this patient in an isolated manner.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

FLOODS – UTILITY BILLS IMPACT

(No. B/288) **Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the inhabitants impacted by flooding since January 2024 to date, he will state if consideration will be given for exceptionally lowering the utility bills thereof due to higher consumptions resulting from the necessary cleaning processes.

(Vide reply to PQ B/284)

SILVER BANK LIMITED – CONSERVATORSHIP DETAILS

(No. B/289) **Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Silver Bank Limited, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to if it is under conservatorship and, if so, indicate if –

- (a) a selective tender exercise was carried out for the appointment of a Conservator, and
- (b) any loan was granted thereto by the Bank of Mauritius and, if so, give details thereof.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, j'ai été informé par la Banque de Maurice que, conformément à l'article 26 de la *Bank of Mauritius Act*, la Banque de Maurice est tenue de préserver la confidentialité des informations relatives à ses affaires et à celles de toute autre banque, ainsi qu'à leurs clients, qu'elle a recueillies dans l'exercice de ses fonctions et par l'intermédiaire du conservateur. Par conséquent, elle n'est pas en mesure de rendre publiques les informations demandées. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am entitled to a supplementary question.

Mr Speaker: You are not entitled.

Dr. Boolell: Why?

Mr Speaker: Let me give you the process.

Dr. Boolell: What is the process?

Mr Speaker: Wait! You want an answer?

Dr. Boolell: You want me to hold my horse? Okay.

Mr Speaker: You want an answer? You have to listen!

Dr. Boolell: If it is...

Mr Speaker: No! You are still questioning?

Dr. Boolell: I am not questioning. If it is an answer to the ...

Mr Speaker: You are still questioning?

Dr. Boolell: I am not questioning! I am asking for...

Mr Speaker: Okay!

Dr. Boolell: ...what I consider to be fair.

Mr Speaker: Now, let us smile and talk.

Dr. Boolell: But I do not pretend to smile to you!

Mr Speaker: You know what?

Dr. Boolell: If you were a nice and beautiful lady, I would have!

Mr Speaker: Yes! Good!

Dr. Boolell: But you are not!

Mr Speaker: Very good!

(Interruptions)

You know what, hon. Member, you are a seasoned politician. It is the Speaker who thinks whether it is fit and proper to ask a supplementary question. It is not you or about your right or any Member's right - on both sides of the House. Not only for the Opposition, but both sides!

Okay? Even one Member there asked one question and I said no supplementary at all! So, let us smile and end this here. Okay?

Next question! You see, you are privileged!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 20 – DAMAGED ROADS – REMEDIAL WORKS

(No. B/290) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the damaged roads at Morcellement De Chazal and its adjoining areas in Albion Village in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit, information as to if a survey has been carried out to assess the extent thereof, indicating if immediate remedial works are being envisaged and, if not, why not.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a joint site visit was carried out at Morcellement de Chazal and its adjoining areas in Albion Village on 25 April 2024 by my colleague, hon. Mrs Diolle, Parliamentary Private Secretary of Constituency No. 20, together with the District Councillors and other representatives of the District Council of Black River and the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill as well as officers of the National Development Unit.

The following observations were made during the visit –

- (i) pipe laying works were being carried out by the CWA in Morcellement de Chazal;
- (ii) the road and excavated trenches were washed away by stormwater, thereby further damaging the roads thereat, and
- (iii) the roads in adjoining areas of Albion Village have sustained damages.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been further informed that six road projects to the tune of some Rs23 m. have been identified to be implemented by the NDU.

However, some of these works will be undertaken after the CWA will have completed its pipelaying works. These projects are –

- (a) Resurfacing of Avenue des Manguiers (corner Serin Avenue off Avenue des Lauriers), Albion;
- (b) Avenue Dhalia, Albion;

- (c) Entrance of Albion phare;
- (d) Part reinstatement Ave Tulipes, Morcellement Belle Vue;
- (e) Part reinstatement of Carpes Avenue near Dodo Supermarket, and
- (f) Part reinstatement Corner Avenue Marlin and Avenue Dauphin.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also advised that five other road projects, amounting to some Rs13 m. have been identified to be carried out by the District Council of Black River. Three of these projects are at bidding stage. They are, namely –

- (a) Avenue Dauphin and Avenue Requin - *san moustass* -, Morc. de Chazal;
- (b) Avenue Baracuda, and
- (c) Corner Frangipane and Tulipe Avenue.

On the other hand, the cost estimates for the remaining two road projects, namely Pointe aux Caves and Simonet Road are being worked out by the Council, following which necessary financial clearance will be sought from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, prior to implementation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the District Council of Black River that immediate remedial works, such as clearing of mud/debris and laying of spalls and crusher run, have already been carried by the Council on these five roads. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Quirin: C'est un fait, M. le président, que les routes dans l'ensemble de la région d'Albion ont été endommagées lors des récentes inondations. De ce fait, le ministre peut-il nous dire si son ministère envisage de mettre en place un plan d'aménagement pour trouver des solutions permanentes pour toutes ces régions afin d'éviter d'éventuelles inondations ? Comme il l'a dit lui-même, à chaque pluie diluvienne, les routes sont endommagées. Il faudrait qu'une fois pour toutes qu'on arrive à trouver une solution durable.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member will agree that this is a separate question; we are talking about drains. The DICL and NDU are already working on a project. I think the PPS of the region, hon. Mrs Diolle, is doing a fantastic job regarding the other roads that have not been damaged but which need to be looked into a holistic manner. For the time being, we are looking into repairing those that have been damaged. As I said, we are working in close collaboration with the CWA. Once the pipe laying is done, the resurfacing works will start immediately. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

RODRIGUES – CRITICALLY ILL PATIENTS – EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROTOCOL

(No. B/291) **Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to emergency evacuation of critically ill patients from Rodrigues to Mauritius, he will state if there is any protocol established therefor and, if not, indicate if consideration will be given for the establishment thereof with a view to ensuring the smooth evacuation thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, at present, the following specialised services, including emergency services are provided in Rodrigues –

- General Medicine;
- General Surgery;
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology;
- Paediatrics;
- Anaesthesia;
- Intensive Care (3 beds);
- Orthopaedics, and
- Psychiatry.

In addition, services in ENT, Oncology, Ophthalmology, Dermatology, Rheumatology, Neurology and Neurosurgery are also provided two times or more yearly depending on the health needs of Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker Sir, patients referred from Rodrigues are categorised as follows –

- (i) Emergency cases requiring immediate evacuation;
- (ii) Cases referred for investigations/procedures;
- (iii) Cases referred for treatment;
- (iv) Cases referred for complex surgical interventions, and
- (v) Cases referred for reviews.

Mr Speaker Sir, with regard to the emergency evacuation of critically ill patients from Rodrigues to Mauritius, the established protocol is as follows –

- for any critically ill patient from Rodrigues requiring further management in Mauritius, the treating specialist makes a preflight assessment and stabilise the patient as much as possible prior to transfer;
- a referral form is filled by the treating specialist and is endorsed by the Health Director for transfer. Provision is also made, as far as possible, to include any relative or accompanying person;
- the case is referred to social worker's office for booking of air tickets, filing of subsistence allowance and arrangements for hotel accommodation;
- a request is then made to the SAMU Control Room for a SAMU team including an Emergency Physician and Nursing Officers to proceed urgently to Rodrigues;
- the arrangement for transfer is, in most cases, made via commercial flight from Mauritius to Rodrigues. In exceptional cases, the services of the Commissioner of Police may be solicited for the transfer to be made via Dornier Aircraft;
- the patient is then conveyed by the SAMU team from Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Rodrigues to the Plaine Corail Airport;
- the patient is transferred, accompanied by the SAMU team by air to the respective Regional hospital depending on the treatment and care required;
- in case the patient is intubated, arrangements are made with Air Mauritius for the provision of special compressed oxygen cylinder compatible with aerodynamic transfer;
- upon the arrival at SSRN International Airport, the patient is conveyed by SAMU Ambulance, under the care of an Emergency Physician and is immediately admitted to Intensive Care or High Dependency Wards depending again on the clinical presentation.

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister, what measures, his Ministry together with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, are taking to prevent delays in transferring emergency patients from Rodrigues to Mauritius due to lack of equipment?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, so far, I have not been informed of any issues concerning equipment. Even though the equipment is not available in Rodrigues, the team – as I have stated

in my reply – leaving from Mauritius to Rodrigues will carry with them all the equipment and consumables required so that these patients can be transferred back to Mauritius.

Mr Léopold: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there has been a delay recently to transfer emergency patients from Rodrigues to Mauritius due to lack of oxygen in Rodrigues?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is because for in-flight we need some special compressed oxygen cylinders that should be compatible with aerodynamic transfer. This is the special provision made by Air Mauritius for the transfer and this is where the delay comes from. So far, the transfer was done with these compressed oxygen cylinders because these patients were suffering from severe injuries and they would require these special compressed oxygen cylinders. This is where the delay has come from.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PAILLES SMART CITY – INVESTMENTS & VILLAS SOLD

(No. B/292) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Pailles Smart City, on the premises of the former Domaine Les Pailles, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation Ltd., information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, indicating the –

- (a) quantum of fund invested by –
 - (i) Government, and
 - (ii) other shareholders, and
- (b) number of villas sold as at to date.

Dr. Padayachy : M. le président, en 2015, the *State Investment Corporation Limited* a conclu un accord de coentreprise avec *Yihai International Investment Management Limited* pour la mise en œuvre d'un projet de Smart City sous le nom de *Yihai Investment Ltd*. Après avoir obtenu tous les permis et approbations nécessaires en octobre 2019, le projet a démarré juste

avant l'avènement de la pandémie de la COVID-19. Par conséquent, sa mise en œuvre s'est considérablement ralentie au cours des années 2020 et 2021 en raison de la pandémie.

Malgré la réouverture de l'économie mauricienne au second semestre 2021, les mesures de lutte contre la COVID-19 en Chine ont été prolongées jusqu'à la mi-2022. Cela a entraîné de nombreuses contraintes en matière de mobilité des ressources, car le promoteur était fortement tributaire des transferts en provenance de Chine, ainsi que de matériaux et de main-d'œuvre.

En outre, le marché cible de ce projet était initialement constitué d'acheteurs chinois et, en raison de la COVID-19, la réponse du marché chinois a été très faible. Après la COVID-19, le promoteur a modifié l'orientation de son marché vers d'autres pays. Tous ces éléments ont entraîné un retard supplémentaire dans la mise en œuvre du projet.

Enfin, depuis le dernier semestre 2022, une nouvelle équipe composée principalement d'un chef de projet, d'un contracteur et de consultants locaux a été nommée par le promoteur afin d'accélérer la mise en œuvre du projet.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a)(i) de la question, conformément au pacte d'actionnaires, la *State Investment Corporation Limited* a injecté des terrains dans la *joint-venture*, représentant des capitaux propres équivalents à la valeur des terrains, soit 573,8 millions de roupies, et les terrains ont été transférés depuis 2019 de la *SIC* à la *joint-venture*. La responsabilité de *State Investment Corporation Limited* se limite à la cession du terrain à la *joint-venture* et n'a pas d'autre engagement financier.

En ce qui concerne la partie (a) (ii), je suis informé que le montant des fonds investis par l'autre actionnaire, à savoir *Yihai International Investment Management Limited*, s'élève à 440 millions de roupies sur 598 millions de roupies, conformément au pacte d'actionnaires. À ce jour, le capital social non libéré de *Yihai International Investment Management Limited* s'élève à 158 millions de roupies.

M. le président, pour répondre à la partie (b) de la question, je suis informé qu'à ce jour, la prospection pour la vente des 4 villas est en cours. Je suis également informé que, sur les 29 unités d'appartements, la *joint-venture* a déjà signé un contrat de réservation préliminaire avec 12

acheteurs et qu'un dépôt s'élevant à 5 % de la valeur de la vente a déjà été effectué auprès du notaire. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have supplementary questions.

Mr Speaker: But you have to raise your hand!

Mr Ameer Meea: But I was waiting for you.

Mr Speaker: It is not like this!

Mr Ameer Meea: No, I have ...

Mr Speaker: Again and again! Very seasoned politician! Wait, wait! Let us enjoy talking! Very seasoned politician!

(Interruptions)

This is customary. You have a question; you raise your hand for a supplementary question.

Mr Ameer Meea: You were not looking at me!

Mr Speaker: Then I give you *la parole*.

Mr Ameer Meea: But you must look at me to see whether I am raising my hand.

Mr Speaker: No! Don't you worry! I know everything.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: So, allow me to have...

Mr Speaker: No! No! Now don't say 2 or 3. Put your first question! I have allowed you only one question. Put it, and then we will see the second.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very serious matter. This is a matter of huge public funds being involved. We are talking about 97 arpents of land, previously known as

Domaine Le Pailles, which were injected in this company since 2015, and today after 9 years, we are being told that only 4 villas have been sold. According to the reply given by the Minister, mention is being made that the 97 arpents was valued as a capital of approximately Rs500 m. whereas the promoter's capital in the company is Rs440 m. – if I have gotten the right figure from the hon. Minister.

So, can I ask the hon. Minister how is it that the Government invested 97 arpents to the tune of Rs500 m. which is market value to-date Rs2 billion for 97 arpents ; how come that Government is shareholder to only 30% in the joint-venture and the Chinese company is shareholder to the tune of 70% in the company? And as at today, I am shocked to hear that only 4 villas have been sold.

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, comme je l'ai dit, il y a aussi le fait qu'il y a 29 appartements et sur les 29 appartements, il y a déjà 12 acheteurs qui ont fait un dépôt s'élevant à 5%.

Pour revenir au capital, je l'ai souligné que Yihai devait mettre l'équivalent de 598 millions de roupies. Donc, ils n'ont pas libéré 158 millions de roupies jusqu'à présent et les 158 millions de roupies devraient être libérés dans ce *joint-venture*. C'est l'accord – le pacte – qu'il y a entre ces deux actionnaires.

Le pacte a été fait de telle sorte qu'à l'époque, la valeur était moins. Donc, c'est pour cela que c'était à 30 % et 70 %. C'est le pacte qu'il y a eu entre ces deux actionnaires et la *State Investment Corporation* a trouvé que c'était un bon investissement à faire.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Very specific?

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Straightforward for clarification.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister, would he agree with me that this is a very bad deal for the SIC and for the Government and for the people of Mauritius, who invested 97...

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Mr Ameer Meea: I have not finished.

Mr Speaker: No! No! You finished! Let the Minister reply!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, nous allons attendre à la fin des procédures pour attendre toutes les ventes, voir quelles vont être les profitabilités de ce projet par rapport à la *State Investment Corporation*. À ce moment-là, on pourra dire si c'est un bon deal ou non.

Merci.

Mr Speaker: Next Question.

GRNW VS MANGALKHAN SC MATCH – INJURED PLAYER – MEDICAL UNIT'S PRESENCE

(No. B/293) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the football match between Mangalkhan SC and Grand Rivière Noire West Coast (D2) played on Saturday 27 April 2024 at Germain Comarmond Stadium, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Football Association, information as to if a medical unit was present thereat and, if not, the reasons therefor.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would first of all like to wish a prompt recovery to the injured player during the football match between Mangalkhan SC and Grand Rivière Noire West Coast held on 27 April 2024. I am informed by the Mauritius Football Association (MFA) that there was no medical unit at the Stadium on that day despite the requirement for every football team playing at the National level to have its own medical team amongst one of its bench officials as per MFA rules of competition. In response to this situation,

I chaired a meeting with the General Secretary of the MFA, staff of my Ministry and the Director of the Mauritius Sports Council to ensure the non-recurrence of such an unfortunate situation.

It was agreed upon that the MFA would henceforth ensure that the checklist of the match commissioner is put into practice and a protocol would be worked out as a matter of urgency between the MFA and the Mauritius Sports Council to better define the respective roles and responsibilities before and during football matches.

Thank you.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, ce qui s'est passé le 27 avril dernier au stade Germain Comarmond est carrément scandaleux. Il est bon de le savoir lorsqu'un joueur s'est blessé, il a été transporté hors du terrain sur une table en plastique. Donc, le Ministre vient de nous dire qu'il a rencontré les officiels de la *MFA* par la suite, mais peut-on savoir si au préalable, avant cette rencontre, s'il avait au niveau de son ministère, si on avait émis des directives officielles aux fédérations nationales afin de s'assurer qu'une présence médicale avec des équipements appropriés soient disponibles sur le site de compétition ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, d'après la *Mauritius Football Association*, chaque équipe qui participe dans un tournoi au niveau national, chaque équipe doit s'assurer d'avoir un staff, une équipe médicale sur le lieu et ça c'est la responsabilité des clubs toujours d'après les règlements des compétitions de football d'après la *MFA*.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, quand il s'agit d'équipe médicale, il faudrait que le ministère des Sports fasse provision je pense et sollicite chaque fédération nationale de façon à ce que chaque gymnase ou stade soit doté d'équipements de premiers soins et dont une civière. De ce fait, est-ce que ce n'est pas le rôle du ministère de s'assurer dans un premier temps, vu les réticences, les délais, de s'assurer effectivement...

Mr Speaker: Okay, we got the gist of your question. Minister, please reply!

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, il est très malsain de vouloir jeter la pierre sur le ministère.

Mr Quirin: Je ne jette pas de pierre.

Mr Toussaint: Non ! Non ! Non ! Il est très malsain de vouloir jeter la pierre sur le ministère. Laissez-moi m'expliquer – le stade Germain Comarmond est équipé d'une civière. Dans le stade Germain Comarmond, je le redis, il y a une civière. Il y a aussi des *First Aid Kits* qui sont disponibles au niveau du stade. Si la *MFA*, si les clubs qui ont eu un souci de blessé et n'ont pas fait appel, n'ont pas fait la demande d'utiliser la civière ou autre équipement de premiers soins disponible au stade, cela ne peut pas être la faute du ministère.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**AFRICA & ASIA PACIFIC CHOIR GAMES 2025 – PROPOSED HOSTING –
FUNDS EARMARKED**

(No. B/294) **Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the proposed hosting of the Africa and Asia Pacific Choir Games 2025 in Mauritius at the Côte d'Or Stadium, he will state the amount of funds earmarked as subsidy therefor.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the proposed hosting Africa and Asia Pacific Choir Games 2025 in Mauritius, an amount of Rs11 million was earmarked in Financial Year 2022-2023. For the current financial year, an amount of Rs11 million has been earmarked.

Thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not asking about how much money was earmarked this year or last year. I am asking about the total amount. Now, I have it from documents here that the total investment participation of Government in the Choir Games will be to the tune of Rs141,823,500. Can the Minister confirm that? I am sure he must surely be aware of the total amount of contribution from Government.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I read the question of the hon. Member well, he asked me, I read again – “whether, in regard to the proposed hosting of the Africa and Asia Pacific Choir Games 2025 in Mauritius at the Côte d'Or Stadium, he will state the amount of funds earmarked as subsidy”. Funds earmarked! *Pas combien cela va coûter.*

Mr X. L. Duval: No, no, no, funds earmarked are Rs141 million. I am surprised that the Minister is not on top of his file. I'm going to ask the Minister....

Mr Toussaint: No, no, no, no...Sorry...

Mr X. L. Duval: I'm going to ask the Minister...

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: I am going to ask the Minister....

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't agree...

Mr X. L. Duval: I am going to ask the Minister...

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am replying. I am replying.

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Both of you! If there's anything, either on a point of order or clarification, you can raise the point.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am going to ask the Minister how can it be justified that in view of the sports federations being starved of funds that such a huge amount of money which the Minister himself is ashamed to tell us the amount, is being spent on the Choir Games – Rs141,823,500?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, comme je l'ai dit, l'honorable Membre fait complètement fausse route et il n'est pas question que je suis *on top of my file*. *I know my subject well*. Dans le budget de l'année dernière, une somme de R 11 millions avait été budgétée pour ce projet. Idem. Maintenant, ce n'est que maintenant que nous commençons à préparer et à voir quelles seront les dépenses qui viendront. Alors, on n'a rien dépensé encore par rapport à 100 millions, 200 millions, etc.

Mr X. L. Duval: Qui va dépenser...

Mr Toussaint: Laissez-moi répondre s'il vous plait. Laissez-moi répondre!

Mr X. L. Duval: Ah bon ! Chacun son tour !

Mr Toussaint: Et l'honorable Membre est en train de faire un amalgame entre les fédérations sportives, entre cette compétition de *Choir Games*. Écoutez, nous sommes là pour autant que possible, avoir une variété d'activités. Il n'y a pas que le sport, il y a aussi des compétitions internationales comme le *Choir Games*. Il y a d'autres compétitions. Il y a des compétitions locales qui, par exemple, à la fin de juin, il y aura une compétition de *A cappella*, une compétition de *Street Dance*. C'est un ministère varié pour les jeunes, les moins jeunes, les adultes, les *senior citizens* et il y va de soi que l'État, que le gouvernement, que notre Premier ministre nous donne le loisir d'investir pour toute la population et pour toutes les catégories de personnes de la République de Maurice.

Mr X. L. Duval: Combien de...

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs141 million; three questions!

SPORTS & RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES –VULNERABLE PERSONS’ PARTICIPATION – INCENTIVES

(No. B/296) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to sports and recreational activities for vulnerable persons, he will state the activities and/or incentives offered by his Ministry to facilitate participation thereto.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Youth Empowerment Section of my Ministry caters for a specific programme targeted towards the empowerment of young people aged between 14 to 25 years.

The Sports Section – *voilà la variété* – of my Ministry develops programmes in the field of sports and mostly, high-level sports. Since November 2019, my Ministry was entrusted with a new responsibility for recreation and this new sector provided an opportunity to realign the strategic objectives and programmes of my Ministry into a coherent manner to offer programmes to all the population of the Republic of Mauritius.

Recreation enables us to create a link between the Youth Empowerment and the Sports Section and to cater for activities for the enhancement of physical, social and mental well-being of all individuals as well as vulnerable persons.

The House may wish to note that my Ministry as well as the Mauritius Sports Council and the Mauritius Recreation Council are fully engaged in offering activities and incentives to facilitate sports and recreational activities for vulnerable persons.

My Ministry organises programmes at national level for vulnerable youth. These programmes include –

- Special Youth Outreach Programme;
- *Carrefour des jeunes*;
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme for youth in special education needs;
- *Promotion de la boxe éducative*, and
- The National Youth Civic Service Training for all young people, among others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to the Youth Empowerment Programmes, the Mauritius Recreation Council, which is the organisation responsible for the promotion and organisation of recreational activities for all, organises major activities in the different outdoor education and recreation centres. Disabled persons had also the opportunity to enjoy water sports activities that are being carried out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a list of activities organised for all, including vulnerable youth, by my Ministry and by the councils operating under the aegis of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker: Yes, please!

Ms Tour: Merci, M. le président. L'honorable ministre, peut-il nous informer des moyens de communication à travers lesquels les différents groupes dont il a fait mention sont informés des différentes activités sportives ou récréatives mises à leur disposition ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, il y a tout d'abord un travail de terrain qui est fait par les officiers du cadre jeunesse de mon ministère, par les différents *coaches* sous le Département des sports du ministère, par les différents animateurs du *Mauritius Sports Council*, par les animateurs du *National Youth Council*, par les animateurs du *Mauritius Recreation Council* qui sont en contact direct avec la population, mais surtout avec les jeunes vivants des conditions difficiles. Et puis, bien sûr, tous nos programmes sont disponibles sur les différents réseaux sociaux et les plateformes digitales.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MAURITIUS-INDIA – DOUBLE TAXATION AVOIDANCE CONVENTION PROTOCOL

(No. B/297) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the protocol amending the convention between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of Mauritius for the avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and capital gains signed on 07 March 2024, he will state if –

- (a) any study has been carried out on the likely impact thereof on the global business sector of Mauritius, and
- (b) consultations were held with relevant stakeholders prior to the signature thereof.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, un protocole modifiant la *Double Taxation Avoidance Convention*, dite *DTAC*, entre Maurice et l'Inde a été signé le 7 mars 2024, mais n'a pas encore été ratifié et n'est donc pas entré en vigueur.

L'objectif du protocole est de rendre la *DTAC* conforme aux normes minimales de l'OCDE en matière d'érosion de la base d'imposition et de transfert de bénéfices, appelé BEPS.

À la lumière des défis sans cesse croissants auxquels est confronté le secteur du *Global Business*, le gouvernement s'est engagé à assurer la conformité avec les meilleures normes et standards internationaux.

Comme le sait l'honorable membre, pour être considérés comme coopératifs à des fins fiscales par l'Union européenne et l'OCDE, les pays sont évalués sur la base de trois critères, à savoir la transparence fiscale, l'imposition équitable et les mesures anti-BEPS.

Depuis 2017, Maurice a apporté plusieurs réformes d'envergure pour s'assurer que nos régimes de taxation, incluant ceux s'appliquant au secteur des services financiers, soient conformes à ces trois critères.

Au regard du BEPS, les juridictions sont tenues de s'engager à mettre en œuvre les normes minimales anti-BEPS de l'OCDE, qui concernent les pratiques fiscales dommageables, la déclaration pays par pays, la résolution des différends et le chalandage fiscal.

La norme minimale relative au chalandage fiscal exige des juridictions qu'elles incluent deux éléments dans leurs traités fiscaux, à savoir une déclaration explicite sur la non double imposition et l'une des trois méthodes permettant de remédier au chalandage fiscal.

Les conventions fiscales conclues par un pays peuvent être modifiées collectivement par le biais d'une convention connue sous le nom de MLI, *Multilateral Instrument*, ou individuellement par le biais de négociations bilatérales. Maurice a signé le MLI le 5 juillet 2017.

À la suite des consultations avec les parties prenantes concernées du secteur des services financiers, tant publiques que privées, Maurice n'a pas inclus la *DTAC* Maurice-Inde dans le champ d'application de la MLI, mais a plutôt décidé de mener des négociations bilatérales avec l'Inde.

M. le président, la *DTAC* Maurice-Inde est entrée en vigueur en juin 1985 et a été modifiée par un premier protocole le 19 juillet 2016.

L'une des principales modifications consistait à conférer à l'Inde les droits d'imposition sur les gains provenant de la vente d'actions acquises par une société mauricienne dans une société résidente indienne.

Toutefois, une disposition transitoire a été convenue pour les actions acquises avant avril 2017, en vertu de laquelle le droit d'imposition de Maurice a été maintenu.

Des négociations visant à rendre la *DTAC* Maurice-Inde conforme aux normes minimales BEPS de l'OCDE ont été menées et conclues en mars 2022. Le protocole signé le 7 mars 2024 comprend des dispositions similaires à celles adoptées dans l'IML.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, comme je l'ai expliqué, avec l'adoption de normes minimales du BEPS par les différents pays, il n'y aura pas d'impact important sur notre secteur en raison de nouvelles conditions de concurrence équitables au niveau international.

Le MLI a déjà introduit ces normes dans 21 de nos traités fiscaux. De même, de nombreux autres centres financiers internationaux, tels que le Luxembourg, les Émirats arabes unis, Singapour et Chypre, ont déjà intégré les normes minimales du BEPS dans leurs conventions fiscales avec l'Inde.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, je souhaite souligner que tant que le protocole n'est pas ratifié par les deux gouvernements, les discussions restent confidentielles et qu'à ce stade, il est difficile de divulguer des informations spécifiques aux parties prenantes.

Nous avons donc l'intention de poursuivre les discussions avec le gouvernement indien afin de clarifier la portée et le calendrier des modifications apportées à la *DTAC* pour se conformer aux normes minimales du BEPS de l'OCDE.

Soyez assurés que nous continuerons de fournir aux investisseurs étrangers la certitude et une stabilité qui ont fait la réussite de Maurice comme centre financier international. Merci.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister of Finance just mentioned BEPS and the European Union. Is the hon. Minister aware that after the OECD published its recommendations for BEPS, there was a case in the European Union Court of Justice, and the European Commission, as far back as 2016, has recommended that its Member States modify the Principal Purpose Test to exclude cases which reflect, and I quote, “a genuine economic activity”?

So, my question to the hon. Minister of Finance is: why is it that in the protocol we have not carved out genuine economic activities from the purview of that article, as recommended by the European Union?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, on est en train de parler d'une négociation entre Maurice et l'Inde actuellement. On est en train de négocier, comme je l'ai dit, de discuter avec l'Inde par rapport à la *DTAC*. Donc, pour revenir à l'accord avec l'Union européenne, cela a déjà été fait. L'Union européenne a fixé les règles ; l'OCDE a fixé les règles. Nous sommes en train, maintenant, de négocier, et de discuter bilatéralement avec l'Inde. On avait exclu l'accord Maurice-Inde de l'accord *MLI*. Donc, c'est pour cela qu'on continue de travailler directement avec l'Inde.

Mr Speaker: But specific on Mauritius and India.

Mr Uteem: Yes, very specific. Yes, the treaty between Mauritius and India. The coming into force of this protocol is causing a lot of concern amongst global business companies because the protocol provides that it is going to come into effect irrespective of the date, the tax rise or the assessment year. So, effectively, this protocol will have retrospective effect. So, may I ask the hon. Minister of Finance to reassure the Global Business Sector that this protocol is forward-looking and will not apply retrospectively to past transactions?

Mr Speaker: So, this is a request!

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, c'est pour cela que j'ai dit depuis le départ que ce sont des discussions avec les autorités indiennes qui sont confidentielles, bien sûr qu'on est en train de voir toutes les implications sur le secteur global. En tant que ministre des Finances, je n'ai pas envie de me retrouver avec un secteur global qui se retrouve affaibli. Donc, nous sommes en train de travailler dessus.

Nous sommes en train de voir d'un côté le respect des normes et des standards internationaux, et de l'autre côté, comme on peut discuter directement avec l'Inde, on est en train de discuter directement avec l'Inde pour préserver les atouts de ce secteur. Donc, oui, on fera en sorte qu'on puisse maintenir cette compétitivité et préserver le secteur global.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MBC – ONLINE COURSES – CONTENT UPDATE

(No. B/298) 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 online courses delivered to students through the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, she will state when the content thereof was last updated.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that online classes are delivered to students on Microsoft Teams and other platforms as deemed appropriate by educators. The Student Support Portal is a digital repository of lessons for students of Grades 7 to 9 based on their respective syllabuses. Students can accede to these lessons anytime and anywhere at <https://ssp.moemu.org/>.

For the primary sector, remote teaching is done through lessons broadcast on the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation TV for the benefit of students. The videos which are currently being broadcast during temporary school closures were last provided to the MBC in December 2023 and are based on the National Curriculum Framework. As for updating the content, it is not required since the curriculum has not been reviewed. Further, all video lessons are vetted and approved by pedagogical inspectors of my Ministry prior to their broadcast.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci. La ministre est-elle au courant que le 22 avril dernier les cours diffusés à la MBC ont été les mêmes que ceux diffusés l'avant-dernière fois et que cela a causé une confusion énorme parmi les étudiants et les parents ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: M. le président, je présume que nous sommes tous là très conscients du fait qu'à chaque fois qu'il y a la fermeture des écoles dû au mauvais temps, les enseignants et l'inspectorat font de sorte à ce que les sujets et les thèmes sont disponibles au niveau de la MBC à travers les vidéos mais on est tous aussi conscient que différentes écoles ont différents *pace of learning* et de ce fait, c'est assez difficile pour qu'on puisse servir les cours d'après les besoins de chaque école. Nous avons 257 écoles primaires et forcément, ils ne peuvent pas tous être au même niveau et très souvent, il y a besoin après une session de revenir sur la session. Dans l'enseignement, on parle toujours de récapitulation et cela se fait.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Merci. La ministre est-elle au courant qu'il y avait également le 22 avril une confusion concernant les horaires de ces cours et qu'il est nécessaire de mettre en place un moyen de communication efficace envers ceux concernés ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: M. le président, nous avons déjà un calendrier qui est établi et la MBC agit et donne les informations en temps et lieu, mais il faut aussi comprendre que si un beau matin, à quatre heures du matin, on apprend qu'il y aura fermeture des écoles, on fait le maximum pour assurer qu'il y a continuité et que les élèves restent connectés aux enseignants et à l'école et aux études mais bien sûr ce n'est pas l'idéal. Nous sommes tous conscients de cela mais il est important d'assurer une continuité et que les élèves soient en train de suivre des cours. Bien sûr, une fois de retour à l'école, les enseignants feront le nécessaire.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**STEERING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOWARDS GLOBAL GOOD,
FASTER REALISATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – UN GENERAL
ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION**

(No. B/299) **Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the adoption of a resolution proposed by the United States and cosponsored by China on Steering Artificial Intelligence (AI) towards Global Good, Faster Realisation of Sustainable Development by the United Nations General Assembly on 21 March 2024, he will state if Mauritius –

- (a) voted in favour thereof, and
- (b) was informed that US officials proposed to announce a bilateral dialogue aiming to manage the risk and safety challenges posed by advanced forms of AI.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the United States circulated a draft resolution in December 2023 on 'The overarching principles that should govern digital technologies and the development of artificial intelligence'. The US draft resolution was the subject of intense discussions and negotiations. Agreement on the final draft was reached only shortly before action was taken at the General Assembly on 21 March of this year.

So, therefore, on that date of 21 March 2024, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the revised resolution proposed by the United States entitled ‘Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy Artificial Intelligence Systems for sustainable development’. The reference is A/RES/78/265.

The said resolution – with regard to part (a) of the question, – Mr Speaker, Sir, was adopted by consensus; therefore, there was no vote.

As regards, part (b) of the question, I am not aware of any direct bilateral dialogue on the specific subject, I quote –

“Aiming to manage the risk and safety challenges posed by advanced forms of AI”

However, I am informed that our mission in Washington DC participated in a panel discussion on Artificial Intelligence organised by the United States State Department with US Government Officials and private sector representatives on 06 March of this year to discuss various uses of AI and how it presented both opportunities and challenges for the International Community. At that meeting, the United States side also informed about the UN draft resolution that was then under preparation.

I can also inform the House that the United States State Department conducted a briefing for a select group of African Countries including Mauritius on 20 December 2023 on ‘Awareness of the growing cybersecurity threats and challenges’.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can also inform the House that discussions are ongoing in various bodies of the United Nations such as the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the International Telecommunications Union on the multiple aspects of artificial intelligence and my Ministry is closely following developments along with the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

TRAINEE DOCTORS – MEDICAL TRAINING APPRENTICESHIP – EXAMINATIONS

(No. B/300) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to trainee doctors, he will –

- (a) give a list thereof having completed their medical training apprenticeship and awaiting examinations conducted by the Medical Council, and
- (b) state when –
 - (i) the last examinations were conducted, and
 - (ii) the next one is expected to be held.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Medical Council of Mauritius that there are presently 89 candidates awaiting the next Medical Registration Examinations.

I am further informed that out of the 89 candidates, 51 candidates have already attempted the examinations once or more than once.

Of the 51 candidates –

- 8 candidates had 1 attempt;
- 11 candidates had 2 attempts;
- 28 candidates had 3 attempts;
- 2 candidates had 5 attempts;
- 1 candidate had 6 attempts, and
- 1 candidate had 10 attempts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the period September 2023 to date, 38 new applications for registration and participation in the Medical Registration Examinations were received by the Medical Council.

Of the 38 applications –

- 4 applications were received in November 2023;
- 3 applications were received in December 2023;

- 25 applications were received in February 2024;
- 4 applications were received in March 2024, and
- 2 applications were received in May 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the last examinations were held on 06 September 2023. It is anticipated that the next Medical Registration Examinations would be held in July/August 2024 following signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the National Board of Examinations, India.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Minister, a trainee doctor or trainee doctors have to wait up to 1 year to participate in the exams. Will you consider requesting the Medical Council to carry out the exams on a quarterly basis or simply review their methodology by conducting the exams immediately after the internship?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as per the provision of the Medical Council Act, an examination should be conducted and the Medical Council does not have the capacity to do the examination locally. At the same time, this examination has been held since 2013. Since the Minister of Health introduced this examination, it has been carried out perfectly with this Board of Examination and personally, I do not think that we have to change this rule of the game.

We have to continue carrying on this examination with the same examination body. Now, at the same time, as I said earlier the applications are being received throughout the year, in different months and it will not be possible for the medical registration examination from India to conduct the examination as soon as possible.

There is the cost implication. There is also the availability of this Examination Board to conduct the examination. So, this time, why do they have to wait for one year? Just briefly to mention that once the MoU expired in September 2023 and since that time, the Ministry has been engaging for the examination and looking for different clearances from the Medical Council itself, from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, from Dental Council and from the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and what is also more important is that the Ministry is still awaiting the final approval from the Ministry of Health and Welfare, India, and the bilateral clearance from the Ministry of Foreign affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. So, we need to have all these clearances before conducting the examination.

I understand that these candidates, who are awaiting the examination, need to do it as early as possible. I am totally agreeable with the hon. Member on this point but we are trying to do everything so that we can organise this examination in July or August.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

RODRIGUES IN-PATIENTS – TREATMENT IN MAURITIUS – FAST TRACKING SYSTEM

(No. B/301) Mr J.B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to inpatients referred from Rodrigues by specialists for further treatment in Mauritius, he will state the reasons as to why these patients have to go through the normal process instead of being referred directly as inpatient, indicating if consideration will be given for a fast tracking system for such type of referral.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that whenever an in-patient is referred from Rodrigues to Mauritius for further treatment, the following established procedure is followed –

- The treating Specialist and the Nursing Administrator from Rodrigues liaise with their respective counterparts from the concerned Regional Hospital.
- The clinical presentation and any other pertinent details of the patient to be transferred are discussed.
- A referral form is filled-in by the treating Specialist and is approved by the Health Director for the transfer.
- The case is referred to the social worker's office for booking of air tickets.
- Depending on the condition and requirements of the patient, a Medical Doctor and/or Nursing Officer is delegated to accompany the patient to Mauritius.
- Arrangements are made for the provision of an ambulance for the patient upon arrival to Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the accompanying Medical or Nursing Officer has to perform a proper handing over to the Medical and Health Officer of the Casualty Unit to ensure that all relevant clinical information have been provided in respect of the patient. The referred patients are then reviewed by the Medical and Health Officers prior to admission. Depending on availability of beds, preliminary investigations required and clinical presentation arrangements are made accordingly for the admission to respective wards.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Léopold, go ahead!

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister why the handing over is not done especially when there are patients from Mauritius who are referred from Specialists to Specialists why are they not done in the ward instead?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, firstly, this patient has to be registered at the Records Office of the Accident and Emergency and secondly, a patient being transferred from the time of transfer that is from the time of leaving the hospital in Rodrigues to the time with the flight time and so on, by the time the patient reaches Mauritius, it is very important to do a review, a reassessment of this patient and the accident and emergency. Otherwise, it has happened in some cases where patients have been transferred into a ward and there are other issues that have come up because it may take 3-4 or 5 hours between the last time this patient was examined by the doctor.

So, we need to fast-track this part. We have to understand that after a flight, we need to fast-track the cases of these patients but at one point in time, we also have to understand that it is not possible to reserve beds for these patients. So, for patients undergoing the procedures being done at the Accident and Emergency level, after reaching this department, the records officer may give the exact ward where this patient can be admitted.

Mr Léopold: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he will be able to establish a fast track system, not only for patients from Rodrigues to Mauritius but also for patients in the mainland island from hospital to hospital when being referred by Specialists?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think especially for critical patients, we need to establish a fast-track basis. So that will be considered. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

ANNUAL PROCUREMENT – IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTRACTS

(No.B/302) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the annual procurement of goods and services, capital works and major contracts for Zones Directorates, she will state the measures taken to ensure timely implementation of the contracts thereof.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes. B/302 and I will have supplementary question.

Mr Speaker: This is not the way! This is not the way! Remember you spoke against me.

(Interruptions)

Go and see yourself in the video.

Mr Ameer Meea: I have the right.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: And our friend, hon. Juman there.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the house that at the level of the Zones, there are officers of the Procurement and the Supply cadre, technical officers as well as Inspectors of works who have the responsibility to ensure effective and timely implementation of procurement exercises and contract management respectively as per guidelines issued by the Ministry.

Regular meetings are held by the Chief Technical Officer of the Ministry with zonal directorates during which issues pertaining to procurement and implementation of projects are also considered.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to major contracts such as infrastructural works, the Infrastructure Management Unit of my Ministry, together with technical staff from the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, carry out site visits. Project monitoring meetings are held on a monthly basis under the Chair of the Permanent Secretary of the Infrastructure Management Unit of my Ministry.

Cluster meetings are also held at the MNICD on a monthly basis to discuss issues identified during site visits to follow up on progress of works and to ensure timely completion of these projects.

A dashboard has now been devised at the level of the Ministry to monitor infrastructural projects. I wish to draw the attention of the House that the MNICD also has a dashboard monitoring all government projects including those of my Ministry.

As for the services such as watch and security services in schools, suppliers of enhanced meals and hot meals for ZEP schools, monitoring is carried out by the Procurement Section of my Ministry in junction with zonal directorates.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, procurement and supply management by the CSD of the Ministry of Education has been criticised by the Director of Audit in his last Audit Report. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister why is it that bids which were cancelled in the financial years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 were not even finalised in 2023?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, for all the bid documents, we have to go back to the MNICD and it is there that the bid documents are reviewed. With the number of projects being carried out by the MNICD, we often have to wait for quite some time.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, State Secondary Schools, according to the Audit Report, have not received any supply of chemicals for both Biology and Chemistry laboratories for more than 3 years. In the absence of fresh chemicals, according to the Audit Report, expired non-hazardous chemicals were being used in schools for practical classes and laboratories. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister if she is aware of the situation and what has been done to remedy the situation?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I remind the House that for almost a full year, the school was not run and some of the products were, in fact, expired. However, actions were taken by the different departments to make sure that the supplies were renewed and that we had them. It is not really true to say that they had to use expired products.

Mr Ameer Meea: The Report!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The Audit Report depends on the fact that people go and see what is on the shelves. Now, there have been some of the expired products which were left on the shelves. As soon as the Ministry became aware of it, actions were taken to get all these removed.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

RUISSEAU DU POUCE, TRANQUEBAR – HEAVY RAINFALL – COLLAPSED HOUSES

(No. B/303) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the houses which collapsed during the heavy downpour of Sunday 21 April 2024 along Ruisseau du Pouce in Tranquebar, he will state if an inquiry has been initiated by his Ministry in order to situate the responsibilities thereof and, if so, indicate the findings thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to the Private Notice Question of 23 April 2024, I highlighted that my Ministry had set up an Independent Committee to investigate the whole matter regarding the incident which occurred at Tranquebar on 21 April 2024, following which a house had collapsed and affecting two adjoining houses.

Currently, the investigation is ongoing and it is premature at this stage, for me, to give any detail thereon. Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. That was two weeks ago! In regard to the collapsed properties, not only there was an email from me which the Leader of the Opposition had tabled dated 15 March 2024, but, in fact, there was a letter from the very contractor, EDCC Ltd, which is implementing the works. It had notified the NDU in a letter dated 01 April 2024 that the increase in water level in the channel, that is, Ruisseau du Pouce will inevitably cause the poor field material to be washed off and thus endanger the stability of these properties, which eventually happened on 21 April 2024. I am going to table the letter for the attention of the Minister.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I come back to the same thing. There is an inquiry going on! I know that the Opposition might think otherwise, but we have very competent public servants working at the Ministry, for whom we have a lot of respect. Just like we have a lot of respect for the Acting Clerk! So, let my officers do their work. They will come up with a report and then we will eventually table it.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Short question! Specific clarification!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the same officers that he is referring to – I was once an officer of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure – so, they will enquire on themselves? Being given that the letter has clearly specified that they were notified of the dangers! Can the hon. Minister state to the House whether this is proper?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is judging without even knowing! The investigation team is led by an engineer from the RDA – the Deputy GM of the RDA, which has nothing to do with the NDU. In that team, you have other engineers that form part of the MNI Department. We have two Ministries; one is the NDU and the other one is the National Infrastructure. So, it is the National Infrastructure which is enquiring.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

BARKLY, CORNEILLE STREET – MINISTRY OFFICES – COLLAPSED BOUNDARY WALL

(No. B/304) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the concrete wall fencing the offices of her Ministry at Corneille Street in Barkly which fell down during the passage of cyclone Belal on 15 January 2024, she will state if she has taken cognizance of a letter of complaint dated 19 February 2024 from the inhabitants, addressed to the National Development Unit and copied to her Ministry and, if so, if same has been given due consideration, indicating –

- (a) the works undertaken as at date;
- (b) if any meeting has been held with the inhabitants and all authorities concerned therewith, and
- (c) when same will be rebuilt and by whom and, if not, why not.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Education Directorate of Zone 2 of my Ministry received copies of two letters dated 19 February 2024 from inhabitants of Corneille Street at Barkly addressed to the National Development Unit

and the Land Drainage Authority. In their letters, the inhabitants requested amongst others for the pulling down of the remaining wall at Corneille Street and the reconstruction of a new one.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following the passage of cyclone Belal on 15 January 2024, part of the boundary wall delimiting a plot of land vested in my Ministry collapsed. On 19 January 2024, a site visit was carried out by officers of my Ministry and representatives of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill. As an immediate measure, my Ministry has, on 20 January 2024, carried out the pulling down and carting away of the stretch of collapsed wall.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that a site visit led by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose-Hill was carried out on 06 February 2024. Representatives of my Ministry attended the site visit and I am informed that the representatives of *force vives* of Barkly were also present.

As for part (c) of the question, I am informed that the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, on 04 March 2024, carried out a structural investigation of the boundary wall at Corneille Street and subsequently has proposed the following works –

- careful and partial demolition of the existing boundary wall up to a height of 300 mm above the ground;
- provision of new supporting pillars at intervals of 2.5 to 3 metres along the existing wall, and
- the fixing of chain link fencing to prevent intrusion.

My Ministry has already conveyed approval to the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development for works to be implemented under its framework agreement.

I am informed that the works are expected to start in mid-June 2024 and will end by September 2024.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre n'est pas sans savoir que l'écroulement partiel de ce mur cause un énorme problème aux habitants de la Rue Corneille à Barkly et lors des pluies torrentielles du 22 avril dernier, toutes les maisons s'y trouvant ont été à nouveau inondées. Je viens d'écouter l'honorable ministre qui nous a fait part d'un plan de travail qui sera implémenté ; à partir de quand nous ne le savons pas. Ce que je demande à la ministre ...

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, mid-June and it will end in September 2024.

Mr Quirin: Je n'avais pas pris note de ce fait. Donc, peut-on savoir, madame la ministre, si les habitants de cette rue ont été informés de ce plan de travail ou par votre ministère, bien sûr, ou par le ministère des Infrastructures publiques ? Est-ce qu'ils ont été informés et est-ce qu'il y a eu un comité de coordination qui a été mis en place ?

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Education was concerned because the boundary wall had, in fact, collapsed. During the site visit, in the presence of the *force vives* and a site visit led by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose-Hill, we understood that there was a need to remove – in fact, we had already removed all the demolished walls. What we were asked to do, we took the advice of the MNICD and we were told that we would need to pull down the wall up to a level of 300 mm from the ground and to add support pillars and fence the area and this is being done; I have just given the dates. Now, it is from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin Rose-Hill to liaise with the inhabitants. We have informed the authorities, and this is what is being done.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, une dernière question : doit-on déduire que, je ne le souhaite pas, mais si entre-temps avant le début des travaux, des pluies diluviennes reviennent et qu'il y a une inondation à nouveau, est-ce que les habitants de cette rue-là auront à subir une fois encore tout ce calvaire qu'ils subissent depuis janvier.

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply.

Mr Quirin: Oui.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: M. le président, je voudrais demander à l'honorable membre : quelle serait la solution ? Parce que nous avons pris...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait! Wait. You cannot request...

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Je n'ai pas terminé. Nous avons pris les mesures qu'il fallait ; nous avons pris l'avis des ingénieurs du ministère des Infrastructures publiques et nous avons déjà octroyé, en fin, on a déjà donné l'aval au ministère pour que les contracteurs *through* le *Framework Agreement* fassent le travail. Bien sûr, il y a quand même la prise du site qu'il nous faut prendre en considération et débiter les travaux. Il faut quand même leur donner ce temps-là. S'il y a pluies diluviennes d'ici demain mais cela peut se produire n'importe où, est-ce qu'on va demander à chaque personne habitant une région de trouver des solutions parce qu'il y a des inondations. Ce que nous sommes en train de faire, nous autres, nous avons pris connaissance de l'état des lieux et nous sommes maintenant en train de prendre les actions qui sont demandées.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

FLOOD PRONE AREAS – HIGH RISK HOUSES – SURVEY

(No. B/305) 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 dwelling houses situated in flood prone areas, he will state if any survey has been carried out to identify the number thereof found unfit for human habitation and, if so, indicate the

—

- (a) number and location thereof, and
- (b) measures taken to –
 - (i) relocate, and
 - (ii) compensate owners and occupiers thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I will reply to PQ B/305. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Land Drainage Authority that 306 flood-prone areas and 58 high-risk flood-prone areas have been identified in Mauritius. I am also informed that no survey has been carried out so far with regard to the number of residential houses found in the flood prone areas or high-risk flood-prone areas which are not fit for dwelling.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the identification of flood prone areas started upon the setting up of the LDA in 2017. At that time, many of houses in the flood prone areas had already been constructed. On the other hand, Government has initiated flood mitigation measures by implementing several major drain projects in high risk flood prone areas, some of which have already been completed such as those at Fond du Sac, Cottage amongst others. As per LDA, there are 1742 projects earmarked under the National Flood Management Programme for a duration of three financial years for a total budget of Rs11.7 billion to be implemented by the National Development Unit, Road Development Authority, Drain Infrastructure Construction Ltd. and the local authorities.

As of the end of April 2024, 544 drain projects have been successfully completed for a total value of Rs3.68 billion. The status of the remaining projects is as follows –

- 923 at design stage;
- 108 at construction stage;
- 150 at tender stage, and
- 17 at land acquisition stage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard to part (b) of the question, I am proposing to set up a technical committee with different stakeholders to look into the relocation and compensation, if any.

I wish to add that, following the torrential rainfall event of 21 April 2024, with regard to the relocation of vulnerable families whose houses have been found to be unfit for use as dwelling, my Ministry has been informed by the LDA that relocation of families have been recommended, so far, namely at –

- downstream at Monseigneur Leen Avenue at La Butte, 4 houses are concerned.
- the region of Tranquebar, along Ruisseau du Pouce, 7 houses are concerned.

In this context, the LDA has written to the Municipal City Council of Port-Louis on 29 April 2024 to initiate necessary actions in consultation with the relevant authorities for the relocation of these 11 families as their houses are exposed to the risk of severe inundation and structural damage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I chaired a meeting personally on 30 April 2024 at the level of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre with relevant stakeholders including Geotechnical Unit, National Development Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, Valuation Department of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, Special Mobile Force, Municipal City Council of Port-Louis, LDA, the Mauritius Police Force and the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity in relation to these vulnerable houses. The following decisions were reached –

- a) The Municipal City Council of Port-Louis would issue notice to the concerned families to vacate the affected houses immediately.
- b) The Valuation Department would work out rental value for the affected families.
- c) The Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and the MNICD would conduct land and structure evaluation, respectively.
- d) Consideration would be given for a rental allowance for a maximum of 2 years, and
- e) Geotechnical Unit and National Infrastructure Division of the MNICD, National Development Unit, Land Drainage Authority and the Municipal City Council of Port-Louis under the lead of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Center would conduct a site visit urgently for remedial action.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to assure the House that we are following the matter closely. Thank you.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am a little bit confused by the answer of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister because in the same answer, he said that there is no survey that has been carried out to identify the number of dwelling houses in flood-prone areas which is at risk and in the same answer he said that there are 4 houses in La Butte and 7 houses along Ruisseau du Pouce. So, is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister telling the House today that there are only 11 houses to-date that are at risk if tomorrow there is flooding, to be unfit for habilitation.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I meant is that – I mentioned it at the very beginning – there are 306 flood prone areas and 58 high risk flood prone areas identified in Mauritius. We

have not gone to all these places to identify high risk houses. We have not done that yet, that is what I meant; but after the flood recently, we have identified those at Tranquebar and Mère Barthélemy; we have identified these houses, but we have not done a survey across the island that was what I meant.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned a technical committee that has been set up and the recommendation made to pay the rental for these 11 houses. So, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister when will this measure be implemented?

Dr. Husnoo: We are still in discussion with the different house owners, Mr Speaker, Sir, some of them actually – even the houses that we feel are severely affected – do not want to move, some of them have gone to their families, or are staying at different places. So, a lot of discussion is still going on, Mr Speaker, Sir.

OLD MOKA ROAD & ST JEAN CEMETRY FLOODING – URGENT DRAIN WORKS

(No. B/306) Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of urgent drain works along Old Moka Road in order to alleviate flooding of St Jean Cemetery and adjoining areas, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that on 29 November 2023, four Works Orders amounting to some Rs70 m., inclusive of VAT, were issued under the Framework Agreement of the Road Development Authority to Gamma Construction Ltd to undertake the drain works over a stretch of 800 metres along Old Moka Road up to Riviere Sèche, located near the MCB building. The scope of works comprises the construction of –

- (i) drains of 2 metres wide and 1.5 metres deep from St Jean A8 Road, crossing A1 along Motorway M1 and up to Riviere Sèche;
- (ii) drains of width of 2 metres and depth of 2 metres from the crossing at A1 to connect to the Motorway M1 along the green area;
- (iii) buried drains of width of 2 metres and a depth of 2 metres from the retaining structure to the crossing at A1, and

- (iv) a raised retaining wall along Old Moka Road.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member will appreciate that St Jean is a densely populated area with an extensive network of buried services in that region. Accordingly, appropriate measures are being taken to prevent any inconvenience pertaining to existing services to the inhabitants thereat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that trial pits were carried out to identify underground services prior to starting the drain works. Consequently, the relocation of the following services would need to be carried out –

- a) CWA waterlines;
- b) Emtel line;
- c) Mauritius Telecom lines, and
- d) CEB services.

Moreover, sewer lines have to be realigned.

As at date, the relocation of Emtel line has been completed while that of the CWA is ongoing. The proposed diversion scheme with regard to the realignment of the sewer lines is under consideration by the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA). The relocations of Mauritius Telecom lines and CEB services are expected to start by the end of May 2024, once the necessary clearances are obtained from the remaining service providers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that the relocation works are major in nature and time consuming as well. In this respect, the NDU is also looking into the possibility of diverting the excess water accumulation at Old Moka Road into Rivière Sèche through a temporary swale or drain system in the event that the project would not be completed by the next rainy season.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the precasting of drains are being done currently on the premises of the Contractor and drain works are expected to start on site by the end of July 2024 for completion by January 2025.

It is noteworthy that the construction of the wall at St Jean Cemetery has already been completed by the National Infrastructure Division and has proven to be effective during the heavy rainfall on 21 April 2024.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: The Minister will surely appreciate that the accumulation of water causes the drains to overflow in Belle Rose – considerably flooding the houses, so, it is very urgent. Now, January 2025 is right in the middle of the next rainy season, with cyclones, etc. as from November. So, what is being proposed in terms of temporary arrangements and when will these be completed?

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, this is what I have said. At the level of the NDU, we have already worked on a Plan B in case we have more delays happening here. So, there will be a swale that will be dug to take the water further down up to Rivière Sèche. So, maybe if the ex-Leader of the Opposition wants to have a private meeting, we can *koz koze* and explain to you.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am not into private meetings.

Mr Toussaint: *Zoli linvasion!*

Mr Speaker: So, time...

Mr X. L. Duval: Just one question...

Mr Speaker: Specific!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, it's specific.

Mr Speaker: Clarify!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: January 2025 is right in the middle of the next rainy season. So, isn't it urgent that temporary measures are taken to deal with the situation before the next cyclone season?

Mr Hurreeram: Obviously, Mr Speaker, Sir. The works are supposed to start in July this year. If, when we come to July, which is right in the middle of the winter season, and we see, we forecast that we will not be able to complete by November and December, we will immediately activate the Plan B.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/308, B/311, B/312, B/313, and B/314 have been withdrawn.

Time over! We move to Motion.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Merchant Shipping (Liability and Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage) Bill (No. II of 2024) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE ENVIRONMENT BILL

(NO. I OF 2024)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Environment Bill (No. I of 2024).

Question again proposed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Léopold!

(4.38 p.m.)

Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, by looking at the context of this Environment Bill, I can tell that the officials and the hon. Minister Ramano have worked tirelessly to bring forward all the requirements that our country needed to tackle all the environment issues, in a holistic approach, of what our country can face, that is, for example –

- Threat to our biodiversity;
- Threat to our air and water quality, and
- Deviation to our sustainable trajectory.

This Bill, therefore, is packed with positive measures which will enable Government and other partners to have their requirable requisites to act and address challenges.

This comprehensive Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, will require us to debate it, passionately, because it is dealing with the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we consume, the ecosystem we live in, where we are all interdependent on, that is, plants and animals, which are very important for the maintenance of a balanced environment.

This Bill is about our health, our well-being and our existence. This Bill provides for mainstreaming of sustainable development and integration. This provision will give Government and other stakeholders the required framework to include all relevant environmental issues into Government development planning.

The present time that we are living in, with climate uncertainty and we are experiencing as frequent as one will imagine adverse weather conditions, therefore, it is high time that our Republic has its sustainable agenda regarding climate change issues, as established by the United Nations for reviewing and formulating pragmatic proposals to deal with environment and development issues.

What has been happening in our country recently is unpredictable weather conditions, more specifically torrential rain and flash floods, we all know who are the ones more prone to ecological catastrophes. Therefore, it is high time for the Government to come up with such an important policy, a policy which will always meet the needs of this present generation but having the obligation to give future generations all the chances and means to meet their own needs.

This is what mainstreaming of sustainable development is all about. It is about setting long-term goals for present and future generations to meet their basic needs and maintain the opportunity throughout for the fulfilment of one and all for a better life.

Environmental mainstreaming, through this Bill, will allow Government to identify development challenges including emergency climate change challenges so that an integrated response be developed.

The tackling of environmental issues by this Bill has a direct impact on our health. Taking one example of environmental issues such as pollution; the effect of pollution on public health is a major factor in shaping this environmental law.

It is a law which is made to preserve life and maintain good health, and this can only be achieved through sustainable development to reduce the prevalence of debilitating communicable and non-communicable diseases, including emerging and re-emerging diseases.

It is predicted by the United Nations that human race will need three times the resources on planet Earth to sustain life by 2050.

In line with this prediction, mainstreaming of sustainable development will be of most important, that's what makes this Bill so important and complex at the same time but comprehensive and proactive.

There is no doubt that this Bill will enhance the integration of environment, social and economic aspects of development to improve health care and this can be achieved by taking necessary measures through strategies and better frameworks to reduce environmental impact, such as pollution, on public health.

New strategies need to be developed to reduce preventable disasters and to improve community health in the wake of climate emergency. Sustainability in public health also involves improving accessibility to health care and reducing inequality to ensure a healthier future.

Further importance of sustainability in health care is that of circular economy which has clearly been defined in this Bill, which has a positive impact on enhancing a healthy ecosystem, by radically reducing waste, which is very important in the prevention of diseases.

Sustainability in health care may also mitigates health risks for environmental threats such as water pollution, air pollution, and improper disposal of hazardous medical waste.

Mitigating health risks from environmental threats through sustainability in public health can also prevent the occurrence of mass casualty events by taking measures to reduce the risk of extreme weather.

Mr Speaker, Sir, mainstream of environmental sustainability also brings awareness in advocating for social equality and welfare, improving medical knowledge, thus enabling the improvement of public health disparities to the more vulnerable to illnesses and diseases and preventing the spread of diseases which may impact the overall community health.

All I am trying to point out is that this Bill, through its sustainable framework, will make significant important changes, through its holistic integration of social, economic, and environmental consideration, in all aspects of short-term and long-term development which will in turn bring an effective healthcare service.

The establishment of an *Observatoire de l'Environnement* and the introduction of a mechanism to ensure better management and protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas give this Bill all its importance.

We are more and more witnessing catastrophic effects of flash floods in our capital city. This mechanism will help policymakers and the population at large to understand the negative effects on the environment and urban spaces, on the trend toward urbanisation, its poor management standard and construction of urban neighbourhood.

Through research, by evidence, humans have been identified as the number one cause of environment degradation, to the point that future generations' means of survival will be compromised.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the *Observatoire de l'Environnement* is a very important structure for the optimal management of environmental and ecological issues.

One of the benefits of the *Observatoire de l'Environnement* will be the usage of ICT in the organisational and accessibility of data to develop innovative and sustainable solutions to environmental challenges.

Pollution, climate change and the misuse of natural resources are elements that cause environment degradation. To reverse this trend, constant monitoring and assessment with data driven decision are needed. That's where the application of ICT through the set mechanism of *Observatoire de l'Environnement*, will be crucial in bringing sound and scientific knowledge for innovative advancement for positive change in sustainable development and environmental conservation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as an island nation, all of us must have seen the effects of plastic pollution. We might have all seen plastic products washing up our coastal line.

Mr Speaker, Sir, both Rodrigues and the main island Mauritius, in the last decade particularly, have reacted to the increased knowledge of the bad effects of plastic pollution on our island by, of course, undergoing important societal change, like for example, by opting for the use of reusable and biodegradable alternatives to stop or reduce the use of single use plastic bags.

I have to congratulate the community efforts, for understanding the impact of plastic pollution and their engagement in reducing the amount of plastic use.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, we still need to make lots of efforts to considerably reduce plastic pollution on our island and its marine ecosystem as plastic pollution is not only caused by single-use plastic bags; we also have, for example, packaging of crisps, bottle caps and drink containers.

Therefore, we still need to further our efforts to stop throwing away plastics, by reusing and recycling. A mandatory deposit return system will effectively address this problem as this scheme will capture as many plastic products as possible for recycling.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is about safeguarding of human race from extinction, by bringing awareness of our own disastrous impact on our immediate environment, on the urgency in preserving our ecosystem, conserving biodiversity and promoting the well-being of our generation and future generations.

Tonight, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad for this opportunity given to me, to participate in such an important debate. I also have to thank the hon. Minister, Ramano and his team for their hard work. This is my contribution to this debate. I thank you for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Jutton!

(4.53 p.m.)

Ms T. Jutton (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): M. le président, à ce moment propice où nous sommes en train d'avoir les débats sur l'*Environment Bill*, l'autre côté de la Chambre est quasiment vide. C'est honteux, M. le président, de voir que sur la liste d'orateurs, il n'y a qu'un seul orateur des rangs de l'opposition ! Mais je me demande où sont donc ces grands défenseurs des droits de l'environnement ! Ou même dirai-je même ces experts en la matière dont on a tant vu et entendu durant le naufrage du MV Wakashio.

An hon. Member: *Tay seve tou!*

Ms Jutton: M. le président, ils sont les premiers à venir en avant pour faire de la démagogie quand un drame se produit tel que le MV Wakashio. Et pendant que nos citoyens souffrent, eux, ils sont seulement concernés à avoir du – ce que j'appelle – *cheap political mileage*. Mais quand on parle du concret, ils démontrent clairement leur vraie couleur, leur '*can't be bothered attitude*'.

Ça demande de l'assiduité, M. le président, d'essayer de voir un projet de loi de 165 pages, n'est-ce pas ? C'est facile de retirer leurs noms pour ne pas parler mais c'est aussi facile de critiquer et de dire des choses ici et là. Mais comme on dit, de tenir le poêlon et de se mettre à

l'œuvre, ceci n'est guère dans leur ADN. Raison pour laquelle, d'ailleurs, je pense que *lepep admirab* a choisi qu'ils soient et restent de l'autre côté de la Chambre. Car nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, *we mean business*. Nous venons à l'avant pour apporter des mesures correctives et préventives. En tout cas, l'histoire témoignera, à travers les archives du Hansard, ce que les membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre ont légué aux générations futures – oui, à nos enfants qui sont concernés par ce qui se passe à notre planète terre.

Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, to come to the speech and the Bill, for me it is with a deep sense of privilege that I am taking the floor to bring my humble contribution to the Environment Bill No. I of 2024 tabled by hon. Kavy Ramano, Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I dare say that this Bill which comes to replace the almost a-quarter-of-a-century-old Environment Act, is yet another ground-breaking piece of legislation that this Government is bringing forth. Indeed, this Bill is yet another instance that proves – if at all any proof is required – that this Government under the able and wise leadership of the Prime Minister, the hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, is a caring, daring, compassionate and responsible Government which is determined to not only transform the life of each and every citizen of this country but also to ensure that our island becomes a beacon of hope amidst the global scourge of climate change and other environmental challenges that the Earth is facing.

Thus, besides its legislative framework, this Bill is the harbinger of a greater cause; an extremely noble one I would say, in that it has the potential of profoundly contributing towards the global efforts to give a new lease of life to our planet that has far too long been subjected to all sorts of mistreatment caused by the gargantuan development – frenzy of the so-called modern civilised world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall delve into some of the clauses of this Bill in a moment. But before that, with your permission, I wish to highlight the fact that the Environment Bill being debated in this House today deeply resonates with the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development and Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs, which emphasise that climate policy, poverty reduction and universal peace are all inextricably linked in achieving sustainable development.

In particular, SDG 15, which is “to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of our terrestrial ecosystems, to sustainably manage forests, to combat desertification and reverse land degradation as well as biodiversity lost.” It is also in line with our SDG 13, which is “to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and SDG 17, which is to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.”

Yes, sustainable development, circular economy and sustainable ecosystems are all new paradigms for the United Nations and other international organisations. Trillions of dollars are being invested and high-level summits are being held across the world to ensure that this planet becomes a better place to live in. I, myself, have had the immense privilege and honour of actively participating and contributing to some of these conferences, including the United Nations Climate Change Conference and more recently, the COP 28 preparatory events in New Delhi and the United Arab Emirates, focusing mainly on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

As such, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can vouch that the Environment Bill being tabled today does indeed take on board the very ethos, the very spirit and more importantly, the very core concerns of all international organisations aiming at stalling the often irreversible damages caused to Mother Earth.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Mauritius, wrestle with coastal protection, marine pollution and coral bleaching, as well as increasing sea level rise and climate-related disasters. These multiple and overlapping challenges exacerbate our inherent vulnerabilities and threaten our ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. But, yet, this side of the House has taken the oath to make it happen. Mauritius has pledged to abate greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by the year 2030. Through this Bill, we will be able to effectively implement the obligations of Mauritius under the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.

This is the reason why I truly believe that the debates on this Bill should have no room for demagoguery or unwarranted political mileage; otherwise, more than anything else, posterity will be too severe a witness to what is being debated today.

As I mentioned earlier, besides being a major legislative milestone, this Bill not only holds the promise of transforming our environmental landscape for the better but also serves as a vital step towards securing the health and longevity of our planet.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today we stand at this critical juncture in the history of tomorrow. The challenges posed by climate change, pollution and environmental degradation demand decisive and prompt action. So, the first question is why has the previous Bill is being repealed? As the hon. Minister in his opening speech clearly mentioned, it is in light of the lessons that have been learnt from emerging local and global environmental challenges and of course with a view to achieve our targets relating to the SDGs. Also, during the *Assises de l'environnement* which was held in December 2019, this was highly underscored.

It is also important to take note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Bill does not just come like this because some people have been questioning: ‘so since 2019 to 2024 what has been happening?’ The Minister explained clearly that there have been extensive consultations held with ministries, departments, local authorities, public bodies, academia, private sectors, NGOs, as well as civil society and the public was even invited to submit proposals and comments. And there were a number of working sessions held at the level of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, to analyse all the comments and proposals received. A draft Bill was then produced by an international legal consultant, which was even exposed to further consultations held online and in person.

So, the gist of this transformative Environment Bill brought to the House today embodies this Government’s unwavering commitment to address these challenges comprehensively and proactively through key provisions, such as the Integration and Mainstreaming of Environmental Sustainability in Planning and Development through the formulation of a National Policy Strategy and Action Plan on sustainable development and the National Circular Economy Policy Strategy and Action Plan for every five years, with a view to achieve sustainable development and to transition to a green and circular economy.

The hon. Minister clearly informed the house on the 10 main themes of this Bill and I will only go through a few of them; the first being – ‘Integration and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Development to Assess the Country in Engaging into its Ecological Transition Pathway’.

It is a fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that ever since this Government took power under the strong leadership of the hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the unwavering commitment to the environmental cause is unquestionable. The oath to shape a vibrant, green and sustainable Mauritius through a series of measures and legislations brought from even the Climate Change Act to today this Environment Bill; it is a fact that Mauritius is spending around 2% of its GDP on the environment and climate change-related matters and policies.

Our Climate Change Act serves as a cornerstone of our commitment to fulfil our obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement amongst other related instruments.

In order to build our resilience, we have implemented a series of adaptation measures such as coastal rehabilitation, mangrove propagation and flood management programmes. We have also formulated low-carbon development strategies and nationally appropriate mitigation actions. Our country aspires to become an inclusive, high-income and green Mauritius. This government is designing new strategic measures that will allow us to leapfrog to this cleaner, greener, environmentally sustainable climate change resilient, low emission and circular economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Environment brought about a master plan in 2022, with a 10-year Policy and Strategy, which defines a new mindset and approach to business, strategic partnership, and governmental corporation through holistic policies for the environment. It includes an updated nationally determined contribution, introduction of regulations, banning non-biodegradable single-use plastics products, formulation of a Solid Waste Management Strategy and development of strategies to address vehicular emissions.

As I said earlier, we are also investing massively in the construction of drains and coastal rehabilitation programmes for eroded sites in terms of priority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the *Observatoire de l'environnement*, which is the second key theme of this Bill, which will be introduced to act as an interface with stakeholders including the public and any other stakeholders, of course, on environmental parameters. This in itself constitutes a major action towards clean governance. So, different actors working separately to create a robust body of knowledge but, if we can effectively integrate all together

and ensure that there is proper dissemination of this knowledge, we will definitely be more effective and this is what has been recommended during these *Assises de l'environnement*.

A new platform which will be called 'Science to Policy Platform' will also be set up to assist in evidence-based policy-making. So the main objective of this platform will be to improve the use of empirical evidence to support environmental decision-making processes at the level of government as well as ensuring the buying of all stakeholders.

The introduction of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), which will facilitate the coordination amongst different institutions, as well as the establishment and updating of an ESA inventory and ESA maps are key factors of this Bill that need to be commended. The ESAs are actually places with special environmental attributes which have a crucial value with respect to maintenance of ecological services such as biological diversity, preservation of our soil, water and other natural resources and which will also act as buffers against erosion, floods and temperature extremes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that the coastal region of my own constituency, Constituency No. 11, Vieux Grand-Port/Rose-Belle, is one such vulnerable area; not only vulnerable to land slide, soil erosion and flooding, but *elle n'est pas à l'abri des séismes aussi*.

The week before when I was to intervene on the Bill, on the same day I came across an article in the written press of *l'Express du mardi 23 avril*, where there was a whole article dedicated to Constituency No. 11, mentioning the risks of landslide which I quote –

“Risk of landslide from Quatre-Soeurs to Deux-Frères is high.”

The article also states, I quote –

“The wreck of Wakashio was a spoiler and a major polluter. It's a place which has been neglected but with room for improvement.”

But they missed the number of measures being taken by this government to protect those areas – I invite them to have a drive along the coastal region of my own Constituency to see for themselves. For instance, the number of works being done from Pointe aux Feuilles to Grand Sable, which constitutes rock revetments, plantation of mangroves, landscaping and greening

works amongst others with the aim to control erosion, climate change impacts and attenuating road inundation during storm surge, are a few amongst.

Let me talk about Deux Frères, Mr Speaker, Sir, which is a small village situated in my Constituency, which is low-lying on the South-East coast between the mountains and the sea and which has been identified as highly vulnerable to coastal inundation and climate change impacts such as accelerated sea level rise and extreme events.

Well, let me tell the House and à *bon entendeur*, that to be able to adapt and increase resilience to these climate change impacts, the government and the Ministry of Environment have embarked on a series of measures from 900 m of rock revetments to having perched beaches, to new access roads and creating a new waterfront area with parking spaces, recreational areas as well as spaces for children and youths to have leisure activities and even for commercial outlets and tuck shops.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now if I move along the coast, from Pointe aux Feuilles to Deux Frères to Grand Sable and I move from Providence and Bois des Amourettes, I can only say that the works being done are clearly visible and tangible. So from rock revetments to walk-ways to new boat ramps being created to cycle tracks, to even having new stairs up to the sea, with our shoreline being protected against erosion and the impacts of climate change, all these are just, but a few measures.

Alors, à bon entendeur, je demanderais bien : qu'a donc fait l'ancien régime pour adresser ces nombreux défis dans cette circonscription unique en elle-même ; comme le dit si bien l'article de l'Express ?

Well, coming back to the Environment Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill aims to reduce the damage caused by the lack of measures from 2005 to 2014. This Bill is not only a national awakening. It is meant to proceed in a structured way with the support of one and all to tackle the escalating hotlist of global environmental crises.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with climate change challenges, droughts, landslides and flash floods, the impacts of which can be very damaging, proper land use planning and development is becoming more and more difficult. Hence, it has become a *sine qua non* to revise the

development control mechanisms in the country. This Bill addresses those issues through the landmark reintroduction of Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs). So, the proposed introduction of new parameters for the preliminary environment report and Strategic Environmental Assessment Framework, whereby environmental consideration will be integrated into plans and programmes right from the planning stage and the cumulative impacts, will be assessed in a holistic approach taking into consideration the social economic interlinkages to ensure environmental protection, management and conservation. This will be yet another major step towards enhanced transparency and efficiency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while the EPA previously catered for SEAs, same has been repealed in the past and was duly explained by the hon. Minister in his speech, I will just add that development in sectors from fisheries, energy, transport, waste management, water management, tourism, real estate, smart cities, bunkering activities, and even recreational parks will all now require SEAs. All this will ensure the development is coupled with environmental protection. This is why, as I said earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill being debated today is of groundbreaking proportion and will lay the foundation for a greener, safer and cleaner Mauritius, and hence, a better world for the generations who are yet unborn.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now speak on Part V of the Bill, which is on the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan. As I said earlier, when the bulk carrier vessel MV Wakashio wrecked on the reefs of Pointe d'Esny, off the southeast coast of Mauritius, we were all left aghast at the damaging impacts of the oil spill on our beautiful lagoons and our beaches, especially my Constituency from Rivière des Creoles to Quatre Sœurs and Deux Frères. No one was prepared for it. It was the very first in the history of our *zoli ti zil* and we were all worried about the impacts of the oil spill. But I have here to commend the enormous work accomplished by all stakeholders together and this Government despite having no contingency plan.

From the committee set up under the chairpersonship of the hon. Prime Minister himself to the collaboration of stakeholders with the Ministry of Environment, Local Government, to collaboration of international countries, United Nations, international experts, our lagoons, our beaches and our Marine ecological system have been saved. Today, this Bill comes up with a National Oil Spill Contingency Plan to ensure quick, properly planned and coordinated response and preparedness to any potential oil spill. A National Oil Spill Coordination Committee will be

set up and tasked to coordinate the implementation of a National Oil Spill Contingency Plan to advise on policies and administrative measures with respect to oil spill contingency planning and to ensure cooperation amongst the various stakeholders dealing with oil spill incidents.

They will also report to the National Crisis Committee and subpart (b) of the oil spill dealing with emergency measures also entails the responsibilities of the owner of the spilled oil to report within one hour, failing which, as per the provisions of this Act, will constitute an offence. There will also be an environmental monitoring of discharges of oil spills and the cost of such monitoring will be incumbent upon the owner of the oil spill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, due to time constraints, I shall not delve into other equally key sections of the Bill such as the introduction of a Framework for Plastic Management to achieve the Government's vision for plastic-free Mauritius, a National Strategy and Action Plan for Plastic Management and sustainable production and consumption of plastic and other laudable initiatives that this Bill brings forth, with the National Environment and Climate Change Fund as well as a number of enforcement measures.

I will choose to conclude. *Pour conclure, M. le président, il faut que nous sachions que le jugement de la postérité serait implacable. Nous devons ainsi avoir l'humilité de comprendre que nous ne sommes que des locataires éphémères d'un monde permanent et qu'il est de notre devoir sacro-saint de léguer ce monde aux générations futures dans un état bien plus meilleur que nous l'avons hérité, bien sûr. Il faut surtout ne pas perdre de vue le fait que la force de la nature est telle qu'elle riposte toujours à ceux qui tentent de la détruire. Allons donc saisir cette opportunité dont offre ce projet de loi afin de créer un impact positif, de se mettre du bon côté de l'histoire et aussi de protéger et de sauvegarder notre planète pour les générations à venir.*

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramchurrun, you will speak after the break.

At 5.19 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.07 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Ramchurrun!

Mr N. P. Ramchurrun (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I feel privileged to be able to contribute to our debates around this crucial Bill, today. Let me, from the outset, mention that my earnest wish is that this piece of legislation garners the unanimous support of both sides of the House. Let us all put party politics behind us and unite as one National Assembly to constructively and positively debate the Bill being presented today by the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Environment Bill aims to give the Republic of Mauritius a contemporary environmental protection and preservation framework and action plan. The Bill has created a robust environmental approval charter alongside a significantly enhanced and improved system for environmental impact assessments. Accordingly, projects that could significantly affect the environment of Mauritius will be the subject of a thorough environmental impact assessment, which will generate the decision of whether or not to grant an environmental approval, which is a prerequisite for the project's execution.

The proposed legislation thus eliminates discretion, boosts transparency, and guarantees that important environmental factors are taken into account throughout the steps of project planning, design, and execution by replacing an inept and ineffective legislation. Crucially, this legislation would ensure greater transparency on the expectations and management of important environmental risks of commercial projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is indeed a strong and transparent Bill with well-defined procedures that offers more assurance. It is designed to provide an outcome and risk-focused system. The standards for environmental impact assessments will thus be proportionate to the level of risk. The legislation also offers an environmental impact assessment that directly influences the environmental approval that follows. This is a significant change that will lead to the recognition and protection of our island's significant natural environmental, social, cultural, and economic assets.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, was crafted after the hon. Minister consulted the wider population through the *Assises de l'environnement* in December 2019. This event was a wide success and gave a voice to any participant who felt they had constructive suggestions for the betterment of our country's environment. We have thus listened to our people and delivered a balanced and forward-looking legislation for the future of our people and country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this legislation is undoubtedly a significant step forward as part of our Government Programme to have a greener and more sustainable Mauritius. It is thus replacing the Environment Protection Act and its associated practices that date from early 2002. How can it possibly be argued that this is not good for the Republic of Mauritius? Thus, it does make me wonder though as to why Members of the Opposition would see this legislation as a threat. Why would they oppose such an environmentally progressive legislation? Indeed, they are. Unfortunately, once again, still very much stuck in the '*nanye pa bon*' mindset. Perhaps, they are still under the effect of shock and recovering from the flop of their regional May Day meeting and *les 20 mesures fizette* or *farfelues*, Mr Speaker, Sir. And I can recall, hon. Ms Jutton rightly pointed out that on such an important Bill, we can see how many Members of the Opposition are present in the House today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it needs to be clear that the Bill does not exclude the issue of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. These are one of a number of matters that should be considered when delivering environmental protection and ecologically sustainable development outcomes.

In fact, the Climate Change Bill was adopted by this august Assembly in 2020, which was one of the landmarks of this Government following our election in November 2019. Climate change is accepted by scientists as only one of the nine boundaries of the planet. The other boundaries, for instance, include the freshwater change, land system change and ocean acidification.

Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, our planet is not doing any better, year after year, across the nine boundaries. In 2023, out of the 9 boundaries, 6 had crossed the danger zone which implies that the natural balance of the planet, which was gifted by God to men, has been significantly damaged.

Thus, the changes in the proposed legislation aim to make sure that the environmental impact assessment system takes into account the potential effects of development on the climate, such as greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the potential effects of climate change on development, such as sea level rise and the migration of species southward.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the public and environmental NGOs are acknowledged as major stakeholders in the Bill, which has been crafted with their contributions. For instance, the public will be allowed to provide their comments, following a Preliminary Environmental Report Licence application and under specific conditions, the legislation caters through Clause 34 to enhance public participation in the environmental impact assessment procedure, raise awareness of how decisions are made and facilitate information availability. The legislation is very much explicit that the views of the public are required to ensure a conducive, inclusive and culturally appropriate consultation, with members of the community who may be impacted by a project.

Moreover, the Bill also provides an environmental impact assessment methodology that is not reliant on published written text which may not be accessible to potentially impacted citizens. The legislation before us today is tailored for the Republic of Mauritius while reflecting regional and international best practices. It is a legislation that is responsible and places us in the best possible position to grow and develop without passing on the negative externalities of development to our children, their children and the forthcoming generations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is unfortunate that some Opposition Members have already started complaining about the legislation prior to the legislation being presented. In fact, they cannot claim that the new legislation is too complex while lamenting the uncertainty and unpredictable nature of discretionary decision-making-based legislation. A comprehensive legislation would entail a more transparent process, defined decision-making criteria, engagement with proponents, engagement with clear time frames, risk-based decision-making and integration of the environmental impact assessment and environmental approval process.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Environment and Sustainable Development Commission will be set up and chaired by the hon. Prime Minister, as proposed by the legislation. The initiative is very much welcome as it will definitely contribute in creating synergies across Ministries and sustainable development experts in the country. Indeed, it is essential that experts of the country

and the domain of a sustainable development are given the right and conducive platform to express their advanced views on how to integrate the best practices in our sustainable development policies. They will provide science and industry-based information to the policymakers to enable the dissemination of the latest international and local knowledge to the public.

Moreover, the setting up of the *Observatoire de l'environnement* is one of the most value-added proposed initiatives of this legislation. It has been widely demanded by the majority of stakeholders in the field of environmental management and sustainability. The *Observatoire de l'environnement* will definitely promote the use of science-based evidence in our environmental management decision-making. Moreover, it should be investigated whether the *Observatoire* can also maintain key national climate risks data which will be used by banks and other financial institutions to integrate climate risks and a financial risk within their credit assessment processes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are firm believers that every single action contributes to the preservation and regeneration of our paradise island's environment. For instance, three days ago, that is, on Saturday the 4th of May, a clean-up campaign was organised by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Beach Authority, the District Council of Rivière Noire and the NECA, whose formidable job throughout the country must be acclaimed. Hence, through the joint efforts of the volunteers, myself, hon. Ganoo, hon. Mrs Mayotte and hon. Ramano, we were able to create awareness amongst the local inhabitants and ensure that our beaches remain pristine. I am also glad that this laudable initiative will be spread across all the 134 beaches across the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, sustainable development as a concept was introduced only in 1987, by the United Nations in Brundtland Commission which defined it as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be noted that as the MSM has been a party of pioneers, we must be proud that, late Sir Anerood Jugnauth was even ahead of the United Nations in defining the parameters of the concept of sustainable development. Mr Speaker, Sir, back in 1983, hence, nearly 41 years ago and 4 years prior to the UN's Brundtland Report, Sir Anerood Jugnauth's wise words were as follows, I quote –

“It makes us ponder on how we can help nature to help us, not exploit natural resources rapaciously and denude our earth of its riches, impoverishing future generations.”

He also added the following –

“It is a matter of deep regret that since man first discovered that he could use nature for his own purposes he has been interfering with his environment. The ecological problems with which we are now concerned embrace diverse aspects ranging from the economic, social and psychological problems of human settlements to the management and use of natural resources and the conservation of natural habitats.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, how far-sighted was Sir Anerood Jugnauth, 41 years ago, when he had already warned us of the impacts of an unsustainable development! Mr Speaker, Sir, supporting this legislation answers the very core questions of how our environment should be managed to ensure its sustainability and regeneration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and his staff who have delivered a comprehensive and advanced legislation after wide consultations with hundreds of stakeholders locally and internationally.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: MP Osman Mahomed!

(6.23 p.m.)

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on the Environmental Bill. While the intent behind the proposed replacement of the Environment Protection Act is commendable, it is our responsibility to ensure that the legislation re-passed is not only visionary but also practical, inclusive, modern and effective for the sake of the present and a future generation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, consideration for the environment is a *sine qua non* requirement for the sustainable development of Mauritius in as much as the three main pillars of sustainable

development are the economy, the social landscape and the environment. That is why we had always referred *Maurice Île Durable* as a societal project, *un projet de société*.

Members will recall about this important point as it is clearly explained in the progress report of the implementation *Maurice Île Durable* Policy Strategy and Action Plan which I had tabled in the National Assembly in 2015 in my first mandate. I am stressing this point on sustainable development because it is one of the main objectives of this Bill as more fully explained in section 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum, the so-called formulation of a National Policy, Strategy and Action Plan on sustainable development after nine years of the MSM-led Government being in power.

This is very paradoxical indeed because there was one such document that the Labour Party had concealed with the financial assistance from development partners after extensive consultations for which the Republic had obtained international recognition and how all this good work was put away by the MSM-led government in 2015 as evidence by the very first parliamentary question to Ministers, PQ B/10 of 2015. This is what the late hon. Dayal, then Minister of Environment had to say and I quote –

“The *Maurice Île Durable* Commission has been dissolved as from January this year.”

That is, immediately after the 2014 general elections.

He further stated –

“The mandate of the *Maurice Île Durable* Commission which was to coordinate the implementation of sustainable development across key sectors of the economy has been fully integrated with the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, Disaster and Beach Management and its implementation is being carried out by all relevant line Ministries.”

This was the biggest mistake this Government had made!

The idea to have the Policy Strategy National Plan (PSNP) chartered across all Ministries from a commission at the Prime Minister’s Office is precisely to have it implemented; otherwise, it will not be left for implementation by a Ministry which is low in hierarchy in Government. So,

today, hon. Ramano no longer holds the mandate for sustainable development because his mandate is Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, unlike during the Labour Party days when the Ministry was Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. So, when hon. Ramano comes to the Parliament with a Bill that advocates at the very memorandum in paragraph 2(a) on sustainable development, one can only say that it is an attempt to catch up or to make believe that it intends to catch up on nine years of delay. *Neuf ans de retard* through which we have seen four Ministers of Environment always making all kinds of speeches and promises, but, in fact, very poor in overall achievement in sustainable development.

The four Ministers are late Mr Dayal, Mr Alain Wong, Mr Etienne Sinatambou who was a part-timer Minister of Environment because he was also Minister of Social Security.

Since the very beginning of his mandate, hon. Ramano has made circular economy his leitmotiv, his *cheval de bataille* instead of sustainable development! I hope he will tell us what his *bilan* is after four years.

Mr Speaker Sir, I understand that the Environment Bill is coming to Parliament after consultation with several stakeholders. I have read many comments here and there about NGOs not being very happy with the consultation process, but I am not going to delve into this tonight. One point which I agree with them is that the Bill can be classified as one which will lead to a paradigm shift in environmental stewardship.

When going through the Bill, you have the feeling that it is a Bill that has been written with the intention for the Republic to benefit from international funding. Yesterday itself, the CEO of Economic Development Board gave a statement to l'Express with the title –

« Changement climatique : Ken Poonoosamy prévoit des pertes jusqu'à 2.1 milliards de roupies d'ici 20 ans. »

Now, if you go and check the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) website, you can read that the total financial needs for Mauritius to implement the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) target are estimated at Rs6.5 billion US Dollars, that is, Rs305 billion as at today's exchange rate.

Although true enough, Rs2.1 billion is referring to *perte de valeur* and 305 billion pertains to adaptation and mitigation, the figures are very far apart but in essence, a lot of money is being requested which does not quite address the local issues and global ones at a time the crisis of climate change is very real.

I was in Dubai three weeks ago on my way to Abu Dhabi to attend the Annual International Renewable Energy Agency meeting. All passengers and myself, in a full plane Boeing A380, were compelled to remain in the plane for 16 hours for a mere six hours flight because of the havoc caused by the storm that hit Dubai on the very next day I left.

Many people around the world have attributed this happening to cloud seeding that Dubai regularly has recourse to in order to provoke rainfall, but this time, I do believe it was due to climate change per se because the whole region was affected by this phenomenon.

Not doing sustainable development and favouring concrete and hard surfaces everywhere and no adequate land drainage network has called this catastrophic state of affairs in the deserts of Dubai. This is exactly what is happening in Mauritius. For example, when the Municipal City Council of Port Louis was about to convert a large part of the green area Champ de Mars with bituminous concrete for use as a paid parking area, I had organised a petition which collected some 1,500 signatures and which I had tabled in Parliament in my first mandate.

Today, this loss of green space has given place to a huge tarmac that has become a white elephant because nobody uses this parking area. The Champ de Mars in the process consequently is no longer able to absorb water as it used to and all that water goes downstream towards La Poudrière Street, if I may put it this way. Notwithstanding all the investments that have been made, they are subject to very severe flooding. We have seen it during the cyclone Belal with so many cars and people who got stuck.

Earlier, I had spoken about the Bill lacking modernity and novelty. I was reading an article on the BBC News of last Sunday, that is, only two days ago and its title is, I quote –

“Cities are stripping out concrete for earth and plants.”

Here, the authorities are doing the exact opposite and the Environment Bill is silent about it!

Another case in point about modernity in the physical environment is best captured in an article of 21 March 2021 which appeared online on the Facebook page of the environment agency and its title, I quote –

“Did you know that trees can help reduce the risk of flooding? Trees reduce the flow of water after heavy rainfall.”

This is very true!

There is one example of that which I have personally experienced in Sorèze, which now forms part of my Constituency after revision of the electoral boundaries in December last; that will be after the dissolution of Parliament of course.

There, the roads have been damaged as never seen before after the passage of cyclone Belal at the beginning of this year, and all this is due to heavy flow of water coming down the hills and mountains there, after human intervention to convert mountains into terraces and in that process getting rid of greeneries and clogging the cutoff drain system at these very locations.

I had written immediately after that to the Municipal City Council of Port Louis on 04 February 2024, I can even give the hon. Minister a copy of my letter. But no concrete action has taken place and the 21 April, the same flooding system occurred again. So, passing new laws is interesting but the authorities not doing their jobs correctly are the main cause of environmental problems in this country.

Earlier, I had mentioned about my trip to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, less than 48 hours after my return from that trip, I witnessed another traumatic episode which is due to climate change – this time in my own constituency in Tranquebar on the evening of 21 April 2024 along corner of Ruisseau du Pouce and Swami Sivananda Street where one house actually collapsed and two others were cracked beyond repairs. I think I have commented enough about this in the media, and even today I had a Parliamentary Question on this addressed to the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure.

Climate change is real. The moot point of my intervention on this is: climate change is real and human intervention makes things worst sometimes – irresponsible human intervention.

At the time when the Government is claiming that a lot of development is happening in the country with the Metro project, highways, social housing, government buildings, private sector-led developments, Smart Cities and all, like the Master Plans, like the 100 acres of beach-front at Anse la Raie, the Smart City at Roches-Noires, the 238 acres of beach-front at Palmar, which all by the way were subjects of Parliamentary Questions of mine, it is good that the Environment Bill takes on board the concept of Strategic Environmental Assessment, which the Minister extensively explained about in his Second Reading on the Bill. He even mentioned that Members have canvassed about this in the past; I am one of them on at least two occasions.

Firstly, during my intervention on the Construction Industry Authority Bill on 28 November 2023 and, secondly, it was the subject of a Parliamentary Question of mine, B/1673 and 05 December 2023 on the call for expression of interest on Palmar State Lands.

But the disappointment here is that the Strategic Environmental Assessment has been reduced to a simple extension of the EIA process in many cases. When in fact stakeholders were expecting a paradigm shift; it is safe for smart cities. I should hope that the full Strategic Environmental Assessment will be conducted contrary to what the Minister of Finance, for example, had replied to me on the Master Plan for Palmar. I quote –

« En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, EDB a été informé par le ministère de l'Environnement que les dispositions actuelles de l'Environment Protection Act ne font pas mention d'une évaluation stratégique de l'environnement. Toutefois, le développement de la zone à usage mixte de Palmar sera soumis aux dispositions des parties (a) et (b) de la 5^{ème} annexe de l'Environment Protection Act 2002, c'est-à-dire que ce développement fera l'objet d'un rapport environnemental préliminaire ou d'une autorisation d'EIA selon le cas. »

I know the hon. Minister is here tonight and the Palmar site is a very big site and I hope that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment will be imposed on that site.

Another issue addressed, that the hon. Minister had mentioned in his Second Reading on the Bill and which I had extensively canvassed on, is on the National Development Strategy. I see the hon. Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning is here. This National Development

Strategy is referred to as NDS in short and it is also sometimes called the National Land Development Strategy.

On two occasions I had questioned the hon. Deputy Prime Minister Obeegadoo on this. The first one was in PQ B/775 of 12 November 2020 and the second time, PQ B/1590 of 28 November 2023, because I feel this is a very important question. Well, we learned from him that a team of consultants was tasked with the preparation of the NDS on 07 June 2019, more than five years ago – more than a mandate actually. I have never seen something like this before and I am wondering why that is so. The Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning even had to go to Cabinet the Friday before my last Parliamentary Question on the NDS to look for an extension to the current NDS which is now 20 years old when it is supposed to be of a maximum of 10 years old and the extension has been conveniently granted to December 2024, after the elections.

Now, this is what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister had replied to me, hon. Obeegadoo, during the last interaction on this question, and I quote –

“Now, in the intervening period, as the hon. gentleman might be aware, the Land Drainage Authority had produced its Land Drainage Master Plan. Now, in order to have a coherent approach to land use planning and keeping in mind the dangerous consequences that climate change has wrought to the planet and to Mauritius with the risk of flash floods as we are witnessing on an all too regular basis, it was decided that the recommendations of the Land Drainage Master Plan needed to be incorporated in the National Development Strategy, the NDS, and this process is ongoing in the sense that consultations are ongoing between the Land Drainage Authority and my Ministry.”

Now, the Land Drainage Master Plan was finalised more than two years ago. We all remember the PNQ on this, of June 2022, we are now in 2024 and yet the NDS has not been finalised. Why is it taking so long?

I wish to mention here what the Leader of the Labour Party, MMM and Nouveaux Démocrates, since the hon. Ramchurrin had referred to 01 May rally. We have taken the bold commitment to render the Land Drainage Master Plan public if we come to power, and we will!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: When? When?

Mr Osman Mahomed: And we will come to power.

An hon. Member: *Zame pou vini!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: Interestingly, in elaborating on the subject of oil spills as provided for in the Bill, the Minister of Environment has chosen to refer to the Wakashio crisis in 2020. In this Bill, the Minister has made it a point to mention that action is to be taken – if I heard him correctly – within one hour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, do you know how long time elapsed from the time of the grounding of the Wakashio to the oil spills? 12 days! And yet, two days before the oil spills, on Tuesday 04 August 2020, during PQ B/476, I told the hon. Ramano, that we, myself and hon. Ramful and hon. David, had observed during site visit on Friday 31 July 2020 that the ship was repeatedly moving position on the reef because it is understood that this is dangerous. And I further asked him which department was responsible for immobilising the ship so as to prevent further damage, and he replied to me that it was the Minister of Shipping's responsibility.

Mr Speaker, Sir, oil spills are not just in national but global environmental disaster and coordination with international bodies are absent in this Bill. For example, if the Minister of Shipping had been proactive and had immediately, on grounding of the Wakashio, had the Japanese flag been replaced by the Mauritian immediately, after discussion with competent authorities – international competent authorities – no disaster would have happened because he would have taken control of the ship and do the needful, but such did not happen.

You know precaution is better than cure. Waiting for 12 days for a disaster to happen is clearly unforgivable. I would now like to touch on the issue of *locus standi* in the EIA process. It is still being required that citizens need to prove that they are personally aggrieved in order to appeal against the decision to grant an EIA permit, whereas it should have been the right of any citizen to defend the environment as well.

And the Ministry of Environment, the Minister himself, has lost an opportunity to go for a novel approach to this issue because when the Supreme Court has ruled in favour of Eco-Sud in the Pointe d'Esny Lakeside Company Ltd case for a residential development on two plots of land, the Ministry has supported the plea to the Privy Council, precisely on the *locus standi* issue. Now, the hon. Minister of Environment has also touched on the issue of eyesores. No new laws are needed but simple action. On the ground floor where the Minister's office is located, there is the office of the Police of *l'Environnement*. God knows how many emails, how many phone calls I have made to that department on the subject of eyesores and pollution in general but very little action has followed.

The Explanatory Memorandum omits essential elements such as biodiversity, natural ecosystem, the Ridge to Reef approach, the climate emergency and disaster risk management. Furthermore, the Bill provides for the creation of numerous committees, the members of which are representatives of Ministries and departments. We can legitimately wonder whether they will have enough time but I see some amendments have been proposed at Committee Stage. Getting more people from civil society will go a long way in enhancing environmental stewardship but more significant modifications and amendments are needed in the current Environment Bill. It will certainly not be a law up to the current challenges, contrary to even the aspirations of the Minister and of the Government.

Unfortunately, I cannot dwell more on this because I am limited in the duration of my intervention. As we stand on the brink of enacting significant changes to our environmental legislation, let us ensure that this Bill does not just change laws but change lives for the better. We owe it to our countrymen to get this right and I called upon my colleagues across the aisle to consider these points seriously and work together for the good of our Nation and our planet.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Hurreeram.

(6.46 p.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me first of all to thank my hon. colleague and point out to

this Chamber and to the whole population watching us tonight that hon. Ramano has now introduced his fourth Bill in the National Assembly, after successfully passing the Climate Change Act, the Beach Authority Act, the Waste Management and Resources Recovery Act and on top of that, successfully promulgating the control of single-use plastic products and the banning of plastic bags; in a single mandate Mr Speaker, Sir, while single-handedly literally eclipsing a certain *chef de fil du Parti travailliste* in his Constituency. *Une lumière de la circonscription No. 18.*

“The proof of the pudding is in the eating,” he likes to say. After so many years of humiliation, I wonder what kind of pudding his Leader cooked for him and Mr Speaker, Sir, I just can’t understand sometimes how some people literally, naïvely, blow their own trumpet all the time, thinking that we run a country by their petition, by their Facebook posts, by their letters. This is a responsible Government leading this country. And this is why I had to mention that this is the fourth Bill that hon. Ramano is bringing into this Parliament.

Hon. Members, the hon. Member who spoke before me, no doubt is very good in theory but concretely, has chosen to ignore that the first true Environment Act that was brought in this Assembly was in 2002 and that was by an MSM-led Government. Mr Speaker, Sir, talking about writing letters, making petition, I wonder why he then did not have a letter to his then Minister of Infrastructure when their Ring Road was crumbling on its own, when the Terre-Rouge-Verdun was sliding away *dans les précipices*. Where was their letter, where was their so-called intelligence then?

(Interruptions)

I might not be an Engineer...

Mr Speaker: What is happening?

Dr. Boolell: *Li p dire wakashio in zett delwil dan la mer.*

Mr Speaker: What is happening?

(Interruptions)

... your throat. Now you are talking, you are shouting.

Dr. Boolell: Yes. It's freedom to talk at last and at large.

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister talk!

Mr Hurreeram: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I know it hurts, truth hurts. I may not be an Engineer but comparing Dubai to Mauritius, I wonder what topography we are referring to. Should we import solutions or rely on our citizen public servants to come with adapted solutions which we are doing? Talking about drain, talking about cementing, putting concrete everywhere – we should put on record that 50% of drain infrastructure in high-risk flood prone areas that comprise Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS), we are building retention basins, swales which are devoid of concrete structures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is this Government which came up with the first holistic Land Drainage Master Plan for the first time ever and I appreciate that the hon. member acknowledge that it is an important piece of document unlike *Maurice Ile Durable* which yes, the then hon. Mr Dayal; *paix à son âme*, was right to do away with *Maurice Ile Durable* because that was what we call “Job for the boy”. So we had to do away with it and here, this is why it is under this Government that we have seen so many different laws, Bills coming in this Parliament to protect our environment and this is all due to the vision and support of the hon. Prime Minister and the very able leadership at the head of the Ministry of Environment, of our good friend, hon. Ramano.

M. le président, on doit se rendre à l'évidence qu'il n'y aura pas un seul projet de loi qui sera présenté dans cette Chambre qui va générer une critique constructive de l'autre côté de la Chambre. Mes collègues avant moi ont déjà commenté sur la présence de l'opposition dans cette auguste Assemblée.

Mr Toussaint: L'absence!

Mr Hurreeram: L'absence. La présence et l'absence bien sûr. The elections are near, they say. *Alor, bizin critike*. Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend my hon. friend who introduced a very meaningful clause in this Bill, the clause 4 –

“It is declared that every person shall use his best endeavours to preserve and enhance the quality of life by caring responsibly for the environment.”

This is such a meaningful clause, Mr Speaker, Sir, which not only represents the spirit of this Bill, but also the philosophy of this Government.

Each and every one of us should be an advocate of cleanliness, sustainability and green economy. We, as Mauritians, should aspire to more than just our daily needs and wants.

This country, we currently live in, we are building it for the future generations, for our children! In twenty to fifty years, it won't matter who was in power. What will matter, Mr Speaker, Sir, is what action was taken.

Take this new measure at clause 15, *l'Observatoire de l'environnement*. You know what is remarkable in this new addition to the existing law, Mr Speaker, Sir? The public! More often than not, under previous regimes, the views of the public were heard only in certain demagogic talkshows on a Friday night or during weekends. We also hear it in this august Assembly! You have all sort of *monsieurs et madames konn tou* who will lecture us day and night, but when it comes to walk the talk and take position on such an important Bill that will be building the future, protecting the future of the country, you just need to have a look at the list of orators! It speaks volume.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what we call a caring and inclusive Government. As representative of the executive, I also want the public to be part of the decision making process of this Government. This is one step ahead of the curb. This is not about posting pictures on Facebook and claiming others project. It is not my good friend hon. Dr. Mrs Chukowry who will tell me the contrary. We know what we are talking about. *Il faut prendre le taureau par les cornes*. Do excuse my French which is not as perfect as some *donneurs de leçons et misier konn tou*, but I enjoy the French language, especially the sayings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what have we not heard from 2005 to 2014, regarding Environment Impact Assessment permits? It was being delivered like *dipain gato pima* on a Sunday morning! Back in the days, there were people who were buying islands! I am sure you remember.

The hon. Minister has boldly reintroduced another requirement which is the Strategic Environment Assessment at Clause 45! I know! I know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that with this measure, our Government may not be so popular amongst certain real estate promoters. However, this is

clear testimony that we are not here to please one section, that is, *le grand capital*, unlike some have done in the past. Here, we are for the *petit peuple*. *On dirige avec le peuple et pour le peuple !*

We want to encourage infrastructural development in our country, and no one can point fingers at us for that. Even more so, we want to be even more stringent about our criteria to allow such developments.

Speaking of being more stringent, we are now introducing a whole clause dedicated to oil spill. We may have been criticised for the Wakashio incident; we just heard the orator before me. Apparently, he is also an expert about ships now! But not only did us and the population at large managed this incident brilliantly, myself, hon. Toussaint and hon. Doolub, being representatives of Constituency No. 12, can now proudly say, thanks to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Fisheries, our beaches are now clean and trust me, our fishes in Mahebourg taste as good as they used to!

We decided to act upon it and protect our lagoons for the years to come. You can criticise all you want on the other side of this House, but one thing you can be certain, unlike most of you, we have never sat on a problem and hid under the bed. We have faced the music and took decisions and implemented them, regardless of our own interests.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the amendments to this Bill are paving the way to a modern and sustainable Mauritius. Like Clause 98, for example, the National Circular Economy Policy, Strategy and Action Plan.

Globally, Mr Speaker, Sir, annual construction waste is expected to reach 2.2 billion tons by 2025. According to the World Bank, construction wastes will increase by 70% by 2050.

With a population of 1.27 million (2019), the average amount of solid waste per capita disposed at the landfill daily has increased steadily from 0.6 kg/day in 2000 to 1.1 kg/day in 2019, generating around 537,147 tons annually. It is estimated that about 70,000 tons of construction and demolition wastes are generated yearly in Mauritius, representing about 15% of the total annual wastes disposed at the landfill. As a responsible Government, we could not tolerate such a situation.

I am proud to report that our Ministries have been collaborating already to that effect. As the main highway authority, the Road Development Authority is developing a strategy which intends to encourage contractors to use innovative and sustainable construction materials and technology. Do keep in mind that we have around 3000 kilometres of roads in Mauritius. So, you can imagine the amount of asphalt we remove every year.

Advanced countries, such as the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands use recycled asphalt in up to 90% of its production of asphaltic concrete. Asphalt is the most recycled product in the United States.

It was high time we jumped onto this bandwagon and embrace our future. This is what we have been working on for the past few years while others spent most of public money on trying to sell an alliance that no Mauritian will ever adhere to.

As I have mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has already embarked on the solid waste management journey with the introduction of recycled asphalt at the Road Development Authority, and also, more importantly, waste management requirements in the bid document for the new framework agreement at the Civil Engineering Section of my Ministry.

Embracing circular economy principles can revolutionise the way we approach waste in the construction industry. In this context, a Circular Economy Platform for the Construction and Real Estate Sector, to be chaired by the Construction Industry Authority, will be set up. This platform will promote active involvement of relevant stakeholders, coordinate the agendas and evaluate the progress made regarding the successful implementation of the policy actions and key projects identified in the roadmap. I am actually very proud, Mr Speaker, Sir, that my Ministry is actively participating in making our country sustainable.

We are often criticised by the Opposition and a section of the press: “*on est en train de bétonner partout!*”, “*on a coupé les arbres,*” “*on a défiguré ici et là*”. Yet, no one will ever mention that it is this Government, under the wise and strong leadership of Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has also introduced a policy that compels us to plant 3 trees for every single tree that we had put down for any of our projects.

No hon. Member on the other side of this House, or I dare say, some wise men of the press, will venture to even mention how major cut off drains at l'Amitié, Cottage, Piton, Malakoff, Queen Victoria, Mare Tabac have saved lives for the past 3 years, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We will not achieve sustainability overnight. We will not become 100% resilient to climate change overnight. However, the progress we have made in recent years is highly commendable.

The Land Drainage Authority, another key organisation under the aegis of my Ministry, and directly involved in this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, plays now a pivotal role in our country's economy. *Et la LDA, M. le président, n'a rien à voir avec un certain éléphant blanc nommé Maurice Île Durable.*

As at January 2024, we know, I have said it earlier, there are so many projects that we have done already and are functioning nicely. The LDA now plays an integral part in the attribution of BLUP which is crucial to this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, because here we are talking about environmentally sensitive areas. And let me tell you that the LDA, with modern technology, has not only identified natural water courses that are crucial in transferring rain water towards rivers and the sea, but also the ESAs – existing ones and also new ones. And we are going to protect them at all cost, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I command my hon. Colleague for Clause 99 which pertains to plastic management. We are on the right track and this is the right thing to do I believe as well as the introduction of Clauses 127 and 129 regarding offenses and penalties, and additional powers of the court.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe that dumping of waste, even if it is a cigarette butt, in a drain, should be severely punished. After the cyclone Belal, we all saw *ce spectacle de désolation* on the waterfront – tons and tons of debris, waste, clothes, shoes, refrigerators, computers, bed mattresses. We could have equipped 10 houses with every amenities required. This is unacceptable, Mr Speaker, Sir. There is, through these amendments, Mr Speaker, Sir, a culture that has to be developed, a culture of cleanliness.

The Government is going the extra mile to make this country a better place to live. We are building the future of Mauritius. We are not wasting our time squabbling among each other for tickets or decide who is going to inherit which ministry in the next mandate. This is the

difference, Mr Speaker, Sir, when you have a composed leader, with a stronghold on an alliance, composed of complementary and natural allies who cooperate fully and sincerely. We are in the final year of our mandate. We have accomplished what practically no other government since independence has managed to accomplish in one term. And we still have a lot to deliver. Wait and see.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Koonjoo-Shah!

(7.06 p.m.)

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will start off by congratulating my colleague to bring this extremely important Bill to the House and it is always with pleasure that I bring my two cents to any innovative legislation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going to overegg, my colleague, hon. Ramano's pudding. I am sure I am going to leave him the luxury of replying to most of the Opposition's points that they have raised during his, what promises to be an interesting summing up but allow me to put into perspective some of the points raised by hon. Osman Mahomed during his intervention earlier on.

Mr Speaker, Sir, that particular Member has not just today, on numerous occasions in the past as well, stipulated or purported or try to *faire croire à la population* that the unfortunate incident of MV Wakashio was not properly dealt with by our Government. Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I will refer the hon. Member and the population to an article that is online. In fact, it is from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the OCHA *comme on l'appelle*. The title of the article is 'MV Wakashio: Environmental monitoring of terrestrial and marine resources'. It was published on 28 August of 2020 and I will just read a very short extract of that article and it goes as follows –

“A continuous environmental monitoring of terrestrial and marine resources is being maintained by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and key stakeholders following the grounding of MV Wakashio at Pointe d'Esny

and the resulting oil spill in the region. This exercise comprises the monitoring of coastal water quality, sediments, air quality as well as an ecosystem survey for the benefit of the local population.”

And it goes on. To conclude, it says –

“As at date, continuous monitoring has shown that there has been a significant decrease in the level of Oil and Grease in the coastal water quality. This has been achieved following actions of the authorities, volunteers and Non-Governmental organisations.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, my point is: it does not matter as much as the Opposition, especially hon. Osman Mahomed, come to the House and try to make as if the MV Wakashio unfortunate accident was mismanaged by the Government. Unfortunately, this article itself proves it right. It begs the question that – had it been the very sparse Opposition in front of us right now – had it been this Opposition who was called upon to deal with the MV Wakashio Oil Spill? I wonder whether their remedial action would have been amounting to chopping off their hair and trying to contain the... Well hon. Osman Mahomed would not have been able to contribute to that action at all considering he does not have a huge amount of hair. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, it goes to say that the Government has beautifully managed an unprecedented accident, a first of its kind in our history. The article clearly says that there has been significant decrease in the level of oil and grease in the coastal water quality. Action was taken to compensate all those affected by this oil spill. So, the hon. Member should refrain from coming to the House and trying his best to convince the population that they would have done better; it is not the case. We are in power and we did manage the MV Wakashio incident beautifully well.

So, coming back, Mr Speaker, Sir, to this very important piece of legislation, it is true, I think all of us agree, that we should be engaged, we should be concerned, we should all be passionate about environmental protection, about management, conservation issues. And again I would like to remind my fellow colleagues sitting on the other side of the House, in their wisdom; I hope they are not going to attribute all the droughts, all the flash floods, all the cyclones that hit our island to this Government. *Nou pa fer siklonn vini*. We are sitting, we happen to be sitting smack in the middle of an active tropical cyclone basin and unfortunately our nation is vulnerable to natural disasters and climate-related concerns. This is why making the

Republic of Mauritius more resilient to climate disaster is a top priority for this Government, of course, under the leadership of our Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this piece of legislation is going to be addressing a myriad of essential elements for human life. According to the 2023 World Air Quality Report, only 10 nations or territories last year had clean air standards set by the WHO and that includes Bermuda, Grenada, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Puerto Rico, Australia, New Zealand, French Polynesia and Mauritius. So, we can see, we can note, we can appreciate that Mauritius is one of the world's only ten countries with healthy air quality and does this come as a surprise to the Members of the Opposition. Why so? One might ask: why is there a need to bring this modern legislative framework?

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are through this piece of legislation embedding internationally recognised environmental principle into our domestic framework. These principles they include but they are not limited to the integration, prevention and precautionary principles and this is an innovation in the way how government makes policy. I mean we are innovative. I think we have proven that time and time again. Consideration is being given to all these principles in all our policy developments when it affects human life environment.

Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, is placed 106 out of 193 nations in the World Risk Report 2023 for the greatest vulnerability to climate disaster risk. Like I said earlier on, being a tropical island, Mauritius has always been very susceptible to weather-related disasters, but the effects of climate change have exacerbated these risks. And in the years to come, if nothing concrete is done, our very livelihoods might be at stake. Today, because of melting of glaciers, Mauritius and the entire planet for that matter faces threats, notably the erosion of our immaculate beaches, beaches that we can very easily coin as our national pride. Over the past few decades, coastal erosion in some areas of Mauritius has reached up to 20 metres. Over the next fifty years, half of our beaches are predicted to disappear, Mr Speaker, Sir. In addition to experiencing greater coastal erosion and coral bleaching than the rest of the world, Mauritius is unfortunately seeing a faster rise in temperatures and sea levels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we, at the level of Government, are firmly committed to safeguarding the environment and enhancing climate resilience through significant projects which my

previous colleagues have enumerated and this Environment Bill is one such commitment. It is a Bill, like I said, aiming at embedding internationally recognised environmental principles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has unfortunately suffered as a result of so many global events, for example, the war between Ukraine and Russia, the COVID-19 pandemic which was both a huge economic and health problem. At the same time, our economy was highly impacted when we had to unfortunately close our frontiers and impose a travel ban which affected our tourism industry. Our country, unfortunately during that time, experienced one of the largest GDP contractions in the world and if we do not, at this stage, adopt concrete measures, beach degradation brought on by climate change will have an effect on visitors' arrival rates and that is definitely going to be impacting our economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if we do not adopt these concrete measures, besides the increased impacts of natural calamities, beach degradation brought on by climate change is going to have an effect on visitor arrivals and also there is the other aspect of blue economy which is expected to become a keystone of our more resilient and diversified economic trajectory under the able leadership of the Prime Minister and my good friend, hon. Maudhoo, but its sustainability will depend on strict environmental policies, protection measures and in that similar spirit, the Government recognises that there is an emergency regarding our environment, our climate and our biodiversity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are in the midst of a climate and an ecological emergency that is threatening our very survival. Therefore, inaction is simply not a choice and today, the Bill being debated is testimony of concrete action.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member who spoke before me, hon. Hurreeram, has elaborated extensively on land drainage management, disaster risk reduction and I am sure that the population is going to appreciate the gargantuan work being undertaken by his Ministry under his very able leadership.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the objectives of the Bill I would like to expand upon is to have a comprehensive plan for turning Mauritius into "waste plastic-free Mauritius" by the provision for a national strategy and action plan for plastic management and sustainable production and

consumption of plastics and the enforcement, research, development and public awareness aspects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think even the Opposition will agree that it is truly a landmark Bill. It is providing a holistic approach, it is tackling real world issues through more structural changes to our environmental governance, it is ensuring that policy decisions account for the environment are being taken at the right level and judicious well. It is a very ambitious Bill and I think I agree with the hon. Members of Opposition on that. It is definitely an ambitious Bill but it is going to aid our recovery and help us meet goals of Net zero emissions. It is going to help us stem the loss of biodiversity; it is going to help us reduce the damage that pollution does to our natural world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to conclude by including a climate change concerns in our new development initiatives. There have been significant efforts that have already been made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to ensure the attainment of sustainable development goals and to build this very resilience – which I have elaborated upon – to build this resilience to the negative effects of climate change, there has to be unquestionably a strong political will to further improve the current policies, and this Environment Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is yet another demonstration by our Prime Minister who is walking the talk. Thanks to the bold strategic initiatives by Government and the new provisions elaborated in the Bill, we shall progress together and build a green, prosperous, and inclusive Mauritius.

Together, we shall achieve a faster, cleaner, greener, a more environmentally sustainable, a more resilient circular economy and I can reassure the hon. Member again, hon. Mahomed that we are going to be doing it. We are going to be achieving everything that has been stated. We do not need you to have imaginary dreams of being in power and speculating what you would do *si par hasard* you ever do come into power. That is not going to happen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I congratulate once again my very good friend, the hon. Minister of Environment, hon. Kavy Ramano, for his guts and his leadership for bringing such an innovative, transformative Bill to the Parliament.

Long live the Republic of Mauritius!

I thank you very much for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Seeruttun!

(7.20 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to intervene on this important Bill being introduced by my colleague, the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

A Bill so vital for our future, yet I see no interest from the Opposition's side. Only one Member has intervened on this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir. This again is a concrete example of how this Opposition is, Mr Speaker, Sir; lots of talk but when it comes to stand for a cause, they are always the *abonnés absents*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, agriculture and environment are intricately linked. Whilst a key challenge for the agricultural sector is to feed an increasingly global population with safe and nutritious food and achieve food security, environmental laws on the other hand, universally, aim at safeguarding our environment from the noxious impact of agricultural practices which directly or indirectly cause environmental degradation, ozone depletion and global warming; hence affecting human health and livelihoods of people.

The Environment Bill 2024, Mr Speaker, Sir, is calling upon every one of us to be more caring and responsible towards our environment. It concerns everyone. It is in fact giving us all the opportunity to prepare and foster as from today for a cleaner, safer and healthier environment for our future generations. Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Environment Bill 2024 will reinforce control on the use of chemicals in agriculture.

By so doing, it seeks to strike the right balance between agriculture and the environment, thus calling for the adoption of safe and sustainable agricultural practices and judicious use of chemicals which as everyone in this House is aware, if left uncontrolled, will gradually jeopardise the health and well-being of our citizens.

It will also, Mr Speaker, Sir, entrust the powers for the enforcement with regard to excessive and dangerous use of agricultural inputs to my Ministry, thus empowering officers of my Ministry to curtail, if not, eliminate any abusive use at source of these pesticides. I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Government has recognised the need for our country to have safe

agricultural practices. This is why it has been steadfast in its commitment to foster a paradigm shift from conventional to environmentally responsible farming methods and the promotion of ecological stewardship and resilience for some years now.

Several initiatives to that effect have already been undertaken and are still ongoing. For instance, farmers are encouraged and empowered to embrace agricultural practices that minimise reliance on chemicals, adoption of organic farming methods, integrated pest management techniques and the use of bio fertilisers and biopesticides. In addition, in 2018, we had taken the bold decision of introducing legislation, namely the Use of Pesticides Act to address the excessive use of pesticides in agriculture.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our endeavours extend much beyond promotion of research and development through partnerships with research institutions and collaboration with industry stakeholders. My Ministry is providing a panoply of support to facilitate the transition from conventional to sustainable farming methods, improving our soil health which is deteriorating day by day with the use of chemicals and especially the control, if not to say strictly minimum use of agricultural inputs with the view to continually transforming our agricultural sector to a safer and sustainable one.

It is good to note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that section 10 of the Bill provides for the preparation of a National Policy, Strategy and Action Plan on sustainable development. The overarching aim of the National Policy is to provide guidance as well as a governance framework on environmental policies required to support and contribute to the effective, transformative process towards sustainable development in line with SDG 12. This will therefore compel Government, departments and agencies to formally establish detailed protocols on how to incorporate sustainable development requirements in policy making, thus ensuring our environment is duly protected at all times.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for sections 22 to 26 of the Bill, they provide for the introduction of a multi-stakeholder Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) Committee which will coordinate and harmonise activities, policies and other measures around the protection, conservation and management of ESAs, including caves which currently do not fall under the purview of any enforcing agency. The House may wish to note that ESAs are places with special environmental

attributes which have a crucial value to the maintenance of ecological services such as biological diversity, the preservation of soil, water and other natural resources as well as they act as buffers against erosion, floods and temperature extremes.

The National Parks and Conservation Service of my Ministry is working tremendously towards the conservation of our biodiversity addressing drivers of biodiversity loss and restoring areas known to be rich in native biodiversity.

However, this is a real challenge given the inherent scarcity of land in Small Island Developing States like ours and taking into account the ever increasing demands and competing uses that have resulted in land degradation and loss of ESA. Moreover, the fact that ESA-related legislations and associated policies are currently fragmented across several laws and are under the purview of different authorities, the effective protection of these ESAs is no easy task. This Environment Bill 2024 will not only address this gap but also allow for better enforcement and protection of our ESAs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition, it will allow for private land to be declared ESAs in instances of presence of wetlands, biodiversity attributes, etc. which is not the case currently. This new provision, Mr Speaker, Sir, is in accordance with international conventions and agreements, namely the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on Biological Diversity to which Mauritius is a party. It will no doubt facilitate proper land use planning.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure everyone in this House will agree that as a result of climate change phenomenon such as unpredicted flash floods, droughts and landslides, proper planning and development is becoming more complex day by day. Such challenges call for a rethinking of development control mechanisms in the country over the past few years, the more so as we have all witnessed the dramatic impacts of such phenomenon lately. Through the reintroduction of Strategic Environmental Assessments, the Environment Bill 2024 will undoubtedly address those challenges.

It is good to note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the reintroduction of the ESAs is in line with the recommendations of the *Assises de l'environnement* held in December 2019. This explains the reason why the types of developments have been now redrafted. The ESA according to sectors spanning fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, tourism,

real estate development and smart cities, bunkering activities, theme and amusement parks have been clearly spelt out in Part C of the Sixth Schedule to the Bill. This will not only, Mr Speaker, Sir, allow decision makers to purposely consider environmental and sustainable development requirements at the very outset of policy and strategy and programme development and hence ensure that informed decisions are taken, but also demonstrate this Government's strong commitment for enhanced protection and safeguard of our environment.

I also note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that with this new legislation undertaking such as morcellement with several components whether single or multiple on the same location or different locations which currently require only one Environmental Impact Assessment or Preliminary Environmental Report will now also require an SEA. This is indeed a very good measure as it will offer additional protection to potential buyers and prevent them from both constructing in the areas or localities not meant for such projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given that Mauritius is concurrently highly dependent on the vitality, aesthetics and ecological functioning of its coastal and marine environments, located on a very busy maritime route, limited in size, physically isolated and has limited access to specialised equipment and expertise, the country faces serious threats from oil spills in its territorial waters. The environmental crisis brought about by the MV Wakashio in 2020 is a stark reminder for the need to have adequate preventive and preparedness measures to minimise the risk of widespread impacts from oil spills. To prevent such catastrophes, necessary legal provisions were required with regard to oil spills. It is observed that such provisions have been factored in the Environment Bill 2024 which in Part V provides for an improved coordination framework that will detail the preparation and response to an oil spill.

The Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, also sets the foundation for a National Oil Spill Coordination Committee which will be mandated to review and update our National Oil Spill Contingency Plan as and when the need is felt, coordinate its implementation and respond in a timely, safe and healthy manner in the event of an oil spill and report to the National Crisis Committee. It is worth noting that activities associated with the storing of oil will with the coming into force of the Environment Bill 2024 also require the development of an Oil Spill Contingency Plan which is not the case currently.

In addition, anyone conducting an activity related to the storage or use of liquid fuel within his premises will also be legally required to undertake a risk assessment and prepare a contingency plan. The Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change will undertake environmental monitoring of discharges of oil spills and liquid fuel such as to determine the endpoints of such exercises. The cost of such monitoring or any associated study will be at the expense of the authors of the oil spill.

In addition, in the event of loss or damage to the environment, offenders will also have to make due for the cost of restoration thereof. This is to send, Mr Speaker, Sir, a very strong signal to people who negligently cause damage to natural habitats, ecosystems, biodiversity and to our environment and to make them more accountable for their acts and deter them from *récidiver*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment will ensure that the port industries as well as other industries surrounding the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Birds Sanctuary which is an ESA of international importance, comply with the provision of this new legislation and develop their own contingency plans with the view to mitigating, if not preventing, any damage and biodiversity loss.

Mr Speaker, Sir, plastic pollution is one of the biggest environmental threats that the world has been facing since many years now as it accumulates in the soil and does not break down easily. Everyone is conscious of the major environmental problem that the rapidly increasing level of plastic pollution represents worldwide. In view of its transboundary hazard to maritime life, plant growth, bird and human lives, global cooperation and commitment are required for its reduced use or elimination. I note that this legislation is seeking to seriously mitigate the pollution caused by plastic in as much as it provides for the setting up of a Plastic Management Committee mandated to ensure development and implementation of policies, projects, strategies, programmes and action plans for plastic management. My Ministry will form part of that committee in view of the dangers that plastic represents to agriculture.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that just as food and nutrition security is our priority, so is our environment. We will therefore fully collaborate with the Ministry of Environment to ensure that our food security is pursued or achieved through sustainable agricultural practices and respect for required environmental norms. Indeed, my Ministry will

work together with the Ministry of Environment to ensure that the agricultural sector conforms to the provisions of the Environment Bill 2024. Farmers will be further sensitised on the dire need to engage in sustainable agricultural practices and protect and preserve the environment.

Necessary guidelines will be worked out to monitor the level of contaminants in the soil, including pesticides, fertilisers and heavy metals as well as existing legal provision and the site mechanism will be strengthened to control the use of fertilisers including restrictions of dosage rates, mandatory soil testing and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices. Compliance with existing regulations on pesticides and fertiliser use will be closely monitored through increased inspections and sanctioning for defaulters; introduction of stringent quality control standards for compost production including testing protocols to prevent heavy metals contamination and guidelines for safe application in agriculture; promoting research and innovation in sustainable agricultural practices including the development of alternative pest management strategies and the promotion of organic farming methods and the introduction of a Wetland Bill to enhance the protection and management of wetlands in our country.

So, with these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like again to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Environment for coming up with this Bill which is like I said very vital, very important for the country and the planet and we are all grateful to him for having come up with such as Bill.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Maudhoo!

(7.41 p.m.)

The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr S. Maudhoo): *M. le président, tout d'abord, je voudrais répondre à l'honorable Osman Mahomed que c'était plus facile de changer le pavillon sur le Wakashio. Il croit que c'est comme le pavillon du Parti travailliste qui retire le coq quand il veut, qui retire le cœur et tout cela. Ce n'est pas comme cela. Malheureusement, pour l'opposition, à chaque fois qu'il y a des problèmes, ils se déclarent experts et puis, ils foutent tout en l'air. Tout le monde le sait !*

Mr Speaker, Sir, whether COVID-19, whether Wakashio, whether Dengue, whether flood, whether war in parts of the world, this Government led by hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth has a proven track *du devoir accompli* in the best interest of all Mauritians despite all odds, and what about this Opposition? I think the performance of this Opposition in this mandate has been the worst since the existence of this Parliament and fortunately, the majority of the people outside are still saying: ‘No! No! No way that this Opposition comes to power’. That is for sure, we will see in the near future.

M. le président, tout d’abord, je souhaiterais remercier le Premier ministre et mon collègue le ministre de l’Environnement pour ce projet de loi. C’est en effet un projet de loi participative qui s’étend sur un spectre très large, mais c’est une condition nécessaire pour les enjeux et les défis liés à la protection de notre environnement.

M. le président, notre pays est confronté à des menaces bien réelles en ce qui concerne la montée des eaux et le réchauffement climatique. Sans une législation appropriée, nous risquons de nous retrouver en retard sur les questions de développements durables.

Mr Speaker, Sir, business as usual is no longer an option when it comes to complying with ever-changing international environment standards. This shift from the current Environment Act requires a bold vision to enact an innovative piece of legislation as well as the political will to proceed with its implementation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a responsible Government, we are bound to help our country’s transition from out-dated environmental standards to new and more appropriate ways of protecting, managing and conserving our environment, not like the *Maurice Ile Durable*. *C’est resté que des mots vains !*

M. le président, l’économie bleue est la source d’innombrables richesses, mais elle est également à la merci des changements climatiques sur toute la chaîne de valeur. C’est pourquoi la participation de mon ministère aux discussions liées à la protection de notre environnement marin est plus que nécessaire pour permettre à l’ensemble des partis prenants d’apporter leur pierre à l’édifice.

M. le président, la création de plusieurs institutions est nécessaire pour la mise en place des stratégies liées à la gestion de l'environnement. On le sait bien, chaque prise de décision s'accompagne d'une suite d'événements que seules les institutions régulatrices sont capables de mettre en application et de surveiller.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry will be involved in several working groups, namely the National Environment and Sustainable Development Commission, the Science to Policy Platform, that is, *Observatoire de l'environnement*, the Environment Sensitive Areas, the PER, the EIA, the SEA, the National Environment and Climate Change Fund, the Plastic Management Committee, the National Oil Spill Committee, and the Network for Sustainable Development, among others. Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is also the enforcing agency for the coastal and maritime zones of Mauritius which include coral reefs, beaches, wetlands, estuaries, and the islands of Agaléga and St Brandon and other outer islands.

In line with section 20 of the Fisheries Act 2023, the Bill provides for the Ministry of Environment to make regulations providing for the management, protection and enhancement of the marine environment through control and prevention of pollution of the marine environment from anthropogenic activities and land-based sources, including rivers, estuaries, pipelines and outfall structures. It also allows for regulation related to the prevention, reduction and control of pollution from vessels, crafts and other engines, and from installation and devices used in the exploration or exploitation of the natural resources of the seabed and subsoil of the maritime zone.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the banning of single-use plastics in Mauritius will prevent plastic pollution in the ocean and will, in the long run, benefit the marine environment and its biodiversity enormously. Plastic pollution has been recognised as one of the main threats posed to the ocean. It is addressed by SDG 14.1, that is, by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular, from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution. There is now hard evidence that plastic pollution in ocean ecosystem has reached the abyss of the deepest oceans. Plastics constitute around 33% of the anthropogenic debris found in the ocean and almost 89% are from single-use plastics, hence, the undeniable link between marine litter and single-use plastics.

As rightly stated by my colleague, hon. Hurreeram, in the aftermath of Cyclone Belal, tons of debris and plastics were scattered in front of Port Louis Waterfront. This unfortunate scene is a stark reminder of nature's power and its ability to reflect our actions back to us. What we discard carelessly into the sea, rivers and canals does not disappear. Instead, it returns often during the fierce weather events, like the cyclone we just experienced. This is a wake-up call we cannot ignore. Our environment and marine life are precious and it is our responsibility to safeguard these natural treasures for future generations.

M. le président, quiconque jette des ordures dans la nature est considéré comme coupable de porter atteinte à la préservation de notre si beau pays. Jeter des ordures est un acte antipatriote que tout le monde doit condamner. Je lance un vibrant appel à contribuer à une île Maurice propre. Un simple geste tel que ne pas salir constitue une contribution considérable. Together we can make a difference, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Government of Mauritius fully acknowledges the serious consequences resulting from the degradation of the environment due to plastic pollution and its impact on the quality of life, health and on the economy. Along this line, Government aims to implement a plastic-waste management mechanism to ensure the collection, sorting and recycling of plastic waste, thus shifting from a linear approach to a circular economy whereby resource recovery and recycling are maximised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has also ratified the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region and Related Protocols, that is, the Nairobi Convention. The aim is to prevent the degradation of the coastal and marine environment of the western Indian Ocean region and to provide a mechanism for regional cooperation, coordination and collaborative actions for more effective management of coastal and marine ecosystems. The Nairobi Convention is working towards the development of a regional strategy action plan on the management of marine litter and microplastics.

The Bill is also very important for the protection of ESAs, which include marine ecosystems, namely, the seagrass, the corals, the mangroves, and wetlands. However, with the advent of climate change resulting in rise in sea surface temperature, sea level rise and coastal

erosion along the island, my Ministry is implementing a number of projects with regard to the conservation and rehabilitation of the marine environment. With regard to coral restoration, even though Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are not responsible for the rise in water levels and water temperatures or for coral bleaching, we are, nonetheless, the most affected, given our heavy reliance on marine ecosystems for our economic development and food security. We are hearing about carbon credits from G7 countries and we keep seeing commitments related to the COPs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry carries out long-term coral reef monitoring at established sites to assess the state of coral reefs along the island. We have the UNDP Coral Restoration Project, implemented in collaboration with UNDP, which aims to rehabilitate 3.2 hectares in the southeast coast of Mauritius and 1 hectare in Rodrigues through funding from the Adaptation Fund. Two NGOs, namely, Eco-Sud and Reef Conservation were selected in Mauritius whereas in Rodrigues, Shoals was selected for the coral restoration activities. The project is ongoing up to November 2026. Coral farming activities are carried out by the AFRC and the MOI through Government funding at several sites around the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, very soon, Mauritius will be the first in the world to have a dedicated mobile application for marine environmental sensitisation and dissemination of marine species to the public while at the same time connected to various underwater live streaming camera systems. This project will allow us to educate not just the Mauritian population but the world population on the marine biodiversity of Mauritius. In this connection, I would like to inform the House that the NGO EcoMode Society has transplanted more than 25,000 coral fragments at Pointe aux Feuilles under the Tech4Nature Project, implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). On May 24, we will witness the launching of the Coral Watch App.

Mr Speaker, Sir, mangroves are plants that form intertidal forests and provide many important ecosystem services, including coastal protection, nursery grounds for coastal fish encrustations, nutrient filtration and carbon sequestration. Yet, mangroves are disappearing three to five times faster than overall global forest losses with serious ecological and socio-economic impacts for coastal nations. Fortunately in Mauritius, my Ministry initiated actions and to date

400,000 propagule seedlings have been planted around the island covering an area of around 50 acres. This is an ongoing project every year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one more item is the sea grass, underwater plants that live in shallow parts of the ocean, which are very important. They provide home and food for many marine creatures and help maintain a healthy marine environment. They also help prevent erosion, filter pollutants and support bio-diversity. Two projects are happening in Mauritius right now to protect sea grass. One is the assessment of the sea grass ecosystem around Mauritius to quantify the carbon sequestration, a local project called sea grass conservation and management to understand the status of sea grass around Mauritius. Another project funded by Japan is working on restoring coral reefs, sea grass and mangroves on the southeast coast to protect marine habitat there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a number of awareness and sensitisation campaigns is being carried out by this Ministry to sensitise the general public on the importance of the marine ecosystem. The organisation of events such as World Ocean Day, World Fisheries Day, World Sea Grass Day and World Mangrove Day, amongst others, is conducted by my Ministry where the distribution of flyers, pamphlets, posters and other means of sensitisation is being undertaken.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is also promoting aquaculture as an economic activity and has earmarked areas around Mauritius where these activities can be carried out. However, to protect the marine environment and ensure that the activities do not have any negative impacts on the marine environment, this Bill includes aquaculture activities under the list of undertakings requiring an EIA. It goes without saying that like in the two previous examples of collaborative work I have just mentioned, this Bill is all about the integration of a national effort towards a more sustainable future. Beyond the legislation, it is a question of demonstrating our ability to take a regional leadership position on the sustainable development front.

M. le président, d'ailleurs, on a tous vu le naufrage du Wakashio qui a été un événement traumatisant pour l'ensemble de nos concitoyens, mais on a également assisté à un élan de solidarité nationale. C'est une preuve de la haute importance que nos concitoyens accordent aux questions de protection de notre environnement marin. Ce projet de loi au travers du National Oil Spill Contingency Plan vient encore une fois apporter des mesures préventives

supplémentaires pour faire face à toute éventualité. Nous ne pouvons pas éliminer tous les risques, mais nous pouvons être prêts à agir.

M. le président, j'ai parcouru ce projet de loi avec en tête tous les événements qui nous sont arrivés au cours de ces cinq dernières années, je ne peux que conclure qu'il s'agit là d'un projet de loi de la plus haute importance pour les générations futures. Nous voulons léguer un héritage environnemental qui rendra nos enfants fiers de nous. Je n'oublie pas l'importance de la protection de notre environnement à Rodrigues aussi et dans les autres îles de notre territoire, comme il en est fait mention dans ce projet de loi.

M. le président, pour finir sur une note d'optimisme, sur la possibilité de régénération de notre récif corallien, je souhaite citer l'exemple du Belize, ce pays côtier d'Amérique centrale, qui possède la deuxième plus grande barrière de corail au monde, a réussi à mettre en place un système de régénération. Il a obtenu des résultats très prometteurs avec des taux de régénération à l'ordre de 60% dans 10 ans. Je pense que c'est un modèle que l'on peut répliquer à Maurice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this coral reef restoration strategy using community-based management is an extremely encouraging example of how we can leverage collective responsibility to attain ambitious regeneration targets. We have already started in this direction; we need to go further, but faster. We will continue to work with NGOs for these programmes. It is only then that we will be able to succeed in not only protecting our marine ecosystems, but also restoring them.

M. le président, je suis convaincu que ce projet de loi va permettre à notre pays de devenir plus résilient sur les problématiques de développement durable et des décisions de l'environnement ce qui au final bien sûr permettra à notre économie de se renforcer et de continuer à contribuer positivement à notre développement économique.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Dr. Husnoo!

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday, 14 May 2024 at 11.30 a.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned! Adjournment matter! I will leave the House to the Deputy Speaker. Can you please handle with the favourite?

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated! Let us have the hon. lady first, hon. Mrs Arianne Navarre-Marie!

MATTERS RAISED

(8.00 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 – CHILD DAY CARE CENTRES – CLOSURE

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. J'adresse ma requête à la ministre de l'Égalité des genres et ma requête concerne la fermeture des garderies dans ma circonscription.

Depuis plusieurs semaines, plusieurs garderies, dont au moins trois dans la circonscription numéro 1, ont été sommées de fermer leurs portes. Même la crèche de la *Mauritius Family Planning Association (MFPA)* à La Tour Koenig a été contrainte de fermer ses portes. Cette situation cause d'énormes inconvénients aux parents qui ne savent où confier leurs enfants pendant qu'ils travaillent. Le ministère leur a donné une liste de crèches comme alternative, mais le problème est que les crèches recommandées ne correspondent pas à leur budget.

Deuxième problème, les propriétaires des crèches qui ont investi leur argent en termes d'infrastructure, de mobilier et autres mesures de sécurité ne touchent pas de salaire pendant la fermeture, ni le personnel d'ailleurs.

Je lance un appel à la ministre afin que son ministère prenne les mesures nécessaires, afin que ces crèches soient à nouveau opérationnelles en leur donnant les moyens nécessaires et aussi d'intervenir auprès de son collègue le ministre des Finances pour que le personnel des crèches reçoive une aide financière en attendant la réouverture des crèches.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Member. I am fully aware of the situation, but the hon. Member will appreciate that following the coming to action of the regulations of the Child Day Care Centres, there has been a set of standards that these crèches, as we call them, have to adhere to. And there has been moratorium after moratorium given to these Child Day Care Centres.

As a matter of fact, the Ministry of Finance puts forward an allocation of up to, if I am not mistaken, *je parle de mémoire*, Rs500,000 so that they can upgrade their standards, they can adhere to the new regulations there are. There is a team of Enforcement Officers that go around and ensure...

(Interruptions)

I am trying to give a reply to the hon. Member for her qualms that she has raised, if you listen maybe.

So, as long as we give every chance to those crèches, those Day Care Centres to come up and to adhere to the set regulations, we help them in every other way by providing the schemes that I have just mentioned by the Minister of Finance who has put those *à leur disposition*. We have a team of Enforcement Officers and the level of my Ministry who go and carry out checks. These regulations are there to ensure that those Child Day Care Centres are operating according

to law – the standards set out by law – which, in itself, ensures that our children are therefore in a safe place.

Therefore, we are, at the level of the Ministry, carrying out extensive work to be able to give back the licensing, – *comment dire, permission* – permission to these Child Day Care Centres. If there is one that the hon. Member wishes to bring to my attention, one or whichever Child Day Care Centres that she has in her Constituency, that she knows have got all the paperwork in good order, I will ensure that my officers carry out the requisite check so that the operation licence can be re-issued.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Let us have a lady from Government side. Hon. Ms Tour!

(8.05 p.m.)

LES MARIANNES – BUS SHELTERS – INSTALLATION

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Merci. M. le président de séance, ma requête s'adresse au ministre du Transport terrestre et du métro léger, l'honorable Alan Ganoo, concernant la demande des habitants Les Mariannes pour l'installation de trois abris bus sur l'autoroute de Les Mariannes, car en ce moment, il n'y en a pas et souvent les enfants attendent l'autobus et font face aux intempéries. C'est pareil pour ceux qui attendent aussi l'autobus pour aller au travail. Merci de bien vouloir considérer cette demande.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): I thank the hon. Member for the request, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will certainly look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Osman Mohamed!

(8.06 p.m.)

MORCELLEMENT RAFFRAY, PAILLES – ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION – FLOODING

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of Local Government, especially after the reply that we have obtained this afternoon from the

Ministry of Agro-Industry regarding an illegal construction in Rivière St Louis along Cardinal No. 5 in Morcellement Raffray, Pailles. A long-standing matter of 16 years of illegal construction that is causing a lot of flooding in the locality there and causing a lot of hardship to the people, and during his reply, the hon. Minister has stated that the matter has been referred to the Municipal City Council of Port Louis for a needful action – pulling down or whatever. So, my request to the hon. Minister tonight is to kindly look into this matter with a view to expediting the proper decision at the level of the Council. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We will look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Ittoo!

(8.06 p.m.)

LA MARIE – BUS SHELTERS – BAD STATE

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse à l'honorable ministre du Transport et du *light rail*, l'honorable Ganoo. Et cela concerne aussi l'état des abris bus qui se trouvent dans la région de La Marie. Cela fait suite bien sûr après le passage du cyclone Belal et aussi après ma rencontre avec les responsables de la *TMRSU*. Je demanderais à l'honorable ministre s'il pourrait intervenir en tant que ministre de tutelle de la *TMRSU* pour une réévaluation de l'état des abris bus et en même temps de venir, si possible, avec un *action plan*. Comme vous le savez déjà, M. le président, avec l'arrivée de l'hiver et des intempéries, cela va aider bien sûr les habitants. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I again thank the hon. Member. I have taken good note of his request and I will certainly pass on the message to the *TMRSU*.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea!

(8.08 p.m.)

MASJID NOOR-E-ISLAM – NICOLAY ROAD – ZEBRA CROSSING

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. I raised an important issue of unmarked cross-here, that is, cross-here which is not painted with black and white colour, we call it the zebra crossing, on Nicolay Road next to Noor-E-Islam mosque.

I also stated to the House that there have been several accidents there as it is a very busy street and drivers tend to speed up on this road. I would also like to mention that hon. Minister came to the House with a statement but what happened after I raised this issue in Parliament, the TMRSU instead of painting the cross here, came to Nicolay Road next to Masjid Noor-E-Islam, instead of painting the cross here, they painted yellow lines adjacent to all the streets next to the mosque and this is causing much difficulty to worshipers coming to the mosque as is no place for parking it is painted with double yellow lines; I have all the information which I shall give to the hon. Minister afterwards.

But, my request to the hon. Minister is to instruct the TMRSU to simply paint the cross-here white and black which is the tar colour and to remove the yellow lines which is, as I said, giving much difficulty to inhabitants and worshippers going to the mosque. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member is right. He did raise the matter at a given time. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as soon as I went back to the Ministry, I conveyed the message to the TMRSU. I have taken good note of remarks made by the hon. Member and I will tomorrow again take up the matter with the TMRSU and bring corrective measures if there is a need to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: This is the last one. Hon. David and we have one more!

(8.10 p.m.)

POINTE AUX SABLES – POST OFFICE

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête de ce soir s'adresse au ministre des Technologies de l'information et de communication et de l'innovation et concerne un problème récurrent d'accueil du public au

bureau de poste de Pointe aux Sables. M. le ministre, trop d'habitants de Pointe aux Sables se plaignent de l'interminable attente dans la file devant, trop souvent, un seul guichet d'ouvert, et en particulier le samedi, le jour où il y a visiblement le plus de monde. Il y a clairement un problème d'organisation et un manque de personnel à la poste de Pointe aux Sables, ce qui provoque trop régulièrement l'exaspération et la frustration des habitants et des usagers de cette région. Puis-je demander au ministre de bien vouloir intervenir afin qu'une solution efficace soit trouvée rapidement afin de réduire le temps d'attente et d'améliorer la qualité de service au bureau de poste de Pointe aux Sables. Merci par avance.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know that my colleague hon. Dr. Mrs Chukowry is already looking after this matter with the Minister Balgobin. So, she will look into it. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. So, Dr. Farhad Aumeer, for you to close the session, I understand.

(8.12 p.m.)

CHALET STREET, VALLÉE PITOT – PARTIALLY ERODED HOUSES – DANGER TO FAMILIES

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Minister of Local Government who is also in charge of the National Emergency Operation Command. I would ask him if he could request his officers to pay a visit to a couple of families who live along Chalet Street in Vallée Pitot; the basement of their houses have been partially eroded by the torrential rain from along La Paix Street which represents a dire danger to their survival there. Please, if they can be provided with appropriate support and solution so that they can live at least with some security. Thank you. I will provide the names to you off record.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):

Dr. Aumeer: Oh, you are planning to look at it! That is very great then!

The Deputy Speaker: Wait! Wait! Allow the Vice-Prime Minister to answer. I am sure he has the answer.

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the message to the National Disaster to check on the situation over there.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much hon. Members. Have a good trip back home!

At 8.12 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 14 May 2024 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

LATE MR S. K. – DEATH INQUIRY – STATUS

(No. B/272) Dr. A. Boolell (First 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 the death of late Mr S. K., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether the inquiry initiated therein has been completed.

Reply: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to the Private Notice Question on 18 October 2022 and to Parliamentary Question B/412 of 09 May 2023 whereby I informed the House of the Police inquiry initiated into the death of late Mr S.K. and also the institution of a Judicial Enquiry which was followed by further Police investigation.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 18 October 2020, an enquiry was initiated into the death of late S.K. whose body was found in a sugarcane field on the same day at Telfair Moka.

During the course of the initial investigation, 98 persons were interrogated by the CCID and their respective statements recorded.

Moreover, on 04 December 2020, a Judicial Enquiry was conducted by the Magistrate of the District Court of Moka to look into the cause of death of Mr S.K. The Judicial Enquiry was completed on 21 November 2021, following which the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions had, on Wednesday 26 January 2022, advised the Police to carry out an in-depth investigation in the case.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that from Wednesday 26 January 2022 to date, 62 statements from 56 persons were recorded after the Judicial Enquiry. Further recording of statements is proceeding.

CONSTITUENCIES NO. 01 & NO. 19 – BALLOT PAPER CASE – ENQUIRY

(No. B/273) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated into the case of a ballot paper of Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West found during the recount exercise for Constituency No. 19, Stanley and Rose Hill held on 01 February 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

PORT POLICE STATION – HEAVY RAINFALL, 21 APRIL 2024 – DAMAGES

(No. B/274) 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 Port Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if it has been inundated following heavy rainfall, on or about Sunday 21 April 2024 and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) damages caused thereto, and
- (b) immediate and long-term remedial measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that apart from water infiltration, there was no structural damage caused to the building housing Port Police Station.

As regards part (b) of the question, as an immediate remedial measure for this flooding problem, I am informed by the National Development Unit of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development that a contract was awarded by the Road Development Authority to General Construction Ltd for placement of metal grating to enable the

installation of high submersible pumps by the Fire and Rescue Service at Caudan to evacuate water in extreme conditions. The works are expected to be completed by 23 July 2024.

Moreover, the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development is considering the following measures to mitigate the flooding problem in the vicinity of Place d'Armes and Motorway M1 –

- (i) The construction of an additional overflow drain/outlet at Caudan Esplanade of length 55 millimeters and dimension 2 meters wide x 0.6 meters deep across the Caudan Esplanade;
- (ii) Installation of a new flap valve at the outlet within Caudan Esplanade;
- (iii) Construction of three catch pits along drain alignment, and
- (iv) The Relocation of services far from flood prone areas.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that discussions are ongoing with the Mauritius Ports Authority with a view to identifying a suitable plot of land within the port area for the construction of a new Police Station as the existing building is very old and beyond economical repairs.

ECO DEER PARK ASSOCIATION – STATE LAND ALLOCATED – INQUIRY STATUS

(No. B/275) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to State land allocated to Eco Deer Park Association near the Grand Bassin, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police and any other relevant institutions, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that as at 02 May 2024, three cases have been reported with respect to the Eco Deer Park Chassée, namely –

- i) a precautionary measure following a notice of cancellation of lease agreement served on Eco Deer Park Association giving the Association 48 hours to quit and vacate the premises;
- ii) alleged trespassing along the property, and
- iii) a precautionary measure for securing the main entrance of the property

and that enquiry into all three cases is proceeding.

Furthermore, the Financial Crimes Commission has informed that the investigation concerning the lease land allocated to Eco Deer Park Association initiated by the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) on 03 March 2023 was nearing completion.

DRUG RELATED OFFENCES – ARRESTS – 2014 TO 07 MAY 2024

(No. B/276) Ms J. Tour (Third 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 drug related offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of arrests effected in relation thereto for the period 2014 to date.

Reply: I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the year 2015 instead of 2014. In this respect, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the period January 2015 to 02 May 2024, 28,708 drug cases have been detected and 24,973 suspects have been arrested. Regarding drug seizures, the estimated street value of drugs seized in respect of these cases stood at around Rs16 billion for the same period.

The huge seizure of drugs by the Police demonstrates the sustained and successful crusade of my Government in the combat against drug trafficking and drug use.

CHEMIN BRÛLÉ, PAILLES – LATE MR A. I. T. L. – DEATH CAUSE DISPUTATIONS

(No. B/277) 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 late Mr A. I. T. L., 23 years old, whose body has been found on 05 April 2024 at Chemin Brûlé in Pailles, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the Pailles Police Station is in presence of any representation disputing the cause of death following the post mortem examination carried by the Police Medical Officer and, if so, indicate the actions envisaged in relation thereto.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police reported that on Friday 05 April 2024 at 07:15 hours, Pailles Police Station received an anonymous phone call to the effect that there was a dead body at Cité St Louis, Pailles near *Ti Bazar*. A team of Police Officers immediately proceeded thereat and found the body of a male person, later identified as one Mr A.I.T.L. aged 23 years, lying lifelessly in a prone position.

A backpack bag colour blue was also found near the feet of the deceased. The bag contained the following articles –

- (a) four syringes;
- (b) a cream make figicort;
- (c) a mouth drop;
- (d) a pen;
- (e) a lighter colour green;
- (f) two keys, and
- (g) two cremodile pills in a small sealed plastic bag.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that the personnel of the scene of Crime Office, Police Photographer and Central Investigation Division were summoned on the spot. The corpse of A.I.T.L. was conveyed to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital mortuary for autopsy.

On the same day, that is, 05 April 2024 at 10:30 hours, an autopsy was performed upon the body of late A.I.T.L. The cause of death was attributed to be acute pulmonary oedema. After autopsy, the body of deceased was handed over to the family for burial. No complaint was made.

Additionally, the Commissioner of Police has informed that in a written statement made to Police, Mr T.L., aged 57, father of deceased, residing at Impasse Baboo, Bonnefin Road, Pailles stated that his son had drug issues which he attributed to the bad influence of friends. He further stated that on Thursday 04 April 2024 at 16:30 hours, deceased left his place for shopping at Dream Price and was supposed to return by 19:00 hours, but he never turned up. He looked for him in the region and questioned several residents, but did not obtain any information respecting the whereabouts of his son. He was later informed that a body was found along Chemin Brûlée, Pailles which he identified as his son, Mr A.I.T.L.

On 20 April 2024, Police took cognisance of a press cutting of even date authored by R.T., Reporter at Le Defi Media Group whereby Mr T. L., father of deceased, voiced out that the death of his son was a homicide staged as overdose. He made an appeal to the Commissioner of Police for an investigation into the matter.

On 27 April 2024, the Office of the Commissioner of Police received a letter dated 22 April 2024 from Mr T.L., following which the Officer in Charge of the Major Crime Investigation Team was directed to take over the enquiry for an in-depth investigation.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that enquiry into the case is proceeding.

AGALÉGA ISLAND – CONSTRUCTION OF CHALETS

(No. B/278) 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 Agaléga island, he will state if any project for the construction of some 15 chalets to develop tourism activities was previously envisaged thereat and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CAMP BERTHELOT – HEAVY RAINFALL & FLOODING – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/279) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in

regard to flooding resulting from the heavy rainfall of 21 April 2024 in Camp Berthelot at Chebel Branch Road, he will state the remedial actions envisaged therefor.

Reply: The Land Drainage Authority (LDA) informed that no major flooding was recorded prior to 21 April 2024 in Camp Berthelot at Chebel Branch Road and thus, no drain project was earmarked under the National Flood Management Programme for implementation in that region.

In fact, the concerned locus at Camp Berthelot is not declared a flood prone area and the extreme weather condition of 21 April 2024 was an exceptional event where a record level of rainfall intensity was registered in the region of Albion.

The Commissioner of Police informed that after the heavy rainfall of 21 April 2024, one complaint was received at the Coromandel Police Station and a 'Victim of Disaster Assistance Form' was issued to the complainant.

Camp Berthelot is a residential settlement bordered by two irrigation canals. The flooding event recorded on 21 April 2024 thereat, was attributed to the overflow of both irrigation canals which had eventually converged towards the settlement.

In the light of this incident, the LDA is surveying the region of Camp Berthelot to determine the remedial measures, if any, to be taken in consultation with the relevant authorities, such as the Water Resources Unit and the Local Authorities.

In addition, a joint meeting will be organised by the Local Emergency Operation Command (LEOC) and the Coromandel Police Station together with representatives from the Medine Sugar Estate and the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill to look into the issue of overflowing of the canals.

In order to prevent the recurrence of inundation at Camp Berthelot, it is envisaged to install a sluice gate in consultation with the Irrigation Authority and other concerned stakeholders and to, concurrently, consider having a temporary diversion in case of a torrential rain warning.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 20 – HEAVY RAINFALL & FLOODING – REMEDIAL ACTIONS

(No. B/295) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to cases of flooding following the heavy rainfall of 21 April 2024 in several regions of Constituency No. 20, Beau-Bassin and Petite-Rivière, he will state the remedial actions envisaged therefor.

Reply: The regions of Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière were heavily impacted during the heavy rainfall of 21 April 2024. In fact, the highest rainfall intensity in Albion was 302 millimetres and 190 millimetres in Beau Bassin. The main localities impacted were Richelieu, La Fourche Lane Coromandel, Morcellement Chapman Coromandel, Barkly, and Albion.

With a view to mitigating flooding in the region of Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) has recommended the implementation of several measures. These will be undertaken by different implementing agencies.

For the region of Albion, the Road Development Authority will implement the following –

- a) construction of a new culvert of 4 metres wide and 2 metres deep across Albion Branch Road near Splendid View;
- b) construction of a culvert measuring 5 metres wide and 2 metres deep across B78 Albion Road along Rivulet des Cabots near Camp Creoles, and
- c) reconstruction/upgrading of the bridge along Albion Road across Belle Eau River of size 21 metres wide by 2.2 metres deep.

On the other hand, the NDU will implement the following works –

- (a) construction of an open road side drain of 1.5 metres wide and 1.5 metres deep from Camp Creoles to Belle Eau River;
- (b) construction of a retention basin of 82,800 m³ (cubic metres), and
- (c) construction of trapezoidal earth drains upstream of Morcellement Splendid View along a stretch of 1.7 kilometre with width ranging from 5 to 7 metres and depth ranging from 1.5 to 2 metres.

For the region of Richelieu, the following projects have been recommended for implementation on an emergency basis –

- a) construction of a detention basin with a capacity of 266,900 m³ to be undertaken by the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd (DICL), and
- b) construction of a cut-off drain upstream of the metro track to be undertaken by the NDU.

With regard to the region of Coromandel, the upgrading of the existing drain network and construction of new drain networks have been identified for implementation by the DICL and for which, the designs are currently being finalised.

Drain projects amounting to some Rs38 m. have already been implemented in Constituency No. 20. These projects are –

- (a) Drainworks in low-lying properties at Residence Les Chebecs;
- (b) Construction of Drain at Jhoree Lane, Petite Rivière;
- (c) Construction of Drain at the Lane, Off Barkly Asylum Street, Beau Bassin;
- (d) Construction of Drain at Palmiers Street, Beau Bassin;
- (e) Construction of Drain at Sophie Lane, Gros Cailloux;
- (f) Construction of Drain at the Lane, Off Serge Alfred Street, Beau Bassin;
- (g) Drainworks at Schuman Street, Barkly, and
- (h) Drainworks at Govdan Street.

The Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill is implementing drain projects in the following areas in Constituency No. 20 –

- (i) Jules Koenig Pre Primary School;
- (ii) Iris Street, Barkly;
- (ii) Junction Rene Maingard
- (iii) Maingard-Rose Des Bois, and

(iv) Barkly Government School Junction with PSSA.

Moreover, evaluation of bids for two new drain projects, namely at Napier Broom and Colonel Draper, and at Beau Bassin SSS Girls have been completed and bidders are being notified. In addition, the cleaning of 56 drains is ongoing and is expected to be completed by the end of May 2024 by the Council.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 20 – DRAINS – CLEANING & MAINTENANCE WORK

(No. B/307) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the existing drains in Constituency No. 20, Beau-Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain a list thereof having benefitted, since January 2024 to date, from –

- (a) cleaning services, indicating the dates and frequencies thereof, and
- (b) maintenance work, indicating the nature and dates thereof.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that cleaning and maintenance of drains in Constituency No. 20 are carried out by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, District Council of Black River and Road Development Authority respectively.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the list of drains in Constituency No. 20, which are cleaned and monitored by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, District Council of Black River and the Road Development Authority, is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to drains which are under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin Rose Hill, I am informed by the latter that works orders have been issued at its level for the cleaning of 64 drains in Constituency No. 20, which were clogged/obstructed following the recent weather incidents. The works are expected to be completed by 27 May 2024. As at date, 8 drains have been cleaned. The frequency of cleaning of drains is yearly. A list of the municipal drains concerned is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

I am informed by the District Council of Black River that covered drains in Constituency No. 20, which fall under its jurisdiction, are cleaned twice yearly as per the established

programme and also on an as and when required basis. Cleaning of uncovered drains is carried out every week in three villages, namely Petite Rivière, Gros Cailloux and Albion.

I am informed by the Road Development Authority that it carries out weekly inspections to ensure cleanliness of drains along classified roads found in Constituency No. 20.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, that it is responsible for the maintenance of a total of 17.2 kilometres of municipal drains found along non-classified roads in Constituency No. 20. Maintenance is carried out once yearly and same is undertaken by in-house labour and is also contracted out.

I am informed by the District Council of Black River that clearance has been sought from the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) for the rehabilitation of drains in the region of Albion. Once the LDA would convey its clearance, financial clearance would then be sought from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, for the rehabilitation works.

As far as the Road Development Authority is concerned, I have been informed that the drains along the classified roads are maintained on a routine basis by its in-house labour.

GOVERNMENT ANALYST DIVISION – QUALITY STANDARDS

(No. B/308) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Government Analyst Division of his Ministry, he will give details pertaining to the quality standards attributed thereto.

(Withdrawn)

BANK OF MAURITIUS & SUBSIDIARIES – ANNUAL REPORT 2023 – NON-SUBMISSION

(No. B/309) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Bank of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to why the annual report and those of its subsidiaries for the year 2023 have not yet been submitted.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has already made necessary arrangements for the annual report, including the audited accounts for the Financial Year 2022-23 of the Bank of Mauritius to be placed in the Library of the National Assembly on 19 December 2023.

**ST JEAN – DRAINS’ CONSTRUCTION PROJECT – AMOUNT DISBURSED &
REVISED COST ESTIMATES**

(No. B/310) **Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed construction of drains at St Jean, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the –

- (a) cost budgeted therefor and revised budgeted cost, if any, and
- (b) amount paid or payable to the consultants therefor.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the cost for execution of the whole project at St Jean as at date stands at some Rs70.4 m., inclusive of VAT, which provides for –

- a) some Rs3.6 m. for consultancy services;
- b) Rs664,672 for trial pits, and
- c) some Rs66 m. for works.

As regards part (b) of the question, an amount of Rs797,851.11 has already been paid to the Consultant, Vyvaass Consulting Engineers Ltd.

The trial pits works have been completed and underground services such as CWA waterlines, Emtel lines, Mauritius Telecom lines, CEB services and sewer lines, have been identified and would need to be either relocated or realigned. Consequently, these will have a direct bearing on the drain works design and the cost of the project is also expected to be increased further owing to these extensive buried services.

The revised cost estimates will be finalised after all service providers concerned will give their respective clearances. Thereafter, financial clearance on the increased amount will be sought in accordance with prevailing practices.

MONTEBELLO, PAILLES – WATER SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS

(No. B/311) **Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, he will state if he has been made

aware of disruptions in water supply in the region of Montebello in Pailles since Sunday 21 April 2024 and, if so, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to when the water supply will be restored thereat.

(Withdrawn)

ALBION – HEAVY RAINFALL – ROAD INACCESSIBILITY

(No. B/312) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the two main roads leading to Albion which become inaccessible during heavy rainfall, he will state the remedial actions envisaged therefor.

(Withdrawn)

PATEL ENGINEERING LTD. VS REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS – ARBITRAL PROCEEDINGS – LEGAL FEES

(No. B/313) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the arbitral proceedings brought by Patel Engineering Ltd. against the Republic of Mauritius, he will state the total amount of legal fees and interest incurred by the State, giving a list of the respective amount paid to lawyers.

(Withdrawn)

MORC. DE CHAZAL, ALBION – WATER PROJECT DETAILS

(No. B/314) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Morcellement De Chazal at Albion, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as the water project being currently executed thereat, indicating –

- (a) the cost and duration thereof;
- (b) the name of the contractor and date of award thereof, and
- (c) if full road reinstatement is included in the project costs and the damaged roads such as Barracuda street will be reinstated and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

CHÂTEAU D'EAU, PORT LOUIS – 22 KV FEEDER – REPAIR & MAINTENANCE

(No. A/20) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the 22 KV feeder Château d'Eau from Nicolay Substation, he will state if consideration will be given for the rerouting of the main line with a view to facilitating access for repair and maintenance thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that 22 Kilovolt (kV) feeder found at Château d'Eau, Port Louis was installed some 30 years ago. This overhead High Voltage (HT) line crosses the regions of Military Road, ABIS Deigo, Canal Anglais, Alma Street, Eid Gah, Dogue, Cité Madeleine, Crownland Tory, Tranquebar, Independence Street, Volcy Pougnet Street, Harris Street, Bar Signaux and Labourdonnais Street, amongst others. Over the years, residential buildings have been constructed in the buffer zone of these HT lines, thus hindering the maintenance and repairs thereof by CEB's intervention teams.

In 2022, the Central Electricity Board approved the design of the relocation of the overhead HT lines along accessible areas at Boulevard Victoria Street, Port Louis with a view to addressing the above mentioned difficulties.

I am further informed by the CEB that some 6 poles were erected, however, some inhabitants opposed the excavation works for the remaining poles and this caused the project to halt.

The CEB has redesigned the rerouting and is planning to relocate these cables through an underground network. Request for wayleave has been made to the City Council of Port Louis and same is awaited.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 3 – FLOOD-PRONE AREAS – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. A/21) 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 flood-prone areas in Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, he will give a list thereof, indicating in each case the remedial measures that will be taken to address same.

Reply: In May 2021, the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) had submitted a list of flood prone areas in the region of Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East as follows –

- (i) Canal Anglais, Cite Martial (Near Mamade Elahee Football Ground)
- (ii) St Martin Street, Roche Bois (Along Lataniers River)
- (iii) Junction Leonce Alias Street and Abattoir Road
- (iv) Pierre Albert St, Quartier Shell, Roche Bois
- (v) Canal Wheldon, Mer Rouge

The Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development (National Development Unit) has already initiated action to mitigating flooding in these regions for which works have already started as follows –

- (i) Upgrading of Canal Anglais, Port Louis
 - (a) The upgrading of Canal Anglais started in October 2021 and completed on 29 April 2024. The works undertaken include –
 - Geotechnical Investigation.
 - Demolition and reconstruction of the initial 550 metre of the existing canal.
 - Construction of a new 300 metre reinforced concrete drain 4.45 wide at the downstream end.
 - Construction of concrete keys/aprons on the sloping side of the mountain and fencing.
 - Refurbishment of all existing steel footbridges and construction of a new pedestrian walkways.
 - Repair on 1.2 kilometres of canal.
 - Ground Radar Survey to map cavities under canal base, followed by grouting works to fill cavities.
 - Structural strengthening works of the Islamic School for Disabled Children at Priest Peak, Cite Martial, to mitigate the risk of collapsing into the canal during excavation works.
 - (ii) Upgrading of Storm drain at Dr Wheldon, Roche Bois first bridge, downstream to Rivulet Terre Rouge River Bank, Roche Bois.

The Preliminary design has been completed.

The following works would be undertaken in due course –

- Construction of an open masonry drain 2.2 metres base width by 0.7metre deep at Canal Wheldon.
 - Cleaning of drains and culverts along Nicolas Baudin Street.
 - Demolition and reconstruction of the existing culvert across Canal Wheldon.
 - Cleaning, widening and lining of existing drainage path over a stretch of approximately 60 metres.
 - Pump and Sump Configuration at the Outlet.
- (iii) Construction of whole drain network at Quartier Shell, Roche Bois.
The investigation work has been completed and the Consultants are finalising revised layouts, including service relocations.
- (iv) Construction of Drain at Allee Tamarin, Roche Bois.
The Consultant is preparing the bidding document for tendering exercise.
- (v) Upgrading/Extension of drains along St Martin Street, Roche Bois.
The design is being finalised.
- In addition, several remedial works including construction of drains and cross drains are being/ will be undertaken at Abattoir Road, St Martin Street, Shand Street, Des Carrieres Street, Benitiers Street, Adelaide Street, Dupont Street.