



**EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**(UNREVISED)**

**FIRST SESSION**

**TUESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2024**

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**(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)**

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands
Hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger, GCSK	Deputy Prime Minister
Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Rajesh Anand Bhagwan	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries
Hon. Govindranath Gunness	Minister of National Infrastructure
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Christian Harold Richard Duval	Minister of Tourism
Hon. Ashok Kumar Subron	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Gavin Patrick Cyril Glover, SC	Attorney-General
Dr. the Hon. Mrs Jyoti Jeetun	Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning
Hon. Patrick Gervais Assirvaden	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities

Hon. Dhananjay Ramful	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Darmarajen Nagalingum	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Muhammad Reza Cassam Uteem	Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations
Hon. Mahomed Osman Cassam Mahomed	Minister of Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kaviraj Sharma Sukon	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research
Hon. Sayed Muhammad Aadil Ameer Meea	Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives
Dr. the Hon. Mahend Gungapersad, PDSM	Minister of Education and Human Resource
Dr. the Hon. Avinash Ramtohul	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Lutchmanah Pentiah	Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Ranjiv Wochit, OSK	Minister of Local Government
Hon. Mahendra Gondeea, OSK	Minister of Arts and Culture

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Deputy Speaker	Hon. Vedasingam Vasudevachariar Baloomoody
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**MAURITIUS**

**Eighth National Assembly**

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**FIRST SESSION**

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**Debate No. 03 of 2024**

**Sitting of Tuesday 10 December 2024**

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

**The National Anthem was played**

*(Madam Speaker in the Chair)*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS****OBITUARY****DR. SEEWOSUNKUR JHUBOO**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister, you have the floor.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, it is with much grief and sadness that we have learnt of the passing away of Dr. Seewoosunkur Jhuboo, former Member of Parliament, on Saturday 10 August 2024 at the age of 79.

Madam Speaker, born on 01 February 1945 in Quatre Bornes, Dr. Jhuboo did his primary schooling in Strasbourg France and at Aryan Vedic School, Vacoas. He attended the Royal College of Curepipe for his secondary education and studied medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, where we became very close friends.

I should add that his father, also known as Dr. Seewoosunkur Jhuboo, was also a medical doctor, a dermatologist, and he was very close to Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam.

Dr. Jhuboo joined the Mauritius Labour Party in 1995 and held the post of Treasurer of the Party. He stood as candidate for the General Elections in December 1995, under the banner of the Alliance Parti Travailleuse/MMM in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, and he was elected as Third Member of the said Constituency.

In 1997, Dr. Jhuboo was appointed Government Chief Whip, a post which he occupied until August 2000.

Madam Speaker, Dr. Jhuboo was a well-known entrepreneur and land developer and will be remembered for his contribution in the development of the regions of Tamarin, Rivière Noire and Trou aux Biches, in particular.

Dr. Jhuboo, who had a passion for sailing, reading and classic cars, also occupied the post of President of the Rotary Club of Rivière Noire.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you have the floor.

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard):** Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, I associate myself with the tribute paid by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister to late Dr. Seewoosunkur Jhuboo. My thoughts are with my former colleague, Member of this House, from Constituency No. 14, Mr Ezra Jhuboo.

Madam Speaker, may I kindly request you to direct the Acting Clerk of the National Assembly to convey our deep condolences to the bereaved family. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you very much.

Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Dr. Seewoosunkur Jhuboo, former Member of Parliament, by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and I direct the Acting Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

Thank you.

### **MR JOSEPH TSANG MANG KIN, GOSK**

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, we have also been saddened by the demise of Mr Tsang Fan Hin Tsang Mang Kin, commonly known as Joseph Tsang Mang Kin, former Member of Parliament on Saturday 16 November of this year at the age of 86.

Born on 12 March 1938 in Port Louis, Mr Tsang Mang Kin did his primary schooling at the Chinese Middle School and then at the Cassis Government School and the Ecole Centrale de Rue de la Paix. He attended the Royal College of Port Louis for his secondary education and graduated in English and French at the University of London in 1960.

In 1968, he pursued diplomatic training at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland with a fellowship from the Carnegie Endowment fellowship.

Mr Tsang Mang Kin had a rich professional career. In 1957, he joined the *Chinese Daily News* as a reporter, and he worked as a teacher at the Bhujoharry College and then at St



Andrew's College. From 1961 to 1967, he worked as an Education Officer at the Royal College of Port Louis.

From 1968 to 1972, Mr Tsang Mang Kin joined the public service as Second Secretary to the Mauritian Embassy in Paris. From 1972 to 1977, he was appointed First Secretary and later became First Counsellor in Brussels where together with Mr Raymond Chasle, he participated in the negotiations leading up to the signature of the Lomé Agreement and the Sugar Protocol.

From 1977 to 1983, he acted as Minister Counsellor and Head of the International Division at the Ministry of External Affairs. He has also occupied the post of Deputy Director of the Commonwealth Foundation in London for the period 1983 to 1990.

Madam Speaker, on the political front, Mr Tsang Mang Kin made his first foray in politics in 1991 by joining the Mauritius Labour Party and stood as a candidate for the General Elections in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, under the banner of the Alliance Parti Travailleuse/PMSD, but he was not returned.

Mr Tsang Mang Kin then contested the 1995 elections in Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, under the banner of the Alliance Parti Travailleuse/MMM and was elected as Second Member to serve the National Assembly. He was also appointed as Secretary-General of the Mauritius Labour Party.

In January 1996, he was appointed Minister of Arts, Culture and Leisure where during his tenure of office, he set up the National Library, the National Art Gallery, the National History Museum, and the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture.

In December 1996, he became Minister of Civil Service Affairs, a portfolio which he held until June 1997. In July 1997, he again held the portfolio of Minister of Arts, Culture and Leisure and served in that position until August 2000.

Madam Speaker, Mr Tsang Mang Kin was conferred three titles during his lifetime: *l'Ordre du Lion* in 1991 by the Republic of Senegal; in 1996, he was awarded the title of *Ordre des Palmes académiques*; on 12 March 2010, he was elevated to the rank of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean for his significant contribution in the fields of literature, culture, diplomacy and politics.

In 2013, he became the winner of the Brilliance of China Award. Mr Tsang Mang Kin has also held the post of Vice-President of the Mauritian Writers' Association in 2011 and has also occupied the post of Chairman of the Guan Di Association from 2012 to 2013. In 2013, he became a member of the African Peer Review Mechanism Panel, a position he held until 2021.

Madam Speaker, Mr Tsang Mang Kin had a passion for literary works and poetry. He has authored several books ranging from history to culture. He was also a passionate of the Hakka culture. His poem compilation '*Le Grand Chant Hakka*' was translated in English and Chinese.

Madam Speaker, may I kindly request you to direct the Acting Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to his widow, Mrs Marie Reine Tsang Mang Kin and to his children and family.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Opposition, I again associate myself with the tribute paid by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister to the late Mr Tsang Fan Hin Tsang Mang Kin and, Madam Speaker, may I again kindly request you to direct the Acting Clerk of the National Assembly to convey our deep condolences to the bereaved family.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Tsang Fan Hin Tsang Mang Kin, former Member of Parliament by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister and by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and I direct the Acting Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

**NOTICE OF QUESTIONS – PQs ORDER**

Hon. Members, before we proceed with Parliamentary Questions on the Order Paper, I wish to make an announcement with regard to notice of questions.

For today's Sitting, I have decided to accept questions and propose them on a first-come, first-served basis, a practice adopted previously in this House.

In the light of the aforementioned, I am given to understand that the hon. Chief Government Whip and the hon. Whip of the Opposition have come to a consensus regarding the order in which Parliamentary Questions would appear on the notice of questions for particular Tuesday Sittings.

*(Interruptions)*

That is what I was given to understand. Let us wait. In this case, next time, we will have decided for the next Tuesday meeting what you would like to do because we really want a consensus.

As regards today's Sitting, I will be as flexible as possible regarding supplementary questions. The keywords here are: fairness, relevance, and importance of the subject matter of the PQ, because we have two hours, as you know, for questions.

Thank you.

Hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, Mr Duval!

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****14<sup>TH</sup> MONTH END-OF-YEAR BONUS – PROPOSED PAYMENT**

**(No. 1 B/1) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member of Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed payment of a 14<sup>th</sup> month end of year bonus to the pensioners, the private and public sector employees, he will state where matters stand.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, even before the electoral campaign and during the campaign, we were warning the nation that the macroeconomic figures were being manipulated by the MSM Government and its allies.

The implementation of the 14<sup>th</sup> month bonus will have deep impact on the economy and on public finances because of the disastrous situation we have inherited from the previous Government.

But never, in our wildest nightmare, did we know the extent that the figures would be falsified.

In fact, Madam Speaker, the economic boom that the previous Government boasted has been nothing but an electoral gimmick, very, very far from the harsh reality that we have discovered after assuming office.

We will, therefore, have to be extremely prudent to minimise the adverse impact of the 14<sup>th</sup> month on the economy.

As regards the implementation of the 14<sup>th</sup> month bonus, I will make an announcement once a policy decision is taken by Cabinet on Friday.

I will elaborate more on these issues in a statement to the House on the state of the economy this afternoon, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. Yes, next question.

**Mr A. Duval:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Does the hon. Prime Minister know that the Minister of Labour has stated recently in an interview that consultations had begun and that he was working closely with the Office of the Attorney General for the preparation of a Bill? Will he confirm whether this is, in fact, the case?

**The Prime Minister:** I can confirm that, in fact, he has been working with the Attorney General. We will have to come with a Bill; not as it was previously announced. It will have to be through a Bill.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes!

**Mr A. Duval:** May we know, from the consultations and the preparations that are being made with the Office of the Attorney General for the payment of the 14<sup>th</sup> month bonus, whether it is being envisaged to cap the payment to a certain income level or it will be for all employees?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, Madam Speaker, I will make a statement later on on the state of the economy, and I am sure the hon. Member will have a good look at it. This is why I said that we will have to be extremely prudent to minimise the adverse effect of the 14<sup>th</sup> month on the economy. But after the statement on the economy, I am sure you will come up with new questions.

**Madam Speaker:** We have been advised that there are some questions that will be replied by other hon. Ministers. PQ I B/2 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection. PQ I B/4 will be replied by Dr. the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries.

Hon. Fourth Member of Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, Mr A. Duval, your next question!

#### **MOGAS & DIESEL – PROPOSED PRICE REDUCTION**

**(No. 1 B/2) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed reduction in the price of Mogas and diesel, he will state where matters stand.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **ELECTORAL COLLEGE - SETTING UP - PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS & SPEAKER OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION**

**(No. 1 B/3) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of an electoral college for the election of the President of

the Republic of Mauritius and the Speaker of the National Assembly, he will state where matters stand.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, after 56 years of independence, it is opportune to consider constitutional and electoral reforms to further consolidate our democratic institutions, especially after how the previous regime has undermined all our institutions. It is precisely to consolidate our democracy that the proposal for the setting up of an Electoral College for the election of the President of the Republic has been included in the electoral manifesto of the Government.

Madam Speaker, Electoral College is a process whereby a group of electors is formed to elect a candidate to a particular office.

The concept of Electoral Colleges is not a novel one and is known to several democracies across the world. For instance, countries such as India and Germany have recourse to Electoral Colleges to elect their President. In France, the Senate is elected by an Electoral College. Each of these countries has its own model of Electoral College, adapted to suit their local context and the specificities of their respective electoral system.

Madam Speaker, the establishment of an Electoral College in Mauritius will be an integral part of the reform agenda of my Government and we will have consultations with all the stakeholders.

**Mr A. Duval:** Madam Speaker, may I?

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, of course!

**Mr A. Duval:** Will the Prime Minister agree that he had pledged during the campaign to appoint the President of the Republic through an Electoral College and that it will not be a simple *nominé* of the Prime Minister? I will ask the Prime Minister whether he does not agree that the outgoing President could have remained in office pending the appointment of a new President through the Electoral College as he himself pledged.

**The Prime Minister:** I do not agree with the hon. Member. We have a new government. The President's term has ended. We gracefully allowed him to stay in his position. He stepped down at the time when he was supposed to step down. So, this is why

we have to replace the President and the Vice-President until we do the reforms that we have pledged to do.

**Mr A. Duval:** Will the Prime Minister not agree that under the Constitution, there is already provision for the outgoing President to remain in office pending the incoming President, and that because a President's term is for five years, it will not be under this Government that a new President will be elected through the Electoral College, as has been pledged?

**The Prime Minister:** I do not agree with the hon. Member. The President, as I said, wanted, decided, and accepted that he has to step down after a new government is elected. And his term of office has come to an end. So, this is how we proceeded with the appointment of the new President and the Vice-President.

We cannot allow things to stay as they are because, you know, this will be an eternal argument if that is the case. That is why we followed the procedure and we have elected a new President as it has always been elected, but we will bring the reforms that we have pledged to bring.

**Mr A. Duval:** If I may.

**Madam Speaker:** Well, I think the Prime Minister has replied to your question. You may, but do not be argumentative and do not come back again to the same issue.

**Mr A. Duval:** If I may ask the hon. Prime Minister, given that now the President and the Vice-President are in office, and like I said, the term will expire after this Government's mandate, will he consider, once the Electoral College is set up, to ask the President, therefore, to vacate the office until he is appointed anew through that system?

*(Interruptions)*

Otherwise, like I said, he will not be keeping his promise to elect the President under his term, under his mandate, through the Electoral College.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** You are coming back. He has given an answer; you may not agree with the answer, but I think I will not pursue with this question anymore.

Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, there was also a part on the Speaker's choice. Maybe you want to reply on that?

**The Prime Minister:** This is like saying, Madam Speaker, that we should be allowing Mr Phokeer to stay as Speaker! This is precisely what you are saying, when we saw what the difference was! So, this is not acceptable! You must treat the President properly. He has stepped down and a new President has come in his place.

**Mr A. Duval:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister will realise that the Speaker has to be elected for constitutional amendment to be brought to the House, voted, for the President to be appointed under the new mechanism. My question being that this could have been the case and this promise could have been kept, but I will not insist.

**The Prime Minister:** That promise will be kept. As I said in my answer at the end, I did say that there will be wide consultations with all stakeholders because we have to look at all the aspects of it, and we will keep to what we have said.

#### **RODRIGUES – GOODS & FUEL SUPPLY – SHIPMENT PROCEDURES**

(No. 1 B/4) **Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the supply of goods and fuel to Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the relevant authorities, information as to the procedures established for the shipment thereof, indicating the measures being envisaged in order to avoid any shortage thereof for the end of year period.

*(Vide reply to PQ 1 B/17)*

#### **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS – ELECTORAL REFORMS – PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE**

(No. 1 B/5) **Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to electoral reforms for the National Assembly elections, he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up of a Parliamentary Committee mandated to make recommendations thereon, in particular, the



introduction of proportional representation and increasing the number of representatives to three for Constituency No. 21, Rodrigues.

**The Prime Minister:** Allow me, Madam Speaker, to state at the very outset that my Government is committed to a fully comprehensive reform of the current electoral system which would be reflective of the will of the population and restore the democratic reputation of our country.

To this end, consultations will be undertaken with all the stakeholders. The need for the setting up of any relevant committee to look into the constitutional and electoral reform will be looked into during this process.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil, Mr Beechook!

#### **STATE OF THE ECONOMY – COMPREHENSIVE REPORT**

**(No. 1 B/6) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the comprehensive report on the state of the economy currently under preparation, he will state where matters stand, indicating if consideration will be given for the tabling thereof in the National Assembly.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for the question. I will certainly table a copy of the report of the state of the economy after my statement in this House this very afternoon.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, the hon. Third Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or, Mr Etwareea!

#### **LARCENIES – NORTHERN COASTAL REGIONS – MEASURES**

**(No. 1 B/7) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the recent increase in the number of larcenies in the coastal areas in the North, he will, for the benefit of

the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the measures taken and being envisaged to address same.

**The Prime Minister:** Thank you. Madam Speaker, the coastal areas in the north comprise 17 regions which start from Le Goulet and end at Roches Noires. These regions are highly popular among tourists and local residents.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the past three years, 1,120 cases of larcenies have been reported to the Police in the northern coastal areas, that is, from 2022 to 2024.

I am also informed that the Police have put in place several measures to closely monitor the situation. They are as follows –

- (i) bike and mobile patrols are carried out daily by the regular Police, Divisional CID, Emergency Response Services, Divisional Support Unit, *Police de L'Environnement*, *Police du Tourisme*, and the National Coast Guard in the residential and commercial areas as well as the coastal regions for the safety of visitors and business operators;
- (ii) the Special Supporting Unit and Special Mobile Force are deployed at night to carry out mobile patrols and road blocks in strategic locations throughout the island, including, therefore, the Northern Division;
- (iii) the Crime Prevention Unit regularly conducts sensitisation campaigns in residential and commercial areas as well as hotels in order to raise public awareness on crime prevention measures. Additionally, Neighbourhood Watch Schemes have also been set up in those regions in order to enlist the support of the whole community in the fight against crimes, including larcenies, and
- (iv) Safe City Cameras are used to monitor the movements of suspicious persons and vehicles for prompt and coordinated response to attend to public requests for police assistance.

Madam Speaker, following the appointment of the new Commissioner of Police, the existing measures are being reinforced to revitalise the various Units of the Police Force island-wide for a more effective response to crime.

The Police Force is reorganising its workforce and will adopt a zero-tolerance policy approach against all offenders as a deterrent to reoffending.

We place, Madam Speaker, a high premium on the safety and security of visitors and local residents. We must ensure that our country remains a safe destination, not only for tourists but also for local residents.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. We will now be moving to Questions addressed to other hon. Ministers. So, I have to inform you that PQ 1 B/22 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. I now call on the hon. Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien, Mr Apollon.

### **MV WAKASHIO SHIPWRECK – VICTIMS – COMPENSATION**

**(No. 1 B/8) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the compensation payable to the victims of the Wakashio shipwreck, he will state where matters stand.

**Dr. Boolell:** Madam Speaker, I seek your indulgence. I will give the salient features in my reply and the comprehensive one will be circulated.

**Madam Speaker:** I am so sorry. You were replying to the question 1 B/22?

**Dr. Boolell:** Yes, I am replying to the question, but what I am saying is that I seek your indulgence. I will give the salient features in my reply and the comprehensive one will be circulated.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay!

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Following the grounding of the MV Wakashio on 25 July 2020, a Solidarity Grant was put in place to provide financial assistance to all victims. Registered fishers, applicant fishers, fishmongers, holders of commercial pleasure craft licence, skippers, beach hawkers were thus each paid only Rs10,200 per month from August 2020 to March 2021, that is, an average of Rs80,000 only during the period of 8 months. The sum disbursed was unfortunately grossly inadequate.

Following public outcry and protest march, the Japan P & I Club, the sole organisation in Japan underwriting Protection and Indemnity Insurance to both ocean-going vessels and Japanese Coastal Vessels and the insurer of the Cape Size Vessel agreed unfortunately to pay only USD 2,650,048 as full and final compensation to the 999 registered fishermen, applicant fishers and fishmongers.

Though the fishers, the applicant fishers and fishmongers were entitled to more, they were each only paid Rs113,000 in December 2021 as additional compensation for loss of earnings.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that as at date, Government has disbursed approximately Rs838 millions of taxpayers' money for various expenses in connection with the shipwreck. It is unacceptable that as of now, only Rs60 million, that is, 7.4% of expenses claimed has been reimbursed so far by the insurers.

Madam Speaker, I personally raised the matter with the Japanese Ambassador during a meeting I had with him on 05 of December 2024 and to register my official complaint on the loss of income suffered by the victims. I impress upon the Ambassador to ask the Japan International Cooperation Agency to expedite in relation of projects identified to empower the fishers.

It is unfortunate that the ship owner Okiyo Maritime Corporation has entered a case before the Supreme Court to set a limitation fund under the international convention on civil liability for bunker oil pollution that is a bunker convention to the sum of approximately Rs720 million instead of Rs2.3 billion claimed. I hope the Supreme Court will not take long to give its ruling.

It is unfortunate, Madam Speaker, that none of the former Government Ministers nor the Prime Minister deemed it fit to depone before the Court of Investigation on the MV Wakashio to look into the grounding which are the major ecological disaster. It is only now that this pertinent case is being given the great seriousness of purpose. The Attorney General and his office are exploring all possible avenues in relation to legal matters. The State of Mauritius as plaintiff will fight for its legitimate rights and the victim should be entitled to all plaintiffs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. The hon. Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien, Mr Apollon!

### **ELECTRIC CREMATION INCINERATORS**

**(No. 1 B/9) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to electric cremation incinerators, he will state the number thereof installed, indicating the number thereof not in operation and further indicating where matters stand as to the repairs thereof.

**Mr Woochit:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that there are 32 LPG Fire Human Incinerators across Mauritius, out of which, 16 are not operational. These 16 incinerators were procured by the Ministry of Local Government in 2018 and the project was funded under an Indian line of credit. The contract was awarded on 26 July 2019 for an amount of USD 2,256,000 inclusive of contingencies.

Madam Speaker, here I have the duty to inform the House that the out-going Government failed to ensure that the provision for maintenance in the bidding document and this situation led to the 16 incinerators not functioning and hence causing undue inconvenience to our citizens around the country.

In order to remedy this situation, bids were invited for the repairs, periodic servicing and maintenance of all these 16 LPG Fire Human Incinerators. Eventually Steam House Limited which met all requirements was awarded the contract for the repairs, periodic servicing and maintenance of these 16 LPG Fire Human Incinerators by contract price of Rs20,504,000, excluding VAT on 14 October 2024, for a period of two years, renewable each year for an additional period of three years upon satisfactory service.

Madam Speaker, as at date, the contractor has already surveyed three incinerators, namely at Camp Levieux, Richelieu, and Tombeau, Mahebourg. In order to prevent any malfunctioning of incinerators, Steam House Ltd. intends to set up the incinerators with both automatic and manual options so that the incinerators could be switched to manual mode of operation whenever needed.

In the meantime, all requests for incinerations received at the level of different councils are being redirected to the nearest cremation incinerators, which are in operation under their

respective council's jurisdiction. In case incinerators are not available, the traditional cremation grounds are being used.

Madam Speaker, as per the contract, the contractor is expected to complete the repairs of all these 16 incinerators within a period of 12 months. However, my Ministry is requesting the contractor to proceed faster with the repairs. In fact, I am personally following up on this matter with the officers of my Ministry. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Apollon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House which company supplied the 16 incinerators that were funded under the Indian line of credit as stated by the hon. Minister?

**Mr Woochit:** These 16 incinerators were procured from Kanta Electricals India Ltd.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, then. Hon. Second Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, your third question!

#### **FISHERMEN CARDS APPLICATIONS – 2019-DEC 2024**

**(No. 1 B/10) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the fishermen cards, he will state the number of applications therefor received since 2019 to date, indicating the number thereof –

- (a) issued, and
- (b) rejected.

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, hon. Member.

Madam Speaker, since 2019 to date, my Ministry has received 2,257 applications for fishermen cards, of which 1,134 fishermen cards have been issued. The list is being tabled.

Moreover, from 2019 to date, a total of 186 applications for fishermen cards were rejected for the following reasons –

- (a) 48 applicants were aged above 50 years;

- (b) 93 applicants were holders of Business Registration Number or were in gainful employment, and
- (c) 45 were involved in drug dealing.

**Mr Apollon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. L'honorable ministre, peut-il nous dire si le ministère peut revoir les critères pour la distribution des cartes de pêcheur ? Comme on le sait, les dix dernières années, cela a été utilisé à des fins politiques. Est-ce qu'on peut revoir les paramètres pour assurer que les vrais pêcheurs obtiennent leurs cartes ?

**Dr. Boolell:** Certainly, Madam Speaker. I invite the distinguished hon. Member from Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien to dispense his sound advice to us. We are here to pay heed to what he has to say.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes!

**Mr François:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that 100 fishermen cards allocated to Rodrigues in the present financial year by his Ministry have not been delivered to the Rodriguan fishermen? Will he enquire as to the reasons thereof?

**Dr. Boolell:** I am glad that the distinguished hon. Member from Rodrigues has made me aware! Now that I have been made aware, corrective measures will be taken to redress the situation.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. Mr Apollon, your fourth question!

#### **MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL – MEDICAL SERVICES & FACILITIES**

**(No. 1 B/11) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Mahebourg Hospital, he will state if consideration will be given for the review and upgrading of the medical services and facilities thereof.

**Mr Bachoo:** Madam Speaker, in fact, the answer is in the positive. I am aware that there is a project for the construction of a ground plus three buildings comprising *inter alia* an Accident and Emergency Department, Non-Communicable Diseases Services, a Pharmacy Department, Laboratory Services and a Psychotherapy Unit. The project is still at design stage and I will see to it that the process is activated.

In the meantime, the services being provided at the existing hospital will be upgraded to provide in the first instance, a 24/7 hours service for general medicine, cardiac services, pediatric and antenatal care.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Apollon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I ask for a humble request from the Minister if the ministry can, on a short-term solution, see to the better functioning of the Mahebourg Hospital as there are more than 100,000 inhabitants that use the services of this hospital?

**Mr Bachoo:** Madam Speaker, I can give the assurance to the hon. Member that in the days to come, I will conduct a personal visit to the hospital and try to make efforts to improve all the services that are there.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister. I would not like to be called 'Sir,' I am sorry. Just Madam Speaker will be okay!

Next question, hon. Fourth Member of Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, Mr A. Duval!

#### **FORTHCOMING MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS – DUE DATE**

**(No. 1 B/12) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the forthcoming Municipal Council Elections, he will state when same will be held.

**Mr Wochit:** Madam Speaker, the last Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Council elections were held in June 2015. Accordingly, as per the Local Government Act, the life of all councils should have ended in June 2021.

The previous government repeatedly postponed the Municipal Elections on three occasions since June 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Municipal Elections were postponed on two occasions for a period of one year each as from 15 June 2021 and a further period of one year as from 14 June 2022.

However, the previous government again postponed the Municipal Elections for a third time to June 2025. This was very irresponsible and against the democratic rights of the inhabitants governed by the municipal council concerned.



Madam Speaker, it is an undeniable fact that the previous government was aware that if ever the Municipal Council Elections were to be held, they would have lost all the 120 seats in the Municipal Councils. Hence, they came up with an amendment to the Local Government Act to extend the life of the municipal council by a further period of two years on the ground that the reform had to be brought to the local government system in Mauritius. The Municipal Council Elections are now due by mid-June 2025.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, one and a half year has elapsed, but no official report on such reform has been laid on the table of the National Assembly nor has the public been made aware of these reports. Our Government has the commitment to uphold the democracy and to ensure that the Municipal Council Elections be held as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker, we do not believe in piecemeal solutions. Our firm commitment is to redress all the wrongdoings of the previous government, to uphold democracy and to ensure that the local authorities are governed under a proper, modern and effective legal framework.

Accordingly, only a few days after joining the Ministry, we have already started to review and update the Local Government Act and all the regulations that flow from same. Our Government and my Ministry give the firm undertaking that we are going to hold the Municipal Council Elections as soon as possible when all the necessary amendments are made to the Local Government Act to reflect the vision of this Government.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister.

*(Interruptions)*

Be careful, I can hear!

The hon. First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, Mrs Savabaddy!

**LATE MINOR E.E.J. – ALLEGED MURDER – FAMILY ASSISTANCE & SUPPORT**

**(No. 1 B/13) Mrs A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the alleged murder of minor E.E.J. on 25 November 2024, she will state the assistance extended, if any, by her Ministry to the victim's family.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that on 25 November 2024, at 15:45 hours, one Mrs R.R. reported to the Police that at around 10 hours, on the same day after having fed her late baby E.E.J. of 18 months old, she found that the latter was not reacting. She conveyed the baby to Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, Port Louis where Doctor V. certified her death and the case was referred to the Police Medical Officer for an autopsy.

The autopsy was conducted by the Principal Police Medical Officer, where the cause of death of late baby E.E.J. was attributed to a subarachnoid haemorrhage.

Mrs R.R. confessed to the police that on 25 November 2024, she dealt the baby girl a fisticuff blow violently at the head of baby E.E.J. early in the morning. On 26 November 2024, a provisional charge of murder was lodged against the accused before the District Court of Port Louis.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that prior to the events that led to the tragic death of the baby on 17 October 2024, she was admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital Rodrigues for treatment.

On 18 October, the social worker of Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Rodrigues, referred the case to CDU Rodrigues. On 21 October, Mrs R.R. attended the first session with a psychologist of CDU Rodrigues. I am informed that a second appointment was scheduled for 11 November 2024, but she did not attend as she was in Mauritius since 06 November 2024.

Madam Speaker, when the case of the demise of the 18-months-old baby became known to the officers of my Ministry, psychological assistance was proposed to Mr P., the maternal uncle, the only relative living in Mauritius, on 27 November 2024, but he declined.

I am also informed that no assistance was provided to the mother as she was arrested by the police and was and is still in police custody. Given that the family of the late baby expressed their wish to conduct the funeral in Rodrigues, I made necessary arrangements with the relevant authorities for the repatriation of the body on 27 November 2024.

With regard to the father and other relatives residing in Rodrigues, I am further informed that the psychologist posted to CDU Rodrigues contacted them on 27 November 2024 and 06 December 2024 for psychological assistance, but they declined the same. I wish to reassure the House that close follow-up is being maintained in this case for further assistance.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that since I took office, I have already met the Commissioner of Police on 05 December 2024, along with different units of my Ministry. It was an occasion to review the existing protocol to reinforce the collaboration between the police and the Ministry with a view to enhancing the protection of children and women, victims of violence.

I thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes, hon. Mrs Savabaddy!

**Mrs Savabaddy:** Madame la présidente, en parlant des cas d'enfants morts dans des circonstances tragiques, je me réfère certainement au cas de la mère qui a avoué avoir battu son bébé de 18 mois à mort le 25 novembre dernier. Son ex-compagnon a déclaré dans la presse que leur fille âgée de trois ans serait décédée à la suite d'une chute en septembre dernier à Rodrigues, mais qu'aucune autopsie n'avait été réalisée. Aujourd'hui, il souhaite que la justice soit faite. Est-ce que le ministère accompagne ce monsieur dans ses démarches ? Merci.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Thank you for the question. Madam Speaker, I wish to inform you that we were informed that there was a previous child who died in similar circumstances, but an autopsy was carried out on the dead child on 24 September by Dr. Monvoisin, PMO at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and it was found out that the cause of death was natural because the late girl child was an epileptic patient.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Dr. Aumeer!

**Dr. Aumeer:** Merci, Madame la présidente. Puis-je demander au ministre concernant le rapport d'autopsie qui a déclaré la mort à la cause naturelle, êtes-vous satisfait ou avez-vous revu le rapport ? Merci.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Frankly speaking, I wish to inform the House that I have not taken cognizance of the report personally. If need be, I shall look into that. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Mrs Savabaddy! Next question please!

#### **RIVALLAND ROAD, CRÈVE COEUR - WATER METER CONNECTIVITY**

**(No. 1 B/14) Mrs A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water meter connectivity to households along Rivalland Road in Crève Coeur, he will, for the benefit of

the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to whether they are connected thereto and, if not, the reasons therefor.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Central Water Authority currently has a total of 310 subscribers in the region of Rivalland Road, Crève Coeur, who are connected to the Central Water Authority's existing pipe network. This region forms part of the CWA water supply zone, that is, the north. The region of Rivalland Road in Crève Coeur receives potable water from Crève Coeur Service Reservoir, which sources its water from Malinga Reservoir, Bassin Loulou, and Labourdonnais River. The daily hours of supply are between 4 am and 8 am and then 4 pm and 8 pm.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that following complaints from some residents of Rivalland Road on social media regarding water supply, the Central Water Authority has effected a site visit thereat on 06 November 2024. It was found that 22 households along Rivalland Road in Crève Coeur were not registered subscribers of the Central Water Authority, and there was no Central Water Authority service main in that particular area. They are situated at a far end of the road and on a higher elevation.

The Central Water Authority thus conducted a public relations exercise with the inhabitants concerned, who were advised to make an official application for a new water supply at the Central Water Authority sub-office in Pamplémousses in order to be connected to the CWA pipe network. I am also informed by the Central Water Authority that no application has been received from the inhabitants concerned up to date.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Mrs Savabaddy!

**Mrs Savabaddy:** L'eau est une matière première précieuse et importante. Sans elle, l'être humain ne pourrait pas survivre, mais toutes les eaux ne se valent pas. M. le ministre, il faudrait quand même dire que j'ai été dans la circonscription avec mes deux colistiers, l'honorable Ashok Subron et l'honorable Ludovic Caserne. Malheureusement, vos réponses ne sont pas satisfaisantes. Plusieurs de ces habitants ne sont malheureusement pas raccordés au réseau de la CWA. C'est le cas de le dire pour les habitants de Rivalland, Crève Cœur.

Est-ce que M. le ministre pourrait informer la Chambre des mesures qui seront prises rapidement pour que nos citoyens soient raccordés en eau et aient une consommation d'eau potable ? Vous avez parlé de 22 familles et nous parlons de 50 familles. Merci.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Madame la présidente, je peux comprendre l'irritation de l'honorable membre et son impatience ; je peux comprendre. Je ne vais pas me bagarrer avec les chiffres entre 22 et 50. Ce que je voudrais ajouter, Madame la présidente, c'est que pour être connecté au réseau de la CWA, il faudra qu'on ait une application de ces gens-là.

*Donc, connecting these households would require significant infrastructural work including l'installation de 500 mètres de new pipelines et upgrading of the existing pump system to ensure adequate water supply.*

Comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse initiale, Madame la présidente, il faudra que les 22 ou 50 familles, comme précisé par l'honorable membre, fassent une demande auprès de la CWA, et j'espère, je promets à l'honorable membre que ces 22 familles seront raccordées très rapidement.

**Madam Speaker:** Your next question because that has been quite ... And do not shout, please! *Le micro est très sensible.*

**Mrs Savabaddy:** I am sorry. I B/15.

**Madam Speaker:** Parlez normalement ! Parlez normalement !

**Mrs Savabaddy:** I am not used to it, sorry. B/15.

**Madam Speaker:** That is all right; that is better.

### **CITÉ LA CURE, PAUL & VIRGINIE STREET – WATER METER CONNECTIVITY**

(No. 1 B/15) **Mrs A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water meter connectivity to households along Paul and Virginie Street, also known as Ti Rodrigues, in Cité La Cure, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to whether they are connected thereto and, if not, the reasons therefor.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the Paul and Virginie Street also known as Ti Rodrigues in Cité La Cure falls within the CWA water supply zone of Port Louis. The region receives potable water from the Priest's Peak Reservoir supplied by La Nicolière and Pailles water treatment. I am further informed that households located on the right-hand side of Paul and Virginie Street leading to La Cure

Reservoir are connected to the water supply network and have individual water metres installed by the CWA.

However, the Central Water Authority does not have any pipe network on the left-hand side of the road at Ti Rodrigues as the area is currently occupied by unauthorised settlement or *un mot que je n'aime pas* 'squatters.' Madam Speaker, I am informed that an applicant for a new supply connection has to submit a title deed or authorisation from the land owner to enable the Central Water Authority to fix a water meter. I understand that the Central Water Authority will have to undertake necessary infrastructure development and the laying of approximately 3kms of pipeline to extend the network to the region concerned. Thank you.

**Mrs Savabaddy:** *Madam Speaker*, les conditions dans lesquelles les habitants de Ti Rodrigues vivent en 2024 sont unimaginables. Nous sommes pour le changement ; nous parlons du changement. Est-ce que nous pouvons changer le quotidien, la situation de ses habitants et améliorer leur qualité de vie ? Monsieur le ministre vient tout juste de parler d'un réservoir qui sera placé dans la région. Est-ce que cela peut se faire au plus vite pour le bien-être des habitants et aussi pour les enfants ? Merci.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Madame la présidente, je comprends encore une fois l'impatience de l'honorable membre, mais je dois préciser que *new application for water connectivity requires an applicant to provide proof of land ownership such as title deed or autorisation from the land owner to install a water meter*. Ceci étant dit, je dois préciser que *the land* dont on en parle ce matin, Madame la présidente, the land occupied by the squatters are found on private land belonging to various owners. There are about three hundred people/squatters at La Cure known as Ti Rodrigues over an area of 35 arpents. The squatter area which is located at the foot of Long Mountain is rather sloppy, and as such, there might exist several natural storm drains.

Je voudrais aussi ajouter pour l'honorable membre que *any future consideration for water connectivity on the left side of the road will depend on the resolution of the land occupation issued which should be dealt by the Ministry of Housing and Lands*. Étant dit cela, Madame la présidente, si les papiers voulus, les permissions voulues sont obtenues, au sein de la *Central Water Authority* et au ministère, nous allons faire le nécessaire pour que ces personnes soient raccordées au réseau de la CWA. Le coût du projet est autour de 25 millions de roupies, *duration of work* trois à quatre mois si les permis nécessaires sont faits. Je vous assure, Madame la présidente, le nécessaire sera fait.

**Madam Speaker:** Relevant only, please!

**Mrs Savabaddy:** Last question, thank you. En attendant que ces habitants soient relogés par le ministère du *Housing*, M. le ministre, est-ce possible que nous allions avec vos officiers sur les deux sites, que ce soit à Crève Cœur ou à Ti Rodrigues pour faire un état des lieux ? Sachant que vous avez reçu des réponses des officiers de votre ministère – donc, être présent sur le site et voir la situation de visu et avoir les informations par téléphone – est-ce possible que nous puissions aller sur place pour un *site visit* ? Merci.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Certainement, Madame la présidente.

**Madam Speaker:** *Merci.* Mr Edouard, hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues, please. Your question!

### **RODRIGUES – PETROLEUM PRODUCTS – SUPPLY**

(No. 1 B/16) **Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the supply of petroleum products in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) if there has been any shortage thereof in the past year, giving details thereon;
- (b) the established procedures for the import and retailing thereof, and
- (c) if consideration will be given for the setting up of a centralized system for the coordination and distribution thereof.

**Mr Yeung Sik Yuen:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that the supply distribution and storage of petroleum products in Rodrigues is presently effected by AEL DDS Ltd. The aforementioned company procures its petroleum products directly from oil companies in Mauritius as per its requirements and is responsible for the importation of same into Rodrigues.

With respect to part (a) of the question regarding the shortage of petroleum products over the past year, I am informed there has been occasional disruption due to increased demand, logistical challenges and limited storage capacity, notably shortages occurred on the following occasion –

- (a) on 30 October 2024, supply was disrupted for a few hours before being restored the following day;
- (b) on 09 November 2024, supply was interrupted until the arrival of a consignment on 10 November 2024;
- (c) on 21 November 2024, sales were halted following half day shortages until arrival of new consignment the next morning;
- (d) on 01 December 2024, a shortage of Gasoil disrupted public transport which resumed normal operations on 02 December 2024 with the arrival of new stock, and
- (e) on 06 December 2024, supply was again disrupted.

These challenges stem from various factors, including logistical constraints such as the limited number out ISOtainer available and the disruption caused by increased bulk purchases.

To address these issues, we have taken proactive steps, including increasing the ISOtainer filing capacity, improving stock management and securing additional ISOtainers which are expected to enhance supply reliability by January 2025. Additionally, priority measures such as dedicating specific filing stations for government, emergency services and public buses have been implemented to mitigate the impact of shortages on social services.

Madam Speaker, with respect to part (b) of the other question, as I mentioned earlier, AEL DDS Ltd. is presently responsible for the whole supply chain of petroleum products in Rodrigues from the importation to the retailing of the products. The company faces challenges such as limited shipping capacity, restricted storage facilities and rising demand from the public and Central Electricity Board.

Petroleum products are transported from Mauritius to Rodrigues in dedicated ISOtainers with recent addition bringing the fleet to 16 units present. I am informed that AEL DDS Ltd. owns and operates three petrol service stations at Port Mathurin, Mont-Lubin and Grand La Fouche Corail. Additionally, AEL DDS Ltd. also owns and operates a mobile truck at Baie Lascar Service Station which is used to replenish vehicles with Gasoil only.



Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, all possible avenues to enhance the present provision for the supply, distribution and retail of petroleum products in Rodrigues to ensure reliable access to these essential resources are being explored.

Madam Speaker, we remain committed to addressing these challenges and ensuring the residents of Rodrigues have stable and secure access to petroleum products.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister.

**Mrs Henriette-Manan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to whether he is considering in the near future measures such as the expansion of the port on the island to accommodate a higher fuel storage capacity, being given the increasing demand in Rodrigues due to increase in number of vehicles? Thank you.

**Mr Yeung Sik Yuen:** Madam Speaker, we will definitely take it into consideration subject to availability of funds. We will have to go to Cabinet to take a decision.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you Minister. Yes, Mr Edouard.

**Mr Edouard:** There have been discussions between the former Chief Commissioner for Rodrigues and the State Trading Corporation for a storage facility in Rodrigues. Will the Minister state if the procurement notice that had been launched in October last, will continue for a white wall storage facility in Rodrigues?

**Mr Yeung Sik Yuen:** Well, we will take it into consideration. We will discuss it with the STC.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, your next question please!

*(Interruptions)*

Oh, I am sorry. I did not catch your eye!

**Mr François:** Alright.

**Madam Speaker:** You did not catch my eye.

**Mr François:** Thank you. Will the hon. Minister confirm whether in the past, during any shortage of petroleum products in Rodrigues, a small private tanktainer or whatever name we call it, vessels were chartered to serve Rodrigues and if the problem persists, will he contemplate the same modalities?

**Mr Yeung Sik Yuen:** Well, according to the information that I have, we will need to have more trips to Rodrigues. Once we have more trips to Rodrigues, I believe that the problem will be resolved.

**Mr François:** That is correct and is the Minister aware that there is limited infrastructure in the port area? Even if we have additional trips, there is limited space in the port area, especially for containers, storage and others. Is he considering looking with MPA and other authorities to extend the storage area in the port area in Rodrigues?

**Mr Yeung Sik Yuen:** Madam Speaker, we will definitely work on it.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. Yes, your next question please!

#### **RODRIGUES – FESTIVE SEASON – GOODS SUPPLY**

**(No. 1 B/17) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the supply of goods during the festive season in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd., information as to whether consideration will be given for the increase in the number of trips of the vessel Peros Banhos to Rodrigues during the month of December 2024.

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, hon. Member. With your permission, Madam Speaker, I will reply to both Parliamentary Questions I B/4 and I B/17 as they relate to the same subject matter.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that as of now, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. is operating with only one vessel, the Peros Banhos which takes around 260 containers to Rodrigues per trip. For the peak period between October and December for year 2023, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. shipped a total of 2,013 containers. For the same period this year, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. has already shipped 1,512 containers as at

30 November 2024 with 510 containers forecasted to be shipped on the remaining two verges in December which will make a total of 2,022 containers.

Madam Speaker, notwithstanding what my colleague, the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection has stated in relation to petroleum products and of course we take onboard valuable suggestions made by distinguished honorable members from Rodrigues, let me say that as regard shipment of petroleum products to Rodrigues, 14 tanktainers were shipped to Rodrigues in the last verge and it is planned to ship 16 tanktainers on each of the next two verges to Rodrigues. With the above shipment of goods and petroleum products, it is expected that there will not be any shortage thereof in Rodrigues. However, of course, we have to err on the side of caution and it is precisely why I am going to inform the House that the MV Trochetia which went for dry docking will come back on 16 December 2024 and additional trips can be arranged to Rodrigues if ever the need is felt.

**Madam Speaker:** Now, I will call the Third Member for Port Louis and Port Louis Central, Dr. Aumeer!

### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC – DIALYSIS PATIENTS’ DEATH – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**(No. 1 B/18) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the death of dialysis patients during COVID-19 pandemic, he will state if the report of the Fact-Finding Committee thereon will be rendered public, indicating the supportive actions, if any, given or will be given to the families thereof.

**Mr Bachoo:** Madam Speaker, with your kind permission, I shall reply to PQ I B/18 and PQ I B/24 together as they relate to the same subject.

Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I wish to extend my deepest condolences to the families who lost their loved ones during this tragic period. The loss of these lives is a matter of profound regret and we remain committed to addressing this issue with transparency, accountability and a focus on systemic improvement.

Madam Speaker, since the coming in office of this Government, one of the priorities has been to look into the circumstances that led to the death of dialysis patients which

occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fact-Finding Committee set up by the previous Government identified major shortcomings in the management of this crisis. However, despite public demand, the findings of this report were never released. This lack of transparency only compounded the sense of injustice experienced by the grieving families.

Madam Speaker, the present Government is committed to rectify these past failures and ensure the right balance is struck between accountability and respect for individuals involved. The report produced by the Fact-Finding Committee contains sensitive, personal and medical information and you must uphold patients' confidentiality as a matter of principle. There is no objection to tabling of the report before the National Assembly, provided the consent of the families of the deceased is obtained. My Ministry is arranging accordingly.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, yes Dr. Aumeer.

**Dr. Aumeer:** Merci madame la présidente. Est-ce que le ministre peut-il assurer à la Chambre que diverses enquêtes ont découlé suite à la soumission du rapport du *Fact-Finding Committee* à son ministère tel que le *Medical Negligence Standard Committee*, le *Medical Council*, le *Nursing Council* ? Est-ce que pour ces rapports, le ministère peut assurer que ces conclusions soient aussi soumises à la Chambre, car cela fait déjà trois ans depuis que le rapport a été soumis et les circonstances atténuantes des décès de ces onze patients, ces parents, ces proches attendent patiemment pour compléter leur deuil.

**Mr Bachoo:** All these information will be made available once we get the clearance from the families' consent.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, your next question, Dr. Aumeer.

#### **RAINY SEASON – FLOOD PRONE AREAS – MITIGATION MEASURES**

**(No. 1 B/19) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the forthcoming rainy season, he will state the measures taken and/or being envisaged to mitigate the risk of flooding in the flood prone areas in Port Louis, particularly at the beginning of Ruisseau du Pouce in the vicinity of Crown land Tory and Rivulet Pailles.

**Mr Gunness:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Land Drainage Authority that the City Centre of Port Louis has been declared as high risk prone area in August 2019. The region of Port Louis, particularly the City Centre is highly exposed to the flood water emanating from the mountain range, that is, Le Pouce and Signal Mountain and is bordered by the mountain range upstream and is in fact, a trough, that is a “*cuvette*” by nature of its topography, and downstream it is bordered by the sea.

Accordingly, the discharge of surface runoff is highly dependent on the tidal levels at the discharge point which is Bassin Caudan. In the event of a concurrent scenario of a torrential rain and storm surge, the evacuation of flood waters is inhibited due to the effect of tidal locking. This causes a rapid rise in the water level in the low points, namely at Poudrière Street, Ruisseau du Pouce, Caudan and La Chaussée Street amongst others.

Madam Speaker, the flood mitigating measures earmarked within the region of Port Louis include the following –

- Drain along Lord Kitchener Street;
- Drain along Dr. Raoul Rivet Street;
- Drain along Pope Hennessy Street;
- raising of walls along Ruisseau de Créole stream;
- raising of banks along Le Pouce stream;
- reconstruction of bridges along Le Pouce stream, and
- upgrading of Boulevard Victoria Bridge, Vallée Pitot.

The following projects have been completed –

- drain works at Caudan along Motorway M1 at Place d’Armes;
- drain works at Cité Rosemont, Vallée Pitot;
- drains works at Boulevard Rivaltz, Tranquebar;
- drains works at Jules Mallac, Tranquebar;
- upgrading of Canal Anglais;

- construction baffle tank near STR Marketing, and
- removal of cover slabs in front of Winners.

The raising of walls along Ruisseau du Pouce consists –

- (i) raising of the existing bank walls, varying from 0.5 metre to 3 metres at different locations, and
- (ii) reconstruction of several bridges across Ruisseau du Pouce, including Gayasingh Bridge and two bridges in Caudan premises.

The first phase of the project comprises the raising of the walls up to the deck of the existing bridges and is currently ongoing.

In view of the constraints within the region of Port Louis, the proposal of implementing a cut-off drain at the foot of Le Pouce and Moneron Hill is being looked into by the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd. The geotechnical investigation is currently ongoing.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the Municipal City Council of Port Louis carried out desilting and cleaning works along the stretch of Ruisseau du Pouce, in the vicinity Crown Land Tory, Tranquebar, in February and April 2024.

In addition, all the concrete slabs over Ruisseau du Pouce have been removed from ex-Majestic Cinema to Brown Sequard Street and from Brown Sequard Street to Chaussée Street. 90 % of the works have been completed.

As regards the demolition of the KFC outlet, as at date, 95% of the works have been completed and for the demolition works at parking spaces of MEDCOR and Rogers Co. Ltd., bids are being evaluated.

Madam Speaker, with regard to Rivulet Pailles, desilting works along river St Louis were effected over a stretch of 4.670 km in May 2024. The council has effected clearing of the watercourse from overgrown vegetation and removal of obstructive materials, especially in the region of Avenue Cardinal 5 in November and December 2024.

Madam Speaker, as for measures to mitigate the risk of flooding in the vicinity of Crown Land Tory, I am informed by the LDA that a drain project has been identified for

implementation thereat. In this respect, the NDU carried out two bidding exercises for the appointment of a contractor for the construction of a flood wall at Nazareth, Tranquebar.

The scope of works comprises, *inter alia*, the following –

- construction of a flood wall over an approximate stretch of 400 m on both sides of Le Pouce stream;
- backfilling compaction and reinstatement of roads;
- concrete lining of riverbed over an approximate stretch of 400 m, and
- desilting works over an approximate stretch of 125 m.

However, as the bids received were unresponsive, both bidding exercises were cancelled.

Madam Speaker, following the unsuccessful bidding exercises carried out by the NDU, the project was referred to the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd. for implementation. A first invitation for bids was launched but no recommendation for award was made. Therefore, a second bidding exercise was carried out and financial clearance is awaited before an award can be made. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, Dr. Aumeer!

**Dr. Aumeer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister, as far as Rivulet Pailles is concerned, whether his Ministry will leave no stone unturned as to the illegal construction of a poultry building that has been the cause of deviation torrential rain over the inhabitants living in Cardinal 5 and causing major chaos?

**Mr Gunness:** I will certainly look into it because I am being informed by the Member. So, I will look into it.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes.

**Dr. Aumeer:** I have heard a very exhaustive reply from the hon. Minister and I am glad to say that a lot of works are being planned for the inhabitants of Camp Tory, Tranquebar, particularly Le Pouce stream. May I ask the hon. Minister, until and so forth, these works are

to be completed and in the advent of summer rains coming up, particularly torrential rains, whether he will make it a priority that those houses that have been earmarked in Tranquebar and along Mgr. Leen, particularly the six families, these people will be given priority of relocation or at least be evacuated promptly during torrential rains to avoid casualties? Thank you.

**Mr Gunness:** As far as the evacuation plan is concerned, there is an evacuation plan being prepared and has been circulated between different Ministries. Among the evacuation plan, we have voluntary evacuation and also mandatory evacuation. So, we will act, obviously, when we come in front of the situation.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, Mr Baboolall!

**PELLEGRIN, SEBASTOPOL, BRAMSTHAN, BEL AIR & BEAU CHAMP – WATER SUPPLY**

**(No. 1 B/20) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply in the regions of Pellegrin, Sebastopol, Bramsthan, Bel Air and Beau Champ, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as –

- (a) to the reasons for the erratic distribution thereof, indicating the remedial measures envisaged therefor, and
- (b) expected time-frame for the provision thereof on a 24/7 basis.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the regions of Pellegrin, Bramsthan, Bel Air, Beau Champ and Sebastopol form part of the Central Water Authority Water Supply Zone. Except for Beau Champ where water is supplied on a 24-hour basis, I am informed that the other regions have intermittent water supply. It is to be highlighted that there has been a general drop in production levels in the boreholes and surface water due to the deficit of rainfall during the year and the prolonged dry season. However, the situation has improved following the recent heavy rains in the East region.



As far as Pellegrin and Sebastopol are concerned, Madam Speaker, these regions are served by Melrose Reservoir which sources water from Quartier Militaire Reservoir and Petit Paquet borehole. Melrose Reservoir also supplies Sans Souci, Montagne Blanche and exports water to Etoile Reservoir. Pellegrin and Sebastopol receive respectively 5 hours and 8 hours of water supply daily.

I am informed that the dry spell that prevailed in 2024 has affected production from Petit Paquet borehole, which has declined by 17%. This deficit was mitigated by installing a containerised pressure filter at the Melrose Reservoir, supplying 1000 m<sup>3</sup> per day. The recent rainfall has restored normal production to normal level.

Madam Speaker, for Bramsthan, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that it is serviced by Montagne Fayence Reservoir, Bonne Mère Reservoir and a Containerised Pressure Filter at Bramsthan River. Part of Bramsthan, including areas such as Morcellement VRS, Lallbahadoor Road, Kalipa and Shivala Road, enjoys water supply of 18 hours daily, while part of Bramsthan, that is, Chemin Dominique, Nunka Road, Morcellement La Gaieté, Downtall Road, Shivala Road, Bernard Road, are supplied with 10 hours of water daily.

The prolonged dry season has caused a reduction in production from Belle Rose, Clemencia borehole by 37.5% and from Bramsthan containerised pressure filter by nearly 50%. Valve operation had to be carried out to rationalise distribution of water. Water tankers were deployed to service the most affected areas, namely Shivala Road, Lallbahadoor Road and Morcellement VRS. With the recent rainfall, production has improved and tankers trips have also been reduced.

Madam Speaker, concerning the region of Bel Air, I am informed that it is supplied by Belle Rose, Clemencia Reservoir which sources its water from Belle Rose Clemencia Borehole, Caroline borehole. The normal hours of supply at Bel Air is 12 hours daily.

The normal hours of supply at Bel Air are 12 hours daily. The production from the sources has dropped significantly during the dry season, leading to a revision in hours of supply from 12 to eight hours daily. Water tankers were deployed to the affected areas.

As for Beau Champ region, it has started to be supplied with water on a 24-hour basis only in August 2024, following the installation of a containerised pressure filter at Beau Champ Deep River. However, technical issues encountered in October 2024, with the booster

pump have led to interruptions in parts of Morcellement Beau Champ. The Central Water Authority is in process of procuring a new pump, are expected to be operational by April 2025. Meanwhile valve operations and water tankers are being deployed as an interim solution.

Je voudrais, Madame la présidente, avant de terminer, ajouter que pour l'honorable membre et les autres membres de la Chambre, la stratégie de mobilisation des ressources en eau de traitement, de stockage et de distribution d'eau en vue d'améliorer l'approvisionnement en eau de la population est en cours de révision. Malheureusement, faudra le dire, suite à l'incapacité du gouvernement précédent à mettre en œuvre ses promesses de 2014 « *delo 24/7* », les parties prenantes concernées seront consultées en temps et lieu.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

**Madam Speaker:** Je vous en prie. You have no supplementary? We have three minutes left. Maybe I shall suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour at this stage.

*At 12.58 p.m. the Sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.41 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.*

**Madam Speaker:** Please be seated!

We resume Questions. Hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, Mr Baboolall!

#### **CONSTITUENCY NO. 10 – FLOOD PRONE AREAS – SURVEY**

**(No. 1 B/21) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to flooding in Constituency No. 10, Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, he will state if a survey has been carried out to identify the flood prone areas to avoid recurrent flooding in the different regions thereof.

**Mr Woochit:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Land Drainage Authority (LDA) that it has identified 14 sites as flood prone areas in Constituency No. 10 and they are as follows –

- Near Bel Air SSS area;
- Tagore Road, Ernest Florent;
- Morcellement Verger, Bel Air;
- Pont Lardier, Bel Air;
- Bramsthan and Dowlal area;
- Near Chapelle area, Clemencia;
- Avenue des Echassiers;
- Avenue Merle, Camp de Masques;
- Melrose, Cooperative Road ;
- Hamza Road, Melrose ;
- Sans Souci, Montagne Blanche ;
- Tourterelle Road, Montagne Blanche ;
- Avenue Perruche, Montagne Blanche, and
- Junction Petit Paquet Road.

Madam Speaker, it is to be highlighted that the flood prone areas are dynamic as a result of climate change and land cover changes.

I am further informed that the LDA carries out regular surveys and consultation with relevant stakeholders to update the flood prone areas in Mauritius. In order to mitigate the risk of flooding, several drain projects are being implemented under the National Flood Management Programs.

In this context, I am informed that various drain projects have been completed so far and there are presently four projects which are on-going namely –

- Morcellement Bel Etang, Camp de Masque;
- Drain works at Sans Souci Road, Montagne Blanche;

- Drain works at Shivala Road, Petit Paquet, Montagne Blanche, near Louis Sylvio House, and
- Upgrading of bridge Camp Sonar, Camp de Masque Pavé.

On the other hand, the District Council of Flacq is undertaking cleaning and desilting of rivers of the following sites –

- Bel Air Rivière Sèche;
- Clemencia;
- Camp de Masque;
- Camp de Masque Pavé;
- Ecroignard;
- Trou D'eau Douce;
- Medine, and
- Deep River.

Madam Speaker, since I joined office, I have already had meetings with various local authorities including District Council of Flacq, in order to take cognisance of their flooding problems, with a view to finding sustainable solutions.

I wish to add that a meeting was also held at the Municipal Council of Port Louis on Thursday 05 December under the Chairmanship of hon. Govindranath Gunness, Minister of National Infrastructure in order to discuss on necessary actions being taken and to be taken for the cleaning of drains and rivers across the country in the awake of the raining season. Hence, all necessary actions are being taken to prevent flooding during heavy rainfall in flood prone areas. I am tabling a list of the projects completed in Constituency No. 10.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East!

**KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA – MONETARY DONATION – MOSQUES  
REFURBISHMENT**

**(No. 1 B/22) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the donation of USD 5 million from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the refurbishment of mosques, he will state where matters stand.

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr D. Ramful):** Madam Speaker, you would appreciate that there has been much dilly-dally and opacity around this matter by the previous government, of course. With your permission, I shall, of course, provide a detailed answer in order to qualify the situation.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the proposed amount for the donation for the refurbishment of mosques by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia amounts to USD 6m. instead of USD 5m., as mentioned in the PQ.

I wish to recall that on 05 August 2019, the Royal Saudi Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa, addressed a note verbale to our High Commission in Pretoria informing that the government of Saudi Arabia had acceded to the request made by Mauritius for a donation of the sum of USD 6m. to the government of Mauritius as assistance to support the needs and requirements of the mosques in Mauritius.

In June 2022, the Saudi government dispatched an inter-ministerial delegation, mainly *maulanas* to Mauritius to conduct a visual assessment of the requirements of the mosques. The report of the Saudi delegation and its recommendations were submitted for approval to the Royal Court in Saudi Arabia. On 07 April 2023, the Royal Consulate General of Saudi Arabia in Mauritius sent a *note verbale* requesting for a draft MoU to be signed so that the Saudi side may initiate the grant procedures. The request was sent to the Prime Minister's office for consideration. The final version of the draft MoU was submitted by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Planning on 12 October 2023, nearly 4 months after. Following internal consultation with the then Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, the initial draft MoU was amended to reflect the new proposals and same was vetted by the Solicitor General.

On 18 October 2023, the embassy in Riyadh transmitted the draft MoU in English to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia through diplomatic channel. The same MoU was translated in Arabic and transmitted to the Saudi authorities on 26 October 2023.

In February 2024, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance of Saudi Arabia informed that the MoU would be finalised of the completion of all the procedures. The Saudi ambassador in Mauritius was expected to facilitate the process as the latter holds the authority for the signature of the MoU and the disbursement of the first installment. The whole process, Madam Speaker, for disbursement was to be completed as follows –

- the payment was to be made in three instalments from the Saudi government;
- the work was to be implemented in three phases,
- the first phase was to cover 65 to 75 mosques approximately.

On 25 June 2024, the Saudi authorities informed Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of the proposal to add an additional clause to Article 3 of the draft MoU.

On 04 July 2024, the then Ministry of Art and Culture Heritage informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade that legal advice of the Solicitor General was sought with regards to additional clause proposed by the Saudi authorities. The Solicitor General advised that the clause proposed by the Saudi authorities should be incorporated in the draft MoU. The Solicitor General also proposed some minor changes.

On 04 July 2024, the amended draft MoU, incorporating amendments proposed by both sides, was sent to the embassy of Saudi Arabia in Mauritius with a request to expedite the signature of the MoU. On 22 August 2024, mission in Riyadh forward in the last version of the MoU, including the amendments proposed by the Solicitor General officially translated in Arabic. On 23 August 2024, the draft MoU, the English version along with a translated version in Arabic, was sent to the embassy of Saudi Arabia in Mauritius.

Cabinet noted *inter alia* at its meeting of 23 August 2024 that the final agreement of the Saudi authorities is still awaited. On 06 September 2024, the embassy of Saudi Arabia in Mauritius sent a final version of the MoU between Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the trust fund of the Islamic Cultural Office in Mauritius. According to available records at the Ministry, on the same day, an entry was made to the effect that a correspondence on that matter was dispatched to the Prime

Minister's Office by my Ministry. It is a matter of concern, Madam Speaker, that neither the original letter nor a copy thereof could be traced out from the record.

On 10 September 2024, a meeting was held with the Saudi ambassador in Mauritius with the former Prime Minister to discuss the way forward, but we have not been informed of the outcome of that meeting. On 16 September 2024, as the issue was brought to the forefront, following publication of an internal note from the Ministry, a communiqué was issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to confirm that with regard to the proposed donation of USD 6m. from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, no disbursement has been effected whatsoever to Mauritius as at date. Since 06 September 2024, Madam Speaker, no progress whatsoever was made on this issue from the then government despite persistent questions being raised in the media.

On 27 November 2024, when the new Government took office, following a request from my Ministry for clarification, the embassy of Saudi Arabia informed the Ministry that they had already submitted the final version of the MoU since 06 September 2024 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to be finalised. On 09 December 2024, the embassy of Saudi Arabia once again confirmed that the final MoU was sent on 06 September 2024 and a copy of same has been forwarded anew to my Ministry.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry now proposes to take up the matter upon the return of the ambassador of Saudi Arabia who is currently out of the country. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes, hon. Juman!

**Mr Juman:** *Merci, Madame la présidente. Merci d'abord d'avoir restauré la démocratie parlementaire.* Madam Speaker, it is a matter of great concern listening to the reply of the Minister. If official documents are missing from file, can I know from the hon. Minister if he will consider referring the matter for enquiry regarding the missing documents?

**Mr Ramful:** Yes, I can confirm to the hon. Member that I have already asked the officers of my Ministry to initiate an enquiry. If needs be, the matter will be referred to the Police.

**Mr Juman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It has been more than five years; does the hon. Minister intend to speed up the process since it has been more than five years, as I have said?

**Madam Speaker:** He just replied to that. He has already replied to that!

**Mr Juman:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Never mind. Go ahead!

**Mr Ramful:** I can reassure the hon. Member that as soon as the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia will be back to the country, I am going to speak to him and I will see to it that the matter is being speed up.

**Madam Speaker:** Your next question, please!

### **NPF & NSF – INVESTMENTS BREAKDOWN**

**(No. 1 B/23) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the National Pension Fund and the National Solidary Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain in each case, information as to –

- (a) the investments effected therefrom, giving a breakdown as to the amount thereof, and
- (b) if the amount invested into United Investments Ltd (UIL) has been recovered and, if so, give a breakdown thereof.

**Mr Subron:** Madam Speaker, first, let me thank the hon. Member for his question which is of utmost public interest. The more so that his question concerns funds related to the past and present contributions of workers and their future pension entitlements.

I also understood from the Hansard of this Assembly that the hon. Member was ordered out and asked to be collected from this Assembly when he asked a similar question to the then Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity in 2024.

The hon. Member can now rest assured that as the new Minister, I will answer all questions which are of public interest. This is why this House is made for. I will further expand on this aspect later in my reply. Second, I am assuming in his question, the hon. Minister made reference to the National Solidarity Fund when in fact he is referring to the National Savings Fund thus I will respond...

**Madam Speaker:** You mean the hon. Member?



**Mr Subron:** Hon. Member.

In relation to the second part of the question, I am also assuming that when the hon. Member is referring to the investments in United Investments Ltd (UIL), he is also referring to Hold Attitude Ltd which is a related company of UIL and was created as a result of a restructuring of UIL's level in 2019.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that, first, the National Pensions Fund (NPF) was established under Section 37 of the National Pensions Act 1976 with the objective to have a publicly run contributory pension system to provide for various types of pensions to workers of this country.

The NPF is administered by the Minister of Social Security and the NPF/NSF Investment Committee set up as per Section 38 of the National Pensions Act 1976. In 2020, the previous Government unilaterally, without consultations with stakeholders, decided to do away with the National Pension Scheme. Thus, since October 2020, employees and employers no more contribute to the NPF. The Ministry is now administering the past contributions made to the fund.

The National Savings Fund was established under Section 3 of the National Savings Fund Act 1995 with the objectives to provide for the payment of a lump sum to every employee on his retirement or in respect of every employee at the time of his death and to set up and operate for the benefits of employees such schemes including loan schemes as may be prescribed. Employers contribute 2.5% in respect of each employee thus the Fund is still operational and administered by my Ministry.

Madame Speaker, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that at the end of September 2024 the total value of investments of the NPF stood at around Rs160.5 billion and the value of investment of the NSF stood at around Rs45.5 billion. I am also pleased to announce to the hon. Members in this House that in line with the policy of change and *rupture* of the new Government, I am tabling today the full detailed list of investments for both NPF and NSF as at September 2024.

Total disclosure to the National Assembly on matters of public interest and public funds will henceforth be the norm of my Ministry thus creating conditions for citizens monitoring and watchdog on matters of public interests and public funds.

Madame Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the amount invested in United Investments Ltd has not yet been recovered. I wish to inform the

House that UIL is an investment holding company quoted on the Mauritian Development Enterprise Market (DEM). After an internal restructuring of the company, the financial and non-financial clusters of UIL were separated and thereafter Hold Attitude Ltd was regrouped under the hospitality cluster. The NPF and NSF now deal with Hold Attitude Ltd.

Madam Speaker, in March 2022, NPF and NSF invested in aggregate an amount of Rs1.5 billion in secured bond issued by Hold Attitude Ltd and split as follows –

- (i) NPF – Rs1,001,439,000
- (ii) NSF – Rs448,561,000

The security offered was a pledge of 40% stake in the shares of Attitude Hospitality Ltd. As at February 2024, these shares were valued at around Rs2.29 billion by KPMG. As at 03 December 2024, Hold Attitude Ltd owes an amount of Rs1,084,948,311 to NPF and Rs485,960,194 to NSF. I am tabling the details of the respective amounts held by Hold Attitude Ltd as at 03 December 2024 to the NPF and NSF. For the period of March to September 2023, there was accrued interest of Rs89.5 million for the NPF and Rs40.1 million for NSF which was settled on 12 June 2024. Penalty of 3% above applicable interest rate on account of late payment of interest which was due on 30 September 2023 was also received on 01 July 2024 for an amount of Rs10.8 million.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that on 20 September 2024, Hold Attitude Ltd. made a request to the NPF/NSF Investment Committee to extend the maturity date of 30 September 2024 to 31 March 2025 to give them time to list the shares of Attitude Hospitality Ltd in the stock exchange of Mauritius. Hold Attitude Ltd. was informed via a letter dated 24 September 2024 that the NPF/NSF Investment Committee will not grant any delay in the repayment date and they were strictly reminded to settle the amount due together with the interest on the due date on 30 September 2024.

The NPF/NSF Investment Committee has decided on the 20 September 2024 that in the event that Hold Attitude Ltd would not repay the capital amount of the bond, an interest due for the period 01 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, NPF and NSF will trigger the event of default and will initiate procedures with the security agent State Bank of Mauritius Ltd so that these pledged shares would be transferred to the ownership of NPF and NSF. According to the Note Subscription Agreement, the event of default could not be triggered after five business days after the due date of 30 September 2024.

Madam Speaker, I wish to point that Hold Attitude Ltd made another request via a letter dated 30 September 2024, that is, on the due date requesting the NPF and NSF Investment Committee to extend the capital repayment for a period of two to three years or earlier. Upon listing of Attitude Hospitality Ltd, they have also made a request to delay the repayment of interest due on 30 September to 31 December 2024. The NPF-NSF Investment Committee met with the representatives of AHL Attitude Ltd on 02 October 2024. They explained to the Committee the series of events that have prevented them from paying the debts due to NPF and NSF.

I am informed that the NPF-NSF Investment Committee deliberated and agreed to the extension of capital repayment until 31 March 2025, but interest due was to be paid immediately. AHL informed the NPF and NSF that they would only be able to repay the interest due in September 2024 by end of December 2024, following the sale of some of their clusters under UIL Ltd. It is also to be noted that a penalty of 3% above applicable interest rate is being imposed on Hold Attitude Ltd for the delay in repayment of interest and capital.

As at date, interest due on 30 December 2024 has not yet been settled. The NPF-NSF Investment Committee is closely monitoring the situation regarding the repayment of capital and recovery of interest with respect to investment by NPF and NSF in Hold Attitude Ltd. In line with the provision of the existing law and the subscription agreement, in the event of default, the NPF-NSF Investment Committee will have to take a decision in the sole and best interest of the two funds, the NPF and the NSF. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, Mr Juman!

**Mr Juman:** Merci, Madame la présidente.

**Madam Speaker:** It was very comprehensive.

**Mr Juman:** Yes.

**Madam Speaker:** But you still have a question?

**Mr Juman:** Yes, I still have. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Je ne veux pas vous décourager.

**Mr Juman:** Merci, M. le ministre. Malgré l'assurance donnée par l'ancienne ministre que la totalité de la somme, R 1,45 milliard, serait remboursée en fin de septembre/octobre, cela n'a pas été le cas. Maintenant, on est dans une situation où on n'arrive même pas à payer l'intérêt. On a R 1,45 milliard qui est à risque. M. le ministre, est-ce qu'on doit attendre jusqu'à mars pour pouvoir récupérer l'argent venant de la sueur des travailleurs ?

**Mr Subron:** I am informed the issue will be discussed in the next meeting of the NPF-NSF Investment Committee. I am also informed that the committee could not meet because of lack of quorum in the two previous meetings.

**Mr Juman:** Last, Madam Speaker. Thank you. Can I know from the hon. Minister if there has been any due diligence exercise conducted on UIL, and if yes, who conducted same, and if not, why not?

**Mr Subron:** I do not have this information, but I can assure the Member when I have the information, I will inform the House.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay, your last question was already replied. So, I will now move to hon. Second Member for Rodrigues, Mr François!

### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC – DIALYSIS PATIENTS DEMISE – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**(No. 1 B/24) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the death of dialysis patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state if he proposes to render public the report of the Fact-Finding Committee thereon.

*(Vide reply to PQ 1 B/18)*

### **QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, RODRIGUES – CT-SCAN & X-RAY APPARATUS – OPERATIONALITY**

**(No. 1 B/25) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the CT-Scan apparatus and X-Ray apparatus at the

Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Rodrigues, he will state if they are operational and, if not, the measures envisaged to ensure the continuity of these services thereat.

**Mr Bachoo:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by Rodrigues Regional Assembly that the CT-Scan apparatus at Queen Elizabeth Hospital is not operational since 01 December 2023 while the X-Ray apparatus is functional.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the only CT-Scan of the island is not operational despite numerous interventions being done by technicians from the supplier who proceeded to Rodrigues in October last. In fact, a technician arrived in Rodrigues from South Africa in October 2024 and initiated the repair of the CT-scanner. The Commission for Health and Others is continuously proceeding with repairs and other interventions on this equipment which is costly to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Therefore prior to approving any further intervention on the equipment in November 2024, the commission has sought the technical advice and expertise of my Ministry for the preparation of specifications of a new, more performing CT-Scanner. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly will make funds available within its Budget Estimates Financial Year 2024-25 for the purchase of a new CT-Scanner.

Madam Speaker, meanwhile, patients requiring CT-scan are being referred to Mauritius and the cost of travel and accommodation for the patient and accompanying family member are being borne by the commission.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr François:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Will the hon. Minister agree with me that there is the urgency for remedial action to save people's lives in Rodrigues? You will recall the recent tragedy of the little E.E.J. as stated by hon. Mrs Savabaddy in PQ I B/13. She was medically transferred to Mauritius from Rodrigues as there is no CT-scan in Rodrigues. There is urgency.

**Mr Bachoo:** Madam Speaker, we are aware of this problem. That is the reason why we are precipitating with this issue. We are hardly two weeks old now. So, within a few months, we will do the needful, I can assure you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. Your next question, please!

### **CHANG FONG II FISHING VESSEL – BREACH OF LAW**

**(No. 1 B/26) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the fishing vessel Chang Fong II, he will state if the vessel has, on or about mid-November 2024, been contravened in breach of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2023 at the Port Mathurin Harbour and Port Louis Harbour and, if so, give details thereon and the action taken in relation thereto.

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you. I thank the hon. Member for putting this question. Madam Speaker, I am informed that on 15 November 2024, while inspecting the fishing vessel Chang Fong II in Port Mathurin, officers of the National Coast Guard and the Fisheries Protection Service of Rodrigues had discovered several shark fins measuring between 7 and 57 cm on board the vessel.

As party to the South Indian Ocean Fisheries Association and Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, Mauritius cannot remain indifferent and insensitive to the worse form of cruelty. A sharp knife was used to slice the fin and the bleeding shark thrown into high seas to die. Unfortunately, the fine for this serious offense is a fixed penalty of Rs5,000 only. I will seek advice from the State Law Office to review the fine. Since we have a national plan for conservation of sharks, the killer should not get away.

A contravention has been established against the vessel for breach of section 28 of the Fisheries Act 2023, namely for Prohibition on Removal and Sale of Shark Fins. The shark fins have been seized and the matter will be prosecuted before the Court of Justice in Rodrigues. If proved guilty, the operator will be liable to pay a fine not exceeding Rs40 m. or five years of imprisonment.

I am further informed, and I was rather shocked and flabbergasted, to learn that the vessel left Rodrigues on 16 November 2024 and reached Port Louis Harbour on 21 November 2024 after a fishing campaign on the Hawkins Bay. On its arrival in port, the vessel was inspected and this exercise revealed the presence of toxic fish, namely barracuda on board. In this respect, the master of the vessel was issued a fixed penalty notice under

section 202 of the Fisheries Act 2023. The master has up to 12 December 2024 to pay the fixed penalty failing which, the matter will be prosecuted in court.

Moreover, it was also noted during the inspection that the information contained in the logbook was inaccurate and incomplete. As this is an infringement under section 46(2) of the Fisheries Act, my Ministry has initiated an investigation in view of prosecuting the operator. If found guilty, the latter again will be liable to pay a fine not exceeding Rs40 m. or five years of imprisonment.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that on 23 November 2024, Froid des Mascareignes Ltd had refused to take part of the fish that was on board the vessel as it did not meet the temperature for preservation of frozen fish which is equal or less than -18 degrees celcius.

The Ministry of Health investigated into the matter and determined that the fish was deemed to be unfit for human consumption in breach of section 143 (1) (b) of Food Regulations 2024.

The fish was accordingly disposed of at sea at a distance of about 9.3 nautical miles from Port Louis. This operation was supervised by officers of my Ministry and the Ministry of Health.

The fishing vessel is moored in the port of Port Louis and will not be allowed to sail for fishing expeditions. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, Minister.

Hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche...

**Mr François:** Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I am sorry, you did not catch my eye. I have already called... I am so sorry, we have got only 30 minutes to go, let us give a chance to everybody. We will not reach the end. So, let us move on with Mr Baboolall, hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East!

**LATE MINOR E. K. G FAMILY – PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT & ASSISTANCE**

(No. 1 B/27) **Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the alleged murder and sexual aggression of minor E. K. G. on or about 29 November 2024, she will state the support and assistance her Ministry extended or proposes to extend to the victim's family.

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that on Friday 29 November 2024 around 19.40 hours, Mrs M.C.N.L. noticed that her granddaughter, late minor E.K.G., 7 years old, was nowhere to be found. The minor was spending her school holidays at her place since 23 November 2024. The grandmother proceeded to Bain des Dames Police Station to report the matter. There, the Police officers viewed the CCTV footage of the region, which revealed that a man was holding the hand of the minor and was walking towards Cassis Bridge. The grandmother identified the man as one A.R.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that on 30 November 2024 at 4.00 hours, Police arrested the alleged perpetrator, Mr A.R., residing at La Butte, Port Louis. The latter confessed having murdered minor E.K.G. The dead body was found in a wasteland behind St Georges Cemetery at Bain des Dames. An autopsy was conducted by the Police Medical Officer. The cause of death was attributed to asphyxia by choking.

Madam Speaker, on the same day, I visited the grandmother at Bain des Dames, Cassis and the biological mother at Chebel. I remained in contact with the biological father by phone. Meanwhile, officers of my Ministry visited the relatives, where necessary psychological support and counselling were provided to them.

Madam Speaker, I would also wish to draw the attention of the House that following further investigations, it was revealed that the suspect published on social media, several pictures of himself with three other minors sitting on a bed, each holding a bottle of alcoholic drink. At the material time of the death of late minor E.K.G., the pictures were still on social media. It would appear that this post has been online since last year.

Madam Speaker, as soon as I was made aware of these publications, I immediately gave instructions to officers of my Ministry to report the matter to the Cybercrime Unit on 02 December 2024 and to have this post removed. The suspicious nature of these pictures has



triggered an enquiry at the level of my Ministry. Upon identification from the outset, a psychological assessment was also carried out with the three minors.

Madam Speaker, I personally instructed that an Emergency Protection Order be applied for before the Children's Court, in line with the provisions of the Children's Act 2020, to enable medical examinations of the three minors.

Madam Speaker, I wish to reiterate that violence against children in all its forms would not be tolerated by this Government. This horrible crime against that child is testimony that we still have to strengthen our legislation, place increased emphasis on education and communication campaigns to sensitise all citizens on the need to protect our children. There is also the need to report on any ill-treatment and harm upon a child or any suspected risk.

Madam Speaker, a new protocol of collaboration with the Police is being designed to tackle more efficiently such cases in the future. The *Assises de la femme et de la famille*, which is being held today itself, will serve as a crucial platform, allowing NGOs as well as social and community workers to provide useful information which will serve to redefine our policies and action plans, aiming at the development of innovative and re-engineer policies for the welfare and protection of families, especially our children. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. Yes, hon. Baboolall, your last question!

#### **NEW FLACQ HOSPITAL – BUS SERVICE FACILITY**

**(No. 1 B/28) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the New Flacq Hospital, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the provision of a regular bus service for the persons attending same.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) that a regular bus service does exist at the New Flacq Hospital to service the approximate 870 visitors calling thereat daily. Currently, individual bus operators licensed to operate along bus routes 176, 112 and 232 are performing some 36 trips on a daily basis at an average interval of 30 to 40 minutes, starting from 4.45 hrs in the morning up until 19.00 hrs.

Furthermore, since the operation of the New Flacq Hospital in August this year, the NLTA has extended the itinerary of buses plying along routes 15, 16 and 17 and as such, six additional trips are performed along the said routes to the hospital daily.

Madam Speaker, moreover, the 32-seater buses of the NTC provide shuttle service from the hospital to Central Flacq whereby some 18 trips are carried out from 6 o'clock in the morning up until 18.00 hrs. Additionally, some 159 taxis based in and around neighbouring localities, along with those 30 taxis based at the New Flacq Hospital, provide shuttle service to and fro from the hospital throughout the day.

As the New Flacq Hospital has recently been made operational, there are inevitably some teething issues with regard to the public transport which still need to be addressed. In this context, the NLTA has been requested by myself to extend the services of buses operating along Routes 18, 56, 55 and 194, which ply through the regions of Montagne Blanche and Grande Rivière Sud Est to enable the inhabitants thereat to easily access the New Flacq Hospital.

Madam Speaker, following this Parliamentary Question, I have also requested the NLTA to effect a site visit to assess the level of service at the New Flacq Hospital and I stand informed that no issues have been observed as regards the level of bus service at the New Flacq Hospital.

I further stand guided by the regulator that initially complaints had been received at its level regarding the fact that passengers were alighting and boarding buses in a haphazard manner outside the newly constructed traffic centre situated adjacent to the hospital and this constituted a road safety hazard. In this context, following instructions from the NLTA, the individual bus operators are alighting and collecting passengers from the traffic centre.

On the other hand, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has already placed appropriate traffic signs thereat to deter buses from stopping along that main road while the Police has been informed that regular patrols are being ensured thereat.

Madam Speaker, to end, I am informed that my colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness will be holding a site visit tomorrow with all relevant stakeholders, including representatives from my Ministry to look into the issues raised in this Parliamentary Question

as well as to look at ways and means to further facilitate bus users going in and out of the hospital.

I am also informed that two site visits have already been conducted by the Director Health Services along with representatives of my Ministry. We remain open to the recommendations of this committee led by my colleague the Minister of Health, like I just said, also a former Minister of Land Transport and who is very familiar with the domain. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, Mr Caserne!

### **VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES, MORCELLEMENT RAMLAGUN – DRAINS CONSTRUCTION & FLOOD MITIGATION MEASURES**

**(No. 1 B/29) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to recurrent flooding in the region of Vallée des Prêtres, in particular, in Morcellement Ramlagun during rainy season, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority/Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd., information as to the projects for the construction of drains being envisaged thereat to mitigate the risk thereof.

**Mr Guinness:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Land Drainage Authority that the region of Vallée des Prêtres and its surroundings, including Morcellement Ramlagun, on 20 April 2021, have been declared as a high risk flood prone area. On 13 March 2022, following heavy rainfall, the region of Morcellement Ramlagun was seriously inundated.

In view of the potential risk to life, the following temporary measures were prescribed by the LDA for mitigating flooding thereat –

1. removal of all encroachments and obstructions and restoration of the natural drainage path within Morcellement Ramlagun;
2. restoration of the Rivulet Reserve and the removal of debris at River Latanier;
3. rivulet training works, that is, realignment of a stretch of 850 meters. These have been carried out by the National Development Unit and the Municipal City Council of Port Louis.

Madam Speaker, in addition, the LDA recommended the construction of a flood wall at Morcellement Ramlagun to be implemented by the NDU and the upgrading of the existing bridge along Bernardin de Saint Pierre Road to ensure adequate hydraulic capacity to be carried out by the RDA. To that effect, the NDU appointed Benchmark Consulting Engineers Ltd., which submitted a preliminary design report on 12 May 2022 and a detailed design report on 15 March 2023. The following flood mitigating measures have been proposed by the Consultant –

- construction of a cut-off drain at the foot of Mountain Le Pouce of varying dimensions which discharges incoming flows into Latanier River through the tributaries;
- upgrading, desilting, lining of the existing tributaries and River Latanier;
- construction of flood wall of 4 meters high to protect the existing build-up settlement, and
- upgrading the existing bridges and culverts along the different water courses.

Madam Speaker, it was also envisaged that the Consultant would conduct a geo-technical investigation prior to the implementation of the project. However, in view of the significant delay by the Consultant, the project has been referred to the DICL on 09 August 2023, except for the construction of the flood wall which would be implemented by the NDU.

As at date, the LDA and the DICL are reviewing the design. Concurrently, the latter has awarded a contract to Water Research Company Ltd. on 04 October 2024 to carry a geo-technical investigation. Same is expected to be completed by end of February 2025.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre called a site meeting on 18 November 2024 where representatives of the NDU, DICL amongst other stakeholders were present. At the meeting, it was agreed that the DICL would take over the project.

Madam Speaker, as regards the works allocated to the RDA, I am informed that the latter awarded a contract to Gamma Construction on 28 September 2022 for the following works –

- demolition of existing Bernardin de Saint Pierre Bridge;

- construction of a new reinforce concrete bridge of 21 meters wide and 3 meters deep, and
- relocation of existing services.

The implementation of the project suffered delays due to land acquisition issues, rerouting of sewer lines and traffic diversion. Works resumed in April 2024 and continued till August 2024 after which, the traffic diversion scheme was communicated to the public. Unfortunately, this diversion scheme could not be implemented due to protest from the inhabitants. The RDA is currently working on an alternative design which may entail further land acquisition. Works are expected to restart by end of January 2025 and the construction period is estimated to be 8 months.

Madam Speaker, over and above to the proposed measures I mentioned earlier, regular desilting of River Latanier has been undertaken. For instance, in July 2022, desilting of the river over a length of 5 km was carried out. In March 2024, some 8.5 km of the river was desilted, some Rs14 m. was spent for the desilting works.

Madam Speaker, following torrential rainfall in April 2024, River Latanier has been silted again. As an urgent measure, the Municipal City Council of Port Louis has been requested to undertake desilting works of a stretch of 600 meters along Morcellement Ramlagun.

I am further informed that the Ministry of Local Government is currently seeking financial clearance for the desilting of another 8 km of River Latanier. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Your next question, Mr Caserne!

#### **ABERCROMBIE MARKET FAIR – EXTENSION WORKS – COST & DURATION**

**(No. 1 B/30) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the extension works currently being carried out at the Abercrombie Market fair, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the scope of works thereof, including the cost and duration thereof.

**Mr Woochit:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis (MCCPL) that an initial contract was awarded on 13 July 2021 for the project ‘Construction of Multipurpose Complex and Music School’ at the Abercrombie Market Fair.

However, both the contract of the consultant and contractor had to be terminated given that there were disagreement between the contractor and the consultant due to several issues such as certification of payments, approval of materials and methodologies, among others.

Subsequently on 13 October 2022, the Ministry of Local Government requested the Ministry of National Infrastructure to provide a technical team to the MCCPL to design and complete the project.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the MCCPL that the scope of works is as follows –

- consolidation works and ancillaries at the ground floor of the existing market fair area in phases and make good;
- refurbishment of existing toilets and painting works for the whole market fairs (not included in initial contract);
- completion of all outstanding works and allied works of the Multisports Complex at first floor;
- electrical and mechanical works, and last
- temporary shelter to relocate stall holders during consolidation works at ground floor.

The proposed duration of the work is 300 days. A first bidding exercise was undertaken by the MCCPL through the Central Procurement Board (CPB) on 29 March 2024. By the closing date of 07 May 2024, two bids were received. After evaluation of the bids, both were found to be non-responsive.

In this respect, the MCCPL brought some amendments to the bidding documents as requested by the CPB. Same were submitted to the CPB on 29 November 2024 for vetting prior to invitation of bids.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the cost of the project, same would be known only after the award of the contract.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. Your last question, Mr Caserne!

That will be the last question for today because we are reaching the time.

### **ABERCROMBIE POLICE STATION – METHADONE DISTRIBUTION – RELOCATION**

(No. 1 B/31) **Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the distribution of methadone currently being carried out near the Abercrombie Police Station which is causing inconvenience to the inhabitants thereat, he will state if consideration will be given for the relocation thereof.

**Mr Bachoo:** Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight to the House that the relocation on methadone dispensing to another site without proper planning will tantamount to transferring these inconveniences to other regions. I have been made aware that the Ministry has already embarked on a decentralisation process with a view to decreasing overcrowding at the dispensing sites and hence, minimising any inconveniences. In this regard, stable methadone beneficiaries are being relocated to our primary health facilities and this is a slow process.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the whole project of decentralisation of methadone dispensing will be addressed in the forthcoming National Drug Control Master Plan which is being finalised by the National Drug Secretariat under the Prime Minister's office with all stakeholders including my Ministry.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka, we still have a few minutes left. You have nine minutes left.

### **NOUVELLE DECOUVERTE & L'AGREMENT, ST PIERRE – WATER PIPE RENEWAL WORKS – CONTRACT DETAILS**

(No. 1 B/32) **Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water pipe renewal works recently carried out by the Central Water Authority in the regions of Nouvelle

Découverte and L'Agrément, St Pierre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) the name of the contractor/s thereof, giving details in each case as to the
  - (i) contract value thereof;
  - (ii) completion date thereof, and
  - (iii) penalty clauses applicable for lateness, and
- (b) if an assessment of the works undertaken thereat was carried out and, if so, by whom, giving details thereof.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Central Water Authority has undertaken renewal works for the ageing water pipelines infrastructure in the regions of Nouvelle Découverte and L'Agrément, St Pierre. These projects aim to address challenges on frequent bursts and leakages due to the pipelines having exceeded their intended service life.

A project for the renewal of pipelines at Nouvelle Découverte concerns approximately 1.6 km of pipes along Rousset Road, Shivala Raod and Jokhoo Road.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that on 25 April 2024, Pride Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd was awarded the contract for the renewal of pipelines at Nouvelle Découverte (Phase 1) in the sum of Rs8,165,535. The contract was for a duration of 90 days. The project commenced on 19 May 2024 with a scheduled completion date of 17 August 2024 which was revised to 31 August 2024 due to an extension of time granted. The actual completion date was 25 October 2024.

I am further informed, Madam Speaker, that a variation order in the sum of Rs1,821,165 was issued to the contractor for the laying of temporary trench asphalt bringing the total value to Rs9,986,700. As per the condition of contract, liquidated damages of 10,000 per day are applicable for each day of delay with a maximum amount liquidated damages being 10% of the contract value.

I am informed that the project was supervised in-house by the Central Water Authority's Planning and Design Department. Assessment on site was conducted by the technical officers of the Central Water Authority. According to the assessment of works



carried out, the shifting of connection was completed on 25 October 2024 following testing, disinfection and connection work.

The Central Water Authority further informed that an interim payment made to the contractor, that is Pride, to date, stands at Rs6,443,098.25. The Central Water Authority has informed contractor on 05 September 2024 that delay damages of Rs10,000 daily will be applicable in line with the sub-clause 46.1 on the condition of contract. No liquidated damage has been applied yet by the Central Water Authority.

As far as L'Agrément, St Pierre, Madam Speaker, I am informed that the distribution network comprises of asbestos concrete pipes along Mercedes Road and its lateral connections at St-Pierre. These pipes have exceeded the lifespan and need to be replaced.

The project started on 07 April 2024 with a scheduled completion date of 15 October 2024. The supervision and assessment of the project was carried out by the Planning and Design Department of the Central Water Authority.

That's all. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, we have a few minutes left. Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka, your next question.

**Mr Venkatasami:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. | B/33.

**Madam Speaker:** Now, hon. Minister.

#### **STATE LAND – RÉDUIT TRIANGLE – SOCIO CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS – REMEDIAL ACTIONS**

**(No. | B/33) Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State Land at Réduit Triangle initially allocated to various socio cultural organizations, he will state the remedial actions being envisaged by his Ministry for the settlement of the dispute thereon.

**Mr Mohamed:** Thank you. I will try to be very quick. So as I said earlier on when it was my turn, Madam Speaker, plots of state land in Réduit Triangle were allocated to various governmental and non-governmental organisations including 6 social-cultural organisations. There was an application for state land on 22 June 2024 by Luxury Retirement Village Ltd. In March 2023, if we follow the sequence of events, however, the then government decided

to retrieve all undeveloped plots of state lands allocated in Réduit Triangle. The 6 social-cultural organisations, the status as at March 2023, were as follows –

- Maharashtra Bhawan had been constructed on a plot of land allocated to the Mauritius Marathi Mandali Federation;
- A socio-cultural centre had been constructed on the plot of land allocated to the Mauritius Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation, and
- The four plots of land allocated to the Hindi Speaking Union, Indo- Mauritian Catholic Association and the Mauritius Tamil Cultural Centre Trust as well as the Urdu Speaking Union were undeveloped.

In April 2023, with a 48 hours' notice to start construction over the leased plots of undeveloped land, government had decided following that 48 hours' notice to pull back the lease and to cancel the lease of all those 4 plots of land. Following that, Madam Speaker, I am informed that there are court cases that are pending. In April 2024, there was a plaint with summons which was upon the Ministry of Housing and Land and the Ministry of Arts and Culture and the co-defendant was the Mauritius Tamil Cultural Centre Trust. These plaintiffs in the plaint to summons claimed that they were beneficiaries of the Mauritius Tamil Cultural Centre Trust and as such there was another case that was also entered by the Indo-Mauritian Catholic Association against my Ministry back in July 2024.

As we speak, the letter of reservation which was issued on 16 October of 2023 to Luxury Retirement Village over the plots of land that were retrieved from the Hindi Speaking Union and the Urdu Speaking Union and as it stands today, the plot has been fenced. In spite of the fact that it is only a letter of reservation and it does not mean that title has passed; the Luxury Retirement Village has fenced, in my view, wrongly the land allocated to it. And, as such, it has not even informed the Ministry of Housing and Land that it is fencing the place.

The plots of land, the state land retrieved from Indo-Mauritian Catholic Association and the Mauritius Tamil Cultural Centre Trust are, as we speak, still uncommitted and undeveloped. In the circumstances, I proposed to meet the representatives of the 4 organisations meaning the Indo-Mauritian Catholic Association, the Mauritius Tamil Cultural Centre Trust as well as the Hindi Speaking Union and the Urdu Speaking Union to find the solution because there is a commitment that has been taken before elections and after

elections that those plots of land if uncommitted and undeveloped, would be returned and this is what we are doing. We are sticking to our commitment and we are returning those lands.

We are going to embark upon discussions in order to find what would be the most practical way to do it.

I am also considering referring the matter to the hon. Attorney General's Office. Why? It is because part of the letter of reservation to Luxury Village makes reference to the fact that they need to be informed in the event that the company wishes to raise capital through equity financing, prior written approval of the Ministry should be obtained and such issue of transfer or shares shall be up to a maximum of 30%.

So, prior to issues of equity financing being raised, there needs to be a written authorisation. Same was not done. As such, I am also aware that there have been negotiations with the MIC and the State Bank by that same company to the tune of several hundred million rupees without the authorisation being sought first. There is, therefore, potentially another violation of the letter of reservation. So, this matter will be referred to the Attorney General's Office with a view of seeking his advice, whether this letter of reservation can be cancelled, and if being cancelled, in what way to be done in a lawful manner.

This is my answer, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Now, time is really up. But I have to inform you that a few questions have been withdrawn: PQ 1 B/2, 1 B/34, 1 B/35 and 1 B/36. Hon. Members who have not reached their PQs, they can get written replies. You maintain you want to remove it, hon. Jhummun?

**Mr Jhummun:** Yes, I want to remove it so that I can take it for the next session.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, and then you can come back, of course. No issues then!

## **STATE SECONDARY ACADEMIES & REGIONAL SCHOOLS – GRADE 10 INTAKE**

(No. 1 B/34) **Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to State Secondary Academies and Regional Schools, he will state the yearly intake of boys and girls at Grade 10 level, respectively, since the implementation thereof to date, indicating if his Ministry proposes the phasing out thereof and, if not, why not.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **RIVIERE DES ANGUILES DAM – CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. 1 B/35) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Rivière des Anguilles Dam, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –

- (a) amount disbursed for the construction thereof to date, and
- (b) timeframe for the completion of works thereof.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **CONSTITUENCY NO. 13 - DRAIN MAINTENANCE**

**(No. 1 B/36) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the maintenance of drains in Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to where matters stand therefor in view of the upcoming rainy season, indicating the amount disbursed since January 2020 to date.

*(Withdrawn)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister, the floor is yours!

### **STATEMENT BY MINISTER**

(3.46 p.m.)

### **MAURITIUS – STATE OF THE ECONOMY**

**The Prime Minister:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. With your permission, I would like to make a Statement with regard to the State of the Economy. I will, of course, be tabling the document afterwards.

Madam Speaker, it is with great concern that I present the document to the House and to the nation. I say great concern because the previous government has left us an economy which is in an unprecedented state of precariousness.

The legacy of the previous government is disastrous to say the least. And the nation will be appalled when they take cognizance of the way the previous government has dilapidated the finances of our country.

It is shocking, Madam Speaker! They have fumbled and jumbled all the macroeconomic fundamentals. The damages done to our socioeconomic and environmental fabric defy description.

Madam Speaker, let me start with the macroeconomic fundamentals. Firstly, they have grossly exaggerated the GDP growth rates to fool the population into believing that there is an economic boom. There is no such economic boom! In fact, it is the very opposite of what they have said. It is now obvious that this was but a very dangerous political gimmick that eventually sealed their fate.

A reassessment of the National Accounts by Statistics Mauritius has resulted in a downward revision in GDP figures for every year since 2022. These downward revisions were more pronounced in 2023 and 2024.

The nominal GDP for 2023 has been reduced by close to Rs22 billion – *R 22 milliards, Madame la présidente* – compared to data published in September 2024. Therefore, in real terms, the downward revision is 1.4%, which is a lot.

Similarly, the forecast for nominal GDP for 2024 has been reduced by more than Rs36 billion. *R 36 milliards!* I do not know if hon. Members realise what all these figures mean. To arrive at these inflated figures, it appears that the growth of the construction industry in particular was deliberately over estimated.

Indeed, the new assessment by Statistics Mauritius indicates that the GDP growth was deliberately exaggerated by intimating that the construction industry would grow by 37.4% in 2023 and 38.8% in 2024, as published in September 2024. These figures were manifestly overstated – I am putting it mildly! Statistics Mauritius has significantly lowered these growth rates to 21.3% and 25%, respectively.

The previous government, Madam Speaker, has been boasting of high GDP growth rates in recent years. Let me stress that these GDP growth rates reflect the normal process of post-COVID recovery, and in no way reflects any kind of new dynamism in the economy.

In fact, Mauritius has taken more time than its peers to recover from the COVID-related recession. In 2023, the GDP in US dollars for Mauritius was still below its pre-pandemic level.

Secondly, investment in our economy has been on a declining trend as a percentage of GDP during the past ten years.

Madam Speaker, one does not need to have a '*Doctorat de la Sorbonne*' to know that low investment means low growth. Any O-Level student on Economics knows that, Madam Speaker!

Yet, what do we see? The average annual investment rate has declined from 21.9% during 2010-2014 to 18.5% during the period 2015-2023. The average annual private investment rate over the same period has also declined significantly from 16.6% to 14.1%.

In a country where more than 80% of wealth is generated by private enterprises, this low private investment must be very worrying. The situation has been caused mostly by visible deterioration in the public/private sector partnership. It is unthinkable how a government can destroy one of the most important institution strengths in our country's economic development.

Madam Speaker, this core strength has to be restored.

Thirdly, the trends in our external sector, that is, imports and exports and the balance of payment have also been worsened by the pathetic mismanagement of the previous government.

The yearly average export of goods as a percentage of GDP has declined from 22.9% during the period 2010-2014 to 17.4% during the period 2015 to 2023.

On the other hand, the consumption-driven growth, that is, the model of the previous government, has sharply increased imports.

As a result, both the trends in trade and current accounts of the balance of payments have deteriorated and is a source of great concern.

In fact, the overall balance of payments, which has traditionally been in surplus, has registered deficits in the last two years. It is no wonder, no wonder at all that there is a severe

shortage of foreign currency on the market and that there is pressure on the rupee to depreciate.

Fourth, related to the fast depreciation of the rupee is the surge in the level of prices. Over the period 2022 to 2024, cumulative inflation in Mauritius was 23%.

Our record on inflation has been one of the worst when compared to other peer nations. This signals a total failure of monetary policy and exchange rate management.

While we were cumulating an inflation rate of 23 per cent, Seychelles, our neighbour next to us, had an inflation rate of only 2.4 per cent. 23 per cent compared to 2.4 per cent!

Madam Speaker, as we all know, the poor spend a greater share of their income on food. Prices of food items have increased at a much higher rate than the average inflation rate. Cumulative food price inflation over the period 2022 to 2024 is more than 33 per cent compared to the inflation rate of 23 per cent. In other words, the food inflation has been much more. Therefore, it is no wonder that people have been complaining about the constant rise in the price of food items, but the former Minister of Finance and the former Prime Minister did not seem to care! They did not bother about it. *Ils ont fait la sourde oreille*. After all, it did not affect them!

Fifth, the previous Government had one of the worst records in terms of employment creation and labour market development. The employment level in 2023 was lower than in 2019.

The low employment rate combined with other major weaknesses in the labour market has become a severe impediment to economic growth. For example, around 23 per cent of the labour force were underutilised in 2023, which includes skills-related and time-related underemployment.

Moreover, only about 20 per cent of our labour force has post-secondary education. There is a persistent skills mismatch on the labour market and employers keep complaining about labour shortages in spite of the relatively high unemployment rate.

Madam Speaker, our predicament does not end here.

Sixth, the state of public finances has never been as disastrous and shaky as it is now. The previous Government has literally dilapidated all the fiscal space of this country. There is absolutely no room for manoeuvre. This is the legacy of the previous Government. They have practiced a policy of “*terre brûlée*”. As the French saying goes, Madam Speaker –

« *Après moi, le déluge.* »

The budget deficit and the public sector debt figures were largely understated. They are, in fact, much higher than the population was made to believe. As regards the budget deficit for the fiscal year 2023-2024, revenue was overestimated by Rs13.8 billion. Rs13.8 billion! This was done to deliberately reduce the deficit. Yes, Rs13.8 billion! And after thorough analysis of the figures, the actual budget deficit for 2023-2024 turned out to be much higher at 5.7 per cent of GDP instead of 3.9 per cent. I hope people realise; we are talking about percentage of high figures, and 1.8 per cent means a lot.

For this fiscal year, that is, 2024-2025, revenue has been overestimated by Rs16.7 billion while expenditure has been underestimated by Rs5 billion. As a result, the deficit would increase by Rs21.7 billion. The budget deficit as a percentage of GDP is expected to be 6.7 per cent compared to the budget target which was 3.4 per cent.

Even worse, Madam Speaker, the borrowing requirements of Government is going through the roof. And we know that in the present context, borrowing requirement is the most relevant indicator of sound public finances because it impacts directly on Government debt. The updated borrowing requirements of Government work out to be Rs59.6 billion instead of Rs38 billion estimated in the Budget. In other words, a difference of Rs21.6 billion, underestimated!

I must point out, Madam Speaker, that these figures are on a no-policy change. We are not talking about the 14<sup>th</sup> month, fuel prices, or bonuses. This is as it is now, without any policy change.

The seventh and by far the biggest blunder of the previous Government is the huge amount of debt it has accumulated through reckless expenditure on white elephant projects with obvious sinister motives of lining the pockets of the well-known cronies.



Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that when I was in office in 2014, the public sector debt ratio was under 60 per cent. In fact, it was 59.5 per cent. Today, it is well above 80 per cent! This is above the statutory limit that the previous Government itself had targeted. Updated data, in fact, shows that at the end of June 2024, the public debt ratio stood at 83.4 per cent; well above 80 per cent.

Mauritian parents and grandparents have always seen to it that their responsibility to their children and grandchildren is to give them the best start possible in life. That is what parents and grandparents do. Yet, what has the previous Government done? It has been piling national debt on the shoulders of the new born babies.

Indeed, over the last ten years, the previous Government has added – believe it or not – Rs321 billion to public sector debt. That is an average of Rs32 billion per year, which means every new born has a debt of about Rs500,000 as soon as he or she is born.

Included in the increase in debt are –

- Rs26.9 billion that the previous Government has had to pay as compensation in relation to the ex-BAI, Betamax and Neotown cases.
- Rs19.8 billion resulting from the deliberate depreciation of the rupee.

Madam Speaker, our fiscal space has been totally constricted, the more so that all the Special Funds about which they would not answer questions in Parliament, have been completely depleted.

Besides high public sector debt, our country is saddled with significant contingent liabilities. The list is very long, but let me enumerate just five of them –

- (i) Metro Express is unable to meet the cost of servicing its loan. Unable! And its loan is of Rs16 billion under the Line of Credit from India. Unable to do it!
- (ii) The STC had a total deficit of Rs5.6 billion under the Subsidy Account and the Price Stabilisation Account.

- (iii) As per the Companies Act 2001, Air Mauritius is deemed to be insolvent. Yes, insolvent! They have recklessly destroyed our national pride. Insolvent!
- (iv) The Wastewater Management Authority is unable to pay its debts. Unable! It is already in arrears of Rs2.2 billion and it has on top of that outstanding loans of Rs3.5 billion.
- (v) The Mauritius Post Ltd, the Casinos of Mauritius, the National Property Fund, CWA, and CEB, all of them are in deep financial stress.

Furthermore, the Statutory Bodies defined pension funds have an actuarial deficit of Rs47 billion. I can assure the House...

*(Interruptions)*

I can assure the House and the Nation...

**An hon. Member:** *Incroyable!*

*(Interruptions)*

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, unbelievable!

But I can assure the House, Madam Speaker, and the Nation that we will bring down the public sector debt to a more sustainable and manageable level. And we will do so not only to balance the books or fix the figures, but most importantly, to relieve our children and grandchildren from the burden of debt imposed on them by the previous Government. It is a despicable act on future generation. It is a despicable crime. *Ils ont hypothéqué l'avenir de nos jeunes ! Totalement !*

Madam Speaker, our endeavour to deal with the catastrophic legacy inherited from the previous government will be pursued amidst a number of challenges.

The most pressing challenges are –

- climate change;
- demographic trends;

- labour market constraints and resource repurposing;
- restoring the social partnership between Government, civil society, unions and the private sector;
- educational reforms, which have already started;
- social upliftment, and
- institutional reconstruction.

Madam Speaker, let me end by giving the assurance to the population that this Government will turn around the situation and secure a better future for all and for next generations as well.

The top of our priorities will be to implement a credible Medium Term Fiscal Consolidation Plan. Our aim is to significantly reduce debt and contingent liabilities so as to minimise the risks to our debt sustainability and ensure medium-term macroeconomic stability.

We will rebuild the fiscal space while safeguarding critical social spending to protect the most vulnerable. The Plan will also be towards growth-promotion. The more we produce, the more we can share.

Madam Speaker, if we want to reclaim fiscal serenity, we need to aim at a primary fiscal balance and pave a pathway to a debt ratio of about 60 per cent of GDP. It will be a tough challenge not only for Government but for the entire Nation. But we have done it before. We can do it again.

Madam Speaker, we are not going to go it alone. We will have to work with development partners, international institutions and friendly countries.

Let me reiterate that the previous government has fumbled and jumbled the economic fundamentals. Their mismanagement of the economy and their falsifying of figures have been an unmitigated disaster for our country. It borders on criminal negligence. It borders on that!

Their incompetence and irresponsibility are baffling. Difficult to understand! They have been practicing voodoo economics. That is what they have been doing – voodoo economics!

And they should be made to answer for their misdeeds. We cannot just note and then let it go. No way! What they have done borders on criminal negligence.

Madame la présidente, nous sommes dans une tempête financière. Il faut d'abord redresser l'économie. *That is the priority.*

I shudder to think, Madam Speaker, what they would have done to our beloved country had the people of this country not seen through their, what we should call, malevolent actions and given them another mandate. Do you realise what would have happened?

There is a God for this country. God knows! We would have had to chant, "Cry our beloved country" because this is what would have happened. They have tried not only to destroy our unity; we have seen it during the campaign. Attacks on unity! The victory is one of unity for the last elections. People showed that they wanted to be unified. It was a victory for unity. They tried to destroy not only our unity but also our institutions, our economy, and the future of our youth.

Fortunately, not one of them got elected as the people of this country in their wisdom have consigned them to the dustbin of history, Madam Speaker. My two hon. friends, I must say, they are in a way elected because they got in as Best Loser.

But, Madam Speaker, never, never again should anyone be allowed to destroy our country as these people have done. Never again!

We will take up the challenge of tidying up the mess together as a nation, all of us together, but it will take time.

Madam Speaker, there is no magic wand when you have seen the catalogue of what I have just told you; there is no magician to pull us out of this economic quagmire, but, Madam Speaker, history has taught us, ever since independence, that we have always been able to overcome the daunting challenges that we have faced as a nation. We have always done so.

Today, I stand in this House with confidence that, once again, we shall be able to rise up to this mammoth task ahead of us – as one people as one nation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Madam Speaker, may I?

**Madam Speaker:** Yes!

**Mr Lesjongard:** Madam Speaker, can I raise a point of order? Because the Statement made by the hon. Prime Minister falls under the item 'Statements by Ministers'. Normally, I know that it should not be controversial because we do not have a right to reply.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Let me...

**Mr Lesjongard:** Do I understand that now...

**An hon. Member:** Facts hurt!

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, let us listen and let me rule!

**Mr Lesjongard:** Yes. Do I understand that now Statement by Ministers can be controversial?

**Madam Speaker:** I did not hear...

*(Interruptions)*

Okay, let me rule, please!

I did not hear the Prime Minister attack any Member of Parliament. In Standing Order 40, we have contents of speeches. It is only if he had attacked, let us say one of you or anybody, then we could have said that it is not acceptable. I think what the Prime Minister has done here – I have been a Member here for 15 years – this has been current. So, maybe it hurts a little bit. I would suggest...

*(Interruptions)*

I would suggest ...

*(Interruptions)*

May I speak, please?

Of course, you cannot reply to what he is saying today. I would suggest hon. Leader of the Opposition that there will be other instances; maybe you will get a chance to come back on issues that have been raised. But I do not think we can condemn the Prime Minister on a point of order. So, I will not allow this point of order.

Adjournment!

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 17 December 2024 at 11.30 a.m.

**The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Speaker:** The House stands adjourned.

Adjournment matters!

### MATTERS RAISED

(4.12 p.m.)

#### RODRIGUES HEALTH SERVICES – PHYSIOTHERAPISTS/PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSISTANTS – RECRUITMENT

**Ms R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues):** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to raise an important issue in this statement. A particular concern to me and my constituents is the present delivery of health services in Rodrigues, that this House do take note that the population of Rodrigues is nearing 44,000.

I am informed that at present, Rodrigues Island counts only one Physiotherapist in service together with four Physiotherapy Assistants who are on the job training in mainland Mauritius.

Given the high number of patients requiring treatment for a broad spectrum of physical problems and their like treatment, health promotion and illness prevention, I call upon the relevant authorities to respond urgently, to remedy the situation, especially that the authorities contemplate the recruitment of additional physiotherapists as well as additional physiotherapy assistants at the earliest in the interest of the people of Rodrigues. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you.

**The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo):** May I respond?

**Madam Speaker:** Yes. Do not give us too lengthy replies, please.

**Mr Bachoo:** No. I have taken note of your request and I will see to it that the needful be done to provide additional therapists.

**Madam Speaker:** Who has not spoken here? *Je donne une chance à ceux qui n'ont jamais parlé. Je crois, je ne suis pas sûre. Allez-y !*

#### **MARE D'AUSTRALIA – ADDITIONAL PRESSURE FILTER**

**Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil):** Merci Madam. J'ai une demande à l'honorable Patrick Assirvaden. S'il pouvait demander à la CWA d'allouer une deuxième *pressure filter* d'un volume de 2000, ce qui permettra de *supply*, comme on dit, 2500 m<sup>3</sup> d'eau potable à Mare d'Australia puisque l'eau y est abondante et l'actuel *pressure filter* d'un volume de 1200 m<sup>3</sup> est insuffisant, donc un *pressure filter* additionnel permettra d'alimenter au moins un cinquième de la circonscription No.9. Merci.

**The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr P. Assirvaden):** Noted, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, Mr François!

(4.14 p.m.)

#### **AIR MAURITIUS FLIGHTS – MAURITIUS-RODRIGUES – UNAVAILABILITY OF SEATS**

**Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues):** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the issue I am raising this afternoon is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister. So, in regards to the actual non-availability of seats on Air Mauritius Flights on the Mauritius-Rodrigues Mauritius Route during this end of year period for our Rodriguan brothers and sisters stranded patients here. Many patients have already been discharged from hospitals and I am informed that they have been advised to wait after mid-January to secure a seat on Air Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, you realise they are concerned of the situation while staying in hospitals without any accommodation or any financial support. You will also note that the

Commission for Health of the Regional Assembly has been in default payment at a private hotel accommodation for our Rodriguan patients and accompaniers transferred to Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, I would humbly request Dr. the hon. Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Office to intervene towards Air Mauritius to schedule additional flight on a humanitarian ground to facilitate their repatriation either before Christmas or before New Year, which also will provide additional seats to many persons seeking to secure one. Thank you.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, if I may respond. I find what the hon. Member is saying shocking. Even on a humanitarian ground it is shocking. But this is what I have been saying; they destroyed Air Mauritius. This is probably the reason they cannot find flight, whatever they do, but I will certainly look into it and make sure that they go home.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, there is one here, there is Dr. Aumeer, then Mrs Savabaddy; there are too many. We won't be able to reach time. Also, remember you can put a question for next Tuesday; a real question. Okay? So, if it is urgent, I said. Young man here, I am sorry I can't remember.

(4.16 p.m.)

#### CONSTITUENCY NO. 6 – WATER SHORTAGE

**Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or):** Madam Speaker, thank you. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Energy and Public Utilities. There is an acute problem of water shortage since several months in my Constituency No. 6, especially in Goodlands, Grand Gaube, Vale, Fond du Sac, Petit Raffray, Calodyne, Grand Baie, and Cap Malheureux. So I request the hon. Minister to address this issue please. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr P. Assirvaden):** Noted, Madam Speaker.

(4.17 p.m.)

#### CONSTITUENCY NO. 9 – DRAINS & RIVERS – CLEANING

**Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil):** Madam Speaker, my request is addressed to the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure. I make a humble



request to the hon. Minister in regard to the highly flood prone village of Poste de Flacq in Constituency No. 9, that needful be made for the dredging of rivers and cleaning of drains as soon as possible. I would like to point out that the hon. Prime Minister did a site visit six months before and insisted that these tasks be done regularly.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, Minister, are you taking note?

**The Minister of National Infrastructure (Mr G. Gunness):** I take note and I am sure that my hon. friend knows that we had a meeting with the local authorities for the cleaning of drains and rivers.

**Madam Speaker:** Good! Now, Dr. Aumeer!

(4.17 p.m.)

#### **SOREZE – AVENUE ROUGET & LA BONITE LANE – DESTROYED ROADS – REPAIRS**

**Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central):** My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure. It is regarding Avenue Rouget and La Bonite Lane in Sorèze, Pailles whereby the roads have been completely destroyed since cyclone Belal, making it even difficult for people to have access to their residence. I would urge you to see if your Ministry can see to it at least now that you have a new Government, repairs are started.

**The Minister of National Infrastructure (Mr G. Gunness):** I take note.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes!

(4.18 p.m.)

#### **MARE D'ALBERT SWIMMING POOL – DEPLORABLE STATE**

**Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien):** Je m'adresse au ministre de la Jeunesse et des sports concernant l'état déplorable de la piscine de Mare d'Albert surtout en cette période de vacances où les enfants n'ont pas pu profiter de cette facilité. Donc, je demande au ministre si le nécessaire peut être fait très rapidement. Merci.

**The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr D. Nagalingum):** I take good note, hon. Member. A meeting is scheduled for Thursday next and you can accompany hon. Members for the Constituency.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes!

(4.18 p.m.)

#### CONSTITUENCY NO.4 – SHORTAGE OF WATER SUPPLY

**Mrs A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):** *Thank you, Madam Speaker. Humble request to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities, hon. Patrick Assirvaden.* Nous avons dans la circonscription de gros problèmes en ce qui concerne la fourniture et la distribution en eau sachant que durant ces cinq dernières années, il y a eu un *Senior Minister* qui occupait ce même poste mais malheureusement, la situation est restée inchangée et on compte sur vous pour résoudre ce problème. Merci.

**The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr P. Assirvaden):** Madame la présidente, c'est noté.

**Madam Speaker:** Très bien. Il y avait qui encore ?

(4.19 p.m.)

#### CONSTITUENCY NO. 13 – BUS SERVICE REVIEW

**Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac):** My question is addressed to the hon. Minister of Land Transport. Can we review the timings, the duration, the time that they have to wait in my Constituency from Bois Chéri, Grand Bois, La Flora for bus services in the morning and as well as evening, including Benares and Batimarais. Thank you.

**The Minister of Land Transport (Mr Osman Mahomed):** Yes, Madam Speaker, I take note of the concern raised by the hon. Member and I will look into it.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, there was someone on this side? Yes!

(4.20 p.m.)

#### MONTAGNE BLANCHE POLYTECHNICS – 3 CREDITS CRITERIA

**Mr R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE):** My question is addressed to the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research. I want to know with the reform coming for education to the status of three credits to be admitted to HSC and what about the standing of the Polytechnics of Montagne Blanche, which was initially a project of the previous Government meant for tertiary education, whether he will stand as we are meant together to have much more student at HSC levels? Thank you.

**The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research (Dr. K. Sukon):** In fact, we are asking each one of them what capacity they are using and I will come back. I understand that we do have spare capacity that can be used for running other programmes.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you everybody! Last question!

(4.20 p.m.)

**CITÉ CIM, RIVIERE DU REMPART – RESTRICTED ACCESS – FIRE  
SERVICES & AMBULANCES**

**Mr S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Sports. We have an issue with Cité CIM of Rivière du Rempart where access is very restricted to fire services and even maybe ambulances because of the football ground's wall, so I will request an urgent visit with our colleagues, MPs and Ministers of the Constituency to remedy the situation. Thank you.

**The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr D. Nagalingum):** I take good note.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. May I just remind Members that if you want to send questions, you have until tomorrow 2 p.m. to send your questions? And now, we discussed during lunch time, we have agreed that there will be *tirage au sort* but it will be done in a very strict and serious fashion, okay. So, don't forget, before 2 o'clock because some of you haven't reached your questions, you see, so we will have to give a chance to everyone.

Thank you very much.

*At 4.23 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 17 December 2024 at 11.30 a.m.*