



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 18 APRIL 2023

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

STATEMENT

BILLS (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS (*Written*)

THE CABINET**(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)**

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management
Hon. Alan Ganoo, GCSK	Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs

	and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation
Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram	Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development
Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping

Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah

Minister of Gender Equality and Family
Welfare

Hon. Avinash Teeluck

Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage

Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal

Minister of Public Service, Administrative
and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr Speaker	Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GCSK, GOSK
Deputy Speaker	Hon. Mohammud Zahid Nazurally
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
Clerk of the National Assembly	Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena
Adviser	Dowlutta, Mr Ram Ranjit
Deputy Clerk	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
Clerk Assistant	Gopall, Mr Navin
Clerk Assistant	Seetul, Ms Darshinee
Parliamentary Librarian and Information Officer	Jeewoonarain, Ms Prittydevi
Serjeant-at-Arms	Bundhoo, Mr Anirood

MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 04 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 18 April 2023

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications
Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Human Rights Commission for the year ended 30 June 2020. (In Original)

B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Integrated Annual Report 2021/22 of the Mauritius Revenue Authority.
- (b) The Gambling Regulatory Authority (Personal Management Licence) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 46 of 2023)

C. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training
Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 8) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 44 of 2023)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 9) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 45 of 2023)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**FINANCIAL YEAR 2022-2023 – TOURIST ARRIVALS**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to tourist arrivals, he will state if the forecast number of 1.4 m. for Financial Year 2022-2023, as announced in the Budget Speech 2022-2023, is expected to be reached and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, indicate the reasons therefor.

(Interruptions)

Welcome Arvin!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall remove my mask. May I bid the hon. Leader of the Opposition good morning and thank him for providing me the opportunity to offer to the House all the information I hold in my possession concerning an important matter in the course of what I hope to be a courteous exchange.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since 2022, world tourism and Mauritian tourism of course, have been living in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic that has so far, let us recall, claimed more than 6.9 m. lives worldwide including, around 1,000 Mauritian lives.

Now, prior to the pandemic, tourism as we all know, accounted for a direct contribution of 8% to GDP and direct and indirect around 24%, accounting for the fact that some 100,000 households derive income directly or indirectly from travel and tourism. Tourism earnings prior to COVID-19 stood at around Rs63 m.

Now, let us look at the figures of tourist arrivals prior to COVID. For calendar year 2018, we had 1,399,000 tourists; nearly 1.4 m. For the fiscal year 2018-2019: 1.4 m. and for calendar year 2019: 1,383,000; slightly below 1.4 m. Now, COVID-19 brought world tourism to a standstill with initially what were travel restrictions turning into travel bans, closure of air space and then of borders and, as a result, the world faced its deepest recession since the 1930s and it led to a profound crisis for both the Airline and Cruise Ship Industries, leading to closures, downsizing and redundancies.

As regards the travel and tourism sector, this mantis translated into closure of hotels and restaurants, tourism-based enterprises, massive redundancies impacting both the most developed

and the poorest countries around the world. Now, in Mauritius, let us recall, borders were closed from 20 March 2020 to 14 July 2021; nearly a year and a half and we experienced two lockdowns at National level, followed by a period of gradual lifting of restrictions between 15 July to 30 September 2021. Now, as a result for fiscal year 2019-2020, the number of tourist arrivals stood at 1,038,000, approximately 1 million because we lost only the last quarter of 2021. For calendar year 2020, we had 309,000 tourists and for the fiscal year 2020 to 2021, a paltry 7,300 tourists, the worst performance since ever.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, time is going by, we are still in 2020, I was hoping the Minister would tell us something that we do not already know. Please tell us about the reason for this year, hon. Deputy Prime Minister. We are not interested in things we already know, when the lockdown took place, what happened, this is already known. There was no point in asking you a question if that was the answer.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will surely agree that the question is the Leader of the Opposition's to frame as he thinks fit and the answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, under your guidance, is mine to respond fully and comprehensively to the PNQ put and that is what I propose to do.

Now, in Mauritius, I said in 2020-2021: 7,300 tourists. I wish to recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we saved the population of Mauritius. In the thick of COVID, we saved the population under the guidance of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health through vaccination, thereby creating the possibility of an early and safe reopening of borders. By the time we reopened in October 2021, 86% of our population had been vaccinated once, 80% twice and we had started the booster vaccination, exceptional worldwide and this is a performance that has been acknowledged and recognised both by the World Health Organisation and the World Bank. We have not only saved the population but we have saved Mauritian Tourism. Had Government not acted then, the inevitable consequence would have been closure of many hotels and tourism enterprises with massive loss of employment and livelihoods.

Government spent Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs12.3 billion in terms of Wage Assistance Scheme and it's relevant because had we not done that, we would not have been speaking of 1.4 million, we would be speaking of 50,000 tourists. Rs12.3 billion Wage Assistance Scheme to hotels,

tourist residences, restaurants, Tour Operators and all the employers and employees of the tourism sector, waiver of State Land rental and related support measures, direct support to the Hotel Industry through the MIC to the tune of some Rs15 billion and the Self Employed Assistance Scheme for Taxi Operators, Skippers and Pleasure Craft Operators amongst others, Rs354 million to safeguard livelihoods. When I say we saved Mauritian tourism, of course, it's not just Government. It is also the hotels, the restaurants and employers who used this time for refurbishment, retraining and greening and strategizing for the re-launch of the sector and also, let me pay homage to all the employees and independent operators of the tourism sector who, through huge sacrifices for themselves and their families, demonstrated admirable resilience and willingness to support tourism.

Now, as from October 2021, we began the slow and complex process of building back and of building back better. Why do I say 'slow'? Because, the global recovery has been a very gradual process with twists and turns. Today, we live in a world of uncertainty and this has affected travellers and the travel industry generally. Why do I say 'complex'? Because of this uncertainty, the world has changed. Collectively we have experienced the most traumatic, psychological upset since World War II. How does this impact on the health of travellers and on the willingness to travel and why do I say 'building back better'? Because we cannot have more of the same. The risk of future pandemics is real, disruptions in the global value chains, the capacity of travel, the travel industry to respond. So, since October 2021, recovery has been slow and complex.

In the fiscal year 2021, we had only 180,000 tourists, 12.8% recovery. In fiscal year 2021-2022: 553,000 tourists, 39% recovery comparing to the corresponding year, pre-COVID, that is when, in the course of the Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance, my colleague and good friend, spoke of the objective of achieving nearly - he said nearly - 1.4 million tourists, referring to that pre-pandemic figure and the objective referred to this present fiscal year. For recall, we had achieved 1,383,000 immediately before COVID. So, 1.4 million is indeed the target for the present financial year.

I have always said two things. Firstly, that it is a very ambitious target. We have never hidden the fact that it is a very ambitious target ever since June 2022; that is what we had said. It was then very ambitious, remember, at the moment the Minister of Finance spoke for fiscal year

2021-2022, we had had 553,000 tourists, representing a recovery rate of 39%. It was on the one hand very ambitious; it still is and it will remain a very ambitious target. On the other hand, a target to my mind is not an accounting exercise. It is the definition of a common goal to mobilise all the energy, all the resources, all the goodwill of the whole population, of the whole tourism sector to strive towards the future confident with a clear perspective of where we are heading. It was in that spirit that we created the joint working group with the private sector to strategize as to the reopening and how we would re-launch tourism.

Now, since the last Budget Speech, what has been the progress we have made? From 553,000 in fiscal year 2021-2022, for calendar year 2022, we achieved more than 997,000 tourists; a recovery rate of 72%; from 39% in the fiscal year to 72% in the calendar year. In the first quarter of 2023, we have welcomed more than 305,000 tourists; the recovery rate for this first quarter of 2023 stands at 87%. So, for the whole of the fiscal year, we had, so far, welcomed 926,000 tourists; a recovery rate of 84%.

Now, when I say 1.4 million is and remains a very ambitious target, why do I say that? Because, first of all, the pace of recovery is uncertain. Who can tell me what will be the course of events in Ukraine? Who can say for certain what will be global inflation and in our main markets? Who can say how this will psychologically impact on tourists? Will the phenomenon of revenge travelling remain a constant for the future or will it change? This is all uncertain. The challenge now – and that is why I say recovery is complex – is, on one hand, generating the demand.

Over the last three months, in our main markets –

- France, UK and Reunion Island, we are at 100% recovery;
- Germany is at more than 90% recovery;
- South Africa has got its own peculiarities, we are at 86% recovery;
- India, unfortunately, only reopened less than a year ago, we stand at 48% recovery for the last three months, and
- China has only just reopened and we had to wait for the second list of countries for tourists exchanges for Mauritius to appear there.

So, the first major challenge is that of demand; consolidating and recovering our position within the main markets and generating additional demand from the opportunity markets that are India and the Golf countries, first and foremost.

Now, the second major challenge after demand is connectivity. The Leader of the Opposition will be interested to know the number of airlines serving Mauritius. In 2019, between January and March, we had 22 airlines. For the first quarter of this year we had 18 to 19 airlines. The Number of destinations from which tourists can come to Mauritius in 2019, 31 to 32 destinations or ports of embarkation prior to COVID-19. Today, we have between 25 and 26. The number of flights we had, let us say, an average of 800 flights prior to COVID-19. Today, our average would turn around 600, I believe. I have the figures per month. Unfortunately, I do not have the total average for the first quarter.

In terms of total seat capacity, very important –

- (a) in 2019 first quarter: 686,000 seats, and
- (b) in 2023: 558,000 seats.

So, there are real constraints and challenges, but our recovery in terms of seat capacity stands at 81%. So, we are doing very well as Air Mauritius' builds back capacity and we connect with other airlines.

Now, one of the major challenges, for the Leader of the Opposition to understand, is cruise tourism. The cruise ship industry has not recovered. From memory, I think, the recovery rate stands around 22 to 23%, and that is, of course, impacting us. One of the reasons is that one major operator is no longer operating in our region and we do not have the cruise ships that we had prior to COVID-19. I will end on that, I would like to put it to the House that yes, we have this highly ambitious target of 1.4 million and we will spare no effort to get as close as possible to 1.4 million. But what is most important - and I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will agree - is tourism earnings. In terms of tourism earnings, we are doing better than in terms of recovery of actual tourists.

The percentage change for 2019 to 2022 in terms of tourist arrivals, we have 28% less tourists, but as regards tourism earnings, we are only at 17% less, which means that we are doing much better in terms of tourism earnings with a total of nearly USD1.5 billion for 2022. That is

accounted for by a longer period of stay. Tourism stay, on average, has increased and tourism spend per tourist has increased.

So, as we move forward, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are mobilising all the resources that we have at hand, working hand in hand with the public sector to bring about the best possible results for the tourism industry in the present fiscal year.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has taken nearly 20 minutes. I hope you will give me adequate time to ask questions and I hope he will have the decency to reply short and precise answers because this is what the nation expects from a Deputy Prime Minister.

The first thing I would like to ask the Deputy Prime Minister is: you are talking about recovery rate, we would have recovered 100% if we were to 1.4 million tourists. We are at 87%; Maldives is at 108% in the first three months of this year; Seychelles - you will be shocked to learn Deputy Prime Minister - is at 132% of recovery, meaning that it has 32% more tourists in the first three months of 2023 than it had in 2019.

We used to be the market leader by far in the Indian Ocean, and now, we are into third place. My question is –

- why is Seychelles doing better?
- why is Maldives doing much better, and
- why we are the last horse in a three course race?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to first point out that neither the Seychelles nor the Maldives closed down for as long as we did during the COVID-19 period. Let me just quote one figure for the House to understand why we chose to close our borders.

According to the WHO, total number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population –

- (a) Seychelles: 46,505,
- (b) Mauritius: 3,161.

What can be more important than safeguarding the lives of Mauritians? That was the choice of our Prime Minister and of Government!

Deaths per 100,000 –

- (a) Seychelles: 170,
- (b) Mauritius: 80, less than half percentage wise.

That is first and foremost the very first reason because we chose to close our borders and protect our population until we achieved a high level of vaccination. Now, the Maldives hardly closed and they reopened fully in July 2020. Seychelles reopened to tourism after closing for a much shorter period than Mauritius in March 2021. We reopened in October 2021. So, the answer is very clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. We made the choice and I believe it was the right choice to protect our population so that when we reopen our borders, we would do so safely and we would allow tourism to flourish in proper conditions.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, we opened 18 months ago and when you quote the figures of the Ministry of Health, we all know they were falsified and erroneous. It can be proven at any time by looking at the deaths in 2022 and 2021...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...compared to the average. It can be proven; I'm sorry about that. Now it is COVID-19; in his Press conference, he said and I quote -

“(...) en raison du mauvais temps qui a prévalu en février (...)”.

I looked at the Météo report for February; it was one of the driest months for the last 30 years. So, what is the real reason? *En raison du mauvais temps*, because of COVID-19, 18 months ago or, simply because the Ministry is not competent enough to run the tourism industry in Mauritius?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first and foremost, I take on behalf of Government strong objection...

Mr X. L. Duval: It is true!

The Deputy Prime Minister: I did not interrupt the Leader of the Opposition. He speaks of decency and I would request that he be decent enough to listen just as I listened to him politely.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we take strong objection to the accusation that figures would have been falsified. These figures have been vetted and are being used by the World Health Organisation. They have been considered both by the World Bank and the IMF and are being used internationally. There are within international society clear procedures for collection of data at national level and compilation at international level that are used by international bodies. Unfortunately, this Leader of the Opposition and this Opposition as a whole have spent the whole COVID-19 period casting doubt at closing and reopening borders; casting doubt at vaccination; casting doubt at the whole effort of my colleagues of the Ministry of Health and that is indeed shameful, Mr Speaker, Sir! Likewise, in terms of public spending to protect the population, to protect the economy, this has been acknowledged worldwide, ...

An hon. Member: Worldwide!

The Deputy prime Minister: ... by everybody save for this Opposition. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, the figures speak for themselves. We have one of the best performances in terms of affording protection to our population and we are very proud of that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Now secondly, as regards February, what I said in the course of my Press conference, was that in the specific case of South Africa nous avons noté une progression en dents de scie, une progression certes mais de janvier à mars, nous avons fait 96% de récupération au mois de janvier, 84% de taux de récupération sur le marché sud-africain au mois de février. Donc, j'ai posé la question : pourquoi ? J'ai interrogé mes collègues de la MTPA ; j'ai interrogé des spécialistes du domaine, des hôteliers, des opérateurs et ils m'ont parlé du cyclone Freddy. Le cyclone Freddy, nous le savons tous, qui a eu la plus longue durée dans toute l'histoire des cyclones, qui s'est renforcit, je crois, six fois et qui a traversé tout l'océan Indien. Et toute cette période de mauvais temps associée à Freddy a coïncidé avec la St Valentin et donc, nous avons eu des annulations de dernières minutes. Et donc, c'est pour cela que j'ai fait référence en ce qui concerne le mois de février au marché sud-africain et le mauvais temps ayant prévalu.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sad that something as important as that, it is as if I'm asking a PNQ to the Minister of Health. Very disappointing, I must tell you quite frankly!

Now, I am going to come to this weird issue. The Deputy Prime Minister thinks that revenue has in fact increased per tourist compared to 2019. He is forgetting inflation. Not inflation in Mauritius; inflation in the dollar zone because he quoted dollars. Inflation in the dollar zone from 2019 to 2022 is nearly 20%. So, whatever you are saying is total rubbish in that firstly what we can say for sure...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Withdraw!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please remove that!

Mr X. L. Duval: He is totally wrong!

Mr Speaker: Withdraw that word!

Mr X. L. Duval: “Rubbish” I withdraw. Totally wrong!

Totally! 100%, 1000% wrong because not only the recovery rate is much less than our competitors but also revenue per tourist is less in real terms. And I hope you understand the difference between real terms and nominal terms. It is not the same at all. One iPhone was worth \$900 in 2019, it is \$1,200 today. The purchasing power goes down. Do not come and tell things that are completely wrong!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not, as the Leader of the Opposition used, say that what he has said is rubbish. I have too much respect for the traditions of parliamentary debate in our House...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Deputy Prime Minister: ... than to use such terms. And may I assure him that I know fully well what impact inflation has and what it means in terms of reality.

Nonetheless, the figures are the figures, and the Leader of the Opposition, if instead of giggling, he would have the courtesy of listening, I could say that he is 10,000 times, 100,000 times, 1 billion times wrong likewise. The figures are clear. From 2019 to 2022, my point was: the percentage drop in tourism earnings is less than the percentage drop in tourist arrivals. And likewise, in terms of earnings per tourist, we have earned more. So, a comparison – and let me

say this again – January to December 2019, we have 28% less tourists but tourism earnings have been reduced by only 17% and the earnings per tourist have in fact increased by 16%. And I deliberately expressed the figures in US dollars as opposed to Mauritian rupees.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Deputy Prime Minister does not understand that there is inflation in dollar terms also, not just in Mauritian terms. Maybe that is something for you to find out after this PNQ.

Now, I want to come to the budget, Mr Speaker, Sir. Now, once upon a time, 5-6 years ago the MTPA was enjoying a budget of maybe 14 million Euros. Now this year, it will get in nominal terms 8 million Euros but in real terms, counting inflation – which I am sure the MTPA will tell you all about – it is about 6 million Euros. So, the MTPA has half the budget that it used to have and that is a fact! 100% right! That is a fact! Now, where is the money going? Because the money is being spent, the taxpayer is spending the money. He is spending the money, Rs130 m. to Rs400 m. on Liverpool, probably useless and Rs300 m. or more on Film Rebate Scheme, that is where the money is going instead of going to your Ministry for promotion. So, I am trying to help you here, your Ministry has been squeezed completely of funds – half of what it used to get for promotion – and that is the reason why tourism is less. That is the reason, plus the fact that the country is so dirty, plus the fact that there is hardly any night life, plus the fact that during COVID-19, instead of improving the destination, the amenities, hotels, renovations etc., you sat on your hands and did nothing. These are the reasons why today we are stuck in tourism. That is the real reason.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first let me clarify one thing. On this side of the House, we are a team, we operate as a team. So, when the Leader of the Opposition says he is ashamed...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Deputy Prime Minister: ...that he has asked me a question, it is as if a question to the Minister of Health, well, we are a team and the language we speak is the same language. It is the language of truth whether expressed by the Prime Minister, my colleague of Health, my

colleague of Finance or myself. We speak and we act as a team. I know it might be difficult for the Opposition with all its divisions to understand that but we act as a team.

(Interruptions)

Secondly, I would pray once again that the Leader of the Opposition, I understand the President designate of the Labour Party led alliance, should show some respect and courtesy in the House. It is as if he is the one who understands Economics, who understands inflation as if nobody else understands that inflation is also expressed in dollar terms but that is the reality for the whole world round.

Mr X. L. Duval: Exactly!

The Deputy Prime Minister: For the Seychelles, for the Maldives, for Reunion, for South Africa, that is the reality and we cannot escape that.

Now, as regards the MTPA, let me come back to the point of working as a team. My duty as Minister of Tourism is to ensure that every cent of public money is properly spent. With the MTPA, we are working to ensure that the whole marketing strategy is constantly being updated, is dynamic as following the trend of each particular market. The Leader of the Opposition I believe, was once the Minister of Tourism. He should understand that when I speak of opportunity markets, it means a new strategy as regards India, as regards the Gulf States and in the near future, as regards China. Whatever budget the MTPA has is closely followed by the Ministry of Tourism and by my colleague of Finance.

Whenever and wherever there is a need expressed by the MTPA through the Ministry of Tourism for additional funding, we have had no issues. I may assure the Leader of the Opposition, funding will follow the marketing strategy to guarantee optimal use of public funds in the interest of an effective tourism marketing.

Mr Speaker: Time over by 5 minutes.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *Bravo !*

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame!

Mr Speaker: Prime Minister's Question Time!

**ECO DEER PARK ASSOCIATION – ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES – COMMISSION
OF INQUIRY**

(No. B/210) **Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the State land allocated to Eco Deer Park Association at Grand Bassin, he will state if he will consider the advisability of setting up a Commission of Inquiry presided by a Judge to look into the allegations of –

- (a) irregularities in the allocation thereof;
- (b) illegal activities organised by the lessor or drug traffickers;
- (c) bribery against the current hon. Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, and
- (d) any other illegal matters pertaining thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, the House will recall that, in his reply to the Private Notice Question from the Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday 11 April 2023, the Attorney General and Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security provided detailed information and clarifications regarding the grant of the Shooting and Fishing Lease to Eco Deer Park Association on the State land at Dayot, Grand Bassin.

He also explained the reasons for which the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security had subsequently decided to cancel the lease of Eco Deer Park Association and to resume possession of the said State land.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister also informed the House that the Independent Commission Against Corruption has already initiated an inquiry into an allegation of corruption and money laundering in respect of the lease of the State land at Dayot to RKS Deer Ranch Ltd. and Eco Deer Park Association. He emphasised that both the Ministry of Agro-Industry and

Food Security and the Forestry Service are collaborating fully in the investigation by providing all the information sought by the ICAC.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Police has also initiated an inquiry, which is ongoing, following reports made in March 2023 regarding alleged illegal activities at the State land formerly leased to Eco Deer Park Association.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to point out that, as at date, I am not in presence of any report from relevant authorities on an alleged case of bribery against the Attorney General and the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this particular case, it is neither advisable nor desirable to set up a Commission of Inquiry, as suggested by the hon. Member, for the reasons I shall explain.

Section 12(2) of the Commissions of Inquiry Act provides as follows, and I quote –

“No evidence given before a Commission shall –

- (a) give rise to any civil or criminal proceedings, other than a prosecution for perjury, against any person giving such evidence;
- (b) be admissible against any person in any civil or criminal proceedings, except in the case of a witness charged with having given false evidence before the Commissioner or Commissioners conducting an inquiry under this Act.”

It is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir, that no evidence given before a Commission of Inquiry can give rise to any civil or criminal proceedings or be admissible against any person in any civil or criminal proceedings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, furthermore, section 12(3) of the Commissions of Inquiry Act provides as follows, and I quote –

“No person giving evidence before a Commission shall refuse to answer any question on the ground that an answer would incriminate him and no incriminating answer shall be admissible against him in any prosecution, action or suit.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, what is stipulated in section 12(3) further confirms that any evidence produced by a person before a Commission of Inquiry shall not be admissible against any person

in any prosecution, action or suit. Therefore, in the event the Commission of Inquiry incriminates any person, the evidence provided before the Commission cannot be used for the purpose of prosecution. It is worth mentioning that the Supreme Court made the following pronouncements in the case of Dayal v/s His Excellency the President of the Republic of Mauritius [SCJ No. 23 of 1998], and I quote –

“... the proceedings before the Commission cannot be equated with a criminal or civil trial since the Commission has no power to try anyone for a criminal offence or to determine, as in the case of a civil court or tribunal having similar jurisdictional powers, ‘the existence or extent of any civil right or obligation’. The Commission is, it must be stressed, just a fact-finding tribunal which makes a report to the first respondent (The President) and its findings do not have any juridical effect.”

Accordingly, the Police or any other investigatory body cannot rely on the evidence brought before a Commission of Inquiry to institute criminal proceedings against any person blamed by the Commission. The Police would instead have to start investigation afresh, call witnesses, gather evidence in relation thereto and submit the file to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, experience has shown that previous Commissions of Inquiry set up by Government have not enabled the authorities to take speedy actions against those blamed or incriminated in the report of a Commission of Inquiry. A Commission of Inquiry is time consuming and we have to bear in mind that the findings of a Commission of Inquiry are amenable to Judicial Review and eventually to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the present case of the allocation of State land to Eco Deer Park Association, as I stated earlier, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Police are already investigating into the various allegations made in this matter. These institutions are the relevant and competent institutions to carry out such investigations and they are better equipped for such tasks. Moreover, since the hearings of a Commission of Inquiry are generally held in public, any evidence that will be produced before that Commission may be tampered with, or any witness deponing before that Commission may be interfered with before any subsequent investigation by any investigatory body.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government is all for the setting up of any Commission of Inquiry which is fully justified and does full justice to the letter and spirit of the Commissions of Inquiry Act. We unhesitatingly did so by setting up, as a glaring example, the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking. However, in this particular case, for the reasons I have just explained, it is considered that the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry is indeed not warranted.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, la réponse du Premier ministre est semblable à la réponse donnée quand l'ex-ministre, Yogida Sawmynaden, était impliqué. Le Premier ministre avait dit qu'il n'y a pas de rapport pour déterminer que son ministre a fauté. Étant donné, M. le Premier ministre, que vous-même vous avez déclaré que vous êtes celui qui est le mieux informé du pays et que plusieurs personnes – selon vos mots – étant dans votre radar, est-ce que vous pouvez dire à la Chambre depuis quand vous êtes au courant de ce méga scandale qui éclabousse votre gouvernement, le *Eco Deer Park*, impliquant votre ministre et votre PPS ? Depuis quand êtes-vous au courant de cela?

The Prime Minister: What is the allegation against the hon. Attorney General?

Mr Assirvaden: De bribe et de corruption !

Mr Speaker: No! No!

The Prime Minister: We need to look at the question that has been put. I think the hon. Member should read his own question that he has himself put. He is now talking about other people, but if I look at the question, at paragraph (c), you are talking about bribery against the current hon. Attorney General. So, I am asking you what is the evidence and what is the information that you supposedly have to make such an allegation. Let me know.

Mr Assirvaden: Donc, le Premier ministre, ici, dans la Chambre, vous venez de dédouaner votre *Attorney General* et votre ministre de l'Agriculture. Ceci dit, le Premier ministre parle des allégations sans fondement alors que nous avons eu des allégations sans fondement concernant l'honorable Collendavelloo, nous avons eu des allégations...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, you have the right to ask a supplementary question with regard to your own question.

Mr Assirvaden: Okay.

Mr Speaker: What hon. Collendavelloo has to do with this question?

Mr Assirvaden: Non, mais le Premier ministre parle des allégations.

Mr Speaker: No, go to your own question!

Mr Assirvaden: Le Premier ministre déclare fièrement bien souvent, M. le président, que ‘*mo pou kas lerin mafia ladrog*’ et cela est lié à ma question initiale. Maintenant, M. le Premier ministre, que votre propre ministre, l’*Attorney General* et votre propre PPS sont visés dans des allégations d’être en relation étroite avec un baron de la drogue qui a été condamné et qui a signé le contrat du *bail*...

Mr Ganoo: On a point of order!

Mr Assirvaden: Qu’attendez-vous...

Mr Speaker: Wait! There is a point of order.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think this matter must stop. In this House our proceedings are governed by the Standing Orders. I will cite two Standing Orders to you and I think you are duty bound to rule that such type of questions asked by the hon. Member are inadmissible. Standing Order 22 (1) reads as follows –

“(j) a question shall not be asked which makes or implies a charge of a personal character or which reflects upon the character or conduct of persons except in their official or public capacity;”

Standing Order 40 –

“(5) The conduct of the (...) Members of the Assembly (...) shall not be raised except upon a substantive motion moved for that purpose; and in any amendment, question to a Minister, or remarks in a debate dealing with any other subject, reference to the conduct of the persons aforesaid shall be out of order.”

Mr Speaker: Put good questions!

Mr Assirvaden: Heureusement, pour le gouvernement ce ne sont pas des *good questions*. Le ministre a voulu me bâillonner. Qu’attend le Premier ministre pour montrer sa détermination et envoyer un signal fort ? Alors que son *Attorney General*, M. le président, est toujours en poste, il peut - je le dit très fortement - à ce jour manipuler les preuves et influencer les témoins.

Mr Speaker: No!

Mr Assirvaden: D'autres ministres à sa place ont dû...

Mr Speaker: No, please! Please! This is insinuation! Gross insinuation! This is not proper to parliamentary democracy.

An hon. Member: *Enn show médiatique!*

Mr Speaker: We have been hearing a lot about parliamentary democracy. This is not proper!

Mr Assirvaden: Dans ce cas, voyons le côté moral de ma question, M. le président. Le Premier ministre jusqu'ici a été sauvé par l'honorable Ganoo et le *Speaker*, mais le Premier ministre n'a pas répondu jusqu'ici. Est-ce que le Premier ministre considère-t-il approprié et normal que son gouvernement, incluant lui-même, doit demander de l'avis juridique à son *Attorney General* sur lequel pèse des graves allégations de corruption, de bribe, et qui est également son ministre de l'Agriculture, responsable de l'attribution des terrains à *Eco Deer Park* ? Est-ce normal, M. le Premier ministre ? Au moins il faut répondre à cela.

The Prime Minister: M. le président, premièrement, je n'ai pas à dédouaner l'*Attorney General*. Il ne passe même pas devant la douane. Qu'est-ce que j'ai à dédouaner ? *But let me put it again to the hon. Member that he should tell me what are the allegations he is alluding to.* Il est en train de faire une déclaration générale. *I have answered that as at now, I have no report from any relevant institution mentioning any allegation against the Attorney General. Therefore, the question does not arise. Maybe he has a short-lived memory, not to qualify the kind of memory he has.*

Let me refer him to a reply that was made by Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam to a PNQ that was put on 11 April 2006 in regard to the allegation of fraud and corruption against the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands concerning the Bel Air Sugar Estate IRS Project. I shall just quote one answer. The Prime Minister then said, and I quote –

“Again I say, don't believe anything you read in the press. Never at any point!”

It is the same situation. What the hon. Member is referring to, I have also been reading in the Press all sorts of allegations, wild allegations and I must say most of them - if not all of them – are unfounded as at today. Let me say as at today!

Now, let us see how this investigation is going to unfold. But as at today, I have asked the hon. Member who makes an accusation to this House to come and tell us what evidence he has, and if he is honest and sincere in his allegation, he must tell this House who has made what allegation against the Attorney General for bribery.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, le Premier ministre de ce pays n'est pas Patrick Assirvaden.

The Prime Minister: Normale!

Mr Assirvaden: Le Premier ministre de ce pays est l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth. C'est à vous de répondre ! C'est à vous de répondre ! M. le Premier ministre, vous parlez d'allégations. Nous entendons tous les jours dans les journaux, pas plus tard que hier...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Don't talk about all sorts of allegations. The Press is free. You are in Parliament. If you are referring to a particular allegation, the hon. Prime Minister told you to come with evidence. Don't impute motives!

An hon. Member: *Fizip sote!*

Mr Speaker: Don't create allegations! Come with evidence, if you don't have evidence, change question!

Mr Assirvaden: Le Premier ministre...

An hon. Member: *To pou aler ek sa la!*

Mr Assirvaden: C'est clair. Le Premier ministre parle à moi d'amener des *evidences!* Non! C'est au Premier ministre d'éclairer la population sur les allégations de son propre ministre...

(Interruptions)

... the Attorney-General...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Honourable...

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr Assirvaden: Il protège son ministre!

Mr Speaker: That question of enlightening the population, the population needs to be enlightened...

(Interruptions)

Please!

The population needs to be enlightened, both ways, with your questions and also with the answers!

Mr Assirvaden: Mais il ne veut pas répondre !

Mr Speaker: But you are putting allegations!

Mr Assirvaden: Il ne veut pas répondre !

Mr Speaker: You have no evidence!

Mr Assirvaden: Il ne veut pas répondre !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: So, I consider...

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: I caught your eye half an hour ago!

Mr Speaker: No, this is another issue!

(Interruptions)

Wait! Wait! I am dealing with the mover of the question. Your turn will come. Don't worry! Be patient!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister...

Mr Lesjongard: On a point of order!

Mr Speaker: Point of order?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, please! Mr Speaker, Sir, can I refer you this time to section 22 (1) (h) of our Standing Orders where it is clearly stated that every question, including supplementary questions, shall conform to the following rules –

“a question shall not include the names of persons or statements of facts unless they are necessary to make the question intelligible and, in the case of statements of facts, can be authenticated by the Member concerned, nor shall it contain charges which the Member asking the question is not prepared to substantiate;”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I think the Standing Order is clear enough. I don't even have to make a ruling.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question to the hon. Prime Minister concerns the ongoing inquiries. He says he has no reports of any alleged act of corruption. This is because I presume he is saying he has no access to what is happening at ICAC. I would like him to clarify that. He is not getting any reports from ICAC, so he cannot say whether the other persons have actually involved the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry.

The second one is the Police. Now, the Police and illegal activities, in September 2020, during COVID-19 restrictions, there was supposed to be - we hear - a stag party which would be illegal under the circumstances ...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, bear with me!

Mr X. L. Duval: What is the question?

Mr Speaker: Bear with me! This is a supplementary question; I allowed you, put your supplementary question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, be patient!

Mr Speaker: The population is waiting for your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, and looking at you too!

Mr Speaker: It seems that...

Mr X. L. Duval: Believe me!

Mr Speaker: You are making a long statement.

Mr X. L. Duval: Be patient!

Mr Speaker: You are making a long statement!

Mr X. L. Duval: Be patient! Be patient! Be patient!

So, the question is what report did you get as to the stag party which the Police are enquiring, not the ICAC, but the Police that will report to you? Are you also saying that there was no party in September there?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition has not put this question but he should read the question. We are talking about setting up a Commission of Inquiry to inquire into certain allegations that have been made in this question by the hon. Member, and I have answered. The issue is about setting up a Commission of Inquiry and I have amply stated and given reasons why it would not serve the purpose in this case to set up a Commission of Inquiry. Let the Investigatory Bodies do their work; there is the ICAC and there is the Police, and, at the end, we shall find out. Hopefully, we shall see what is going to be the conclusion.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I rule this question has sufficiently been canvassed. I move to the other question! Mr Léopold!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. I had to announce that PQ B/211 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. PQ B/226 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting.

Hon. Léopold!

RODRIGUES - POLICE HAND PISTOL – LOSS

(No. B/212) **Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated into the recent loss of a Police hand pistol in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand, indicating –

- (a) the circumstances thereof, and
- (b) if the suicide of a Police Officer recently is reportedly associated therewith.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Sunday 05 March 2023 at around 09.20 hours, following information received, the Police Operations Room, Port Mathurin, requested a Police Sergeant to proceed to the residence of Police Constable J. F. C, 30 years old, at Mourouk. On arrival, the Police Sergeant found the body of Police Constable J. F. C lying in a prone position in a room of his concrete house under construction with a piece of electrical wire tied to his neck.

Following an autopsy carried out, the cause of death was attributed to “Asphyxia due to hanging”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, an enquiry has so far revealed that on Saturday 04 March 2023, Police Constable J. F. C, who was on third shift duty, was detailed to perform sentry at MBC Police Post at Citronelle and was armed with a Police revolver. He had reported for duty around 23.15 hours and had allegedly left his post at around 23.40 hours for refreshment.

However, he did not return to his site of work and, as I stated earlier, on the next day he was found dead in his house under construction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that an enquiry has also been initiated by Police on the loss of the revolver of late Police Constable J.F.C. During the course of the enquiry, several

persons including Mr C.A., whom he met during the early hours of Sunday 05 March 2023, have been interviewed and searches have been carried out.

Mr C.A. was arrested on Thursday 09 March 2023, and a provisional charge of larceny of Government property has been lodged against him. Bail was denied to the suspect on Thursday 16 March 2023, and he was remanded to police cell. On Thursday 30 March 2023, the suspect appeared before court and his remand has been extended up to Wednesday 19 April 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Police enquiry on both cases is proceeding.

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. If the hon. Prime Minister has the information, can he inform the House whether there has been any refresher course for Police Officers of Rodrigues for handling of weapon after their training?

The Prime Minister: From what I know, they have, first of all, during their initial training time been trained with regard to the good use and safekeeping of a revolver and there are also regular courses with regard to the way and the manner as well as to the protocol also, a very strict protocol, with regard to how they should be careful when in possession of their revolver during working hours, and whenever they have to go from their assigned site of work to attend to other needs – I do not want to go into the detail of this case - and to other requirements, and also to what is exactly the protocol with regard to the possession of a revolver.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether the Police Force has devised or implemented any Stress Management Programme for Police Officers? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: The recruits, Mr Speaker, Sir, are provided training on Stress Management during their initial training by Police Psychologists to deal effectively with traumatic and emotional situations and there are simulation exercises that are often carried out with a view to allowing them to develop the necessary skills for surmounting stressful and difficult situations.

Mr Speaker: Time over! PQs B/219 and B/220 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Doolub!

CATARACT SURGERY – WAITING LIST – 01 MARCH 2023

(No. B/221) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & PlaineMagnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to cataract patients, he will state the number thereof on the waiting list for surgery, indicating the waiting period for cataract surgeries at the Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital in Moka and New Souillac Hospital, respectively, as at 01 March 2023.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the waiting list of cataract surgeries as at 01 March 2023 was as follows –

- 2,389 cases at Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital with an average waiting time of 23.4 weeks, that is some 6 months, and
- 293 cases at Souillac Hospital with an average waiting period of 17.8 weeks.

Mr Speaker Sir, as matter stands, around 25 cases of cataract surgeries are being carried out at Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital on a daily basis. For Souillac Hospital, an average of 20 cases is being performed daily. Both hospitals combined are performing around 800 cases of cataract surgery monthly.

Mr Speaker Sir, patients who have undergone cataract surgery in one eye will have clearer vision compared to the affected eye, which increases the pressure on the treated eye. Thus, in most cases where cataract surgeries are being carried out, patients require a second surgery for the other eye. In addition, it is known that cataract prevalence increases with age, especially after the age of 60 years. Given the increased life expectancy and ageing population in Mauritius, more and more people are developing cataract problems. The above issues will continuously impact on the waiting list of cataract surgeries in our hospitals.

Mr Speaker Sir, in view to curtailing the waiting list and providing treatment in time to patients, my Ministry is looking into the possibility of performing extra sessions after normal working hours which would further increase the number of cataract surgeries being done on a daily basis. In addition to the provision of extra sessions, my Ministry has already carried out a

market sounding exercise and an evaluation exercise has been carried out with a view to outsourcing cataract surgeries to local private clinics.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I wish to refer to the report of the Director of Audit and the report mentions that patients have been waiting for more than five years to get an appointment for eye surgeries. Can the Minister state the reasons of this delay?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. With regard to patients who have waited for more than five years to get an appointment, I am informed that these patients were in fact reported to have incorrect residential addresses or contact numbers in their respective medical file. Additionally, there were also patients who were contacted by phone or sent letters to attend to hospital to get a date for surgery but those patients did not revert to the hospital. It is also to be noted that patients who were found to be unfit for surgery were asked to bring back letter of fitness from their treating Specialist from other hospitals but they failed to do so. Those patients were even contacted by phone and requested to bring their letters of fitness in view to schedule an appointment for cataract surgeries but they did not comply. So, the report is wrong to say that patients have been waiting for more than five years.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The report also mentions that surgeries were cancelled. Can the Minister inform the House of the reasons thereof?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. With regard to cancellation of surgeries, due to unavailability of medical items, I am informed that in early 2022, certain surgeries as Vitrectomies were cancelled as Vitrectomy consumables were unavailable due to delay in the Annual Procurement of 2020-2021 and unavailability of consumables from suppliers. Further, due to the costly price of Vitrectomy packs, purchase could not be done at the level of the Procurement Unit of my Ministry because we have to respect the procurement procedures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the Annual Procurement of 2022-2023, part of the purchase of Vitrectomy packs were delivered at the Moka Eye Hospital and in January 2023, an additional batch was delivered according to the shelf life of Vitrectomy packs. So, the delay in the supply of consumables for cataract surgery was also due to the delay in the delivery beyond the time frame mentioned in the award. So, proof of reasons for the delay was provided by the supplier in these cases but at present, all deliveries of consumables from annual procurement have been

done and necessary measures requested for purchase. So, all these, in the audit report whatever has been mentioned it was because of delay to receive the consumables for the operation.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether previously there were cataract operations going on at Dr. A.G. Jeetoo hospital and if they were stopped, why? Please provide us with some reasons.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the ophthalmology service at Dr. Jeetoo hospital was in operation since October 2019 and was closed in September 2021. The unit at the hospital comprised of outpatient clinic, laser clinic and was also supported by cataract surgeries, performing 20 cataract surgeries weekly. So, that equipment was used at Dr. Jeetoo hospital to perform 20 cataract surgeries or may be less during a week.

We transferred that equipment to Souillac hospital, which is equipped with two operation theatres to allow the conduct of surgeries on a daily basis, as I stated earlier. So, instead of having an equipment placed in a hospital where the services are being delivered on weekly basis – 20 cataract surgeries on a weekly basis – at Souillac hospital, the same equipment is doing 20 surgeries daily. So, that is the reason why cataract surgeries have been shifted to Souillac hospital for making efficient use of such an equipment.

Mr Speaker: Next question, Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

BEAU BASSIN & PETITE RIVIÈRE –DAMAGED WATER PIPES

(No. B/222) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if a survey has been commissioned to assess the number of broken and leaking water pipes in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière and if remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Central Water Authority supplies water in six district water supply zones across the island, irrespective of

constituencies. Beau Bassin, for example, is located in the Lower Mare-aux-Vacoas water supply zone and Petite Rivière is located in the Port Louis water supply zone.

According to information obtained from the Central Water Authority, a survey was carried out to identify the old and defective pipelines in Lower Mare-aux-Vacoas water supply zone in January 2023 and some 60kms of pipelines are required for renewal. Another survey was carried out in February 2022 to identify the old and defective pipelines in the Port-Louis Water Supply Zone and 100kms of old and defective pipelines were identified for renewal.

I am further informed that the CWA has identified some 32.3kms of pipes of most critical in the Port-Louis Water Supply Zones which need to be replaced as a matter of top priority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I had already informed the House in previous replies, replacement of old and defective pipes in an ongoing programme. Pipe replacement works in respect of old and defective pipes are normally carried out by the Central Water Authority under its capital projects and its Framework Agreement for minor works. Other such pipe replacement works are also undertaken by the Wastewater Management Authority under its sewerage projects, by the National Development Unit under road infrastructure projects or by the Metro Express Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, proposal will be made for funds to be provided in the forthcoming Budget for the renewal and upgrading of water supply work on a priority basis. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: M. le président, j'ai trois questions supplémentaires, si vous me permettez ?

J'ai compilé une très longue liste, je dois dire, de presque 60 endroits – 57 pour être précise – où il y a des fuites d'eau dans ma circonscription. Et là, j'ai fait le travail que la CWA était censée de faire. Certains tuyaux étaient cassés depuis des mois, certains depuis des années. Mes collègues, Rajesh Bhagwan, Franco Quirin et moi-même, nous avons à maintes reprises alertés la CWA, mais les réparations sont faites au compte-goutte.

Je dépose donc cette liste à l'Assemblée et une copie à l'honorable ministre pour qu'il puisse prendre connaissance. Et je demande à l'honorable ministre s'il peut donner l'assurance

qu'en attendant que les tuyaux soient remplacés, comme il l'a mentionné, que les mesures soient prises immédiatement afin de réparer toutes ces fuites qui représentent un grand gaspillage d'eau.

Mr Lesjongard: M. le président, je remercie l'honorable membre d'avoir compilé une liste des fuites d'eau dans sa circonscription qu'elle va me remettre, je comprends, aujourd'hui. Mais peut-être, ce serait bien de conseiller l'honorable membre de faire comme un de ses colistiers de m'appeler quand il y a une urgence en ce qui concerne des fuites d'eau et j'agis conséquemment. Merci, M. le président.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha : Bon, j'allais peut-être vous appeler 60 fois ! Est-ce que le ministre peut quantifier et donner les chiffres de ces pertitions d'eau dans les *supply zones* qui desservent la circonscription par jour en terme de mètres cube et en terme d'argent que cela représente ?

Mr Lesjongard : M. le président, vous réalisez que c'est une question assez complexe dont je n'ai pas la réponse en ma possession. Je vais, parce que l'honorable membre m'a posé cette question, naturellement faire le nécessaire et remettre les informations à l'honorable membre ultérieurement. Merci.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha : Est-ce que le ministre est au courant de la frustration des habitants quand ils voient ces grands gaspillages d'eau à travers toutes ces fuites, même pendant des moments de sécheresse grave et des restrictions strictes ? Et quand ils rapportent ces fuites à la CWA, les réparations prennent un temps déraisonnable – des mois, voire des années. Peut-on savoir pourquoi et comment le ministre compte y remédier ?

Mr Lesjongard : M. le président, je comprends que l'honorable membre veut faire croire à la Chambre qu'il y a une grande frustration. Tel n'est pas le cas, M. le président. Ces derniers temps, effectivement, il y eut des fuites d'eau. Ce n'est pas seulement dans la circonscription de l'honorable membre. On aura encore des fuites d'eau parce qu'avec le temps, les tuyaux qu'on a s'usent, les connexions aussi s'usent, M. le président. Mais l'important, c'est de réparer au plus vite les fuites d'eau.

Dans le cas des fuites d'eau à travers l'île, M. le président, nous avons mis sur place un *flying squad* qui fait le tour de l'île et s'attèle à réparer les fautes qu'il y a dans divers régions le

plus vite possible, M. le président. Je peux rassurer la Chambre qu'au niveau de la CWA, ils font le nécessaire quand il y a des fuites d'eau d'intervenir le plus rapidement possible. Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, c'est ma circonscription aussi!

An hon. Member: Mais ce n'est pas ta question !

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member! Hon. Member, listen to me!

Mr Quirin: Yes.

Mr Speaker: The relevance and the number of questions depend on the Speaker. I will make an announcement about that later on. I will make an announcement.

Next question!

EBENE-REDUIT METRO EXPRESS LINE – REVENUE COLLECTED

(No. B/223) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Ebène-Réduit Metro Express line, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Ltd., information as to the total revenue collected therefrom as at to date.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware phase 3 of the Metro Express Project connecting Rose-Hill to Réduit with two new stations, namely Ebene Cybercity...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: *Pose to kestion!*

Mr Quirin : *Oui, b fode li laisse poz kestion la !*

Mr Lesjongard: *B ecrire to anvoy to kestion!*

Mr Quirin: *Kestion mo koleg sa...*

Mr Lesjongard: *B pa to keston!*

Mr Quirin: *Ale do ta, to p rakont zistwar ici!*

An hon. Member: *To manev sa?*

Mr Speaker: I hear some noises. Let me remind the House that I will make an announcement about the question; question of questions. Wait!

Mr Quirin: *Tou seki tonn dir foss la ! Tou !*

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, he has said the following words “*tou seki tonn dir foss*”. Can he remove the word “*foss*” because this is not acceptable, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Hon. Members: Withdraw! Withdraw!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: So, be a gentleman, let us proceed.

Mr Quirin: Tout ce que l’honorable ministre vient de dire *is not accurate*.

Mr Lesjongard: Not even that! I do not accept that, Mr Speaker, Sir!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, il y a des centaines de fuites dans la circonscription.

Mr Speaker: No! No! You are disturbing the House! There is a question to be answered and you said something not accurate or whatever you said. Please withdraw that and we proceed! Do not embarrass the House! You withdraw! Okay!

Mr Quirin: I withdraw if you say so.

Mr Speaker: Okay, gentleman! Gentleman! Please!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, Phase 3 of the Metro Express project, connecting Rose Hill to Réduit, with two new stations namely, Ebène Cybercity Station and Mahatma Gandhi Station, was launched on 22 January 2023 and commercial operations started the next day, that is, some two months ago.

I am advised that the opening of Phase 3 has led to a steady increase in the light rail ridership, averaging some 50,000 passengers daily. I am further informed that bulk of the ridership currently occurs during morning and afternoon peaks of weekdays along the Rose Hill to Réduit leg and that the additional number of passengers commuting along the extension is 2,000 daily.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important to highlight that the climatic conditions such as the torrential rains and cyclonic conditions, which occurred during the past month negatively impacted on the ridership in as much as it resulted in closure of schools and university and hindered mobility in general.

Moreover, Phase 3 has only been operational for a very short period, that is, 2 months. As has been the case for Phase 1 and 2, the ridership gradually picks up after a period of adaptation from the public. Accordingly, being given that the service along Phase 3 is still in its adaptation phase, the revenue figures would not be a fair indication of the success of this line and would fail to be a reliable yardstick for gauging the light rail over that specific leg.

To be fair to the Metro Express Ltd, we cannot appraise a project of this magnitude solely on the ridership or revenue achieved during such a short period of time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed furthermore that Metro Express has proactively conducted a survey amongst the public to analyse the behaviour of commuters. As a result, several actions have been undertaken to encourage passengers to commute to Ebène and Réduit, namely –

- intensive communication and marketing campaign regarding Metro Express fares, connectivity choices, ME Cards, shuttle services, through radio partners, stakeholders and all social media platforms;
- information emails to corporates in Ebène;

- promotion of sale of ME cards, and
- radio shows at Rose Hill, Ebène and Réduit.

Further actions have been taken in terms of stakeholder engagement whereby together with Landscape and Rose Hill Transport, a free shuttle service has been successfully implemented and this has had a positive impact on the ridership along Phase 3.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the abovementioned shuttle service has enhanced accessibility of the commuters within the Ebène Cybercity where the first and last mile connectivity has been improved. This measure is contributing to make the light rail more convenient to the passengers proceeding to or from Ebène as they may avail of the shuttles to connect more quickly to their place of work from the light rail station and vice versa. The implementation of shuttle services in the region of Ebène has proven to be beneficial with a ridership increase of 15-20% recorded commuting to the Ebène Station.

Additionally, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is to be noted that the foot-overbridge connecting Ebène Station to the Cybercity is currently being fitted with escalators, lifts and a full-fledged canopy. Once these facilities are operational, it will provide an even better pedestrian connectivity for commuters and contribute to ridership.

It is expected also, Mr Speaker, Sir, that with the upcoming extension of the line towards Moka, St Pierre and Côte d'Or, the ridership along the Metro Express alignment will increase given its role as a gateway to the east.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not too sure whether you have noticed but I had asked the hon. Minister to give information about the total revenue collected to date. The Minister has not replied to the substantive question. Is that in order? Do you reckon?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must inform the hon. Member and the House also, Metro Express Ltd is a Private State Owned Company. Providing information related to revenue is commercially sensitive at this stage and this why instead of answering this precise question with regard to the revenue collected which is a commercially sensitive information, I have played the card of transparency and I have given him all the information with regard to the number of passengers travelling every day and with the whole question of ridership.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Speaker, Sir, I strongly beg to differ. The Minister has not been transparent at all. This project has been funded to the tune of Rs4.55 billion from public funds. He himself said it in the House. Where does the private company come into play? This is our money; this is your money, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister must be transparent because I know for sure this line is a total failure. The Minister has just said himself that the ridership per day is 2,000.

Mr Speaker: Put a question! Hon. Member, put a question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister...

Mr Speaker: That's better!

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... whether he will concede to the fact that the line itself is a total failure in the light of the scanty figure that has just given, 2,000 riders per day, when he himself in Parliament stated on 25 May...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, this is my question!

... in PQ B/486 that the expected ridership on this line is 15,000 passengers per day.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the figure of 2,000, which I have just mentioned, the hon. Member seems to be taking this figure to prove his point that this extension is not viable. But let me remind him, Mr Speaker, Sir, even for Phase 1 when we first launched the commercial operations in 2020 along the Port Louis to Rose Hill corridor, despite the buzz at that time which the Metro created, the novelty that it offered and the keen interest of the Mauritian public at the time, the initial daily ridership was around 10,000 to 12,000 passengers for 7 stations from Port Louis to Rose Hill over a stretch of 12 km.

Now, as regards the Phase 3, the extension we are talking about, the alignment is from Rose Hill to Réduit. It spans only on two stations and for the first few months of commercial operation, we are achieving a ridership of approximately 2,000 per day for only two stations over a stretch of 3.4 km. From these figures we can deduce, Mr Speaker, Sir, that initial daily ridership of Phase 3, launched only two months ago, is comparable to the initial daily ridership

of Phase 1 and is therefore, consistent with such an operation that only started recently considering the early period of implementation of the project in this region with the numerous exogenous factors that have affected the metro ridership as discussed above. Let us compare same with same: Port Louis to Rose Hill, seven stations, 10,000 people; Rose Hill to Réduit, two stations, 2,000 people. When you compute the figures, it is the same, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes. Time and again, we have asked for the feasibility to be tabled in this House but it has never been tabled. Can I ask the hon. Minister to think along these lines? I am going to give him some figures because he is not providing. For an investment of Rs4.55 billion based on interest rate, conservatively put of 5%, the expected return on this capital investment excluding running cost, operational cost and shuttle service should at least bring to the Metro Express Ltd Rs19 m. per month. I can give him my calculations if he wants to. I have done it for him.

So, based on this, I am going to question him again next time because he has mentioned 'compare like with like'. I am going to put a question again to him next time, if he can bring figures to the House so that we know that our public money is not being wasted.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I replied that it is unfair to appraise a project of such a magnitude solely on the ridership, on the revenue it has just started to achieve during such a short period of time. We must take into consideration that the service along this Phase 3, this extension is still in its adaptation phase.

Mr Speaker: The Table is advised that PQs B/245, B/251, B/258, B/265, B/269, B/273, B/279, B/281, B/290 and B/294 have been withdrawn.

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

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

On resuming at 2.38 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

ANNOUNCEMENT**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS – SELECTION OF ORDER –MODALITIES**

Hon. Members, I have a short announcement to make following certain remarks made regarding the modalities for the selection of the order of Parliamentary Questions.

I wish to refer hon. Members to the announcement I made on 29 March 2022 whereby I informed the House that henceforth the order of Parliamentary Questions would be determined by the drawing of lots. This followed an agreement to that effect which had been agreed upon by the Whips. The said Agreement co-signed by the Chief Government Whip and the Opposition Whip has been laid on the table of the Assembly.

The main objective of the agreement is to give a fair chance to all Members to have at least one, and in some cases, more than one Parliamentary Question reached orally within the time limit prescribed by the Standing Orders for Questions requiring an oral answer.

In this context, I also refer hon. Members to Standing Order 26(1) which provides as follows, I quote –

“Supplementary questions may only be put for the further elucidation of the information requested and shall be subject to the ruling of the Speaker, both as to the relevance and number.”

Hon. Members may wish to be governed accordingly.

I thank you.

Hon. Minister Teeluck is here. So next question!

MAURITIUS SOCIETY OF AUTHORS – SUB-COMMITTEES

(No. B/224) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the sub-committees set up by the newly appointed board of the Mauritius Society of Authors since July 2022, he will, for the

benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof, indicating their respective functions and the number of sittings held to date.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Board of the Mauritius Society of Authors is empowered under section 45(a) (i) of the Copyright Act 2014 to set up such committees as it may determine to assist in its discharge of its function and exercise of its powers. Consequently, I am informed that the Board, with newly elected members, as at 10 July 2022, set up 6 committees. These are namely –

- the Anti-Corruption Committee;
- the Technical Committee;
- the Human Resources Committee;
- the Good Governance/Audit Committee;
- the Finance/MASA Provident and Benevolent Fund Committee, and
- Reprography Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling details regarding the functions of these committees as well as the number of sittings held by each of them since their setting up to date.

Mr David: Merci, M. le président. Le site internet de la MASA, je le découvre à la lecture de la réponse du ministre, n'est pas à jour vu que le site mentionne 5 comités et j'ai bien noté qu'il y a un sixième comité qui a été mis sur place. L'un des 6 comités dont nous parlons et c'est le premier que le ministre a mentionné, est le comité anti-corruption. Or, deux membres, qui siègent actuellement sur cet *Anti-Corruption Committee*, font actuellement et selon mes informations, l'objet d'une enquête de l'ICAC suite aux révélations du dernier rapport de l'*Office of Public Sector Governance* sur des malversations financières reçues à priori par ces deux officiers. Le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il a fait la demande pour la suspension ou au moins la mise en retrait de ces deux officiers du comité anti-corruption, au moins le temps de l'enquête ?

Mr Teeluck: Déjà juste pour rassurer l'honorable membre par rapport au nombre de comités, comme j'ai énoncé, 6 comités, ces comités ont été mis en place, les 5 premiers en octobre et novembre de l'année dernière.

Le *Reprography Committee* a été récemment mis en place le 24 mars - la composition de ce comité même - raison pour laquelle mention n'est pas faite sur le *website*, mais bien sûr, on va s'assurer que *its updated*.

In relation to your query pertaining to the ongoing investigation, you will understand that there is an investigation today, so, we are waiting at least for things to upscale to another level before we take any stand in terms of whether they have to step down or not. *Il faut bien comprendre qu'aujourd'hui la MASA* is a board which is very specific as opposed to other boards. We have elected members as well as appointed members. So, we need to allow the board to operate *en toute indépendance et* for them to judge at which point they will need to get these people if required, of course, because allegations can be made. I do not think it is proper for any allegations to give rise to immediate actions. So, I will leave that to the board for them to decide the way forward.

Mr David: Revenant sur ces allégations qui font l'objet d'une enquête, je le comprends bien, en regardant les différents comités de la MASA, il me semble qu'il y a parfois une certaine mauvaise gestion et je vais illustrer à travers la question que je vais adresser au ministre, notamment à travers l'un des comités qui est le comité des ressources humaines. Alors, le ministre peut-il expliquer à la Chambre la raison pour laquelle, alors que la MASA paye une allocation mensuelle à la directrice du *HR Department* de son ministère pour s'occuper des sujets *HR* de la MASA, pourquoi est-ce qu'un comité *Human Resource* a été mis sur pied au sein de la MASA en parallèle et qui en plus est présidé par le directeur de la culture de son ministère qui n'a à priori aucun lien avec les ressources humaines, donc pourquoi créer des comités redondants et coûteux alors qu'on demande aux artistes de serrer la ceinture ?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very normal practice in all parastatal and governmental organisations that they have subcommittees to address certain issues. For instance, when it comes to the Human Resource Committee, it will not only work on matters which strictly pertain to, for instance, recommendations on Schemes of Service, but if there is anything dealing with appointment, recruitment or any other business, it has to go through a subcommittee before going to the Board level.

Now, it is also a very common practice that the MHR, the Manager of Human Resource of any Ministry, assists their relevant organisation falling under the aegis of a Ministry. So, this is the practice for most of the institutions. For instance, for the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, the Manager of Human Resource will assist where need be, of course, for subcommittees, whether Human Resource, whether Finance, anti-corruption or any other subcommittee be either chaired by a member of the board. In this particular case, when we are talking about the Human Resource Committee, the Director of Culture is a member of the Board of MASA and they have appointed him to be the Chairman of this specific subcommittee.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MTPA - PLEASURE CRAFTS - PERMIT REGISTRATION

(No. B/225) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the pleasure crafts, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Authority, information as to the number thereof registered as at to date, indicating when the last permit registration exercise was carried out.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Tourism Authority that as at 13 April 2023, a total of 3,327 pleasure crafts were registered with that authority and the last registration exercise was carried out on 20 March 2023.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister remind the House what is the validity period and delay for renewal of license for pleasure crafts? Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: According to the information I have been provided with, a pleasure craft license remains valid for a period of one year.

Mrs Mayotte: I would also like to ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, for the benefit of the House, the composition of the Competency Test Panel with regard to the pleasure craft license? Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Let me try and provide more information. I must say I am not familiar with all the technicalities; I am not directly involved with pleasure crafts, which is

the responsibility of the Tourism Authority. Now, I understand that there are two types of pleasure crafts licenses: one for commercial pleasure craft and one for private pleasure crafts. I am told that a study was initiated I believe in early 2019, if I am not mistaken, to survey what is called the carrying capacity of our lagoons.

The Licensing Committee of the Tourism Authority decided in January 2019 that no new application for commercial pleasure crafts licenses would be accepted with two exceptions. The first is that applications which had already been lodged before 16 January 2019 would be processed as normal. The second exception is having regard to innovative projects. So, if there is an application for a commercial pleasure craft to be licensed, which is based on innovative projects, then the application is nonetheless considered and the license can be granted. I am therefore informed that after the date of 16 January 2019, I do not have the exact figure, but I think its approximately 30 commercial pleasure craft licenses have been granted. In fact, it is 34.

As regards private pleasure crafts, then in that case, the applications are considered according to the relevant criteria on a case by case basis. So, the committee that decides whether a license is to be recommended or not for approval is called a Licensing Committee.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Your question has been transferred to the Prime Minister. Question B/226 transferred to hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Assirvaden: Mais, M. le président, personne ne m'a avisé que ma question a été transférée au Premier ministre.

Mr Speaker: C'est moi, c'est moi, je suis responsable!

Mr Assirvaden: Mais au moins pour la courtoisie, M. le président, j'attendais à ce que le ministre réponde à ma question concernant les allégations.

Mr Speaker: Ah non, ce n'est pas ça! Ce n'est pas comme ça que cela fonctionne. Je vais vous expliquer. Donnez-moi...

Mr Assirvaden: Non, mais il ne faut pas changer les règles, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Non, je ne change pas de règles.

An hon. Member: *Mo pa truv sa korek!*

Mr Speaker: Je ne change pas de règles! Je ne change pas de règles!

Mr Assirvaden: Mais il abuse !

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, you are making an abuse! You are making an abuse!

Listen to me carefully! You are at fault! This morning, I already announced that your question has already been transferred since long. You are making an abuse! Stop there!

Next question!

**MAURITIUS FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - TRAILER PUMPS - UTILITY
PICK-UPS - COSTS**

(No. B/227) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to trailer pumps and utility pick-ups, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, information as to the number thereof acquired over the past two years, indicating –

- (a) the cost thereof, and
- (b) if same have been used during flash floods and torrential rains as at to date.

The Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House may be aware, the core duties of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service are to protect lives, properties and the environment against the destruction by fire to intervene in rescue operations such as water evacuation in flooded areas during flash floods and road and further accidents.

Over the years, with climate change, it has been observed that the frequency of flash floods has increased considerably resulting in flood waters affecting the lives and properties of inhabitants throughout the country. The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service therefore decided to procure pumps with high volume output so as to alleviate the suffering and hardship of the population affected by flash floods.

I am informed by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service that following a procurement exercise, ten submersible pumps powered by mobile generators and fitted in trailers with a discharge capacity of 5,000 litres per minute and three stand-alone pumps fitted in trailers with a discharge capacity of 6,000 litres per minute were delivered in August 2021. These pumps which were acquired at the total cost of Rs19.5 m., were put in operation in December 2021. These pumps have been used at several locations throughout the island during the flash floods and torrential rains, namely at Avenue Eucalyptus, Black River, Plaine Magnien, Gros Billot, Mare Chicose, London Plaza, Vacoas amongst others.

I am further informed that nine pick-up utility vehicles were procured in April 2022 by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service at a cost of Rs21.9 m. These vehicles are used for multiple usages as follows –

- (i) towing facilities for the trailer mounted flood pumps in flooded areas;
- (ii) conveyance of firefighters to flooded sites during emergencies;
- (iii) conveyance of firefighting portable pumps, floating pumps and other rescue gears at flooded areas;
- (iv) inspection and maintenance of fire hydrants around the island;
- (v) inspection of government buildings for issue of fire certificates, and
- (vi) conducting enforcement of statutory fire safety requirements.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the person(s) who were in charge of submitting specifications for these trailer pumps had technical expertise in such matters as there are concerns from firemen and people working in the Fire Service about the high voltage and risk of electrocution when these are being used?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know the person who actually wrote the specification but usually, the Fire Services tend to contact the MNI to get proper specification for whatever they procure.

Dr. Aumeer: Can the hon. Minister confirm that the utility pickups, that is, the Nissan Navara, as you mentioned yourself approximately nine, were bought in lieu of proper cranes that

were supposed to tow these trailer pumps and they had been modified and still could not be used and therefore, has been used for administrative purposes which results in a sort of wastage of money.

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, a lot of these pumps have been towed, as you mentioned, by these pickup utility vehicles; they are being used. Apart from the other administrative works, the high volume pumps are being carried by these pickup trucks.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS CONSTRUCTION - NEW ZONING – LAND CONVERSION

(No. B/228) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether he will state if his Ministry proposes to make representations to the Local Government for new zoning of agricultural land into residential zone for the construction of social housing units.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to thank the honourable gentleman for drawing my attention to a very important part which I am not normally directly involved with.

Now according to the information I have gathered from the Ministry of Housing and the NSLD, the situation is as follows: the first phase of construction of 8,000 social housing units concerns 38 plots of land spread out across the island of Mauritius. Of these 38, 28 are plots of State Land, that is, the freehold vests with the State. These 28 have now been transferred to the NSLD and crusted to the NSLD for construction purposes but they remain State Land, technically.

In addition to the 28, there are 10 plots of private land that have been acquired, I had the opportunity in response to a Parliamentary Question, no, I think it was in the course of the Committee Supply in debates on the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, to give the details of the 10 sites which I have since made public. Those 10 sites were plots of private land acquired by the NSLD which now owns the freehold rights over those 10 plots.

Now, as regards those 10 plots of land, my understanding is that the NSLD as owner of the land is doing the needful to ensure that it has all proper permits and clearances for building purposes. And this, according to my understanding, would involve as well as clearing the issue of conversion if the land is classified as agricultural land.

As regards the 20 plots of State Land, I understand that the Ministry of Housing is presently looking into the question in the light of relevant legal provisions and past practice as concerns building of social housing on land belonging to the State.

So, that being the case, my Ministry does not propose to make representations to the Ministry of Local Government for the simple reason that according to Section 28(3) of the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act 2013, conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural land is the responsibility of the Minister responsible for the subject of agriculture. Furthermore, for that purpose, the SIE Act provides that the Minister in charge of agriculture is advised by a Land Conversion Committee and the Land Conversion Committee has clear criteria as defined by Section 28 subsection 5 of the SIE Act. So, to the extent that it is relevant, it is the Ministry of Agro-Industry that will be approached for relevant clearances to be obtained.

Mr Woohit: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House when the last rezoning exercise, that is, the Outline Planning Scheme (OPS) was carried out in depth?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I would be delighted to provide the information. Unfortunately the honourable gentleman will understand that I could not have anticipated such a supplementary question but should he put a new question to that effect, I am very happy to provide the relevant information.

Mr Woohit: Mr Speaker, Sir, to release land for permitted development should define settlement boundary like the metro, new school, shopping malls and other social infrastructure, any construction. So, is the Minister aware that the country is witnessing a comprehensive development in the absence of the updated Outline Planning Scheme as the Local Government is releasing several developments without any planning control?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am certainly not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, because of course, as Minister of Housing and Lands, I would not tolerate such a situation. Now, if the honourable gentleman has such concerns, I would welcome a specific question to that effect and I shall provide all the relevant information.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/235 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

PQ B/289 will be replied by hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

PQs B/243, B/249, B/253, B/255, B/261, B/267, B/276, B/283, B/286, B/291 and B/295 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL – UPDATES

(No. B/229) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the proposed introduction in the Assembly of the Police and Criminal Justice Bill, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will first of all refer the House to previous replies given in relation to this subject matter; the previous replies which I wish to reiterate today. By way of update, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House of certain new proposals and representations which my Office has received namely, from the recently appointed Director of Public Prosecutions who has made some fresh representations and I do not want to reveal the tenor of the discussions but just to name one of them, a certain specific amendment has been proposed to the Courts Act and these fresh proposals and representations, therefore, are being considered.

Furthermore, I wish to inform the House by way of update that consideration is also being given to consider the criminal procedure aspect separately inasmuch as there is general agreement that the amendments relating to the rules of evidence may be dealt with more speedily

compared to the criminal procedure generally and police procedure in particular. Therefore, all these proposals and representations are being considered at this stage in a holistic manner.

Mr Lobine: May I ask the hon. Minister what is now the timeframe to introduce such a Bill because the same issue was raised in 2018 with regard to consultation with the DPP's Office and now, there are new issues that are being raised. May we know what the new timeframe is since 2018 now that will be brought?

Mr Gobin: It is dangerous for me to venture on proposal of the timeframe. There are many aspects, Mr Speaker, Sir. The House will appreciate; it will include issues like giving of evidence by way of live television broadcast. That is just one of them that I'm mentioning. That is why I do not want to venture at this stage to provide any timeframe. All those proposals are being looked into, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lobine: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the practice of provisional charge is also being looked after with regard to those new proposals from the DPP's Office?

Mr Gobin: These were already the subject matter of extensive discussions in the past, Mr Speaker, Sir. And, in fact, this is the crux of the matter pertaining to the change of mindset. As I have mentioned in previous replies, it is not an easy task to change 150 years of Police procedures and this is why I said earlier that there is general acceptance that the rules of evidence can be dealt with more speedily. So, consideration is being given to consider them, not separately but rather rules of evidence on one hand, more speedily compared to criminal procedure generally and in particular Police procedure. This one will take the time that it will require.

Mr Speaker: MP Quirin!

MALABO PROTOCOL – RATIFICATION BY MAURITIUS

(No. B/230) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the ratification by Mauritius of the Malabo Protocol of the African Union purporting, *inter alia*, to extend the powers of the Pan African Parliament into a full-fledge legislative organ, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the protocol to the Constitutive Act of the African Union relating to the Pan-African Parliament also known as the Malabo Protocol was adopted by the 23rd ordinary session of the Assembly of heads of State and Government of the African Union in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea on 27 June 2014. The Malabo Protocol is a revision of the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to the Pan-African Parliament which was adopted in Sirte, Libya on 02 March 2001.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that nine years after its adoption, only 22 out of 55 African Union Member States have signed the Malabo Protocol and out of these, only 14 have ratified it. For the Malabo Protocol to enter into force, 28 ratifications, that is, a simple majority of the 55 Member States are required. It may therefore be inferred that African Union Member States are exercising caution to tread along this path.

Hon. Members may wish to know that Article 11 of the Protocol to the treaty establishing the African economic community relating to the Pan-African Parliament provides, *inter alia*, that the Pan-African Parliament shall exercise advisory and consultative powers only. In contrast, Article 8 of the Malabo Protocol stipulates that the Pan-African Parliament shall be the legislative organ of the African Union. Once ratified, the Malabo Protocol will give the Pan-African Parliament distinct legislative responsibilities. Article 8(1) in fact provides that the AU Assembly –

“will determine the areas on which the Pan-African Parliament may propose draft Model Laws”.

It also foresees that the Pan-African Parliament –

“may on its own initiative make proposals for subjects or areas on which it may submit or recommend draft Model Laws to the Assembly for its consideration and approval”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to these new legislative functions, the Malabo Protocol entails important changes in the election and membership of the Pan-African Parliament. The Protocol will not allow for Parliamentarians to become concurrently members of the National Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament. Whilst a member of the National Parliament will be eligible to contest an election to the Pan-African Parliament, however, if elected, she or she shall

resign from the National Parliament. The Malabo Protocol also provides for the election of members to the Pan-African Parliament from outside the membership of national Parliaments.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Malabo protocol has, therefore, wide-ranging political, legal and financial implications which need to be examined in detail before a decision can be made on the way forward. It is important that we ensure that ratifying this legal instrument does not, in any manner, result in the relegation of part of our national sovereignty to Pan-African institutions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that irrespective of the fact that Mauritius has not signed the Malabo protocol, we have always participated fully in the deliberations of the Pan-African Parliament and remain supportive of its initiatives. For instance, a Mauritian delegation comprising five members of our national Parliament attended the 6th session of the Pan-African Parliament held from 27 June to the 02 July last year in Midran, South Africa. The hon. Member himself has been appointed Chairperson of PAC Committee on health, labour and social affairs.

My Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, will continue to monitor the situation and ensure that any future course of action on the matter does not jeopardise our national interest and impinge on our sovereignty.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, dois-je rappeler au ministre que le Protocol de Malabo a été présenté au pays membres de l'union Africaine depuis 2014 et je crois que lui-même, dans sa réponse l'a précisé. Et cela, 9 ans après, il n'y a toujours pas une position officielle de Maurice par rapport à la ratification de ce Protocol. Donc, de ce fait, peut-il nous préciser si le gouvernement a des réticences par rapport à ce Protocol ; si oui, est-ce que ces réticences ont été exprimées à l'union Africaine ?

Mr Ganoo: M. Speaker, Sir, as I have just said, we have very important and credible reasons why we have not acceded to this legal instrument.

I have quoted article 8 of the protocol and the implications of acceding to this Parliament, namely that the AU Assembly will determine the areas in which the Pan-African Parliament will propose draft the model laws. It may recommend to the Assembly model laws and we shall be bound to consider and approve those laws. It is clear that this implies the surrendering in some way or the relegation of part of our national sovereignty to another institution, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, it is clear and this is what explains the reason that so far, Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the 55 African Member States, only 14 have ratified it. Let us be honest, objective and candid about this. There is hesitancy on the part of other African Members, not only Mauritius. Only 14 out of 55 African Union Member States have so far ratified this instrument, Mr Speaker, Sir.

It is clear that not only Mauritius, but the majority of the African Union Member States are treading cautiously with regard to this path. As I said, we will continue to monitor the situation in case there is any future development or course of action, then the country, the Mauritian State will take the decision that it has to take.

Mr Quirin: En 2017, j'avais adressé pratiquement la même question à l'ancien ministre des Affaires étrangères qui avait choisi aussi de maintenir le flou. Or, aujourd'hui l'honorable ministre réalise-t-il qu'il y a urgence, car Maurice doit faire connaitre sa position officielle par rapport à ce protocole puisque lors de la prochaine session plénière du Parlement panafricain, qui aura lieu au mois de mai prochain, les représentants des pays qui n'ont pas encore ratifié ce protocole dont Maurice fait partie seront appelés à présenter la position officielle de leur pays.

Alors, je réitère ma requête à l'honorable ministre, les représentants de Maurice dont je fais partie et mes honorables collègues, nous aurons à ouvertement présenter la position de Maurice. Est-ce que nous allons dire qu'on est dans le flou, qu'on ne sait pas, qu'il y a des réticences, etc. ? Nous aurions voulu nous, en tant que représentants de Maurice au sein du Parlement panafricain, être en mesure de pouvoir présenter la position officielle. Qu'on le dise, si on n'est pas pour la ratification, qu'on le dise.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Ganoo: Well, I think the reply I have just given answers the question of the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I just said, besides Mauritius, countries like Algeria, Angola, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa and all our neighbouring countries Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, all these friendly countries, Mr Speaker, Sir, have also chosen to go along the same path that Mauritius has chosen.

So, in due course, whenever the occasion arises, Mauritius without any hesitation will make its position known. May I also remind the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, that at the last

African Union summit which was held a few months ago recently this year, the question of the ratification of the Malabo Protocol in order to extend the powers of the Pan-African Parliament into a fully fledged legislative organ was not on the order of the day, was not on the agenda. Had it been so, as a representative of the Mauritian Government in this forum, I would have certainly voiced out the opinion of our country, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/240, B/256, B/257, B/260, B/263, B/270, B/272, B/277, B/287, B/289.

Next question, Mr Bodha!

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS – DIGITAL HEALTH CARD SYSTEM

(No. B/231) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public health institutions, he will state when his Ministry proposes to introduce a Digital Health Card system or Computerised system for patients attending thereto.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to a computerised system for patients attending public health institutions, a Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Permanent Secretaries of my Ministry and the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, was set up to come up with appropriate recommendations for the E-Health Project in 2020.

In parallel, collaboration started with the United Nations Development Programme in the same year with the support of the University of Washington for the COVID-19 Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) which was successfully implemented. As the LIMS was an initial component for a National E-Health Project, the UNDP had proposed to review the E-Health Project free of cost prior to its launching.

The Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development was also consulted and advised for a review of the project specifications and cost of the National E-Health Project. Consequently, several discussions and consultations were held with the UNDP and the other government stakeholders on the way forward.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 26 January 2022, my Ministry signed a project portfolio document on eHealth Initiatives with the UNDP for the implementation of the e-Health Project.

To understand the market, the UNDP launched an Expression of Interest for implementation of the eHealth on 10 February 2022. Thereafter, based on the market study, the Request for Proposal document was prepared by the UNDP with the contribution of my Ministry, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. The tendering exercise is being conducted according to the UNDP Procurement Rules.

The tender documents went through a series of review at the UNDP Country Office and the UNDP Regional Procurement Committee and bids were floated internationally in November 2022 with an extended closing date of 10 February 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that from mid-February 2023 till 29 March 2023, the UNDP proceeded with the technical and financial evaluation of bids received on its eProcurement portal. The technical evaluation also included an extensive live demonstration of proposed eHealth solutions from the bidders. Officers from my Ministry, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development assisted the evaluation exercise as observers to ensure.

I am also informed that the evaluation process has been completed and given its complexity and high cost, the UNDP International Advisory Committee on Procurement would need to review the evaluation report prior to award. The UNDP is presently finalising the reference checks and internal modalities prior to submission to the UNDP Advisory Committee on Procurement prior to the award.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a letter of award is expected by end of May 2023, and then, our eHealth project will start, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has an idea of the cost of such a project?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated in the reply, everything is being conducted at the UNDP's office. Probably by the end of May, we will have a clear idea about the

cost. At the initial stage, we projected some Rs600 m., I mean before 2020. But at this time, I have no idea at all about the cost of this project.

Mr Bodha: Was it considered, as far as the new ID card is concerned, that this same new ID card could be used as an eHealth card?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, even if we scan the barcode of the present ID card, all the basic information on the ID card can be transferred to any PC, and we have already worked out how the basic information on the ID card can be transmitted to the software that will be provided in this e-health project.

Mr Bodha: One last question! May I? Yes? Do we have a timeframe for the implementation of such a project?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this project will be implemented in three phases. So now, we are only on the first phase of the project. Once we will award the first phase, the implementation will last for some 18 months and that will be implemented soon.

Mr Speaker: Next question, MP Mrs Luchmun Roy!

INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025 - MANUFACTURING SECTOR

(No. B/232) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the Industrial Policy and Strategic Plan for the Manufacturing Sector 2020-2025, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Mr Bholah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Industrial Policy and Strategic Plan (IPSP) 2020-2025 for Mauritius was prepared with the assistance of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in collaboration with my Ministry and was launched on 04 December 2020.

The IPSP has as overall objective to give a boost to the Manufacturing Sector, thus contributing further to economic growth of the country. The House may wish to note that the IPSP comprises 194 projects resting on 5 focus areas, namely –

- (1) industry foundations;
- (2) upgrading of value chains;
- (3) increased domestic market supply;
- (4) regional and global export growth, and
- (5) advanced technology absorption.

The IPSP also includes dedicated plan of actions for key sectors within the Manufacturing Sector, namely –

- Domestic Enterprises;
- Textile and Clothing;
- Food Processing and Fish Preparations;
- Medical Devices, Pharmaceuticals and Medical Products, and
- Jewellery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has been very proactive in ensuring that the recommendations of the IPSP are implemented in as far as possible in a timely manner. In this perspective, in January 2021, an Industrial Policy Executive Oversight Committee, under the Chair of my Permanent Secretary of my Ministry, was set up to oversee the overall implementation of the recommendations outlined in the said IPSP.

Eight sub-committees have been constituted to drive the implementation process with regard to the focus areas and sectoral action plans relating to –

- industry foundations;
- regional and global export growth;
- advanced technology absorption;

- domestic enterprises;
- textile and clothing;
- food processing and fish preparations;
- medical devices and pharmaceuticals, and
- jewellery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, 96 projects, representing 50% of the recommendations, have already been implemented. These include, amongst others –

- the operation of a Modernisation and Transformation Fund to the tune of Rs5 billion at IFCM Ltd;
- issue of export development certificates;
- issue of Export Development Certificates;
- extension of Support Schemes, and
- redynamising of export and investment promotional campaigns at the level of the Economic Development Board.

On the other hand, 62 projects, representing 30% of the recommendations, are in the process of being implemented. One major project entitled, Manufacturing 4.0, is being undertaken by my Ministry in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat to encourage greater technology uptake in the field of Industry 4.0.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the 194 projects in the IPSP, 96 have been implemented and 62 are under implementation. At this stage, we have almost reached the mid-term phase of the implementation schedule and actions are being initiated for the remaining 36 projects. My Ministry is coordinating with all stakeholders to find ways and means to kick-start implementation of those outstanding projects as soon as possible.

On the whole, the realisation of the Industrial Policy and Strategic Plan is well entrenched, as demonstrated by the buoyancy in the manufacturing activities. Indeed, this sector recorded a growth rate of 6.3% in 2022, leading to an all-time gross output of Rs152 billion. On the export front, the performance has also been spectacular with a record-breaking figure of

Rs52.3 billion. My Ministry is committed to ensuring that all recommendations of the IPSP are timely implemented for a renewed impetus to the Manufacturing Sector.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister provide further information as to the recommendations found in the Industrial Policy and Strategic Plan that have already been implemented? Can we have further details about those which have already been implemented? Thank you.

Mr Bholah: As I said earlier, out of the 194 projects, 96 projects have already been completed and it is practically impossible to enumerate all the 96 but I can provide some main projects relating to the Textile and Clothing Sectoral Plan, where 28 projects have been completed. These are mainly in relation to, as I said earlier –

- operationalisation for the Modernisation and Transformation Fund;
- training schemes operational at HRDC, MITD and ADI;
- streamlining of work permits procedures;
- productivity enhancement programme at NPCC;
- extension of support schemes such as the Trade Promotion and Marketing Scheme and Freight Rebate Scheme.

With regard to Sectoral Plan for Medical Devices and Pharmaceuticals, many projects have reached an advanced level. They mostly relate to fiscal measures adopted in Budget 2020-2021 and the adherence of Mauritius to international conventions such as the World Intellectual Property Office, Madrid Protocol and Hague System which are relevant to the sector.

Furthermore, 16 projects pertaining to the Food Processing And Fish Preparations Sectoral Plan have also been realised. These include –

- introduction of the Food Act 2022;
- upgrading of training programme in food safety, and
- creating more value addition to fish waste at enterprise level.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

RENAL TRANSPLANT – RENAL TRANSPLANT UNIT & RENAL REGISTRY

(No. B/233) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to renal transplant, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof performed in regional hospitals since October 2022 to date, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the setting up of a –
 - (i) Renal Transplant Unit at the Jawarhal Nehru Hospital, and
 - (ii) renal registry in Mauritius.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, live kidney donor transplantation has restarted in Mauritius in October 2022 with the visit of Dr. Rajasekhar Perumalla, Consultant Transplant Surgeon from India and is now continuing with the presence of Professor Nizam Fatehmamode, Professor in Transplant Surgery from Guy's Hospital, UK.

As at date, 18 transplantations have taken place and a further number of 12 patients is being forecasted to undergo renal transplant.

With regard to part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed, the tender for the construction of a Renal Transplant Unit was launched on 07 October 2022, with extended closing date of 22 November 2022.

A Letter of Award was issued to Varindera Constructions Ltd on 15 February 2023, with a contract value of Rs557,378,437.67. Same is being financed through a grant of USD 10 million, that is, Rs440 million from the Government of India, and the remaining amount represents Government's contribution to the project.

The Ministry is currently processing the contract agreement which would be signed shortly. The duration of works is of 18 calendar months. The Renal Transplant Unit would be a separate block in the compound of the existing Jawarhal Nehru Hospital at Rose Belle. It would

have a total built-up area of 8,252 square metres. It would comprise of a basement, ground floor and three floors with a total number of 100 beds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) (ii), I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has organised a one-day workshop to launch the Digital National Renal Registry on 06 March 2023 to mark the occasion of the World Kidney Day.

The purpose of a renal registry is to collect, analyse and report on data related to the care and outcomes of patients with renal disease. Specifically, a renal registry is designed to track information about patients who have all kinds of kidney diseases, including chronic renal disease, end-stage renal disease as well as those who have received kidney transplants.

From a public health perspective, renal registries help to quantify disease burden, formulate preventive strategy, plan health infrastructure, audit practices patterns and evaluate service quality. With the setting up of a National Renal Registry, Mauritius is geared to step up on the global medical front with data scientifically collected as per international norms. Contributing renal data to international organisations like the WHO, International Society of Nephrology (ISN), African Association of Nephrology (AFRAN), and United States Renal Data System (USRDS) will ensure that data on Mauritius published internationally is accurate.

Moreover, this register will facilitate clinical research and the conduct of numerous studies based on reliable and disaggregated data. It is worthy of note that renal registries have become a priority for the World Health Organisation to the point that a joint collaboration between the ISN and the WHO to facilitate the establishment and growth of renal registries in all countries. Contributing data to the global medical community will also ensure Mauritius can attract appropriate aid and cooperation for kidney disease for the benefit of kidney patients in our country.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In this very issue, can the hon. Minister inform the House if capacity building in respect of health care workers, is envisaged?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, there are different health care workers where we need to empower them, pending the opening of the Renal Transplant Unit. So, at present, there are two groups of Officers, nursing officers, 26 and 24 who have already been trained by the Mauritius Institute of Health for Certificate in Nephrology.

All Nephrologists, on weekly rotation to Transplant Unit, participate in meetings. There are two Laboratory Technicians having been trained in Flow cytometry and HLA Antibodies measurement technics, team of dialysis nurses being trained to administer plasma exchange in case of antibody mediated rejection. So, these are the different trainings for scrub nurses, surgical specialists, Histopathologists, Nephrologists and coordinators; all are being trained at this moment and hopefully, all training will be completed in the coming year.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Yes, thank you. Can the Minister inform the House, how many persons have been sent abroad for renal transplant surgery since the last five years?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2018 – 9 patients, in 2019 – 13 patients, in 2020 – 3 patients, in 2021 – 6 patients, in 2022 – 5 patients and for 2023, only one patient. So, once we started the renal transplant surgeries, most of the surgeries are being conducted in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker: MP Dr. Gungapersad!

STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS - GYMNASIUM FACILITIES

(No. B/234) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the State Secondary Schools, she will state the number thereof fully equipped with operational gymnasium facilities and table copy thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry provides the necessary infrastructure and amenities in our State Schools for the practice of sports and physical activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that currently, we have 63 State Secondary Schools, out of which 35 are equipped with a gymnasium. Out of these 35 gymnasiums, 32 are operational and fitted with equipment for physical education activities. As regards, the remaining three gymnasiums, they are temporarily not in operation due to water leakages and electrical wiring issues. My Ministry has already requested the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development to take remedial actions to address these issues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am herewith tabling a list of the 32 equipped gymnasium available in the State Secondary Schools.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, given that 18 State Secondary Schools do not have a proper gymnasium for the time being, will the hon. Minister inform the House when those gymnasiums, for which Budgetary Provisions were made in the past, for example, in the Budget Speeches of 2015-2016, 2018-2019 and 2021-2022 be built because last year's Budget Speech only mentions the construction of a gymnasium at RCC, not mentioning the other SSS colleges?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the MNI has informed that tender documents have been finalised for one multipurpose hall and however, they had to be reworked due to changes in the bidding document format and Bill of quantities are presently being prepared and the same applies to all the other five halls that were supposed to be set up and they would be ready by the end of June and the tenders will be launched thereafter.

Dr. Gungapersad: Hon. Minister, you mentioned, I think three gymnasiums which are not operational because of leakage, for example, in Quartier-Militaire SSS. Will any legal actions be taken against the contractors because of major defect which have been identified during the liability period and when will these gymnasiums where we have leakages, be operational?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the matter has already been referred to the Ministry of National Infrastructure and necessary actions are being taken.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Ms Anquetil: B/235.

Mr Speaker: No, I said this morning that your question has been transferred to the hon. Minister Ganoo.

HENRIETTA GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

(No. B/235) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the Henrietta Government School, he will state if consideration will be given for the installation of pedestrian

crossing located on the main road in the vicinity thereof, especially, to enhance the safety of the students attending same.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr Ganoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the Henrietta Government School is situated on a side road which branches out from the main road. Pedestrians including students have to cross along the main road to access the school through the side road. Unfortunately, the geometry of the Henrietta main road, at that particular locus, includes a sharp bend which is dangerous. I am advised that the installation of a pedestrian crossing thereat is thus not recommended from a road safety point of view.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, I am informed that my Ministry would carry out a traffic survey at the Henrietta main road to explore other traffic and road safety measures to be implemented thereat for the safe and convenient movement of pedestrians including students.

Ms Anquetil: M. le président, comme l'a si bien dit le ministre, les écoliers de la Henrietta Government School traversent la route dans un *dangerous curve* tous les jours. Peut-on savoir du ministre combien de temps cela prendra pour que la TMRSU ou autres départements, pour qu'une recommandation soit faite assez rapidement, sachant que piétons, vélos, bus, voitures s'y croisent parfois à vive allure? Merci.

Mr Ganoo: Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I said, one important factor before providing a crossing facility along any public road is that there should be adequate safe stopping distance that is, pedestrians must be able to see and be seen by the approaching traffic.

In view of the topography of the location which we are talking about and having listened to the hon. Member, I can assure the House and the hon. Member that the Office, the TMRSU, will carry out a traffic survey to ascertain whether all the elements will be met before we initiate an appropriate action to provide either for a crossing facility some way further from the school or other measures which we can take for the safety of the crossing pedestrians.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if it will not be possible to provide for a crossing facility along Henrietta Branch Road, I can assure the hon. Member that the TMRSU will explore other traffic measures to cater, for example, for a low speed zone along the stretch of Henrietta Branch Road and take

other measures and explore other possibilities for the benefit of road safety, especially in the interest of the school children thereat.

Ms Anquetil: M. le président, il y va de la sécurité des écoliers. Le ministre, serait-il prêt à intervenir personnellement auprès des autorités afin que cette démarche soit traitée avec urgence. Je vous remercie.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Member is rubbing it in, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have already answered the question.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

FISHERMAN CARDS 2023 - ALLOCATION EXERCISE

(No. B/236) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the allocation of fisherman cards for 2023, he will state if this exercise has been completed, indicating –

- (a) the number thereof to be delivered;
- (b) the terms and conditions thereof;
- (c) the number of applications received constituency-wise, and
- (d) when same will be issued.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I will also reply to this Parliamentary Question together with Parliamentary Question B/241 and B/250 as they relate to the same subject matter.

With regard to PQ B/236, I am informed that application for fisherman cards is an on-going exercise and interested persons may call at the Fisheries Post for submission of applications.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may recall that announcement made in the Financial Years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 for the issue of 1,000 additional fisherman cards for the two consecutive years. In 2021, there was already a database of 725 pending applications, some dated as far back as 2008. Priority was given to these longstanding applications. In 2022, 323 cards have been allocated to active fishermen. I wish to remind the House that due to COVID-19 protocol, only 50 applicants were allowed to follow the General Fisherman Course at a time.

Moreover, a batch of 59 active applicants who are already following the General Fisherman Course which brings to a total of 384 out of the 725 previous applications. Out of the 384 allocated and 59 on-going, from Constituency No.12., 83 fisherman cards have been allocated, which represent 20%. So, these have already been allocated.

The balance of the 361 from the previous applications are still pending or not being considered for the following reasons –

- (a) The applicants are in employment;
- (b) The applicants operate business activities;
- (c) They have drug dealings conviction;
- (d) Medically unfit, and, of course,
- (e) Incomplete submission of required documents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, 317 fishermen who had reached the age of 65 years or were medically unfit and had opted for the Voluntary Retirement Scheme which Government introduced in Budget 2022-2023. These retired fishermen have received a sum of Rs52,500 each totalling an amount of Rs16.6 m. I am informed that there are still pending applications being processed. Since the implementation of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme, a total amount, as I said, has already been paid to 307 fishers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this measure of Voluntary Retirement Scheme allowed my Ministry to allocate more than 300 plus additional cards to replace those retired. So, added to the 1,000, it brings to plus 1,300 cards. Unfortunately, the turn out application in all our Fisheries Posts was very low, I am informed that during the last 20 months before the walk-in application exercise,

we had received an average of 13 applications monthly, that is, a total of 260 of which 120 have been processed and completed, and they are awaiting for the medical and swimming tests before going for the course.

The Fisheries Training and Extension Centre (FITEC) has made provision to accommodate batch of 100 intakes for the General Fisherman Course at a time. Therefore, in regard to PQs B/241 and B/250, my Ministry had to organise a communication campaign to invite walk-in application for fisherman card on 20 and 21 March 2023. The campaign has been a very successful one. I seize this opportunity to thank my officers who dedicated themselves for the organisation of the campaign whereby we have received 1,363 applications in only two days.

So, with your permission, I am tabling the number of applications received Constituency wise and the eligibility criteria also for the registration of artisanal fishers. I hope hon. R. Duval will be happy once again to hear that 215 applications were received from Constituency No.12, again nearly 16% of all the applicants.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, all applications are being processed in order to ensure that all necessary documents have been submitted so as to confirm the eligibility of the applicants. All eligible applicants will then undergo a medical examination by the Ministry of Health and Wellness and a swimming test by the National Coast Guard. Successful applicants will then be called to follow the General Fisherman Course in batch of 100.

All going well, as asked by hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie, it is expected that the gradual allocation, after each course, we won't wait for the applicants to go, so, once the course is over, the allocation of cards will be gradual. The 1,000 fisherman cards allocation will be completed by end March 2024.

With regard to PQ B/241, I am informed that allocation for fisherman cards in Rodrigues is under the responsibility of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. Thank you.

Mr R. Duval: Can the hon. Minister inform the House if prior to the allocation of fisherman cards, a due diligence exercise was made so as to ensure that those who received the precious document are real fisherman, not fake as some news indicate?

Mr Maudhoo: As I indicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, while we had 725 applicants, so now, in fact, 361 of them have been more or less eliminated. So, the due diligence has been done. It means we have checked the NPS, the BRN, the medical exam, the swimming test. In fact, the swimming test was not there and this has been recently introduced. We should at least ensure that fishermen know how to swim.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Le ministre, peut-il nous donner les raisons pour lesquels un des critères pour l'obtention de cette fameuse carte est la présentation d'un certificat de caractère qui est un non-sens ?

Mr Maudhoo: *Ah non!* Mr Speaker, Sir, let me explain. In fact, this is in the Lam Shang Leen Report. It comes from there and it means we do give fisherman card. It means we take application with regard to any minor crime committed, be it larceny, be it even drug consumption, but we only eliminate those who have been in drug dealing because at sea, there is obviously the high risk that they may indulge in drug trafficking.

Mr Léopold: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House what is the maximum age limit that his Ministry consider as a professional fisherman?

Mr Maudhoo: Normally, applications are accepted within 18 to 50 years old.

Mr R. Duval: Can the hon. Minister tell the House what will be the facilities offered to the new fisherman and if he will provide new facility to purchase fishing vessel without taking any additional collateral, except the fishing vessel itself?

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, a lot of incentives is being provided to the fisher community. In fact, there is the grant of Rs200,000. The maximum is provided by Government and also, they get more than Rs200,000 at preferential rates from the DBM. And except of that, there is a lot of equipment, safety equipment and now we are working on – we are trying to realise it quickly – the long awaited VHF radio, 15 VHF radios which will be given to our fishers who go in high seas. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Le ministre, peut-il nous dire quand est-ce que l'exercice pour l'obtention de ces cartes sera finalisé pour la Circonscription numéro 1 ?

Mr Maudhoo: It is not by constituency. Mr Speaker, Sir, once clearance is obtained... In Constituency No.1, we have 127 applicants. In fact, applications are there, screening is there and once we obtain all the clearances, then obviously, the allocation will be to all the coastal specific constituencies where all the applications come from. So, accordingly, we will do it proportionately and not by constituency. We will do a proportionate allocation so that we can take everybody on board, in batches of hundred. We will do like this.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/242, B/244, B/252, B/254, B/259, B/280 and B/285.

Next question!

LA VIGIE-LA BRASSERIE LINK ROAD (PHASE 1) – INTERSECTION – M1 MOTORWAY

(No. B/237) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the construction of Phase 1 of the La Vigie-La Brasserie Link Road, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand, indicating the measures being envisaged at the intersection thereof with the M1 Motorway.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/951 on 26 July 2022, I informed the House that the Road Development Authority is currently undertaking the construction of the East-West connector which comprises the following projects –

- (i) La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road (Phase 1), starting from Motorway M1 at La Vigie crossing Phoenix-Plaisance Road (A10) at 16^{ème} Mille and ending at La Marie (B102) at La Marie.
- (ii) La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road (Phase 2), project starting from La Marie Road (B102) passing through Henrietta, Holyrood and ending at

Pierrefonds. The new road will link the Palma Road (B2) and the Phoenix-Beaux Songes Link Road (B130).

- (iii) The Flic-en-Flac Bypass starting from Pierrefonds roundabout to end at Flic-en-Flac as Phase 3.

The coming into operation of La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road will have a major relief on the distribution of traffic between the west, central and south region of the country including between Black River, the Motorway M1 and the SSR International Airport. This will improve the level of service, journey time, and accessibility within the town of Curepipe where the main road network is currently fragmented and congested.

The initial scope of works for Phase 1 of the project consists of the following –

- (i) construction of 6.5 km single carriageway with a width of 7 m and shoulders of 1.5 m on both sides of the flexible pavement from La Vigie to La Marie;
- (ii) construction of roundabouts at 16^{ème} Mille and La Marie with associated slip lanes;
- (iii) construction of a junction on Motorway M1 at La Vigie;
- (iv) construction of box culvert and other drainage structures;
- (v) construction of a pedestrian crossing;
- (vi) construction of a cycle lane over 3.5 km;
- (vii) installation and commissioning of street lightings;
- (viii) provision of miscellaneous road equipment such as carriageway markings, traffic signs, handrails, safety fences among others;
- (ix) relocation of existing utility services, and finally
- (x) landscaping works.

This Phase 1 project was awarded to General Construction Company Ltd. on 31 December 2020 for the sum of Rs655.7 m. inclusive of VAT. Works which started on 10 February 2021 have progressed significantly on site, that is, 72% as at date and are expected to be completed by November 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard the measures envisaged at the intersection of the road with the Motorway M1, I am informed that at the time the Phase 1 project was conceptualised in 2017, the connection at Motorway M1 at La Vigie was to be made through a roundabout. A policy has in the meantime been adopted in line with the Government Programme 2020-2024 to replace roundabouts as far as possible with flyovers or grade separators.

After consultation with the TMRSU, it was initially proposed to construct appropriate slip lanes to make provision for left-in and left-out vehicular movements to access the Motorway M1. It was, however, observed that these slip lanes will cause inconveniences to commuters coming from the north as they will have to make a detour of approximately 3.2 km at Midlands flyover to be able to join the new Link Road to go to their destinations. Likewise, those coming from La Brasserie and Le Morne going to airport and the southern region will have to go to La Vigie roundabout where there is a high flow of traffic.

Accordingly, Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to providing a complete and efficient solution to all commuters, my Ministry is proposing to construct a flyover which will be implemented concurrently with the Phase 2 of La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road project. The works will comprise the following –

- (i) a flyover;
- (ii) a slip lane from Motorway southbound to connect the roundabout;
- (iii) a slip lane from the roundabout to connect with the Motorway southbound;
- (iv) a single carriageway connecting a flyover to the new La Vigie-La Brasserie-Beaux Songes Link Road, and
- (v) appropriate drainage and retaining structures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a tender exercise for the construction of the flyover will be launched shortly and works, which will be for a duration of 15 months, are expected to start in August 2023.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the Minister for his answer, but with regard to Phase 1 of the project, it has been brought to my knowledge that there has been a delay regarding the completion of this new link road. May we know why and what has been the cost implication?

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, there has been a delay. As I have mentioned in my reply, the new completion date is now November of this year and there are several reasons to explain this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

There were the constraints related to COVID-19 pandemic, the lockdown period and the bad weather conditions but more importantly, because we have had a new component after the award of the project, that is, the cycle lane. Regarding any cost implications, obviously, it is the cost of the cycle lane that we have added and this is included in the figure which I have already mentioned but just for the information of the House, it is costing an additional amount of Rs84.5 m. for 3.5 km.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Dhunoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two supplementary questions...

Mr Speaker: No. Last question!

Mr Dhunoo: Is it true that the alignment of this new road goes through the Montvert Nature Walk as has been suggested by a Member of the Opposition?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is completely false, untrue, totally demagogue! The location of the Montvert Nature Walk is precisely 216 metres away from the construction site and is not affected by the project. In fact, for the information of my honourable colleague, there is a health track which is found across the alignment of the new road at Montvert. This

track is being reinstated by providing an overpass for cycle and pedestrians with appropriate ramps on the project.

Mr Speaker: MP Ameer Meea!

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS – UNUSED LANDS – PROJECTS

(No. B/238) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to unused lands vested in his Ministry, he will give details thereof, indicating the projects, if any, that have been identified for implementation thereat.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to unused land, I am informed that there is presently one plot of State land of an extent of 6 acres, 10 *perches*, situated at La Tour Koenig vested in my Ministry which is currently undeveloped. We have identified this plot of land for the relocation of the Department of Operations Support Services which supports my Ministry in terms of fleet management.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would wish to point out that we have initiated the process of registering all assets under my Ministry on the Government Asset Register (GAR). GAR has been implemented in the central government with the objective of providing the Government with a central database of assets acquired and controlled by different ministries and department. The GAR system forms part of the Treasury Accounting System. Assets consisting of vehicles, land, buildings, equipment and furniture are being input on the system.

Mr Ameer Meea: According to the Director of Audit, there are some 800,000 Square Metre, that is 190 *arpents* of State land and private land that were allocated to the Ministry of Health and also according to its findings, there was no consolidated and updated database of land that was maintained and in the absence of documentary evidence, even ownership could not be ascertained. The list is included in the report. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister if he has taken cognizance of the findings of the report of the Director of Audit and also why so much land has been vested to his Ministry and why were there no such records all that time? It is now that your Ministry is embarking on this project.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the question was on unused land, I have already given the reply. Should the hon. Member come with a substantive question, I will give all the replies but in all the lands vested to my Ministry, construction is ongoing. There are so many. I cannot go on giving information for all the lands but, come up with a substantive question on this. I am ready to give all the information or even regarding other remarks made by the Audit Office, I will give the appropriate reply for that.

Mr Ameer Meea: Since you will be giving all the information, as you just mentioned to the House, I will give you two examples that maybe you could include in your reply which is of paramount importance, the Victoria Hospital occupies 25 acres of land, for which ownership details were not provided by the Ministry of Health to the Auditors and also a Mediclinic is being constructed on two leased plots of private land and the annual lease rental for this private land is Rs5.5 million. Since the Minister will be providing the information, can he also enquire into this matter which is also mentioned in the report?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Victoria Hospital, as the hon. Member stated, we all know, is in a boundary area of 25 acres of land and this has been so for the last 100 years. If ever information has not been imparted to, I have to confirm whether this is so or not and then I will be able to give that appropriate answer. For Mediclinics, all projects undertaken by the Ministry for any health project, the land has been vested by the Ministry of Land and Housing. It is not that the Ministry does acquire land directly or on lease. So I believe these questions could have been put to me prior. I would have given you the details and the information that would have been provided by the Ministry of Land and Housing. So, at this time, I do not have the replies to these questions.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

GRNW, PORT LOUIS WEST – STATE LAND BENEFICIARIES’ LIST

(No. B/239) **Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will table the list of beneficiaries of State land/*Pas Géométriques* thereat since October 2019 for both residential and commercial purposes.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to apologise to the hon. Lady that my Ministry keeps records of the relevant information pertaining to the grant of leases of State land and *Pas Géométriques* on a district-wise and not constituency-wise basis and I stand informed that her constituency in fact, concerns three distinct districts – Port Louis, Moka and Black River. So accordingly, my Ministry will require some time to obtain the information relating specifically to her constituency and as soon as it is ready, I will lay it in the Library of the National Assembly. However, if there is any specific matter that is troubling the hon. Lady, I am happy to answer if I have the information at hand.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Will the hon. Minister be prepared to lay the Industrial Lease as well for Constituency No.1?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, certainly.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: As soon as it is ready.

The Deputy Prime Minister: As soon as it is ready, I will and if the hon. Lady has any specific matter which she wants to draw my attention to, I would be grateful if she could do so.

TRADE FAIR – SVICC, PAILLES – OUTCOME

(No. B/240) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the Trade Fair organised by his Ministry in December 2022 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, in Pailles, he will state the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

FISHERMAN CARDS – APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

(No. B/241) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the fisherman cards, he will state the number of applications received for the issue thereof received for the 2023 exercise for operation in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues Island respectively, indicating the number thereof approved as at to date.

(Vide PQ B/236)

MALAKOFF – DRAIN PROJECT

(No. B/242) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas and Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the implementation of the drain project at Malakoff, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

FOOTBRIDGE CONSTRUCTION PROPOSAL – QUEEN VICTORIA

(No. B/243) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a footbridge at Queen Victoria, he will state the work progress thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MULTI SPORTS COMPLEX & MUSIC SCHOOL PROJECT – AWARDED CONTRACT

(No. B/244) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the implementation of the Multi Sports Complex and Music School Project at the Abercrombie Market Fair Building, he will state where matters stand, indicating the –

- (a) date on which the –
 - (i) tender was launched, and
 - (ii) contract was awarded, and
- (b) expected completion date thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ENTREPRENEURSHIP/ STARTS UP – RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – MEASURES

(No. B/245) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) to ask the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to entrepreneurship and starts up, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council, information as to how the measures taken to ensure that research and innovation are aligned with the country's development goals and priorities to promote same.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Next question! MP Quirin, you have a question?

Mr Quirin: Yes.

CANOT – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/246) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a football ground at Canot, in Constituency No. 20, Beau-Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will state where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Black River that Government acquired a portion of land of an extent of 3 acres from Médine Ltd. and the said portion of land was vested in the then Ministry of Youth and Sports on 11 June 2010 for the construction of a football ground.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that there have been some issues about constructing a big football pitch and a smaller synthetic soccer pitch. There have been some argument between the Village Council and other stake holders but recently, I am told by the PPS of Constituency No. 20 that they had a meeting yesterday and they sorted it out. They are going to have both the football pitch and their mini soccer pitch as well.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, j'ai moi-même, ici, dans cette Chambre, à plusieurs reprises, fait état de la requête des jeunes de Canot, à l'effet qu'un terrain de football soit construit dans la région. Là, j'apprends à travers de la réponse de l'honorable ministre, que cette fois-ci, ce ne sera

pas un terrain, mais deux. Mais ce qu'on a envie de savoir c'est quand, parce qu'à chaque fois que j'ai soulevé cette question ici dans cette Chambre, j'ai entendu la même réponse – 'Ça va venir ; nous attendons le prochain budget, ce sera la NDU, ce sera le *Local Government* etc...'
mais jamais des réponses concrètes en réalité. Donc, ma question à l'honorable ministre, je pense qu'il est temps de nous le dire ici dans cette Chambre quand le terrain de football sera construit. Nous ne demandons pas deux dans un premier temps, mais au moins un premier terrain, qu'il soit synthétique ou normale, standard comme on le fait, mais de nous le dire quand.

Dr. Husnoo: As I mentioned Mr Speaker, Sir, the meeting took place yesterday. For long time now, there was an ongoing argument about whether to keep the big field, the football pitch or to have a small mini soccer pitch. The big argument has been going on for ages on that. Now that a decision has been taken, NDU is going to build the small synthetic pitch and they are going to take care of the football ground later on.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn – B/275, B/288.

Time over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

(4.14 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

OBITUARY - MR SERGE LEBRASSE

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement following the demise of Mr Serge Lebrasse. I would like on behalf of the Government to express my most sincere and heartfelt condolences to the Lebrasse family.

Mr Joseph Emmanuel Serge Lebrasse, also known as Serge Lebrasse, was born on 25 June 1930 in Rose Hill. Regarded as one of the greatest singers in Mauritius, as the icon of Mauritian *séga*, Serge Lebrasse had, with his unique voice, lyrics and music, redefined *séga* itself. The *séga* we know today bears to a great extent the imprint of Serge Lebrasse. He has contributed towards bringing *séga* to a different stratum of the society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the course of his career, Serge Lebrasse forged himself a reputation of being an exceptional singer. His songs are part of the memories of anyone who grew up as from the 60's. Serge Lebrasse released a collection of albums and singles and his songs very often were a reflection of our local culture and traditions, flavoured with themes, ranging from love, social justice, patriotism to unity. His repertoire was very rich and some of his most famous tracks include '*Madame Eugène*' and '*Moris mo pei*'. Serge Lebrasse would be called upon for major events and cultural activities; such was his musical and artistic aura.

Recipient of numerous accolades and awards, he also won the National Award in the Category of Music and Songs in the 2018 Edition of the National Award Ceremony organised by my Ministry. His music continues to be so popular throughout the country, which eventually led him to become renowned internationally as well.

During all these years, he had successfully helped to keep alive the various facets of the *séga*. Serge Lebrasse has contributed in his own way to make the *Séga Tipik* a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage.

He has been a role model for several artists in Mauritius and has inspired many of them, and would continue to do so for generations to come. Besides, Serge Lebrasse has constantly been an exemplary figure.

With the demise of Serge Lebrasse, he leaves behind a void, especially in the creative industry, but has handed over to us a unique and invaluable legacy.

M. le président, Serge Lebrasse est un monument de notre secteur créatif. Un artiste ne meurt jamais. La voix de ce géant de la musique locale restera toujours vivante et résonnera dans nos cœurs et nos esprits à tout jamais.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE RECOVERY BILL (NO. I OF 2023)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Bill (No. I of 2023).

Question again proposed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Collendavelloo!

(4.18 p.m.)

Mr I. Collendavelloo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Merci, M. le président. Mon intervention ce soir s’articulera autour de l’amendement qui a été circulé par l’honorable ministre de l’Environnement et notamment sur l’amendement à la clause 2 du projet de loi.

Alors, voyons ce que la clause 2 disait à l’origine. La clause 2, c’est le *Interpretation section* qui disposait que –

“*disposal*” means –

(a) *the deposit of waste into or onto land specifically designed for that purpose; or*”

C’est-à-dire pour les *transfer stations* ou les *landfills*.

“(b) *incineration of waste without energy recovery;*”

Et c’est là l’objet de mon intervention aujourd’hui.

C'est un peu ambigu finalement ce qui est écrit, mais en d'autres termes, il semblerait que partout où on mentionne *disposal* dans le projet de loi, cela exclut *waste to energy*. On peut faire toutes sortes de choses avec nos déchets excepté produire de l'énergie. Ce sera là-dessus que je vais parler cet après-midi, M. le président.

Le projet de loi, donc, avant l'amendement implique qu'il n'y aura pas de valorisation énergétique sur nos déchets, et tout à l'heure on verra ce qui se passe effectivement avec nos déchets. Mais maintenant, il y a un amendement qui est mineur dans le contexte du projet de loi, mais qui a toute son importance. Cet amendement, c'est d'enlever les mots '*without energy recovery*.' C'est que maintenant disposer des déchets implique également *waste to energy*, et c'est là-dessus que je voudrais en parler aujourd'hui.

D'abord, pour mieux cerner notre discussion, peut-être que ce serait bon de voir quelques dispositions de ce projet de loi dans le contexte de l'amendement. On crée un département à la clause 4. Beaucoup d'intervenants avant moi ont parlé de ce département. Je vais simplement signaler quelques mesures contenues dans le projet de loi. Le département doit –

“(ii) implement measures related to the sustainable and integrated management of waste.”

Donc, gérer nos déchets et surtout mettre en pratique toutes les mesures pour le faire d'une façon qui sera *sustainable*.

Ensuite, au paragraphe (1) –

“monitor the collection, treatment and disposal of waste”

Le département doit donc gérer le *disposal of waste*. Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire ? Cela veut dire que sous le projet de loi, avant l'amendement, le département allait regarder, avoir un droit de regard sur le *disposal of waste*, mais sans *energy recovery*. Maintenant, *disposal* inclut également *energy recovery*. Ce sera donc le travail du département de regarder ce qui va se passer aux déchets et essayer de voir, je l'espère, le *waste to energy programme* du propre ministère de l'Environnement et du ministère de l'Énergie. Je note que le ministre de l'Énergie prendra la parole après moi.

Ensuite le department *cannot* –

“(...) *accept waste for the purpose of being landfilled at a public waste management facility* [essentiellement les *transfer stations* et Mare Chicose] *where the waste –*

(i) *can be reused or recycled (...)*”.

Un petit peu ambigu, qu'est-ce que ça veut dire? Est-ce que cela veut dire qu'on ne peut pas mettre des déchets dans les *transfer stations* si on va s'en servir pour faire de l'énergie mais le département va trouver une solution avec l'aide du comité de coordination bien sûr.

Et puis il y a le *subsection 3* qui est tellement important. Le département sera le –

“*exclusive regulator with respect to waste management*”.

Oui, c'est normal mais que se passe-t-il lorsque le CEB voudra utiliser des déchets pour fabriquer de l'énergie, son *regulator* étant le *Utility Regulatory Authority (URA)* et non le département. Encore une fois, la solution va se trouver au niveau du *National Coordination Committee*.

Ensuite, l'honorable David avait dit qu'il n'y avait pas de provisions pour la supervision du *waste management facilities*. Non, je crois qu'il se trompe. Si j'ai bien compris, c'est bien prévu dans la loi que le directeur a ce pouvoir.

Nous tournons vers le ministre. Le ministre a un rôle très important surtout après l'amendement qu'il a proposé parce que c'est lui qui va intégrer les politiques de la gestion des déchets. Durant sa responsabilité, il sera à lui qui va présider ce *National Coordination Committee* et tout à l'heure j'en parlerai. Ce sera à lui d'inspirer les politiques et donc y compris suite à l'amendement, le *disposal of waste with energy recovery*. J'espère que mon appel d'aujourd'hui sera suivi d'un effet pratique. C'est le ministre qui sera en charge d'élaborer la politique et c'est normal d'établir l'économie circulaire. Tout à l'heure, M. le président, j'aurai quelques mots à dire sur cette économie, ce qu'on l'appelle mondialement, l'économie circulaire. C'est un procédé ; pas une économie. Mais appelons ça comme tout le monde l'appelle : une économie circulaire. Et c'est le ministre qui va inspirer la politique pour établir l'économie circulaire à l'île Maurice. Par exemple, dans le domaine du recyclage, on va se servir du plastique, on va recycler en des bancs publics et ces mêmes bancs publics, on va les recycler pour faire des porte-clefs, etc.

Et finalement, ce qui est important c'est le *Coordination Committee* que je ne sais pas pourquoi n'est pas un mini conseil des ministres. Il aurait dû être composé par des ministres et puis les techniciens auraient fait partie de *subcommittees* mais le ministre a décidé que *as a matter of policy*, lui il présiderait la réunion qui serait composée de *Supervising Officers* et aussi des *officers of any institution* qui pourrait être coopté et je pense évidemment au *Central Electricity Board* si jamais cet amendement est suivi dans l'effet pratique.

Ce *Coordination Committee* a un rôle extraordinaire parce que c'est ce comité qui va intégrer la politique des déchets à Maurice et entre autres coordonner et établir une coopération entre les départements du gouvernement, les autorités locales, les collectivités locales, très important parce que ce sont eux qui vont collecter les déchets et les jeter quelque part et *other institutions engaged in waste management, circular economy projects and programmes*. Ça veut dire y compris le CEB qui gérerait le *waste to energy facilities*. Les propriétés sucrières aussi puisque aujourd'hui les propriétés sucrières convertissent les déchets de la canne, la bagasse en électricité qu'ils utilisent pour rouler leur propre usine et aussi pour envoyer sur le réseau du CEB.

Il y a eu beaucoup d'experts qui nous ont dit que l'économie circulaire ne peut pas vivre avec le *waste to energy programme* ; ce n'est pas vrai ! Dans tous les pays du monde, on peut prendre comme exemple Singapour où on composte, on fait du recyclage, on fait du *landfilling* et on fait de l'énergie avec les déchets. C'est une pensée assez sclérosée et c'est archaïque, c'est dépassé maintenant. Maintenant on ne parle plus en termes d'économie circulaire *without energy recovery*. Ça n'existe plus ça ! Mais je ne sais pas comment c'est arrivé à trouver son chemin dans le projet de loi et je félicite le ministre qui vient avec cet amendement pour enlever cela de la pensée universelle établie au niveau de son ministère.

A Singapour, ils ont un *National Environment Agency* qui fait à peu près le même travail que notre département va faire et ils n'ont aucun problème à faire du compostage, du recyclage et de l'énergie en même temps. C'est bon de prendre Singapour comme exemple parce que c'est un pays qui a la moitié de la superficie de Maurice mais une population cinq fois plus grande que Maurice et génère 7 millions de tonnes de déchets tous les ans. Nous générons 500,000 de tonnes qui vont à Mare Chicose et un surplus qui va autre part. Ils ont quatre *waste to energy powerplants*. Il y a quatre stations en plein centre de Singapour et là, ils sont en train de

construire Mitsubishi ; une autre centrale pour générer de l'électricité, gérer 3,600 tonnes de déchets. Il faudra donc nous aussi changer notre *mindset* pour travailler là-dessus.

Je prends un exemple. En mai 2022, le ministère de l'Environnement avait organisé une conférence au Méridien sur l'économie circulaire. C'était une très bonne conférence, centrée surtout sur le tri des déchets, le ministre en a parlé, et sur le compostage, le recyclage. Pas un mot sur l'énergie ! Pas un mot sur l'énergie ! Et nous allons voir que c'est, je ne comprends pas pourquoi on enlève cette pensée de notre vocabulaire et c'est peut-être pour cela que dans le projet de loi qui est devant nous - parce que la proposition d'amendement n'a pas encore été circulée - cette définition de « *disposal* » est là, c'est-à-dire, *without energy recovery* parce que eux-mêmes quand ils ont fait cette conférence, ils n'en ont pas parlé.

Mais dans le *Nationally Determined Contribution Action Plan*, c'est un document qui a été circulé internationalement, on lit ceci –

“Other renewable energy sources that will contribute to achieve the transition towards the greener energy are bio mass generation, waste to energy and wave energy power.”

C'est une obligation que nous avons prise internationalement. Et, notre *roadmap for renewable energy* prévoit déjà un *powerplant* qui travaillerait sur 1000 tonnes de déchets par jour. C'est-à-dire on pourrait *process* 350 000 tonnes par an pour faire de l'énergie. Et ce n'est pas aujourd'hui qu'on invente ça et je n'invente rien.

Nous avons, j'ai découvert dans mes vieux papiers, un papier des Professeurs Mohee et Raghoonundun, de l'Université de Maurice ; des gens brillants, un petit peu rêveur bien sûr comme tous les professeurs de l'université. J'espère qu'il n'y a personne ici mais, ils sont sérieux et ils travaillent bien. Et depuis 2006, ils avaient préparé un papier – '*Solid Waste as a Potential Energy Source*'. Et ils avaient calculé qu'avec chaque tonne de déchets, on pouvait produire 600 kW/h d'électricité.

Et vous savez que le CEB produit 3000 GW/h, pas kilowatt – 300 GW/h et si vous réalisez qu'on produit 500,000 tonnes de déchets tous les ans, bein calculez et vous verrez que nous pouvons facilement éliminer les *fossil fuels*, l'huile lourde et le charbon et ce *lobby* des charbons qui est tellement puissant à Maurice, les éliminer avec nos poubelles que nous ramassons, je crois une fois par semaine; parfois une fois par mois, mais ça, c'est autre chose. Je

voudrais encore une fois prendre l'exemple de Singapour. Une des plus vieilles *powerplant*, c'est Senoko. Senoko est au centre de Singapour. Depuis 1992, imaginez-vous ! Il brûle 2100 tonnes de déchets par jour et il génère ; ils ont une capacité de deux fois 28 MW, sans aucun problème de pollution, de rien parce que la technologie est tellement avancée aujourd'hui.

Voyons le problème mauricien. Le problème mauricien est finalement extrêmement simple et je ne me demande comment, pendant des années et des années, on continue à discuter et tourner en rond. Et heureusement, aujourd'hui le ministre vient finalement arrêter le carrousel ; pour ne pas dire arrêter de tourner en rond. Maintenant on vient avec un projet de loi, on établit des structures et espérons qu'ils vont travailler. Le site de Sotravic nous dit que Mare Chicose reçoit 1100 tonnes par jour. *Statistics Mauritius* et le ministère de l'Environnement mentionnent des chiffres un peu différents mais finalement, *enn dan lot* comme on dit, 500,000 tonnes par ans. 500,000 tonnes !

Imaginez qu'une voiture pèse à peu près 1,5 tonnes. Vous vous réalisez combien de voitures ça fait qui vont à Mare Chicose tous les ans. 500,000 tonnes par an ! Et évidemment tous ces déchets produisent du méthane, du gaz et le gaz sert à faire de l'électricité mais très peu. 0.82% de l'électricité qu'achète le CEB. Donc, pratiquement négligeable. Et par contre la bagasse qui est *waste to energy* ; n'oublions pas que la bagasse c'est *waste*. *Waste* n'est pas uniquement ce que nous jetons dans nos poubelles. La bagasse produit de l'énergie ; pas assez valorisée. Les petits planteurs ne sont pas bien rémunérés encore mais ce n'est pas grave. On verra comment trouver la solution et la bagasse donne à la CEB à peu près 15-20% d'électricité par ans, 40 % de l'huile lourde et puis un petit peu de JET A-1, ça c'est pour Nicolay parce qu'ils ont des turbines et 36% de charbon ; 36% c'est bon marché le charbon. Ça veut dire, 76% et vous savez combien on paye ? 4 milliards pour le charbon, 4 milliards pour l'huile lourde. 8 milliards tous les ans que nous payons *foreign exchange* qui partent. Et pour acheter quoi ? De la pollution. Pour faire de l'électricité.

Et n'oublions pas le prix du pétrole, le prix du charbon. C'est extrêmement volatile comme nous savons. Un jour 75 Dollars, l'autre jour 100 Dollars. Nous ne savons plus. Donc on ne peut même pas faire une prédiction. Le ministre de l'Énergie sait de quoi je parle. C'est le cauchemar de faire une prédiction sur le budget de CEB, parce qu'on ne sait pas combien on va

payer le pétrole pour plus tard. Nous avons tous ces problèmes et pourtant nous avons eu la source d'énergie qui déborde à Mare Chicose.

Nous payons 1.5 milliards de roupies tous les ans pour opérer les *Transfer Stations* et la station de Mare Chicose. Peut-être que le ministre pourrait nous donner des chiffres ; combien on paye le transport pour transférer les déchets jusqu'à Mare Chicose et transférer le leachate de Mare Chicose à Roche Bois Pumping Station. Ça aussi c'est une aberration qui date de 1997. Nous allons voir ça plus tard.

Alors, quel est le problème de Mare Chicose ? Premièrement, la saturation. L'honorable Ramkaun a parlé très bien sur la saturation. Il a bien étudié ce problème de saturation sur laquelle il nous a bien éclairé ; l'honorable David et d'autres intervenants aussi. Mais cela est extraordinaire, je crois ce n'est qu'à Maurice qu'on a des solutions pareilles. Mare Chicose est saturé. Vous savez à Singapore, le *landfill* qu'ils ont à Semakau, qui est une île, sera saturée en 2035. Jusqu'à maintenant, ils sont en train d'essayer de résoudre le problème. Notre Mare Chicose est saturé depuis longtemps; afin depuis quelques temps. Quelle a été la solution proposée? Parce que la compagnie Beau Vallon ne voulait pas louer encore d'autre terrain pour étendre, pour élargir Mare Chicose ; alors, c'est mieux de lire ce que je lis sur le *website* du ministère. Et le ministre pourrait peut-être demander à ses fonctionnaires de regarder ce qu'ils écrivent –

“In view of the saturation of the Mare Chicose Landfill and to prevent a major waste management crisis in Mauritius.”

Et je vous dis que cela est sur le *website* qui paraît aujourd'hui en 2023.

“To prevent a major waste management crisis in Mauritius post 2019, the idea of raising the Mare Chicose Landfill to provide disposal capacity was put forward.”

J'aurais bien aimé rencontrer cette personne qui a “*put forward*” cette idée de génie qu'on peut juste faire !

“The vertical expansion works are expected to start by April 2020.”

Mais nous sommes en 2023, le *website* d'aujourd'hui vous dit que cela va commencer à opérer en avril 2020 !

“(…) and thus increase the disposal capacity of the landfill.”

Heureusement le ministre, le 28 novembre 2020, il a corrigé cela à une réponse d'une question parlementaire B/1164 de l'honorable Joanna Bérenger et il a bien dit que maintenant on va essayer de voir comment on fait cette expansion verticale. Donc, qu'est-ce qu'on va faire ? On va faire Mare Chicose devenir un gratte-ciel de déchets. On va *expand* verticalement, alors que nous pouvons nous en servir pour faire de l'énergie. C'est le premier gros problème de Mare Chicose et c'est un problème énorme.

Le deuxième problème, c'est quoi ? C'est la pollution. Le Mare Chicose produit ce qu'on appelle le *leachate*, l'eau qui *percolate* dans la saleté. Vous avez cela dans votre poubelle en plastique toutes les semaines ; ça coule, ça dégouline, c'est un jus. Évidemment, à l'échelle de Mare Chicose, cela veut dire 200,000 m³ par an, selon le *website* de Sotravic. Que fait-on ? En 1997, on m'a déjà raconté qu'il y avait un *leachment transplant plant* qui a disparu de Mare Chicose, mais on n'a jamais pu savoir si c'était vrai ou pas. Toujours est-il qu'un camion prend ce *leachate* depuis Mare Chicose - et je crois les députés du numéro 11 savent bien de quoi je parle- il traverse tout le pays, il roule 97 kms jusqu'à Roche Bois où il jette ce *leachate* dans le *treatment plant* qui finalement va se terminer dans l'eau. Là, je vois qu'il y a un plan pour faire un *Leachate Treatment Plant*, qui en français s'appelle lixiviat, qui va pourvoir traiter ce *leachate* sur place et produire de l'eau de bonne qualité pour l'irrigation et même pour jeter dans la rivière La Chaux et l'autre rivière qui passe tout près de Mare Chicose, sans compter le risque de pollution et sans compter l'incendie. Dans sa réponse à la PQ B/1164 de l'honorable Joanna Bérenger, le ministre a bien expliqué.

Mais vous imaginez ce qui va se passer, M. le président, si on va essayer d'étendre Mare Chicose verticalement et qu'il y a un incendie ? Qu'allons-nous faire ? Le ministre avait donné des détails et j'avais bien écouté de tout ce qu'on a dû faire. L'aéroport, Riche en Eau, les pompiers, Sotravic, tout le monde ont mis la tête ensemble, les équipements, de l'eau pour pouvoir éteindre cet incendie. Et on veut étendre Mare Chicose ? Mare Chicose occupe maintenant 48 hectares de terrain. Au lieu de faire cela, pourquoi on ne commence pas à envisager à partir de demain comment ça se fait partout ? Dans le centre de Paris, il y a au moins quatre *powerplants* qui transforment les déchets en énergie électrique. C'est pour cela que j'accueille ce que le ministre a fait en venant corriger l'imperfection qui y avait dans le projet de loi en enlevant ces mots '*without energy recovery.*'

Le ministre l'a bien dit, nous allons établir l'économie circulaire, le recyclage, le compostage et tout cela doit commencer par le tri des poubelles. Il faudra commencer à apprendre à avoir une poubelle bleue, une poubelle jaune, et une poubelle rouge aussi pour mettre tous les rouges dans les poubelles de l'histoire, peut-être ! Donc, on va mettre les trois poubelles, il faudra trier les déchets et éduquer la population mauricienne.

À la Réunion, ils sont encore en train d'éduquer les Réunionnais. Il ne faut pas oublier nous avons des mentalités insulaires chez nous, et c'est un gros problème. Ce ne sera pas fait aujourd'hui ou demain. Ensuite, faire du compostage. Combien de tonnes allons-nous faire et pendant ce temps qu'allons-nous faire ? Étendre Mare Chicose ? Parce que nous allons crouler sous les déchets. Mon appel, ce n'est pas un appel, c'est plus qu'un plaidoyer, c'est une supplication que je fais. Mettons immédiatement nos énergies à ce problème pour transformer nos déchets en énergie.

On ne peut pas attendre à ce que nos professeurs d'université commencent à éduquer la population à trier les poubelles, à faire le compostage, etc. On ne pourra pas attendre, sinon nous irons vers la catastrophe écologique dans notre pays. Le gouvernement était toujours d'accord avec ce que je dis, je n'invente rien. Seulement le Parti travailliste était contre. J'ai en souvenir les exclamations de l'honorable Assirvaden qui s'écriait que nous allons brûler de la saleté, polluer l'atmosphère, étouffer la population avec de la fumé, et ce jusqu'au 14 juin 2021 ! C'est important que je le dise.

L'honorable Fabrice David prend la parole et je vais le citer, il commence en disant –

« Je vais même aller plus loin, M. le président, en affirmant que nous devons nous décomplexer sur la question du *waste to energy*. »

Je suis entièrement d'accord, décomplexons nous, et surtout à commencer par certains de nos penseurs qui sont sclérosés dans leurs pensées, qu'ils pensent être la pensée unique. Encore plus, à la lecture du rapport de la Banque mondiale d'avril 2021 sur la sortie de crise de la pandémie pour l'île Maurice, ce rapport dit, l'honorable David mentionne à la section dédiée à la *National Solid Waste Management Strategy*, and I quote, dit-il –

« The sector could benefit from recognising the energy generated from waste to energy. »

Regardez bien les mots, “*the sector could benefit from recognising.*” Je suis tenté d’ajouter ‘*at last,*’ “*from recognising ‘at last’ the energy generated from waste to energy facilities as renewable power that counts towards the country’s renewable energy goals. This coupled with feed in tariffs for electricity generated from waste processing facilities could provide strong systems support for solid waste project development.*”

Et il continue, M. le président, contrairement à ce que certains peuvent penser –

« La valorisation énergétique n’est pas un opposant de l’économie circulaire dans la mesure où elle concerne essentiellement des déchets qui ne se sont ni recyclables ni compostables. »

Là, je ne suis pas d’accord avec lui mais c’est un autre débat et nous pouvons prendre l’exemple sur Singapour etc. Ainsi le parti Travailleiste fait la leçon au parti Travailleiste et je suis heureux de voir qu’il y a maintenant un changement appréciable dans la politique adoptée.

Le MMM n’épousait pas cette idée. Maintenant nous avons le Travailleiste, le MMM et je pense the PMSD sûrement de ce que j’ai entendu de l’honorable Lobine et le gouvernement. Sauf peut-être une personne qui elle, elle pense, – et on ne sait pas qui c’est – qu’au lieu de faire ce que tout le monde est d’accord de faire, qu’on devrait ajouter des déchets à Mare Chicose et grandir Mare Chicose. Il y a une personne qui pense comme ça mais qui soulage le lobby des camionneurs et le lobby du charbon. Ce sont les deux seuls lobby qui vont perdre de l’argent avec *waste to energy*.

Donc, il faut savoir ce que l’on veut. Le ministre peut-être pourra nous dire, sinon je vais demander lorsque le budget sera appelé en examen du comité pour voir combien nous payons ces camions. R 1.5 milliards tous les ans. Ça c’est pour tout mais dedans combien pour les camions ? Nous les voyons circulant sur l’autoroute, *waste carriers*. On ne réalise pas qu’au moins une fois par mois, un de ces camions fait des accidents. Et le lobby du charbon, n’en parlons pas !

Je vais conclure, M. le président. Alors, c’est pour ça que j’accueille favorablement l’amendement du ministre et le projet de loi de son ensemble. N’ayons pas de crainte comme les organisations non gouvernementales ont de bonne foi sur les risques de pollution. La technologie est bien établie, bien rodée ; nous n’avons aucun problème. Dans le centre de Paris, dans le centre de Singapour, à Shanghai, en Australie, partout c’est fait, excepté à Maurice.

Donc, je conclus en disant une chose : Maurice a été le pionnier dans la conversion des déchets agricoles en énergie. En 1957, Saint-Antoine est la première usine à convertir de la bagasse à l'électricité et qui vend cette électricité au CEB. 1957 ! Dès 1961, d'autres usines entrent dans ce programme et commencent à produire 15 % à-peu-près et aujourd'hui, nous sommes à 15-20%. J'ai déjà parlé de ça. Et aujourd'hui, nous sommes allés une étape plus loin, *lapay kann*, la paille de canne, *cane trash* qui est également un déchet agricole - le ministre de l'Agriculture sait très bien quel est le problème de ce *cane trash*. Là aussi on commence à utiliser du *cane trash* pour faire de l'électricité qu'on vend à la CEB, très peu, très, très peu, minime – 0.1 % peut-être. Mais ça se fait !

Donc, progressons. Peut-être que je peux conclure sur ce qui s'est passé en Allemagne il y a une semaine. Il y a eu un grand débat sur l'abolition de l'énergie nucléaire parce que on disait ça risque d'exploser. Oui c'est vrai, comme on voit à Zaporizhzhia en Ukraine etc. Et il y a des O.N.G. qui était là et qui ont fait un lobby très fort et là, samedi dernier, la dernière centrale nucléaire a été fermée et ça a créé des manifestations à Berlin entre les pros et les antis. Mais on a découvert en 2022 l'année dernière la vérité. La vérité c'est qu'il y avait un ancien agent de la Stasi, Monsieur Matthias Warnig qui, lui, avait infiltré les O.N.G. et le gouvernement allemand parce qu'il voulait faire *Nord Stream*, c'est-à-dire, le gaz russe entrer en Allemagne. C'est ainsi que l'Allemagne a abolit le nucléaire pour devenir l'esclave de la Russie, l'otage de la Russie. Et c'était le chancelier Schröder qui était devenu le chantre de l'abolition du nucléaire en Allemagne. Tout de suite après son remplacement par Angela Merkel, Schröder devient directeur de *Nord Stream* à Russie et Rosneft. Et là, l'année dernière, Union européenne lui a dit qu'il serait sur la liste des sanctions s'il ne démissionnait pas et il a démissionné. Et M. Warnig qui était devenu CEO a dû démissionner lui aussi et lui, il est sur la liste des sanctions internationales depuis longtemps.

C'est pour cela que je dis : faisons bien attention, ne tombons pas facilement dans les pièges et puis venir dire 'pollution', 'pollution', et trouver toutes sortes de grandes thèses. Il y a des travailleurs de l'ombre et dedans, dans ce secteur plus qu'autre part qui ne veulent pas que nous fassions la conversion des déchets parce que leurs intérêts sont menacés et il faut mettre fin à cela. Et le petit amendement de trois mots que le ministre est en train de proposer aujourd'hui à la Chambre va peut-être établir une révolution à Maurice, une révolution qui sera économique, financière et sociale et qui pourra nous emmener vers un grand avenir. Dans un monde où le

changement climatique nous menace ; nous, petite île plus que les autres, nous avons une fenêtre d'opportunité qui s'ouvre à nous, là maintenant. Saisissons-la ! Que le ministère de l'Environnement et ce nouveau département fassent ce qu'il faut faire pas pour nous mais pour nos enfants et nos petits-enfants.

Merci de votre attention, M. le président.

(5.02 p.m.)

Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Speaker, Sir, all of us have listened to a speech of epic proportion, provocative, scintillating but at the end of the day, the truth has to prevail.

We were in Government too and I recall when the then Prime Minister came with a project in relation to solid waste-to-energy. Who were those who came to the forefront to torpedo this project?

And at the time, the sugar industry was being converted into a sugarcane industry, preferential trade was going and of course, those who obtained a lot of benefits from the proceeds of sale of sugar and bagasse in relation to conversion of bagasse into energy, were the first to be more vocal, vociferous and certainly to exercise influence within and outside to torpedo the project and I have in mind the Covanta Solid Waste Energy Project. Lands were already identified and were Indicative Term Sheets to negotiate, agree and execute.

Probably at that time, ecological sense prevailed but to a large extent, the Government of the day found it difficult to counter the lobbying and we had Professor Joël de Rosnay who was an advisor to the then Prime Minister and I am sure he was under undue pressure from our friends from the sugar cane industry because ultimately and at the end of the day, they want to put a premium on the land. There are more proceeds to be obtained from parcelisation of land than to think of the future as has been aptly described by hon. Collendavelloo. Not that we totally agree with what he is saying, at the end of the day you need to have volume and you need to have quality waste also. This is why we talk of characterisation of waste because you cannot simply rely on organic waste. At the end of the day, when you produce energy; it has to be calorific energy.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know whose interests our friends on the other side of the House, are serving but one thing I have to say: let us put our differences apart, set our differences aside and chalk out a clear cut strategy in relation to production of energy and management of solid waste. The truth has to be spelt out and we have to sensitise our population at large and at last to highlight the merits of what energy is all about and what are the sources for production of energy and we can do it, subject that the facts are known, the facts are spelt out and the merits of projects are clearly spelt out to overcome or to overshadow the demerits.

I made it a point to read the speech made by the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and I had to do it out there, Mr Speaker, Sir, for reasons which are too obvious and I am not going to highlight the reasons as to why I was asked to vacate my seat, Mr Speaker, Sir, but the truth has prevailed and justice has prevailed and here I am, to spell out without fear or prejudice and speak on a subject which is relevant to the present and future of our country. I read the speech of the hon. Minister. My impression is either he is misleading or he has misled and I refer to what happened 25 years ago. The prevailing position was that landfill constituted a healthy and ecological mode of waste disposal.

This is past history now and I hope the Minister is trying to revive the defunct project of waste to energy. I am sure that there are arguments to say that the merits by far, outweigh the demerits because at the end of the day, we need to bring down cost, we have to make sure that the impact on our budget is a positive one because we cannot constantly carry on being a country which imports most of its commodities, be it food or fuel, Mr Speaker, Sir. First, there is a call for the right mindset and there is a call for the right frame of mind. I grant you, there was the Environmental Tribunal but even the Environmental Tribunal, at that time, was under pressure and had to bow to alleged sound technical advice being dispensed because there are people in this country who think that they have monopoly of knowledge. Knowledge is meant to be disseminated and in an age and an era of technology, when information travels at the speed of lightning, we have every reason to take on-board sound advice. It cannot be the monopoly of a few.

Of course, our object is to have a wide discussion at the bar of public opinion and I still cannot understand why this Bill has a Certificate of Urgency; if we want to sensitise the people at large to highlight the merits of the importance of waste disposal, to inculcate the culture of

waste disposal into the minds of our people, the relevance and importance of proper sorting out of waste and the meaning of receptacles, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Today, environmentally advanced countries have abandoned landfill because it has been discovered that it is neither healthy nor an ecological mode of waste. Even incineration is not the alternative but we have to look, as I have stated earlier, if the waste characterisation exercise as well as 50% of waste generated by the country is organic, then incineration should be ruled out as a primary source of disposal.

It is true that contrary to Singapore which is much smaller than us but has a bigger population and can sort out its waste appropriately because the people have been inculcated with the values of sorting out of waste, it is true that matters are less arduous notwithstanding the fact that they have harnessed the appropriate energy. But charity starts at home before we can dream and I will impress upon the Minister notwithstanding that his Second Reading speech is a speech with a litany of proposals. As I have said, charity starts at home and let us see what is happening at our doorstep as long as we do not throw the rubbish on somebody else's doorstep, Mr Speaker, Sir.

And, I have in mind, of course, Constituency No. 18, *la ville des fleurs* but the environment *n'est pas sain*. It is not a few potted plants along Hillcrest Avenue which will save the day for the Minister and as they say, if you want to deliver, Minister; good deeds begin in front of one's doorstep. Keep it clean and tidy. But, the Minister is answerable to the residents for untidiness of the town. Collection of garbage, of solid waste is of epic scandal in Belle Rose-Quatre Bornes. Did the Minister say collection of rubbish by scavenging lorries will be on different days because the fleet will be equipped with receptacles for proper segregation of solid waste?

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us come back to *la ville des fleurs* where the risk that we will end up with the petals of dust is very likely if corrective measures are not taken and there is a public outcry in Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes over garbage collection. Most of the newly acquired fleet of lorries purchased at exorbitant prices have broken down and my friend, the Minister of Local Government, is a privileged resident of the constituency but for God's sake do not sell dreams over circular economy when you are going in circle, Ministers!

This is a regime which behaves like square pegs in round holes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am of the view that this Bill, as I have said, should have been ventilated more widely and for longer period among stakeholders, NGOs and the general public. But the Minister has chosen, as I have stated earlier, a Certificate of Urgency, when we are yet, of course, to inculcate new values into the mind of the people.

But then, let us turn our attention to Mare Chicose, which should be the landfill of last resort. I agree with hon. Collendavelloo. I was member of that Constituency since 1987 to 2014. Of course, I lost and I had to bow to the will of the electorate for good measure or bad measure, but they still want me over there. You know that hon. Bholah? And he acknowledges!

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, the people living close to the landfill had to be relocated elsewhere for reasons spelt out clearly by hon. Collendavelloo. I am not going to highlight the health problems which many of them had. Earlier, there was a question in relation to renal transplant. Do you know that one of the causes of renal diseases was precisely due to the polluted environment of Mare Chicose? They have conducted studies and found out that there were heavy metals and these were largely responsible.

But, as of now, what is our other concern? If there is no proper sorting out of solid and hazardous waste collection and construction of new cells in Mare Chicose, release of gases from toxic waste can turn the landfill into a towering inferno or bomb blast. Hon. Collendavelloo was talking of vertical integration when there is hardly any space. The odour being emitted is felt all over Constituency No. 11. Yet, Government is acting irresponsibly. But then, what can we expect from a flawed Government, but decisions which are irrational and irrelevant, irrespective of consequences to the health of the inhabitants of the region. The complex issue of Mare Chicose Landfill, if you do not want it to be a bomb blast, needs to be dealt with utmost urgency.

I have been appalled to read from the Audit Report, just published last month, that because of the failure of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change to proceed timeously with the relevant procurement exercise for the operation of Mare Chicose Landfill, 59-months contract with the contractor has been extended to an incredible and horrendous additional period of 52 months. So, where is the vision? Instead, its renewal of contract on a month-to-month basis with the consequence that Government is neither here nor there. But it is the taxpayers who have to fork out the money.

The Solid Waste Management Division of the Ministry actually awarded a contract for the "Construction of Cell 7 and for the Operation and Maintenance of Mare Chicose Landfill' to a specific company for the period January 2014 to November 2018 for the sum of more than Rs1,600,000 m. 'The above contract was subsequently extended four times over the period December 2018 to June 2021 at an additional cost of almost Rs395 m. Further, three successive emergency contracts totalling almost Rs650 m. have been awarded to the same contractor in respect of the period of July 2021 to March 2023.'

According to the Director of Audit, "the procurement exercise for the award of a fresh contract after the expiry of the initial contract in November 2018, has been unduly delayed by 52 months." Subject to proper scrutiny, if the contract has to be allocated, let the exercise be conducted in transparency. Why the delay? Who are the beneficiaries of the delay? Mr Speaker, Sir, either we live and adopt policies which are transparent or certainly we encourage a culture of opacity. This Government is encouraging a culture of opacity, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the fallacy that they have to live with. Horrendously, the total contract value has been increased from an initial sum of Rs1,590,000 m. to an incredibly high amount of Rs2.7 billion, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Shockingly, the Minister of Environment and Solid Waste Management has told the National Audit Office that 'four extensions to the contract from December 2018 to 30 June 2021 and three consecutive emergency contracts from 01 July to 31 March 2023 were due to delays in the procurement exercise.' But where is the procurement exercise? As I say, who are the ultimate beneficiaries when tenders are not called for and who are those who have to fork out that money? I have said it, it is the taxpayers, Mr Speaker, Sir, who have to fork out money for reasons which are unjustified because we do not know what is the true cost of the project.

But can you believe it? Seven extensions due to the delays in the procurement exercise. So, where is the procurement exercise? We seek it here, we seek it there; it is neither here nor there. Probably, it has ended up in the pockets of some of our friends sitting on the other side, Mr Speaker, Sir. The House will be appalled to know that as of 26 January 2023, the revised bidding document was still not finalised. According to the National Audit Office, there is possibility of further extensions in contract with the existing company.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are yet to sort out wastes from our own kitchen, but what about the hundreds of scrapped vehicles which are dumped on wasteland, roadsides, public places? It is

now five years since it has been proposed to set up a scrapyards in Mauritius for depollution, dismantling and recycling of end-of-life vehicles, and to provide suitable storage areas for the recyclable parts. We still have to see the scrapyards. I know the Minister did make mention of giving serious thought to the setting up of a scrapyards, but time is telling and time is of an essence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, incidentally, the integrated waste management and circularity principles, to be found in Clause 14 of the Bill, are already encompassed in the Solid Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan, with a special focus on resource recovery, which was adopted before the last general election. I do hope that the hon. Minister will have the courage to table the strategy and the action plan. This plea was forcefully made by my friend hon. David in his intervention.

In the Budget 2019-2020, provision was made for the elaboration of a National Environment Policy, Strategy and Action Plan and he has done nothing about this to this day.

For more than three years of his mandate now, we have seen nothing of the National Environment Policy Strategy and Action Plan. Why? I will come to the old waste from one disaster, from hazardous to different solid waste; the capsized, Mr Speaker, Sir. After the mismanagement of Wakashio by this disastrous regime, especially from 25 July 2020 when the vessel went aground on the reef of south eastern coast of Mauritius to 06 August 2020 when the oil spill occurred, reasons which would have it that he should have resigned or be revoked. It was the biggest environmental disaster with solid hazardous, reusable recycling waste, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is what we call waste in one and you name it, it's there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, this minority Government - minority, because more than 63% of the voting population voted against this Government at the general elections - has no shame and the hon. Minister is still in Office. In India, George Fernandes, Minister for Railways resigned after the train was derailed with catastrophic consequences. Recently, at the end of the month of February this year, the Greek Transport Minister resigned after a train crash. Today, the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change is coming before this House with a piece of legislation, the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Bill with the hallmark of a shameless Government, the hallmark of opacity.

Documents, unfortunately, not readily available in the country but when it so happens that they are available, the Government has developed an irresponsible and despicable culture of

opacity. One here just has to look at a few examples. On 11 April 2023, in his Second Reading, he informed the House that bid exercise for *installation intégrée de traitement des déchets* would be launched in November 2022 and be closed by 14 April 2023, but the tender exercise has been extended. Is it deliberate? Doubt lingers as to whether special or differential treatment would be allocated to specific bidder or the extension is due to unresponsive bidding. Is it so capital intensive that there is no bidder? I challenge the Minister to table the project document relating to the project including the provisional budget but in terms of capital expenditure and also in relation to operational expenditure.

I can go on and highlight several cases in relation to how this Government operates in opacity but let me come back to the Solid Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan prepared by the previous regime and the same regime, a special focus on resource recovery and this has been concealed from our country. To understand how scandalous the opacity of this Government can be, I will just make another quick reference to Wakashio. The hon. Minister and the Prime Minister for that matter have not told the nation that the Wakashio was the biggest 1% of all vessels in the world. The Wakashio was in fact bigger than the Titanic and the Minister did even know that the Wakashio was capsized vessel. In other words, the Wakashio was so big that it could not navigate through the Suez and Panama Canals. It had to navigate around the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn and to add insult to injury, in pursuance of this culture of opacity, the Minister did not even offer to depone before the Commission of Inquiry on Wakashio.

Why this hidden National Solid Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan, a special focus on resource recovery so relevant? This is because it renders the gist of Sub-Part B of the Bill particularly, Clause 16, redundant. The National Solid Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan to be prepared under Clause 16 and this has been formulated in line with international conventions and in line with sustainable waste management procedures as envisaged in Clause 16 (2) (a) of the new Bill.

Finally, the creation of additional institutions and authorities, committees and staffs in Part II, III, IV and Clauses 4, 5, 6, 9 and 12 of the Bill. I would ask the Minister to inform the House what analysis has been carried out before creating these institutions and postings. Indeed there is already a Solid Waste Division at his Ministry which was previously at the Ministry of Local Government. Most of all, if not all, the matters contained in Clauses 4, 5, 6, 9 and 12 can be done

by the hon. Minister under powers derived from the Environment Protection Act and Regulations be it thereunder.

Bearing in mind that our ratio of public debt to GDP is now almost 100%, it does not appear wise to create new committees, Mr Speaker, Sir, or department and posts until thorough analysis have been carried out. I shall wait eagerly the hon. Minister's response to the above. I still believe that the existence of the National Solid Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan with special focus on resource recovery which was adopted before the last general election by the this very Government should have been made public and I believe that he has failed to come up with a National Environment Policy Strategy and Action Plan which was voted in the 2019-2020 Budget and with a natural scrap yard which has been under Government agenda since about four years.

Finally, I submit that his mismanagement of the Mare Chicose issue is at least as disastrous as his management of the Wakashio oil spill crisis and for all these reasons he has to do what any decent Minister would do. A Certificate of Emergency would not save him from the precipitous fall.

Thank you very much.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Of course, his maiden speech!

Hon. Lesjongard, 10 minutes!

(5.31 p.m.)

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Merci, M. le président, de me donner l'occasion d'intervenir sur ce projet de loi.

M. le président, premièrement je note que les débats sur ce projet de loi se sont tenus sur un ton consensuel et c'est à mettre au crédit des orateurs qui ont pris la parole car nous débattons sur un sujet d'une extrême importance, c'est-à-dire la protection de notre environnement.

Je tiens aussi, M. le président, à saluer l'intervention de l'honorable Ivan Collendavelloo mais aussi d'autres orateurs avant lui pour avoir emmené la dimension énergétique dans ce débat

et dans mon intervention, M. le président, je vais donner quelques informations sur cette dimension énergétique.

Quant à l'intervention de l'honorable Dr. Boolell qui a pris la parole dans la Chambre après quelques séances où il a été absent, il a la plupart du temps été hors de propos, M. le président, accusant comme d'habitude, avec une légèreté, le gouvernement et j'espère que quand le Ministre prendra la parole, il réfutera les accusations gratuites portées par l'honorable Dr. Boolell à l'encontre de son ministère, M. le président.

Avec ce projet de loi, notre pays se donne plus de moyens pour faire face aux défis liés à la protection de notre environnement. Le *Waste Management and Resource Recovery Bill*, apporte des solutions légales administratives et opérationnelles afin de régler notre gestion de déchets et *Mr Speaker, Sir, I fully welcome and support the bill*. Ce projet de loi, M. le président, concerne tous les citoyens de ce pays, les autorités aussi qui sont concernées par le ramassage d'ordure et le traitement des déchets mais aussi le secteur privé.

Il est malheureux de constater qu'au quotidien, l'humain continue à polluer et à produire de plus en plus de déchets. Et c'est un fait M. le président, que depuis la révolution industrielle, notre bien-être se fait aux dépens de la nature. Depuis la seconde guerre mondiale, un manque de conscience écologique, une économie en expansion et une évolution démographique rapide sont parmi les éléments qui contribuent à la dégradation de notre environnement. Le constat est triste. Nous avons causé et nous continuons M. le président, à causer de gros dégâts à notre planète. Nous subissons aujourd'hui les conséquences à travers le changement climatique qui nous affecte particulièrement en tant que petit état insulaire.

M. le président, il faut le dire, et il faut le dire haut et fort. Les grandes puissances mondiales polluent le plus et malheureusement, ce sont les petits états insulaires en développement, tels que notre république, qui en payent les plus graves conséquences aujourd'hui.

Inondations, cyclones intenses, sécheresse, érosion des plages ; nous sommes les plus vulnérables sur le plan économique et infrastructurel. Face à ces défis, les différents gouvernements des petits états insulaires font des gros efforts et nous essayons de faire entendre notre voix lors des forums internationaux. M. le président, ce projet de loi, démontre encore une

fois que ce gouvernement prend les mesures afin de mieux répondre aux changements climatiques.

Le *National Flood Management Program*, avec la construction de 1700 drains d'ici 2025, le *Land Drainage Masterplan*, les 60% d'énergie renouvelable dans notre bouquet énergétique d'ici 2030 sont parmi tant d'autres mesures qui sont déjà en chantier. Très bientôt M. le président, un *Water Resources Bill* sera présenté au Parlement pour une gestion beaucoup plus holistique et soutenue de nos ressources en eau. Le Premier Ministre à travers le conseil interministériel sur le changement climatique, démontre son engagement actif et personnel à ce problème et à trouver des solutions face aux changements climatiques.

M. le président, ce projet de loi propose la coordination entre les différentes institutions gouvernementales afin d'atteindre notre objectif qui est de réduire à 70% les déchets déposés dans les différents dépotoirs à travers l'île. Le ministère de l'Environnement, celui des Collectivités locales et celui de l'Énergie pourront désormais opérer en synergie afin de mettre en place une industrie de recyclage, de réutilisation et de la production d'énergie à base de déchets mais le plus important pour moi, M. le président, c'est l'adhésion de la population à ce concept d'économie circulaire. Sans le soutien et la contribution de la population et de la jeunesse aux projets de recyclage, de tri de déchets, l'économie circulaire restera qu'un projet, M. le président.

Et permettez-moi, M. le président, comme j'ai la parole, de saisir cette occasion pour saluer l'effort des organisations non-gouvernementales à travers l'île qui contribuent grandement à la protection de notre environnement et là, je salue plus particulièrement l'engagement de la jeune génération dans ce combat.

En tant que dirigeants politiques, c'est notre rôle de mieux préparer l'avenir pour les prochaines générations. Notre pays a connu un développement rapide depuis les années 80 et nous avons bâti notre progrès économique, en partie grâce au développement de l'industrie manufacturière et le tourisme. Et en tant qu'une petite île, il faut le reconnaître, notre émission de gaz à effet de serre est insignifiante au niveau mondial. Mais les différents secteurs de l'économie doivent aussi s'adapter face aux changements climatiques et réduire au maximum la quantité de déchets qu'ils produisent.

Il est très encourageant de constater M. le président, que certaines entreprises manufacturières mais aussi certains groupes hôteliers ont revus leur modèle de production et de service. M. le président, en tant que petit état insulaire, nous pouvons être un exemple au niveau international dans notre gestion des déchets face à ce changement climatique. L'économie circulaire est un gros chantier que nous entamons mais il est primordial que nous réussissions afin de rendre notre pays plus durable pour les générations futures. Je l'ai dit avant, et je le ré dit, il est impératif de conscientiser notre jeunesse dans implémentation de ce projet.

Et là, M. le président, permettez-moi de faire référence à une étude effectuée aux États Unis mais aussi en Grande Bretagne par le *World Economic Forum* et publiée en Novembre 2022 sur la génération Z, la génération, c'est-à-dire la génération Z, génération qui est née entre 1997 et 2012 et l'un des sujets qui les préoccupe le plus, c'est la protection de notre environnement.

Je cite du rapport du World Economic Forum « Business and Government Leaders hoping to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 will need to mobilize Gen Z to make it happen. Gen Z, for its part, needs better information and encouragement now. No single group of people will solve the climate conundrum by themselves. But Gen Z, the oldest of whom will be 53 years in 2050, will be a major part of the solution. The sooner leaders help this cohort to close the gap between climate concern and action, the better their chances of building a sustainable future.»

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me now to make some comments on some sections of the present piece of legislation related to my Ministry. The global environmental problems we face today are largely the result of overexploitation of our natural resources and the increasing amount of waste that we generate daily. Therefore, there is a pressing need to transition to a more sustainable model of circular economy of waste management.

Here, on this side, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a clear vision of a “cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius.” We have, over the years, demonstrated our strong commitment for a sustainable environment through the various projects we have implemented, the incentives we have taken. The introduction, Mr Speaker, Sir, today of this piece of legislation will provide for the regulatory framework to ensure the environmentally safe and sound management of solid waste and hazardous waste and also, it will, Mr Speaker, Sir, provide for a sustainable waste

management system through the adoption of a circular economy, which will mainly focus on waste reduction, waste reuse, material recovery, recycling, treatment and safe disposal of waste.

With this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are taking a firm commitment to leave a better legacy for our future generations. The upgrading of the solid waste management division to a full-fledged department of waste management and resource recovery with a dedicated and comprehensive legal and regulatory framework clearly depicts the importance that this Government is putting in waste management. This will definitely facilitate sustainable management of waste through the adoption of a circular economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, currently, Governmental institutions and local authorities have full responsibility for the collection of waste up to the disposal. To overcome the challenges of climate change, collective actions are required between public and private enterprises, and between communities and individuals. Hence, with this new Bill, Government is prepared to consider private operators in the field of waste management to create new economic opportunities and with a huge potential for job creation.

Moreover, inefficient management of waste has a substantial impact on climate change which is the major threat affecting humanity today. We are being impacted, Mr Speaker, Sir, on a daily basis and global efforts are being made to implement adaptation, and sustainable mitigation measures to combat these effects.

The adoption of a National Solid Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan, as proposed in the Bill, will bring about a paradigm shift in our way of dealing with waste. Each local authority will be empowered to devise its own strategy and action plan in order to manage waste generated within its administrative area. They will decide on the methodology, the resources required, the quantity and also on the type of waste, tariffs and fees.

Hence, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the proper handling of waste management, at least, five impacts on climate change will be addressed, that is, –

- (1) reduction in landfill methane emissions;
- (2) reduction in industrial energy use and emissions due to recycling and waste reduction;
- (3) energy recovery from waste;

- (4) carbon sequestration in forests due to decreased demand for virgin paper, and last
- (5) energy used in long-distance transport of waste.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is also engaged in the implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies to address climate challenges. Our renewable energy actions are primarily guided by the renewable energy road map, that is, to attain 60% renewable energy in our energy mix by 2030.

Since 2015, the renewable energy sector has been spearheaded by solar energy and PV installations with the gradual fall in prices of PV modules on the international market. The capacity of solar PV systems installed in Mauritius has reached more than 100mw in 2022 as compared to only 18mw in 2014. Our battery energy storage systems have also been enhanced to cater for such developments. In order to enable penetration of intermittent renewable energy on the grid, a battery energy storage system of 18mw has already been commissioned and an additional 20mw will be commissioned in 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is also promoting Renewable Energy Hybrid Facility Projects (REHF). We are actually implementing such projects of the order of 130mw. The Power Purchase Agreements have already been signed and the facilities will come into operation by October or November next year.

Our next renewable energy actions in the near future will target development of wind energy, floating PV, and subsequently, offshore renewable energies. I understand that consultations and discussions on the National Biomass Framework have progressed and are at an advanced stage. The enhanced promotion of biomass utilisation as a source of energy is yet another step in our green transition journey.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are proceeding at a measured pace and in tune with a roadmap which has already defined our priorities and actions. Mr Speaker, Sir, as we speak of the development of conventional as well as innovating and emerging technologies in the renewable energy sectors, the effective and safe recycling and disposal of consumables will be a major challenge in the future.

Most solar PV manufacturers guarantee 25 years life span for a typical solar panel, after which the efficiency of the panel decreases and same needs to be replaced.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me give a brief overview of the composition of a solar panel. A solar PV panel consists of –

- (a) 76% glass;
- (b) 10% plastic;
- (c) 8% aluminium;
- (d) 5% silicon, and
- (e) 1% other metals.

95% of the materials of solar PV panels can be recovered through recycling, mainly glass, metals and silicon. 100% of the materials can be recovered from lithium ion batteries. And at the level of my Ministry, we have been proactive.

In order to cater for disposal and recycling of waste from batteries and solar panels in the coming years, the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA) has been tasked with leading reflection on this matter. Thus, MARENA chaired a subcommittee comprising of various stakeholders including the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Ministry of Local Government, Business Mauritius, the Central Electricity Board and other stakeholders. And several meetings have already been held and a feasibility study on the recycling of renewable energy waste is expected soon.

I, therefore, welcome the proposal of Extended Producer Responsibility in this piece of legislation whereby the responsibility of a producer of a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of the product. This will be, Mr Speaker, Sir, of paramount importance on the recycling of electronic wastes and other products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my intervention in the House would not be complete if I fail to elaborate on the potential of energy recovery from waste. I have said that earlier that I will say a few words on that issue. First of all, I wish to say to the House that this process is fully compatible with the concept of circular economy as advocated in the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Bill

Non-recyclable waste has the potential to be converted into usable forms of energy. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Renewable Energy Roadmap which has been elaborated in consultation

with the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change does provide for the renewable energy from waste, that is, waste-to-energy power plant by the horizon of 2029. Such technologies can displace the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity while having at the same time limited carbon footprint and greater efficiency levels.

Unfortunately, and traditionally, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated earlier, waste-to-energy has been associated with incineration and emission of toxic gases. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been substantial development in these technologies over the past years, most of which have sought to address, to different degrees, issues such as efficiency, the impact on our environment and the cost.

Research has shown that some progressive solutions which do not contain combustion but which can treat waste biologically can have near to zero emissions with high efficiency level.

Normatively speaking, Mr Speaker Sir, zero waste is the best waste, the most sustainable way. However, non-recyclable waste can be repurposed and converted into energy using low emission technologies in an environmentally friendly and sustainable ecosystem.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as we seek to encourage the adoption and deployment of such energy efficient and sustainable technologies in our strategy to have renewable energy from waste, we have to allow for a learning time. We have to create the conducive environment for testing and piloting of such technologies in the short and medium term.

The green economy growth pole, which includes waste management and resource recovery, has the buy-in of all stakeholders including the private sector. And in line with SDG 7, investment in clean and renewable energy infrastructure is being encouraged, especially for Mauritius as a Small Island Developing State.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by saying that green energy initiatives will definitely reduce our dependence on fossil fuels as well as fulfil our targets with respect to a clean environment. Mr Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, we firmly believe that the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Bill will be one of the catalysts thereto.

I thank you for your attention Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for 45 minutes!

At 5.59 p.m. the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.51 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Ramano!

(6.52 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now proceed with the summing up of this important piece of legislation. *J'aurai préféré que l'honorable Boolell soit là, mais okay.*

Hon. Members : Il arrive ! Il arrive !

Mr Ramano: J'attendrai.

Hon. Members: Il arrive!

Mr Ramano : M. le président, tout d'abord, je tiens à remercier tous les députés des deux côtés de la Chambre pour avoir apporté leur point de vue sur le *Waste Management and Resource Recovery Bill (2023)*.

M. le président, permettez-moi de répondre à quelques commentaires qui ont été faits par l'honorable Dr. Boolell mais je suis parmi ceux qui, après avoir écouté l'honorable Dr. Boolell, sont dans une confusion totale. Est-ce qu'il est pour ou contre le *waste to energy* ?

M. le président, après avoir écouté l'honorable Dr. Boolell, je pense qu'il a été bien sur impressionné par le discours de l'honorable Collendavelloo mais, a-t-il revu sa position en ce qui concerne le *waste to energy* ? Il a quand même fait des remarques assez fortes pour dire que « *those who torpedo the waste to energy project* », ils vont se reconnaître eux-mêmes. De Rosnay *was under the pressure from his friends from the sugar sector* et donc, l'honorable Boolell se présente comme *an ardent* défenseur du *waste to energy*.

M. le président, permettez-moi de rafraichir la mémoire de l'honorable Dr. Boolell. Il a posé une PNQ à moi-même, c'était au moment qu'il était leader de l'Opposition et c'était le 7 juillet 2020. Le 7 juillet 2020, l'honorable Dr. Boolell me pose une PNQ et dans ses différentes questions, permettez-moi de citer la question de l'honorable Dr. Boolell –

“Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, his Government will entertain a politics of contradiction or will put an end to the Waste Energy Incineration Project, which was the pet project of the former Deputy Prime Minister to the cost of Rs4 billion? Will he tell

the House that he is going to put an end to this project if he wants to save what has been spelt out at the *Assises de l'Environnement* in respect of reduction, reuse, recycling and recover?"

Contradiction totale, M. le président ! Pour ou contre le *waste to energy* ? Il va plus loin dans sa question et sa question, M. le président, inclue aussi une réponse claire. Une autre question –

“Can I ask the hon. Minister again, if he is for circular economy - a comprehensive clinic, that we call a ‘Centralised Clinic Coordination Programme’ which is part of what has been spelt out at the *Assises de l'Environnement*. He needs waste; he needs to make sure that there is segregation at source. And can he give firm guarantee to the House that no waste will be given to CEB?”

M. le président, *which is which*?

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Alala! Alala!*

Mr Ramano: Qu’est-ce qu’il est en train de dire ? Qu’est-ce qu’il impute, M. le président ? C’était en juillet 2020, M. le président. Quelques années après, il se contredit lourdement, M. le président.

M. le président, je pense que l’honorable Boolell a toujours excellé dans la superficialité des arguments et je pense que même ses collègues ont dû pousser un grand ouf de soulagement lorsqu’il avait soumis sa démission comme leader de l’Opposition, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, il se permet même de donner des leçons de bonne gouvernance. Il y a certaines personnes qui l’appellent l’*Iznogoud* du Parti travailliste, l’éternel second du Parti Travailliste. M. le président, s’il ne prend pas des précautions, je pense qu’il est assuré d’être le bouffon dans le royaume de sa majesté Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

M. le président, il donne des leçons de bonne gouvernance. Permettez-moi de citer la PNQ du leader de l’Opposition d’alors, M. Paul Raymond Bérenger, qui était adressée à l’honorable Ivan Collendavelloo, concernant le projet de *City Power*. L’honorable Arvin Boolell ose parler de bonne gouvernance, ose donner des leçons en ce qui concerne la transparence. M.

le président, le projet de *City Power* et permettez-moi de citer le premier paragraphe de la réponse de l'honorable Collendavelloo –

“In 2005, CT Power (Malaysia) Ltd. made a proposal to the Board of Investment for a 2 x 55 MW pulverized coal power plant to be implemented by its subsidiary, the Mauritius CT Power Ltd. This was an unsolicited proposal.”

M. le président, *unsolicited proposal!*

“At that time, there was a committee called a ‘Fast Track Committee’. It was chaired by the then Prime Minister. The Fast Track Committee approved the proposal. In July 2006, the Board of Investment issued a Letter of Intent to the promoter. Immediately thereafter, the Central Electricity Board, on 26 July 2006, decided that negotiations be held with the promoter.”

Avec un *unsolicited bid*, M. le président.

“On the same date, a Shareholders’ Agreement, a Coal Supply Agreement and an Interconnection Facility Design and Build Agreement were concluded on the same date. No EIA licence had been obtained at the time these documents were signed.”

Et, M. le président, il ose donner des leçons aujourd’hui en terme de protection de l’environnement, en terme de transparence. M. le président, je pense qu’il est très bien dans son rôle *d’Iznogoud* du Parti travailliste. M. le président, permettez-moi de faire le *summing up* aujourd’hui, pour dire que la législation sur la gestion des déchets dans le monde a progressé au-delà de l’assainissement et de la protection de la santé de la population. L’accent est désormais mis sur la prévention et la récupération des ressources gaspillées. Dans le contexte local, l’actuel cadre juridique fragmenté n’aborde que l’aspect sanitaire et n’impose pas aux différentes parties prenantes l’obligation de stocker et collecter les différents matériaux précieux présents dans leur flux de déchets. Il n’y avait pas de disposition claire dans les différents textes législatifs qui favoriseraient le détournement des déchets des stations de transfert et du site d’élimination. Les différentes dispositions de cette nouvelle législation et les règlements à venir nous permettrons de mettre en place un système qui conduira à un détournement substantiel des déchets vers le compostage et le recyclage. Cela préservera l’espace d’enfouissement, génèrera des revenus, créera des emplois verts et réduira aussi des émissions de gaz à effet de serre.

L'utilisation des ressources de manière intelligente est une logique économique, M. le président. La flambée des prix des matières premières, des produits de base et du fret à laquelle nous assistons doit nous inciter à repenser nos habitudes de production et de consommation. Il est donc très important de conserver les matériaux le plus longtemps possible dans l'économie et de mettre fin à la culture de l'utilisation et de l'élimination. La transition vers l'économie circulaire n'est pas un luxe; c'est une nécessité, M. le président. Les matières recyclables séparées par les producteurs, ont tendance à être de meilleure qualité par rapport à la collecte des déchets mixtes et au tri ultérieur.

M. le président, cette législation nous permettra de proposer une réglementation pour la collecte séparée des déchets organiques, des déchets recyclables et des résidus. Les autorités locales pourront jouer leur rôle dans la transition vers une économie circulaire grâce à ce cadre législatif, ambitieux, complet et juridiquement contraignant. Nous sommes conscients que la collecte séparée à domicile ou dans une entreprise nécessitera des efforts diligents de la part des producteurs et aussi des consommateurs, M. le président et là, à cet effet, des campagnes de communication et des programmes de sensibilisation seront menés afin de promouvoir un changement de comportement à tous les niveaux.

Je note avec beaucoup de satisfaction que la plupart de ceux qui sont intervenus sur le projet de loi ont convenu que le statu quo dans la gestion des déchets solides et dangereux mais pas une option. Je voudrais souligner ici que certains membres de l'Opposition ont également présenté des points positifs sur les mérites de cette législation et des contributions pertinentes en accord avec ce que nous, au gouvernement, voulons réaliser par la promulgation de ce projet de loi, M. le président. Nous sommes tous conscients que le model 'prendre, fabriquer et jeter' a atteint ses limites et il est temps de passer à un autre model plus durable. Ce projet de loi nous permettra de le faire.

Je voudrais maintenant clarifier certains points qui ont été soulevés au cours des débats, M. le président. Les membres se souviendront qu'en deuxième lecture, j'ai informé qu'un *consultancy service* financé par l'Agence Française de Développement, avait été entrepris pour préparer un *Solid Waste Strategy and Action Plan* comprenant un examen de base et une analyse des options stratégiques.

Une étude de faisabilité d'usines de compostage et d'une unité de tri régional a ensuite été préparée. De larges consultations ont été menées avec toutes les parties prenantes concernées. Les avis ont été recueillis et pris en compte tout au long du processus, M. le président. Il ne s'agit pas d'un exercice de copier-coller.

Dès la réception de l'étude de faisabilité, mon ministère a lancé un appel d'offres pour la mise en place et l'exploitation de deux installations intégrées de traitement des déchets sur une *Build, Own and Operate basis* pour deux régions dans un premier temps. Les exigences de l'appel d'offres en termes de taille des installations prouvent clairement que le gouvernement a l'intention de fournir de grandes installations de gestion des déchets qui détourneront une part importante des déchets générés par les décharges. La proportion de déchets qui sera valorisée sera bien sûr supérieure aux 10 %, qui ont été mentionnés par le député Aadil Ameer Meea dans son intervention.

L'exercice de *procurement* a été fait de manière transparente et la question de l'attribution de contrats juteux ne se pose même pas, M. le président. Nous sommes tous d'accord pour dire que nous devons recycler et composter davantage, ce qui ne peut se faire sans infrastructures supplémentaires qui doivent également être exploités. Cependant, le détournement de l'enfouissement se traduira par des coûts de transport et d'éliminations évités qui, à moyen et à long terme, apporteront des économies substantielles au gouvernement.

M. le président, comme je l'ai souligné dans mon discours lors du *Second Reading*, compte tenu des contraintes liées à l'acquisition de l'espace pour garantir l'enfouissement, l'incinération des déchets pourrait être l'option à envisager à long terme, comme le recommande l'étude de l'Agence française de développement. Cependant, la mise en œuvre de toute installation d'incinération des déchets pour la production d'énergie représente un gros investissement. Il existe un certain nombre de cas où des usines de valorisation énergétique des déchets à grande échelle ont dû fermer pour des raisons financières, techniques et sociales.

M. le président, il convient aussi de rappeler que dans notre cas également, ici à Maurice, il y a eu quelques tentatives dans un passé récent, mais ces tentatives ont dû être abandonnées par faute de soumission qui n'ont pas été concluantes.

M. le président, nous avons déjà circulé les amendements qui seront proposés au *Committee Stage*. Il est vrai de dire que nous avons dans la disposition concernant la définition de ‘*disposal*’, nous avons prévu les cas d’incinérations, et je vais expliquer cela, M. le président.

M. le président, la nécessité d’une étude de faisabilité a également été soulignée par le Dr. Fuentes, expert en énergie renouvelable de Maxwell Stamp PLC, *Consultant* pour le ministère de l’Énergie et des services publics. Le Dr. Fuentes a souligné que Maurice doit d’abord réaliser une étude de faisabilité pour évaluer la perspective d’une usine de *waste to energy* dans le contexte local avant de décider de la capacité de l’usine. Une étude de faisabilité appropriée devra donc être réalisée préalablement à la mise en place d’une telle centrale comme c’est le cas dans la plupart des pays qui ont mis en place de telles installations.

La Commission européenne en 2017, dans un document de ‘Consultation sur le rôle de la valorisation énergétique des déchets dans l’économie circulaire,’ indique clairement que « les procédés de valorisation énergétique des déchets peuvent jouer un rôle dans la transition vers une économie circulaire à condition que la hiérarchie des déchets de l’Union européenne soit utilisée comme principe directeur, et que les choix effectués n’empêchent pas des niveaux plus élevés de prévention, de réutilisation et de recyclage. »

Dans son vingtième rapport sur la production d’électricité à partir des déchets solides municipaux, le *Standing Committee on Energy* du Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi 2016, a noté que, je cite –

« Les déchets produits en Inde sont des déchets mixtes, comprenant une grande quantité de matériaux inertes et un niveau d’humidité très élevé, contrairement à d’autres pays. »

Le comité a donc recommandé ce qui suit –

« Les citoyens devraient d’abord être encouragés à garder des poubelles séparées pour les déchets humides, secs et dangereux. »

Deuxième recommandation –

« La séparation des déchets devrait être rendue obligatoire dans tous les bureaux gouvernementaux, les ménages, les établissements commerciaux. Le cas échéant, une sanction pourrait être imposée en cas de non-respect de cette règle. »

Le *Indian Task Force on Waste to Energy technologies* a également recommandé que les déchets qui peuvent être recyclés soient recyclés pour fabriquer de nouveaux produits, ce qui permet d'économiser les ressources naturelles. Les déchets humides qui peuvent produire du bio gaz ou du compost doivent être traités, et les déchets qui ne sont pas recyclables, mais qui ont un pouvoir calorifique élevé doivent être utilisés pour des projets de *waste to energy* (*Planning Commission of India, 2014*). Une telle étude devra prendre en considération principalement les quantités futures des déchets compte tenu des changements démographiques et socio-économiques, des valeurs calorifiques et bien sûr du taux d'humidité des déchets.

M. le président, comparer la combustion de la bagasse avec l'incinération des déchets municipaux revient à comparer des oranges avec des pommes. Les déchets solides municipaux sont d'un matériau hétérogène et ne peuvent être comparés à la bagasse qui est sèche par nature. Le pouvoir calorifique et le taux d'humidité de ces deux matériaux sont très différents. Les déchets solides municipaux non triés générés au cours d'une année entière à Maurice ont un pouvoir calorifique de 6 mégajoules par kilogramme et ne conviennent donc pas à l'incinération sans le tri à la source pour s'assurer que les déchets combustibles sont fournis à une telle usine pour le rendre viable.

La stratégie nationale de gestion des déchets solides et du plan d'action qui seront révisés tous les cinq ans ou à tout autre moment déterminé, comme est prescrit dans ce projet de loi, pourrait bien sûr reprendre l'option de valorisation énergétique des déchets, M. le président.

M. le président, l'expansion verticale n'est envisagée que pour éviter la construction d'une décharge supplémentaire. L'empreinte actuelle est utilisée de manière optimale afin de ne pas empiéter sur des terres supplémentaires, d'autant plus que le village de Mare Chicose a déjà été déplacé. L'implantation d'infrastructures de gestion des déchets fait souvent l'objet du syndrome *not in my backyard* - pas dans mon jardin. L'acceptation sociale de toute infrastructure de gestion des déchets est d'une importance capitale. Je souhaite attirer l'attention de la Chambre sur le fait à long terme, si l'option de l'incinération est retenue, nous aurons toujours besoin d'une décharge pour l'élimination des déchets résiduels et des cendres générés.

M. le président, je voudrais répondre aussi à l'affirmation selon laquelle l'économie circulaire ne vise qu'à créer des opportunités commerciales pour le secteur privé et à drainer des

fonds publics en donnant quelques exemples de régions et de pays qui ont adopté l'économie circulaire et les avantages qui en découlent.

L'Union européenne a adopté un cadre juridique pour une économie circulaire à travers la convention cadre de l'Union européenne. Selon la commission, ce cadre stimulera le recyclage et empêchera la perte de matériaux précieux, créera des emplois, de la croissance économique et de nouveaux modèles d'entreprise, et réduira les émissions de gaz à effet de serre. La commission a estimé que l'économie circulaire peut entraîner une économie de 600 milliards d'euros.

Une étude danoise pourtant sur cinq secteurs a révélé qu'une transition plus poussée vers une économie circulaire d'ici 2035 pourrait débloquer une augmentation du PIB de 0,8% à 1,4 %, créer 7 000 à 13 000 emplois et réduire l'empreinte carbone du pays jusqu'à 7 % et diminuer de 5 % à 50 % la consommation de ressources vierges pour certains matériaux.

Au-delà de l'Europe, M. le président, des études en Chine et en Inde ont montré qu'une économie circulaire peut générer des avantages substantiels, surtout dans les pays en développement. Une étude sur la Chine a révélé qu'une trajectoire d'économie circulaire pourrait permettre aux entreprises et aux ménages d'économiser environ 32 000 milliards de yuans chinois en 2030, ce qui équivaut à environ 14 % du PIB chinois prévu cette année-là.

Parmi les autres effets, citons une réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre d'environ 11 % et une diminution des embouteillages de 36 % d'ici à 2030.

En Inde, une étude a estimé qu'une économie circulaire pourrait apporter des bénéfices annuels de 624 milliards de dollars en 2050.

Le rapport de la Banque mondiale intitulé "*What a Waste 2.0- A Global Snapshot to Solid waste management to 2050*" mentionne que les efforts visant à passer à une économie circulaire gagnent du terrain, en particulier en Europe.

M. le président, je note aussi une certaine dissonance entre les membres de l'Opposition. L'honorable Ameer Meea considérant l'économie circulaire comme un mot à la mode alors que l'honorable David a déclaré qu'il s'attendait à un projet de loi sur l'économie circulaire comme c'est le cas en France et en Irlande. Il était même d'avis que l'intégration et l'utilisation du terme

économie dans son sens systémique ne devraient pas être réservées seulement au ministère des Finances.

Je suis tout à fait d'accord bien sûr avec l'honorable David sur ce point et c'est pour cela que mon ministère s'est totalement investi dans cette démarche, M. le président.

Nous travaillons actuellement sur une feuille de route pour l'économie circulaire, une étude commanditée par l'UNEP et financée par le programme Switch Africa Green. Cette étude examinera entre autres la faisabilité d'un cadre juridique pour l'économie circulaire.

En attendant, avec ce projet de loi, nous visons à soutenir l'économie circulaire grâce à une meilleure gestion des déchets.

Je suis en effet reconnaissant à l'honorable Lobine qui a exprimé son soutien à la politique de mise en œuvre de ce projet de loi.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne le commentaire sur la collecte déguisée de redevances (taxes), permettez-moi de préciser, M. le président, que le pouvoir du ministre de prescrire une redevance en vertu de l'article 23 du *Bill* pour le *collection and disposal of household and commercial wastes* existe déjà en vertu des articles 162 et 163 du *Local Government Act*.

Cependant, aucune taxe n'a été prescrite jusqu'à présent, M. le président. La position adoptée par les membres de l'Opposition sur cette clause particulière est purement de mauvaise foi et ne sert qu'à créer des doutes.

M. le président, je souhaite quand même attirer l'attention de l'Assemblée sur la décision du Conseil des ministres du 14 avril 2023 relative à la promulgation des *Local Government (Exemption of Municipal Tax on Family Home) Regulations 2023* et des *Local Government (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2023*, concernant l'abolition de la taxe municipale sur les maisons familiales, M. le président. C'est cela la politique du gouvernement, M. le président.

Ces règlements entreront en vigueur à partir du 1^{er} juillet 2023. Cela démontre clairement que ce gouvernement n'a pas l'intention de proposer des taxes additionnelles pour les ménages, M. le président. Je tiens à rassurer l'Assemblée que la collecte de taxes n'est pas à l'ordre du jour de ce gouvernement.

En ce qui concerne la clause 24 (3) du projet de loi, qui prévoit que les autorités locales peuvent prescrire un paiement pour les bennes, celui-ci ne sera déterminé qu'après discussion

avec les collectivités locales, en tenant compte bien sûr du type de bennes à fournir et aussi du volume de déchets à collecter par ménage. Ce n'est que lorsqu'un ménage a produit un volume de déchets beaucoup plus élevé que la normale (environ 75 litres par semaine) qu'une redevance peut être appliquée à la demande de collecte, comme cela se fait par les collectivités locales lorsqu'il y a des *bulky wastes* à être collecté par les ménages et bien sûr il y a une charge additionnelle qui est perçue par les collectivités locales, M. le président.

Donc, la section 163 (2) du *Local Government Act* prévoit déjà que chaque autorité locale peut percevoir des droits et des redevances pour l'enlèvement de ces déchets volumineux. Cette disposition est intégrée à la législation sur la gestion des déchets et la récupération des ressources, afin d'harmoniser les redevances qui pourraient être perçues à l'avenir. En outre, cette mesure sera prise en étroite collaboration avec toutes les autorités locales.

En ce qui concerne la fourniture et la distribution des poubelles, un mécanisme sera élaboré par le Comité National de Coordination de la Gestion des Déchets qui sera mis en place en vertu de l'article 9 du projet de loi, M. le président.

À cet égard, je tiens à préciser que les trois premières poubelles qui seront fournies seront gratuites pour les ménages afin de garantir que le tri des déchets soit effectué à partir de ce niveau. Cela permettra de s'assurer que les déchets triés sont envoyés aux installations de compostage et de recyclage pour que la circularité de la gestion des déchets soit une réussite.

L'acquisition des poubelles, M. le président, il va sans dire, sera effectuée conformément aux dispositions du *Public Procurement Act*, par le biais d'un appel d'offres compétitif, pas de *unsolicited bid* comme nous avons vu dans le passé, M. le président.

La mise en place d'un système moderne de tri, de collecte, de transport, de recyclage et d'élimination des déchets permettra de réduire au minimum le contact et la manipulation des déchets par les éboueurs. Les autorités locales devront réorganiser le service pour répondre aux attentes de la population et continuer à assurer le bien-être des éboueurs.

M. le président, concernant les déchets électroniques, il est vrai que seul un très faible pourcentage des déchets électroniques générés est actuellement recyclé (2 % des 8 000 tonnes). La raison en est qu'il n'existe actuellement aucun système établi pour la collecte et le recyclage des déchets électroniques.

La gestion des déchets électroniques et d'autres flux de déchets sera abordée dans le cadre d'un mécanisme de responsabilité élargie des producteurs (REP) qui sera élaboré en étroite collaboration avec le secteur privé.

Une étude menée par l'ONG américaine *Recycling Partnership* a révélé que la politique de responsabilité élargie des producteurs (REP) a permis de collecter et de recycler plus de 75 % du papier et des emballages en Colombie-Britannique, en Belgique, en Espagne, en Corée du Sud et aux Pays-Bas.

L'article 46 du projet de loi prévoit donc la mise en place d'un système de responsabilité élargie des producteurs (REP) pour ces produits. Les règlements nécessaires seront bien sûr pris en conséquence.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne les huiles usagées, je voudrais souligner que leur gestion est déjà réglementée sous *l'Environment Protection (Collection, Storage, Treatment, Use and Disposal of Waste Oil) Regulations 2006*. Cette réglementation impose aux producteurs d'huiles usagées des obligations en matière de stockage et d'élimination des huiles usagées. L'équipe de mon ministère chargée de l'application de la réglementation procède à des inspections régulières pour s'assurer du respect de la réglementation.

Deuxièmement, les transporteurs d'huiles usagées doivent demander l'autorisation de mon ministère pour le transport des huiles usagées des producteurs vers les installations de recyclage réglementées par le *Environment Protection Act*.

Actuellement, deux opérateurs privés participent à la collecte et au recyclage des huiles de graissage usagées provenant des garages de l'île et une société est enregistrée pour la collecte et l'exportation d'huiles de cuisson usagées.

En 2021, environ 4,16 millions de litres d'huile de lubrification usagée (des garages et des industries) et d'huile de cale des navires ont été collectés et recyclés, tandis que 295 615 litres d'huile de cuisson usagée ont été collectés pour l'exportation.

Toutes les réglementations relatives à la gestion des huiles usagées seront intégrées dans la législation sur la gestion des déchets et la récupération des ressources et seront révisées pour avoir une meilleure traçabilité des huiles usagées depuis leur production jusqu'à leur récupération, maximisant la collecte des huiles usagées et améliorant les processus de recyclage.

M. le président, venons-en maintenant aux pneus usagés. Environ 4500 tonnes de pneus usagés sont générées chaque année à Maurice, dont environ 10 % sont mis en décharge chaque année (en moyenne).

Pour résoudre durablement ce problème, le gouvernement encourage le recyclage des pneus usagés en offrant une incitation financière de R 2000 pour chaque tonne de caoutchouc recyclée localement ou exportée pour être recyclée.

Dans le cadre de cette incitation budgétaire, la division de la gestion des déchets solides de mon ministère a lancé un appel d'offres afin de sélectionner un soumissionnaire, pour la mise en place et l'exploitation d'une installation de recyclage/traitement de pneus usagés à Maurice, sur une *build-own-operate basis* de dix ans. Une évaluation des propositions est en cours M. le président.

M. le président, permettez-moi de commenter le sort de la division de la gestion des déchets solides. Le *Department of Solid Waste* de mon ministère. La Chambre peut être assurée que la division continuera d'exister avec son propre budget et sera dirigée par un Chef de Cabinet mais avec un nouveau département de la gestion des déchets, de la récupération de ressource comme le prévoit le projet de loi. Le département, son directeur, son directeur adjoint et ses fonctionnaires disposeront de pouvoir accrue pour assumer toutes les responsabilités décrites dans ce projet de loi.

On m'a informé que seul un *restyling* des postes serait nécessaire, c'est-à-dire, que dans leurs titres, les mots 'gestion des déchets solides' seront remplacés par 'gestion de déchets et récupération des ressources'.

M. le président, l'objectif ultime de ce projet de loi est de garantir une gestion écologiquement sûre et saine des déchets solides et des déchets dangereux, ainsi qu'un système durable de gestion de déchets par l'adoption d'une approche d'économie circulaire axée sur la réduction, la réutilisation, le traitement, l'élimination en toute sécurité, la récupération des matériaux, et le recyclage des déchets.

Je remercie tous mes collègues et les membres de l'Opposition qui ont contribué à ce débat. Je voulais aussi saluer la contribution de mon collègue, l'*Attorney General* et ses officiers pour leur aide précieuse dans la préparation de ce projet de loi.

Je tiens bien sûr aussi à remercier le personnel de mon ministère qui a participé aux différentes étapes de l'élaboration de ce projet de loi.

M. le président, avec ses mots, je souhaite recommander le projet de loi à l'Assemblée.
Merci

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

THE WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE RECOVERY BILL

(NO. I OF 2023)

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 (Interpretation)

Motion made and question proposed: "that the clause stand part of the Bill."

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the following amendment in clause 2 –

“in clause 2 –

- (i) in the definition of “authorised officer” –
 - (A) in paragraph (a), by deleting the words “section 6(2)(a)” and replacing them by the words “section 5(2)(a)”;
 - (B) in paragraph (b), by deleting the words “section 6(3)” and “section 6(4)” and replacing them by the words “section 5(3)” and “section 5(4)”, respectively;
- (ii) in the definition of “disposal”, in paragraph (b), by deleting the words “without energy recovery”;
- (iii) in the definition of “minimisation”, by deleting the word “education” and replacing it by the word “reduction”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 3 to 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 9 (Coordination Committee)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the following amendment in clause 9 –

“in clause 9, in subclause (1), by deleting the word “conversation” and replacing it by the word “conservation”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 10 to 24 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 25 (Disposal of waste)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the following amendment in clause 25 –

“in clause 25 –

- (i) by deleting the heading and replacing it by the following heading –

25. Management of waste by local authority

- (ii) in subclause (1), by deleting the words “for disposal”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 25, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 26 to 45 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 46 (Extended producer responsibility)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the following amendment in clause 46 –

“in clause 46, by inserting, after the words “solid waste”, the words “and hazardous waste”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 46, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 47 to 55 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The First and Second Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and the enacting clause was agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Mr Speaker in the Chair, Mr Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Bill (No. I of 2023) was read a third time and passed.

Second Reading

THE MAURITIUS DIGITAL PROMOTION AGENCY BILL

(NO. III OF 2023)

(7.31 p.m.)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr D. Balgobin): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency Bill (No. III of 2023) be read a second time.

M. le président, face aux enjeux de la mondialisation, aucun pays ne peut rester en marge des innovations technologiques. La digitalisation des services publics est aujourd'hui plus qu'une nécessité; c'est une préoccupation majeure pour le gouvernement face aux attentes de nos citoyens. Et l'importance capitale pour réussir ce processus de développement s'associe à la préparation de cette nouvelle ère numérique dans laquelle s'est engagée notre pays depuis ces dernières années, grâce à la vision du Premier ministre de créer une île Maurice intelligente et connectée.

M. le président, dans cette course vers le futur, nous présentons aujourd'hui, devant cet auguste Assemblée, un projet de loi qui vient combler les lacunes existantes au *National Computer Board Act* qui date de 1988. Aujourd'hui, après plus de 35 ans d'existence, il est impératif de renouveler la réflexion autour des objectifs du NCB et d'instituer des nouvelles fonctions au NCB afin de mener cette institution à atteindre de nouveaux horizons.

Ainsi, la restructuration du NCB en tant que *Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency* est en ligne avec la stratégie du gouvernement et de notre programme gouvernemental. Nous ne sommes point des techno-prophètes, M. le président, en revanche, notre but est non seulement d'anticiper les besoins digitaux de nos citoyens, en améliorant la manière dont le gouvernement offre ses services en utilisant les outils numériques, mais aussi de nous assurer que nos citoyens soient dotés d'aptitudes qui les permettent d'adopter ces services.

Comme l'a dit l'inventeur américain Charles Kettering, je cite –

«Je m'intéresse à l'avenir, parce que c'est là que je vais passer le reste de ma vie.»

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill which is before the House today represents a crucial step in Government's collective efforts to promote and boost digitalisation in Mauritius and to ensure that our country remains competitive in the global digital landscape. I stand before you today as the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, under the leadership of our hon. Prime Minister, with a message that holds a vision which will empower generations to come.

We are in the middle of a technological revolution that is transforming every aspect of our lives at an unimaginable pace. Today, over 4 billion people across the globe are online and the digital economy is no longer a luxury or an option. It is a fundamental requirement for any country that seeks to remain competitive and prosper in the global economy. The digital age has already transformed the way we live, work and interact with one another. It has the potential to reduce poverty, improve our education system and healthcare capabilities and also promote gender equality, amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, the ICT sector has contributed significantly to the country's GDP and according to the Economic Development Board (EDB), it has accounted for approximately 6.9% of Mauritius' GDP in 2021. This demonstrates the enormous potential of the

ICT sector to drive economic growth but also job creation in the country. The sector employs over 32,000 persons and this number is expected to grow in the coming years as this Government continues to actively promote digitalisation and innovation.

This Government is in fact leveraging the power of IT in new and innovative ways. We have implemented digital platforms to improve services and the lives of the citizens thereby allowing them to access government services from the comfort of their homes. We have accelerated the shift towards the digitalisation and no less than 140 public services are online today.

Citizens are encouraged to make use of these services through the different marketing campaigns launched by my Ministry on different media and social platforms. Many of you have probably come across our printed and digital campaigns on MauPass, on MoRendezVous or even on Mokloud.

Let me here, Mr Speaker, Sir, say a few words on Mokloud. One of the examples today is a citizen can download their birth certificate online. This is the reality and we have to say it as it is; there is no shame in saying it. Today, if a citizen wants to have a copy of their birth certificate, what is the process? First of all, they go to the Civil Status Office. They queue up, arriving their turn, the officer prints a copy and then he realises a stamp of Rs25 is missing. The same citizen leaves everything there, go back to a Post Office, queues up again, buys a stamp for Rs25 and if he is lucky, he has a change, or else he has to go and buy a coke or a chocolate to get change to buy a stamp and come back again to the Civil Status Office to be able to get a valid birth certificate which is valid for three months.

Today, in matter of seconds, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the MoKloud platform, a citizen can download their birth certificate and marriage certificate. Over 11,000 citizens in this country have already made use of such facilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the path to success is not only to provide access through proper ICT infrastructure and ensure implementation of technology, but also, a digitally agile culture must be nurtured to deliver the innovation we want to see. Our society is undergoing numerous technological changes and in this digital era, with innovation, the rapid expansion of the Artificial Intelligence, for example, Robotics industry and the advent of Metaverse, we cannot rest on our laurels.

It is against this backdrop that we are proposing, today, the revamping of the National Computer Board into the Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency. This Agency will be called upon to play an important role in –

- (a) Promoting digital literacy among our citizens;
- (b) Driving the adoption of digital technologies among businesses, and
- (c) Fostering innovation in the tech sector.

The ultimate objective is not to build a world-class digital economy in Mauritius that benefits all our citizens, as neither do we want to nor can we afford to lag behind in this race!

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the time NCB was set up and its Act voted back in 1988, IT was at its infanc. Internet was not even known to people, mobile phones did not even exist in the country. Today, our ICT sector is set to become one of the main pillars of our economy. The country is fully connected and fibered, we have launched 5G connectivity for mobile phones, we have a mobile penetration of 157%, and we have more mobile phones than people in this country. The statistics speak for themselves, Mr Speaker, Sir. We can see the gap: 1988 to 2003.

The NCB has also played a fundamental role in promoting and developing the ICT sector by e-powering the public and private sectors. The objectives set under the NCB have ensured that the nation is properly equipped with the necessary ICT infrastructure, strategies and policies, and a growing pool of ICT literate citizens. Important projects and responsibilities were entrusted to the organisation, the focus of which was to e-power the citizens, the businesses and the public sector.

With the influx of projects, professionals in the IT have been recruited to support the smooth running of the organisation. The number of employees as at January 2023 stood at 86 compared to 55 back in January 2010. It is without a doubt, Mr Speaker, Sir, that due to the various initiatives taken by the NCB over the years, digital literacy has increased from 51.3% in 2010 to around 60% in 2021 according to Statistics Mauritius, and this percentage will continue to grow.

But the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is: is it enough? The NCB Act did not, however, make provisions for the exponential growth in the ICT sector worldwide as compared to incremental growth for other sectors. In fact, although digital transformation has made inroads faster, the

functions attributed to the NCB have remained unchanged over three decades and thus the need to review its roles and responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in the Budget Speech 2020/2021, it was announced that with a view to accelerating digital transformation, the NCB, amongst other organisations falling within the purview of my Ministry, would be restructured. The objective would be to strengthen and empower the institution to reorient its services and expertise towards building innovating capabilities.

It is in this context that in July 2021, a Consultant was appointed to advise on the restructuring of the organisation by proposing the future direction of the NCB with a revised mandate, as well as a new vision, mission and strategic objectives aligned with Government's medium and long-term plan for the country's economy development.

The Consultant after a thorough analysis of the current state of the organisation but also, based on comparative exercise in the ICT sector in countries such as Singapore, Estonia, India and Rwanda, came up with a series of recommendations for a new organisational structure with revised strategic goals and objectives.

The Consultant also took into consideration the fact that NCB has a wide experience and expertise in delivering and managing ICT training and awareness projects, outreach and cooperation across institutions, including citizens and businesses.

The recommendations included the need to repeal the National Computer Board Act of 1988 and to come up with a new bill to provide for a revamped organization, subsequently named as I mentioned, the Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency, which would take over the functions of the NCB with a new vision: "to create a digitally inclusive knowledge-based society through the next-generation technology" and a new mission statement: "to lead Mauritius toward a world class digital economy by fostering the required skills and making technology widely accessible to all".

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to go through this salient clauses in the Bill. In view of the evolving needs and fast moving pace of the ICT/BPO sector, the Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency is expected to respond effectively to new national aspirations to cater for the multifaceted challenges emerging in the wake of globalisation threatening the very resilience of

the country's economy. The organisation will hence, be called upon to spearhead the development of the ICT industry in Mauritius through innovation to increase its global competitiveness. It will also play a prominent role in the development of the ICT industry by advising the Government of Mauritius on policies to harness emerging technologies, implementing innovative projects related to boosting ICT exports, technopreneurship, democratising access to ICT and promoting digital culture and citizens' empowerment.

Clause 4 of the Bill, thus, provides for the Agency to have as main objects to –

- (a) boost growth of the ICT sector through skills development and innovation;
- (b) achieve basic ICT proficiency among all population groups, and
- (c) advise the Minister on the formulation of national policies in respect of promotion, development of ICT and its application.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to enable the MDPA to achieve its objectives, provision is made under clause 5 of the Bill for the Agency to perform its functions. The Agency will be the body responsible for the promotion of digital literacy amongst the population at large, so as to inculcate the notion of digital citizenship nationwide, which relates to the ability to navigate into digital environment in a safe and secure manner. It will also be responsible for the national upskilling programme in ICT and to conduct awareness campaigns so as to attract talent into the sector.

The Institution will act as facilitator for setting up of ICT start-ups and developing programmes for ICT skills development and promoting digital entrepreneurship for the SMEs business continuity.

For producing smarter outputs and results and to avoid duplication in institutional functions, the MDPA will work together with other organisations of my Ministry namely, the Mauritius Emerging Technologies Council and the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council and also with other Government departments, the private sector and NGOs.

I must also highlight that since August 2021, Mauritius has entered the league of the few countries where the Government has its own Certificates Authority (CA). The CA has the responsibility of issuing digital certificates to facilitate verification of identities between users in

an electronic transaction, including the use of electronic signatures for individuals and businesses.

The service known as Massign is currently being managed by the NCB which has been licensed under the Information and Communication Technologies Act to operate as a Certificate Authority. This important function will be taken over by the MDPA.

Another important function of the MDPA would be the promotion of the use of Open Data at national level and let me be clear about this Open Data, Mr Speaker, Sir. Open Data, as defined in the Bill, refers to data held by Government and/or the private sector which is not confidential and can be freely used or distributed.

The NCB has, since April 2018, been hosting the Open Data Mauritius Portal which currently provides for some 430 data sets related to various topics or sectors of our economy and those data are available for businesses, for companies, for Government to use to be able to plan and forecast any projects or any potential businesses for the country.

In today's world, Mr Speaker, Sir, data is the new oil. These datasets have the potential of unleashing new business opportunities for SMEs, for the private sector by empowering innovation in all sectors of the economy with the creation of new products and services. This function will also be taken over by the MDPA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order for the Agency to attain its objective, it is imperative that people who are responsible for its management, have extensive knowledge and experience in the field of ICT and digital literacy amongst others. Provision is therefore made at Clause 7 of the Bill for the membership of the Board of the Agency to comprise representatives of relevant sectors, including the private sector, having knowledge and experience in the field of ICT emerging technologies and education.

So, you can imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the new Board, with people from Government, from the private sector or appointed by the Minister, the new Board will comprise people with proper experience in the sector, in emerging technologies and in education and thus, they will be in a better position to guide the institution and bring it to new heights and this will ensure that there are continued linkages between the organisation and the ICT industry because we have catered for the private sector also to be part of the Board.

Clause 11, Mr Speaker, Sir, refers to the appointment of staff of the Agency by the Board on terms and conditions as may be approved by the Minister and here, with regards to recent press articles, published concerning the restructuration which I believe are of bad faith and which have attempted to distort public opinion on my Ministry's agenda and I wish to inform the House that I have personally met with the NCB Employees' Union to dissipate any confusion in the minds of the existing employees. I have given assurance to the Union that none of the staff members will be less favourable or penalised in the transition from NCB to the Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency and I am glad to share that the NCB Employees' Union has expressed its satisfaction and extended its full support to the management, to my Ministry and to Government in this transition.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to table a letter dated 12 April 2023, addressed to me by the National Computer Board's Employees Union and what do they say, Mr Speaker, Sir? The NCBEU is satisfied and agreeable with the insight provided by the Ministry and provides its full support to the Minister and the Ministry in this upcoming transition phase. I would like to table the document, Mr Speaker, Sir, because there have been a lot of articles in the press – gossips regarding staff would have to get permission from the Minister to be able to be appointed; the Minister will put political appointees and so on and so forth. All these are gossips and *palabres* and we have a mandate; these are official documents, not pictures or photos, official documents signed by the Union, expressing the satisfaction and support to the Ministry in this regard.

So, once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate that the transition from the NCB to the MDPA is being carefully planned. My Ministry will be taking all necessary steps cautiously to ensure that everyone is included and no prejudice is caused to any of the existing employees.

M. le président, l'honorable Premier ministre a pour vision de bâtir une nation intelligente et les premières pierres sont déjà posées. C'est sur cette fondation solide que nous construisons désormais l'avenir pour les générations à venir. La refonte et la restructuration de nos organisations changeront la donne sur la façon dont nous voulons opérer dans cette quête. C'est-à-dire, créer une île Maurice plus intelligente pour nos citoyens et renforcer notre économie.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we may have innovative digital solutions in place but they are useless without broad take up by all segments of the population. At a higher level, the Mauritius Digital

Promotion Agency will give a boost to the development and application of ICT in the evolving technology world to deliver better citizen experience.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, we walk the talk. We practice what we preach and this Government, under the able leadership of our Prime Minister is moving forward and fast in this new digital era.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

Thank you very much.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Mr Speaker: Now, hon. Dr. Boolell, I think you have the turn. You have 20 minutes.

Dr. Boolell: 25 minutes.

Mr Speaker: Just to welcome you.

(8.02 p.m.)

Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): I have listened intently to the speech delivered by the hon. Minister. The Bill is non-controversial and it cut across both Opposition and Government benches.

However, there are legitimate questions which deserve to be asked and answers to be given. To some extent, the Minister has reassured Members of the National Computer Board (NCB) that their rights will be safeguarded. Of course, it is not a favour which is being dispensed as of rights. When you look at Section 26, these rights have to be safeguarded. Now, giving firm assurances certainly convey right signals but implementing, creating and enabling confidence is of paramount importance. They have to feel that there is no threat, no Damocles sword hanging over their heads. Otherwise, if confidence is eroded, it is the whole fabric that may collapse.

We wish the Agency well, but I expected the Minister also to tell us whether the Digital Promotion Agency Bill is the appropriate pathway in restructuring the NCB or the IT for the future. He did mention the name, but I take it for granted that when he referred to the Consultant, he was referring to the report submitted by Director Sharma of PricewaterhouseCoopers. Am I

right? Is this the report of 15 October, on the future of the National Computer Board that you are referring to? I hope the Bill does justice to the findings of this report.

The Minister has given firm assurances that the best candidate would be selected for the post of Executive Director after all. He stated very clearly in succinct terms that there would be no political interference and that it would be left to the Board to make the appropriate choice. This is very relevant and important otherwise, the wrong signals would be conveyed.

Past experiences, unfortunately, tell us a different story. If I have to refer to the existing Chairman of the National Computer Board, who after all, is a political agent; the Minister has also not told us the reason as to why over the last 2 years, the NCB has had no Executive Director. Either the climate is hostile or the person whose services were enlisted did not deliver or probably the person felt discriminated upon. I think this is very relevant. Otherwise, this climate of uncertainty, if it prevails, can certainly jack up the whole process. Now, if we get our acts right, the sky and its clouds are the limit, because I tend to agree and there is unanimity in the House and in the country that our object is to turn Mauritius in a gateway in cross-border initiative.

The IT sector, as the Minister has rightly pointed out, features prominently among the services. In fact, it is snapping at the heels of tourism and finance, and is a sector whose growth is exponential. The Minister knows that computing power doubles every two years and the best brains therefore are required to consolidate the sector. He is right to remind us that our IT sector emerged in 1988. Things have changed and things are moving at an incredible speed, and now, this sector is the third most important pillar of our economy.

I heard the Minister saying that our country is well carpeted with good fibre-optic internet network, not only to work with fibre to home, but to convey and retrieve information at the speed of light. What he said has to be relevant. He stated very clearly that the country is well carpeted with good fibre-optic internet network. I hope this is true because the information that I have been given is not totally different, but as I say, there is room for improvement.

In relation to information, information is data. Today, he or she who has data has power. But there is a call for open data and open data is not relevant if there is no freedom of information. The Minister stated that under Section 5 (i), the described function is to promote and encourage the use of open data at national level. Now, having said so, this section already

fails the proposed object as the publication of open data requires a freedom of information legal framework. Despite what you said, that the information is available, one has to retrieve it without any hiccup, one can relay the information. But be careful, as I have stated, we have to err on the principle of caution and make sure that the freedom of information legal network is ushered in.

I would advise the hon. Minister to refer to the open data portal of the UK government. We have to think globally and act locally, but we have to act fast.

As an ocean state, our services sector has to position itself for outward and inward investment with ongoing restructuring of IT for a greater future. Without proper network, we lose our competitive edge and this is what we do not want to happen. We have to make sure that we constantly capture new market as the preferred market for investment today is Africa. There was a study which was conducted and the preferred market for investment today is Africa with 57% of respondents. It is a go Africa policy if we want to turn Mauritius into a proper hub.

Africa is a vast roaring continent with almost one billion people and, together with India, has the highest percentage of young population, and opportunities are knocking since the Continental Free Trade Agreement was signed. There is no looking back. We have to put our best endeavours to be an inclusive knowledge-based IT society. It is the springboard to level up, but time is of an essence and policy orientation is vital.

The Minister said that we have to walk the talk, but not only do we have to walk the talk, but we have to think big and walk the talk. Dividends to be reaped will rest on decisiveness and political will. Does the regime have the right mindset? We cannot forever stay in the crawler lane. If we want to emulate, as the Minister has stated, the success of Lithuania, Estonia, Singapore, let us, first of all, catch up with Rwanda and Kenya. This is a sector where we have to constantly level up. We have to prepare for the best and hope for the best. We have to bring down constantly the cost of the Internet, its people's power, and agree that the chip today is the powerhouse of IT sector, but beyond our control. Taiwan produces 60% of the world chips and 90% of the advanced chips. So, without access to Taiwanese chip, huge waves of global industry and digital economy would grind to a halt. America and China are dependent on them.

But against this backdrop, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to size up and the Minister has to report progress to the House. Pull the drawer and remove the reports which have collected dust. If the Minister computes the cost of old reports, it would be exorbitant and alarming. The

Minister stated that we need to level up and I totally agree. The cyber caravan has brought joy to the young and the mature by levelling the ground on e-learning. But the change in scenario reminds us, it is a race against time.

Today, digital entrepreneurship reaches global audience and with the right marketing strategy, the world is our oyster. But beware of influencers who promote defective products and financial scams. They should not be given a legal status. Like France, Government should contemplate introducing ground-breaking legislation to regulate influencers who sell fake products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may recall a Labour Government set up, as the Minister has said, the Ministry of IT, and it was as far back as 1997. Policies were formulated and reformulated based on five-year plan, the Smart Mauritius Strategy 2010-2014 was subject of wide discussion. The strategic plan is the mirror image of the roadmap with an overview of National Broadband Policy 2012-2020 and e-Government Policy 2013-2017.

All these strategic papers were prepared by the then Labour Government but policy implementation since 2015 unfortunately, has been sluggish. And in Budget of Financial Year 2020-2021, a holistic approach towards institutional review of all institutions was proposed that is the National Computer Board, ICTA, CIB, CISD, ITSU, Government Online Centre. But where is the review Minister? It is not even in the cloud. The setting up of a Mauritius Digital Transformation Agency akin to the Singaporean model was proposed in the institutional review. The process cannot be moved if ownership is not people's ownership.

The Bill moves that the Minister is indeed a different kettle of fish and I totally agree that there is room for improvement but changes have to be fundamental, fundamental changes which would propel us to better cloud. The Minister did not talk of Global Network Readiness Index. We are lagged. Mauritius ranked 72nd out of the 131 economies included in the Network Readiness Index. The greatest scope for improvement meanwhile concerns people. This implies that much effort has to be done for skill development on the sector calling for collaboration with institutions such as the University of Mauritius and with the Ministry of Education.

The weaknesses of Mauritius as for the National Network Readiness Index Report include participation of industry in research and development as well as high tech and medium tech manufacturing. The gaps to create strong synergy among the three institutions falling under

the purview of the Ministry have to be filled. The MRIC, the Mauritius Emerging Technologies Council and the new Agency cannot remain poles apart. The three bodies address research and development, entrepreneurship, creation of research repository and addressing needs of the industry. There should be no overlapping, no duplication, with clear deliverable for a judicious outcome. Setting up the overarching committee to monitor the digital age has been identified by a number of international instances and an innovation wave that can improve productivity and change lives for the better. The new Bill does not prepare for the new wave of development, the AI and the Advanced Artificial Intelligence. This can only be achieved by proper governance structure, proper coordination and having the right people at the right place. The key word is 'meritocracy with strong leadership'.

Has there been wide discussion? Yes, the Minister confirms that there have been wide discussions with all the stakeholders. There is no deep-seated concern which was flagged by computer and software engineers. They have been reassured and I am glad that their fear has been allayed. But nothing has been mentioned in relation to the Government Online Centre. The two main functions of the NCB has been stripped off of the CERT-MU related to the cyber security and the Government Online Centre which is the data centre of Government dumped in a corner with hardly any prospects of the staff taking the rung of the ladder. Now, if the officers of the CERT-MU have been reassured, fair enough, but the need to obtain assurances and these assurances have to be made double sure.

Now I refer to section 5 (f) Certification Authority. This has been set up since more than two years Minister, but from information that has been relayed, it has not been a success. I don't want to say it is a 'flop'. Rs50 m. wasted and only some digital certificates issued. Now, they want to throw this new potato to the new organisation. I hope corrective measures will be taken, lessons drawn and learned and I am sure then this Authority will be able to deliver.

Now, the Bill gives additional power to the Minister to hire consultants and other staffs. It runs. I hope that it would not run against the principle of governance and accountability. But at the same time, I expect the Minister to have a culture of restraint and I am sure he has, as far as I know and I hope that the additional power conferred upon him would not be a passport to hire and fire. Despite wide powers vested upon the Minister in Clause 16, I hope that he will be his

own master and not pay lip service to Prime Minister's Office. Clause 16 may be a lethal cocktail of shall with may. Transparency, I hope will not be under seen and the good habits will prevail.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me refer to the authentication system and it's good that we be inspired by the mavericks, the software engineers of Mother India. There is a mesmerizing article on the untold story of star to India. The number of bright software engineers with lucrative jobs or pause their entrepreneurial ventures to respond to the call of Mphasis co-founder in 2009 to build an online authentication system and six months later, the team delivered the first Adel car by 2012 despite all kinds of legal, political and logistic challenges more than 400 million citizens had been enrolled on the platform. If the Minister wants to use this as an example and to enlist services of those professionals from India by all means, do so, but make sure that the right signals are conveyed because what we need is a synergistic approach and this synergistic approach is relevant to creating the enabling environment because concert we have to level up and we have to take the rung of the ladder constantly and strive and struggle to reach the target. Mr Speaker, Sir, when we talk of the Indian citizens above the age of 18 who have their adult card, we are talking of roughly 1.2 billion people in all, covering 99% of the population.

Let me conclude by saying that expectations indeed are high in Mauritius but these stumbling blocks have to be overcome and in an article which appeared in the UK Times, William Hague, former UK Foreign Secretary reminded readers that the world must wake up to the speed, scale and scope of Artificial Intelligence and Advanced AI. As an ocean economy, there are vast resources to be tapped from the sea bed. The earth is being depleted of those rare elements essential for constant breakthrough in smart technology. Rare elements are needed for advanced semi-conductors necessary for cutting-edge AI. Our yardstick cannot remain back office, that is, our BPO. Let us rearrange the furniture, move to the front office with new skills and up skill workforce, and bring in the smart boys and girls from Mother India as stated, Eastern Europe and Israel. And I believe in brain gain. First let us give additional incentive to attract our national working overseas willing to share the competence and knowhow.

Let me end up by referring to Section 7, Composition of the Board. The Minister has given reassurances that it is not going to be Government-centric although when we look at the number of officers to be appointed by Minister, of course. There is a relatively high number of Government officials but I hope that they will not pay lip service to the Minister; that there will

be good synergistic action and reaction because at the end of the day, we have to deliver. Minister means well and I hope that it's not going to be a one-way traffic, good governance is relevant and it's not going to be a false dawn. I expect that among the five Members I have said, there will be one specialist in data protection and security. I pray that the Board is not a lapdog of the regime and I hope that it will be above Board. I wish the Agency well and I hope it will deliver on promises made.

Thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Koonjoo-Shah!

(8.23 p.m.)

Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I will congratulate my hon. colleague later, but I will start a bit unconventionally with your permission Mr Speaker, Sir, by going over a few words from the World Economic Forum which was published quite recently, that goes on saying that globally, men are 21% more likely to have access to internet than women. In the world's least developed countries, this likelihood rises to 52%, women facing intersectional discrimination, living in communities with lower socio-economic status have even lower access to connectivity or any digital device and this leads to a string of tremendous consequences even sometimes vital ones.

Why am I referring to this Mr Speaker, Sir? Because this happens to be the very tragic story of a young 19-year-old, bright scholar of the New Delhi University - LSR College who could not afford to buy a laptop and came under tremendous stress during the pandemic as she could not attend her online classes. Eventually, she took her own life in November 2020, just before the exams.

The reason I have chosen to start my intervention with this article from the World Economic Forum Mr Speaker, Sir, is precisely to bring the focus on the opportune timing of this incredibly important piece of legislation and I, here congratulate my hon. Colleague, Darsanand Balgobin, the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation for his very eloquent introduction of the Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency Bill to this House and no doubt, the population agrees that each time a piece of legislation is brought to the House, under the

leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is brought for the betterment of our people and our country.

I have listened to the hon. member who spoke before me, hon. Boolell, who said that the Bill might not be perfect. It is not perfect but it sets the scene. Of course it is perfectible. It sets the scene for this historical ship in paradigm that we are witnessing of our economies which is shifting from the physical into the digital space Mr Speaker, Sir. And on a parallel note, I must say that it is extremely refreshing to see the hon. member of the Opposition who spoke before me physically present in the House, instead of outside the precinct of the House. It looks like you shared the secret with your colleagues from the Opposition by the way.

(Interruptions)

No, it's good to see you here, attempting *tant bien que mal* to live up to the duties that you are paid for. I mean, let's be honest, not many of us in this House can boast about bagging up two million rupees for 2 minutes' presence in this House. You see? Yes or No?

It's very nice to hear you. You start off by welcoming this Bill, hon. Dr. Boolell. Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank him for his plea in favour of this important Bill.

Anyway! Coming back to the Bill in question Mr Speaker, Sir. It's main goal, as said by the mover of the Bill, is to replace the 35-year-old National Computer Board Act with a new, comprehensive, whether perfectible piece of legislation which is here to boost the ICT industry and which is very much in line with Government's Digital Strategy which I heard hon. Dr. Boolell say, they have spent their five years' devising this strategy. Here we are catching up with lost time with the implementation of what you were supposedly devising.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very much agreed that we need to have a better adapted legal and policy framework. This is much warranted in order to address these new situations.

35 years later, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to be bringing these changes and after again listening to the member of the Opposition who spoke before me, it begs the question. Yes, he purported that they have been devising a strategy but what about the implementation? So, this is it. This is the time. This is proper timing where following the Bill that was successfully brought

by the same hon. colleague concerning cybercrime and cybersecurity. This is a natural course of action to the previous Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to gently remind hon. Dr. Boolell who quoted Rwanda and Kenya in his intervention, Mauritius happens to be hailed as being a leader in Africa, in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector. Mauritius, for his information and those who are not aware, ranked first in Africa in the Global Innovation Index of 2022. Mr Speaker, Sir, this happens neither by luck nor by chance. It is made possible through strategy adopted by Government. It is a result of consistent strategy of our government to precisely boost up this sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the strategy that we are talking about has been developed in October 2018. It incorporates short, medium, long terms goals based on five key themes which are – Infrastructure, Broadcasting; E-Government, Business Facilitation, Talent Management, Cybersecurity, Innovation and Emerging Technologies.

Mauritius has been engaged in setting the pace in adopting these emerging technologies and the globe, as we can see, is experiencing this change, this very distinct change in how all of us communicate, how we do business, how we engage in commerce and the use of electronic transaction as earlier on, very aptly, eloquently elaborated by the mover of the Bill.

The use of these electronic transactions is replacing the traditional methods in increasing numbers. Mr Speaker, Sir, even if it has taken more than 35 years to revamp the National Computer Board, somewhere we cannot really put the blame on the previous or the ancient regimes, taking into consideration the very gently, very kindly, the prehistoric members of the Opposition. Maybe they never understood the importance of embracing a digital world and to bring the changes that are required so that we can keep up with this galloping pace of *le monde numérique comme on l'appelle*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we will recall that the global COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has forced almost every aspect of our lives to shift to online modalities and in response, we have had to come up with new legal guidelines, new strategies, new best practices. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is a response to those difficulties posed by globalisation and the hasards it brings to the economy. The Government's goal is to make the ICT industry a significant economic component. The very economic pillar, which some will remember, at its very conception, was coined as a white

elephant and time, Mr Speaker, Sir, has proven this Doomsday Prophets. Time has proven them completely wrong.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the services provided by this Government have been modernised in so many different ways. One clear example, being our court systems, which benefitted from this digitalization. The Commercial Court was the first to implement the e-judiciary. Our Courts have used digitalization during the time of lockdown in an effort to maintain business continuity. I speak as the Minister in charge of child protection and women protection as well, whereby we delivered our protection orders for children and victims of domestic abuse during the lockdown period using digital platforms.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I wish to remind the House and the population that it is my colleague who introduced the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act 2021 to deal with related offences. So, once again the timing of this current Bill is opportune Mr Speaker, Sir. Having promoted secured access and a conducive environment with the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act of 2021, the present Bill, being debated today, will establish the Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency, which will have, amongst others, the primary responsibility of fostering innovation and skill development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will lay a bit more emphasis on empowering grassroot level through digital literacy. Some of the functions of the agency, among so many others, are to prepare and not just to prepare, also to deliver the National Upskilling Programme in ICT, Mr Speaker, Sir. To achieve this, my Ministry fully undertakes to work in close collaboration with the Ministry of IT so that we can reach the grassroot level and enhance our sensitization through the use of our Community Centres, our Social Welfare Centres and our Women Empowerment Centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very important that we address the National Upskilling Program in ICT from this gender perspective. Here, I recall the very justified theme retained by the United Nations for this year's International Women's Day, the theme was "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality."

Mr Speaker, Sir, through the setting up of the agency, our women and our girls will be leading the way for the development of transformational technologies, digital education and, at the same time, we will be educating our population on the significance of protecting the rights of

our children, our women and our girls within online environments and as well as learning how to deal with gender-based violence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while we have the need to equip our children with the requisite ICT skills to enhance their everyday lives, to change the way that they work, we should also bear in mind that to raise awareness about the real dangers of the digital sphere.

It is undeniable, unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, that so many people fall victims due to their lack of knowledge of the dangers I am speaking about. There are some malicious minds out there ready and lurking to exploit and violate the rights of our women. In fact, how many times have we not witnessed videos, intimate pictures, fake news, unfiltered comments, body shaming, ad hominem attacks being circulated by some, and, Mr Speaker, Sir, the ladies on this side of the House will testify having been subject to such vile attacks and ill practices themselves including myself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is not a Bill that anybody should look at as a medium to gain political mileage or brownie points. This Bill has, as objects, the intention to greatly contribute to narrow the digital divide, which is a very real aspect that should not be overlooked or diluted.

This Government, when it comes to our women, looks at return on investment as return on impact because when we talk about upskilling and skilling our women folk, this has ripple effects that extend way beyond the monetary, the pecuniary, the economic aspect. They stretch across communities. As women, we pay it forward in so many different ways, be it mentoring others, educating children, driving businesses. So, this return on investment is rather a return on impact and this is what leads this Government to bring such Bills to the House.

In order to bridge the foreseeable inequalities that will occur, no doubt, if we do not empower our citizens with the requisite skill - and for this to happen, I am going to invite my colleagues from the other side of the House and the population at large to look at this Bill through the gender lens that I am referring to so that when you are analysing the contents of this Bill, it will give you the opportunity through this gender lens to see - that this Bill comes with enormous potential to bolster our women, our young minds and eventually drive our nation forward.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, allow me to reiterate that this Government will never embark on a process that is to the detriment of its citizens. I hope that through my intervention, I have managed to allay some of the fears of hon. Dr. Boolell who spoke before me. This is not our philosophy; I have said that over and over again in this House, that this is not this Government's way of doing things. This Government has always been guided by one single philosophy, one core principle and this sentence remains of seminal importance, Mr Speaker, Sir, 'we work for the well-being of our citizens for the progress of one and all.'

This has been demonstrated time and again by this Government through the number of legislations that we have brought - new ones, repealed ones, amended ones to this House, that have been brought by the Prime Minister and his colleagues on this side of the House. This, Mr Speaker, Sir, is why I personally commend the very laudable initiative of my colleague, hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, and I unhesitatingly put on record my unwavering support for this essential and very much needed piece of legislation.

Long live the Republic of Mauritius. I thank you very much for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 25 April 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 8.40 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 25 April 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

POLICE OFFICERS – SUICIDE CASES – INQUIRY

(No. B/219) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether in regard to recent cases of suicide of Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof since January 2021 to February 2023, indicating in each case the –

- (a) grade of the officer and department where the latter was posted, and (b) outcome of the inquiry initiated thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

LA TOUR KOENIG – COPPER INGOTS - SEIZURE

(No. B/220) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the 20 tons or more of copper ingots seized on a scrap yard at La Tour Koenig on Monday 10 April 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the name of the company allegedly involved therein, and
- (b) if the sources thereof have been identified.

(Withdrawn)

MUNICIPAL TAX – HOUSEHOLDS – EXEMPTION

(No. B/249) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the municipal tax, he will state the number of households concerned with the exemption of the payment thereof, since the abolition thereof.

(Withdrawn)

FISHERS' CARDS – REGISTRATION – NUMBER OF APPLICATION

(No. B/250) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the registration of fishers following the open days organised by his Ministry in March 2023 to obtain fishers' cards, he will state the number of applications received, indicating when same will be granted.

(Vide PQ B/236)

DUBREUIL-MELROSE LINK ROAD – CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

(No. B/251) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of the Dubreuil-Melrose Link Road, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Moka, information as to where matter stands.

(Withdrawn)

HOUSING UNITS' CONSTRUCTION – NSLD – PRIVATE LAND PURCHASE

(No. B/252) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the project for the initial construction of 12,000 housing units, now revised to 8000, by the New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain details thereof and table information on all the private plots of land purchased therefor.

(Withdrawn)

STATE LAND – LEASES – DILIGENCE EXERCISES

(No. B/253) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to State land, he will give the list of the beneficiaries of leases of plots thereof since December 2014 to date, including renewal of leases thereof, indicating if due diligence exercises are carried out prior to the granting of the leases, particularly, regarding the criminal records of the applicants.

(Withdrawn)

LOCAL AUTHORITIES – EXISTING VACANCIES

(No. B/254) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the local authorities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of existing vacancies thereat in each case as at to date indicating when same will be filled.

(Withdrawn)

AUTISM PATIENTS – REPORTED CASES

(No. B/255) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to patients suffering from autism, he will state the reported number thereof as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

WATER DISTRIBUTION – QUALITY & SAFETY

(No. B/256) Mrs K. Foo Kune Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water distributed islandwide, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to how the quality and safety thereof is ensured, and
- (b) state the risks to public health of wrongly calibrated chlorine dosage thereof, if any.

(Withdrawn)

SCHOOLS – ONE-OFF GRANT OF RS50,000 SCHEME

(No. B/257) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre D'or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the One-off Grant of Rs50,000 Scheme to support 125 private pre-primary schools in disadvantaged regions, as announced in the Budget Speech 2022-2023, she will state the number of schools having benefitted thereunder.

(Withdrawn)

ST BRANDON – PERMANENT LEASE/GRANT – RAPHAËL FISHING LTD.

(No. B/258) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Permanent Lease/Grant held by Raphaël Fishing Ltd. on St Brandon Island, he will state if Government has initiated legal procedures against the said company, as envisaged, and if so, indicate where matters stand and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

STATE LANDS – AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES – BENEFICIARIES' LIST

(No. B/259) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to State lands for agricultural purposes, he will table the list of the beneficiaries of plots thereof over the past three years, indicating the extent and location thereof in each case.

(Withdrawn)

LA MARIE/HENRIETTA – STATE LANDS – CULTIVATION PURPOSE

(No. B/260) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to State land for agricultural purposes, he will state if plots thereof are available in the region of La Marie and Henrietta for vegetables and other crops cultivation.

(Withdrawn)

CWA – BURSTING OF PIPES – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/261) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water pipes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the measures

being undertaken to reduce the bursting thereof and the time taken for the carrying out of remedial measures in case thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CEB – STAFF & MANUAL WORKERS PENSION FUND – QUANTUM

(No. B/263) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board Staff Fund and the Central Electricity Board Manual Workers Pension Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the respective quantum of the deficit thereof as at 30 June 2022.

(Withdrawn)

SOLFERINO NO. 3, VACOAS – DRAIN PROJECT DETAILS

(No. B/265) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction and rehabilitation of drains along the road at Solferino No. 3, Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas Phoenix, information as to the

- (a) date of award of the contract;
- (b) name of the contractor, and
- (c) total project value thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CUREPIPE FORUM – RENOVATION

(No. B/267) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Forum, in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from

the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to if the renovation of the temporary structure thereof is being envisaged and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PROMOTION – GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

(No. B/269) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to Artificial Intelligence (AI), he will state Government strategy for the promotion, development and adoption thereof in Mauritius, indicating how his Ministry is ensuring that AI systems are developed and used in an ethical and responsible manner.

(Withdrawn)

TEENAGE PREGNANCY – SCHOOL DROP-OUTS - MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE

(No.B/270) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to teenage pregnancy, she will state the number of reported cases thereof for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively, indicating the –

- (a) number of the teenagers having dropped out of school and the support given thereto, if any, to continue their schooling during and post pregnancy, and
- (b) maternal mortality rate thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CEB (GREEN ENERGY) CO. LTD. – BOARD COMPOSITION & REMUNERATION

(No. B/272) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CEB (Green Energy) Co.

Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the present composition of the board thereof, indicating the monthly remuneration payable to members of the board thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MAHEBOURG, YOUTH CENTRE – PROPOSED REVAMPING

(No.B/273) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the proposed revamping of the Mahebourg Youth Centre, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY MAURITIUS

(No. B/275) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Liverpool Football Club International Academy Mauritius, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if trainees are required to sign a training contract therewith prior to admission and, if so –
 - (i) table copy of a specimen thereof;
 - (ii) indicate the number of contracts signed, and
- (b) state if his Ministry has initiated an inquiry into potential breaches of FIFA Regulation in relation to minor trainees, as indicated in FIFA's letter dated 08 March 2023.

(Withdrawn)

NEW FLACQ TEACHING HOSPITAL – FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT

(No. B/276) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the New Flacq Teaching Hospital, he will state where matters stand as to the procurement of equipment and furniture and of a CT-Scan therefor.

*(Withdrawn)***METRO LINE – EXTENSION – NORTHERN REGION**

(No.B/277) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre D'or) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the proposed extension of the Metro line to the North, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Limited, information as to where matters stand.

*(Withdrawn)***VACOAS – MODERN URBAN TERMINAL – DEVELOPMENT & OPERATION**

(No. B/279) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the contract awarded to the Joint-Venture Laxmanbhai & Co. (Mauritius) Ltd. and Manser Saxon Contracting Ltd. for the development and operation of a Modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) expected start and completion dates thereof, and
- (b) date of approval of the detailed design thereof submitted by the Joint-Venture.

*(Withdrawn)***STC – PRICE STABILIZATION ACCOUNT – FUNDS**

(No. B/280) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the Price Stabilization Account, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to –

- (a) the quantum of funds available therein –
 - (i) in September 2022, and

- (ii) presently available;
- (b) the reasons for the promulgation of the Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Petroleum Products) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 on the date same was promulgated, and
- (c) table copy of all cash flows therefrom since September 2022.

(Withdrawn)

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CULTURE – INCENTIVES FOR PROMOTION

(No. B/281) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the promotion of the Information Technology culture in the Republic of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Computer Board, information as to the incentives taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

PUBLIC HOSPITALS – CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES – HEART SURGERIES

(No. B/283) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public hospitals, he will state the number of –

- (a) patients presently being treated for cardiovascular diseases, and
- (b) heart surgeries carried out thereat over the past five years.

(Withdrawn)

MAHASHIVRATRI FESTIVAL – INJURED PILGRIMS – SOCIAL AID

(No. B/284) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the pilgrims who were electrocuted during the incident which occurred in the course of the pilgrimage to the

Ganga Talao for the Mahashivratri festival, she will state if consideration will be given for the granting of social aid thereto and to the families thereof.

Reply: I am informed that my Ministry has received thirteen applications for Social Aid/Invalid's Basic Pension (BIP), from the pilgrims who were injured in the incident at Mare Longue during the Mahashivratri festival on Thursday 16 February 2023.

Financial assistance has been provided to nine victims and as at date, a total sum of Rs260,603 has been paid to them. The remaining four applicants have already been medically assessed and arrangement is being made to effect payment accordingly.

NSLD LTD. - 12,000 HOUSING UNITS – CONTRACTS TERMINATION

(No. B/285) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the project for the initial construction of 12,000 housing units, by the New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the contracts with the consultants have been terminated and, if so, indicate the terms thereof and the quantum of compensation paid, if any.

(Withdrawn)

“PRIME À L'EMPLOI” SCHEME – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/286) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the “*Prime à L'Emploi*” Scheme, he will state the number of young persons and women, respectively, having benefitted thereunder since the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

PRIMARY & SECONDARY STUDENTS – VIOLENCE & BULLYING – REPORTED CASES

(No. B/287) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to violence and bullying of primary and secondary students inside and outside school premises, she will state the number of reported cases thereof since January 2015 to date.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIAN CLUBS – INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS – FINANCING

(No. B/288) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the participation of Mauritian clubs in African and other international competitions, he will state the policy of his Ministry pertaining to the financing thereof.

(Withdrawn)

TOURISM SECTOR – GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS – NATIONAL STRATEGY AND ROADMAP

(No. B/289) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the tourism sector, he will state –

- (a) over the past two years, the level of Greenhouse Gas emissions generated, quantity of waste produced and quantity of water and electricity consumed, respectively, and
- (b) if his Ministry proposes to set up a National Strategy and Roadmap for the sustainability thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MAHEBOURG MUSEUM – NEW BUS SHELTER & LAY-BY – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/290) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the construction of a new bus shelter and lay-by near the Mahebourg Museum, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, information as to the –

- (a) scope of works;
- (b) cost, and
- (c) work progress thereof.

(Withdrawn)

RONAPREVE – DOSES – SUPPLIER

(No. B/291) Dr F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Ronapreve, he will

state the name of the supplier thereof in December 2021 to his Ministry, indicating the number of doses thereof delivered, quantum of payment effected and number of doses thereof used as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

**FATF GREY LIST – MAURITIUS JURISDICTION – ANTI-MONEY
LAUNDERING & COUNTER-TERRORISM FINANCING MATTERS**

(No. B/294) Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the Mauritius jurisdiction exiting the FATF Grey list, he will state the actions being taken to sustain the level of compliance with regard to Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing matters.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL GENDER POLICY 2022-2030 – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

(No. B/295) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the National Gender Policy 2022-2030, she will state the recommendations contained therein and the implementation plan thereof.

(Withdrawn)