



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 29 MARCH 2022

CONTENTS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

MOTIONS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

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	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. Mohammad 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
Hansard Editor	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
Parliamentary Librarian and Information Officer	Jeewoonarain, Ms Prittydevi
Serjeant-at-Arms	Bundhoo, Mr Anirood

MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 01 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 29 March 2022

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OBITUARY

MR KARL AUGUSTE OFFMANN, GCSK

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we learnt of the demise of former President Karl Auguste Offmann who was also an hon. Member of this House. We were also saddened to learn of the loss of three former Members of Parliament since this Assembly last met in December 2021-

- (i) Mr Jayeshwur Raj Dayal on 19 December 2021 at the age of 72;
- (ii) Mr Dinesh Mundil on 15 January 2022 at the age of 69, and
- (iii) Mr Ramnath Jeetah on 28 February 2022 at the age of 92.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with profound sadness that I address the House to pay tribute to late Mr Karl Auguste Offmann, GCSK, former President of the Republic and former Member of Parliament who passed away on 12 March 2022 at the age of 81.

Mr Karl Offmann, as he was commonly known, was born on 25 November 1940, in Port Louis, in a poor family of seven children. For his primary education, he attended the Girls Government School and the Champ de Lort Government School in Port Louis.

Since his family could not afford to pay for his secondary education, he chose to compete for a scholarship in order to pursue his studies further.

He won the Government-awarded mechanical Engineering Apprenticeship Scholarship in 1956 and secured a seat at the prestigious Royal College School, then known as 'La School', and the Technical College of Floréal.

To acquire practical knowledge and experience, he was trained at the then Government Railway Department, upon the completion of which, in 1963, he was awarded a Certificate in Mechanical Engineering, issued by the Government of Mauritius.

Mr Offmann also held a Diploma in Social and Political Science from the Claver House in London.

Mr Offmann took up employment at the daily "*l'Express*" Newspaper as technician in the composition department. In 1979, he left "*La Sentinelle*" as Plant and Personnel Manager and joined "*L'Imprimerie Père Laval*" as Director until 1983. He thereafter took up employment at the daily "*Le Socialiste*", as Director, a position he held until 1986.

Mr Offmann always had a keen interest in social and voluntary work. At the age of 17, he joined the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* and, as such, he had been a coordinator of activities within the Indian Ocean Islands from 1966 to 1969.

He left the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* in 1969. Thereafter, Mr Offmann was entrusted the presidency of the Commission of Lay Apostolate by the then Bishop of Port Louis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the political front, Mr Offmann started his career in 1976 and stood as candidate for several General Elections.

In December 1976 itself, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West under the banner of the *Union Démocratique Mauricienne* but was not returned.

In June 1982, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, under the banner of the MMM/PSM alliance, and was returned as Third Member.

On 20 March 1983, Mr Offmann was appointed as Minister of Economic Planning and Development.

In August 1983, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal, under the banner of the MSM/Labour Party alliance, and was returned as First Member.

On 17 April 1984, Mr Offmann was assigned the ministerial portfolio for Local Government and Cooperatives.

From January 1986 to August 1987, Mr Offmann held the ministerial portfolio of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions. He was also assigned the portfolio of Local Government from 24 July to 08 August 1986.

In August 1987, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal under the banner of the MSM-Mauritius Labour Party alliance but was not returned. He was, however, allocated an additional seat under the Best Loser System.

From November 1988 to August 1991, Mr Offmann was the Chief Government Whip.

In September 1991, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal under the banner of the MSM/MMM alliance and was returned as Third Member.

From October 1991 to July 1994, he held the ministerial portfolio of Social Security and National Solidarity.

From September 1994 to December 1995, he held the ministerial portfolio of Labour and Industrial Relations.

In 1995, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal, under the banner of the MSM-RMM alliance but was not returned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Offmann was one of the founding members of the MSM party, and had been the Secretary General thereof from 1987 to 1991.

Thereafter, in 1996, Mr Offmann became President of the MSM party, a position he held until 2002 when he retired from active politics.

Mr Offmann had been a guide and confidant for me and many other Members of the MSM during all the time he served the party from 1983 to 2002.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 25 February 2002, Mr Offmann was elected President of the Republic of Mauritius, and he was elevated to the rank of Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean on 08 March 2002. He served the country in this high office until 01 October 2003.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Offmann had been the recipient of many other titles and honours.

- On 25 August 2002, the title of Honorary Freeman of the City of Port Louis was conferred upon him;
- on 13 September 2002, the title of Honorary Freeman of the City of Maputo was conferred upon him;
- on 21 May 2003, the title of Honorary Freeman for the Town of Tampon Reunion Island – Republic of France was conferred upon him;
- on 26 June 2003, he attended the commemoration of the 43rd Independence Anniversary Day of Madagascar, and was conferred the *Grand-Croix de Première Classe de l'Ordre National de Madagascar*;
- in 2004, he became the Lloyd G. Balfour African President-in-Residence and continued to promote Mauritius and Africa on the international front, and
- in 2006, he became a founder member of the Forum for Former African Heads of State and Government, Africa Forum.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Offmann was imbued with the qualities of a staunch patriot, a fighter, an honest and disciplined person and politician who demonstrated a high sense of responsibility in all the positions in which he served the country and his fellow citizens.

From very humble beginnings, he rose to become Head of the State and his destiny was such that his journey ended on the National Day. That is testimony of his greatness.

With the demise of Mr Karl Offmann, the country has lost a loyal and trustworthy servant, a man who loved his motherland and who contributed in his own way to craft a better future for our country. His achievements and memories will be cherished forever. He will remain a source of inspiration for all those who persevere against all odds and believe in inclusive development and shared prosperity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to kindly direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the members of the bereaved family of late Mr Karl Auguste Offmann, particularly to his son Mr Gilles Bernard.

Thank you.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I fully associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Karl Offmann, GCSK, former President of the Republic, and a former Member of Parliament. And on behalf of the Opposition, may I request the Clerk to convey our condolences to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Karl Auguste Offmann, GCSK, former President of the Republic and former Member of Parliament by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

MR JAYESHWUR RAJ DAYAL, CSK, PDSM, QPM

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Jayeshwur Raj Dayal, CSK, PDSM, QPM, was born on 07 January 1949 in Carreau Laliane.

After his studies, he joined the then Mauritius Police Department as Police Constable in 1971.

In 1972, he became Cadet Inspector and was one of the first Mauritians to be commissioned as a Military Officer in the United Kingdom at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst.

In 1976, he was trained as Helicopter Pilot in France.

In 1977, he took command of the Helicopter Department as Pilot-in-Command in Mauritius.

In 1985, Mr Dayal completed his postgraduate military studies at the Defence Services Staff College of Camberley in the United Kingdom.

On 10 July 1986, he assumed office as Commanding Officer of the Special Mobile Force.

In 1991, the Queen Police Medal, the highest Police distinction in the Commonwealth, was conferred upon him.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Dayal attended high level trainings in various institutions such as FBI Washington and New Orleans, KGB Moscow, Scotland Yard UK, Interpol, and Military and Police Institutions in India, Italy, Switzerland, France, UK, and Singapore.

On 31 August 1994, Mr Dayal was appointed Commissioner of Police.

On 12 March 1995, he was elevated to the rank of Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean for outstanding contribution to the Mauritius Police Force.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after leaving the Mauritius Police Force in 2000, Mr Dayal started his political career, and founded the *Mouvement Démocratique National Raj Dayal*.

In September 2000, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No.10, Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East under the banner of his party, but was not returned.

In December 2003, he ran for the By-Election in Constituency No.7, Piton and Rivière du Rempart under the banner of his party but was not returned.

In July 2005 and May 2010, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No.10, Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, under the banner of his party, but was not returned.

In December 2014, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No. 9, Flacq and Bon Accueil, under the banner of *L'Alliance Lepep* and was elected as First Member.

On 15 December 2014, he was appointed Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management, a position which he held until 23 March 2016.

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

Thank you.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I again fully associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Jayeshwur Raj Dayal, former Member of Parliament, former Commissioner of Police and also, therefore, on behalf of the whole Opposition, request the Clerk to convey our condolences to the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Jayeshwur Raj Dayal, CSK, PDSM, QPM, former Member of Parliament by the hon. Prime Minister and hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

MR DINESH MUNDIL

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Dinesh Mundil was born on 29 October 1952 in Port Louis.

In 1969, Mr Mundil joined the office of his father, Mr Hurry Mundil, a Notary Public, as a Notary's Clerk.

In 1977, he contested the Municipal Council Elections as an MMM candidate, and was elected Municipal Councillor for Port Louis.

Mr Mundil successfully contested the Municipal Council Elections for Port Louis in 1982, 1985, 1988 and 1991.

From 23 December 1986 to 30 October 1988, he served the Capital as Deputy Lord Mayor and became Lord Mayor on 28 November 1989, a position which he held until 22 November 1990.

In August 1983, Mr Mundil ran for the General Elections in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue under the banner of the MMM, and was elected as Third Member.

In August 1987, he stood as candidate in the General Elections in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, under the banner of *L'Union MMM/MTD/FTS* but was not returned.

From 1991 to 1995, Mr Mundil held the post of Vice-Chairperson of the National Remuneration Board.

In 2000, he was appointed Adviser to the Minister of Environment, a position he held till 2005.

Mr Mundil is also remembered for his contribution in the social and cultural fields.

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

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Dinesh Mundil, former Member of Parliament and on behalf of the Opposition, I again request the Clerk to convey our condolences to the bereaved family.

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

MR RAMNATH JEETAH, GOSK

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Ramnath Jeetah, GOSK, was born on 13 June 1930 in Riche Mare.

In 1951, he started his teaching career at the Bhujoharry College.

Having personally experienced difficulties to access education since most secondary schools were located in towns in those days, Mr Jeetah was determined to provide educational opportunities to the youths of the Flacq region.

In 1956, he founded the Eastern College, later renamed as the Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal College in Central Flacq.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Jeetah had a keen interest in social work and politics.

In 1958, he joined the Independent Forward Bloc and in 1963, ran for the General Elections in Constituency No.19, Grand River South East, but was not elected.

From 1964 to 1967, he served the Village Council of Central Flacq as President. He had also played a significant role in the agricultural sector.

In the 1960s, Mr Jeetah campaigned for the rights of the small planters which led to the creation of the Mauritius Small Planters' Association. In 1963, he became the President of the Association, a position he held till 1976.

Mr Jeetah was fully engaged in socio-cultural activities. He has also been an active member of the Mauritius Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation.

In August 1967, Mr Jeetah ran for the 1967 General Elections in Constituency No. 9, Flacq and Bon Accueil, under the banner of the Independence Party, and was elected as First Member.

Mr Jeetah held the ministerial portfolio of Information and Broadcasting from 1967 to 1969. Thereafter, following a split in the Government coalition, he joined the ranks of the Opposition.

From April 1975 to October 1976, Mr Jeetah served as Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee.

In December 1976, he ran for the 1976 General Elections in Constituency No. 9, Flacq and Bon Accueil, under the banner of the Independent Forward Bloc, but was not elected.

Mr Jeetah continued to manage the Eastern College and devoted himself to educational activities. In 1980, he joined a Distance Learning Programme from Punjab University and was later awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree.

From 1982 to 1986, he served as President of the Administrative Council of the D.A.V. College in Port Louis, while also being in charge of the Eastern College.

On 12 March 2011, Mr Jeetah was elevated to the rank of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean for his long and distinguished service in the fields of education and politics.

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

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I fully associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Ramnath Jeetah, former Member of Parliament, and again on behalf of the Opposition, may I request the Clerk to convey our condolences to the bereaved family.

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

I have an announcement.

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS – DRAWING OF LOTS

Hon. Members, you will recall that on 08 December 2020 and 18 May 2021, respectively, I informed the House that my attention had been drawn to the fact that some hon. Members had expressed concerns in regard the manner in which notices of Parliamentary Questions are being received by the Clerk of the National Assembly and the way same are being treated prior to finding the order in which they appear on the Notice of Questions.

I also drew the attention of the House to the fact that the procedure of giving notice of Parliamentary Questions stands governed by Standing Order 24 and that the internal arrangement at the Clerk's Office is purely an administrative matter. In effect, the order in which Parliamentary Questions have been appearing on the Notice of Questions were determined by the order in which same were being received, in other words, on a first come first serve basis.

In the light of the aforementioned, I invited the Whips of both sides of the House to thrash out the issues with all the stakeholders and submit concrete suggestions to review the process.

I have to inform the House that I received a written Agreement dated 18 March 2022, co-signed by the hon. Chief Government Whip and the hon. Whip of the Opposition, to the effect that Parliamentary Questions of which notices are given for a particular Tuesday

Sitting be the object of a drawing of lot for the purpose of determining the order in which same would appear on the Notice of Questions and that same would be conducted in the Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly, in the presence of the hon. Government Chief Whip or any Government representative MP and the hon. Whip of the Opposition or any hon. Opposition representative MP.

Copy of the said agreement is hereby being tabled.

I agreed to the implementation of the said agreement, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 77, which reads as follows –

“The Speaker shall have power to regulate the conduct of business in the Assembly in all matters not provided for in these Orders.”

And the Notice of Questions for today’s Sitting contains Parliamentary Questions set in the order determined by the drawing of lot conducted on Wednesday last.

Moreover, should hon. Members have further queries on the matter, they are kindly invited to see me privately in my office.

I thank you for your attention.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Office of the President

- (a) The Civil Establishment Order 2022. (Government Notice No. 39 of 2022)
- (b) The Civil Establishment (Rodrigues Regional Assembly) Order 2022 (Government Notice No. 56 of 2022)

B. Office of the Speaker

- (a) The Second Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the First Session of the Seventh National Assembly
- (b) The Annual Report and Audited Accounts of the Independent Commission against Corruption for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (c) Declaration of Interest by the Honourable Fourth Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West (Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie) in relation to PQ B/4. (In Original)

C. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills (In Original):
 - (i) The National Flag, Arms of Mauritius, National Anthem and Other National Symbols of Mauritius Bill (No. I of 2022);
 - (ii) The Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Bill (No. II of 2022);
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Chagossian Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2019. (In Original)
- (c) The Freeport (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 316 of 2021)
- (d) The Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Shipment of Motor Vehicles from Mauritius to Rodrigues) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice Rodrigues Regional

Assembly
(No. 4 of 2021)

- (e) The Rodrigues Regional Assembly Elections (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No.1 of 2022)
- (f) The Rodrigues Regional Assembly Elections (Polling Stations) Order 2022. (Government Notice No. 3 of 2022)
- (g) The Freeport (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 14 of 2022)
- (h) The Port (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 28 of 2022)
- (i) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for the year ended 30 June 2020. (In Original)
- (j) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for the year ended 30 June 2019.
- (k) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Information & Communication Technologies Authority.
- (l) Reprint of regulation 3 of the Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 6) Regulations 2021, published as Government Notice No. 35 of 2022, by the direction of the Prime Minister for the purpose set out in section 3(a) of the Reprint of Laws Act. (Reprint No. 1 of 2022)

**D. Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning
Ministry of Tourism**

The Landlord and Tenant (Extension of Time) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 328 of 2021)

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

- (a) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Mauritius Qualifications Authority.
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority for the period ended 30 June 2017. (In Original)
- (c) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of Mauritius Examination Syndicate.
- (d) The Annual Report of the University of Technology, Mauritius for the period 01 January 2016 to 30 June 2017.

F. Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Statutory Bodies Family Protection Fund for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (b) The Local Government (Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 307 of 2021)
- (c) The District Council of Grand Port (Naming of public places) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 317 of 2021)

G. Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade

- (a) The Road Traffic (COVID-19 Sanitary Measures) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 303 of 2021)
- (b) The Motorways and Main Roads (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 2 of 2022)
- (c) The Industrial Property Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 36 of 2022)
- (d) The Road Traffic (Control of Vehicle Emissions) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 41 of 2022)
- (e) The Motorways and Main Roads (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 49 of 2022)
- (f) The Road Traffic (Speed) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 55 of 2022)
- (g) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Independent Police Complaints Commission for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (h) The Annual Report and Final Account of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund for the Financial Year ended July 2019 – June 2020. (In Original)

H. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Government for the Financial year 2020-21.
- (b) The Certificate of the Director of Audit and the Audited Annual Statements of Government for Financial Year 2020-21.
- (c) The Gambling Regulatory Authority Appeal Committee (Decisions of Administrators and Racing Stewards) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 306 of 2021)

- (d) The Customs (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 4 of 2022)
- (e) The Value Added Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 5 of 2022)
- (f) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 7) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 13 of 2022)
- (g) The Freeport (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 14 of 2022)
- (h) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 15 of 2022)
- (i) The Statutory Bodies Pension Funds (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 24 of 2022)
- (j) The Statutory Bodies Pension Funds (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 25 of 2022)
- (k) The Export Enterprises (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 33 of 2022)
- (l) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 6) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 35 of 2022)
- (m) The Stock Exchange (Brokerage) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 42 of 2022)
- (n) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 54 of 2022)
- (o) The Annual Report 2020-2021 of the Central Procurement Board.
- (p) The Business Registration (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 58 of 2022)
- (q) Virement Warrant - Quarter 2 (October – December 2021) Nos. 04 and 24. (In Original)
- (r) Virement (Contingencies) Warrant - Quarter 2 (October - December 2021): Nos. 3 to 7. (In Original)
- (s) Virement Certificates - Quarter 2 (October – December 2021): Vote/Sub-Head (Certificates Nos.): 1-1(1-2), 1-3(1-2), 1-5(1), 1-6(2-3), 1-9(1), 1-10(1), 1-12(1), 1-15(2-5), 1-18(1), 2-101(4), 2-102(3), 2-103(2), 2-106(2-3), 2-107(1), 3-1(2), 3-3(1-2), 5-1(2), 5-4(4-7), 6-103(1), 6-3(1-2), 7-1(1,3), 8-1(7), 8-103(4-5), 10-102(1), 10-103(1-3), 11-2(1-2), 12-1(1), 13-4(1), 14-1(1-4), 15-2(1-3), 16-1(2-5), 16-103(2-4, 4A), 17-2(1,3), 18-1(12), 18-102(3,11), 18-103(10, 14), 20-1(1), 21-1(1), 22-1(1-2), 23-1(1-4), 24-1(2). (In Original)

I. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

- (a) The Central Water Authority (Water Supply for Domestic Purposes) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 20 of 2022)
- (b) The Central Water Authority (Irrigation) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 21 of 2022)
- (c) The Central Water Authority (Water Supply for Non-Domestic Purposes) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 22 of 2022)
- (d) The Ground Water (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 23 of 2022)

J. Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity

- (a) The Social Integration and Empowerment (Free Examination Fees Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 12 of 2022)
- (b) The Pensions (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 26 of 2022)
- (c) The Pensions (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 27 of 2022)
- (d) The National Savings Fund (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 43 of 2022)
- (e) The National Savings Fund (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 44 of 2022)
- (f) The National Savings Fund (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 45 of 2022)
- (g) The National Savings Fund (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 46 of 2022)
- (h) The National Savings Fund (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 47 of 2022)
- (i) The National Savings Fund (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 48 of 2022)
- (j) The Annual Reports of the Senior Citizens Council for the: (i) period 01 January 2016 to 30 June 2017;
(ii) period 01 July 2017 to 30 June 2018; and(iii) financial years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.
- (k) The Annual Report and Audited Accounts 2015 of the Senior Citizens Council.

K. Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives

- (a) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Fashion and Design Institute.
- (b) The Annual Report of the National Co-operative College for the Financial Year 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

L. Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Environment Fund for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (b) The Environment Protection (Control of Single Use Plastic Products) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 309 of 2021)
- (c) The Annual Reports of the Beach Authority for the periods:(i) January to December 2014 (ii) January to December 2015(iii) January 2016 to June 2017.

M. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

- (a) The Annual Report 2020/2021 of the Financial Services Commission
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements to the Recovered Assets Fund Committee for the year ended June 2018.

**N. Attorney General
Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security**

- (a) The Annual Report 2020 of the Sugar Investment Trust.
- (b) The Revision of Laws (Revised Subsidiary Legislation of Mauritius) (Volumes 1 to 9) (Supplement – Issue 6) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 308 of 2021)
- (c) The Reports of the Director of Audit and Financial Statements of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden Trust for the: (i) periods 05 June 1999 to 30 June 2000, (ii) years ended 30 June 2001 to 30 June 2009 (iii)18-month period ending 31 December 2010 and (iv) years ended 31 December 2011 to 2014.
- (d) The *Institutions Agréées* (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 324 of 2021)
- (e) The Annual Report of the Agricultural Marketing Board for the period 01 July 2019 – 30 June 2020.
- (f) The Annual Report 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 of the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute.

O. Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development

- (a) The Construction Industry Development Board (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 6 of 2022)
- (b) The Construction Industry Development Board (Conversion of Grade of Contractors) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 7 of 2022)
- (c) The Construction Industry Development Board (Registration of Consultants, Contractors, Service Providers and Suppliers) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 8 of 2022)
- (d) The Construction Industry Development Board (Appeal Fee) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 9 of 2022)
- (e) The Construction Industry Development Board (Compliance Notice and Penalty Fees) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 10 of 2022)
- (f) The Land Drainage Authority (Enforcement Notice) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 59 of 2022)

P. Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation

- (a) The Information and Communication Technologies (Registration of SIM) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 326 of 2021)
- (b) The Annual Report 2018 of the National Computer Board.

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

- (a) The Workers' Rights (Overtime in Connection with Covid-19 Period) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 310 of 2021)
- (b) The Workers' Rights (Prescribed Period) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 311 of 2021)
- (c) The Workers' Rights (Shift Work) (Prescribed Period) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 312 of 2021)
- (d) The Workers' Rights (Registration of Employers) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 313 of 2021)
- (e) The Workers' Rights (Atypical Work) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 314 of 2021)
- (f) The Consumer Protection (Control of Retail Selling Price of Imported Live Goat and Sheep) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 318 of 2021)

- (g) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 319 of 2021)
- (h) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 34) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 320 of 2021)
- (i) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 35) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 321 of 2021)
- (j) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 36) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 322 of 2021)
- (k) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 37) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 323 of 2021)

- (l) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 327 of 2021)
- (m) The Workers' Rights (Additional Remuneration) (2022) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 16 of 2022)
- (n) The Workers' Rights (Payment of Special Allowance 2022) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 19 of 2022)
- (o) The National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 32 of 2022)
- (p) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 50 of 2022)
- (q) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 51 of 2022)
- (r) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 52 of 2022)
- (s) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 53 of 2022)
- (t) The Annual Reports of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) for the periods: (i) 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019; and (ii) 01 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.
- (u) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the State Trading Corporation.
- (v) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 57 of 2022)

- (w) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 61 of 2022)

R. Ministry of Health and Wellness

- (a) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 304 of 2021)
- (b) The Medical Council (Additional Qualifications) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 305 of 2021)
- (c) The Pharmacy Council (Code of Practice) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 325 of 2021)
- (d) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 5) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 11 of 2022)
- (e) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 34 of 2022)
- (f) The Consolidated Covid-19 (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 37 of 2022)
- (g) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 38 of 2022)
- (h) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 40 of 2022)
- (i) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 60 of 2022)
- (j) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 62 of 2022)
- (k) The Consolidated COVID-19 (Amendment No. 7) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 63 of 2022)
- (l) The Dental Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 64 of 2022)

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

- (a) The Annual Report of the Seafarers' Welfare Fund for the period 01 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.
- (b) The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Conservation of Sharks) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 315 of 2021)

T. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Children's Council for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (b) The Children's (Prescribed Forms) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 17 of 2022)
- (c) The Child Sex Offender Register (Notice of Reporting Obligations) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 18 of 2022)
- (d) The Child Day Care Centres Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 29 of 2022)
- (e) The Child (Foster Care) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 30 of 2022)
- (f) The Residential Care Institutions for Children Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 31 of 2022)

U. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

- (a) The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the English-Speaking Union for the period 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Mauritius Council of Registered Librarians (MCRL).
- (c) The Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Conservatoire National de Musique François Mitterrand.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SPLASH N FUN LEISURE PARK – REFURBISHMENT & UPGRADING

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, whether, in regard to the project of the refurbishment and upgrading of the Splash N Fun leisure Park at the cost of over Rs380 m. as at to date, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Sugar Investment Trust Leisure, information as to –
 - (i) the expected completion date thereof, indicating the quantum of funds required for completion;
 - (ii) if any market research was effected prior to the start of the project and, if so, by whom, and
- (b) state if he will obtain and table copy of the report of the internal auditor following the Board of Directors’ meeting of 02 June 2021, and
- (c) state whether any matter has been referred to the Police for inquiry.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Sugar Investment Trust is established under Section 3 of the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act. The Trust is a body corporate and for the purposes of the Companies Act, the SIT is considered as a company.

The objects of the Trust are set out in Section 4 of the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act. It may, therefore, invest, *inter alia*, in, I quote –

“Leisure, entertainment and gaming.”

As such, the Board of the SIT, in October 1999, set up a subsidiary as a private company, namely SIT Leisure Ltd for the purpose of investment in the then Belle Mare Water Park constructed in the year 2000, and which opened on 04 December 2000. The Belle Mare Water Park was rebranded as the Splash N Fun Leisure Park in 2019.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the refurbishment, I am informed that it started in 2018 for an estimated cost of Rs350 m. Refurbishment was completed in 2019 except for one item, namely the *boomerango*, which has been completed up to 68% only, as the park was closed due to COVID-19 pandemic from 19 March 2020 to 15 October 2020 and from 15 March 2021 to 29 October 2021, and again from 12 November 2021 to 29 January 2022. I am

informed that the Board is contemplating to complete the *boomerango* subject to availability of funds.

With regard to the market research, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a business review was undertaken by firm PwC in 2016 for the SIT and its subsidiaries. I am further informed that for the water park project specifically, a business review was carried out by firm KPMG.

With regard, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the Internal Auditor's Report, I am informed that following a Board meeting of the SIT Leisure Ltd held on 02 June 2021, the Board members requested the internal auditor to prepare a comprehensive report on the Rs350 m. spent on the refurbishment of the park and the construction of the *boomerango*.

I am informed that the report of the internal auditor was submitted to the Board of SIT Leisure Ltd on 23 March 2022. This report is still being examined by the Board. I am further informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there is not only one Internal Auditor's Report but other connected Internal Auditor's Reports on the refurbishment. All the reports are also being examined by the Board. I wish to reiterate, Mr Speaker, Sir, that SIT Leisure Ltd is a private company, as I have explained earlier.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Police inquiry, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, as at date, no case has been reported to the Police for inquiry in connection with the refurbishment and upgrading of the leisure park.

Lastly, Mr Speaker Sir, with regard as to whether the report of the internal auditor should be tabled in the House, I wish to inform the House that the report has not yet been officially submitted to my Ministry. I am also informed that the Independent Commission against Corruption is investigating in this case and, therefore, by virtue of Section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, the said investigation and all information surrounding it is confidential.

Mr X. L. Duval: I thank the hon. Minister for his concise reply. May I ask him, concerning the famous *boomerango*, which has been completed about two thirds for a total cost of Rs76 m. - I am sure he well knows - and needs maybe Rs35 to Rs50 m. more to complete. It is currently an eyesore; I can submit photos. Is the hon. Minister honestly telling the House that he is not sure whether the Rs76 m. project to date is going to be completed or otherwise the money is just going to be thrown down the drain? Because he said that it is subject to available funds.

Mr Gobin: The situation, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the SIT Leisure Ltd, as I said, is a private company which is governed by its Board of Directors. I do not have ministerial responsibility on the way the company is being managed by the Board of Directors. However, in a spirit of transparency, what I can share with the House is that, as far as I am informed, the business plan was that revenue would have been generated from the operation of the park and that revenue would have funded the remaining part of the refurbishment project. As I said, the park had to be closed not on one but on three occasions. Let me give the dates again. On 19 March 2020, after the detection of the first COVID-19 cases and then the park was reopened in October 2020. However, it was again closed in March 2021 following a second lockdown, and it was reopened on 30 October 2021, and then in November 2021 with Omicron, it was closed again. The park has reopened. The figures, as far as I am informed, show that when the park is in operation, it generates sufficient revenue. Now, when will the park operate fully, 100%, I cannot say because the situation is very volatile.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the *boomerango* was meant to be completed in December 2019, three months before the first lockdown. The amount spent was Rs76 m., and has been stopped because of financial constraints. Is he seriously telling us that the future of a project having cost Rs76 m. is solely reliant on this SIT being able to generate some funds from what has been historically a loss-making concern, the water park; otherwise, the money will just go down the drain?

Mr Gobin: If the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker, Sir, is suggesting that there has been some mismanagement, then the Board of Directors will have to take its responsibility. As I have mentioned, it is the Board which asked for the Internal Auditor's Report. They are still examining not one, but I am informed there are other Internal Auditor's Reports as well. So, I will say let the Directors shoulder their responsibility and in case there has been mismanagement, the Board will know what to do.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to remind the hon. Minister that there is a Permanent Secretary and also a DPS of his Ministry who have historically sat on these Boards and, therefore, his Ministry should have all the historical information necessary for him to be apprised of what is happening, and I am surprised that his Ministry says they don't know what is happening.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have visited the park. The park as it stands, Mr Speaker, Sir, the *boomerango* is unfinished. The bumper car is out of order and needs Rs20 m. The 7D

cinema needs another Rs14 m. or Rs15 m. to be put in order. There is a VR games not working. The carousel is not working. The pirate boat, although recently installed, is totally rusted. Nearly Rs400 m., Mr Speaker, Sir, has been spent. You cannot see anything for that money that has been spent. I am just asking the hon. Minister whether the money has not been embezzled right, left and centre, and this is why I am asking for a Police inquiry, because there is nothing to show for nearly Rs400 m. of funds spent.

Mr Gobin: I know the hon. Leader of Opposition visited the park on Friday.

Mr X. L. Duval: On Sunday.

Mr Gobin: I thought it was on Friday, but never mind. I had the occasion of visiting the park in October 2020 but not recently. What the hon. Leader of the Opposition is asking is for a Police inquiry, but, as I have informed the House, there is an ongoing investigation by the ICAC; I do not want to say more. What I can also say is that this is probably precisely why the Board has asked the internal auditor to produce a report on the refurbishment. So, let the Board examine that Internal Auditor's Report and let also the ICAC pursue its investigation.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is at least Rs100 m. more required and I am going to ask the hon. Minister whether he is going to put that money into the Waterpark without this time having a proper market research. Because, as everybody knows, a business review is not a market research. And the Waterpark has historically been losing money; someone decides to put Rs400 m. or more in a project and does not do a market research to see whether there is any chance of it making money.

Mr Gobin: Let it be clear. We are not talking of public funds here. The SIT Leisure Ltd is a private company; the Waterpark Refurbishment Project has, if I am not mistaken, 79% or 80% of debt financing from bank and proprietary funds for 19% or 20%. We are not talking of public funds, let there be no confusion about that. Furthermore, Government is not injecting any public funds in the refurbishment project.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have historically been a PS of the Ministry of Agriculture and the DPS on that Board because there happens to be 55,000 *ti-planteurs* who are shareholders in that company following an Act of Parliament passed in this House. If the hon. Minister is going to wash his hands entirely of the issue, then why have the PS and the DPS of his Ministry historically sat on this Board? And I can give the names if you want.

Mr Gobin: Yes, you are correct to say that the *ti-planteurs* are represented on the Board of Directors. This is clearly spelt out in the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act, in section 5, which lists down the composition of the Board of Directors. And, in fact, when we look at section 5 of the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act, the Board of the SIT consists of nine Directors, Mr Speaker, Sir, out of whom only three are appointed by the Minister; the majority of Directors, that is, six are appointed by the Assembly of Delegates, that is, those who are elected by the *ti-planteurs* and who are delegated – and they are from various sectors. This Assembly of Delegates is composed of delegates from the four factory areas; six representatives from each of the four make 24 delegates. It is wrong to believe that Government has a majority on that Board of the SIT; it has never been the case. The majority of six of the nine Directors is composed of the representatives of the delegates who are elected; that should be very clear in the minds of one and all.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also clear that *de facto* the PS and the DPS of the Ministry, on that Board, it is the Ministry and the Ministers from then on, from the past who have controlled that Board.

I am going to ask the hon. Minister - I am surprised that he says that he has not read a copy of the Internal Audit Report. Will he inform himself, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, will he check and see whether this Internal Audit Report does not say that suppliers to SIT have been paid millions of rupees, in fact, Rs22.7 m., without any tender? Will he be surprised to say that amounts, large amounts, millions, have been paid to local contractors without Board approval? In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs3.5 m. were spent on accommodation, food, drinks, and entertainment - Rs3.5 m. - for foreign visitors! And, Mr Speaker, Sir, will he also check whether, in fact, the internal auditor does not say that Rs2.7 m. should have been paid to a contracting company, but was paid to a different individual, coming to a conclusion that, in fact, the SIT could have been accessory to a crime? All this is in the Internal Audit Report and he is saying he has not been given a copy of that report?

Mr Speaker: Put your question! You are making statements for too long time. Put your question, what you want from the hon. Minister.

Mr X. L. Duval: I asked!

Mr Speaker: Okay. Hon. Minister!

Mr Gobin: Let me come on two points. First of all, on the control of the Board, I reiterate what I have said earlier. The hon. Leader of the Opposition keeps saying that the PS

of the Ministry used to sit on the Board. Even if the PS used to sit on that Board, I say it again, the Minister appoints only three persons over a total of nine Directors on the Board of the SIT. That does not give the Minister or the Ministry a control over a Board of nine Directors. That should be clear.

Coming to the Internal Auditor's Report, let me say it again, it is the Board members who asked for the Internal Auditor's Report. They must, therefore, have seen that there is a need for such an Internal Auditor's Report, in the light of which the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentions a number of specific matters. I will not go into the specific matters because this report, together with the other Internal Auditor's reports, are being examined by the Board. The responsibility will rest with the Directors.

I have also disclosed that I am informed there is an ongoing ICAC investigation; I will leave it at that and I will say no more for reasons of confidentiality in section 81 of the PoCA.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister knows full well that it is only the new Board, appointed by himself when he took office, following the then Minister Seeruttun, when he took office, it is then that the new Board, seeing what has happened and the obvious embezzlement that has happened, asked the internal auditor to do the work. It is the new Board, Mr Speaker, Sir, not the old Board. And, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to again ask the hon. Minister to take cognizance of this Internal Audit Report if he says he has not done so, because he has the responsibility of 55,000 long suffering *ti-planteurs, artisans, pensioners*. He has those people on his shoulder. We respect his decision to ask the internal auditor, because this is his decision to ask the internal auditor...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister! Give your reply!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...to do the work. He has to go further and look at the report and tell us what is going to be done following this report.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I can only reiterate what I have said earlier; the work is being done, the report is here. I did not say that I have not taken cognizance of it; the report has not been sent officially to my Ministry because it is still being examined by the Board. I can say that I have asked for it following the PNQ. I have also asked for other information surrounding this whole matter and this is how I came to know that there are other Internal Audit Reports and the work is ongoing. It is premature to say what the investigation will reveal. I will say again, for reasons of confidentiality, I will say no more.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this project was done against all the established procedures in Government, without tender, without architects, without supervising engineers, nothing, all done *au petit bonheur*. Would he explain, Mr Speaker, Sir, how come the then Chairman of this company SIT, the Sugar Investment Trust and SIT Leisure, one Mr Preetam Boodhun has supervised all this bloody mess and he has been promoted to now becoming the Chairman of Landscape Ltd which has three times more assets to deplete than the Sugar Investment Trust. How can this gentleman, now, as we speak, be sitting as Chairman of Landscape?

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take objection to the fact that the hon. Leader of the Opposition now starts to mention somebody's name here, who is not in the House. It is established parliamentary practice that we do not reveal the names of persons, especially those who are not here to defend themselves; this is a cardinal rule of parliamentary practice. We should stick to this established practice.

As I said, again, if there has been mismanagement, the Board will take its responsibility. And, once again, we should not create the confusion in the minds of people that SIT is a department of Government. SIT is not a department of Government or a Ministry for that matter. When the hon. Leader of the Opposition says: "the established procedures of Government have not been followed", the SIT is not a department of Government; we should not create this confusion in the minds of people.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has to take responsibility. They had a Permanent Secretary – I am not giving the name of the poor lady –, they have also another Permanent Secretary who replaced her and a DPS sitting for all this time on these Boards, appointed by the then Minister himself, and here we come and Government washes its hands completely of this fiasco which is going to cost in all Rs480 m. to the small planters of Mauritius.

I am going to ask one thing to the hon. Minister. The SIT Leisure now owes Rs600 m. of *ti-planteurs* money, artisan money, pensioners' money. It owes that...

Mr Speaker: Your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, I ask...

Mr Speaker: No, you are making a long statement.

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, I am going to ask the question in a moment.

Mr Speaker: Put your question directly!

Mr X. L. Duval: I am going to ask as directly as I can. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to ask the hon. Minister what does he propose to do? Is Government going to refund the Rs600 m. that have been thrown down the drain by SIT? It is all money belonging to poor people of this country.

Mr Gobin: It is premature to say that money has been thrown down the drain, Mr Speaker, Sir. If there is anything to be done, the Board has to take its responsibility. And furthermore, talking of the 55,000 *ti-planteurs* and other shareholders, I will invite them, through the Assembly of Delegates, which is created under section 6 of the SIE Act, to also take its responsibility. The Assembly of Delegates appoints, as I say, six Directors out of nine on the Board of the SIT. They have their say in the management of the company; they will also have to enquire, to ask questions in the appropriate forum.

Mr X. L. Duval: All through its history, the Sugar Investment Trust (SIT) created by Government in this House has had problems. It used to have a huge turnover; at one point Rs1.2 billion to Rs1.3 billion. Now, the latest turnover is Rs200 m. It has dwindled, Mr Speaker, Sir, like a *peau de chagrin*.

So, what I am going to ask the hon. Minister now is a matter of policy. Whether is it not time for us to review the way that SIT is managed, the way that the Directors are appointed so that for this huge amount of money that is still there, there is now a decent management and a decent Board of Directors, however they may be appointed professionally, to manage money belonging to all these 55,000 people.

Mr Gobin: As a matter of policy, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can say, yes, I have had consultations for some time now in my Ministry. Collectively, we believe time has come to review the structure of SIT. Now, which form that will take, we are still having internal discussions. But there is indeed room for improvement after so many years and especially after seeing facts and figures based on historical performance. So, I am personally in favour of a review of the corporate structure. How will that happen, whether it is coming in a specific legislation or in the forthcoming Finance Bill, we are still having internal discussions.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, a last question and then maybe my colleagues. I am going to ask the Minister, the previous Minister who supervised all this was promoted from Minister of Agriculture to Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance *s'il*

vous plaît. The previous Chairman, Mr Preetam Boodhun, has been promoted to a much bigger company, Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd.

I have also received many representations from *ti-planteurs* principally, artisans, etc., calling this huge scandal ‘Splash Gate’ and saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that they request, through me, through the Opposition, a full Commission of Inquiry not only on SIT Leisure Ltd - *c’est un petit marchand* in this huge scandal - but on the whole forthcoming demise I would say of SIT itself which, as I mentioned, has lost a huge amount of its profitability and is now paying a few cents only of dividends per share, a tenth of what it was paying before. Can we have a full-fledged Commission of Inquiry on Sugar Investment Trust?

Mr Gobin: I do not believe a Commission of Inquiry is called for, Mr Speaker, Sir. What can happen is, the new delegates who have been recently elected, very recently - towards the end of last year, there is a whole new Assembly of Delegates who have been elected. Elections are held in all the factory areas every three years. So, that new body of Assembly of Delegates can ask whatever questions they wish to in their Assembly of Delegates and through their elected Directors on the Board. Insofar as the internal audit is concerned and the facts disclosed therein, there is, as I said, an inquiry ongoing at ICAC. *La question de la Commission d’Enquête ne se pose pas, M. le président.*

Mr Speaker: Prime Minister’s Question Time! You have a question?

Dr. Boolell: Following the replies given by the hon. Minister, it stands to reason that there is collusion and incestuous relationship between the SIT Board of Directors and the Ministry. Am I to understand that one of the members appointed by the Minister, sitting as a Director on the Board of SIT, is under investigation by ICAC, and would he tell the House the reason as to why he has not been asked to step down?

Mr Gobin: No, I take exception on the word ‘collusion’, Mr Speaker, Sir. I might not have heard the exact word used by the hon. Member, but ‘collusion’ certainly is not there between anybody and the Ministry. I think the hon. Member has not heard me earlier when I explained what is the structure of the SIT and how that Board functions.

(Interruptions)

If that is the case, then I am indeed very pleased that you know the Board structure. So, there cannot be, therefore, in any way, any collusion whatsoever. Now, who is being investigated by ICAC, which specific aspect, the hon. Member knows very well these are confidential, covered by section 81 of the POCA and I cannot, therefore, reveal it. It is not a

question of whether I can reveal or not; I do not even have the confidential information from ICAC.

Mr Speaker: Time over! Prime Minister's Question Time!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that...

(Interruptions)

I appreciate the good mood on the first day.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members the Table has been advised that PQ B/18 will be replied by Dr. the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. PQs B/62, B/77, B/99, B/101 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Richard Duval, you have the floor!

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – BLENHEIM REEF – SURVEY

(No. B/1) 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 the scientific survey undertaken in the Blenheim Reef in the Chagos Archipelago by the Mauritian delegation on the Bleu de Nîmes luxury yacht, he will state the –

- (a) duration of the survey mission;
- (b) cost thereof;
- (c) location where the company owning the said yacht is registered, and
- (d) if a tender was launched prior to this survey mission and, if so, give the list of the bidders together with the respective bid value and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will be aware that on 25 February 2019, pursuant to a request from the United Nations General Assembly, the International Court of Justice gave an Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, in which it made clear that the Chagos Archipelago is, and has always been an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. The UN General Assembly adopted on 22 May 2019 Resolution 73/295 which affirmed, in

accordance with the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

Following the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, Mauritius invited Maldives to engage in negotiations for the delimitation of the maritime boundary between the two States in the region of the Chagos Archipelago.

Since Maldives did not accept that invitation, Mauritius initiated on 18 June 2019 arbitral proceedings against Maldives under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. By a Special Agreement dated 24 September 2019, Mauritius and Maldives agreed to transfer the case to a Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

On 18 December 2019, Maldives raised preliminary objections to the jurisdiction of the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Following the exchange of written pleadings between the Parties and the holding of an oral hearing in October 2020, the Special Chamber gave on 28 January 2021 its Judgment in which it rejected all the preliminary objections raised by Maldives and found that it has jurisdiction to adjudicate on the dispute submitted to it by the Parties. The Special Chamber also ruled that Mauritius has undisputed sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

The case is still at pleadings stage. Mauritius filed its Memorial on 25 May 2021 while Maldives submitted its Counter-Memorial on 25 November 2021. Pursuant to an Order dated 15 December 2021 from the President of the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Mauritius has to submit its Reply by 14 April 2022 and Maldives, its Rejoinder by 15 August 2022.

In the context of the preparation of its Reply, Mauritius considered it necessary to undertake a scientific survey of Blenheim Reef which took place from 08 to 22 February 2022. The purpose of the survey was to collect crucial data which can assist the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in the maritime delimitation exercise. In that regard, Mauritius chartered the 'Bleu de Nîmes' which met our requirements.

The Mauritius delegation seized the opportunity to also visit Peros Banhos and Salomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that it was initially planned that the participants in the scientific survey would depart for the Chagos Archipelago from the port of Gan in Maldives and return to Gan from the Chagos Archipelago. The expedition would have lasted about one week in that case.

As a matter of fact, Mauritius wrote to Maldives to seek its assistance for the use of its port in Gan. However, the conditions imposed by Maldives for the use of its port were unacceptable to Mauritius. Consideration was accordingly given to the departure of the participants from Rodrigues. However, the captain of the 'Bleu de Nîmes' advised that the journey would be very tough if the vessel were to set off from Rodrigues because of cyclonic weather conditions. It was, therefore, decided that the participants would leave for the Chagos Archipelago from Seychelles and would return to the Seychelles. In the circumstances, the survey mission lasted 15 days instead of about one week.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the cost of the survey mission includes -

- (i) the cost of chartering the vessel 'Bleu de Nîmes' for undertaking the trip to the Chagos Archipelago, which amounts to 956,648.33 euros or approximately Rs48 m.;
- (ii) the cost of a special charter flight from Mauritius to Seychelles to fly the participants based in Mauritius to Seychelles, amounting to 28,825 US dollars or approximately Rs1.3 m.;
- (iii) the cost of air tickets for the return of 14 participants from Seychelles to Mauritius and amounting to Rs366,655;
- (iv) insurance cover for travel by sea and travel by air, which amounts to Rs46,552.25;
- (v) the cost of hiring the services of two foreign surveyors. The total fees payable to the surveyors amount to US\$160,000 or approximately Rs7.2 m. and exclude the cost of the air tickets they have purchased to travel to and from Seychelles.

There are other costs relating to the survey mission which have yet to be settled and the claims are being awaited.

The journalists from the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Guardian and the Atlantic magazine who have formed part of the delegation have offered to make a contribution to the cost of the survey mission. To date, contributions have been received from the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Guardian.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the question, the company owning the vessel 'Bleu de Nîmes' is Chemba Limited which is registered in Gibraltar. As for the vessel, it is registered in Cook Islands.

With regard to part (d) of the question, I wish to inform the House that in view of the national security and vessel safety implications of such a mission in the Chagos Archipelago, let alone the fact that bidders were not readily available for this type of mission, the 'Bleu de Nîmes' was hired outside the parameters of the Public Procurement Act in conformity with section 3(1)(a) of the Act and, accordingly, no tenders were launched.

Mr R. Duval: Thank you very much, hon. Prime Minister. In a Press Conference, the hon. Prime Minister stated that some companies have imposed conditions which were unacceptable by his Government. Could he specify which conditions were considered unacceptable?

The Prime Minister: May I know from the hon. Member which Press Conference did I hold at which I am alleged to have said those words that the hon. Member is referring to?

Mr R. Duval: On 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I never said that the companies have imposed conditions which were unacceptable to the Government of Mauritius. Well, can he table a report on my having said that?

Mr R. Duval: Okay, I will. Maldives.

The Prime Minister: I have never said such things.

Mr R. Duval: Yes, you said Maldives...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Any supplementary?

The Prime Minister: The company.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Richard Duval!

The Prime Minister: Well, if you rephrase the question, of course, I shall answer.

Mr R. Duval: Never mind! Since you were well aware in advance of the schedule, of the date of the mission, then, was it not of paramount importance for you to be part of this

mission, and, most importantly, mark your presence as Prime Minister of Mauritius on the Chagos Archipelago to hoist the Mauritian flag as a historical moment for our country?

The Prime Minister: Well, yes, I did say in a Press Conference that I had always wanted to form part of a trip that would go to the Chagos Archipelago. This occasion had arisen in the light of the case that we had entered against Maldives. As I said, we had to carry out this survey and we tried our best. I can tell you that I also spoke to the President of the Maldives at one of the previous conferences that we attended to seek his cooperation, but it is unfortunate that, when we wrote to the Maldives to request that we could depart from one of their ports because that would be the quickest and the cheapest way of going to the Chagos, and I was, indeed very keen on forming part of that expedition because it would have taken only about 7 days, at the most. But, unfortunately, I must say Maldives have been very uncooperative and maybe, if you are referring to what conditions they have imposed, let me inform that they were willing to allow only people who are directly connected with the scientific and technical survey that would be conducted.

This condition is unacceptable. Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, excluding, first of all, our lawyers! They are the very persons who are going to appear for us before a tribunal, who are going to plead and submit in our case, and such a condition excludes them! Anyway!

When we, in fact, decided to explore the possibility of leaving from our territory itself, that is, Rodrigues, unfortunately, at that time the weather conditions were bad. In fact, we had two cyclones, one after the other, and the weather conditions did not permit leaving from Rodrigues and we stood guided by the advice of the Captain of the Ship, and, anyway, even from Rodrigues, it would have taken 15 days to go there.

So, the other option was to leave from Seychelles, and I must say that I spoke personally to his Excellency President Wavel Ramkalawan, and he immediately told me that he would do everything that he could to facilitate our expedition from the Seychelles. It took about 15 days to go there, and it would have been very difficult for me to leave the country and to be away for 15 days. I hope, maybe next time, when we organise another such trip to the Chagos, which will take less time and I shall be able to form part of that trip.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le Premier ministre, vous parlez de la tentative des Maldives d'exclure les avocats mauriciens. Est-ce que le Premier ministre peut éclairer la Chambre comment est-ce que la presse indépendante mauricienne, dans son ensemble, n'a pas été invitée à participer dans cette délégation alors que d'autres presses étrangères ont été

invitées ? Quels sont les critères qui ont été établis par votre gouvernement pour que la presse mauricienne soit exclue de cette délégation ?

The Prime Minister: J'ai déjà répondu à cette question en dehors de la Chambre. C'est un plaisir pour moi de répondre dans la Chambre maintenant. J'ai dit que le nombre de places disponibles sur le bateau, si je ne me trompe pas, c'était je crois environ 28 personnes et on n'avait que quelques places seulement pour les journalistes, et on a privilégié ...

(Interruptions)

What is it? You want to intervene? You want to speak? What is it?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet! You don't have the right. He is...

The Prime Minister: What is this gesticulation?

Mr Speaker: Please! You don't have the right, you don't have the floor!

(Interruptions)

You don't have the floor!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have listened to questions without interruption. I also do not want to be interrupted when I am answering.

M. le président, je disais qu'il n'y avait que quelques places seulement pour les journalistes et on a privilégié - je l'ai dit - les journalistes tels que ceux de la *BBC*, du *Guardian*, et de l'*Atlantic*, parce qu'on voulait avoir un *international exposure*. On voulait que le monde puisse savoir exactement qu'est-ce qui s'est passé concernant les Chagossiens et comment l'Angleterre a illégalement démembré l'archipel des Chagos de notre territoire avant de nous donner l'indépendance.

Donc, je suis satisfait que cet objectif a été atteint. M. le président, je pense que cet objectif n'aurait pas été atteint aussi bien si on n'avait que les journalistes de la presse locale. Ceci dit, j'avais dit à la conférence de presse que j'espère qu'à une prochaine occasion, quand on pourra organiser un autre voyage au Chagos, on va évidemment essayer de voir si on peut inviter les journalistes locaux.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to request the hon. Prime Minister to give information with regard to the scientific survey mission which was carried out. Did they notify the UK Government and were there some interruptions during the

survey as some Members of the British Parliament termed this mission as a political stunt?
Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Well, whether we did notify the UK? I must have the dates which I can communicate. On 01 December 2021, my colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade had addressed a Note Verbale to the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office to inform the United Kingdom, as a matter of courtesy, of the intention of Mauritius to carry out in February 2022 a scientific survey of the Blenheim Reef, Salomon Islands Atoll and appurtenant waters in the context, of course, of the maritime delimitation case which we had brought against the Maldives.

Mauritius also had sought the assurance of the United Kingdom that it would not impede the survey. In its reply of 17 December 2021, the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office conveyed the “consent” - can you imagine - of the United Kingdom to the survey and assured Mauritius that the British Authorities would not impede the survey.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 04 January 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade sent a Note Verbale to the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office to clarify that Mauritius did not seek the “consent” of the United Kingdom for the survey as the Chagos Archipelagos forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

With regard to the other issue raised by the hon. Member, as soon as the ship entered our EEZ, suddenly, there was no internet communication which was becoming very difficult and, on top of that, when we had entered the territorial waters of Mauritius, there were two British ships which were monitoring the activities of Bleu de Nîmes. In fact, we had also drawn the attention of the UK that it was improper, and illegal for these ships to be in our territorial waters without our consent.

Mr Speaker: You have the floor!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Merci, M. le président. Le Premier ministre a parlé d'objectifs atteints*; one of the objectives is for the Chagossian community to return on the Archipelago. Will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the next move of the Government, especially with regard to the Chagossian community, whether there is a settlement plan, a plan of action for the community to settle there, and if there is one, what is the time frame within which this action plan, this resettlement plan will be implemented?

The Prime Minister: *M. le président, j'ai qualifié cette visite comme historique.* Unfortunately, there is one Member of the Opposition who criticised me saying it was not *historique*, it was *hystérique*. Let me also say what comes from the MMM, when I looked at what was stated, not even privately, but in the Press by the Leader of the MMM who said that *ce voyage ce n'est que du bluff!* This needs to be said for people to know it! You have put a very good question! I am very happy that you put the question, but then you should not be double-faced; outside you say something, and then in the House, you are saying something else. But, anyway, I qualified this visit as *historique parce que pour la première fois depuis notre indépendance, nous avons pu indépendamment louer un bateau pour aller, sans contrainte, sans être suivi, sans aucune directive et sans surveillance - enfin surveillance, il y a eu - mais on a pu aller librement sur notre territoire, les Chagos Archipelago !*

(Interruptions)

Et je suis encore plus fier, M. le président, que même si moi, comme Premier ministre, je n'ai pas pu faire partie de ce voyage, les Chagossiens, ceux qui sont nés là-bas, ont pu aller sur l'île où leurs ancêtres ont été enterrés !

And I do not want to say - but you must know, that for me, this is very emotional.

(Interruptions)

This is very emotional for me because...

(Interruptions)

the Chagossians have found out *dans quel état, par exemple, l'église et leur cimetière étaient dans un état délabré!* But, anyway, I have repeatedly said in the past that one of the objectives is for the Chagossians or anyone who is willing to go to the Chagos Archipelago and to live there, we will have a plan of resettlement, at any rate. In the past Budget, we have already voted a sum of money and then in future Budgets also we will make provision.

But, of course, we cannot resettle unless we take possession of those islands and, unfortunately, I must say that the UK is still remaining on the wrong side of history, but that is their choice. But we will fight, and we will fight until we regain possession of our territory.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I can see too many supplementary questions flowing. I will give hon. Osman Mahomed one, hon. Ms Tour one, and last supplementary would be for hon. Richard Duval.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. In the same vein of *objectifs atteints de la mission*, for Blenheim Reef to be considered as baseline, it has to be, of course, the outermost point of the Archipelago and also considered as an island. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the survey team has been able to ascertain this very important point for us to be able to finally; because it was a long time fear to use this for our claim, going forward from now onwards?

The Prime Minister: If you had listened to my answer carefully, you would have understood that the case is still at the pleading stage. It is not yet even fixed for merit to hear the submission of Counsels from both sides. I am sure you will appreciate that I shall not be able to publicly provide information with regard to a submission that we shall make in the future before the Tribunal. There are a number of datas that have been collected, at the end of which a report will be drawn, and, obviously, our Counsels will be able to make the relevant submission and use all the surveys that have been conducted in support of our case. It would be improper and also not intelligent on our side to already provide them information which is very sensitive.

Mr Speaker: Because of time constraint, I will allow one last question from hon. Richard Duval.

Mr R. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House the approximate date when scientific survey/report will be available and will be made public?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member will also appreciate that that report will depend on our surveyors and on the datas that have been collected. I do not want to say more because, again, I do not want to cause any prejudice to our case. But, of course, that report will be ready before we make our submission and there is a submission to be made, I think, on 14 April and that report most probably will be ready for Maldives to consider and to make a rejoinder.

Mr Speaker: Time over! But before time over, the Table has been advised that PQ B/6 and B/7 have been withdrawn, and I suspend the Sitting for one hour exceptionally.

At 1.03 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.08 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please remain seated and be seated! Question time! Next Parliamentary Question!

**TROU AUX CERFS METEOROLOGICAL STATION - DOPPLER WEATHER
RADAR**

(No. B/19) **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 the Doppler Weather Radar installed at the Trou aux Cerfs Meteorological Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Meteorological Services, information as to if it is fully operational, indicating –

- (a) the contribution thereof in forecasting weather and severe weather systems;
- (b) if his Ministry is fully satisfied with the accuracy and timely weather forecasts and climatic conditions since 01 January 2022 to date, and
- (c) if specialised staff at the said station have been trained to interpret information gathered through same.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I will combine the replies to Parliamentary Question B/19 with B/46, B/50, B/57 and B/71 as they all pertain to the same subject matter, that is, the Doppler Weather Radar at Trou aux Cerfs.

With regard to the first part of PQ B/19, PQ B/50 and PQ B/71, I am informed by the Mauritius Meteorological Services that the Doppler Weather Radar equipment is operational since 01 April 2019.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of PQ B/19 and part (d) of PQ B/57, the Mauritius Meteorological Services has confirmed that the Doppler Weather Radar has, since its installation, greatly contributed to the improvement of weather forecasting in Mauritius, including severe weather forecasting, and has enhanced the capability of Mauritius Meteorological Services to monitor hydro-meteorological phenomena while contributing in developing a weather resilient nation. The radar has contributed in tracking clouds systems likely to produce rainfall as well as tracking tropical cyclones when the latter are within its range of detection, that is, 450 km. The radar was instrumental in tracking intense tropical cyclone “Batsirai” and allowed for precise forecast regarding heavy rainfall and strong wind.

As regards part (b) of PQ B/19, the Mauritius Meteorological Services has indicated that it is fully satisfied with the Doppler Weather Radar regarding the accuracy and the timely weather forecasts since 01 January 2022. It should be noted that at the Mauritius

Meteorological Services, all weather forecasts issued are objectively verified by robust statistical methods. The accuracy of a forecast is based on a skill score called the Critical Success Index, which is a widely used skill score method recommended by the World Meteorological Organisation. The average Critical Success Index for the period 01 January 2022 till date is between 70% and 80%, which is considered as satisfactory. It is in fact higher than average.

Regarding part (c) of PQs B/19 and B/46, I am informed by the Mauritius Meteorological Services that staff have been trained to interpret data obtained from the Doppler Weather Radar and I am herewith tabling the list of staff who have benefitted from training provided by the Japanese Experts within the project framework of the “Project for the Improvement of the Meteorological Radar System”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of PQ B/46, I am informed by the Mauritius Meteorological Services that commissioning for the Doppler Weather Radar was completed in March 2019.

With regard to part (b) (i) of PQ B/46, I am tabling the details of the preventive maintenance exercises carried out as at date. Normally, preventive maintenance is carried out on a daily basis, on a weekly basis, monthly, semi-annual and annual maintenance.

With regard to part (b) (ii) of PQ B/46 and part (a) of PQ B/57, I am informed that calibrations and fine tuning were carried out from February to March 2019, following which the radar became fully operational. The last calibration performed by the Japanese team, in the presence of the supplier of the Radar, was carried out during the period 03 to 18 November 2021. Based on additional data gathered, further fine tuning will be performed remotely on an annual basis to ensure that the radar is working at its optimum level.

Mr Speaker Sir, as regards part (c) of PQ B/57, the Mauritius Meteorological Services has indicated that currently, the running cost of the Doppler Weather Radar is approximately Rs1.2 m. annually and that relates to consumables and utility bills whilst staff salaries, upkeep of the ground and building, etc. are in the budget.

I wish also to highlight that until November 2021, the Radar was on warranty and therefore, no cost was incurred regarding spare parts.

Mr Speaker Sir, as regards PQ B/71 on the manning of staff at the Doppler Weather Radar at Trou aux Cerfs, I am informed that the Doppler Weather Radar is fully automatic, and it operates on a 24/7 shift system with two (2) Telecommunication Engineers and ten

(10) Meteorological Telecommunication Technicians who operate on a roster basis. It is important to note that all data obtained from the Doppler Weather Radar is transmitted to the Headquarters at Vacoas wherein the Meteorologists have access to these data and use same for weather interpretation and forecasting.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Vice-Prime Minister. In the light of the tragic loss of two lives one just after cyclone “Batsirai” on 03 February and the loss of one gentleman during torrential floods at Alexandra Falls on 13 March, can I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has asked the meteorological services on one hand to review its criteria of weather warning after immediate lifting of cyclone warnings, and on the other hand, a graded alert system of expected heavy torrential rainfall with using an emergency SMS service alert to the whole of the population?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, here, I must say that we are actually sorry for the loss of life that has happened, and personally, I tender my sincerest condolences to the family.

Now, as far as the first question is concerned, about the classification of...

Dr. Aumeer: It is whether you will review the criteria of immediate lifting of cyclone warnings.

Dr. Husnoo: That has been discussed, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have discussed that at the National Disaster Centre and we have been working on this for some time now, and we are going to put a phase after a cyclone, when a Class IV has been withdrawn we are going to have a new phase. We are working on it and that is going to come soon. That is number one.

The second question relates to...

Dr. Aumeer: A graded alert system for torrential fall using SMS to all the population.

Dr. Husnoo: As you know torrential rain, we have just started giving the *avertissements* recently. So now, we are using the radar trying to give information about the different places where the rain is going to fall which we were not getting before. So we are working on that. As far as a different graded level, that is going to come. But now we are trying to concentrate more on the area because even for the area it is difficult because Mauritius is so small. When we say that we are going to have heavy rain supposed in the East, with just a change in the wind velocity you can get it in the Central Plateau, you can get it even in the West because Mauritius being so small. So, they have been working on it, and

the radar is helping us naturally to do these kinds of *prévisions* but it is not that easy. As far as the grading, obviously, that is going to come later on.

Now, as far as sending messages by SMS, again a company has been working on this; we have a consultant and they have been working on it actually, frankly, for the last two years, it is a consultant from Belgium. I think the company is called Onetomany. Unfortunately, because of the COVID the consultant did not manage to come on time, that is why we are a bit late. We are trying to develop a system where, as rightly said by the Member, we can send information through SMS to the population at large. We have been working on it; but unfortunately we are a bit late on that because of the situation that has happened with the COVID; but we take note and we will continue the work.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the recent years we have witnessed severe weather conditions and the objectives of having the Doppler radar was to have reliable weather forecast. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, how come that recently our meteorological services forecast has been *à coté de la plaque*? I mean *à coté de la plaque*, they were issuing communiqué for torrential rainfalls when the rainfall has already started and in some cases after the rainfalls, communiqués were issued. And I will not agree that the forecast is a forecast because we have all been in ...

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Mr Ameer Meea: ... and we can see that there the weather forecasts are precise, are accurate and they are bigger countries and in Mauritius we are a smaller country, how come that with sophisticated equipment still we cannot forecast torrential rainfall?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this happened especially on 13 March, last month. This problem arose and I can assure the hon. Member, I asked the Director of the Meteorological services why we have reached that situation. On 13 March, when I came to the National Disaster Centre I talked to him; how come we have reached that situation; we got that warning a bit later. He explained to me. Firstly, you have to understand that –

- (i) Number one, there was a warning – actually that is coming in the next question –which was given on the day before, on 12 March that we are going to have heavy rainfall the next day. That is number one. 24 hours before, a heavy rain warning was given.

- (ii) Secondly, on the same day at 11:30 there was a heavy rain warning as well. What happened on that day, there was, what they call a – it is a technical term – a squall *kouma enn front* it is a different system. There were clouds coming that was predicted but what they call a squall; *ce enn front*, which was coming but which was very difficult to forecast even with the radar. It was difficult to forecast on 13 March.

And now I can tell you one thing – you have told me about Réunion – France *Météo* on that day said Mauritius was not going to have a lot of rain, at that particular time. And the European Meteorological Services, which we receive it at Vacoas, predicted that on that day in Chittrakoot we got 111 mm of rain and the European Union *Météo* predicted only 2 mm of rain, Mr Speaker, Sir. *Alors*, what I was trying to say is that this squall that came, was very difficult to predict, and not just by Mauritius but by many international meteorological services. That is what happened.

I repeat myself; the warning was given the day before. It was given at 11:30 on the same day and when the squall came, that was something different which was difficult to predict.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. If I heard well from the Vice Prime Minister's reply, in between the initial commissioning in March 2019 and November 2021, there has been no on-site calibration of the weather radar. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, what is the recommended frequency for on-site calibration by the supplier of the weather radar and whether the MMS is abiding by this recommendation?

Dr. Husnoo: As I just mentioned earlier, the calibration work is done regularly. There are different types of calibration which are done – I have just explained that earlier. Some calibrations are done on a daily basis. Some are done weekly, some others are monthly, some of them bi-annually and some of them annually. The annual ones are done by the foreign consultants. And in fact, as I mentioned earlier, they came, they have done the calibration in November last year and this calibration is going to continue because we are in contact with them and they do the calibration regularly.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/23 and B/97 will be replied by Dr. the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. PQ B/38 will be replied by the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community

Development. PQ B/85 will be replied by Dr. the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. PQ B/100 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training. PQ B/99 has been withdrawn. The following PQs have been withdrawn: B/69, B/92, B/72, B/64, B/80, B/74 and B/83.

Next question!

**METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES - FLASH FLOOD – WEATHER
FORECAST – 13.03.22**

(No. B/20) **Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the flash flood of 13 March 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Meteorological Services, information as to the reasons why the officers thereof have not been able to make accurate weather forecasts thereof in spite of having the new radar.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will combine the replies of the parliamentary questions B/20 and B/42 as they both relate to the flash flood on Sunday 13 March 2022. In fact, I have partially answered the question in my earlier reply.

With regard to the flash flood that occurred on Sunday 13 March 2022 in some localised regions in Port Louis, I am informed by the Mauritius Meteorological Services (MMS) that – I said it earlier – in the evening bulletin of Saturday 12 March 2022, it did forecast showers of moderate intensity with risk of thunderstorms and on Sunday 13 March 2022, a mid-day bulletin was issued at 11 30 hours with mention that the showers will be moderate to heavy with thunderstorms and that there might be temporary water accumulations. I quote from the bulletin –

“Water accumulations are possible in certain places. Water courses may be flooded. It is strongly advised to avoid these places. During thunderstorms, the public is advised to remain in safe places and to avoid open areas, sea ventures and sheltering under trees”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Mauritius Meteorological Services (MMS) that at around 12 30 hours on Sunday 13 March 2022, convective clouds developed in the southwest of the island and progressed inland with local showers. From 12 45 hours to 13 30 hours, a squall line – which I just described earlier – resulting from cumulonimbus

clouds crossed the island from the northeast to the west and the enhanced clouds triggered violent thunderstorms and heavy local showers.

Based on data received as from 13 00 hours from the Doppler Weather Radar, a heavy rainfall warning was issued at 13 20 hours. The whole cloud cover flared up very rapidly in about 10 to 20 minutes caused by the squall line crossing the island from the northeast and it was difficult to accurately forecast the same.

Normally these convective clouds take about 40 minutes or more to develop but in this particular case they developed between 10 to 20 minutes, that is a consequence of global warming, Mr Speaker, Sir. This explained the heavy rainfall figures recorded at Mon Loisir and Nouvelle Découverte before reaching Port Louis regions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear that the convective cloud developments happened around mid-day and thus the communiqué could not have been issued earlier. Also, I wish to highlight that a weather radar is an equipment that detects precipitating water droplets within clouds, that is, it can only inform where the rainfall echoes are located.

It should be noted that although the bulletin issued by the Mauritius Meteorological Services (MMS) at 11 30 hours on Sunday 13 March 2022 did mention that localised heavy rain in the southwest, the west and the centre of the island, it was not – I repeat – it was not possible to predict such an extreme weather event and give an accurate forecast of the huge amount of rainfall, as no weather model could capture such an extreme event.

A flash flood is considered as an extreme weather event. Presently, even the state of the art science and the best available weather models cannot predict flash floods resulting from convective clouds.

Mr Nagalingum: Can the hon. Minister confirm that the Doppler Radar Weather Observation Station is fully operational and maintenance is done regularly? Can the hon. Minister confirm that the personnel of the Mauritius Meteorological Services are fully trained and have all the knowledge to operate the radar equipment?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the radar is fully operational, it is calibrated and fully functional and we do regular maintenance. We have qualified meteorologists. Firstly, the radar, as you know, is situated at Trou aux Cerfs, there we have a team of engineers and technicians who look after it and the information is transferred from Trou aux Cerfs to Vacoas where we have the meteorologists who take care of it. We have a team of fully

qualified engineers and technicians at Trou aux Cerfs and we have a fully qualified team of meteorologists at Vacoas to interpret these.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what is the delay between the detection of the climatic threat by the meteo services and the issue of warning to the public of same.

Dr. Husnoo: Again, the warning depends on the type of situation we are dealing because, as I said, like in some places when we have the cloud system, a cloud formation which can be detected earlier by the radar, the forecast is made well in advance. Like I just mentioned in this case, even on Saturday we had mentioned that we are going to get flood and heavy rain the next day. For some types of clouds, you can have advance warning. That is what I have said. When you have convective clouds; I repeat the word 'convective clouds' which is difficult to get it early. Especially with the climate change now, the weather pattern is changing. Before, even for the convective clouds you have about 40 minutes, so you can predict it. At least you know it is coming, you can give an earlier warning but in this case what happened on the 13th, we got it I think about 10 to 20 minutes. It was very difficult. So, it depends what kind of system is coming, whether you have the time or not to do that.

In most cases, we do have enough time to do the forecast but in some exceptional circumstances, it is very difficult to predict and I say that's not just in Mauritius, it is around the world, even with the most sophisticated equipment, it is very difficult even for them to predict. As we have seen, Mr Speaker, Sir, what happened in Australia, in Germany, in Europe, there have been flash floods this year and last year and many people have lost their lives. So, it is not something which is happening only in Mauritius; there are things we can forecast but there are things which are a bit difficult to predict as it is now.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether we have any Japanese experts attending to the functioning of the radar and if not, because of the complexity of the situation why cannot we ask some assistance from Japan in a specific field because they are really very advanced with regard to disaster management?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we had a Japanese team who were in Mauritius only, I think, about three weeks ago. They come regularly to check on the apparatus and to train our staff as well. That is not the only thing because all data that is captured by the radar is

transferred to Japan and then this is discussed with our meteorological officers as well. There is regular communication. All this data is not just kept in Vacoas, no, it is transferred to Japan. And as far as the list of technicians is concerned, I can circulate the list of professional staff trained to use the Doppler Weather Radar. We have a long list of engineers and technicians. I am going to circulate it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

VICTORIA URBAN TERMINAL – HAWKERS – RELOCATION

(No. B/21) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government & Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed relocation of hawkers at the Victoria Urban Terminal, 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 Municipal City Council of Port Louis that a total of 1,183 registered hawkers currently operating at Decaen, Ruisseau du Pouce, Monneron and La Case Cassée are concerned with the allocation of stalls at the Victoria Urban Terminal. Accordingly, drawing of lots was carried out on 26 October 2021 with the 1,183 hawkers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given that at Victoria Urban Terminal, the promoter has provided a Hawkers' area which can accommodate 1,000 hawkers, the remaining 183 registered hawkers have been put on a waiting list.

I am also informed that as at date, 707 hawkers out of 1,000 hawkers have satisfied all the relevant criteria for the allocation of stalls and their names have been submitted to the promoter for the purchase or rental of their respective stalls.

As there are stalls which are still vacant due to the fact that 197 hawkers have failed to come. Actually, we have contacted them, we have contacted about 1,000. We have sent them a registered letter, but they did not revert back. We have 197 hawkers who have failed to call at the Municipal Council for appropriate formalities; a second drawing of lots will be carried out on Thursday 31 March 2022 among the remaining 183 hawkers surveyed for Victoria Urban Terminal.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the proposed date for the relocation of hawkers at the Urban Terminal, I am informed that same would be done by mid-April or the third week of April.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the Vice-Prime Minister...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha, you should wait for me to give you the floor!

(Interruptions)

Whatever! Even if it is his question, he should give me sign that he has a supplementary question. Sir!

(Interruptions)

We stop it here, Sir! Please!

(Interruptions)

Now, the floor first, and anybody wanting a supplementary question should give sign! Go and read Erskine May, Sir!

(Interruptions)

Please!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether, in relocating the hawkers to the Victoria Urban Terminal, in the process, he has received or the Municipal Council of Port Louis has received representations from the hawkers as regards the size of the stalls, and the fact that they are located on upper floors of the building, customers and clients may not really go to the place, so their sale will not be as good as expected?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have had many meetings with the hawkers. We have had site visits at Victoria Urban Terminal, not just now, but months ago while the building was under construction. And then the hawkers came, we showed them the size of the stalls; they were happy with the size. I think it was about 2.5 by 1.3 metres, something like that. They did not have shutters before, now each individual stall will have shutters as well. This has been discussed with the hawkers. That's what they wanted and they have been provided with that. Now, he said that they are situated on the first floor and second floor. The first floor is where the passageway from Metro would come. That's number one. I think you have about 700 hawkers on the first floor, if I remember well; and about 300 on the second

floor. From the first floor to the second floor, you have escalators. This has been provided just to make life easy for them. Escalators have been provided. Stairs and everything have been provided to them. They came; they visited the place and they accepted it. We had many visits, a lot of discussions. *Pa plitar ki anviron 2 semenns, 3 semenns de cela*, I met the hawkers in my office as well to discuss about these things. So, I think, on the whole - I do not know if one or two have met you and they are unhappy, I do not know about that - but, overall, most of the hawkers are happy. And when I met the leaders of the hawkers, they are very happy with the situation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In view of the fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this project, successful as it is as a PPP (Public/Private Partnership) is a successful one. We should not fail on the socio-economic principle, because it was on that principle that a certain number of incentives were given to the consortium like the rental of State land, like our facilities...

Mr Speaker: So, you are putting a supplementary question?

Mr Bodha: Yes, I have to explain the question because we should understand the philosophy.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You've been a Leader of the Opposition yourself! You know better than me how to put a question. Supplementary questions ask for clarification!

Mr Bodha: The hawkers constitute a socio-conomic priority of this project. I am asking the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether, when the negotiations started sometimes back, the rental was Rs3,000 per month, I would like to know whether this rental is going to be Rs3,000 per month? The second thing was that there was a loan which was supposed to be given to the hawkers so that they can buy their stall, and the stall, then, was calculated at Rs300,000 to Rs400,000. I would like to know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether, this rental remains what it was, and second, whether this facility from Government, that a loan facility can be granted to the hawker to buy his stall is being maintained because I heard of a figure of 600,000 which would make this stall very expensive.

Mr Speaker: No, you have already put your questions; and two-fold questions! Supplementary questions cannot be two-fold, three-fold! So, let the hon. Minister reply first!

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two issues here. Firstly, it is about the rental of the stalls. The rental of the stalls, from the beginning, we discussed with the hawkers, it was Rs4,000. Rs4,000 include payment to the Municipal Council and for the maintenance, *comme ene sindik comme sa*, of the place. Rs4,000 per month, that's the rental. That was discussed with the hawkers and they agreed to that. That's number one. That's for renting. But, now, if they want to buy the stall, we are trying to negotiate; I had a meeting with the hawkers, I think about three weeks ago, I got a correspondence from VSL, the company, I think about 10 days or so ago. We are still negotiating about buying the stall because from the beginning we said they must be able to buy the stall. So, we are still negotiating on that. The figures, to be fair, the company came with a figure of Rs600,000 to buy the stall. We told them we are not going to accept that. So, then, they have come down to Rs500,000. There was a discussion. I told them: 'before we said it was going to be Rs400,000, how come it is Rs500,000 now?' But they told me that there are two issues, firstly, now we have COVID, a lot of things have gone up. That's number one. And secondly, the fact that some of the modifications asked by the hawkers, they have to take that into consideration, that is why they have increased the cost to buy the stall. But, we are still discussing on that; discussions have not finished yet.

And as for the loan with the Government, it is still on because we are still negotiating with the Government; it is still in discussion. They can get a loan from the DBM and they can pay gradually in the next five or ten years or whatever they decide.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The space allocated is 1 metre 90 by 1 metre 35, which makes 2 metres 56 square metres at a rent of Rs4,000 that comes down to Rs1,559 per square metre or Rs144 per square feet. That's five times what you pay for a prime site in Port Louis and three times what you pay for rental in Bagatelle. So, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, how is it that people who were paying Rs500 for a stall in Ruisseau du Pouce will now be expected to pay eight times more for less space? So, would he in the circumstances consider revisiting the price which the hawkers will have to pay?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we are talking about different space.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Husnoo: I think, Mr Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. gentleman knows that working on Ruisseau du Pouce and working at Urban Terminal are two different places.

(Interruptions)

To come and say this, I think it is a bit unfair. But having said that, these rents were discussed from the very beginning and it was agreed by the hawkers themselves. And if you can get a place in the Urban Terminal at a lower rate than that, please let me know. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: The question has sufficiently been canvassed, we move to the next question!

STRAY DOGS - PROLIFERATION - PUBLIC PLACES

(No. B/22) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to stray dogs, he will state if his attention has been drawn to a proliferation thereof in public places, including roads, beaches and hospitals and, if so, indicate if urgent remedial actions have been/are being taken in relation thereto.

Mr Gobin: The overpopulation of stray dogs has indeed been an issue of serious concern for our country for many years now. I would like to reassure the House that remedial actions are being taken and I can inform the House as follows –

- Following various representations received from a number of institutions, NGOs, as well as individuals, both locally and internationally, the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare, the MSAW, has, since January 2021 moved away from the previous Catch and Kill Policy to adopt a Comprehensive Nationwide Dog Population Management Programme.
- Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the MSAW, that more than 15,000 dogs have been sterilised since September 2015 and the MSAW is continuing the Free Mass Sterilisation Programme with the support of the National Environment and Climate Change Fund (NECCF).
- With a view to giving a boost to this programme, the MSAW has had consultative meetings with private veterinary surgeons to find a sustainable Dog Population Management Program and will soon be coming with more recommendations.

- I am informed that the MSAW has also had working sessions with the Beach Authority to look at sustainable solutions regarding control of stray dogs on public beaches.
- I am also informed that the MSAW has a continuous sensitization program whereby staff of institutions in strategic locations are kept informed about animal welfare including control of stray dogs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will appreciate that as responsible citizens, we are all concerned with the stray dog issue and I take this opportunity to invite all dog owners to have their dog sterilized.

Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the MSAW stopped or slowed down the catching exercise of dogs, we have seen proliferation of stray dogs at different places and in my own Constituency, gang of stray dogs have been formed. Can I request the hon. Minister to pay special attention to the regions of my Constituency, especially in view of the forthcoming Ramadan month so that people going to the bakeries and shops in the early morning are not attacked by stray dogs?

Mr Gobin: The problem has become more serious of late. That's correct. We should face the reality. However, there are two main issues where we have to strike a balance, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is the difficulty we face. Catching begs the question of the holding capacity that the MSAW has. We cannot catch more than what we can hold. Secondly, how many veterinarians are there available in Mauritius for the sterilisation or even for the euthanasia where euthanasia is required? Do we realise in this country there are only about 100 vets for the whole of the Republic, out of which only 20 in the public service? It is a scarcity area. Last time, there was a call for application for the Public Service, I think only two or three applicants applied. This is the reality. I am not saying we are not doing anything. We are trying to get help from foreign countries and also increase the holding capacity for MSAW, holding of strays whenever they are caught and for instance, if I can say, to increase the holding capacity, there is now a new compound which we have opened in Plaine Magnien. So, the work is ongoing. I fully appreciate what my hon. colleague has said. It is not only in Constituency No.3 but in other areas including strategic places. By strategic, I mean the hospitals, the airport and the harbour.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, I recall during the last mandate, I asked a similar PQ and the then Minister, hon. Seeruttun stated to the House that there are approximately 200,000 stray dogs in Mauritius. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he has updated statistics in terms of the number of stay dogs in Mauritius?

Mr Gobin: Yes, there is. Of course it is an estimate as you will appreciate. It has increased to about 220,000. This is the latest estimate for strays.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Last year, I understand that the MSAW is moving from the Catch and Kill to the new programme due to international pressure.

Mr Gobin: Local also.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Local as well. Can I ask the hon. Minister, being given that this is the case and that the MSAW has never, up till now, table its Annual Report and Audited Accounts which was the subject of a Parliamentary question of mine last year which has not been replied, unfortunately, whether he can undertake to the House to table these two reports which is a requirement by law actually?

Mr Gobin: Yes, they will. *On corrige là où il y a eu les manquements.* There have been a number of issues with the MSAW. Fortunately, I would say the new Board is taking corrective measures. We will speed up the Audited Accounts and it will be tabled as required by law. Moving away from the Catch and Kill, the policy is what the NGOs call in jargon, the CNR; Catch, Neuter and Release. This is the adopted policy.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether MSAW has sought the professional services of the International Animal Rescue to address the problem in a more forceful and effective manner?

Mr Gobin: There are two institutions in the United Kingdom which are in close collaboration with the MSAW, but I do not have the names of the two institutions. They have been contacted since the beginning of last year, I know but I can provide the names at a later stage.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/36, B/86, B/87, B/95 and B/96 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

COVID-19 - MOGAS & GASOIL - LEVY- FUNDS RECEIVED

(No. B/23) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the quantum of funds received from the levy of Rs2 per litre on MOGAS and Gasoil for the purchase of vaccines and since the application of the said levy to date, indicating the quantum thereof disbursed as at to date.

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le président, j'ai été informé par la *State Trading Corporation* que le prélèvement de R 2.00 par litre sur l'essence et le diesel est en application depuis le 1er juillet 2021. Cela, afin de permettre à tous les citoyens de ce pays d'avoir accès gratuitement aux vaccins contre la Covid-19.

Le National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Fund a reçu un montant de R 372, 937, 550 de la part de la *STC*.

Le montant total reçu a été transféré au ministère de la Santé et du Bien-être pour l'achat des vaccins contre la Covid-19.

Merci.

Mr Nagalingum: If I can ask the hon. Minister whether this levy is still being applied and for how long it will last, including a possible 4th dose of vaccine and other booster dose?

Dr. Padayachy: Selon les renseignements que nous avons reçus, l'achat des vaccins a été à hauteur de R 1,3 milliards jusqu'à présent et concernant le *levy*, c'est en application pour l'année financière 2021-2022 et pour l'année financière 2022-2023, nous allons travailler pour voir si allons continuer avec ce *levy*.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance.

Mr Armance: Thank you. Can the hon. Minister give us a breakdown of the sum spent for the purchase of vaccines? He just mentioned about Rs1.3 billion. Can you please table the breakdown to the House?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, pour l'achat des vaccins, au niveau du ministère des Finances, nous avons le montant total. Nous n'avons pas fait l'achat de ces vaccins. Pour cela, il faudra demander une question précise au ministère concerné.

Mr Armance: I just want some clarification from the Minister. I want the amount that he has been paying for the vaccines. I mean he has not paid Rs1.3 billion at a go. So, I want the amount that he has spent for payment of the vaccines.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, encore une fois, je tiens à préciser. Ce n'est pas le Ministère des Finances qui paye. Le ministère des Finances alloue le montant au ministère concerné pour payer les factures. Donc, pour cela, pour avoir vraiment toutes les précisions, il faudrait adresser une question spécifique au ministère concerné.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Merci, M. le président. Peut-on savoir les R 372 millions versées par la *STC*, c'est pour quelle période?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, c'est pour la période juillet à décembre selon les informations que nous avons reçues au niveau du ministère des Finances, de la planification et du développement économique.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: La question était adressée initialement au ministre de la Santé et du Bien-être. Donc, j'espère que vous pourrez répondre. De ces 372 millions de roupies qui ont été transférées au ministère de la santé, êtes-vous en mesure de nous dire s'il y a des vaccins qui ont été achetés mais qui n'ont pas été utilisés aujourd'hui après la date d'expiration ?

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, j'ai bien écouté la question de l'honorable membre mais je suis dans l'incapacité de répondre à cette question. Il doit comprendre. Je m'occupe des finances.

Mr Speaker: This question has been sufficiently canvassed. We move to the next question.

WHEELCHAIRS - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, BENEFICIARIES & SUPPLIERS - JANUARY 2020-MARCH 2022

(No. B/24) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to wheelchairs, she will –

- (a) state the criteria for eligibility therefor, indicating the number of beneficiaries thereof since January 2020 to date, and

(b) table the list of suppliers thereof, indicating the contract amount in each case.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that prior to June 2021, the procurement exercise for assistive devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids and spectacles used to be carried out at the level of my Ministry. However, over the past few years, my Ministry has been facing major constraints regarding the procurement of assistive devices and this was causing considerable delay in the delivery to beneficiaries.

Moreover for the year 2020, tenders for the procurement of wheelchairs did not materialise in view of COVID-19 pandemic. With a view to ensuring a better and timely service to beneficiaries, since June 2021, the Ministry has adopted a new policy which is to provide assistance in cash instead of assistive devices in kind to beneficiaries.

The cash grant for the purchase of a wheelchair amounts to Rs5,000 per beneficiary. Suppliers have been invited through a Press communiqué dated 06 August 2021 and 21 January 2022 to register themselves with my Ministry in order to provide assistive devices to the beneficiaries.

As at date, 19 suppliers have already registered themselves with the Ministry to provide wheelchairs and I must say that the registration process is on-going throughout the year. The list of registered suppliers is being tabled.

The eligibility criteria for wheelchair is as follows –

- the household income of the applicant should not exceed Rs30,000 monthly, and
- a registered medical practitioner should certify that the applicant suffers from a physical incapacity and requires a wheelchair.

I am further informed that since January 2020 to 23 March 2022, 3,351 beneficiaries have been provided with a wheelchair in kind while 1,307 have benefited from a cash grant for the purchase of wheelchairs. Thank you.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether her Ministry is considering –

- (a) to increase the threshold of the household income for eligibility, and
- (b) to increase the present sum of Rs5,000?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, we are working on that.

Dr. Gungapersad: In a reply to a PQ B/730 dated 20 July 2021 by hon. David, you were not of the opinion that it was a *parcours de combatant* for people to get a wheelchair

and you said that there would be a sensitisation campaign in your reply. Now, at this moment, did you carry out any research to find out whether this campaign has successfully been done so that people eligible for these wheelchairs, they do get it without any difficulty?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have issued Press communiqué to the public to inform them of the change in policy. Officers have been on the radio. I am of the opinion that – well, the public has been made aware of this change in policy throughout the year.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon Minister a question? In fact, it is a clarification as well. It is a case in my constituency of a baby, who was born with a disability, and she benefited a chair in her childhood days. But now, she has grown up and the situation has become very complex, warranting her to have another chair that is suited for her. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether in that case - it is a poor family - if the chair costs maybe Rs15,000, she can still apply for this and benefit the Rs5,000 and the family forks out the Rs10,000 or the Ministry is quite rigid on this?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said in my reply, a cash grant of Rs5,000 is submitted to a beneficiary if his application is successful. The person can top-up on the Rs5,000 to buy a wheelchair suitable to him or her. There is no issue.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Il est clair que cette somme de R 5,000 qui est allouée aux bénéficiaires est dérisoire. De ce fait, peut-on savoir par rapport aux revendeurs qui se sont fait enregistrer auprès du ministère de l'Intégration sociale, de la sécurité sociale et de la solidarité nationale, peut-on connaître les prix qui sont pratiqués par ces revendeurs ?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: I must say that when we decided - you cannot say that the grant is *dérisoire* because a survey was done before we come up to the sum of Rs5,000. The cash grant was estimated on the basis of a market survey carried out in 2021. It depends on the quality of the wheelchair; one wheelchair might cost Rs100,000, one wheelchair might cost Rs5,000, it depends on the ...

(Interruptions)

You understand also that Government has to decide on a price and we want to give satisfaction to all our beneficiaries, so there needs to be a cut-off price. If you are saying that

I have to give a wheelchair of, let's say, Rs50,000 to one beneficiary, what do I do with the others? I have to give satisfaction to all our...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a responsible Government, I think we have to give satisfaction to all our beneficiaries. As I have said in one of the questions put to me, we do know that the actual situation is very difficult due to COVID-19 pandemic, and so on and so forth, we are working on something, then we will decide whether we will have to increase the cash grant or not.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

COVID-19 - PCR TESTS – ACCREDITED MEDICAL LABORATORIES

(No. B/25) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to PCR testing for COVID-19, he will state –

- (a) the medical laboratories accredited by his Ministry to perform same, excluding the Central Laboratory at the Queen Victoria Hospital, indicating the number of tests carried in each case over the past 18 months, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the regulation of the price thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (a) of the question, I am informed that a total of nine medical laboratories have been provided authorisation to carry out PCR testing for COVID-19.

As at date, the total number of RT-PCR tests carried out by these medical laboratories stands at 566,702. They are as follows –

Laboratory	Number of RT PCR tests
AIRPORT HEALTH LAB	313,555
WELLKIN	156,576
NOVA LAB	73,508
CITY CLINIC	16,065

AEGLE CLINIC	3,840
BIOSANTE	2,013
FERRIERE CLINIC	274
ABIOLABS	53
MULLER	818
Total	566,702

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the average cost for an RT-PCR test in a public hospital amounts to around Rs2,000 while in a private laboratory, the cost revolves around Rs2,200 to Rs2,500. Therefore, the question of regulating the price of this test does not arise.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Minister. The Minister is surely aware of the plight of many employees of the civil and private service, frontliners, among others who for mostly medical reasons are not recommended for vaccination and have to do PCR testing every 10 days to have access to their place of work or perform other administrative duties. Will the Minister consider free PCR testing in the public service for these groups of people as it is costing them a fortune to have it done on a regular basis?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the information of the hon. Member is not correct because all those who are not eligible to do the vaccine have to see a panel of Doctors who will issue a Medical Certificate for non-eligibility to them. And for those categories, the PCR tests are free.

Dr. Aumeer: I have a different opinion. As I work in the private sector, I have seen everybody...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, don't explain, put your question!

Dr. Aumeer: Can the hon. Minister explain to the House the rationale of his Ministry not offering PCR testing to any patient attending the public hospital, having upper respiratory symptoms during this pandemic, and knowing quite well that the sensitivity and the

specificity of rapid antigen test is very much lacking as compared to the efficiency and low false-positive of PCR testing?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will again go back to the previous question, because I have to make it clear that all those who detain a Medical Certificate for non-eligibility are provided with free PCR tests. It is in the public sector not in the private sector, of course. They only have to get this certificate of non-eligibility for the vaccination.

Now, as regards the second question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the rapid antigen test is as sensitive and specific as the PCR test. It can be conducted at a lower cost. The results are available immediately. Patients who are admitted in hospitals and who are having symptoms, - in fact for all patients admitted in hospitals - the test carried out is the PCR test. And for all patients who are coming to the hospitals in case they do present with any symptoms, they will be doing the rapid antigen test. Mr Speaker, Sir, this has been the trend for nearly the last 6 months now and this has proved to be efficient, it is a proper means of doing the test. It is not only in Mauritius, in fact, in so many countries, the same procedures and the same principle are being adopted.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**NEW SOUILLAC HOSPITAL - RENAL DIALYSIS PATIENTS -
FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE**

(No. B/26) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Fact-Finding Committee set up to inquire into the death of renal dialysis patients at the New Souillac Hospital, he will state the –

- (a) quantum of fees paid to the chairperson and assessors thereof, and
- (b) findings and recommendations thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to PQs B/26, B/40, B/44, B/45, B/55, B/60, B/68 and B/84 together as they are all related to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on behalf of all Members on this side of the House, I wish to, once again, express my sincere condolences to the families of the dialysed patients and to all those who have lost their dear ones due to COVID-19.

The demise of the dialysed patients under treatment at the New Souillac Hospital in 2021 was indeed a very difficult moment for our country.

The House will recall how patients themselves, as well as their relatives, expressed their grief either through social media, through the Press or through verbal or written complaints to the Ministry. Their complaints were numerous and pertained to the food, hotel converted into a quarantine facility, transport issues, shortened dialysis sessions and to the medical care provided by the staff.

Mr Speaker Sir, following these issues, on 23 April 2021, Government decided to set up a Fact-Finding Committee to enquire into the management and death of dialysis patients, including their stay in quarantine, with emphasis on sanitary precautions which occurred from March to April 2021. The Fact-Finding Committee was chaired by Mrs Deviyanee Beesoondoyal, GCSK, former Judge, and comprised of two Assessors namely Dr. Pang Ngah Shin Chitson and Dr. Soobodsing Mareeachalee. The Fact-Finding Committee submitted its report on 31 December 2021.

In light of the report, a Monitoring Committee was then set up by my Ministry to monitor the effective implementation of the recommendations under the chairpersonship of the Director General, Health Services and members namely, a Deputy Permanent Secretary, an Assistant Permanent Secretary, Director Health Services in public health, two Consultants-in-Charge in internal medicine, one Consultant-in-Charge in nephrology and the Dialysis Coordinator.

The Committee examined the report which contained four recommendations made by the Fact-Finding Committee pertaining to the following points –

- (i) Dialysis Units;
- (ii) Infection Control;
- (iii) Patient Management, and
- (iv) Patient Education.

Mr Speaker Sir, the first set of recommendations of the Fact-Finding Committee was on Dialysis Units. The Fact-Finding Committee recommended that all Dialysis Units should be declared permanently restricted zones. These units should restrict sick visitors from entering the unit so as to minimize the risk of infections to patients and the medical personnel. Dialysis Units should ensure that all personnel, patients and visitors wear face

masks at all times. COVID-19 positive patients should be dialysed in isolation in a separate area.

Mr Speaker Sir, in regard to the implementation of the above recommendations, dialysis centres around the island had already put in place those appropriate measures. The Monitoring Committee was, therefore, satisfied that these measures had already been addressed and unauthorised persons were no longer allowed access to the Dialysis Units.

Secondly, the Fact-Finding Committee made recommendations on infection control and recommended that all patients undergoing dialysis as well as all personnel working in the Dialysis Units should be fully vaccinated. It is recommended that dialysis patients be vaccinated at the dialysis clinics.

Further, double masking should be resorted to immuno-compromised patients, even indoors. Movement of staff, within the Dialysis Unit should be minimised and food and drinks should be prohibited within the same unit. Regular PCR tests should be done for both patients and staff at regular intervals. Private transport or hospital ambulances are recommended. All closed spaces should implement cross ventilation and encourage air extractors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the above recommendations, the House will recall that Mauritius rolled out its COVID-19 vaccination campaign in January 2021.

As from the very beginning, vaccines were being administered in priority to health frontliners, the elderly, patients suffering from comorbidities as well those undergoing dialysis. The appeals, on this side of the House, encouraging vaccination have been constant ever since.

However, in January 2021, while we were adamant on encouraging vaccination, some were bound on instilling fears and doubts in the minds of our population.

Erroneous and inappropriate comments were made on the quality of vaccines being offered to the population. There was a whole polemic on consent forms whereby some were once more irresponsible enough to discourage people from getting...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...vaccinated. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the very first PNQ set by the Leader of the Opposition when Parliament resumed on 23 March 2021, pertained to the vaccination consent forms.

It should be noted that in February 2021, my Ministry set up a dedicated team for the vaccination of dialysed patients when the latter came for their sessions. At that time, in February 2021, 81 patients were undergoing dialysis at the New Souillac Hospital and only 2 accepted to get vaccinated.

Today, things have changed. I am informed that all patients currently undergoing dialysis at the New Souillac Hospital are fully vaccinated with their booster doses. Island wide, the Monitoring Committee found that 98% of all patients undergoing dialysis are fully vaccinated with their booster doses.

As a result, I wish to inform the House that as at date 600 patients out of 1,500 undergoing dialysis in Mauritius have been infected with COVID-19 and the mortality rate has been very low even with the Delta variant circulation and thanks to their vaccination status. The remaining 2% mainly consist of patients who are unwilling to get vaccinated despite sensitisation and educational campaigns. We once again strongly encourage them to get vaccinated.

The Monitoring Committee further agreed that one surgical mask, worn properly, offers adequate protection in immuno-compromised patients. It was also noted that Rapid Antigen Tests are already being done for both patients and staff at regular intervals. Moreover, the Infection Prevention Committee has already made its recommendation and actions have already been taken for the revision of hospital ambulances for dialysis patients and the implementation of cross ventilation in closed spaces.

Mr Speaker, Sir, thirdly, on patient management, the Fact-Finding Committee recommended that all facilities such as CT scan and dialysis facilities should be provided at COVID-19 treatment centres. A public relations desk should be set up at each hospital to provide all relevant information to patients' relatives. Patients with severe comorbidities should not be left in quarantine centres alone, a relative should be allowed to stay with them. Strict sanitary precautions should be taken at all times. And during the transport of patients, a proper logbook should be kept in the vehicle. Operational guidelines at all levels of care for epidemic outbreaks should be in writing, circulated and updated according to the epidemic conditions and prevailing WHO guidelines.

The Monitoring Committee noted that there are eight dialysis machines which can dialyse a total of 48 critically ill COVID-19 positive patients and CT scan facilities are provided at new Souillac Hospital. A public relations desk would be provided at each hospital with a healthcare assistant specialised in public relations.

Furthermore, an undertaking was issued to relatives willing to stay with the dialysis patients during their quarantine period. All sanitary measures are being respected at the dialysis units and Operational Guidelines have already been established and are being put into practice.

Lastly, the Fact-Finding Committee made recommendations on Patients' Education and recommended that dialysis patients should be informed about the risks of COVID-19 infection and all information related to COVID-19 should be made accessible to them.

Telehealth options should be promoted so that patients can get appointments, medical advice and other information over the phone or computer. The Monitoring Committee was of the view that sensitization campaigns are being conducted by the Ministry to educate immuno-compromised people about the benefits of vaccination.

With regard to telemedicine, I wish to inform the House that this recommendation will need further consultation and amendment in legislation before its implementation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Committee overlooking the implementation of the Fact-Finding Committee's recommendations has concluded that more than 90% of the recommendations made have already been implemented. All the above recommendations pertain to the improvement of the dialysis service in my Ministry. The remaining 10% of the recommendations to be implemented is mainly for the telemedicine options where patients can get appointments and advice online.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Fact-Finding Committee started its operations on 05 May 2021 until 16 December 2021. The Fact-Finding Committee has held 25 sittings. The Chairperson, the two Assessors and the Secretary would be paid as per established fees set by the Pay Research Bureau and the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms. The Chairperson is paid Rs4,650 per sitting and the Assessors 50% of the fees payable to the Chairperson, and the Secretary, 30% of the fees payable to the Chairperson. I am also informed that the members have not yet been paid.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the findings of the Fact-Finding Committee, it should be noted that they are mainly of personal and individual nature.

I further wish to inform the House that the recommendations of the Fact-Finding Committee's Report on the improvements to be brought to the dialysis services in the Ministry, there have not been any conclusions that have pointed towards acts of negligence at the level of the new Souillac Hospital and the Tamassa Hotel (Quarantine Centre) in the report of the Fact-Finding Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the report will not be made public as these cases have been referred to the Medical Negligence Standing Committee for an enquiry to be conducted on a case to case basis so as to determine whether there have been any cases of alleged medical negligence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover the Medical Health Professionals are regulated by authorities such as, the Nursing Council, the Pharmacy Council, the Allied Health Professional Council and the Medical Council. These bodies operate within specific legislations. In addition, such cases of alleged medical negligence can also be referred to the Medical Tribunal, which is chaired by a sitting Judge and it is his mandate to determine any act of medical negligence.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, unlike for a Commission of Enquiry, a Fact-Finding Committee has no statutory basis and the persons who produced the report and the witnesses before the Committee are not given any legal immunity. You will understand that divulging the Fact-Finding Committee's Report may put these persons at risk of litigation.

Mr Speaker: I will advise Ministers not to lump 8 questions in one reply because this becomes very boring. So, your Chief Executive has to take note of that.

Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I heard the...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You did. One by one!

He is a lawyer! He knows how to defend himself and make it with his case! Please!

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, on 20 April 2021, the hon. Minister of Health refused to give a Fact-Finding Committee. And today, he is refusing to table the report of the Fact-Finding Committee. He is also refusing to tell the House the findings of that Committee despite us having spent hundreds of thousands of rupees for that Committee. So what we would like to know, hon. Minister, what the parents of the deceased people want to know: has

there been any finding as to how 11 people who did not have COVID went for treatment in a dialysis centre under your Ministry caught COVID and died?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply, I have already given the reasons why the Fact-Finding Committee's report cannot be made public and at the same time, I have already also mentioned that what are the different statutory bodies that can deal with cases of medical negligence.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not the first time that Fact-Finding Committees' reports are not made public. If you can recall, in the past we had so many reports of Fact-Finding Committees, under different Governments that were not made public. I can just recall two committees: the Committee on the MITD which was submitted in March 2013 which was not made public; the report of the Fact-Finding Committee of D.Y. Patil Medical College...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: ... was never made public. So, this is not the first time, Mr Speaker, Sir. The horse racing report also; there are so many reports that have not been made public.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *11 dimoune inn mor!*

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Minister, why the matter should be referred to medical negligence when the purpose of setting up the Fact-Finding Committee was to enquire into and report whether there has been any act of negligence which led to death? So, why despite having the Fact-Finding Committee report, you are referring the case to a Medical Negligence Committee? Has there been any case of malpractice or whatever which should be referred to Police, that is why you do not want to lay the report, make the report public?

Mr Speaker: No, do not impute motives. Put questions.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, again in my replies I have already given the reasons why the recommendations of the report are more on the improvement of the services and there are already statutory bodies where they can inquire and give their recommendations as to whether there is an act of negligence or not.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already met the relatives of the deceased patients. I have already explained to them about the report and they have all agreed that these individual cases, individual experiences, individual complaints have to be dealt with the different councils, with the different regulatory bodies.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the Minister aware that the relatives of the deceased and those who are still undergoing renal dialysis have agreed to waive their confidentiality to make sure that the report is rendered public in the name of transparency and accountability?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already given that reply. I think I have to read it again that the Fact Finding Committee has no statutory basis and the persons who produce the report and the witnesses before the Committee are not given any legal immunity. You will understand why this information cannot be made public.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. From the Minister's reply, listening to the four recommendations that he has enumerated from the Fact Finding Committee, it appears that the blame of those who died lies solely at their feet because they refused to come for vaccination. Therefore, can I ask the Minister whether, as part of the whole setup of looking after dialysed patients, his Ministry failed to provide adequate medications such as Remdesivir, Tocilizumab, anti virals in March 2021 which led to their demise?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the hon. Member's observation that these patients have not come to do their vaccination and that has caused their serious state. This is his observation, this is not my observation. There is a Fact Finding Committee which has given its report and I have already given all the main headings of the report.

Now, as to the question of drugs, I believe the hon. Member can accompany the patients' relatives to attend the different complaints whenever they will be taken by the Medical Negligence Standing Committee and he can always give his views to that Committee and then let the Committee, as a Corporate Body, do their report and submit their report. We will go according to the report. We are not here to make any judgement on what has happened or what has not happened there.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the Minister inform the House if ever he has any comparative data on the mortality rate amongst dialysed COVID-19 patients in Mauritius compared to that of other developed countries? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the mortality rate among COVID-19 positive patients in Mauritius stood at 13%. In Reunion Island, during the same period, it was 15% according to the *néphrologue en charge* of the Reunion CHU Professor Vacher Coponat.

International medical literature also shows that the percentage of non-vaccinated dialysed patients getting infected with COVID-19 and passing away varies between 20% to 28% including developed countries. The rate in Great Britain is 20%, 25% to 26% in USA and 28% in the province of Ontario, in Canada. I will table the literatures where the hon. Member can get this information precisely.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members will bear with me. There are eight questions lumped in one reply. So, I have to give an opportunity to each mover of the question. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Merci, M. le président. Peut-on savoir si l'honorable ministre va considérer rendre publique une version qui soit expurgée de ces informations qu'il dit classifiées ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply, I have already given all the recommendations of the Committee; it is public. So, you will get it in Hansard.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if he has obtained legal advice from the State Law Office if this report of the Fact Finding Committee cannot be tabled before this House and cannot be made public? Does he have a legal advice to that effect?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is why I could read it loudly, that is why I have given the conclusion of this report. This is from the State Law Office.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Oui, merci, M. le président. M. le président, le fait de référer le rapport du *Fact-Finding Committee* au *Medical Negligence Committee* pour enquêter, n'est-il pas justement un aveu qu'il y a bel et bien eu négligence médical à l'égard des 11 patients dialysés qui sont décédés ?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, based on the setting up of the Fact Finding Committee according to what has been their terms of reference, that has been the report but at the same time we cannot bypass the other institutions that will deal with the complaints. If in that report you would have the questions that have been raised as to whether there is medical negligence, whether these patients have not been given proper care, if it would have been taken into the recommendations of the report, obviously there would have been no point of sending the relatives to the different Committees that is, the Medical Negligence Committees or to the other Committees. But the report is what I have given you, the recommendations. At the same time, now, for these individual cases, the complaints have to be lodged at the Medical Negligence Committee because I believe you will understand that every relatives have different complaints and that should be dealt with those Committees where they can specifically determine whether there is negligence from the nursing side, from the doctor's side or from any others. So, we have to do this part of the job. That would be because they are public officers, they are recruited by the Public Service Commission. We have to follow the proper procedures before determining whether there is negligence or not.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**EMMANUEL ANQUETIL BUILDING – NATIONAL LAND TRANSPORT
AUTHORITY – SUB-OFFICE**

(No. B/27) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Sub-Office of the National Land Transport Authority situated at the Emmanuel Anquetil Building, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for urgent measures to be taken to reduce waiting time for business transactions thereat.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, prior to 01 July 2020, the process for the transfer of ownership of a vehicle was quite time consuming for customers as it involves different procedures undertaken at the level of the NLTA which is situated at Cassis and the Registrar General's department which is based at the Emmanuel Anquetil Building in Port Louis.

With a view to reducing this processing time and facilitating the transaction, the sub-office at the Emmanuel Anquetil Building was introduced by my Ministry on 01 July 2020 as a one stop shop facility to streamline the procedures. Both the NLTA and the Registrar

General's department are now sheltered under one roof. Thereafter, most customers call at the sub-office of the NLTA situated at the Emmanuel Anquetil Building for transactions relating to the renewal and payment of motor vehicle licenses and more specifically for the transfer of ownership of motor vehicles. Some 715 such transactions are effected on a daily basis at this sub-office.

The processing time of the different transactions depend on the type of transaction. The average processing time for the renewal and payment of MVL does not exceed 10 minutes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am made to understand that initially there was no ticketing system in place at the Emmanuel Anquetil Building sub-office. However, since August 2021, a ticketing system has been installed thereat and the waiting time for a transaction has been significantly reduced to 5 minutes or less.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister provide the figures with regard to the other units or other sub-sections compared to the Emmanuel Anquetil branch?

Mr Ganoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the figures. In fact, the transfers at the other sub-offices are as follows, if I take the month of January of this year –

- Plaine Lauzun, sub-office 848;
- SGS, Forest Side 2,057;
- Flacq, sub-office 1,813;
- Emmanuel Anquetil, Port Louis 2,619

But, I must say that the figures remain high at the Head Office at Cassis, which amount to 12,877. Which means, Mr Speaker, Sir, that if we did not introduce the Emmanuel Anquetil Building in Port Louis, the Head Office at Cassis would have had to deal with 2,619 transactions more per month.

Mr Speaker: You have another one?

Mr Abbas Mamode: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Please, go ahead!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Does the NTA have any place in Internet or a digitalised system so that people do not have to come physically to make queries?

Mr Ganoo: In fact, this is a good question, Mr Speaker, Sir. The problem, basically, with the number of our citizens attending at the different NLTA offices is, Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, due to the increase of our fleet of cars. According to the statistics, Mr Speaker, Sir, in December 2020, our fleet statistics stood at 600,053. December 2021, our fleet stood at 622,988. In the year 2020, in a year of confinement, 23,452 vehicles were registered, Mr Speaker, Sir. And in 2021, last year, 24,947 vehicles were registered for last year, again a year of confinement.

So, therefore, the NLTA has already embarked on the digitalisation of its services, Mr Speaker, Sir. An online platform for the renewal of motor vehicles has been introduced. The system provides a 24/7 service to customers, accessible from the comfort of their home. The phase 1 concerns renewal and payment of MVL for private vehicle owned by individuals only.

In fact, there are different projects. The Motor Vehicle Licence Online – phase 1. Phase 1 has nearly been completed, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are at the moment, connecting the IT system of the Mauritius Post Limited and that of the NLTA to ensure updated information regarding motor vehicle licence renewed at the post office. Testing is being finalised at the level of the Mauritius Post for payment to be shared by the Ministry and the NLTA. And there will be the introduction of the SBM gateway on the MVL Online Platform pending the introduction of an integrated payment system, which will be shortly implemented by the Bank of Mauritius to further enhance payment modes and facilities.

The project which has been completed, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to digitalisation at the NLTA is the online reservation of registration mark from FN-ZZ - this is completed. The online reservation for new series of personalised registration marks up to 9 characters, that is, your name on your plate, this also has been completed. And we are in the process of completing also the MVL Online phase 2, which would consist of renewal of MVL in all types of vehicles, including taxi, contract car, bus, and 'A', 'B' carrier, Mr Speaker, Sir. This platform would enable more vehicle owners to renew their MVL online, especially, for example, during times of lockdown. This would help to decrease the influx of public calling

at the NLTA counters. Discussions are still going on with SIL with regard to the finalisation of the scope of the project.

Mr Osman Mahomed: The question has been canvassed. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MAURITIUS SOCIETY OF AUTHORS - BOARD COMPOSITION

(No. B/28) **Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the administrative board of the Mauritius Society of Authors, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the said Society, information as to the present composition thereof.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the present Board of the Mauritius Society of Authors is chaired by Mr Gérard Daniel Louis, OSK and includes seven Ex-Officio members as well as Mr Mewanand Taucoory, MSK who is a member having knowledge and experience in the field of copyright and related rights in line with the Copyright Act 2014.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the composition of the present Board of the Mauritius Society of Authors.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister just remind us of the initial composition of the Board of the Mauritius Society of Authors?

Mr Teeluck: With your permission, it would be easier for me to table the complete list. So, I will provide it to the House.

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Peut-on-savoir de l'honorable ministre quand aura lieu l'élection des artistes qui siègeront sur le *Board* de la MASA ?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, the last elections were held on 22 April 2018 and the previous Board reconstituted in May 2018. At about the end of the mandate, elections were due in June last year. But, unfortunately, because of sanitary restrictions and the fact that prior to any election there has to be a general assembly with a quorum of minimum 70 members, it was not possible for MASA to hold the election, so we are waiting. We have had discussions with the Electoral Commission. Last week, I personally met the Chairperson and the Director of MASA to discuss on the possibility; of course, we will seek legal advice on this matter to see if we can independently uphold a general assembly and hold the election as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. A Solidarity Fund was set up by the Mauritius Society of Authors in 2010 to support the artists. Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the eligibility criteria? Thank you.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, this question is not related to the main question, but I will, nevertheless, provide some information on the Artist Solidarity Scheme as mentioned, which was set up in February 2010, by way of a decision of the Board. The purpose was to provide a monthly payment of pension to artists at the age of 60. And, the Board at that time approved that the contribution of each member to the development of culture will be taken into consideration together with the individual financial contribution towards the Social Welfare Fund. So, basically, these were the criteria at that time that were put in place to determine whether pension is paid or not. Right now, there is a sub-committee working on a revised set of criteria to ensure that we are able to accommodate more artists in this pension scheme. As at now, we have approximately 25 beneficiaries of the scheme, which is still operating as per the 2010 rules.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

Mr David: Merci, M. le président. Le *Board* de la MASA est donc amputé de ses sept artistes élus depuis bientôt un an. Alors, on a bien compris la raison que ce sont les restrictions sanitaires. Pour autant, puis-je demander au ministre la raison pour laquelle le mandat précédent des artistes n'a pas simplement été prolongé jusqu'aux prochaines élections et donc, quelle est la légitimité du *Board* actuel pour prendre des décisions aux noms des artistes alors que ces derniers n'y siègent pas?

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, it would have been the practice if they were appointed members that their mandate be either renewed or extended, pending elections but unfortunately, these seven members were on Board by virtue of an election. So, by the end of their mandate, they automatically no more form part of the Board of MASA.

Cependant, M. le président, il faut savoir que ce Board comprend également un président qui est lui-même a very reputed and respected artist, en occurrence, Mr Gérard Louis but also another artist appointed again by virtue of the law, qui est Mr Taucoory, another respected Member of the creative Industry.

So, *venir dire que la MASA ait amputé des membres, des artistes*, is not really correct because we have today, two members of the creative, of the music industry who still form

part of the Board. And, *je suis tout à fait d'accord que cette balance des artistes et la représentation administrative doivent être respectées* but unfortunately, as I said, we are subject to certain sanitary restrictions whereby we are not being able to organize the elections.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. Par rapport à la nomination du directeur par intérim de la MASA, peut-on savoir si le *Board*, dans son ensemble, a donné son accord ou est-ce un choix imposé par le ministère?

Mr Teeluck: The Board operates independently and as far as I know, I have been informed that it was a unanimous decision of the Board. Of course, I will need to refer to the Minutes to be able to provide the hon. Member with precise information but all decisions being taken are *à la base* of the consent of all members. So, I do not think I have any particular reason to think otherwise.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/47 and B/78 have been withdrawn.

Next Question!

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - PRICE STRUCTURE REVIEW

(No. B/29) **Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to petroleum products, he will state if consideration will be given for a review of the price structure thereof.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I will reply PQ B/29 and B/100 at the same time as they relate to the same subject matter.

The price structure of Mogas and Gasoil exists since several decades and has been used as a method of raising revenue. The price structure has evolved from the nineties where it contained elements such as stamp duties, Ocean Loss, Construction of Reservoir, Road Fund among others to what it is today.

The contributions in the price structure of Mogas and Gasoil are fixed and do not change when prices of petroleum products are reviewed.

The *Association des Consommateurs de l'île Maurice* and other associations have made representations to the Government to review the price structure and reduce the amount of contributions which are paid by consumers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important to note that when preparing the National Budget, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development imperatively has to forecast both expenditure and revenue. The revenue derived from the price structure finances a number of public projects which include maintenance of roads, purchase of COVID-19 vaccines, provision of subsidies on gas cylinders, flour, rice amongst others and I am sure that the hon. Member would understand this crucial exercise because when the MMM was in power in 1996, a contribution was introduced in the price structure of Gasoil for the construction of reservoirs.

In view of the implications of the proposals, the matter is being thoroughly examined by the Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Mr Uteem: Thank you hon. Minister for saying that you are going to review the price structure. Is the hon. Minister aware that in December 2014, when the Government took office, the retail price of Mogas was Rs45, out of which, Rs21 were taxes and levies. Today, it is Rs61.3 out of which Rs30.2 is taxes and contributions. So, under this Government, there has been an increase by 40% of levies, taxes and charges. Does the hon. Minister find that acceptable?

Mr Callichurn: The question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Uteem: Do you find it acceptable that under your Government, the contribution and taxes on petroleum products have increased by 40%?

Mr Callichurn: Yes, because several taxes have been introduced, specifically to finance the COVID-19 vaccines and other items.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le ministre, vous êtes bien placé pour savoir que la population souffre énormément ces jours ci avec l'inflation des prix. Ces *levies*, ces taxes sur les produits pétroliers ont été introduits depuis quelques temps et plus de 50% dans le structure de prix des produits pétroliers, 50% est des taxes. Est-ce qu'on peut prendre de votre réponse, M. le ministre, que vous prenez l'engagement avec le ministère des Finances pour voir comment on peut revoir cette structure pour enlever ce fardeau sur les consommateurs et les ménagères ?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, the decision to introduce or remove levies or items from the price structure of Mogas and Gasoil is a policy decision and it is taken by the Government. I cannot commit myself neither can the Ministry of Finance, I am sure. It is a collective decision which has to be taken by Cabinet.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you. Hon. Minister, now that nearly one million people have already been vaccinated, we just heard, with two doses and 600,000 already boosted, then considering the number of COVID-19 vaccines already in stocks and the Minister previously mentioned Rs379 m. collected for the last six months, will you consider to waive the Rs2 as tax on Mogas and Gasoil immediately?

Mr Callichurn: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot take it upon myself to remove any levy or taxes. It will be for the Government to decide and I understand the point made and I refer to the reply given earlier by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, we will give due consideration.

Mr Speaker: This question has been sufficiently canvassed. I move to the next question.

CWA - WATER RIGHTS - PRIVY COUNCIL JUDGMENT

(No. B/30) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water rights, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the actions the Authority proposes to take in line with the judgment given by the Privy Council on 14 February 2022 in relation thereto.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the outset, it is worth highlighting that the right to draw water from rivers and canals in Mauritius is governed by the provisions of the Rivers and Canals Act of 1863 and the Central Water Authority Act of 1971. As per the Rivers and Canals Act of 1863, a right to use water from a river or stream for a specific purpose has to be brought before and decided by the Supreme Court of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to briefly enlighten the House on the background of the case before coming to the Judgement delivered by the Privy Council on

14 February 2022, following hearing of the Appeal on 10 June 2021. The appeal case basically concerns water rights in the River Tatamaka.

Mr Speaker Sir, in January 2004, the Central Water Authority had initiated legal proceedings before the Supreme Court of Mauritius on grounds that CIEL and one of its group members, namely, Tropic Knits Ltd, do not hold proprietary rights over the water drawn and were using the water unlawfully. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, Réunion Sugar Factory Ltd. was allocated a water right in River Tatamaka by the Supreme Court in 1888. Later, it sold part of its land to CIEL together with the water rights. Since 1989, Tropic Knits Ltd had been diverting water from Tatamaka River without having applied to the Supreme Court.

The CWA claimed that it was entitled to payments for the use of water from River Tatamaka via Reunion canal for industrial purposes by Tropic Knits Ltd and that claim amounting to Rs4,958,071.65 had remained due as at 30 November 2003.

In a judgment dated 08 July 2016, the Supreme Court allowed CWA's claim, holding that CIEL and Tropic Knits Ltd do not hold proprietary rights over the water and were using the water unlawfully.

CIEL and Tropic Knits Ltd. appealed against this verdict and the Court of Civil Appeal, in its judgment dated 12 September 2018, again dismissed same ordering CIEL and Tropic Knits Ltd to pay CWA for the water used as from January 1994.

Subsequently, in 2018, CIEL and Tropic Knits Ltd appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the main contentions of CIEL and Tropic Knits Ltd were that –

- (i) they already owned the water drawn from River Tatamaka and Reunion Canal, pursuant to the 1888 order or by prescription;
- (ii) CWA did not supply the water and cannot charge for water use, and
- (iii) CWA's claim is barred by prescription.

The Privy Council, in its Judgement of 14 February 2022, and with regard to the ownership of the waters in the River Tatamaka and the Reunion Canal held that a claim in prescription could not succeed because the waters of the rivers formed part of the *domaine public*. Further, under the Mauritian law, the right to a share in the waters of a river is not a right of property that the borderer owns and may sell or transfer. It was not private property or a private good. Thus the only right of the borderers was a right of *jouissance*.

For all these reasons, the Privy Council held that the Appellants had not established any rights to the water in the river or the Reunion Canal.

Mr Speaker Sir, as for the entitlement of the CWA to levy charges on Tropic Knits Ltd for the use of water from River Tatamaka and the appropriate period of prescription, the

Privy Council considered that the CWA was entitled to claim water charges from Tropic Knits Ltd from the date claimed, that is, January 1994, on the strength of regulations prevailing under the CWA Act.

It further ruled that CWA's claim was not barred by prescription. Hence, on ground of all the above, the appeal made by CIEL and Tropic Knits Ltd was unanimously dismissed by the Privy Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that action is being taken by the CWA following the delivery of the judgement. Furthermore, the amount due by Tropic Knits Ltd over the past 10 years is being finalised with the Legal Adviser and will be communicated to Tropic Knits Ltd. for settlement. The Water Supply Regulations under the CWA Act will further be amended to include a tariff for surface water.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the judgment of the Privy Council is a landmark judgment in the administration of water rights in Mauritius. My Ministry is consulting with the Attorney General's Office on the policy implications of this judgment.

Moreover, this judgment will be taken into consideration in the context of the elaboration of the Water Bill, which will be introduced in the National Assembly.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the volume used by holders of water rights?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, records on water rights granted in the 18th and 19th centuries are scattered and incomplete, and as such, have not been validated. But a rough estimate based on information on water entitlement and abstraction returns submitted by water users - we depend on those submissions - can situate the volume of water pertaining to water rights to around 220 to 300 million m³ per year depending on the rainfall situation and any other climatic conditions prevailing. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, to allow for a better estimate, a proper assessment and monitoring mechanism needs to be established taking into consideration the changing circumstances and climatic situation. As I stated earlier, this mechanism would be provided in the forthcoming Water Bill.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Minister. In your answer, you mentioned some important years like 1863, 1971 whereby the Rivers and Canals Act and the CWA, I am sure the hon. Minister will agree that the land used for sugarcane plantation is decreasing and that

water rights have been allocated since decades now. Will the Government consider to review the water rights allocated for irrigation?

Mr Lesjongard: True it is, Mr Speaker, Sir, as stated by the hon. Member, water rights were granted in the 18th and 19th century and were based on the climatic conditions prevailing in those days. Those climatic conditions are no longer valid due to considerable changes in the land use patterns and climate scenarios. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the growing scarcity of water resources and the daunting challenges due to climate change definitely impact on the water sector and calls for us to revisit the existing water rights.

As I stated, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the preparation of the Water Bill, these fundamental objectives will be couched in that Bill which is under preparation at the level of my Ministry to ensure the long term sustainability of the resource in the best interest of the population at large.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/51, B/61, B/90, B/93, B/49, B/66, B/48 and B/65 have been withdrawn. Next question!

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION - ABANDONED LAND - BOOSTING

(No. B/31) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to agricultural production, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to rehabilitate abandoned land to boost same.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, in these uncertain times of COVID-19 pandemic and international geopolitical turmoil, safeguarding food security is even more than ever crucial. I wish to assure the House that my Ministry is working relentlessly to consolidate our food security policy.

On the issue of land abandonment, this is not a new phenomenon. It has been present and persistent for decades. It has been exacerbated when the European Union (EU) reduced the price of sugar by 36% and also with the abolition of sugar quota.

On the sugarcane sector, Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to reversing this situation of land abandonment and ensuring that our agricultural land is optimally cultivated, my Ministry sought the assistance of the World Bank for a review of the sugarcane sector.

Following the recommendations of the World Bank report, which have been made public, my Ministry has implemented several measures to assist and encourage sugar cane

planters to continue cultivating their land or even put their previously abandoned lands under cultivation. These include –

- a) Remunerating planters and producers at an increased rate of Rs3,300 per ton of sugar produced or Rs3.50/kwh and on this front, I am informed that a first payment has been affected to planters in December 2021.
- b) Maintaining the guaranteed price of Rs25,000 per ton of sugar to planters producing up to 60 tons of sugar.
- c) Exempting planters producing up to 60 tons of sugar from payment of the SIFB insurance premium for Crop 2021.
- d) Providing facilities to small planters under the Cane Replantation Scheme to enable them to renew their sugar cane plantations and even bring back their previously abandoned land under cultivation. I am informed that as at date, 228ha of abandoned land out of a targeted 350ha for this financial year has already been replanted.
- e) Investment in modern/high-tech equipment and machinery to enable the planters' community to benefit from timely and efficient land preparation and harvesting services.
- f) Providing planters access to certification and accreditation to sustainability labels and facilities to increase productivity of speciality sugars which is more revenue generating.

As regards the non-sugar sector, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry also provides a plethora of financial schemes to assist small planters. These schemes are intended to promote agricultural production and boost food security, and curb the problem of land abandonment. A few of these schemes are –

- a) Acquisition of solar powered cold room and CCTV cameras;
- b) Purchase of agricultural equipment for the crop & livestock sector;
- c) Purchase of processing equipment and packaging (including design);
- d) Fruit protection/banana bagging;
- e) Refund on sheltered farming nets/plastic covering affected by natural calamity;
- f) Pasture development and cattle breeding;

- g) Promotion of bee keeping, and
- h) Household gardening scheme.

Furthermore, farmers are supported through various measures such as –

- a) an allocation of a one off grant of Rs20,000/ton on purchase of potato seeds;
- b) a guaranteed price for local ware potato and onion;
- c) a cash compensation for crop losses at the rate of Rs6000/A for open field and sheltered farming for a maximum of 5A, and
- d) a subsidy of 50% on the cost for buying fertilizer for one crop cycle at the rate of Rs7,500/A for open field and a maximum of 10A for sheltered farming.

The House, Mr Speaker, Sir, may also take note that some 8000 acres of agricultural State land falling under the purview of my Ministry are currently leased to small food crop growers, livestock farmers and cooperatives. In addition, 321 acres of agricultural State land have been allocated to Landscape Mauritius Ltd to be leased to members of the public for agricultural purpose under the land bank programme.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the Minister whether he can give us an update on land suitability index and if he will be able to tell us what is being done to prevent encroachment on prime agricultural land?

Mr Gobin: Unfortunately, for this specific question on the index, I will need notice of the question. But if the hon. Member is hinting at land speculation for other purposes, for example, residential, IRS, ERS, and all that, there is a Statutory Committee; it is created by Statutes which look into land conversion. That committee is set up under the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act. It is chaired by the supervising officer of my Ministry and it is composed of a number of officers from institutions concerned with that. So, the Land Conversion Committee, once again which is a Statutory Committee, advises Government taking into consideration the issues of prime land, land under irrigation, and then of course, the planning guidelines of the Ministry of Housing and the local authorities. All this is taken into consideration before an application is recommended.

Mr Speaker: The table has been advised that PQs B/53, B/73, B/94, B/43, B/56 and B/88 have been withdrawn. Time over!

MOTION**SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

The 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 Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.11 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO - VISIT ORGANISED BY MAURITIUS - OUTCOME**

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to make a Statement on the outcome of the first visit organised by Mauritius to the Chagos Archipelago from 08 to 22 February 2022.

As the House is aware, following the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019 which authoritatively determined that the Chagos Archipelago is, and has always been an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, legal proceedings were initiated by Mauritius in June 2019 against Maldives under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the delimitation of the maritime boundary between the two States in the Chagos Archipelago region since Maldives refused our invitation to negotiate the boundary bilaterally.

In December 2019, Maldives raised preliminary objections to the jurisdiction of the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, *inter alia*, on grounds that the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago had not been definitively settled, that the United Kingdom was an indispensable party to the case and, therefore, the Chamber should not take any decision in its absence. Following the exchange of written pleadings and the holding of an oral hearing, the Special Chamber gave, on 28 January 2021, a Judgment in which it rejected all the preliminary objections raised by Maldives. In so doing, the Special Chamber confirmed that Mauritius has undisputed sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. It further ruled that the UK has no claim to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, and that its position amounts to nothing more than assertions that are not supported by international law.

The proceedings are still at pleadings stage. In the first round of written pleadings, Mauritius submitted its Memorial on 25 May 2021, and Maldives, its Counter-Memorial on 25 November 2021. During the second round of written pleadings, Mauritius will have to submit its Reply by 14 April 2022, while Maldives will have to file its Rejoinder by 15 August 2022. The Chamber will thereafter organise oral pleadings before giving its judgment probably sometime next year.

In the context of the preparation of its Reply, Mauritius considered it necessary to carry out a scientific survey of Blenheim Reef which is found in the north-east of the Chagos Archipelago, and which is likely to play a significant role in the delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives. Thus, a scientific survey was carried out from 08 to 22 February by a delegation led by Ambassador Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations in New York, and comprising technicians from Mauritius, two Swedish marine surveyors, three of our external lawyers, five representatives of the Chagossian community, a Medical Health Officer and a Nursing Officer from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, a photographer from the Government Information Service of my Office as well as journalists from the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Guardian, The Atlantic magazine of the United States, and the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation.

It was initially planned that the delegation would leave for the Chagos Archipelago from Maldives, and to that end, Mauritius requested the Maldives authorities to facilitate the visit. Regrettably, the Maldives imposed conditions that were not acceptable, including exclusion of lawyers, media representatives and other officials. Consideration was then given to the departure of the delegation from Rodrigues. However, the captain of the vessel advised that the journey would be very tough if the delegation would depart from Rodrigues. As a result, the delegation left for the Chagos Archipelago from Seychelles on 08 February 2022.

For this expedition, Government chartered the 'Bleu de Nîmes' which met all our requirements for this kind of survey because it is equipped with four high speed tenders and a zodiac which allowed the scientists to traverse the shallow waters on and around Blenheim Reef.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this was the first visit that Mauritius organised in the Chagos Archipelago since our independence, and I am pleased to say that the visit has been highly successful as it has enabled us to achieve four key objectives –

- **First: Collection of crucial data**

Mauritius has been able to collect crucial data for the maritime delimitation case which it has brought against Maldives. This data will assist both Mauritius in preparing its Reply and the Special Chamber in delimiting the maritime boundary. The survey of Blenheim Reef and appurtenant areas was carried out over a period of 4 days from 13 to 16 February by the two foreign surveyors, Mr Ola Oskarsson and Mr Thomas Mennerdahl, with the help of high end equipment to measure the tidal movement and to observe drying reefs and corals. Their report will be used in our submission which is under preparation and will be submitted next month.

For their part, officers of the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration of my Office observed the currents and waves on the outer edge of Blenheim Reef as well as other visible formations and took pictures of fishes and coral formations underneath the sea and on the seabed.

I must point out that there has never been any such survey in the past, and I express the hope that the survey might assist the ITLOS Special Chamber.

- **Second: Confirmation of our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago**

The visit has allowed Mauritius to confirm its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, particularly following the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and the Judgment of the Special Chamber of ITLOS. In this regard, the following concrete actions were taken in the exercise of our sovereignty –

- (i) the flag of Mauritius was raised on the vessel to indicate the vessel's destination;
- (ii) on 11 February 2022, when the vessel entered the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mauritius around the Chagos Archipelago, the captain marked the event by making the siren of the 'Bleu de Nîmes' resound several times;
- (iii) as the vessel approached Peros Banhos, foreign nationals who participated in the visit were handed a permit which had already been prepared by the Passport and Immigration Officer for their admission to the Chagos Archipelago, a part of the territory of Mauritius;
- (iv) the flag of Mauritius was raised on Peros Banhos, Salomon Islands and Blenheim Reef. A commemorative plaque was also installed by the Mauritius delegation on Peros Banhos to commemorate its visit there;

- (v) signs posted by the British authorities, purporting to establish regulations for visitors, were removed;
- (vi) an outward port clearance was given to the vessel 'Bleu de Nîmes' on its departure from the Chagos Archipelago by the Mauritian authorities, and
- (vii) a health clearance certificate for COVID-19 in respect of the participants and the crew of the vessel was also issued by the Mauritian health authorities on their departure from the Chagos Archipelago.

- **Third: Visit of the Chagossians to their place of birth**

I am pleased that Government was able to keep its commitment to take some members of the Chagossian Community back to their birthplace.

The visit has provided the opportunity to representatives of the Chagossian Community to return to their birthplace for the first time without any foreign escort or restrictions and without having to be told where they could or could not take photographs. It was with great joy and enormous satisfaction that the representatives of the Chagossian Community set foot on *Ile du Coin* which was the first stop on Peros Banhos islands and which also was the island on which Mr Olivier Bancoult, Mrs Marie Liseby Elysé and Mr Marcel Humbert were born. The delegation was able to visit what is left of the church and the cemetery where some of the ancestors of the Chagossians were buried. Both of these places were in a deplorable state and the representatives of the Chagossian Community were able to clean them and restore the dignity such places deserve. A similar exercise was carried out on Salomon islands, where Mrs Rosemonde Bertin was born, much to the satisfaction of the Chagossians who were able to pay their respect and homage to their ancestors buried there. Mrs Suzelle Baptiste, born on Diego Garcia, was also part of the delegation.

- **Fourth: Uncovering the untruths spread by former officials of the UK**

The visit has received a significant coverage in the international media. The journalists from the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Guardian sent out daily reports of what they saw on the islands which contradicted the narrative that the United Kingdom has maintained over the years, in particular that the Chagossians were in the Chagos Archipelago as contract workers, and that there was no permanent population. The Atlantic magazine will in due course publish an article on the visit. The visit was widely reported in other international newspapers and media. This coverage has created greater awareness in the international community and, in particular, among British citizens of the violations of

international law committed by the United Kingdom which illegally excised the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence and forcibly removed the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago, as well as of the United Kingdom's continued breaches of international law.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to also inform the House that as soon as the vessel reached the Mauritian Exclusive Economic Zone of the Chagos Archipelago, it was observed that two British vessels travelled from Diego Garcia in the direction of 'Bleu de Nîmes' and one of them which was identified as the 'Grampian Frontier', a patrol fishing vessel hired by the so-called "British Indian Ocean Territory", in effect shadowed the movements of the Mauritian chartered vessel. It was clear that it was monitoring the activities of the Mauritian delegation, and this despite the fact that, following a Note Verbale which Mauritius had addressed to the United Kingdom asking for confirmation that it would not in any way interfere with the Mauritian expedition, it had assured Mauritius that as a country respectful of UNCLOS, it would not impede the expedition. These vessels entered the territorial sea of Mauritius in manifest violation of international law.

Government has protested against the presence of the United Kingdom vessels. The UK has sought to deny that its vessels were monitoring the activities of the Mauritius delegation.

After the return of the delegation, following a question in United Kingdom Parliament, the Minister of State at the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office replied that the flags which the Mauritian delegation planted on the islands had been removed and that the United Kingdom was disappointed that we had turned a scientific survey into, and I quote –

“a political stunt”.

Let me state right away that far from being a stunt, this expedition has brought to light the dishonesty, the untruths, and disinformation which the United Kingdom has wanted the world to believe for so many years.

Government also unreservedly condemns the unlawful entry of the United Kingdom into the territory of Mauritius, and the removal of the Mauritian flags from the Chagos Archipelago. Such an act has been committed in blatant violation of international law. A note of protest has been sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to convey

the strong objection of Mauritius to the removal of its flags from the Chagos Archipelago. At a time when the United Kingdom is protesting Russia's occupation of a part of the territory of Ukraine, it is a manifest hypocrisy for the United Kingdom to seek to continue to illegally occupy a part of the territory of Mauritius and the continent of Africa.

I need not point out that the scientific survey was carried out in a part of the territory of Mauritius, as authoritatively determined by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of 25 February 2019 and confirmed by the United Nation General Assembly Resolution 73/295 and the Judgment of the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 28 January 2021.

The actions taken by Mauritius during the scientific survey, including the raising of its flags in the Chagos Archipelago, are fully compatible with the exercise of its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank Seychelles and, in particular, His Excellency President Wavel Ramkalawan, for all the assistance they have extended to us and which facilitated the organisation of this visit to the Chagos Archipelago.

To conclude, may I say that Government intends to organise other visits to the Chagos Archipelago in the future, and I very much hope that I shall be able to participate in one of those visits. In addition, I reiterate that Government is fully committed to the implementation of a programme for resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago of our nationals, particularly those of Chagossian origin, who were forcibly removed from their homes in manifest violation of international law. I once again call on the United Kingdom to get on the right side of history and to abide by the rule of law and the pronouncements of the International Court of Justice.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(4.32 p.m.)

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to make...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening now? Nobody has the floor except the Minister. Please!

Mr Ganoo: ... a Statement on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has ushered the world in an unprecedented period of instability since its outbreak on 24 February 2022.

The conflict between the two largest European countries, which has entered into its second month, threatens the foundations of international peace and security, with far-reaching consequences.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the outset, I would like to emphasise that my Ministry has been closely following the escalation of tensions over the borders of Ukraine since December 2021. The flurry of diplomatic exchanges between Russia and the Western countries as from January 2022 failed to find a path for a peaceful settlement. Indeed, on 24 January 2022, Russia recognised unilaterally the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk Republics in Eastern Ukraine and announced the launch of a special military operation against Ukraine.

There was an immediate condemnation of the military intervention by the UN Secretary General, the EU and by NATO countries when the issue was taken up at the UN General Assembly on 04 March 2022. Mauritius voted in favour of the Resolution condemning the aggression against Ukraine which was overwhelmingly adopted by 141 votes.

The decision of Mauritius was in accordance with the UN Charter and based on our attachment to the basic principles of our foreign policy namely the respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all States, the inviolability of frontiers and the need to refrain from the threat or the use of force against any State. Mauritius has always favoured peaceful coexistence and the settlement of disputes through negotiations.

Mauritius was guided by the same principles when the UN General Assembly adopted a “Resolution on the Humanitarian Consequences on the Aggression against Ukraine” on 23 March 2022. Moreover, we took the same stance at the UN World Tourism Organisation, the *Francophonie*, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Over the years, Mauritius has been consistent in its approach, whenever any of the fundamental principles of our Foreign Policy were at stake, be it in Kosovo or in the pursuit of our struggle over the Chagos Archipelago.

As the conflict unfolded, I had several meetings with the Ambassadors of France, the United Kingdom, the European Union, the United States, and Russia explaining our position and urging for the resumption of dialogue as a way forward.

While the present conflict is the result of a military intervention, the position of Mauritius is not aimed at targeting the Russian people as the people-to-people relations are permanent whatever the circumstances are. In this respect, I wish to inform the House that I met the Russian Ambassador in Mauritius.

Indeed, Mauritius as well as many African countries recall that the 1960 UN Declaration against Decolonisation was introduced by the former USSR, then comprising, *inter alia*, the former Soviet Union, the former Soviet Republics of Russia and Ukraine. The long-standing friendship between Africa and the People of Ukraine and Russia will once again stand the test of time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that since 16 February 2020, a crisis cell to assist the Mauritians in distress in Ukraine was set up by my Ministry to monitor the situation of Mauritian nationals, particularly Mauritian students in Ukraine with a view to facilitating their repatriation. A Hotline was also set up and a number of calls were received on that hotline.

Two communiqués were issued to request our nationals in Ukraine to get in touch with the Ministry and our Embassies in Moscow and Berlin, as we were finding ways to come to their rescue.

Some ten Mauritian nationals studying and others living with their families in Ukraine were successfully repatriated; some of the students were at Dnipro, Kiev, and Sumy.

I would like to express my appreciation to all stakeholders for their crucial role in assisting our nationals trying to leave Ukraine, and during their transits in Poland or Russia on their way to Mauritius.

While on this chapter, I would like to pay tribute to the Mauritian diaspora, which not only helped in organising the repatriation from Ukraine to border countries but also provided food and shelter to those in need. This spontaneous support illustrates once again if need be, the strong patriotic fibre of our fellow citizens which invariably manifests itself in times of crisis. And it is in such dire times, that the solidarity and patriotism should prevail.

I should also emphasise, Mr Speaker, Sir, that from the start we had contacted friendly countries for help and we were monitoring their efforts as they were addressing the plight of their nationals and students trying to leave Ukraine. Here, I would like to thank all the countries which have responded positively to our call for assistance. And in the same breath, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank our two Missions in Moscow and Berlin who spared no efforts to promote support and solace to our Mauritian nationals.

As regards the situation of the Ukrainian families stranded in Mauritius, the Government has requested compassionate consideration of extension of their stay in Mauritius owing to the situation occasioned by the start of the war in Ukraine. In the same vein, following representation by the Ukrainian families and the Honorary Consul of Ukraine, the Ministry of Tourism is looking at possible options for alternative accommodations for their prolonged stay, if need be, in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine crisis are getting more complex as the situation worsens and remains still beyond the grasp of any measurable yardstick.

On the human side, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 4 million Ukrainians have already left the conflict for Poland, Moldova and Romania. A second wave of 4-5 million is expected to leave their country if the conflict lasts for an additional month. Any enduring conflict would lead to an international tragedy.

So far, the conflict has claimed more than 10,000 lives, including a large number of civilians and the destruction of infrastructure and human settlements have been unprecedented in Europe since 1945. On the economic front, the military operation led to the enactment of an unprecedented number of sanctions, freezing the assets of Russian entities and prominent Russian nationals by the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan and the European Union.

The sanctions as well as the switching of Russian Banks from the SWIFT system have the potential of disrupting the world economy in an unforeseen manner, adversely and indiscriminately affecting all countries. Indeed, due to the uncertainties and the indiscriminate impact of the sanctions, the United States and the United Kingdom have stated that the sanctions will be removed as soon as the conflict ends.

In Africa and the Middle East, the impact of rising prices of commodities will have disruptive social and economic consequences. Mauritius will not be spared by the adverse

impacts of these conflicts and my Ministry is participating in several inter-ministerial committees which have been judiciously set up by the Prime Minister to monitor the situation and help in finding ways and means to mitigate the impact thereof.

Conscious of the fact that the import of various commodities will be impacted by the conflict, the Government is identifying alternative sources of imports so as to ensure that there be no disruption in the supply of basic commodities.

Likewise, we are exploring ways of assisting our nationals in Russia with respect to impediments regarding transfer of funds.

The inherent situation is compounded by the fact that insofar as commodities are concerned, the world has a reliance on Russia and Ukraine for the import of wheat maize and sunflower oil supplying half of the world wheat and $\frac{3}{4}$ of sunflower oil and $\frac{1}{4}$ of maize supply.

With the conflict in Ukraine, the global economy is taking a double hit after the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, where we are seeing increases in price of commodities, natural gas and fertilizers.

Added to that, Mr Speaker, Sir, the economic sanctions imposed on Russia are worsening the situation even further. We are already seeing turmoil in financial markets with increased market volatility, but the full impact is yet to be determined.

Furthermore, restrictive measures on airspace and security concerns are complicating all trade routes going through Russia and Ukraine. The conflict will thus likely have a negative impact on global air freight capacity and raise air cargo prices as carriers are forced to take longer routes and spend more money on fuel.

With increased financial volatility, complex global supply chain reconfigurations and mounting trade costs, the global economic outlook is very gloomy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, should the conflict linger, countries like Mauritius, which are fuel and food import dependent nations, may see worsening balance of payments and rising inflation. The combination of very high prices of food and fuel and the inevitable macroeconomic tightening will place severe pressure on the economy and economic growth may be affected worldwide.

Faced with the current situation, our Government has already met with relevant institutions to assess the impact of the Ukraine-Russia crisis on our economy. A Working

Group is considering the different responses to address high inflation in the short run while at the same time promoting conducive macroeconomic conditions for economic resilience and recovery. But the impact on Mauritius of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, Sir, will depend on the duration of the conflict and on, *inter alia*, the consequences on our main trading partners.

Mr Speaker, Sir, war has never been a solution to conflicts, and civilians have always been the first victims. This reminds me of a famous quote –

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”

This is what the Republic of Mauritius led by our Prime Minister believes in.

This is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have consistently urged all parties concerned to take the path of concertation and dialogue with a view to deescalating the situation and finding a lasting solution which will address the concerns of all sides.

I thank you for your attention.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

- (a) The National Flag, Arms of Mauritius, National Anthem and Other National Symbols of Mauritius Bill (No. I of 2022)
- (b) The Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Bill (No. II of 2022).

MOTION

DWELLINGS & POPULATION CENSUS

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. Padayachy):

“This House is of opinion that –

- (a) *A census of dwellings shall be taken for Mauritius between 30 April 2022 and 20 June 2022 to collect statistics in respect of every building;*
and

(b) *A census of population shall be taken for Mauritius between 19 June 2022 to 01 August 2022, in respect of all persons alive at midnight on the night on 03 July 2022”.*

M. le président, c'est avec beaucoup d'honneur et de solennité que nous retrouvons les bancs de l'Assemblée, d'autant plus que cette rentrée parlementaire débute avec l'introduction d'une motion sur un sujet de grande importance, celui du recensement des logements et de la population mauricienne.

A ce titre j'ai l'honneur de présenter aujourd'hui devant les membres de cette auguste Assemblée la motion à voter en vertu de la Section 9 de la *Statistics Act* de 2000, telle que modifiée en 2011 et en 2017.

Précisément, ladite section stipule qu'avant de procéder à un recensement, le Président de la République doit, sous réserve de l'approbation par résolution de l'Assemblée nationale, prendre un décret à cet effet. Le décret peut alors préciser la date ou les dates auxquelles ou entre lesquelles le recensement devrait être conduit.

M. le président, avant de détailler le contenu de la motion, permettez-moi de dire quelques mots sur l'importance que revêtent les exercices de recensement.

Comme nul n'est censé l'ignorer, Maurice possède une longue histoire et une grande expertise en matière de recensement.

En fait, le premier recensement national complet effectué à Maurice date d'il y a près de 300 ans, en 1735 pour être tout à fait exact. Depuis 1851, les recensements ont lieu tous les dix ans, sauf dans des circonstances exceptionnelles.

Le recensement des logements et de la population de 2022 sera ainsi le 19ème de la série.

Je tiens à préciser que le recensement sera mené par Statistics Mauritius, conformément aux principes et recommandations par les recensements de la population et des logements, révision 3 des Nations Unies.

M. le président, le recensement des logements et de la population est l'exercice le plus crucial que nous conduisons pour assurer la collecte d'informations sur les caractéristiques démographiques, sociales et économiques de la population et des ménages de la République de Maurice.

Force est de constater que le contexte sanitaire et économique des deux dernières années nous l'a brutalement rappelé. Alors que Maurice a été frappé par la pire crise de son histoire, le gouvernement mauricien, sous le leadership du Premier ministre, a formulé une série de politiques publiques efficaces sur la base de données tangibles.

C'est notamment à l'appui des statistiques que ce gouvernement a pu freiner les vagues de la Covid-19 tout en protégeant les ménages et en accompagnant la reprise économique.

Je rappelle volontiers que *Statistics Mauritius*, avec le concours de la Banque Mondiale, avait, dès les premiers mois de la pandémie, conduit des enquêtes téléphoniques auprès des ménages mauriciens pour mieux appréhender les effets socio-économiques de la Covid-19 sur la population et les opérateurs mauriciens.

Ces données avaient grandement contribué à aiguiller notre réponse face à la crise pour toujours mieux protéger la population dans un contexte en rapide et permanente évolution. Une réponse historique et efficace, qui je le souligne, a été la 4^{ème} plus importante au monde selon la Banque Mondiale.

M. le président, le recensement à venir va guider notre action. Il permettra de mettre en exergue des situations ou enjeux de premier plan souvent complexes à saisir sans de tels outils.

Je cite volontiers le grand mathématicien Henri Poincaré qui disait avec beaucoup de véracité -

« Le monde et la science ont leurs données propres, qui se touchent et ne se confondent pas. L'une nous montre à quel but nous devons viser, l'autre, le but étant donné, nous donne les moyens de l'atteindre. »

Pour prendre les bonnes décisions, il est essentiel de disposer des données de qualité périodiquement mises à jour.

Sans recensement méthodique et régulier, il serait périlleux sinon pernicieux de formuler des politiques publiques adéquates pour répondre aux enjeux qui se cachent derrière ces données.

M. le président, le recensement à venir que nous soumettons au vote de l'Assemblée sera effectué en deux phases - d'abord le recensement des logements puis suivra le recensement de la population.

Sur le premier point, nous proposons d'entreprendre le recensement des logements de 2022 entre le 30 avril 2022 et le 20 juin 2022.

Le recensement des logements permettra de recueillir des informations sur l'emplacement, le type et les caractéristiques des bâtiments, des unités de logement et des établissements commerciaux et industriels, ainsi que sur les conditions de vie des ménages, notamment les équipements du logement et l'accès à l'électricité, à l'eau et à l'internet. Il couvrira quelque 400,000 ménages et environ 260,000 établissements.

Quant au recensement de la population, il est proposé de le réaliser entre 19 juin 2022 et 01 août 2022, auprès de toutes les personnes vivantes à minuit dans la nuit du 3 juillet 2022.

Le recensement de la population permettra de dénombrer la population résidente de la République de Maurice et ses caractéristiques géographiques, démographiques, économiques et éducatives, telles que la composition par âge, le niveau d'éducation, l'emploi et les situations de handicap. Il fournira également des informations sur le niveau de développement des circonscriptions municipales et des zones de conseil de village. Ce recensement couvrira une population d'environ 1,3 million d'habitants.

M. le président, les informations recueillies lors du recensement seront d'une aide précieuse pour le gouvernement, le secteur privé ainsi que pour les ONG. Les informations provenant du recensement des logements permettront au gouvernement d'orienter sa politique du logement vers les plus vulnérables et d'implémenter les programmes de logements sociaux avec efficience et efficacité.

En outre, le secteur privé pourra s'appuyer sur ces informations nouvellement mises à jour pour sélectionner des sites appropriés pour l'implantation des installations industrielles, commerciales et de services, ainsi que pour le développement commercial des logements résidentiels.

Par ailleurs, en ce qui concerne le recensement de la population, les informations recueillies sont utilisées par les autorités mauriciennes compétentes à des fins d'élaboration de politique, de planification et d'administration, tandis que le secteur privé mettra à profit ces données pour prendre des décisions avisées en matière de production et de fourniture de biens et de services.

Quant aux ONG, elles tireront bénéfice de la conduite de ce recensement en ciblant toujours plus finement leurs interventions et programmes d'assistance auprès de ce qui en ont le plus besoin.

M. le président, à l'instar de la stratégie du gouvernement en matière de transformation numérique, ce recensement sera placé sous le signe de la digitalisation. En effet, *Statistics Mauritius* utilisera, pour la première fois, des tablettes et des logiciels informatiques appropriés pour collecter les informations reçues.

Je tiens ici à remercier chaleureusement le gouvernement de la République du Kenya, et en particulier le Bureau national des statistiques du Kenya qui a eu l'amabilité de prêter gratuitement quelque 8, 000 tablettes pour les besoins du recensement. Nous remercions également *le United Nations Population Fund* (l'UNFPA) qui a pour sa part facilité cette collaboration.

En ce qui concerne le logiciel qui sera utilisé, *Statistics Mauritius* a développé l'application CAPI (*Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing*) avec l'assistance technique du *US Census Bureau* et des consultants de l'UNFPA.

Par ces deux biais, nous rejoindrons ainsi la ligue des pays qui utilisent les avancées technologiques pour la collecte de données. Cela permettra une collecte de données plus précises et plus fiables ainsi que l'obtention accélérée des résultats.

M. le président, sur la base des consultations menées avec différentes parties prenantes, et au regard du contexte mauricien ayant largement évolué depuis le dernier recensement de 2011, nous proposons d'ajouter un certain nombre de nouvelles questions au recensement à venir.

D'une part, pour ce qui est du recensement des logements, nous proposons l'introduction de 6 nouvelles questions, à savoir –

- (a) la première question additionnelle consistera à savoir si le bâtiment fait partie d'une zone de morcellement. Ainsi, des informations seront obtenues sur le profil des habitants de ces zones;
- (b) deuxièmement, la question additionnelle consistera à savoir si le ménage dispose d'équipements modernes tels qu'un réservoir de récupération des eaux de pluie, un puits d'absorption des eaux de pluie, un bac à compost, un climatiseur, un four et une voiture;

- (c) la troisième question additionnelle consistera à connaître la disponibilité de parkings et le type de parkings;
- (d) la quatrième question additionnelle consistera à recueillir des informations sur la distance entre une maison située à côté d'une rivière ou d'un canal et cette dernière;
- (e) en relation avec la quatrième nouvelle question et la disponibilité d'un puits d'absorption pour évacuer l'eau de pluie, la cinquième question additionnelle consistera à savoir si la maison a déjà été touchée par une inondation, et enfin
- (f) la dernière question qui sera introduite consistera à savoir si la personne a accès à un espace extérieur pour des activités de loisirs et la proximité de cet espace par rapport à la maison.

D'autre part, en ce qui concerne le recensement de la population –

- (a) la première question additionnelle consistera à savoir si une personne du ménage a été déclarée à la *Civil Status Division*. Cela nous aidera à avoir des informations concrètes sur la portée du nombre de personnes non déclarées;
- (b) la deuxième question additionnelle consistera à savoir si le réseau internet est utilisé dans le cadre du travail à domicile, à des fins éducatives ou à d'autres fins;
- (c) la troisième question additionnelle concernera la participation des membres du ménage à une activité physique ou sportive;
- (d) la quatrième question additionnelle consistera à savoir si les membres du ménage effectuent un contrôle médical régulier;
- (e) la cinquième question additionnelle portera sur le pays de naissance et la date d'arrivée des personnes qui sont venues s'installer à Maurice, et enfin
- (f) la sixième et dernière question à introduire portera sur les Mauriciens qui ont émigré, leur pays de résidence, la date de leur départ, la raison de leur départ et leur niveau d'instruction.

M. le président, le coût total de la réalisation de ce recensement est estimé à 365 millions de roupies et mobilisera quelque 8,000 personnes sur le terrain. Les dispositions appropriées ont été prises dans le Budget en cours ainsi que dans le Budget indicatif pour l'année fiscale 2022-2023.

Je tiens à rassurer les membres de la Chambre ainsi que la population sur le fait que *Statistics Mauritius* prendra les mesures nécessaires pour minimiser les contacts entre les ménages et le personnel du recensement.

Le personnel observera l'ensemble des protocoles sanitaires en vigueur tels que la distanciation physique, le port de masque et l'application de désinfectants pour les mains afin de minimiser les risques de transmission du virus de la Covid-19.

M. le président, sur ces considérations techniques, je conclus mon propos en réitérant l'importance de la tenue régulière de tels recensements.

Les données qui en découlent nous permettront d'implémenter plus efficacement notre programme socio-économique pour faire de Maurice un pays toujours plus développé, toujours plus résilient.

A l'appui de ces statistiques et conformément à la vision portée par l'honorable Premier ministre, nous atteindrons les objectifs de développement robuste, inclusif et durable que nous nous sommes fixés.

C'est en ce sens que le recensement des logements et de la population mauricienne en 2022 sera une nouvelle pierre à l'édifice national que nous bâtissons ensemble.

Mr Ganoo seconded.

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

At 5,00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.52 p.m., with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated. I will call upon hon. Reza Uteem for his speech.

(5.53 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The last time a census of dwellings and population was carried out in Mauritius was in 2011. According to information available on the website of Statistics Mauritius, a field force of around 7,400 officers were mobilised for data collection and the budget for the 2011 Census was Rs200 m.

We just heard from the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development that for Census 2022, there will be a mobilisation of 8,000 officers and the

budget will now be Rs365 m.; an 82% increase compared to the 2011 Census which cost Rs200 m.

Statistics Mauritius provides an interesting insight as to why censuses are carried out. From its website, one can read, and I quote –

“...population estimates based on census data are used to –

- determine the allocation of grants to local authorities and to socio-religious organisations;
- determine electoral boundaries and calculate the number of members to be elected to Parliament from each constituency;
- determine the distribution of government funds to the Municipalities and District Councils, and finally
- give government and other users information they can use to support planning, administration, policy development and evaluation activities.”

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the census would provide vital information which will assist Government in planning and formulating policies, but also, which will help the private sector when engaging in investment project.

According to Section 9 of the Statistics Act, the census needs to be approved by the National Assembly first and only then will the President by order direct that a census be taken from Mauritius. So, first and foremost, there has to be an approval by this House, and then the President can make an order. The law is clear. Section 9(2) of the Statistics Act provides that -

“The Director of Statistics shall not take a census until regulation has been made by the President prescribing –

- (a) the particulars and information to be furnished on the taking of the census; and
- (b) the manner and form in which, the times and places at which, and the person by whom the particulars and information shall be furnished.”

This is one of the rare cases, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where the President is given statutory powers to make regulations. So, first the National Assembly votes, approves the census, then the President passes an order, then there is a regulation setting out the

information to be asked in the survey. The regulations, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will typically annex a copy of the questionnaire, the return to be completed by the prescribed persons.

Now, the question that we have to ask ourselves is how are we going to vote a motion to approve a census dwellings and population when there is nothing before this House as to the questionnaire that will have to be answered by prescribed person? If it is always like this, why is that the case?

The Deputy Speaker: Address to me!

Mr Uteem: Does that mean that we have to continue like this? How can we, Members of the House, authorise the taking of a census without knowing what are the questions that are going to be asked. And ascertaining these questions are very easy because as soon as we will get the approval, the President will give the order and regulations will come out, and I am sure that already the questionnaire is ready to be annexed to a regulation to be made by the President. So, why can't we, hon. Members of the House, have a copy of the questionnaire so that we can make an informed decision, so that we can comment on it? If there is any question which we think ought to be on this census, we can make proposal. If there is any question which we think should not be on the census, we can make the comment and then there will be a meaningful debate, and at the end of the debate, there can be a consensus about what question to be asked in the census, because there may be very confidential questions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The obvious one which comes to mind is whether the census will require a person to state his community. As hon. Members are aware, on 14 December 1982, hon. Members of this august Assembly unanimously voted in favour of an amendment to paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 of the Constitution to provide that the allocation of additional seats under the best loser system would henceforth be made on the basis of the 1972 official census and not on the basis of the latest official census as was the case before 1982. So, following the amendment of 1982, Mauritians were no longer required to state which community they belong to in any census. But that was back in 1982.

Since then, as hon. Members know there has been a decision of the Human Rights Committee for the United Nations, which had been seized by *Rezistans ek Alternativ* following the 2005 elections. The Committee held that the continued maintenance of the requirement of mandatory classification of a candidate for General Elections without the corresponding updated figures of the community affiliation of the population in general

would appear to be arbitrary and violates Article 25 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Consequently, Mauritius was required to update the 1972 census with regard to community affiliation. So, it is not an academic point. The House, the population need to know whether in the coming census, we are going to ask members of the population, Mauritians to state which community they belong, because this is what has been recommended by the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations. And we all know that there is a case pending before the Supreme Court brought by *Rezistans ek Alternativ* precisely to give effect and implement the decision of the Human Rights Committee for United Nations.

And I know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir that there are diverging views among hon. Members of this august Assembly, diverging views which have been made public as to whether a census on community basis should be taken again. So, it is a live issue and let me reiterate the position of the MMM on the matter. The MMM has not changed its position since the historical constitutional amendment of 1982. The MMM is not in favour of asking Mauritians to declare their community. To require a Mauritian to declare its community is seen by the MMM as a leap backward in nation-building and it is likely to open a Pandora box because many Mauritians do not want to be limited to the four declared communities. Different ethnic groups may wish to have their own separate community and with intercommunity and interfaith marriages,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Uteem: ... many Mauritians do not recognise themselves within the four declared communities.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before today, this august Assembly is going to be required to vote on a census, the very least, we need a commitment from the hon. Minister of Finance that in the coming census, the 2022 census, there would be no question whereby Mauritians would be required to declare their community. So, because we do not have this information before this House, this is why I was duty-bound to raise it.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem, you have one minute.

Mr Uteem: Yes. The second issue I would like to raise is whether a person will be required to state his religion in the return. The same issue was raised in 2011 intervening on the debate on a motion for a population census back in March 2011. The then Minister of

Finance, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, stated there are some 200 religions selected with regard to what people have answered in answer to the question: “To which religion do you belong?”. 200 religions! And I quote hon. Pravind Jugnauth –

“Therefore, first of all, it does not make really sense, but then, I agree that we should not be asking questions about religion and more so, that probably some people might think that it is because we want to direct subsidies with regard to religion. So, that is also not included.”

So, it was very clear at the moment the motion for census in 2011 was debated and voted in this House, the hon. Minister of Finance said that there would be no question about religion. But, when the census came out, the question P17 asked “Write the religion as reported by that person and if you don’t have a religion, write no religion.” So, again I would ask the hon. Minister of Finance to clarify whether we would be requiring people to declare their religion in the census or he will give the undertaking which the hon. Minister of Finance gave in 2011 that there will be no question as to religion.

And I will end up, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you give me half a minute, by just drawing the attention of the House to what I think is an oddity, an oddity about the motion that we are required to vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Mind it, you have 30 seconds only because you are well over the time and I am guided by what the Whip of the Opposition says.

Mr Uteem: Please, half a minute.

The Deputy Speaker: Come on.

Mr Uteem: “A census of the population shall be taken for Mauritius between 19 June to 01 August, in respect of all persons alive at midnight on the night of 03 July 2022.” So, I take it that we are voting a motion to start the census on 19 June 2022. This is what it says: “census shall be taken between 19 June 2022 and 01 August 2022”, but then “in respect of all persons alive at midnight on the night of 03 July 2022.” So, may I know from the hon. Minister how is it that if a person filling the return on 19 June 2022, he will be aware if members of his household will be alive on 03 July 2022. I know there was a similar motion in 2011 but I would not ask you to follow what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said because it was done in the past we should continue with it. I ask the hon. Minister to see to it that such oddity is rectified in the summing-up. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. François, please.

(6.06 p.m.)

Mr J. F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Please it is a gentle request, try to be 10 minutes; I am not going to be lenient.

Mr François: Surely. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am just delighted to be back in Parliament after a long absence amidst of COVID-19 pandemic. I will speak very briefly on this motion.

On 22 March 2011, in this House, I agreed on the census motion presented by the then Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Pravind Jugnauth. Today, 11 years after, Parliament is again in front of this very important motion, presented by Dr. the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, for the 19th census for the Republic of Mauritius, which states that –

“This House is of opinion that –

A census of dwellings shall be taken for Mauritius between 30th April 2022 and 20th June 2022 to collect statistics in respect of every building; and

A census of population shall be taken for Mauritius between 19th June 2022 to 01st August 2022, in respect of all persons alive at midnight on the night on 03rd July 2022”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is clear, that the data of the census, will allow central and local government and many other organisations or institutions to target their resources more effectively and to plan for social and economic services, such as housing, education, health and transport services, from the evolving needs of our society as rightly pointed out by hon. Padayachy.

Nowadays, census of population data is vital for budgeting, research, planning purposes from accurate, reliable and precise data. And you will observe in relation thereof, that there is also on today’s Order Paper the Town Planners’ Council Bill to be debated at a later stage.

In addition, to the population and housing data, my question is: what are our new expectations from the 2022 Census?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is obvious that our society has made significant change over the last 11 years. In that regard, they have introduced some new questions as mentioned by the hon. Minister. However, will the new questions added to improving data quality, consider one important aspect: health-related information for a post-COVID-19 future?

I am glad to note that there will be an innovative shift from a paper method to a digital one that focus on maximising online participation as well by using tablets.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am very much keen also to obtain information from the census about the number of Mauritians who were not in the Republic of Mauritius continuously for the past 12 months, especially those born in Rodrigues Island, who were abroad either as residents or in the process of seeking a permanent residing country like Canada and particularly Australia.

I hope the 2022 Census will furnish a clear indication about our citizens who were or are abroad, as to the reasons of whether they are working, studying or on medical treatment abroad or for any other reasons. That would be interesting to know.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another point I wanted to address is about the number of dwellings abandoned in our Republic being given the considerable number of people facing a housing problem despite Government's great efforts to build houses for needy persons. Would Government at a particular point in time decide that those dwellings be acquired to house needy families?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now let me say a few words with regard to autonomous Rodrigues Island. I would suggest that the census and surveys consider the specificity of Rodrigues, along with the implication and valuable advice of the local team. Rodrigues has made unprecedented progress during the last 10 years, be it on social, economic and environmental fronts, and Rodrigues must be seen also to making progress in terms of innovative ways for data collection and use. The counts and types of social housing delivered and newly built ones, would be greatly indicative.

In this period of climate threats, the census shall collect data on domestic water tank/reservoir being given the problem of water supply in Rodrigues. The questionnaire shall make provision for water storage capacity data from each family.

In comparison to past census and surveys carried out through the 6 geographical electoral local regions in Rodrigues, future surveys should be carried out by adopting a New

Village Code Basis for geographical location to facilitate future use of data more effectively in Rodrigues.

Now, let's consider, for example, the village of Baladirou located on the border of both local Region 5: Port-Mathurin, and Region 6: Grande Montagne in Rodrigues. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I myself find it difficult to obtain precise and accurate information from previous census about the specific village of Baladirou or any other villages. It makes things even more complicated when planning a development for the village; no accurate information could be retrieved for any villages in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity also to plead for a rapid restructuring of a Statistical Unit in Rodrigues to enable it to operate more efficiently and effectively as recommended by the PRB Report 2021. This is a very important unit for the future of Rodrigues.

There must be continuous progress, development and exchange of experience, as the process of data collection for both social and economic purposes is dynamic in nature.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, as I said, I will be very brief, I expect the new census questionnaires to be very simple, rapid and concise, to enable people to respond more easily, accurately and truthfully. This will allow enumerators, to obtain maximum information from the population in lesser time, during this COVID-19 situation. And I do hope that some crucial part of the outcomes of the census will cement us as 'One people and One Nation', as we are all either Mauritian, Rodriguan, Agaleens or Chagossians in our Republic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish Central Statistics Mauritius a successful conduct of the 2022 Census and I thank you for your kind attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Bodha!

(6.14 p.m.)

Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci, M. le président. D'emblée je voudrais dire que voter une motion sur le recensement sans le questionnaire, c'est voter pour le principe du recensement et non pas pour le recensement lui-même.

Le questionnaire est un élément primordial crucial. Il faut absolument qu'on sache qu'est-ce qu'on est en train de demander à chaque citoyen de Maurice. Et je rejoins parfaitement les arguments qui ont été avancés par mon collègue, l'honorable Utem. Il nous

faut absolument avoir le questionnaire et moi, je propose aussi que ce questionnaire doit être consensuel et accepté par tout le monde. Et qu'on sache exactement quelles sont les questions qu'on allait poser.

Quand je regarde le discours de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth en 2011, il avait évoqué le recensement d'avant mais là aussi on n'avait pas présenté le questionnaire, M. le président. Il y avait ces deux éléments concernant l'appartenance à une communauté, moi aussi je suis d'accord qu'il est grand temps qu'on ne pose pas cette question-là. Lui-même, il avait donné à l'époque la garantie, il a dit que *it does not make any sense, so this has not been included*. Mais quand on est arrivé à la question de la religion et ça c'est à la page 17 du document de recensement. Au départ, il a dit –

“From what I have seen and now I get confirmation from the (...) I do not see any question in relation to religion.”

Mais après, il a reçu je pense un éclaircissement des officiers et là il a dit –

“Probably there is one, I see there is a question on religion.”

Il a répondu à cette question. Je pense aussi que l'exercice devrait être un exercice fiable. Il faut absolument qu'on ait un exercice qui soit fiable parce que ces données sont extrêmement importantes, comme tout le monde est d'accord pour l'usage qu'on a fait pendant 10 ans et ce sont les données officielles sur la république de l'île Maurice concernant les établissements, concernant les logements et concernant bien sûr les citoyens Mauriciens.

J'apprécie qu'on est en train de tout faire pour que l'exercice soit digitalisé, c'est une très bonne chose. Et là, je me pose la question sur la formation de tous ceux qui vont aller sur le terrain pour que les questions soient posées de manière adéquate et les réponses soient précises. Alors, par exemple, concernant la religion, *write the religion as reported by the person. But you have 10 ways about how to ask the question to the person as regards his religion. You can ask him: whom do you pray? Where do you go? With whom do you? Where is your congregation?*

There should be some sort of uniformity as regards the training of the officers and I have one specific question as regards the night. A census of population shall be taken for Mauritius between the 19 June 2022 and 01 August in respect of all persons alive at midnight on the night of 03 July 2022. We should tell people that they should be ready, they should have all the information available on that night because for the census, in many cases, the officers are going to come to households not specifically on 03 July, they are going to come

for a month or two months. There should be a national campaign for people to be able to know that they have to have the record of all those who were in their premises on 03 July 2022 and there we can have the discrepancy because people can tell you that I am not so sure, maybe he had gone to work, maybe he was in a home, maybe she was on a shift. So, this specific night is extremely important, everybody should know that we are having a census, the question may come after, but we should know what is happening, what happens on that night and who was there on the premises.

Donc, j'ai parlé concernant la religion, j'ai parlé aussi concernant la communauté. *Let me now say a few words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to see to it that the results of the census are precise. Today, we have the data capture, today we have the data analytics and the system should be foolproof so that everybody can rely on the statistics.*

M. le président, il faut donc assurer la fiabilité du système mis en place au niveau des officiers, l'uniformité concernant leur formation quand ils vont aller pour faire le recensement. Il nous faut assurer la précision des données, M. le président, parce qu'il s'agit d'assurer la légitimité des données. Ce sont des données qui vont devenir un peu, je dirais qui n'auront pas force de loi, mais ce seront des données officielles de la république de Maurice d'où l'importance du sceau de la présidence.

Alors, ces statistiques vont devenir des éléments cruciaux concernant les procédures, concernant la définition de politique d'éducation, de politique d'aménagement de territoire, de politique concernant la stratégie de développement, les stratégies pointues concernant par exemple la migration. Mon collègue de Rodrigues a parlé de la migration entre Maurice et Rodrigues. Il y a aussi la migration de Maurice vers l'extérieur et les gens qui reviennent.

J'espère donc que l'honorable ministre va nous donner les précisions sur les questions posées notamment concernant la religion, concernant la communauté et je souhaite que le questionnaire soit un document aussi efficace que consensuel pour que nous puissions avoir les statistiques souhaitées. Je pense aussi avec mon collègue, l'honorable Reza Uteem, il est très important que le questionnaire soit présenté au Parlement avant que l'exercice ne débute dans un mois. J'ai vu que le Premier ministre adjoint n'était pas tellement d'accord en disant que nous avons toujours agi ainsi mais le monde a changé dramatiquement. Aujourd'hui, la haute technologie, la digitalisation permettent énormément de choses et je crois qu'il sera d'accord lui que par exemple concernant les logements. Auparavant, il y avait quelques types de logements mais aujourd'hui nous avons une multiplicité de types de logements, de type de

terrain, est-ce que les terrains sont inondables, est-ce que les terrains sont des terrains où on peut construire, est-ce que les terrains doivent être préservés. Il y a le changement climatique et il y a un élément, je pense que c'est une bonne chose qu'on ait ajouté un certain nombre de questions telles que ces questions ont été énumérées par l'honorable ministre concernant les nouveaux éléments et les nouvelles questions. Moi, je crois qu'il y a quelque chose que j'aurais aimé qu'on ajoute, ce serait concernant le patrimoine. C'est-à-dire des maisons qu'il faut absolument préserver et qui forment parti de ce qui symbolise un peu la richesse de l'île Maurice, de la civilisation mauricienne.

Alors, je vais terminer en disant que je crois que le questionnaire doit être présenté ici à l'Assemblée, il faut qu'il y ait un débat là-dessus, il faut qu'il y ait un consensus là-dessus pour qu'on pose la même question concernant les sujets sensibles et qu'on revient donc après avec des réponses qui soient précises pour qu'on ait vraiment les données qui devraient nous permettre de définir l'aménagement du territoire de Maurice mais en même temps l'avenir de notre société. Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Bodha. Hon. Dr. Boolell, please!

(6.23 p.m.)

Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us call a spade a spade. We live in a multi-racial and multi-religious country, but we have to put our best endeavour to assuage and to mitigate. I agree that this census or these censuses have their *raison d'être*, but one should not forget that we are going to reach out to 400,000 households and 1.2 million persons. Whether we like it or not, people are going to ask basic questions. On religious issue, we cannot simply come and tell the person that he should not give you the reply that you are not looking for. There are more than 200 religions in this country, perhaps more. On appurtenance of the community, we know that it was on the schedule as far back as 1972 and since then it had stayed where it was and rightly so. But when the canvasser will go and meet the household owners, will talk to people, will exchange information, certain questions will be asked, and they will try to find out the reasons as to why specific questions are not on the census form.

Now, when we are going electorally, we have to tread more cautiously. Why do I say that? Because the household owners will think that they may be taken for granted. And there is a call for a thorough exercise. It is not a question of being politically correct or not. But this is a sensitive issue and if we do not address it in a meaningful manner, then, we will be

erring on a zone which is forbidden. So, there is a call to make sure that the canvassers are properly trained; that relevant questions are put and relevant answers obtained. Because after all a census is not narrowed only to two issues: religious or community appurtenance. We are talking of socio-economic programme. Ambitious indeed, but is it doable? What the Minister has told us is that six new sets of specific questions will be added. Fair enough! But there is a call for wide dissemination of information. That is why my colleagues put the relevant question: where is the questionnaire? We seek it here; we seek it there. It is neither here nor there! And you have a responsibility to see to it that information is properly disseminated. Whether we like it or not, notwithstanding the cost, but there is an element of trust; and people do not trust you. And you know why? Because you have to spell out the reasons as to why you provoked the departure of the former Chairman of Mauritius Statistics. You have to spell it out. Why? Because he did not bow to your whims and caprices in respect of statistics...

The Deputy Speaker: No, no, no! Order!

Dr. Boolell: ... in respect of figures...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(Interruptions)

Order! Please! Hon. Dr. Boolell, I think I have been lenient enough with you, allowing you the first line of saying he was provoked. But don't provoke me!

Dr. Boolell: I don't intend.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Don't provoke me to stop you, basically. So please, continue! Just keep it fair!

Dr. Boolell: I am being fair, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So, what I am saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that if we do not err on the principle of caution and tread cautiously, issues which are not relevant will come in the forefront and we don't want that. That is why, at such a time, we need to give thought to revisiting the electoral system. Otherwise, questions relating to community appurtenance will reveal its ugly head. The Labour Party came up with a noble idea, and it submitted a document in relation to modernising of the electoral system. And, this is one way of doing away with issues which can trigger what we call 'gut reactions'. My appeal to the Minister is that he has to be thorough. He has to be more explicit and he cannot just simply throw a motion at us

where the essence of the motion is absent. So, I call upon him to circulate the questionnaire before we vote this motion.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. That was very brief, short, and concise. I appreciate!

(Interruptions)

Thank you very much. Hon. Deputy Prime Minister! No, it is the hon. Minister of Finance who is going to talk. You can have the brief and then you can start.

(6.30 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le président, je tiens à remercier l'ensemble des membres de cette auguste Assemblée qui ont intervenus dans les débats sur la motion relative à la tenue du recensement des logements et de la population à Maurice en 2022.

Afin de clôturer les débats, je m'attacherai à apporter certaines clarifications nécessaires pour répondre aux allusions sinon accusations formulées à tort par certains membres de l'opposition.

Dans un premier temps, je reviendrai sur la question soulevée par l'honorable Uteem de la collecte des informations relative à l'appartenance communautaire.

Comme vous le savez très certainement, la dernière fois que des informations sur la communauté ont été recueillies, c'était en 1972. Depuis lors, aucun autre recensement ne s'est enquies de la communauté des personnes recensées. Dans cette lignée, le présent recensement débattu ne posera pas non plus de question liée à la communauté.

Pourquoi donc les données sur la communauté ne seront-elles pas collectées au travers du recensement à venir ? La réponse ne pourrait pas être plus simple. C'est dans un esprit de rassemblement et d'universalité que nous envisageons, de ce côté de la Chambre, notre nation. Jamais nous ne diviserons la population et mettrons en péril l'unité de Maurice sur l'autel communautariste. Nous rejetons totalement cette proposition car ce gouvernement, sous le leadership du Premier ministre, défend la nation mauricienne de façon holistique et indivisible.

M. le président, pour ce qui est de l'appartenance religieuse, je me saisis de cette opportunité pour bien différencier les choses. Plaider pour une nation unie ne signifie pas brider ou ignorer les croyances des Mauriciens. Au contraire. Maurice, nation arc-en-ciel, reflète l'art du vivre ensemble dans le respect de la pluralité religieuse.

De ce côté de la Chambre, nous sommes fiers de pouvoir reconnaître toutes les religions présentes sur notre territoire et élaborer les politiques publiques qui leur permettront de coexister dans la tranquillité et la tolérance.

A ce titre, les informations relatives à la religion qui seront recueillies au travers du recensement de 2022 permettront de garantir une attribution juste et objective des subventions religieuses. Ainsi, comme à l'accoutumé, chaque personne recensée pourra indiquer sa religion et les informations seront enregistrées telles que déclarées.

Lors des précédents recensements, quelques 200 religions avaient été déclarées. Ainsi, permettez-moi d'assurer à l'Assemblée que Statistics Mauritius publiera les informations sous une forme agrégée la plus compréhensible possible et cela sans faire allusion à l'ethnicité.

M. le président, concernant certaines accusations par rapport au *Statistics Board*, je tiens à préciser que le 12 novembre 2020, le *Statistics Board* a été consulté. La question avait été abordée et le questionnaire qui sera utilisé avait été approuvé par le *Statistics Board* de 2020, c'est-à-dire à l'époque où siégeait l'ancien président du *Statistics Board*.

Et, en vertu de la section 24-1 (a) de la *Statistics Act*, cet exercice de consultation a donc bien été effectué.

Ladite section stipule, je cite -

« The functions of the Board shall be to —

(a) approve, coordinate and monitor statistical programmes of producers of official statistics in order to achieve consistency and efficiency, facilitate integration and promote comparability of data from different sources, avoid duplication, minimise respondent burden, and improve design of data collection and analysis.”

Sans vouloir faire de l'esprit, toute cette histoire qu'a soulevée l'honorable Dr. Boolell peut-être serait un petit message subliminal car peut-être, je dis bien peut-être, l'honorable membre souhaite toujours redevenir Leader de l'Opposition.

(Interruptions)

On a le droit de me taper en disant que je fais je ne sais pas quoi, mais je n'ai pas le droit de dire quelque chose, de répondre ? Là, c'est *very cheap*.

Dr. Boolell: *Savat dodo!*

Dr. Padayachy: Voilà!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: Qu'est-ce que tu as dit?

Dr. Boolell: *Savat dodo.*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: Franchement! Franchement!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy: *Sa ki apel cheap !*

The Deputy Speaker: Order! There is space outside for those who want to laugh. Please!

Dr. Padayachy: *Moi mo pou ale distribuer des pâtes.*

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Boolell, please be a gentleman!

Dr. Boolell: I am a gentleman.

The Deputy Speaker: You withdraw this kind of address towards anybody.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: ...

The Deputy Speaker: No. No. Don't argue! Please withdraw it.

Thank you.

Dr. Boolell: I withdraw “*savat dodo*”

(Interruptions)

Order! Allow the hon. Minister of Finance to conclude please!

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, pour en revenir au sujet qui nous intéresse aujourd’hui, permettez-moi de conclure en rappelant l’intérêt substantiel que représente la conduite de ce recensement dans la poursuite de nos objectifs de développement.

Comme l’avait indiqué Ban Ki-moon en 2010 alors Secrétaire-Général des Nations-Unies à l’occasion de la première journée mondiale des statistiques -

« La statistique est indispensable au développement économique et à la réalisation des objectifs de développement. »

Conformément à la philosophie portée par notre Premier ministre, ce gouvernement a fait de l’humain sa priorité. C’est ainsi pour mieux servir la population mauricienne nous devons disposer des données tangibles et à ce jour. Et permettez-moi, M. le président, quand même de répondre à cette histoire qu’il vient de soulever même s’il l’a enlevée.

Je tiens ici à préciser, on peut m’attaquer nuit et jour ; nuit et jour parce-que j’ai accepté de faire de la politique et j’accepte les critiques et j’accepte qu’on me critique mais, je dis bien un grand ‘mais’ ici, dans cet Assemblée, qu’on critique les jeunes filles et il vient de le faire. Qu’on critique les femmes après qu’on ait célébré...

The Deputy Speaker: No. No. No.

Dr. Padayachy: Laissez-moi, je dois...

The Deputy Speaker: No. No. No.

Dr. Padayachy: Il l’a dit...

The Deputy Speaker: Once again...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy: ...qu’on critique les femmes pendant le mois...

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order! No. No. No. Wait. Wait.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy: Là franchement...

The Deputy Speaker: Wait! Order! Whatever he said with regard to that critic, he withdrew it, hon. Minister. I can understand you want to rebut it, but rebutting something which has been withdrawn, we are not going to waste time over petty things.

Dr. Boolell: I withdraw gracefully.

The Deputy Speaker: Good. We stick to the Motion.

Dr. Padayachy: Conformément à la philosophie portée par notre Premier ministre, ce gouvernement a fait de l'humain, donc les hommes et de la femme, sa priorité. C'est ainsi pour mieux servir la population mauricienne, nous devons disposer des données tangibles et à jour. Grace à la tenue du recensement des logements et de la population à Maurice en 2022, nous y parviendrons.

Sur ces considérations, je sou mets maintenant la motion au vote à l'Assemblée.

Mr Ganoo seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: I will put the question in a few minutes. We will break for a few minutes.

At 6.39 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.54 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE LANDLORD AND TENANT (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. II of 2022)

Order for Second Reading read.

(6.55 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Bill (No. II of 2022) be read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my colleagues in the House will all have noted that this is practically a one liner. So, I shall therefore be very brief.

As we know, this technical piece of legislation, recalled the Landlord and Tenant Act, has provided since 2005 that there would be a moratorium so that the principle of liberalisation with rent increases being controlled as specified in the Second Schedule to the Act would not apply to business lettings dating back to or before 2005 for a certain period of time.

So, in 2005, the moratorium was to apply up to 2012. Then in 2009, the Act was amended anew, the moratorium period was extended to 2017. In 2017, it was amended anew and extended to end of 2020. And that is where I come in as Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, further to a decision of Government in the light of the very difficult situation the country experienced with COVID, and I presented an amendment on behalf of Government whereby the moratorium was extended to the end of 2021, 31 December 2021.

Now, I remember in this House, hon. Ramful raised the issue whether this extension should be for a year or two years or three years, and I responded in my summing up at that time that the point was well taken but we did not know what lay ahead. And indeed at the end of last year, late, very late last year, representations were made to Government on behalf of small businesses that ending the moratorium on 31 December 2021 was likely to create considerable hardship, could even provoke closing down of small businesses because of the protracted effect of the COVID pandemic on the economy.

So, last year taking into consideration those representations, Government extended the moratorium by way of Regulation, the Landlord and Tenant (Extension of Time) Regulation 2021.

Now, we have almost reached - it was extended up to the end of March - the end of the moratorium. Government has given anxious consideration as to what is to be done, and I am therefore introducing the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Bill to provide for what is intended to be a final extension to 30 June 2022, which extension on the face of the legislation before the House today, has retrospective effect. Such is the intention of the legislator.

That, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, put very simply and very shortly is the intention of today's amendment. The moratorium first introduced some 17 years ago, would require what is hopefully a final extension.

With these words, I commend the Bill to the House.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Uteem!

(5.59 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the fifth time this august Assembly is being called upon to amend the Landlord and Tenant Act to extend the application of the Landlord and Tenant Act to business premises let before 01 July 2005.

As the hon. Deputy Prime Minister alluded to, the Act first of all was passed in 1999, there was a first amendment in 2005, a second amendment in 2009, a third amendment in 2017 and a fourth amendment in December 2020. When the Bill was debated in 2020, I was here; there was unanimity to extend the moratorium period till 31 December 2021 because of the sanitary condition, COVID-19 having affected adversely many traders, especially small traders. There was no unanimity about scrapping the Fair Rent Tribunal but there was unanimity for extending the moratorium period.

So, the Act extended the last amendment - the 2020 amendment to the Landlord and Tenant Act - extended the moratorium to 31 December 2021. What happened in December 2021? One would have expected that a Bill would have been presented before this House to extend the moratorium. But Parliament went on vacation without the Landlord and Tenant Act having been amended. And what did the hon. Deputy Prime Minister do? Well, on 31 December 2021, he made a Regulation, the Landlord and Tenant (Extension of Time) Regulation 2021. Clause 3 of this Regulation reads, and I quote –

“The date of 31 December 2021 referred to in section 3(2) (ab) of the principal Act shall be extended to 31 March 2022.”

So, effectively by way of regulation, the Deputy Prime Minister without the sanction of this august Assembly amended the Landlord and Tenant Act and decided that the Landlord and Tenant Act will continue to apply to business premises let before July 2005 till 31 March 2022. Can you do that?

The heading of the Regulation says –

“Regulation made by the Minister under sections 3 and 34 of the Landlord and Tenant Act. Section 34 of the Act provides that the Minister may for the purpose of this Act make such Regulation as he thinks fit.”

Does that mean that the Landlord and Tenant Act has given a blanket cheque to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to amend the Act by Regulations?

In my humble view, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if Parliament had intended to give such wide powers to the Deputy Prime Minister, he would have expressly said so. For example, section 34(2) of the Act provides that –

“Any Regulations made pursuant to subsection (1) may provide for the amendment of Schedule and for the levying of charges and the payment of fees.”

Clear power given to the Minister to amend the Schedule to impose charges and fees and levies! But nowhere in the Act is any power given to the Minister responsible for housing by Regulation to amend a substantive provision of the law.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister is a lawyer, there are several lawyers in the Cabinet, there is the Attorney General, I am sure that he must have taken legal advice before taking it on himself to pass on this Regulation but I beg to differ. I beg to be convinced and would like to be convinced whether a Minister can, by way of subsidiary legislation, by way of Regulation, amend a substantive provision of the Landlord and Tenant Act when the Act does not give him this specific power.

Be that as it may, it may be, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are called upon to vote this Bill, to extend the application of Landlord and Tenant Act to old leases. We are in favour of this extension.

L'économie va mal. Le pays va mal. Les petits commerçants souffrent et ce n'est vraiment pas le moment de les forcer à fermer boutiques en leur imposant une augmentation de loyer. Au contraire, ils s'attendent à une enveloppe d'aide du gouvernement. Le budget n'est pas trop loin. Ils espèrent tous avoir une enveloppe d'aide de la part du gouvernement parce qu'ils veulent avoir des assurances de ce gouvernement concernant leurs sorts après le 30 juin 2022. Nous avons eu le *Deputy Prime Minister* qui est venu dire à la Chambre qu'aujourd'hui l'amendement est un amendement final, une extension finale. Donc, après le 30 juin 2022, il n'y aura plus d'extensions et le *Landlord and Tenant Act* ne s'appliquera plus aux *business leases*, *aux bails* d'avant juin 2005. Donc, je demanderai au *Deputy Prime Minister* qu'est-ce qui va se passer pour ces petits commerces après 30 juin 2022 ? Qu'est-ce

que le gouvernement compte faire pour les aider à pouvoir payer le *market rate* que sera demandé par des propriétaires ? Et quelles sont les mesures que le gouvernement prendra pour empêcher justement que tous ces petits commerces ferment boutiques et licencient leurs employés ?

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister Jeewa-Daureeawoo!

(7.06 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for giving me the floor to intervene. Well, I welcome and support the introduction of the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Bill 2022 in the House today.

The issue before the House is clear. Section 3 of the said Act is being amended to extend to 30 June 2022 the period up to which the Act shall continue to apply to business premises led on or before 01 July 2005.

The Bill is about an amendment of limited scope. Well, we agree that the Landlord and Tenant Act has been subject to 5 amendments. However, I must say that the spirit of all amendments remain unchanged; the main objective of all those amendments, of course, is to protect the tenants who are in dire difficulty.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a caring and responsible Government, we have always been committed towards striking a right balance between the needs of both the landlord and tenant, and/or between these two competing interests.

Well, I must say that we cannot turn a blind eye to the challenges emerging from the present situation. Through this amendment, our Government is, of course, providing a breathing space to tenants who are facing financial constraints. So, I do hope that this particular amendment would help the tenants. Our intention has always been of good faith. And I must say that we, on this side of the House, are favourable to this last amendment of the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. Minister. Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

(7.09 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me thank my colleague on the other side of the House and my colleague, the Minister, who just spoke before me, for having participated in the debates. And once again, I am happy to note that there is consensus on the need to extend the moratorium.

It is now almost a quarter of a century since in 1999, the Landlord and Tenant Act was voted, and we are referring to a moratorium for that category of business leases that predate 2005, and even with the application of the Act, there is, of course, a certain control in terms of allowable rent increases as introduced by the amendment of 2009, which reduces the allowable increase from 15 to 10 percent a year. So, there are safeguards within the law itself.

Of course, if we have had a broad consensus historically, it is because everybody agrees and I'll quote what I said in 2020 as to the need to regularly reconsider and redefine the delicate equilibrium between the need to protect small and vulnerable tenants of rented business premises in view of the economic trends of the day and on the other hand, the importance of stimulating property development and construction for rental purposes. And that is what different Governments have always tried to do and Parliament has, in a consensus, supported that effort.

So, that is where we are today and hopefully, we will not face the same situation again. So, let me thank the officers of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning for having supported me in bringing this piece of legislation and also the very able officers of the State Law Office who have assisted us throughout, together with my colleague, the Attorney General, of course.

With these words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. FIRST MEMBER FOR PORT LOUIS MARITIME & PORT LOUIS EAST – SUSPENSION - APOLOGIES

The Deputy Speaker: Prior to moving, I have an announcement to make.

Hon. Members, I am informed by the Clerk of the National Assembly that she had yesterday received several e-mails on her official email address and one similar mail on the e-mail of one officer serving her office from the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime &

Port Louis East (Mr Shakeel Mohamed), which the hon. Member referred to as a “Note to Mr Speaker”.

The hon. Member purportedly addressed himself to the hon. Speaker wherein he referred to his suspension from the service of the Assembly for the Sitting of 10 December 2021 and the next four Sittings, unless apologies are tendered to the House, followed by several other paragraphs, in which he stated the background against which he had decided to comply with the condition of his suspension and tender his apologies to the House, requesting that his suspension be cancelled and that he be allowed to take his seat at today’s Sitting.

My attention has been drawn to the fact that the whole matter has been reported in the media by the said hon. Member.

Hon. Members, indeed, in terms of the resolution of the House, on 10 December 2021, the hon. Member would be allowed to resume his seat before the expiry of the suspension period should he tender his apologies unconditionally to the House.

However, I rule that the form and tenor of the “Note to Mr Speaker” is not befitting the manner of addressing the Chair and the House to consider the tendering of apologies with a view to resuming one’s seat when same has had to follow strict procedural rules.

Besides, the “Note to Mr Speaker” was sent to the Clerk beyond the normal office hours and, since this morning, Mr Speaker has been fully taken up with priority issues pertaining to today’s Sitting, explaining why the aforementioned matter hasn’t yet been determined.

On the other hand, the procedure that obtains normally in similar situations is for –

- (1) a Member to tender unreserved apologies and not to qualify same, as can be gleaned from the emails sent, which are being tabled, and
- (2) since same are to be presented to the House, the matter ought to be brought before the House for the House to bring a motion to consider the reinstatement and, if satisfied, to resolve accordingly, for same to be effective.

To conclude, in order for the House to entertain a request from the hon. Member to consider his apologies for the purpose of resuming his seat before the expiry of his term of suspension, the hon. Member is invited gently to address a proper request to the House, through the Speaker, presenting his unconditional apologies to the House.

*Committee Stage**(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)*

The Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Bill (No. II of 2022) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Bill (No. II of 2022) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 05 April 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Adjournment matters! Everybody will have a chance; just try to be brief with the questions so that everybody can be allowed. I saw hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy raising her hand first.

MATTERS RAISED

(7.17 p.m.)

**HARE HARE LANE, VALLEE DES PRETRES – WATER COURSE -
ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION**

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My adjournment matter is addressed to Dr. the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management.

It was brought to my attention that there has been illegal construction on a natural water course where inhabitants of Hare Hare Lane, opposite Hare Krishna Bhawan, in Vallée des Prêtres, whereby several complaints were made to the Municipality. I have further been

informed that the Municipality served the latter with a Compliance Notice which has expired, that is, 28 days. So, I would humbly request the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to look into the matter as urgently as possible because after the heavy rain the inhabitants find themselves *pied dans l'eau*. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, please!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know what happened last week, and I can reassure the Member that we are going to look into it and make sure that action is taken against that particular person.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(7.18 p.m.)

PETIT RAFFRAY CREMATORIUM – TOILET FACILITIES

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my request is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management.

The issue that I wish to highlight is that the crematorium of Petit Raffray does not have a toilet. Understandably, this is causing discomfort and inconveniences to those people who use the crematorium.

May I kindly request the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to do the needful so that the crematorium of Petit Raffray is soon equipped with proper toilet facilities. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter and make sure they have the necessary toilet.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha, please.

(7.19 p.m.)

DR. REID STREET, BEAU BASSIN – DRAIN - CLOGGING

Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, j'aimerais attirer l'attention de l'honorable vice-Premier ministre et ministre des

Collectivités locales par rapport à un caniveau bouché sur la rue Dr. Reid, à Beau Bassin. Celui-ci est dans cet état depuis le passage du cyclone Batsirai et l'eau n'arrive pas à s'écouler car le caniveau est complètement obstrué avec une grande quantité de déchets et de boue. Par conséquent, l'eau s'accumule en abondance et l'état est non seulement insalubre mais est aussi un environnement propice à la prolifération de moustiques. Je demande humblement à l'honorable ministre que ce caniveau puisse être nettoyé promptement par la municipalité de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the message to the Mayor of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance, please.

(7.20 p.m.)

POINTE AUX SABLES/GRNW ROAD – TRAFFIC JAM

Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse conjointement à trois ministres: le ministre du Transport, le Premier ministre, la Police et le ministre des Infrastructures publiques. Donc, ça concerne les embouteillages. Depuis déjà un mois, il y a eu pas mal d'embouteillages monstres à la sortie de Pointe aux Sables pour rejoindre Grande Rivière. Donc déjà il y a des policiers qui se trouvent sur place le matin mais malheureusement le problème ne fait qu'empirer. Donc je demanderais aux ministres concernés de bien vouloir faire une étude de la situation et de revenir vers nous avec des solutions pour pouvoir remédier à cette situation. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): I thank the hon. Member for raising this issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will certainly look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Ms Anquetil, please!

(7.21 p.m.)

CARDINAL MAURICE PIAT – CHRISTMAS MESSAGE - CENSURE

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Je vous remercie, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au Premier ministre et je regrette qu'il soit absent de la Chambre pour cette première séance parlementaire. Nous vivons dans une société multiculturelle...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order! Unruly behaviour will probably have early dinner too! Short, sweet request!

Ms Anquetil : Nous vivons dans une société multiculturelle où toutes les religions opèrent librement. La censure du message de Noël de son Excellence, le Cardinal Maurice Piat, sans son consentement, est un manque de respect envers les dignitaires religieux ...

The Deputy Speaker: No! No! No!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

I would allow you requesting that the message goes as a whole, not making a statement around it! I will not allow it! I hope you do not want to miss a chance!

Ms Anquetil: Alors cet incident déplorable a suscité une vague d'indignation ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order! Order!

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. I do not think it is suitable for the hon. Member to be translating a PQ which is part of the list of PQs into adjournment matters.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

No sure! I take note of your point of order. I think you should take note as well of my position right now. I want a request, hon. Ms Anquetil, and you have your last chance.

Ms Anquetil: Je sollicite l'intervention du Premier ministre afin que le gouvernement présente ses excuses officielles au Cardinal Maurice Piat et que ce genre d'incident méprisable ne se reproduise plus envers d'autres dignitaires religieux peu importe la communauté. Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I think it is a fair request now. Hon. DPM.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism (Mr S. Obeegadoo): I will pass on the message.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

(7.23 p.m.)

STE MARIE STREET - LE CORNU, STE CROIX – ACCIDENTS – SPEED CAMERAS

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Transports terrestres et du métro léger, l'honorable Alan Ganoo. Il y a eu plusieurs accidents sur la rue Ste Marie à Le Cornu, Ste Croix. Je demanderais à l'honorable ministre s'il voudrait bien revoir l'état de la route et prévoir des *speed cameras* et peut-être envisager une campagne de sensibilisation afin de réduire le nombre d'accident, des fois fatal, sur ce tronçon de la route. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. That is a direct request. This will give the opportunity to everyone to put a request. Minister, please!

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr A. Ganoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken good note of the complaint made by the hon. Member. I will ask the TMRSU and my Ministry to look into the issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

(7.24 p.m.)

BEAU BASSIN– PAVEMENTS – BAD STATE

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) : Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au ministre des Collectivités locales et a trait à l'état

déplorable des trottoirs à Beau Bassin. Le Maire de Beau Bassin/Rose-Hill avait affirmé lors d'une émission l'année dernière sur une radio privée et à laquelle je participais aussi que la mairie allait recevoir une enveloppe de R 3 millions pour la remise en état de trottoirs à Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

A ce jour, peut-on savoir si la municipalité a bien reçu ces R 3 millions en question car l'état des trottoirs a même empiré et je profite pour déposer une photo prise à la rue Dr. Reid à côté de la boutique Khorugdary où un habitant de la région s'est fracturé une cheville en marchant dessus. Je compte sur l'honorable ministre pour voir avec la municipalité de façon à ce qu'on puisse faire réparer ces trottoirs qui sont dans un état déplorable. Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can reassure the hon. Member that this year the amount of money that has been given to the Local Authority is unprecedented. They have the money, I am sure they are going to do the needful. I will pass on the message.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Osman Mahomed, please!

(7.25 p.m.)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – PLACES OF WORSHIP – RESTRICTION

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you. I wish to address the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness tonight regarding a recent statement he has made in public in regard to the restrictions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It goes as follows and I quote -

« Définitivement on ne va pas vers un relâchement complet. »

On 31 March 2021. My plea tonight follows representations I have received with regard to the restriction of only ten persons being allowed in places of worship, namely in churches, temples and mosques. Being given the ongoing *carême*, be it for Easter, for Durga Puja this coming Saturday and for Ramadan this coming Sunday or Monday, my plea to the hon. Minister tonight is to have this ten figure restriction to be raised to a higher figure and that the more so many of our citizens are now injected with a booster dose, they are quite familiar with the sanitary protocol, the more so, the Minister of Health himself has publicly stated –

« Le pic de cette nouvelle vague, qui a été provoqué par l'Omicron, a été dépassé. »

So, my request to him is to kindly bring my proposition to the High Level Committee on COVID-19 for consideration.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, please!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, currently the Public Health Department of the Ministry is working on the sanitary measures and shortly we will be coming with the new set of measures after studying the number of cases, the vaccination and all that and the current situation. Definitely, that will be coming very soon.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Lobine!

(7.27 p.m.)

VINTA LANE III – DEFECTIVE STREET LIGHTINGS

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. It concerns the region of Vinta, more precisely Vinta Lane III where the street lightings are not working, are defective for the last month and several complaints have been made by the inhabitants to the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix but yet, the situation is still the same. This is causing great inconvenience to the inhabitants, if the hon. Member could take the matter with the Municipal Council please?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, please!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea, please!

(7.28 p.m.)

PFIZER VACCINE – 5 to 11-YEAR OLD CHILDREN – INOCULATION

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I shall raise the issue of COVID-19 vaccines for children 5 to 11-year old to which I shall require some clarifications from the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some countries around the world are

inoculating the Pfizer vaccine to children 5 to 11-year old. In Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we heard from the hon. Minister in a Press conference on 30 January this year that a consignment of vaccines shall be available in April this year, that is next month. Apart from that, the population has not been provided with additional information as to whether it will be mandatory to all children and if not whether not being vaccinated, access to school will be denied or specified places would be barred as is the case for non-vaccinated elderly. I shall request the hon. Minister if he can enlighten the House and the population on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister please!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the vaccines for children, so far, Pfizer, the company, has sent us the contract that we have to sign with them but we have not got further information on when Pfizer will be delivering us the vaccines for the children. In January, they stated that it would be in March, but so far we have not got any further information on that.

Concerning if ever we will start inoculating children and whether it will be mandatory for them, so far nothing has been decided. But I believe that this would not be the case because the vaccines will be offered to children and then obviously with the consent of parents but no decision has been taken up to now. The Vaccination Committee is still working on that and once we receive the vaccines first, then that will be decided.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Sandra Mayotte please!

(7.30 p.m.)

YVES CANTIN HOSPITAL – LACK OF AMBULANCES

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre de la Santé et cela concerne le service ambulancier dans la région de Rivière Noire, plus précisément à l'hôpital Yves Cantin. Il y a un manque d'ambulances, nous avons fréquemment des urgences, surtout le soir. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, il y a deux enfants qui ont été intoxiqués dans la nuit et nous avons également eu quelqu'un qui a été victime d'un grave accident dans la région du Morne. Alors, je demanderai au ministre de voir s'il serait possible d'augmenter le nombre d'ambulances dans la région. Non seulement augmenter le nombre d'ambulances mais également le service ambulancier. Merci!

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Minister please!

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to look how many ambulance services can be provided in that region, especially after doing a survey first and then giving the service.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Fabrice David!

(7.31 p.m.)

MORCELLEMENT LE PRINTEMPS, POINTE AUX SABLES – MYRIAPODA INVASION

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête de ce soir s'adresse au ministre de l'Environnement et concerne un problème d'invasion insolite mais incommode au Morcellement le Printemps à Pointe aux Sables. Il s'agit d'une invasion de myriapodes, communément appelé mille-pattes qui sont devenus un véritable cauchemar pour les habitants de cette localité. Je me suis rendu avant-hier dans ce morcellement et j'ai visité plusieurs maisons dont les murs, les sols, les fenêtres et les portes sont tapissés de colonies de ces petites bêtes envahissantes et quand il pleut, les habitants les ramassent à la pelle. J'ai compris que certains habitants ont déjà contacté le ministère de l'Environnement et ils sont en attente d'une réponse et d'une solution à ce problème persistant. Puis-je demander au ministre d'intervenir dans ce sens et je lui précise que je reste à la disposition de ses officiers pour les guider dans la localité en question. Merci!

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): M. le président, je prends bonne note de la requête qui a été faite par l'honorable membre. Je prendrai la question avec le département concerné, s'il y a lieu aussi d'avoir l'apport du ministère de la Santé, on va faire le nécessaire.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(7.33 p.m.)

SOCIAL AID – BENEFICIARIES

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Merci. Le problème que je souhaite soulever concerne le ministère de l'Intégration Sociale. Plusieurs familles pauvres qui sont éligibles à une aide sociale ne reçoivent plus leur allocation mensuelle depuis plusieurs semaines. Cela bien entendu leur cause un préjudice

énorme. Je crois comprendre qu'on est en train de faire une enquête sur ces bénéficiaires pour confirmer s'ils sont toujours éligibles pour ces aides sociales. Cependant, on ne peut pas pénaliser les familles et surtout leurs enfants vulnérables alors que le ministère prend tout son temps pour enquêter. Je fais alors un appel à l'honorable ministre pour que toutes ces familles puissent continuer à bénéficier des aides sociales tant que les officiers de son ministère n'auront pas conclu que ces familles ne méritent plus d'aide sociale. Merci!

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say that the policy of the Ministry is, of course, to help the vulnerable people. The contract is for a determined period. It appears that the beneficiaries have been under the contract for many years. You will agree with me that we have to give the chance to new beneficiaries also to be on the system. At a certain point in time, we have had to carry out a recertification exercise so that we can get new beneficiaries in the system but this does not mean that the beneficiaries who are not on the system cannot apply. This is an ongoing process. If they feel that they need the help of the Ministry, the NEF, the NSIF, they can, at any time, apply to be on the system again and, of course, we are here to give a helping hand, we are here to support the vulnerable people. We will look into each case and provide solutions. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

(7:35 p.m.)

ST GEORGES & BOIS MARCHAND CEMETERIES – SECURITY ISSUES

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Collectivités locales et de la gestion des catastrophes et des risques et concerne des vols perpétrés au cimetière de St Georges à Les Salines, à Port Louis, et l'agression physique à celui de Bois Marchand.

En effet, M. le président, plusieurs cas d'actes de vandalismes ont lieu ces jour-ci au cimetière St Georges au grand dam du grand public. Il y a eu également un cas d'agression physique contre un vigile au cimetière de Bois Marchand. Je fais un appel au ministre afin que des mesures appropriées soient prises au plus vite pour la sécurité de tous.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, please!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a major problem because if we take Bois Marchand, it is a very big cemetery. It is about 70 acres of land. Trying to provide security is not easy. I mean we have discussed that, it is a major issue. To tell you frankly, so far, we have not had any solution but we will have to keep working on that. It is a major problem. I know the problem and we will have to work on it.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Ramful, please!

(7:36 p.m.)

MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL - ROAD WORKS - DELAY

Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have an issue which concerns the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development with regard to works that are being undertaken along the roads that lead to the Mahebourg Hospital.

I am being given to understand that there are construction of drains and resurfacing of those roads that are being undertaken. I have received complaints from the inhabitants of the region whereby they are telling me that the works are being delayed because of the contractors. The Minister will appreciate the urgency of those works because they lead to the Mahebourg Hospital. Can I make a humble request to the hon. Minister to kindly look into the matter?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for raising this issue. As we have discussed earlier during breakfast, we are looking into the matter. Yes, we have had issues with the contractor. Last Wednesday, myself, hon. Toussaint and hon. Kavi Doolub were on site with the contractor. We are following the matter closely and we are taking the contractor to task, making sure that they deliver as soon as possible, and we thank you for your support on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I do not see any requests. The last one was hon. Wochit; I think he has left. Have a good evening!

At 7.37 p.m., the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 05 April 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS – UPDATE

(No. B/2) **Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the proposed holding of the Municipal Elections, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The last Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils Elections were held on 14 June 2015. By virtue of section 10A of the Local Government Act, the life of Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils is six years.

Back in May 2021, in view of the prevailing COVID-19 situation in the country, the Local Government Act was amended to provide for the extension of the lifetime of the entire Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils, or entire Village Councils, by not more than one year at a time, provided that the life of the Councils shall not be extended for more than two years.

On 14 June 2021, having taken into account the rising number of cases of COVID-19 being recorded on a weekly basis and being given that a quarantine period was still in force in the country, the President of the Republic of Mauritius had, on my advice, extended the life of the entire Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils for one year as from 15 June 2021. The Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Councils will stand dissolved on 14 June 2022.

It must be emphasized that the quarantine period is still in force in Mauritius and Government is closely monitoring the evolution of COVID-19 pandemic. At this point in time, it is premature to consider a date for the holding of Municipal Council elections.

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – REMOVAL OF MAURITIAN FLAG – ACTIONS TAKEN

(No. B/3) **Mr R. Doolub (Third 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 the recent removal of the Mauritian flag by the British on the Chagos Archipelago, he will state the actions being envisaged by Government following same.

Reply: One reply is made to these two Parliamentary Questions B/3 and B/8 as they relate to the same subject.

The scientific survey of Blenheim Reef in the Chagos Archipelago, undertaken by Mauritius from 08 to 22 February 2022, and the raising of the flag of Mauritius during the visit of the Mauritius delegation of Salomon Islands and Peros Banhos are already widely known.

On 08 March 2022, in reply to a question in the UK House of Commons, the British Minister of State for Asia and the Middle East at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office stated that the United Kingdom had removed the flags raised by Mauritius in the Chagos Archipelago, claiming that Mauritius had turned a scientific survey mission into a political stunt.

Government considers that the United Kingdom's removal of the flags of Mauritius from the Chagos Archipelago constitutes a blatant violation of its international law obligations.

The removal of the flags also implies that the United Kingdom illegally entered the territorial sea of Mauritius around Peros Banhos, Salomon Islands and Blenheim Reef without authorization from Mauritius for the purpose of reaching land in order to remove those flags. Such an action constitutes an incursion in the territorial sea of Mauritius which is not permitted by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

On 11 March 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade addressed a note of protest to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to convey the strong objection of the Government of Mauritius to the removal of the flags of Mauritius from the Chagos Archipelago.

In response, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office addressed on 15 March 2022 a *Note Verbale* to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, in which it asserted, to quote it, that "the Government of Mauritius turned a scientific survey into a political stunt. The raising of Mauritian flags was an unhelpful way to approach a bilateral dispute." Government deeply regrets and categorically rejects such an assertion.

The actions taken by Mauritius during the survey, including the raising of its flags in the Chagos Archipelago, are fully compatible with the exercise of its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

The visit has allowed the international media to report on the untruths and disinformation spread by the former officials of the United Kingdom regarding the status of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago at the time of its illegal excision from

Mauritius. The visit also enabled the Chagossian members of the delegation to visit the graves of their ancestors which were in a lamentable state. These were cleaned and given the dignity such places deserve. As a responsible State, Mauritius considers that those graves as well as what used to be the place of worship of Mauritians of Chagossian origin ought to have been kept clean and in a decent condition. Even as an illegal occupier, the United Kingdom manifestly failed in its duty to protect and preserve these sites.

Government will be replying to the UK's Note Verbale along those lines.

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 - VOTING BALLOT – RECOUNT EXERCISE -
INQUIRY**

(No. B/4) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to a voting ballot of Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port-Louis found during the recount exercise in Constituency No. 19, Stanley and Rose Hill, on 01 February 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating the outcome thereof. (R)

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that the Judgement of the Supreme Court in the case of O.J. Adebire v/s I.L. Collendavelloo & Others dated 21 January 2022 ordered the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court to carry out a recount of the valid votes as having been polled by the petitioner and the first respondent at the General Elections held on 07 November 2019 for Constituency No. 19 (Stanley & Rose Hill).

The recount exercise was fixed on 01 February 2022 at the Goolam Mohamed Dawjee Atchia State College, Port Louis, under the supervision of the Acting Master and Registrar and in presence of the Electoral Commissioner, the Chairman and Secretary of the Electoral Supervisory Commission, the petitioner and the respondent. The result after the recount confirmed the election of hon. Collendavelloo.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that, during the course of the recount exercise, the Acting Master and Registrar apprised the Electoral Commissioner that a ballot paper of Constituency No. 1, that is, Grand Rivière North West and Port Louis West, was found among the ballot papers counted for Constituency No. 19 for the National Assembly Elections 2019. The Deputy Chief Electoral Officer reported the matter to Police on 07 February 2022.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that the Central Criminal Investigation Department is investigating the case. The Electoral Commissioner, the Electoral Supervisory Commission and the Master and Registrar have been requested to provide relevant information and documents pertaining to it. Enquiry into the case is proceeding.

MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY - TUGS

(No. B/5) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to tugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to –

- (a) the present number thereof, indicating the condition thereof in each case, and
- (b) if the purchase of additional ones is being envisaged and, if so, indicate the –
 - (i) proposed number, and
 - (ii) estimated cost thereof.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, the Acting Director General of the Mauritius Ports Authority has informed that the Authority has a fleet of four big tugs and six small tugs.

Presently, three big tugs, namely, Sir Edouard, Da Patten and Al Tareef 1 are in operation with their class certificates valid, respectively, up to 07 July 2026, 22 April 2024 and 21 October 2024. As regards the big tug, Mahé de Labourdonnais, the Authority has decided not to proceed with the renewal of its class certificate given the high cost involved for extensive dry docking works and repairs. Furthermore, in view of its age, that is, more than 20 years and reduced bollard pull capacity, the Mauritius Ports Authority has decided not to invest in the repairs and maintenance of the tug. Accordingly, the Mauritius Ports Authority decided to put the tug out of service and to dispose of it in due course.

With regard to the small tugs, three out of four are operational at Port Louis, namely, Kestrel, Talipot and Ochna. The tug Dombeya is presently under repairs and it is expected to be back in operation by next month. The two small tugs at Port Mathurin, namely, Solitaire and Albion are operational.

With regard to part (b) of the question, in the reply to Parliamentary Question B/784, the House was informed that the Mauritius Ports Authority initially planned to proceed with the procurement of two big tugs and four small tugs with a view to renewing its fleet of tugs, whilst at the same time enhancing its tug capacity for handling of bigger vessels.

The Acting Director General of the Mauritius Ports Authority has further informed that past procurement exercises for the acquisition of new tugs by the Mauritius Ports Authority have not been conclusive. In order to ensure adequacy of tugs for marine operations, the Mauritius Ports Authority decided to proceed with the chartering of one big tug, namely, tug Al Tareef 1 of bollard pull capacity 60 tonnes in 2020 for a two-year period with an option for renewal. The chartering cost is 2,500 US Dollar per day, representing around Rs40 m. per annum.

The Mauritius Ports Authority has launched a new procurement exercise for the chartering of one big tug of around 60 tonnes bollard pull capacity for a two-year period for the replacement of tug Mahé de Labourdonnais. Accordingly, the Request for Proposal for the chartering of one big tug was issued on 07 March 2022 and the deadline for the submission of proposals was set for 25 March 2022. Bids received will be evaluated.

An Open International Bidding Exercise for the procurement of two small tugs off-the-shelf, which were launched on 22 June 2021, was unsuccessful, and was cancelled on the recommendation of the Central Procurement Board, thus causing delays in procuring the small tugs. The Mauritius Ports Authority has accordingly decided to undertake major refurbishment works on its three small tugs, namely, tugs Kestrel, Dombeya and Ochna, which are expected to be completed in a phased manner up to and by August 2022. These works would extend the economically useful lives of these three small tugs by at least three years.

In parallel, on 11 March 2022, the Mauritius Ports Authority also invited proposals for the chartering of two small tugs for a two-year period and the closing date has been set for 29 March 2022. The cost for the chartering of one small tug is estimated at Rs20 m. annually, excluding costs of insurance, maintenance, mobilisation and demobilisation.

MBC - REPORT COMMITTEE - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/6) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain and table copy of the report of the Committee chaired by Ms Sandrine Valère, Permanent Secretary, indicating if any action has been taken in relation to the findings and recommendations of the report and, if not, why not, indicating the fees paid in connection therewith.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS POLICE FORCE - NATIONAL SURVEY - PEOPLE USING DRUGS

(No. B/7) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the National Survey Among People who use Drugs carried out by the Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) groups of people having participated therein;
- (b) method used for data collection therefor, and
- (c) recommendations thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – REMOVAL OF MAURITIAN FLAG – ACTIONS TAKEN

(No. B/8) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the pulling down of the Mauritian Flag on the Chagos Archipelago on 10 March 2022, he will state if –

- (a) any legal action is being envisaged, and
- (b) his Office is in presence of any formal communication or apologies therefor from the UK Government.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/3)

RODRIGUES – SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

(No. B/9) Mr J. 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 Sustainable

Integration Development Plan for Rodrigues, he will state when was same re-actualised, indicating –

- (a) when was the contract therefor allocated and to whom;
- (b) the terms and conditions thereof, and
- (c) when same will be finalised.

Reply: The Island Chief Executive of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) has informed that the Sustainable and Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues (SIDPR), funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was commissioned by the RRA in 2009.

With regard to part (a) of the question, procedures were launched in August 2021 by the European Union with a view to enlisting the services of a Consultant for the revamping exercise of the SIDPR.

The contract for Consultancy Services for the Review and Update of the SIDPR was signed on 18 November 2021 by the EU Delegation with COWI BELGIUM.

With regard to part (b) of the question, over and above the updating of the SIDPR, this assignment would also comprise the following –

- updating the Tourism Development Plan for Rodrigues (which dates back to 2001), and
- updating the 2010 Rodrigues Physical Development Strategy and Land Use Plan.

With regard to part (c) of the question, it was initially decided that the effective start date of the assignment would be 23 January 2022 and the tentative completion date would be 16 August 2022. A kickoff meeting was held on 25 January 2022 between the representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the RRA, the European Union and COWI BELGIUM.

Owing to quarantine measures which were in force and the Regional Elections of 27 February 2022, the official start date of the project was postponed.

The Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has informed that an organisational meeting will be held between all concerned stakeholders in the near future to

finalise the date of start of the assignment which shall be around April 2022. It is expected that the exercise would be completed by the first quarter of 2023 based on an assignment of seven man-months in accordance with the contract.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE – COMPOSITION

(No. B/10) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the High-Level Committee responsible to address matters relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state the composition thereof.

Reply: In the reply to the PNQ on 06 April 2021, the House was informed that on 31 January 2020, the High-Level Committee on COVID-19 was set up by Cabinet under my chair to monitor the situation regarding the outbreak of COVID-19 and also the precautionary measures to be taken to safeguard the population against any related health risk.

In fact, the Committee is the right platform for sharing of information to enable timely and informed decisions to be taken which are then ratified by Cabinet.

The composition of the High-Level Committee on COVID-19 is as follows –

- (a) the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism;
- (b) the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology;
- (c) the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade;
- (d) the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development;
- (e) the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security;
- (f) the Minister of Health and Wellness;
- (g) the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service;
- (h) the Secretary for Foreign Affairs;
- (i) the Commissioner of Police;
- (j) the Senior Chief Executive, Ministry of Health and Wellness;
- (k) the Director, Health Services, Ministry of Health and Wellness;

- (l) Dr. L. Musango, World Health Organisation Representative in Mauritius, and
- (m) Dr. Z. Joomaye, Special Adviser, Prime Minister's Office.

Other Senior Officials and Advisers also form part of the Committee which also co-opts other Ministers, senior officials, and experts, as and when required.

The High-Level Committee meets almost on a daily basis. Since 31 January 2020 to 25 March 2022, 352 meetings of the Committee have been held.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT - PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

(No. B/11) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Representation of the People Act, he will state if major proposed amendments thereto are being envisaged and, if so, indicate when same will be introduced in the Assembly.

Reply: The Representation of the People Act, which was enacted in 1958, contains a whole gamut of provisions governing the electoral cycle, including the compilation of the electoral register, the process for the registration of electors, the issue of writs for the election of the National Assembly, electoral petitions and electoral offences. Part IV of the Act deals with electoral expenses.

So far, there has not been any paper or in depth study on amendments to be brought to the Representation of the People Act.

To remind, during my first mandate as Prime Minister, in line with the 2015-2019 Government Programme, I honoured Government's commitment to bring other reforms to our electoral system.

On 02 July 2019, I, as Prime Minister, introduced the Political Financing Bill, the objectives of which were to provide for accountability and transparency with regard to the funding of political parties for general elections with a view to preventing undue influence and corruption. Several amendments to the Representation of the People Act were provided for in that Bill. However, due to the opposition, the Bill was not supported by a three-quarter majority as required by section 47(2)(b) of the Constitution and was therefore, as a matter of deep regret, not passed.

Prior to that, on 04 December 2018, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill was introduced. The Bill aimed at introducing a dose of proportional representation, doing away with the mandatory declaration of community and also sought to ensure a better gender

representation in the National Assembly. At that time also, the efforts and goodwill of Government were met with sheer resistance from the part of the Opposition and the Bill could not be put to vote as no consensus was secured across the political spectrum to obtain the required majority. Unfortunately, when it comes to electoral reform, the Opposition has so far adopted a contradictory approach.

Both the Constitutional (Amendment) Bill and the Political Financing Bill were the first of their kinds since independence. Had these Bills been enacted, all references to community would have been removed from the sacrosanct provisions of our Constitution, hence de-institutionalising communalism and consolidating the fundamental pillars of our democracy by ensuring wider, equitable and inclusive representation. Also, greater probity and integrity would have been achieved in our political system.

Government has never shied away from reforms aiming to reinforce our electoral system, however challenging those might have been, and it is relevant for me to remind that in 2015, the Local Government Act was amended to secure higher women participation in local government elections.

In the past, from 2002 to September 2014, different proposals for electoral reform were formulated by political parties and in reports commissioned by different governments. But none of these had been implemented. Electoral reform is not simply a trial and error process.

Due to the COVID health crisis, the past two years have been unprecedented for most countries including, Mauritius, whereby resources and priorities have been geared towards protecting public health, ensuring the livelihood of the population and managing and mitigating the effects of the pandemic.

However, Government stands committed to bring reform to the current electoral system along the lines set out in the Government Programme 2020-2024, namely, that Government will pursue its initiative to bring an electoral reform that will ensure political and social stability in the country and higher women participation. If, in the process of further examination of the electoral reform formula, it is found that changes have to be made to the Representation of the People Act, Government will give its earnest consideration thereto.

MR A. D, DECEASED DETAINEE – INVESTIGATION

(No. B/12) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in

regard to the death of A. D. who allegedly fell from a police vehicle at Gros Calloux, in Petite Rivière, on Tuesday 15 March 2022 and who passed away on Saturday 19 March 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating the outcome thereof.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that, during the course of an investigation into a case of larceny reported at Petite Rivière Police Station, Mr A.D. was arrested on Monday 14 March 2022 at 09.00 hours by the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) of Petite Rivière.

On the same day, Mr A.D. was provisionally charged for the offence of “Larceny more than 2 in number” before the District Court of Black River. The police objected to his release on bail and he was consequently remanded to police cell.

The Police Officer escorting the detainee reported that after court appearance, Mr A.D. was being escorted back to Petite Rivière Police Station in a police van. At around 14.30 hours, on reaching Gros Cailloux, Petite Rivière, the detainee, who was occupying the rear seat alone, opened the door and jumped out of the vehicle, as a result of which, he sustained injuries all over his body.

He was conveyed by the CID Officers to Petite Rivière Health Centre for treatment. Thereafter, at 15.03 hours, Mr A.D. was transferred to Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital where he was admitted in ward L1, and subsequently shifted in the ICU during the night. He passed away on Saturday 19 March 2022 at 23.10 hours, and death was due to cranio-cerebral injuries.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that an investigation into the incident, which led to the death of Mr A.D., is underway by the Major Crime Investigation Team (MCIT).

Moreover, the Police Officer who was escorting the detainee was arrested and provisionally charged for “Involuntary homicide by negligence”. The latter has been released on bail and has been interdicted from duty with effect from Wednesday 23 March 2022.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that on Sunday 20 March 2022, the father of the deceased has filed a complaint at Petite Rivière Police Station against the Police regarding the incident. The matter has been referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission on Monday 21 March 2022 for investigation.

**CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – PRESS MEMBERS - INVITATION
CRITERIA**

(No. B/13) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the recent visit of Mauritian officials to the Chagos Archipelago, he will list the criteria used to invite members of the press to participate therein.

Reply: In the context of the maritime delimitation case brought by Mauritius against Maldives under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Government, as I stated in my reply to PQ B/1, organised a scientific survey of Blenheim Reef in the Chagos Archipelago from 08 to 22 February 2022.

In that regard, Government chartered the vessel 'Bleu de Nîmes' which had all the appropriate facilities, including four tenders and one zodiac, all of which were very important for the conduct of the survey. However, the vessel could only accommodate 28 passengers.

In the circumstances, priority had to be given to those officials, lawyers, experts and technicians whose participation was essential for carrying out the survey. Additionally, since Government had made a long-standing commitment to take along some Chagossians on the first voyage, only five of them were invited. This left us with 10 slots which were given to press representatives from the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Guardian, The Atlantic magazine, the Sunday Times and the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. The two representatives from Sunday Times cancelled at the last minute because they had caught COVID-19, by which time it was too late to replace them.

As it was intended to give as much coverage as possible in the international media to the visit, journalists from the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Guardian and Sunday Times of the United Kingdom as well as The Atlantic magazine of the United States were invited to participate in the visit.

The participation of foreign journalists has enabled the visit to the Chagos Archipelago to receive a significant coverage in the international media. There were daily reports on the visit by journalists from the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Guardian. The Atlantic magazine intends to publish an article of more than ten pages on the visit. The visit was also reported in other international newspapers and media. This coverage has made the international community and in particular British citizens become more conscious of the breaches of international law committed by the United Kingdom which

illegally excised the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence and forcibly removed the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago as well as the United Kingdom's continued violations of international law.

**HIS EXCELLENCY CARDINAL MAURICE PIAT –
CHRISTMAS MESSAGE – DECEMBER 2021 -OFFICIAL APOLOGY**

(No. B/14) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the fact that the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation did not broadcast the entire Christmas message of His Excellency Cardinal Maurice Piat in December 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if an official apology has been tendered to His Excellency and, if so, when and by whom and, if not, why not.

Reply: As PQs B/14, B/15 and B/16 relate to the same subject matter, a simple reply is being made thereto.

The Director General of the MBC has informed that it is an established practice at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) to broadcast the message of the following personalities –

- (i) the President of the Republic, on Christmas Day;
- (ii) the Prime Minister, on National Day and New Year, and
- (iii) Ministers, on specific International Days, concerning their respective sectors.

In addition, for a number of years now, the MBC has been broadcasting messages of –

- (i) the Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Port Louis on Easter and on Christmas Day, and
- (ii) the Bishop of Anglican Diocese of Mauritius on Christmas Day.

The Director General of the MBC has also informed that, so far, no such privilege has been extended during prime time on MBC channels to other socio-cultural organisations for recording and broadcast of their respective messages during any religious festivities.

However, some socio-cultural organisations have written to the MBC requesting similar recording facilities and broadcast of messages during prime time by the MBC in relation to their respective religious festivities. These requests are being examined at the level of the Corporation.

In regard to the message of His Eminence Cardinal Maurice Piat on the occasion of Christmas 2021, the recording was conducted on Friday 17 December 2021 under the supervision of the producer. The message was broadcast on Saturday 25 December 2021 on MBC 1, MBC Sat and Senn Kreol.

However, following complaints posted on social media and also in the written press that the message of Cardinal Piat was not broadcast in its entirety, the MBC Board convened a Special Board Meeting on Wednesday 29 December 2021 to look into these complaints.

After hearing the Acting Director General and the Officer-in-Charge of the Production Section, the MBC Board took the following decisions –

- (i) to carry out an internal enquiry into the matter;
- (ii) to broadcast the entire message of His Eminence Cardinal Piat after the French News Bulletin of 19 30 hours on MBC 1 on the same evening;
- (iii) to address a letter under the signature of the Chairperson of the MBC to the Cardinal of the Diocese of Port Louis informing him of the above decisions and to present the apology of the MBC for the mishap, and
- (iv) to establish a written protocol on recording and broadcast of eminent personalities and high dignitaries.

An official apology was accordingly tendered via a letter dated Wednesday 29 December 2021 addressed to His Eminence Cardinal Maurice Piat, CSSp, GOSK under the signature of the Chairperson of the MBC Board.

In the same letter, His Eminence Cardinal Maurice Piat was informed that the Christmas message will be broadcast in its entirety after the French News Bulletin of 19 30 hours on the same night of Wednesday 29 December 2021 on MBC 1.

On Monday 31 January 2022, the MBC Board was apprised of the outcome of the internal enquiry, which had concluded that the Officer-in-Charge of Production Section had, acting in his own deliberate judgement, instructed the producer to edit the message of Cardinal Maurice Piat and had neither informed nor consulted the then Acting Director General on this matter. However, the MBC Board also took note that the Officer-in-Charge of Production Section did not have any ill intention while editing the said message and he presented his apology to the Board.

Consequently, the MBC Board decided that a letter of warning be issued to the Officer-in-Charge of Production Section because this unwarranted situation had impacted negatively on the MBC. The Board also noted that the officer had never been subject to any disciplinary action and his conduct had always been satisfactory.

In regard to part (b) of PQ B/16, the Officer-in-Charge of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) has informed that the Authority had received a complaint dated Wednesday 29 December 2021 from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Port Louis against the MBC on the same issue. In the light of information sought and obtained from the MBC on the measures taken, or intended to be taken, by the MBC, the IBA considered that there was no longer any live issue which warranted the intervention of the IBA. For the same reason, the IBA has set aside a complaint received on Thursday 10 February 2022 from the group “Affirmative Action”.

On Monday 07 March 2022, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Port Louis made a request to the IBA for a review of the latter’s decision to set aside its complaint. The Authority, at its meeting of Wednesday 16 March 2022, examined the request and decided that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Port Louis be informed that the statutory jurisdiction of the Independent Broadcasting Review Panel is limited to the review of decisions in relation to administrative penalties imposed by the Authority. Appropriate action has accordingly been taken by the Authority on Friday 18 March 2022.

HIS EXCELLENCY CARDINAL MAURICE PIAT –

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE – DECEMBER 2021 -INQUIRY

(No. B/15) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External

Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the fact that the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation did not broadcast the entire Christmas message of His Excellency Cardinal Maurice Piat in December 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the outcome of the inquiry carried out thereinto, indicating the measures taken in relation thereto, if any.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/14)

**HIS EXCELLENCY CARDINAL MAURICE PIAT –
CHRISTMAS MESSAGE – DECEMBER 2021 – ACTIONS TAKEN**

(No. B/16) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Message of His Excellency Cardinal Maurice Piat, broadcasted on the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation in December 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information from the –

- (a) Corporation, why part thereof was not broadcast, indicating if any committee has been set up by the Corporation or his Office to determine the reasons thereof and the actions taken in relation thereto, if any, and
- (b) Independent Broadcasting Authority, where matters stand as to the complaint lodged therewith in relation thereto.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/14)

**HINDUSTAN AERONAUTICS LIMITED, INDIA – DHRUV MK-III
HELICOPTER**

(No. B/17) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the acquisition of a Dhruv MK-III Helicopter from the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, India, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) capacity and cost thereof, and
- (b) reasons therefor.

Reply: On Monday 17 January 2022, a contract for the procurement of an Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), DHRUV MK III was signed between the Government of Mauritius and the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL), India. The Helicopter, along with associated deliverables including role equipment, spares, Ground Support and Ground Handling Equipment, Manuals/Technical Publications and training to Police personnel by HAL, was procured at a cost of USD17,670,000.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that, the Dhruv helicopter, which is presently being manufactured, has a twin engine and is a multi-role new generation helicopter in the 5500 kg weight class with an Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) capability. It is designed for extreme climatic conditions and saline environment, with a range of 325 nautical miles and endurance of 3 hours of flight. It has a flying range of 630 kilometres.

The ALH MK III can carry a maximum of 14 passengers or 14 fully equipped troops excluding two pilots or can evacuate four lying casualties in case emergencies with 3 passengers excluding 2 pilots.

The DHRUV helicopter has been designed for both utility and armed roles. It is best suited for surveillance over sea with a state-of-the-art Electro Optical Pod with Forward Looking Infra-Red capability. It has an enhanced under slung lifting capacity of 1500 kg and is equipped with glass cockpit and Night Vision Goggles capability, best suited for night operations.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has also informed that the main reasons for the purchase of this new Helicopter are as follows –

- (a) to provide enhanced assistance during land and maritime incidents even during the night;
- (b) to provide for better casualty evacuation with on-board medical assistance including stretchers for minimum of four lying casualties;
- (c) to have better surveillance capabilities with an on-board Electro Optical pod which is a closed-circuit television camera, with a magnification lens, helping the aircrew to locate and identify objects even at night;

- (d) to complement the current fleet of the Helicopter Squadron which comprises of 3 helicopters which are over 20 years old, and
- (e) to provide enhanced avionics support for the entire duration of flying with the inclusion of the Glass cockpit and thus increased safety for the pilots.

EMBASSY IN MAURITIUS - GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA - REQUEST

(No. B/32) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to Malaysia, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of a request for the opening of an Embassy thereof in Mauritius and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given thereto.

Reply: My Ministry is not in presence of an official request from the Government of Malaysia to open an Embassy in Mauritius.

RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS & DAY CARE CENTRES – ILLEGAL OPERATION – COMMITTAL ORDER

(No. B/33) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to Residential Care Institutions and Day Care Centres, she will state if she is aware that some of them are operating without the required licence and that applications have been made to court for committal orders to commit mistreated children to shelters that were not place of safety.

Reply: There are presently 18 Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) that are regulated and mandated by my Ministry to provide necessary services, protection and “*prise-en-charge*” of the child victims of harm. There are 4 Government-owned RCIs, out of which 3 are run by NGOs and 1 by the National Children’s Council and the remaining 14 are managed by different NGOs.

The Child Protection (Place of Safety for the Welfare and Protection of Children) Regulations 2019 came into effect on 1 October 2019. When I took office in December 2019, I reviewed the structural support services provided to our children and the set-up for an enforcement mechanism.

My Ministry requested all the 16 RCIs that have been providing services, since years, to register as Place of Safety. As at 12 April 2022, 8 out of the 14 NGOs have registered under Residential Care Institutions for Children Regulations 2022, 6 have yet to be registered.

Placing mistreated children in shelters is a last resort measure. My Ministry explores all avenues and alternative placement possibilities such as placement with next to kin or relatives and even willing foster homes before envisaging an application for a committal order.

I am fully aware of the challenges faced by Residential Care Institutions and Places of Safety. To that effect, I chaired a meeting regrouping all stakeholders, including the National Social Inclusion Foundation, involved in ensuring the support and compliance of RCIs to existing legislations and existing funding schemes. The Foundation is already helping to address the shortage of financial and human resources which are preventing these NGOs from complying with the provisions of the Regulations under a new funding framework agreement.

The National Social Inclusion Foundation is working in close collaboration with my Ministry on a National Programme for Residential Care Institutions for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

The provisions of the Regulations 2022 are meant to raise the standards of service being offered in our RCIs. All RCIs will, henceforth, be called upon to offer a higher quality of service. I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry will consider taking bold decisions to cease operations of all RCIs which would not comply with the Regulations.

As regards Child Day Care Centres, as at February 2022, 375 Child Day Care Centres are operational across the island, out of which 216 are operating without a Certificate of Registration.

The Child Day Care Centres Regulations 2022 came into operation on 24 January 2022 and the sanctions have been revised as follows –

“Any person who contravenes these regulations commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs200,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.”

Since October 2021, the officers of my Ministry have requested all Child Day Care Centres to register their managers and child caregivers with the Ministry. As at 25 March 2022, my Ministry has registered 224 managers and 696 child caregivers.

A moratorium of 3 months to all managers and caregivers who have not yet submitted their registration to the Ministry is being given, failing which they will not be authorised to work in a Child Day Care Centre.

For Child Day Care Centres which have not submitted their applications for registration with all the required clearances, my Ministry is envisaging to grant them a final moratorium of 6 months, failing which they will be asked to stop operating and my Ministry will initiate procedures for contravening all those not complying with the regulations.

HUMAN PAPILOMAVIRUS - POPULATION - PROTECTION

(No. B/34) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Human Papillomavirus, he will state the measures taken to protect the population therefrom, indicating if consideration will be given for targeted vaccinations.

Reply: Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a viral infection that is passed between people through skin-to-skin contact. Some cases of genital HPV infection may not cause any health problems. However, some types of HPV can lead to the development of genital warts and cancers of the genital organs and throat. Amongst the most frequent type of cancer caused by HPV is cervical cancer (19.1%), followed by oral cavity cancer (3.88%) and vulva cancer (1.7%).

According to the World Health Organisation, cervical cancer is the fourth most frequent cancer in women with an estimated 604,000 new cases in 2020. In Mauritius, cervical cancer ranks as the 3rd most frequent cancer among women and the 2nd most frequent cancer among women between 15 and 44 years of age. According to the Mauritius Cancer Registry, 91 new cases of cervical cancer were noted in 2020.

Following the Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety in 2015, the World Health Organisation recommended that HPV vaccines be included in National Immunisation programmes in countries where cervical cancer is a public health priority.

Targeted HPV vaccination has been introduced in Mauritius in 2016 as a primary prevention strategy against cervical cancer to school girls as from the age of 9 years old. They are administered two doses and these vaccinations sessions are carried out in school premises during school days by the Public Health Nursing Officers under the supervision of a medical officer. Consent of parents is sought prior to vaccination.

Moreover, Public Health Nursing Officers in Area Health Centres routinely check health cards to assess the vaccination status of girls aged 9 years or above. In case the child has not been administered the vaccine, needful is done accordingly.

I am informed that since the introduction of the HPV vaccination in 2016 to date, a total of 88,861 girls have already received their two doses of HPV Vaccine.

Other measures taken to protect the population from contracting HPV include, amongst others, the restructuration of the cervical screening programme as follows –

- liquid base cytology to ensure testing for Human Papillomavirus in those showing cervical changes;
- use of condoms;
- extending the screening age group from 35 years to 25 years;
- new protocol schedule to handle abnormal or precancerous cases;
- setting up of a register to enrol all women who are eligible for testing so as to ensure proper follow-up of cases and coverage of all those who would have otherwise remained unscreened, and
- extensive media campaigning to ensure that the population is aware of the screening programme and its importance.

With the new restructuration, we hope to further reduce the cases of cervical cancer detected and death related to the disease.

PAILLES-GUIBIES SEWERAGE PROJECT PHASE 2

(No. B/35) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Phase 2 of the Pailles-Guibies Sewerage Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to –

- (a) if there has been any price escalation thereof since the award of the contract on 31 July 2019;
- (b) the updated works schedule, and
- (c) the number of –
 - (i) complaints received in respect thereof, and
 - (ii) meetings organised with the inhabitants concerned therewith.

Reply: I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) that the Pailles-Guibies Sewerage Project-Phase 2 was awarded to Sinohydro Corporation Limited on 31 July 2019 following the approval of the Central Procurement Board for an amount of Rs979,238,452.98 (inclusive of VAT).

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the Contract makes provision for “Adjustment for Changes in Cost” based on changes in Construction Price Index, Fuel and Labour. Till date, there has been no increase in the Contract Value.

As for part (b) of the question, the WMA has informed that the original completion date of 10 January 2023 has been revised to 31 May 2023 due to extension of time for inclement weather and COVID-19.

However, I have also been informed of considerable delays encountered on this project. I have expressed serious concern on this situation and have impressed on both the Board and Management of the Wastewater Management Authority to reinforce monitoring and supervision of the project so as to catch up on delays and mitigate inconvenience to the residents.

Concerning part (c) (i) of the question, the WMA has informed that 60 complaints have been registered from the inhabitants of the project area over the last 12 months. The complaints mainly relate to temporary road reinstatement, dust pollution and damaged property. As at end March 2022, 47 complaints have been resolved and the remaining complaints are being attended.

As regards part (c) (ii) of the question, meetings have been held at the request of the Municipal City Council of Port Louis and the PPS, hon. Dr. Mrs D. Chukowry, on 14 July 2021, 12 January 2022 and 09 March 2022 with the inhabitants and other stakeholders such

as Forces Vives. The WMA Public Relations team is also in constant liaison with the inhabitants and Force Vives of the region to keep them updated on progress of works and difficulties being encountered. 25 meetings have, thus, been held with the inhabitants of Pailles over the last 12 months. Meetings have, moreover, been conducted with the Contractor to expedite temporary reinstatement on site.

NATIONAL BIOMASS FRAMEWORK

(No. B/36) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to biomass, he will state where matters stand as to the charting across of the way forward for the production of the different sources thereof, in line with the National Biomass Framework.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME - LIST OF PROJECTS

(No. B/37) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the National Flood Management Programme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd. the –

- (a) list of projects earmarked for implementation thereunder by the said company, indicating where matters stand in each case, and
- (b) administrative and running costs, respectively, of the said company from October 2021 to March.

Reply: The National Flood Management Programme is spearheaded by the Land Drainage Authority and in that capacity, it has identified some 1,500 drain projects across Mauritius, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, to be implemented over the next three financial years.

The Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd (DICL) is only an implementing agency similar to the National Development Unit, the Road Development Authority and the Local Authorities.

Accordingly, with regard to part (a) of the question, a list of 43 drain projects which the Land Drainage Authority has entrusted to the DICL for implementation at this stage is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly. Out of these, 2 are under construction, 5 are

at bidding stage, 30 are at design stage, and as regards the remaining 7 projects, surveys are being undertaken.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the DICL was incorporated on 16 November 2021. The DICL is managed by a Board of Directors and the first meeting of the DICL Board was held on 03 December 2021.

The DICL became operational in January 2022. The administrative and running costs of the company for the period January to August 2022 amounted to some Rs4.2 m.

CITY CENTRE, TRANQUEBAR, VALLÉE PITOT AND WARD IV - HIGH-RISK FLOOD PRONE AREAS - QUANTUM DISBURSED

(No. B/38) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the provision of Rs 479 million to address the issue of high-risk flood prone areas in the City Centre, Tranquebar, Vallée Pitot and Ward IV as per paragraph 40(b) of the Budget Speech 2021-2022, he will state the quantum thereof disbursed as at to-date.

Reply (The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development): In the 2021/2022 Budget Speech, Government announced an unprecedented 3-year National Flood Management Programme to the tune of Rs11.7 billion to be spearheaded by the Land Drainage Authority.

The National Flood Management Programme comprises some 1,500 drain projects to be implemented across the island by the National Development Unit, the Road Development Authority, Drain Infrastructure Construction Ltd and the local authorities.

With regard to the region of Port Louis, the Land Drainage Authority has identified a list of 36 drain projects for the total amount of Rs2.3 billion. These comprise 20 projects in the City Centre, 7 in Tranquebar, 6 in Vallée Pitot and 3 in Ward IV.

Out of these 36 projects, 10 have already been completed, 2 are under construction, 2 are at bidding stage, 16 are at design stage and for the remaining 6 projects, the scope of works is being prepared.

An amount of Rs479 m. has been provided in the current financial year for drain projects in Port Louis and as at to-date, Rs45.4 m. have already been disbursed. In addition, bids for the following 3 projects for the estimated amount of Rs390 m. are being launched by the NDU –

- (i) Drainworks along Dr Raoul Rivet Street;

- (ii) Drainworks along Lord Kitchner Street, and
- (iii) Raising of banks along Ruisseau du Pouce.

GRADE 1 PUPILS – CURRICULUM

(No. B/39) 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 recent proposed implementation of a dedicated curriculum for Grade 1 pupils born between 01 January and 31 May 2015 which would allow them move to Grade 2, she will state –

- (a) the number of pupils born between 01 June to 31 December 2015 currently following the said curriculum, and
- (b) who will be in charge thereof, indicating the proposed criteria applicable for promotion from Grade 1 to Grade 2.

Reply: The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant disruptions to education since March 2020, with forced school closure and a sudden and unanticipated shift to remote learning. These led to an obvious reduction in face-to-face instructional time resulting in the extensions of the school calendars in both 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 in a bid to facilitate recovery from learning loss.

Where Grade 1 is concerned, the age difference between the youngest and the oldest pupils turned out to be one and a half years. By the end of the Academic Year, the youngest pupils would reach around 6½ years and the oldest nearly 8 years.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 3610 pupils from Grade 1 born between 01 January and 31 May 2015 are following the dedicated curriculum. Around 450 pupils refused to take the dedicated curriculum and chose to remain in Grade 1. No pupil born between 01 June and 31 December 2015 is allowed to follow this curriculum.

As regards part (b) of the question, the dedicated curriculum prepared by the Mauritius Institute of Education, in close collaboration with practitioners at the ground level, is taught by the class teacher.

A school-based evaluation will be carried out to determine the readiness of the pupils to progress to Grade 2.

UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY - 5TH SESSION

(No. B/41) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the 5th session of the UN Environment Assembly, he will state –

- (a) if he attended same;
- (b) the position adopted by Mauritius thereat, and
- (c) the road map to reach the objective of the legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution.

Reply: Further to an invitation from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), I participated in the Resumed 5th Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2) and a Special Session of the Environment Assembly to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the UNEP in Nairobi from 28 February to 04 March 2022.

With regard to part (b) of the question, African States adopted a common position to address, *inter alia*, the major challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, pollution and waste. In my statement at the UNEA, I affirmed the commitment of the Government of Mauritius to shift towards green, inclusive and sustained economic growth through a series of measures relating to energy and greenhouse gas emission targets, ecosystem restoration, nature-based solutions, circular and green economy, sustainable consumption and production and plastic pollution.

A Ministerial Declaration under the theme “*Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs*” was endorsed by Member States, including Mauritius. Commitment was taken in relation to, *inter alia*, the following –

- (i) To promote an inclusive and sustainable recovery, and a green and just transition by mainstreaming biodiversity, climate change and pollution concerns into all policies and tools;
- (ii) To promote the conservation and sustainable use and management of natural resources, and advance sustainable consumption and production patterns;

- (iii) To strengthen nature-based solutions by sustainably managing and restoring degraded land, soil and ecosystems, and
- (iv) To protect nature and human health from adverse impacts of chemicals and waste.

With regard to part (c) of the question, a Resolution to end plastic pollution through an international legally binding instrument was adopted. An Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee would be set up to work towards the drafting of the international legally binding instrument. This Committee is expected to start the assignment during the second half of 2022 and complete same by the end of 2024.

COVID-19 - STATISTICS - INFECTED & DEAD PEOPLE

(No. B/43) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19 virus, he will state when was the first case thereof detected in Rodrigues, indicating the –

- (a) percentage of people infected therewith, giving details in terms of –
 - (i) age group, and
 - (ii) type thereof, and
- (b) number of death –
 - (i) directly caused by same, if any, and
 - (ii) caused by other reasons although the persons had contracted same, respectively, as at 28 February 2022.

(Withdrawn)

DUBAI EXPO 2020 EXHIBITION - MAURITIAN DELEGATION - PER DIEM

(No. B/47) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Dubai Expo 2020 Exhibition, he will state the composition of the various Mauritian delegations having attended same, indicating the capacity in which each delegate participated therein and the quantum of *per diem* and other benefits drawn in each case.

(Withdrawn)

FOOD SECURITY - SMALL PLANTERS

(No. B/48) **Mr N. Bodha** (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to food security, he will state if specific measures are being envisaged to encourage small planters grow all the crops that can be sustained in different regions country-wide.

(Withdrawn)

**COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON DRUGS - JULY 2018 REPORT –
MEASURES & CONTROL OF DANGEROUS DRUGS**

(No. B/49) **Ms J. Tour** (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Drugs of July 2018, he will state the progress achieved by his Ministry on the basis of the recommendations contained therein, indicating the measures taken for the control of dangerous drugs.

(Withdrawn)

MOLNUPIRAVIR TABLETS – USAGE & SUPPLY

(No. B/51) **Dr. F. Aumeer** (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Molnupiravir tablets, he will state the –

- (a) total number thereof bought by his Ministry and already supplied as at to date;
- (b) names of the suppliers thereof, indicating the contract value in each case;
- (c) total number thereof provided to patients as at to date, and
- (d) indication for the use and provision thereof by his Ministry.

(Withdrawn)

NHDC - HENRIETTA - BUS ROUTE - EXTENSION

(No. B/52) **Ms S. Anquetil** (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the existing bus route to and from Henrietta, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority,

information as to if consideration will be given for the extension thereof and for same to ply through the NHDC Estate of Henrietta to the benefit of the commuters living thereat.

Reply: I am informed by the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA) that the NHDC Estate of Henrietta is found at 500m from Bord Cascade Bus Station.

I am further informed that buses operating along the following routes serve this bus station –

- 3B
- 66
- 134
- 141
- 255

I wish to inform the House that although to-date no request for the extension of the bus service up to the NHDC Estate of Henrietta has been received at the NLTA, road tests are being carried out jointly by the officers of the NLTA and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) to consider the extension of some of the existing routes to ply up to the NHDC Estate of Henrietta.

FOSTER CARE – NUMBER OF CHILDREN – 2017 -2022

(No. B/53) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children in foster care, she will state the number thereof over the past five years.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES - EQUIPMENT - STAFF

(No. B/54) Mr Osman Mahomed (First 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 weather forecasts, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Meteorological Services, information as to the –

- (a) present –

- (i) state of the equipment available therefor, and
 - (ii) number of professional staff therefor, indicating the qualifications and expertise held, and
- (b) if a need for the installation of state-of-the-art equipment and aptly qualified personnel for the manning thereof has been identified and, if so, indicate the measures taken in relation thereto.

Reply: With regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Meteorological Services that the latter is equipped, amongst others, with one Doppler Weather Radar at Trou aux Cerfs and around thirty-five (35) Automatic Weather Stations across different regions of the island to monitor weather in near real time. The Department is also equipped with the latest state-of-the-art equipment for the tapping of data from model products from Global Weather Prediction Centres, namely the European Centre of Medium Range Weather Forecast. Model products from the United Kingdom Meteorological Office are also available and are used mainly for aviation forecast. Model products from the American model, the Global Forecast System and Meteo France are used for comparison and verification. Other weather information is acquired through the Global Telecommunication System of the World Meteorological Organization.

As regards the number of professional staff at the Mauritius Meteorological Services, I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly the information as requested by the hon. Member.

With regard to part (b) of the question, global and regional models hardly resolve the present weather issue for Mauritius because of its small size and can hardly capture anomalous cloud behaviour at local scale. Thus, acquisition of a High-Resolution Limited Area Model, which gives forecast with higher temporal and spatial resolution, is being envisaged. Such a tool would enable the Mauritius Meteorological Services to improve on the issue of the tininess faced in regional and global models. It could also help to better capture anomalous rain patterns and improve the lead time of warnings.

I am also informed that most of the Automatic Weather Stations currently available across the island work on telephone line and need a power supply, usually a solar panel. The optical telephone line is greedy in power and thus often during rainfall events, the power supply is depleted and this affects the access on the rainfall collected in weather stations. Funding for replacement of old weather stations is being considered in the upcoming budget.

Furthermore, I am informed by the Director of the Mauritius Meteorological Services that his office is manned with qualified personnel as per requirements of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). These staffs are given the opportunity for continuous professional development through scholarships, notably those from the WMO and short courses offered by Meteorological Training Centres across the world.

Additionally, Diploma Courses for both the Meteorological Technician Cadre and the Meteorological Telecommunication Technician Cadre are being run locally, in conjunction with the Open University of Mauritius, to improve the capacity and increase the knowledge of the existing meteorological personnel in those two cadres.

NEW CARGO VESSEL - PURCHASE

(No. B/56) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed purchase of a new cargo vessel to be used for the interconnection of islands of the Republic of Mauritius, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 SOLIDARITY FUND –MOGAS & GAS OIL PRICE STRUCTURES – QUANTUM OF FUNDS

(No. B/58) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to Mogas and Gas Oil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the quantum of funds collected on the retail price thereof and contributed to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines and the construction of storage facilities for petroleum products since their respective inception dates, indicating the quantum thereof spent in each case.

Reply: The item ‘Contribution to COVID-19 Solidarity Fund’ was introduced in the Price Structures of Mogas and Gas Oil at the rate of Rs4.00 per litre in April 2020. In December 2020, the amount was revised to Rs1.00 per litre on both Mogas and Gas Oil. The amount collected through the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund in the price structure of Mogas and Gas Oil to date amounts to Rs1,019.7 m. as at 24 March 2022.

The item 'Contribution to finance the cost of COVID-19 vaccines' was introduced in July 2021 in the price structures of Mogas and Gas Oil at the rate of Rs2.00 per litre. The total amount collected for financing the cost of COVID-19 vaccines since July 2021 amounts to Rs651.5 m. as at 24 March 2022. I am informed by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development that an amount of Rs530 m. has been transferred to the Ministry of Health and Wellness for the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines.

Since November 2015 to 24 March 2022, the amount collected for the construction of storage facilities for petroleum products stands at around Rs1 billion, out of which Rs91.9 m. has been invested in Mer Rouge Oil Storage Terminal Co. Ltd.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 15 – FLOOD PRONE AREAS – CLEANING OF DRAINS

(No. B/59) 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 Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix –

- (a) the list of the flood prone areas thereat, and
- (b) information as to when and how the drains thereat are cleaned and maintained.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, there are eight flood prone areas that have been declared by the Land Drainage Authority in Constituency 15, which are as follows

–

- (i) Cote D'Or Main Road;
- (ii) Morcellement Noel, Phoenix;
- (iii) Tout Court Road;
- (iv) St Antoine/ Terre Rouge Junction;
- (v) Pont Sinfah;
- (vi) Zinnia and Appali;
- (vii) Ramputh Lane, and
- (viii) ENT Hospital

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that classified roads are cleaned and maintained by the Road Development Authority. As for secondary roads, cleaning of drains, works are undertaken regularly

through contracted services whilst open drains, rivers and canals are cleaned by in-house labour of the Council every six to eight weeks intervals.

I am further informed by the Road Development Authority that during the recent inclement weather, namely with the passage of tropical cyclones and torrential rains at the start of this year, several water accumulations were observed along some of the classified roads. Remedial action has already been taken by the direct labour and Framework Contractor of the Road Development Authority.

Moreover, several works concerning construction and cleaning of existing drains were carried out since 2021 till date in Constituency No 15. The locations were mostly in regions where heavy accumulation of water was observed. The aim of these projects was to mitigate water accumulation on the road and prevent aqua-planing which is a dangerous phenomenon for road users.

REFUGEE CENTERS

(No. B/61) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the recent cyclones Batsirai and Emnati, she will state the outcome of the social inquiry carried out by her Ministry pertaining to the presence of refugees in the Refugee Centers and table copy of the report thereof, indicating the actions taken in relation thereto as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

L'ASSOCIATION DES PROPRIETAIRES DE BOULANGERIES - FLOUR QUALITY - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/62) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the flour being commercialised by the State Trading Corporation on the local market, he will state if he is in presence of complaints from *l'Association des propriétaires de boulangeries* as to the quality thereof since February 2021 and, if so, indicate the measures taken by his Ministry in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

EDIBLE OIL – LIMITATION ON SALE – STOCK AVAILABILITY

(No. B/63) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the recent limitation on the sale of 2 litres of edible oil per person as directed by his Ministry, he will state –

- (a) if a prior meeting was held with the importers of edible oil, and
- (b) the average monthly consumption of edible oil and stock thereof available in the country with effect from 18 March 2022.

Reply: On 18 March 2022, it was publicly announced through the media that only about two to three weeks of oil was available. These public statements caused significant panic among consumers and a rush was instantly noted towards certain retail outlets.

In the face of such a situation, an immediate action was necessary or the shelves in those retail outlets would have been completely depleted. Accordingly, on 18 March 2022, my Ministry took the decision to limit the sale of edible oil to 2 litres per person in all retail outlets. The limitation was applied only to the public buying in retail outlets and not to the industry which normally purchases in bulk under pre-determined arrangements with importers and in respect of which subsidy does not apply.

Although there was no formal meeting with importers, my Ministry had been in constant contact with the main importers of edible oil ever since the Russia-Ukraine war had been declared. In this situation, we considered to place a limitation on sale in order to guard against an early depletion of existing stocks. Accordingly, on 18 March 2022, it was decided to limit the sale of edible oil to 2 litres per person in all retail outlets.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the average monthly consumption of edible oil in Mauritius is around 3000 MT.

After consultations held with the major importers of edible oil, they have reassured that they have established networks with other suppliers of edible oil and are placing future orders.

At this stage, I can reassure the House and the population that there will be sufficient stock of edible oil in the forthcoming months.

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS - FIGURES

(No. B/64) **Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to Foreign Direct Investments, he will state the figures for fiscal years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - CUREPIPE TO QUATRE BORNES - SHUTTLES, FEEDER TRANSPORT & PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

(No. B/65) **Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the implementation of the Metro Express Project between Curepipe and Quatre Bornes through Vacoas, he will state if consideration will be given for the provision of shuttles, feeder transport and pedestrian crossings to ease out pedestrian access and vehicular traffic on both sides of the tracks.

(Withdrawn)

2022 ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

(No. B/66) **Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the proposed hosting of the 2022 Athletics Championships, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO 6 - GRAND'BAIE & POUFRE D'OR - STREET LANTERNS - INSTALLATION

(No. B/67) **Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to Constituency No 6, Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Councils of Rivière du Rempart and

Pamplemousses, information as to the number of street lanterns earmarked for installation in financial year 2021-2022, indicating the –

- (a) funds earmarked therefor;
- (b) name of the successful bidder(s) for the supply thereof, and
- (c) number of lanterns purchased and installed in each village thereat as at to date.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses that 563 street lanterns have been earmarked for installation in financial year 2021-2022 in Constituency No 6, Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or.

As regards part (a) of the question, an amount of Rs9,383,271.50 has been earmarked by both District Councils for the Constituency No. 6.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the successful bidder retained by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart is Midlands Trading Corporation Ltd whereas for the District Council of Pamplemousses it is LED World Company.

For part (c) of the question, 26 lanterns have already been installed in the village of Fond du Sac by the District Council of Pamplemousses. The District Council of Rivière du Rempart is actually carrying out a survey in its Council area.

A list of the villages where survey is being carried out by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart is being placed at the Library of the National Assembly. The Council expects to install the street lanterns by mid-June 2022.

IMPORTED FOOD COMMODITIES - SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS - INCREASES IN PRICE

(No. B/69) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to various imported food commodities, including edible oil, he will state if supply chain disruptions in relation thereto are occurring and indicating if, according to market forces, increases in the price thereof are expected and, if so, give the list of such products likely to be concerned therewith.

(Withdrawn)

PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS – NEW GRANT FORMULA – MEETING

(No. B/70) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the new grant formula to private secondary schools, she will state if she has received representations from the union of managers of private secondary schools requesting for a meeting to discuss same.

Reply: The reply is in the affirmative. I received a request for a meeting from the Federation of Unions of Managers of Private Secondary Schools, regarding the Comprehensive Grant Formula and I met them on 6 January 2022.

At the meeting, they were informed that the valuation exercise in respect of the premises of Private Secondary Schools had been completed and that a Technical Committee was working on the review of the ceiling of the Annual Rental Value accordingly.

They were further informed that the DBM was working on a proposal for the introduction of a new loan scheme at concessionary rates.

I also chaired a meeting with SeDEC in the presence of the Bishop of Port Louis on 24 March 2022.

I wish to inform the House that I received a request for a meeting dated 17 March 2022 from the Federation of Unions of Managers of Private Secondary Schools. A meeting has, accordingly, been held on Tuesday 29 March 2022 and operational issues under the Comprehensive Grant Formula have been discussed.

FISCAL YEAR 2021/2022 - ESTIMATED TOTAL REVENUE

(No. B/72) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the estimated total revenue for fiscal year 2021/2022 as stated in the last budget, he will state if same will be reached and, if not, indicate the –

- (a) estimated shortfall and the estimated fiscal deficit thereof, and
- (b) total Government recurrent and capital expenditure for fiscal year 2021/2022, indicating how they were financed.

(Withdrawn)

PUBLIC BUS SERVICES - NUMBER OF PASSENGERS

(No. B/73) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the public bus services, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the approximate number of passengers commuting through same on a daily basis, indicating the actions taken to improve the said services in terms of number and state of the buses.

(Withdrawn)

**VACOAS MODERN URBAN TERMINAL – IMPLEMENTATION –
VEGETABLE MARKET FAIR BUILDING**

(No. B/74) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the development and operation of the Modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, indicating what will become of the existing vegetable market fair building and metal structures.

(Withdrawn)

BASIC CONSUMER PRODUCTS – PRICE CONTROL

(No. B/75) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the basic consumer products subject to price controls, he will state –

- (a) the outcome of the limitation for the sale of 2 litres of edible oil per person by the retail outlets as directed by his Ministry, and
- (b) if his Ministry is envisaging to limit the sale of the other products in this category.

Reply: In reply to PQ B/63, the reasons which had led my Ministry to impose a limitation on the sale of edible oil to 2 litres per person in a specific context were clearly explained. This arrangement and the constant information campaign to the public has helped

to gradually stabilise the market and the situation of panic buying in retail outlets and prevent hoarding and early depletion of the stock. On 25 March 2022, the limitation on sale was lifted.

In reply to part (b) of the question, my Ministry is closely monitoring the situation with the stakeholders concerned and will take necessary measures on a case to case basis as and when the situation so requires.

HUMAN PAPILOMAVIRUS - EXPANDED PROGRAM OF IMMUNIZATION

(No. B/76) D. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the population, he will state the number of vaccinations and inoculations carried out by his Ministry as part of the routine immunization programme therefor over the past two years, indicating if Human Papillomavirus is included therein and, if not, why not and if consideration will be given for girls aged 12-16 to be immunized against same.

Reply: In Mauritius, the Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI) remains committed to achieving and maintaining high immunization coverage by making efforts to reach all children with potent vaccines.

I am placing in the Library of the National Assembly the statistics regarding vaccination carried out in Mauritius for the past two years, including HPV vaccination. I wish to point out that HPV vaccination has been introduced in Mauritius in 2016 as a primary prevention strategy against cervical cancer to school girls as from the age of 9 years old. Since its introduction to date, a total of 88,861 girls had already received their two doses of HPV vaccine.

There is an established calendar for administration of two doses of the HPV vaccines and these vaccinations sessions are carried out in school premises during school days by the Public Health Nursing Officers under the supervision of a medical officer. Consent of parents is sought prior to vaccination.

GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY – HORSE RACING DIVISION – BOARD COMPOSITION

(No. B/77) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Horse Racing Division, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the composition of the Board thereof, indicating the date of appointment and terms and conditions of appointment of the Chairperson and members thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**DUBAI EXPO 2020 – COMPOSITION OF DELEGATION – COST
INCURRED**

(No. B/78) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Dubai Expo 2020, he will state the composition of the delegations from Government who visited same –

- (a) giving a breakdown of costs incurred in terms of –
 - (i) air tickets;
 - (ii) accommodation, and
 - (iii) per diem and other allowances, and
- (b) duration of stay of individual members of the delegations.

(Withdrawn)

**GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY – FORTHCOMING
HORSERACING SEASON – LICENSE APPLICATION**

(No. B/79) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the forthcoming horseracing season, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to if it is in presence of an application for the issue of any license therefor from the MTCS.

Reply: J'ai été informé par la *Gambling Regulatory Authority* que le *MTC Sports and Leisure Ltd* (*MTCSL*) a, le 7 février 2022, soumis une demande à la *Horse Racing Division* (*HRD*) de l'autorité pour une licence d'organisateur de courses de chevaux pour la saison de courses 2022.

Le 8 mars 2022, le *HRD* a demandé par écrit au *MTCSL* de soumettre les documents et informations manquants pour le 11 mars 2022 au plus tard, afin de poursuivre le traitement de sa demande pour que les courses de chevaux puissent débuter à la date prévue du 9 avril, dans l'intérêt du public et des parties prenantes.

Cependant, le 10 mars 2022, le *MTCSL* a écrit à la *HRD* pour demander une prolongation du délai en indiquant qu'elle était en train de finaliser ses documents qui devraient être prêts pour la fin mars. Après avoir examiné attentivement la demande, la *HRD* a envoyé le même jour, c'est-à-dire le 10 mars 2022, une lettre accordant une prolongation du délai jusqu'au 25 mars 2022.

Entre-temps, le 15 mars 2022, le *MTC* et le *MTCSL* ont envoyé une lettre signée conjointement à la *HRD*, l'informant qu'ils se trouveraient dans une situation financière difficile pour démarrer la saison hippique 2022, à moins que les quatre conditions suivantes ne soient remplies par les autorités, à savoir –

- (i) une réduction significative de la taxe sur les paris ;
- (ii) l'autorisation pour les bookmakers hors course d'opérer ;
- (iii) l'accès du grand public à l'hippodrome pour le début de la saison 2022, et
- (iv) l'imposition d'un droit fixe aux bookmakers hors hippodrome par réunion de course.

Par la suite, le 16 mars 2022, la *HRD* a répondu au *MTCSL* que les quatre exigences définies par les *MTC/MTCSL* n'entraient pas dans le cadre de ses pouvoirs et fonctions statutaires conformément à la loi. La *HRD* a également souligné que ces exigences n'ont aucune incidence juridique sur la demande en cours du *MTCSL* pour une licence d'organisateur de courses de chevaux et ne peuvent pas empêcher le *MTCSL* de soumettre sa demande complète à la *HRD* pour examen et traitement.

Le 24 mars 2022, le *MTCSL* a adressé une lettre à la *HRD* pour lui demander une dernière et ultime prolongation du délai de soumission des documents et informations. Étant

donné que les exigences du *MTCSL* ne relèvent pas des pouvoirs et fonctions statutaires de la *HRD*, cette dernière a soumis cette question à la *Gambling Regulatory Authority* pour une action appropriée.

À cette fin, la *GRA* s'est réunie le vendredi 25 mars 2022 et a décidé d'accorder un délai supplémentaire au *MTCSL* jusqu'au 7 avril 2022 pour soumettre les documents manquants et essentiels à la *HRD*.

NEW SUPREME COURT BUILDING – WATER INGRESS & LEAKAGES – REPAIRS

(No. B/80) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the building housing the New Supreme Court of Mauritius, he will state if it has been the subject of water ingress and leakages during the recent downpours and, if so, give details as to the –

- (a) extent and causes thereof, and
- (b) cost of repairs, if any, and party bearing the said costs.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE - INCREASE

(No. B/81) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the National Minimum Wage, he will state if consideration will be given for an increase of the quantum payable in terms thereof.

Reply: The National Wage Consultative Council was set up in January 2017 under the National Wage Consultative Council Act 2016. Section 6(1)(f) of the Act provides that the Council shall, within 12 months of its constitution, recommend a national minimum wage for the lowest paid workers in relation to the median wage.

Accordingly, the Council submitted its recommendations for the introduction of a national minimum wage to me in November 2017. Subsequently, Government approved the

implementation, as from 01 January 2018, of a national minimum wage of Rs9,000 monthly comprising –

- (a) Rs8,500 payable by the employer and Rs500 payable by Government in the Non-Export Oriented Enterprises, and
- (b) Rs8,140 payable by the employer and Rs860 payable by Government in the Export Oriented Enterprises.

Section 6(1)(g) of the National Wage Consultative Council Act also provides for the Council to review the national minimum wage by latest 2020 and subsequently every 5 years.

Hence, upon the recommendations of the Council, Government approved the review of the national minimum wage to Rs10,200 as from 01 January 2020, as follows –

- (a) Rs9,700 payable by the employer and Rs500 payable by Government in the Non-Export Oriented Enterprises, and
- (b) Rs9,000 payable by the employer and Rs1,200 payable by Government in the Export Oriented Enterprises.

The national minimum wage is increased every year by the quantum of the additional remuneration, that is, the cost of living compensation. As at date, the national minimum wage stands at Rs11,075 comprising –

- (a) Rs10,575 payable by the employer and Rs500 payable by Government in the Non-Export Oriented Enterprises, and
- (b) Rs9,875 payable by the employer and Rs1,200 payable by Government in the Export Oriented Enterprises.

Pursuant to the National Wage Consultative Council Act, the next review of the national minimum wage is due for January 2025. However, should the need arise to increase the quantum thereof due to increased cost of living, Government will not hesitate to do so as it has been the practice over the years.

CHILDREN'S ACT - PROBATION OFFICERS - FACILITIES

(No. B/82) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the implementation of the Children's Act, she will state if the Probation Officers have been trained accordingly, indicating the facilities put at their disposal to effectively shoulder their new responsibilities.

Reply: The Children's Act 2020 was proclaimed on 24 January 2022 and makes provisions for, *inter alia*, better care, protection and assistance to children; the respect and

promotion of children's rights; the protection of the best interests of children; the setting up of structures, services and means for promoting and monitoring the sound, physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional and social development of children; the prohibition of marriage of children under the age of 18 and the age of criminal responsibility to be set at 14 years.

In light of major changes being brought by the Children' Act 2020, capacity building programmes have been planned for officers of my Ministry, the Police Department and the Probation and Aftercare Service. To that effect, the following were held –

- (i) a workshop on child sexual abuse and teenage pregnancy, organised by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, on 06 October 2021. 1 Psychologist, 1 Acting Principal Probation Officer, 1 Senior Probation Officer and 1 Probation Officer attended;
- (ii) a consultative workshop on the Children's Act organised by the Police Department, with a representative of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions as resource person, on 26 October 2021. 1 Deputy Commissioner, 1 Temporary Assistant Commissioner, 1 Principal Probation Officer and 1 Senior Probation Officer;
- (iii) a workshop on Capacity Building/Cum Training through policy Dialogue in line with the proclamation of the Children's Act, Children's Court Act and the Child Sex Offender Register Act, with Head of Child Development Unit as resource person, on 13 December 2021. 1 Assistant Commissioner, 1 Temporary Assistant Commissioner, 2 Principal Probation Officers and 1 Senior Probation Officer attended;
- (iv) a workshop on Children's Act, organised by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, on 09 February 2022. 2 Temporary Assistant Commissioners attended, and
- (v) working sessions on the Children's Act (policy and sharing of information) by Child Development Unit, on 16 February 2022 and on 17 February 2022. 2 Principal Probation Officers attended the first batch while the second batch was attended by 2 Principal Probation Officers and 1 Probation Officer.

I wish to inform the House that prior to the proclamation of the Act, several meetings were held and additional provision to the tune of Rs7,805,000 was made in this year's Budget to meet the expenditure in connection with the Probation Hostel and Home, acquisition of

equipment, furniture and a van. Furthermore, funded vacancies for 2 additional posts of Assistant Commissioner, 3 additional posts of Probation Officer, 1 additional post of Office Management Assistant and 5 additional posts of Management Support Officer were also provided.

As regards the facilities put at the disposal of the Probation Officers to effectively shoulder their new responsibilities, I am informed by the Prime Minister's Office (Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity Division) that –

- (i) 20 Notebooks;
- (ii) 11 printers, and
- (iii) 1 Personal Computer were provided to enable them to perform their duties.

Necessary actions are being taken by the Prime Minister's Office for the provision of appropriate and adequate equipment to the Officers of the Probation and Aftercare Service.

The proper implementation of the Children's Act 2020 requires a coordinated approach from different Ministries/Departments. The training programme is ongoing and officers of my Ministry work in close collaboration with the Police Department and with officers of Probation and Aftercare Service on the field. The main aim is to perform at all time in the best interests of the child.

NEW CANCER CENTRE – WORK PROGRESS

(No. B/83) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the prevalence of all kinds of cancer in Mauritius, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to address same, giving an update on progress of works at the New Cancer Centre.

(Withdrawn)

HENRIETTA – AREA HEALTH CENTRE – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/85) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the proposed construction of an Area Health Centre at Henrietta, he will state where matters stand.

Reply (Minister of Health and Wellness): The project of construction of the Area Health Centre at Henrietta will be funded under a grant from the Government of India.

The Hospital Services Consultancy Corporation (HSCC) (India) Ltd, a Government of India Enterprise, specialised in the implementation of hospital projects, has been appointed as Consultant under a G2G Agreement for the implementation of projects funded by the Government of India.

A site of an extent of 3,000 m² situated at Henrietta for the construction has already been identified. The site has been found to be suitable after consultations with concerned Governmental agencies, namely Planning Division of Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit and Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development.

I am further informed that the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning is in the process of acquiring the said land.

**MATERNAL & NEONATAL SERVICES – MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE –
YEAR 2019 TO 29 MARCH 2022**

(No. B/86) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Maternal and the Neonatal Services, he will state –

- (a) the number of complaints of alleged medical negligence in respect thereof received at his Ministry since 2019 to date, indicating the outcome thereof in each case;
- (b) if an independent audit thereof has been carried out, and
- (c) the measures taken to prevent recurrence of medical negligence thereat.

(Withdrawn)

MOLNUIPIRAVIR TABLETS – STOCK – COST

(No. B/87) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Molnupiravir tablets, he will state the –

- (a) indications for use thereof;
- (b) quantity thereof purchased as at to date, indicating the total cost thereof;
- (c) current stock thereof, indicating where they are stocked, and
- (d) number of patients treated therewith as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUAN FIRE FIGHTERS – TRANSFER

(No. B/88) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the Rodriguan fire fighters actually working in mainland Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, information as to if they may request to be transferred onto the Rodrigues establishment to work in Rodrigues and, if so, give details of the procedure applicable therefor.

(Withdrawn)

POINTE AUX SABLES - WEN HUNG DAR NO. 168 VESSEL - INVESTIGATION

(No. B/89) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the Wen Hung Dar No. 168 vessel which ran aground off Pointe aux Sables on 23 February 2022, he will state –

- (a) when same entered the territorial waters and the port limits of Mauritius, giving details of the communications exchanged between the Captain thereof, the National Coast Guard and the Mauritius Ports Authority, respectively, and
- (b) the first conclusions of the investigation on the grounding thereof.

Reply: My Ministry has been informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Taiwanese vessel Wen Hung Dar No. 168 had entered the territorial waters on (about 12 nautical miles) of Mauritius on 09 February 2022 at 19 31 hours.

On 19 February 2022, the Master of Wen Hung Dar No. 168 was instructed to place the vessel at large, as the cyclone “Emnati” was approaching Mauritius. The vessel was placed at large on the same day, that is, on 19 February 2022.

Furthermore, on 23 February 2022 at 02 15 hours, the National Coast Guard Ops Room received a distress signal (MAYDAY) on VHF channel 16 from the Master of the vessel Wen Hung Dar No. 168. It was monitored on AIS Sea Vision, at anchorage inside Port Limit at about 0.5 nautical miles off Bain des Dames in position 20° 09.46 S 057° 26.43 E. Thereafter, the Master informed Port Louis Harbour Radio (PLHR) that her anchor was dragging due to strong wind and heavy swells. The fishing vessel ran aground on the sand bed off Pointe aux Sables. The Master of the vessel requested for a tug from the Mauritius Ports Authority to pull her out.

As regards the timing of the vessel entering the port limits of Mauritius, my Ministry has been informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that the vessel Wen Hung Dar No. 168 called Port Louis Harbour for bunkering purposes on 10 February 2022 at 06 45 hours. At 11 05 hours on the same day, the vessel entered port and proceeded to the mooring buoys under pilotage.

I am also informed that on Saturday 19 February 2022 at 07 10 hours, the fishing vessel Wen Hung Dar No. 168 shifted from the buoys to outside port limits due to cyclone “Emnati”. Additionally, on 23 February 2022 at 02 15 hours, the Master of Wen Hung Dar No. 168 reported to the National Coast Guard that she required assistance and the vessel went aground off the coast of Pointe aux Sables.

I am further informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that the vessel had indeed entered the port without notifying the Harbour Radio.

With your permission, I am placing a copy of the information received from the Mauritius Ports Authority on the chronology of events as from the detection of fishing vessel Wen Hung Dar No. 168 on the radar up to its grounding in the Library of the National Assembly.

As regards part (b), I am informed that three investigations are being concurrently carried out on the grounding of the fishing vessel Wen Hung Dar No. 168 by the following –

- (i) Directorate of Shipping;
- (ii) Mauritius Police Force, and

(iii) Mauritius Ports Authority.

Regarding the Directorate of Shipping, a preliminary inquiry in line with the requirements of Section 10(1) of Merchant Shipping Act was set on 25 February 2022 to look into the circumstances that led to the grounding of Taiwanese vessel Wen Hung Dar No. 168 in port waters.

The preliminary inquiry is being conducted by Captain A. Coopen, Deputy Director of Shipping, assisted by Captain H. Noel, Principal Nautical Surveyor.

The Director of Shipping has informed me that the preliminary inquiry is still ongoing and a report with the findings and recommendations would be submitted once completed.

As regards the investigation by the Mauritius Police Force, my Ministry has been informed by the Police Department that on the same day that the fishing vessel ran aground, that is, on 23 February 2022, Police started an initial enquiry vide OB 22/2022 – Harbour Security NCG. Thereafter, on 03 March 2022, the case file was referred to the Central Criminal Investigation Department (CCID) and same was transcribed vide OB 184/2022 – CCID “Aground fishing vessel”. Statements from officials of the Mauritius Ports Authority, local agent of the vessel and officers from the National Coast Guard have already been recorded.

I have been informed that the enquiry is still at its initial stage.

Regarding the investigation by the Mauritius Ports Authority, my Ministry has been informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that an internal inquiry has been carried out to establish facts and responsibilities on the grounding of the fishing vessel. The internal inquiry was completed on 03 March 2022.

According to the Internal Inquiry Report, apparently the officers of the Mauritius Ports Authority on duty at the Harbour Radio Station did not notice the drifting of the fishing vessel within the port limits due to lack of alertness.

After taking cognizance of the inquiry Report, the MPA Board had at its meeting held on 09 March 2022, recommended that a correspondence be addressed to the Attorney General’s Office to request the latter to advise whether there were any grounds to take disciplinary action against the officers concerned in the light of the Internal Inquiry Report.

My Ministry has also been informed that accordingly, on 09 March 2022, the Attorney General’s Office was requested to advise on disciplinary actions to be taken against the officers concerned and to vet the charges.

Based on the advice of the Attorney General's Office in a letter dated 11 March 2022, the Mauritius Ports Authority decided not to suspend the six officers on duty at the Harbour Radio Station. However, charges which were duly vetted by the Attorney General's Office, were pressed against them.

In light of the legal advice from the Attorney General's Office, all the six officers concerned were issued with their respective letter of charges on 11 March 2022 and were requested to submit their written explanations within a period of 10 days which was set at 21 March 2022.

I am informed that all the six officers submitted their written explanation on 21 March 2022 and the explanations tendered are being examined with a view to initiating disciplinary proceedings against the six officers.

**MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION – SANCTIONS – 27 AUGUST
2021**

(No. B/90) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the Mauritius Football Association, he will state if the sanctions imposed thereon by his Ministry by virtue of letter dated 27 August 2021 are still valid and, if so, give reasons therefor and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

MELVILLE, GRAND GAUBE – INDUSTRIAL LEASES

(No. B/91) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the *Pas Géométriques* at Melville, in Grand Gaube, he will give the list of industrial leases granted thereon to real estate and hotel developers since January 2015 thereat, indicating the leases –

- (a) on which construction is due to start within the next two years, and
- (b) transferred from one legal entity to another or have had changes in the ownership/shareholding thereof over the past five years.

Reply: I am advised that, since January 2015, my Ministry has, in respect of *Pas Géométriques* at Melville, granted only one industrial site lease, namely to *Société Begonia* for the setting up of a Beach House.

As regards part (a), I stand informed that *Société Begonia* has already completed construction of the Beach House.

With regard to part (b), I am informed that there has been no lease transfer from *Société Begonia* to any other legal entity nor any change in its ownership or shareholding structure over the last five years.

DUBAI EXPO 2022 – BUSINESS EVENTS – COST

(No. B/92) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Dubai Expo 2022, he will –

- (a) state the total costs incurred by the Mauritian Government, including expenses relating to, the setting up and operation of the Mauritian Pavilion, events organized and official visits attended by Mauritian delegates, giving a breakdown thereof and,
- (b) obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to the number of business events organized thereat, indicating in each case the number of participants attending same and if they have shown investment and/or trade interests.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS JUDO FEDERATION – JUDO CLUBS – RECOGNITION

(No. B/93) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to the judo discipline, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Judo Federation, information as to where matters stand pertaining to the request for recognition from 18 judo clubs since 2019, indicating the actions taken by his Ministry to facilitate the affiliation process with the Mauritius Judo Federation and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

MUSÉE DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE - SAFEGUARD & PRESERVATION PLAN

(No. B/94) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the *Musée de La Photographie*, he will state if his Ministry has a plan for the safeguard and preservation thereof following the demise of late T. B. former Director thereof.

(Withdrawn)

DUBAI EXPO 2020 - MINISTERIAL DELEGATIONS, EXPENSES & OUTCOME

(No. B/95) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Dubai Expo 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of ministerial delegations having attended same, indicating in each case the –

- (a) composition of the delegation;
- (b) overall cost, including air tickets and *per diem*, borne by Government, and
- (c) outcome thereof, if any.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 VACCINES – QUANTITY, BRAND & EXPENSES

(No. B/96) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to COVID-19 vaccines, he will state the total quantity thereof purchased per brand and country of origin as at to date, indicating the total cost thereof and quantum thereof disbursed.

(Withdrawn)

MOGAS & GAS OIL - FINANCIAL YEARS 2018-2021 - TAXES

(No. B/97) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection, Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to taxes on Mogas and Gas Oil for financial years 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 respectively, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the total amount thereof –

- (a) inclusive of VAT, collected from the price thereof as at date, indicating the quantum collected for the –
 - (i) Road Development Authority;
 - (ii) subsidy on flour and rice;
 - (iii) construction of storage facilities for petroleum products;
 - (iv) Covid-19 Solidarity Fund since the creation thereof, and
 - (v) Covid-19 vaccines since June 2021, and
- (b) disbursed as to date, giving details thereof.

Reply (The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development): Il incombe statutairement à la *State Trading Corporation*, en tant qu'importateur unique d'essence et de diesel, de collecter et de remettre à intervalles fixes les différentes contributions aux organismes publics respectifs.

Je dépose les informations demandées par l'honorable député à la Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale.

MODERN URBAN TERMINAL, VACOAS – DEVELOPMENT & OPERATION

(No. B/98) 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 Development and Operation of the Modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: A request for proposals exercise was launched by my Ministry on 29 October 2020 for the development and operation of an Urban Terminal at Vacoas. The closing date was on 26 February 2021.

Following an evaluation exercise, a letter of notification of contract award was issued to the selected applicant on 15 September 2021.

As per the terms and conditions of the RFP document, my Ministry is expecting a detailed design and a business plan of the proposed project for final clearance in two months' time.

**BANNED HAZARDOUS PESTICIDES - CONTROLS - 2018 TO 29 MARCH
2022**

(No. B/99) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to banned hazardous pesticides, he will state, since 2018 to date, the number of controls effected in relation to the use thereof, indicating the –

- (a) number of contraventions booked;
- (b) quantity thereof seized, and
- (c) estimated quantity thereof that illegally entered the local market.

(Withdrawn)

**AFED SHELTER, ROSE HILL - ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT CASES -
FINDINGS & SANCTIONS**

(No. B/101) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the AFED Shelter located in Rose Hill, she will state the findings and sanctions taken by her Ministry in recent cases of alleged ill-treatment on minors thereat.

(Withdrawn)

PUBLICO HOUSE – NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE

(No. B/102) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the former Publico House, he will state when Cabinet approved the decision to remove same from the list of national heritage sites, indicating the grounds justifying same.

Reply: With regard to the former Publico House, Cabinet took the decision to remove it from the list of National Heritage Sites on 14 February 2020, following the recommendation of the National Heritage Fund Board.

I am further informed that since the listing of the former Publico House as a National Heritage Site in July 2016, the owner of the property had been making representations to both my Ministry and the National Heritage Fund (NHF) for the delisting of the property as with the listing of the site, he could no longer develop his property nor maintain or carry out repairs to the property. Moreover, he also informed that he had contracted a loan for the acquisition of the property and he was encountering difficulties for the reimbursement of the loan.

Since the owner had informed that the property needed major repairs and the cost of these repairs are enormous, an Expert Committee comprising representatives of my Ministry, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and the National Heritage Fund was set up by the NHF Board to consider the representation made by the owner for the delisting of the site.

After examining the case, the Expert Committee recommended that the property be delisted under the NHF Act 2003 for the following reasons –

- (i) the site was not listed at the time the property was purchased by the owner;
- (ii) the listing of the site was done on 01 July 2016 without prior consultation with the owner of the building and no notice was issued to the owner prior to its listing;
- (iii) in spite of the owner putting the property on sale, buyers backed out due to the high restoration costs associated with the building;
- (iv) professional Engineers, Quantity Surveyors and Architects estimated the cost for restoration at Rs32 m. in January 2017 as per the visual survey and between Rs45 m. to Rs55 m. in 2019;
- (v) the old colonial house has deteriorated over time and most of the wooden structures have collapsed at several places;
- (vi) the roof comprising iron sheets have rusted and collapsed during cyclones;

- (vii) all possible options for preservation were considered with stakeholder and no expertise is available at the NHF for restoration and rehabilitation of such sites, and
- (viii) funds were not available in the budget of the NHF nor provision has been made by Government for restoration of private building.

The recommendation of the Expert Committee was considered by the NHF Board in January 2020 and the following proposals were made –

- (i) the site be either delisted as National Heritage; or
- (ii) the Government acquires the property and undertakes the restoration works which would range between Rs45 m. to Rs55 m. excluding the cost of land.

After careful consideration that provision has been made in 2017 under Section 12 (2) of the NHF Act 2003 for the cancellation of the designation of a national heritage by Regulations where, *inter alia*, the national heritage needs major repairs and the cost of such repairs would be onerous, subject to the Board having assessed all possible means of preservation with relevant stakeholders, my Ministry has raised no objection to the delisting of the Publico House as proposed by the NHF Board. Accordingly, the former Publico House was delisted as per the NHF (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2020 which came into operation on 06 June 2020.

Even though the former Publico House has been delisted under the NHF Act, my Ministry has, with a view to preserving the historical cachet of the colonial building, informed the owner that the iron railings/fence should be kept and the design of the façade should be integrated in any new construction project. The latter has agreed to this condition and the NHF is ensuring compliance thereof. I am informed that as at date, the owner has not undertaken any development thereat.