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

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)
OBITUARY

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep sadness that we have learnt of the demise of –

(i) Dr. Rohit Niemo Beedassy, former Member of Parliament, on Thursday 20 June 2024 at the age of 82, and

(ii) Dr. Mohummud Siddick Chady, former Member of Parliament, on Sunday 23 June 2024 at the age of 73.

DR. ROHIT NIEMO BEEDASSY

Dr. Beedassy was born on 02 November 1941 in Floréal. He studied medicine at Wadia College, Pune and at Kharkov State Medical Institute. He subsequently began his career as medical officer at the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Beedassy’s political journey started in 1976 when he stood as candidate for the General Election under the banner of the Independence Party in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal. He was elected as First Member.

In the year 1977, he was designated to serve on the Public Accounts Committee.

In 1982, Dr. Beedassy was again elected as First Member in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal, under the banner of the MMM/PSM Alliance.

On 18 June 1982, Dr. Beedassy was appointed Minister of Works, a post which he held until June 1983.

In August 1983, Dr. Beedassy contested the General Election in the same Constituency, Vacoas and Floréal, under the banner of the MSM/Labour Party Alliance and was elected as Third Member.

He was appointed Minister of Works in September 1983. He resigned as Minister in July 1986 but kept his seat as Member of Parliament until the dissolution of Parliament in July 1987.
In 1995, Dr. Beedassy stood as a candidate of the MSM/RMM Alliance at the General Election in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, but was not elected.

He also contested the 2014 General Election in Constituency No. 16, Vacoas and Floréal as an MMSD candidate but was not returned.

In 2016, Dr. Beedassy founded a new political party, the *Parti Socialiste*.

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

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, on behalf the Opposition, I associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to the late Dr. Rohit Beedassy. Mr Speaker, Sir, kindly direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey our deep condolences to members of the bereaved family.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Dr. Rohit Niemo Beedassy, 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.

**DR. MOHUMMUD SIDDICK CHADY**

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Dr. Chady joined active politics after his medical studies in Dublin. In the year 1991, he stood as candidate for the General Election under the banner of Alliance Parti Travailliste/PMSD in Constituency No.19, Stanley and Rose Hill. He was not elected but was nominated to serve the then Legislative Assembly under the Best Loser System.

In December 1995, Dr. Chady contested the National Assembly Elections again in Constituency No.19, under the banner of Alliance Parti Travailliste/MMM and was elected as Second Member.
On 30 December 1995, Dr. Chady was appointed Minister of Works, a portfolio which he held until 01 July 1997. On 02 July 1997, he was assigned the portfolio of Minister of Public Infrastructure which he occupied until October 1998. From October 1998 until August 2000, Dr. Chady was the Minister responsible for the Ministry of Environment, Human Resource Development and Employment, which was later re-styled as Ministry of Environment and Urban and Rural Development.

At the September 2000 National Assembly Elections, Dr. Chady was re-elected as Second Member in Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, under the banner of Alliance Parti Traavailliste-PMXD. In September 2004, Dr. Chady resigned as Member of the National Assembly.

Dr. Chady contested the 2005 National Assembly Election in the same Constituency No. 3 under the banner of Alliance Sociale, but he was not elected.

From 2006 to October 2008, Dr. Chady served as President of the Mauritius Ports Authority.

In December 2014, Dr. Chady ran for the National Assembly Elections in Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, under the banner of Muvman Travayis Militan, but was not elected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I kindly request you to direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family, in particular to his wife and children.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, on behalf the Opposition, I associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Prime Minister to the late Dr. Siddick Chady, former Member of the National Assembly. Mr Speaker, Sir, kindly direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey our deepest condolences to members of the bereaved family.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Dr. Siddick Chady, 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.

Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT


Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have one announcement, for the time being.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to a press article which appeared in daily l’Express of Friday 21 June 2024, under the caption –

“Committee of Supply” Budget 2024-25 – Présidence: Nazurally boycotté!

The said press article purports to cast aspersions on my impartiality as Speaker in the discharge of my duties and has also cast doubts on my discretionary powers of requesting hon. Ashley Ittoo to chair the Committee of Supply in his capacity as Deputy Chairperson of Committees in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 8(2).

Hon. Members, I view this matter with serious concern as this amount to an external interference and an invasion of the privileges of the House and that of the Speaker in the discharge of his functions. I have therefore deemed it fit to set record straight.

Hon. Members, the House will recall that hon. Ashley Ittoo was elected Deputy Chairperson of Committees at the Sitting of Tuesday 26 March 2024 by the Assembly pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 7(7) and has not had the opportunity of chairing any Committee of Supply until Tuesday 18 and Wednesday 19 June 2024.

Hon. Members, it is clear from the provisions of Standing Order 8(2) that the discretion of giving the Chair to the Deputy Chairperson of Committees for chairing the Committee of Supply rests with the Speaker, the more so that the duties of the Deputy Chairperson of Committees is to chair the Committee of Supply.
The House may also wish to note that on numerous occasions when the Speaker was chairing the Committee of Supply, questions have been put to the hon. Prime Minister as to the number of Committees chaired by the Deputy Chairperson of Committees, thereby prompting the Speaker to take this decision in all fairness of giving the opportunity to hon. Ashley Ittoo to chair the Committee of Supply.

Therefore, the issue of boycotting the Deputy Speaker from this exercise does not arise. Although the contents of the said press article potentially amount to a contempt of the Assembly under Section 6(1)(s) of the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and powers) Act, I am nevertheless making an appeal to members of the media to exercise caution while publishing articles which may be misleading and tantamount to casting doubts on the democratic processes of this august Assembly.

I thank you.
PAPERS LAID

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

A. Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning
   Ministry of Tourism
   

   (b) The Town Planners’ Council (List of Prescribed Bodies) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 104 of 2024)

   (c) The Town Planners’ Council (Levying of Fees) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 105 of 2024)

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

   The Education (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 103 of 2024)

C. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development


D. Ministry of Health and Wellness

   The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 106 of 2024)

E. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

   (a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 13) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 107 of 2024)

   (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 14) Regulations 2024. (Government Notice No. 108 of 2024)
ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PORT AREA – NEXTSOURCE CSPG (MAURITIUS) LTD – GRAPHITE REFINERY

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell) (by Private Notice) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a graphite refinery by NextSource CSPG (Mauritius) Ltd., in the Port Area, he will state –

(a) the reasons as to why the said project was not entertained at Jin Fei and the date thereof;

(b) if there is any unfavourable report against the project in the Port Area;

(c) the security risks, if any, to the neighbouring population, the factories and the Ramsar site; and

(d) the total estimated cost of the project and expected annual return thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Economic Development Board that NextSource CSPG (Mauritius) Ltd, a subsidiary of NextSource Materials Incorporation, is exploring the possibility of setting up a Battery Anode Facility in an existing building of 14,000 metre square at Mauritius Freeport Development Zone 5, Mer Rouge. The project involves the purification of 8,000 tonnes of flake graphite per annum to obtain 3,600 tonnes of Spherical Purified Graphite or Coated Spherical Purified Graphite per annum.

The subject site is of an extent of 33,840 metre square and has been leased to the promoter by Mauritius Freeport Development Ltd. A conditional lease agreement has been signed in November 2023 but will take effect once the promoter receives all the necessary permits and clearances, including an EIA Licence. The promoter intends to expand its capacity to 14,400 tonnes per annum of Coated Spherical Purified Graphite in the second phase.

The project will consist of an effluent treatment plant, a solid waste storage area, an acid/neutraliser storage area, a heavy fuel oil and liquefied petroleum gas storage area, a firefighting pump room, cooling towers, and offices and mess rooms. Upon arrival of containers
from the Mauritius Container Terminal, the bagged and containerised flake graphite will be transported to the Freeport zone for processing.

The promoter is engaging with Mauritius Freeport Development Ltd to act as logistics provider for the setting up of NextSource’s business activity. It will entail the processing of graphite flakes imported from Madagascar prior to re-export of Spherical Purified Graphite and Coated Spherical Purified Graphite to Japan, the United States, and the European Union for manufacturing of batteries for electric vehicles.

NextSource is planning and forecasting 14,400 tonnes per annum of Coated Spherical Purified Graphite. The processing plant will consist of four lines producing 3,600 tonnes per annum. Initially, the promoter also apprised that annually, water usage will be up to 80,000 cubic metres and 21.4 million Kwh of power supply respectively. NextSource is working on a new methodology which is under progress for recycling of the overall water from the processing plants to avoid liquid wastage and discharge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that a project brief was submitted to the Economic Development Board on 20 December 2022 and initially the location of the project was at Jin Fei industrial site but, so far, no application for a Freeport Certificate has been submitted by the promoter to the Economic Development Board.

I am also informed that the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change and the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training had a meeting with the inhabitants of Baie du Tombeau in the former’s Office in the presence of representatives of his Ministry on 25 August 2023 to hear grievances raised regarding the nature and location of the proposed activity at Jin Fei.

Following complaints from the inhabitants of Baie du Tombeau, the promoter changed the project location to Mer Rouge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the Mauritius Freeport Development Co. Ltd holds a lease from the Mauritius Ports Authority for carrying out freeport activities over a plot of land declared as Freeport Zone 5 in the port area.
The Mauritius Freeport Development has developed its leased site with building facilities, which the company rents to promoters for carrying out storage and light industrial activities.

At the lessee’s request, a meeting was held by the Mauritius Ports Authority with representatives of the Mauritius Freeport Development Ltd, the Economic Development Board Ltd and the promoter as well as their consultants, on 18 September 2023, in connection with the project proposal to set up a Battery Anode Facility within part of the leased site.

The following observations were made in respect of this proposal –

(i) a significant land area of around 3.4 hectares, including 1.4 hectares of building, representing more than 10% of the leased site, will be required for the implementation of the project;

(ii) the process will involve manipulation of dangerous products (acids) and the proposed development will require tanks to store significant amounts of acids as well as a water treatment plant and a 25-metre high chimney;

(iii) less than 50% of the imported grain sized raw material (graphite) will be processed into the final powdered product indicating a high percentage of losses and significant source of dust emission, and

(iv) the facility/plant is intended to be constructed adjacent to the Mauritius Container Terminal and within a radius of less than 350 metres from the Rivulet Terre Rouge Bird Sanctuary, a declared Ramsar Site and an environmentally sensitive area.

In view thereof, on 20 March 2024, the Mauritius Ports Authority informed the Mauritius Freeport Development that the prevailing terms and conditions of MFD’s lease is inadequate/inappropriate for allowing the implementation and monitoring of the proposed development of such magnitude and environment sensitive nature. The need for a separate industrial lease for the project was therefore warranted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that under section 20 of the Environment Protection Act 2002, a Public Notice was issued by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change on 21 March 2024 regarding an application for an EIA Licence submitted on 13
March 2024 by NextSource CSPG Mauritius Ltd for a proposed Battery Anode Facility. The location of the proposed undertaking is at Mer Rouge. The closing date for public comments was 13 April 2024.

On 27 March 2024, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change requested the Mauritius Ports Authority to submit its views for this proposed undertaking.

The MPA informed the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change on 24 April 2024 that the siting of the proposed undertaking of such complex chemical and industrial project within the Freeport Zone is not in line with the recommended land use plan of the area.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, in view of the scope and scale of the proposed project and the risks of environmental pollution, the generation of graphite dusts and waste mud cake resulting from the neutralisation, flocculation and desludging of the wastewater, the proposed project was declared as a scheduled undertaking requiring an EIA Licence under section 17 of the Environment Protection Act on 22 January 2024.

The EIA application from the promoter was received at the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change on 13 March 2024. As per the application, the nearest residential area is 446 metres from the site. Moreover, the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary, which is a Ramsar site, is located at around 344 metres.

I am informed that following the Public Notice of 21 March 2024, comments have been received, amongst others, from Movement Anti-Pollution and Platform Moris Lanvironnman raising concerns regarding the implementation of the project on the proposed site. These comments have been forwarded to the promoters on 16 April 2024 for their views and same were received on 18 June 2024.

I am further informed that the views of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, the Commissioner of Police, the Water Resources Unit, the Wastewater Management Authority, the Mauritius Ports Authority, the Geotechnical Unit, the Municipal Council of Port
Louis and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre, amongst others, have been sought by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. The promoter was requested to submit additional information on 30 April 2024 and 31 May 2024. The additional information has been received on 18 June 2024.

I am informed that the views of certain institutions are still awaited, namely from the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, the Commissioner of Police, the Dangerous Chemical Control Board, the Solid Waste Management Division, National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre, the National Environmental Laboratory and the Land Drainage Authority.

Based on the additional information received from the promoter, the relevant authorities will be requested to send their final views and recommendations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that upon receipt of all views and recommendations from the authorities, a Director Review is drafted whereby the scale, scope site of the project is described. Furthermore, all the possible environmental pollution that may occur is also clearly stipulated. The mitigating measures are emphasised.

The Director Review also contains the proposed list of conditions that should be included in the EIA Licence in the eventuality that the project is positively recommended by the EIA Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the application is still under process as some authorities have still to provide their final views. It is only upon receipt of all views from these authorities that the application will be tabled to the EIA Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (d) of the question, I am informed that as per the project proposal, the initial investment is to the tune of USD 50 million and is expected to create over 120 jobs directly and some 300 jobs indirectly. An annual turnover to the tune of USD 100 million is expected to be generated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the population at large that every single process and legal requirements will be strictly adhered to in considering a project of such complexity with environmental and societal risks.
For any such project, the EIA clearance is the *sine qua non* condition for further consideration.

We are, I can say, a responsible Government and we will act responsibly.

Thank you.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is precisely because we are all responsible and we want to act responsibly, and in the light of what the hon. Prime Minister has stated and the arguments he has put across very forcefully. Can I impress upon him, in the light of the hazardous substances and dangerous chemicals being used by the promoter and the serious health and security risks that the proposed activities posed to the neighbouring population, the factories and Ramsar site; will the Prime Minister reassure the House, the country and the nation as a whole that he will make sure that the activity is not carried out; that this project should be set aside and shelved?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying that he impress on me. I see the contrary; I have already impressed on him because he has commented on my answer which is very clear, which has already indicated what the issues that are going to be considered by the different stakeholders are. But let me reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Nous sommes un État de droit, nous avons des lois. Lorsqu’il y a une application au niveau de l’*Economic Development Board* pour faire un projet, cette application doit suivre son cours. Il y a des ministères qui sont concernés, il y a des autorités, il y a des départements, et dans ce cas, comme je viens d’expliquer, même si au préalable, nous comme *lay persons*, nous avons des réserves, mais c’est aux techniciens, aux experts de venir nous donner leur point de vue afin que nous puissions prendre une décision.

Et dans ce cas, l’application est en train d’être examinée par les autorités concernées et bien sûr, l’autorité principale, comme je viens de dire, c’est le ministère de l’Environnement. Le comité qui est en train d’étudier l’application pour un *EIA* - je ne vais pas répéter tout ce que j’ai dit ; on a des observations, on a des points de vue qui ont été soumis et on a des éclaircissements qui ont été demandés de la part des promoteurs aussi, et les *stakeholders* sont en train de faire leur travail. Le comité va examiner tout ce qu’il y a en ce qui concerne les risques, surtout ; les risques de pollution, les risques environnementaux.
Donc, allons laisser - j’espère que le leader de l’opposition va être d’accord - les autorités, le comité faire son travail et éventuellement faire la recommandation pour que le gouvernement puisse prendre une décision.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, you know, it’s coming from deep talk to all stakeholders that there is no need for the committee to entertain this project. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that in countries like Sweden, such installations, as the proposed graphite refinery, which are constructed as per rigorous standards, they are constructed in areas which are 30 kms away from any residents. And much to the dismay of the population, the hon. Prime Minister is saying that if this project is going to be entertained, it will be located in a strategic location where there are strategic assets and industries in the Port.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in Sweden, if it is 30 kms from any residential or any other areas, who am I to be in a position to say whether it should be 30 kms? I don’t know! I believe such activities are also being done in other countries. But, again, it is neither for me nor for the Leader of the Opposition to say, if ever - I say if ever - this project is to be entertained and to be approved, what are the conditions that will be imposed. It’s not for us to say so. It will be for the experts, for the technical people to say whether it is going to be how many kilometres, whether it’s going to be 30 kms. If that is going to be the case, for argument sake, let say it has to be 30 kms, then c’est un mort-né.

It stands to reason how you can have such an activity when you will require to have such activities within 30 kms from either residential, commercial or industrial area. So, let us leave it to the technical people, the committee. Once they make their recommendation, then we can, maybe debate over a recommendation and eventually a decision that will be taken by Government.

Let me reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition. This activity was not even in any of the Schedules of the Environment Protection Act, but, of course, the hon. Minister of Environment has assumed his responsibility and he has requested that the applicant has to submit an application for an EIA. So, the matter is being considered, and we will leave the committee to do its work.
Dr. Boolell: Since the hon. Prime Minister has stated that it is not in the Schedule of the Ministry of Environment, can I ask him why is it that in June 2023, in the Annex to the Budget, Government proposed to amend the law and include as a new Freeport activity the very substance of this project?

The Prime Minister: That does not mean to say that an authorisation is given. Mr Speaker, Sir, any proposed activity, either to be done in the Freeport area or in the Port area, will have to go through a series of clearances. One main clearance is, from an environment point of view, an EIA, and this is what is being done. So, I hope you are not going to nous faire un procès d’intention when I have clearly given you all the information with regard to what is being done for this application.

Again, let me reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that all the risk factors will be taken into consideration by the Committee when they are going to make their recommendation, and I think I have already given a cue. If you want me to go further, I have already given a cue. In my reply, I have given the preliminary view of the Mauritius Ports Authority.

Dr. Boolell: I do not know what the intention of Government was, but can I remind the Prime Minister that this was surreptitiously introduced in the Finance Bill of 2023. Sections 57 and 34 of the Freeport Act were amended to make of the proposed project of NextSource a new Freeport activity. That is what was done. Can I ask the Prime Minister to revisit his policies? Because the intention of Government was clear and it was inserted in the budget. So, the intention is clear. Can the Prime Minister state clearly that this Government is not going to go ahead with this project? Otherwise you are condemning yourself.

(Interruptions)

Inn met sa dan bidze!

The Prime Minister: M. le président, le leader de l’opposition ne comprend pas ce que je viens d’expliquer.

(Interruptions)
When you asked your question, I did not interrupt or make any comment. I hope you will also be polite to allow me to reply to your question! Yes?

Dr. Boolell: With all due respect.

The Prime Minister: Je viens d’expliquer que nous avons une procédure quand il y a une application ou une demande pour une activité économique au niveau de l’Economic Development Board. They are foreign investors. So, we have to treat them in the same manner that we treat everybody.

When the application is being considered, that does not mean to say that it is being approved. I hope I can make this point clear to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. An application is being considered; all stakeholders will give their views. Once the views are taken into consideration and recommendation is being made… I want to try to make it simple because I think it is difficult for the Leader of the Opposition to understand.

Dr. Boolell: Yes. You agree.

The Prime Minister: Once the views are sent, the Committee will look at all the views of the stakeholders, and the Committee will make a recommendation to the hon. Minister of Environment. The hon. Minister of Environment has also no obligation to go according to the recommendation. It will be looked at, at his level, at the level of Government, and a decision, of course, will have to be taken. I cannot be clearer than that.

Mr Speaker: Time over! Thank you very much. Questions to the hon. Prime Minister! I now call hon. Dr. Aumeer!

CID TERRE ROUGE – POLICE BRUTALITY – SANCTIONS

(No. B/444) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Police inquiry initiated, in or around June 2022, into alleged cases of Police brutality by Police Officers of the Central Investigation Division of Terre Rouge, he will, for the
benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand, indicating the sanctions taken, if any, against the Police Officers involved therein.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer to my replies to Private Notice Questions of 15 and 29 June 2022, respectively, wherein I stated that the Commissioner of Police had informed that, in the aftermath of the video clips about alleged Police brutality released on social media during the month of May 2022, cases of Police brutality were reported by certain persons.

Accordingly, three cases of alleged brutality were reported against officers of the Terre Rouge Central Investigation Division (CID) as follows –

i) On Saturday 28 May 2022, one Mr J. C. J. P. L., aged 34, self-employed and residing at Goodlands, reported at Piton Police Station in the presence of his counsels, that in the year 2019, he was arrested by personnel of Terre Rouge CID in connection with a case of larceny, and that during his interrogation, he was allegedly tortured by means of a taser gun and forced to confess the case of larceny;

ii) The second case was reported on Tuesday 31 May 2022 by Mrs M. A. J., Handy Worker, residing at Baie du Tombeau, to the effect that her son D. J. was arrested on 27 December 2018 by officers of the Terre Rouge CID in a case of murder and he was allegedly tortured by four Police Officers, and

iii) The third case was reported on Monday 06 June 2022 by Mr K. S., aged 29, stone mason, residing at Arsenal, who stated that on 01 February 2020, he was arrested by a team from CID Terre Rouge for unknown reasons and was brought to the Terre Rouge CID Office where he was allegedly assaulted with a device that discharged electric shock. Mr K. S. also informed that he had already reported the case to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) in the year 2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in the case of Mr J. C. J. P. L., in view of the seriousness of the offence, the CCID took over the case for an in-depth investigation. Subsequently, on Monday 30 May 2022, CCID arrested three Police Officers in connection with the case, namely –

1) Inspector H. D.;
2) Police Sergeant P. R., and

3) Police Constable K. G.

And they were detained in Police cell.

With regard to the case of Mr D. J., the initial enquiry revealed that the three Police Officers, namely Inspector H. D., Police Sergeant P. R. and Police Constable K. G., who were already detained as well as Police Constable E. B. P. posted to CID Terre Rouge were involved in the case.

On 31 May 2022, Inspector H. D., Police Sergeant P. R. and Police Constable K. G. were provisionally charged with the offence of ‘Torture by Public Official’ in breach of Section 78 of the Criminal Code before the District Court of Pamplemousses. Police objected to their release on bail and they were remanded to Police cell up to Tuesday 07 June 2022.

On Thursday 02 June 2022, Police Sergeant P. R. and Police Constable K. G. were interdicted from duty. As regards Inspector H. D., he was already under interdiction since 20 August 2021 in connection with a case of Bribery by Public Officials being investigated by the Financial Crimes Commission, that is, the former ICAC.

On 06 June 2022, Police Constable E. B. P. was also arrested in the case, and on the same day, he was provisionally charged with the offence of Torture by Public Official before the District Court of Pamplemousses. Police objected to his release on bail and he was remanded to Police cell up to 14 June 2022. He was interdicted from duty on 10 June 2022.

As for the case of K. S., on Tuesday 07 June 2022, Inspector H. D., Police Sergeant P. R. and Police Constable K. G. appeared anew before the District Court of Pamplemousses. They were remanded to Police cell up to 14 June 2022.

On 07 June 2022, pursuant to Section 10(2) (b) of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) Act 2016, the three cases of alleged torture were referred by the Police to IPCC for continuation of the enquiry.

Subsequently, on Tuesday 14 June 2022, Inspector H. D., Police Sergeant P. R. and Police Constable K. G. appeared before the District Court of Pamplemousses anew. Their
counsels made a motion for their release on bail and the bail hearing was fixed for Friday 17 June 2022. On that day, the representative of the IPCC did not object to their release on bail. They were subsequently granted bail after having furnished a surety of Rs20,000/- and entered into a recognizance in the sum of Rs100,000/- each.

As regards Police Constable E. B. P., he appeared before the District Court of Pamplemousses anew on Thursday 16 June 2022. His counsel made a motion for his release on bail and the representative of the IPCC did not object to his release. He was subsequently granted bail after having furnished a surety of Rs20,000/- and entered into a recognizance in the sum of Rs100,000/-.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the IPCC that in accordance with section 16(1)(b)(i) of the IPCC Act, after completion of investigation, the Commission referred the case of Mr J. C. J. P. L. to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) on 07 December 2022, with the recommendation that the four Police Officers involved be prosecuted for the offence of Assault in breach of section 230(1) of the Criminal Code and for the offence of Violence by Public Officer in breach of section 86 of the Criminal Code.

On 07 April 2023, the DPP requested the IPCC to proceed with further investigation. Thereafter, on 23 April 2024, after further investigation, the IPCC referred the case anew to the Office of the DPP, which, on 07 June 2024, advised prosecution against Inspector H. D. and Police Sergeant P. R. for the offence of Assault in breach of section 230(1) of the Criminal Code and for the offence of Violence by Public Officer in breach of section 86 of the Criminal Code and recommended disciplinary proceedings against Police Constable B. and Police Constable K. G.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to Mr D. J., the case was referred by IPCC to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) on 19 January 2023, with the recommendation that the five Police Officers involved be prosecuted for the offence of Assault in breach of section 230(1) of the Criminal Code and for the offence of Violence by Public Officer in breach of section 86 of the Criminal Code. On 02 February and 14 July 2023, the DPP requested further investigations into the case, following which, on 20 February 2024, the IPCC referred the case file to the DPP, who has now informed that the case is under consideration.
Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the case of Mr K. S., I am informed by the DPP that between 22 June 2022 and 23 November 2022, there were exchanges between the Office of the DPP and the IPCC. Following further investigations by the IPCC, the Commission referred the case file to the Office of the DPP on 09 May 2023. The DPP advised prosecution against six Police Officers for Violence by Public Officer in breach of section 86 of the Criminal Code and for the offence of Assault with Aggravating Circumstance in breach of section 228(1) of the Criminal Code.

On 27 June 2023, an information bearing Cause Number 4430/23 was lodged against the six Police Officers before the District Court of Pamplemousses. On 29 August 2023, they pleaded not guilty. Thereafter, on 11 September 2023, the case against the six Police Officers was fixed for trial for 16 April 2024 and on that date, the trial was postponed to 08 August 2024 and 12 August 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am additionally informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Wednesday 30 December 2020, a USB stick (pen drive) which allegedly contained video recordings of Police brutality, was remitted to the Police. On Wednesday 06 January 2021, the USB stick in sealed cover was remitted to Mr R. K., former Assistant Superintendent of Police posted to CCID who was directed to immediately initiate an enquiry. On Wednesday 01 June 2022, the Commissioner of Police set up a Special Enquiry Team to carry out an exhaustive enquiry into the unreasonable delay in the follow up actions after the remittance of the USB stick to Mr R. K. Subsequently, on 08 August 2022, the team forwarded a report to the Commissioner of Police on the outcome of the enquiry whereby it was observed, amongst others, that Mr R. K. had failed to properly handle the enquiry on the USB stick.

In view thereof, and following consultation with the DPP, disciplinary action was initiated against Mr R. K. under Regulation 37 of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission Regulations 1997 and he was retired from the Mauritius Police Force in public interest on 21 October 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, with a view to empowering Police Officers to exercise their duties effectively whilst safeguarding the rights of
persons in their custody, the following measures have been taken to prevent recurrence of police brutality –

(a) Since 2019 to date, some 3,227 Police Officers have been provided with training on human rights principles, principles of policing in a democratic state, stress management and other protocols on detention;

(b) CCTV Cameras have been installed in Police Stations and the footages are viewed regularly by Station Managers to uphold discipline;

(c) Scientific-led investigation is being enhanced to improve the investigative skills of Police Officers to carry out enquiries in a more professional and systematic manner;

(d) Accountability has been increased at all levels with regard to the movements of detainees whilst they are in Police custody;

(e) Senior Police Officers are exercising their powers under section 12 of the Bail Act to release detainees on parole on a case-to-case basis and to avoid unnecessary detention;

(f) Police Officers departing from established procedures, particularly care and treatment, and safe custody of detainees, are subject to disciplinary/criminal proceedings, and

(g) Sensitisation and information campaigns are organised by the Independent Police Complaints Commission in the Police Department to sensitise new recruits and newly promoted officers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the measures implemented by Police up to now have had a significant positive impact on the performance and conduct of our Police Officers, as evidenced by a decline in reported cases of Police brutality in recent years. This trend underscores the commitment of my Government to ensure that law enforcement agencies operate diligently, ethically and with respect for human rights.

I wish to emphasise once again that my Government has consistently condemned any form of human rights violation, including acts of torture or degrading treatment, committed by any
member of law enforcement agencies. Any deviation will be dealt with swiftly to uphold justice and accountability.

By upholding these principles and implementing effective and continuous training programmes, we strive to foster a culture within our Police Force that prioritises professionalism, ethical conduct, and the protection of human dignity. Our ongoing efforts aim to build trust and confidence between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve, ensuring that justice is pursued in a manner that respects and upholds the rights of every individual.

Thank you.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Disciplined Forces Service Commission has so far taken any sanctions against those who are being prosecuted by the DPP likewise as it has done for ASP R. K. who was also involved in that case under Regulation 37 of 1997?

The Prime Minister: Well, the Police will act according to the advice of the DPP. So, if in a case, it has been recommended that the matter is pursued by proffering formal charges, whereby there have been any criminal offenses, then there are formal charges that are proffered and eventually, of course, the case goes before a Court for a trial. But I mentioned in my reply that there have also been instances where there is a recommendation for disciplinary actions to be taken and, therefore, this has also been the case and we have seen, as I mentioned, what has been the outcome. And let me say that in the case of the Assistant Superintendent of Police, whereby it was reproached that he did not take immediate action and therefore had to be retired, let me say that that person had also sought remedy before the Court to contest his retirement, and the case was dismissed. That shows that the right decision was taken.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state the number of cases of Police brutality reported at Police Stations between two different periods: from 2005 to 2009 and from 2014 to 2024?
The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is good for me to provide statistics, because I have said in my reply that there has been a major improvement. Let me give the figures. So, in –

- 2005: 217 cases;
- 2006: 183 cases;
- 2007: 203 cases;
- 2008: 290 cases;
- 2009: 256 cases.
- 2014: 33 cases;
- 2015: 23 cases;
- 2016: 27 cases;
- 2017: 19 cases;
- 2018: 25 cases;
- 2019: 35 cases;
- 2020: 31 cases;
- 2021: 25 cases;
- 2022: 16 cases;
- 2023: 21 cases, and
- 2024, as at 20 June, 2 cases only.

Now, ceci dit, M. le président, one case is too many already, because as I have said, as a Government, we are not going to condone any act of Police brutality, but, from these statistics,
we can clearly see that the actions, the measures that have been taken by the Police – I have detailed them – have brought results. But, of course, we need to improve further on this.

**Dr. Aumeer:** Merci, M. le président. Est-ce que je pourrais demander au Premier ministre s’il a des informations auprès du Commissaire de police concernant les *taser guns* qui furent utilisés ? Est-ce que ces *taser guns* furent utilisés dans un contexte ? Est-ce que ces *tasers* ont été saisis et non pas déclarés, car selon mes informations, la station de police de Terre Rouge n’est pas un *Office Police Armoury* ? Merci.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this question relates to the cases that have been reported to the Police and eventually to IPCC, and what actions have been taken, that is, where we are, which I have replied. Now the hon. Member is asking a very different and very specific question about a taser.

Of course, I will need notice. I can assure the hon. Member that when he puts his question, I will provide him and the House with all the information. But, right now, I cannot just give any reply like that, out of nowhere, although I am aware about the circumstances that have led to the arrest of those officers in the first case. But I will need notice of that question.

**Mr Ittoo:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to the number of alleged cases of Police brutality that have been reported at the IPCC since its inception and the outcome thereon? Thank you.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since its inception on 09 April 2018 up to 20 June 2024, the Independent Police Complaints Commission has been dealing with 4,229 complaints of alleged Police brutality, including 277 former cases from the defunct Police Complaints Division of the National Human Rights Commission. Investigation has been completed in 2,375 of those cases. The remaining 1,854 complaints are still under investigation.

I am further informed that with regard to the 2,375 cases where investigations have been completed –

- 445 complaints have been withdrawn by complainants;
• 232 complaints have been settled by conciliation meetings conducted by the Commission;

• 7 complaints have been referred to the Disciplined Forces Service Commission for disciplinary action to be initiated against Police Officers concerned;

• 48 cases have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice, out of which 17 cases were lodged in Court, one case has been dismissed, and the remaining 16 are still at the Court’s level, and

• 1,643 complaints have been disposed of after investigation and in line with section 10(4) of the IPCC Act of 2016.

Mr Speaker: Time over!

The Table has been advised that PQ B/445 will be replied by the hon. Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

The following Questions have been withdrawn: B/445, B/446 and B/447.

I now call hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

EXTENDED PROGRAMME – ASSESSMENT – METHODOLOGY

(No. B/450) 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 Extended Programme, she will state the methodology devised for the assessment of the Extended Stream students of the 2024 cohort for the end of year National Certificate of Education examinations.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to the Private Notice Question on 05 December 2023, I informed the House that the mode of assessment for the Extended Programme was being reviewed so as to introduce the School-based Assessment in the evaluation structure as from the Academic Year 2024.
Accordingly, Mr Speaker, Sir, as from this year, the award criteria for the National Certificate of Education Extended Programme has been amended to include this School-based Assessment component.

The School-based Assessment will be conducted by Educators, monitored and moderated by the MES. Technical committees, under the leadership of the MES, have devised tasks and activities subject-wise for implementation by Educators. The evaluation of candidates will be based on these activities. The School-based Assessment will carry a weighting of 40%, while 60% of the marks will be based on the end of year written assessment for NCE. The criteria for grading are as per the annual programme of this year.

**Dr. Gungapersad**: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the Vice-Prime Minister, given that, Educators working with the Extended Programme students received their booklet only a few days ago and they have to prepare the EP students for the School-based Assessment, when we know that candidates have to devote two terms on their project, aren’t we penalising the present 2024 cohort EP students by tardily asking them to prepare for the School-based project only a few weeks before the end of the term?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun**: Mr Speaker, Sir, the teachers have already been briefed and there were training sessions carried out in April this year and the School-based Assessment is based on practicals and has a continuous assessment process. So, teachers have already been engaged in the process earlier. The documents that have been submitted are certain guidelines, certain specimen papers, etc., but the students are being taken care of and there are no projects for end of year. It is a project that is being done ongoing, all the time, and teachers are supposed to be assessing the competencies and the learning outcomes of the students.

The School-based Assessment is based on learning outcomes, on students’ ability to show their critical thinking, and so on and so forth. So, the teachers, the Educators have been made aware long time back and they were trained earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Gungapersad**: May I ask the hon. Minister to explain how come both the Extended Programme students and the mainstream students who sit for the same NCE DT N550 end of year exams, be now assessed differently, that is, the EP students will have an additional School-
based Assessment apart from the end of year assessment for the final grading? Why this additional pressure on these EP students?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the very idea of bringing in a school-based component is to manage, to gage the competencies developed by the students during their schooling. The written paper is the same and has always been the same. Students having passed their NCE EP will get an NCE EP Certificate. Other students, the NCE students, will carry on with the written exam only. This additional component is not to make their life more difficult but to give them the possibility of demonstrating their competencies, skills and knowledge acquired during their schooling.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Hon. Uteem!

SAUDI ARABIA – DONATION – BUILDING & RENOVATION OF MOSQUES

(No. B/452) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the donation of USD 6 million by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the purpose of building new mosques and renovation of existing mosques, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that on 21 July 2020, my colleague, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, informed the House that the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had agreed to donate USD 6 million to Mauritius for the purpose of building of new mosques and renovation of existing mosques.

Subsequently, at the Sitting of 06 April 2021, my colleague, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, also informed the House that the Saudi Authorities are considering coordinating with the local stakeholders in Mauritius to determine the nature of the assistance needed by the various mosques before coming up with an appropriate Memorandum of Understanding. Thereafter, the Mauritian side put forward the proposal for the Islamic Cultural Centre to set up a foundation and a draft MoU was submitted to the Saudi Authorities.
I wish to inform the House that in June 2022, the Saudi Government dispatched an inter-ministerial delegation to Mauritius to conduct a visual assessment of the requirements of the mosques. According to information obtained by our Embassy in Riyadh, the report of the said Saudi delegation was finalised and its recommendations submitted to the Royal Court in Saudi Arabia for approval.

In March 2023, our Embassy in Riyadh requested for an update on the disbursement of the earmarked funds in a series of meetings with high level Saudi officials. On 07 April 2023, the Royal Consulate of Saudi Arabia in Mauritius sought for an update from my Ministry on the status of internal consultations with other relevant stakeholders in Mauritius in view of signing of the MoU on the grant. The House will note that following consultations with the relevant Ministries in Mauritius, a revised draft MoU establishing the modus operandi for the disbursement of the funds was prepared and submitted to the Saudi Authorities in October 2023.

On 14 December 2023, the Royal Consulate of Saudi Arabia in Mauritius submitted an amendment to the draft MoU and following the latest consultations between Mauritius and the Saudi Authorities as recently as May of this year, we are hopeful to see a positive development.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Attorney General whether there is any timeline for the finalisation of that Memorandum of Understanding between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of Mauritius?

Mr Gobin: It is difficult for me at this stage to set a timeline, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have set out already the chronology. We are proceeding in bilateral discussion with the Saudi Authorities especially concerning the modus operandi for the disbursement of the funds. Le principe est acquis, M. le président. But we need the MoU concerning the disbursements.

Mr Uteem: According to previous answers to PQs in this House, the Government has been consistent that they are proposing the setting up of a foundation under the ageist of the Islamic Cultural Centre to monitor the implementation of any funds that is going to be received from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Is that still the plan to set up a foundation or is there another mechanism for the disbursement of funds that is being envisaged?
Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have informed the House that Mauritius had submitted a revised draft to the Saudi Authorities in October 2023, following which the Saudi Authorities in December proposed an amendment to the MoU. I do not want at this stage to disclose the contents of the bilateral negotiations.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/482 will be replied by hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development. PQ B/455, B/459, B/477 and B/487 have been withdrawn. Still some minutes to go! I call hon. Lobine!

VACOAS – MARKET FAIR – CLEANING PROGRAMME

(No. B/453) 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 market fair of Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, information as to the frequency of the cleaning thereof, indicating the cleaning programme put in place therefor and further indicating the actions being envisaged for the enhancement of hygiene thereat.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix that cleaning and sweeping of the Vacoas Fair are effected on weekdays and on fair days, that is on Tuesdays and Fridays and waste generated thereat are carried away either on the same day or on the following day.

Presently, there are 4 General Workers posted at the Vacoas Fair from 7 hrs in the morning to 16 hrs in the afternoon and they have been assigned the task of cleaning and sweeping of the Vacoas Fair and its surroundings including the parking space.

I am further informed that thorough washing of the Vacoas Fair is effected every three months and same was effected on the 22 of January 2024 and 29 of April 2024. The last exercise was done on the 08 June 2024 by a private contractor.

Besides, rodent control services are effected by a private service contractor, Mr Pest Ltd on a twice monthly basis. The rodent control service was effected on the 29 of May 2024 at the Vacoas Fair and the last one was carried out on the 12 June 2024.
I am informed that the following actions are being envisaged by the Council for the enhancement of the hygienic condition at the Vacoas Fair –

1. Presently bids received for the purchase of a high pressure washer is being evaluated and this will increase the frequency of washing by its in-house labour;

2. The frequency of rodent control service will also be increased in the next financial year.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he is aware of complaints received by users of the Vacoas Market Fair with regards to proliferation of rats and mice, even after works carried after the 12 June by the contractor?

Dr. Husnoo: I don’t know, I have not received specific like that but I have just mentioned we are going to increase the frequency of rodent control service. I mean they were just waiting by next week or the week after, we will try to do that.

Mr Speaker: Yes, please!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware that all those rats, mice and rodents, in fact, it is coming from the bare state lands just adjacent to the Vacoas Market Fair; lands that were allocated for parking spaces for the Vacoas Market Fair? Is he aware of that?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, a sum of Rs3.59 m., that is nearly Rs4 m. was used for cleaning of all the plots of land including those pulled down – the pulling down of the abandoned building that took place in the vicinity of the market fair and this has been completed. So, we know there may be a problem and the money has been spent on the cleaning, Mr Speaker, Sir, and we are keeping an eye on that as well.

Mr Speaker: So, hon. Members, I will suspend the Sitting for one hour.

At 1.01 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.21 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.
ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. MS J. BERENGER - PRESS ARTICLES - QUESTIONS

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have another announcement to make regarding two press articles which appeared in –

- first, the weekly *Le Défi Plus* on Saturday 22 June 2024 under the caption – ‘Séance Parlementaire du mardi 25 juin: Une question de Joanna Bérenger sur les activités notariales du ministre Ramano rejetée’; and

- second, the daily *L’Express*, in its edition of Monday 24 June 2024, under the caption – ‘La question de Joanna Bérenger et tant d’autres qui disparaissent’.

The said press articles purport to cast aspersions on the Speaker in the discharge of his duties regarding admissibility of questions.

Hon. Members, I have to once again reiterate that pursuant to Standing Order 27, admissibility of questions rests with the Speaker.

A Member whose question has been refused or amended, must make representations privately on the matter to the Speaker.

Notwithstanding the above, it is regrettable that some hon. Members instead choose to go to the press which is in violation of Standing Order 21(4).

I have to draw the attention of hon. Members that the Speaker ensures that all questions conform to the rules as provided for under Standing Orders 21 and 22.

In the present matter, the Parliamentary Question of the hon. Member had already been the subject matter of a Private Notice Question from the Leader of the Opposition on Wednesday 12 June 2024.

Consequently, in accordance with Standing Order 22(1)(b), the question could not be entertained.
Hon. Members, by reporting this matter to the press, it is clear that hon. Joanna Bérenger has breached Standing Order 21(4).

Moreover, for criticising and casting aspersions on the Speaker in the press, the hon. Member has verged on a potential contempt of the National Assembly. In so doing, the hon. Member has offended the dignity of the House.

Hon. Members, in the light of the above, I am therefore requesting the hon. Joanna Bérenger to present her unconditional apologies to the House, failing which I will have no other alternative than to request the hon. Member to withdraw from the Chamber.

Ms J. Bérenger: I apologise.

Mr Speaker: You apologise?

Ms J. Bérenger: Yes! I apologise.

Mr Speaker: Okay, hon. Joanna Bérenger has apologised and therefore that she takes that as a warning for next time.

Now, I will call the next question!

**BOM – FOREIGN EXCHANGE – SHORTAGE**

(No. B/454) 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 foreign exchange, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to if there is any shortage thereof on the market and, if so, the reasons therefor, indicating the measures being envisaged to address same.

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the closure of our borders in 2020 to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic had led the decrease in foreign exchange inflows the domestic foreign exchange market, resulting in a shortage of supply of foreign exchange. As a consequence, the Bank had to intervene on the foreign exchange market and sold a total amount of USD 4.1 billion to the market to alleviate pressure of foreign exchange shortage.
Without the support of the Bank of Mauritius, the domestic foreign exchange market would have been in a difficult state. I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that since the reopening of borders in October 2021, the situation has improved compared to the pre-pandemic level with an increase in the level of foreign exchange inflows. It is observed that since January this year, the inflows on the domestic foreign exchange market are now higher than in the corresponding period of 2023 and more or less at the pre-pandemic level of 2019. In fact, in 2023 we registered a record level of tourism earnings of Rs86 billion as well as FDI inflows of Rs37 billion.

From January to mid-June 2024, foreign exchange inflows have exceeded outflows, which is a clear indication that there is no shortage on the market. As a stream of foreign exchange inflows is steadier, the bank has scaled back the size and frequency of its foreign exchange intervention. In fact, the bank only intervened once since January 2024 to sell foreign exchange on the domestic market to smooth out excess volatility in the rupee exchange rate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the bank continues to closely monitor market conditions and is in constant discussion with commercial banks regarding the good functioning of the foreign exchange market and has regular meetings with treasurers of commercial banks through the Financial Market Committee it has established.

Mr Juman: M. le président, je me demande si moi et l’honorable ministre nous vivons dans la même république. Comment se fait-il qu’il n’est pas au courant qu’il y a une pénurie de devises ?

Mr Speaker: No, no, no!

Mr Juman: Is the hon. Minister aware….

Mr Speaker: Wait! Withdraw all these comments.

(Interruptions)

Mr Juman: Is the Minister….

Mr Speaker: Now, let me guide you.
Mr Juman: I don’t need your guidance.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You don’t need my guidance?

Mr Juman: I don’t need your guidance!

Mr Speaker: So, you do not have the floor. You do not have the floor. Next question!

CONSTITUENCY NO.1 – NATIONAL HERITAGE SITES – AMOUNT DISBURSED

(No. B/455) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the national heritage sites in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state the total amount disbursed for the refurbishment and restoration thereof since 2019 to date, giving details of the works effected.

(Withdrawn)

COVID-19 – ASTRAZENECA VACCINES – COUNTRY OF ORIGIN – ADVERSE EFFECTS

(No. B/456) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to AstraZeneca Vaccines used for vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic, he will state –

(a) the number of people inoculated therewith, indicating the country of origin thereof, and

(b) if any case of adverse effects following the inoculation thereof has been reported at his Ministry.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius received 300,800 vials of AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccines from Korea, Italy, Spain and India, out of which –

• 161,289 adults received a first dose;

• 156,294 adults received a second dose, and
• 2,825 adults received a first booster dose.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed that there were 869 cases of adverse events following immunisation among those who were administered the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccines. They were referred to the National Pharmacovigilance Committee to investigate any causal link to the vaccine.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the above mentioned Committee had concluded that out of 869 reported cases, there were five minor A1 adverse effects following vaccination and 2 major A1 adverse effect following vaccination. It is to be noted that the WHO classifies a minor A1 adverse effect following vaccination as an event that is not serious and has no potential link to the health of the recipient of the vaccine. On the other hand a major A1 adverse effect following vaccination is defined by the WHO as an event that potentially results in persistent or significant disability, incapacity or death. As per our records, I am informed that there are 2 such cases where one patient was diagnosed with Guillain–Barré syndrome and another one who was diagnosed thrombosis with thrombocytopenia.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Minister. As you are aware about the admission by AstraZeneca concerning the serious side effects of Covishield namely, Thrombocytosis syndrome, has your Ministry considered having a hotline in an attempt to reach out to those recipients of Covishield so that we have a fair and clear idea whether this particular side effect has been encountered in the population?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, we stand guided by the WHO. In the event that the WHO will recommend that we should go for a hotline and start calling all those who have received the Covishield, the AstraZeneca vaccine, definitely the Ministry will do so. But so far, there is no such recommendation from WHO for such an activity.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. I do appreciate you are being guided by the WHO. However, can the hon. Minister see in the light of what is happening worldwide, particularly with these serious side effects as a class A legal action in the United Kingdom, should we not be proactive now to see whether there are these active cases or have been active in the population? Thank you.
Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is why in my reply I already stated that there were 869 reported cases of adverse effects and the Committee has already given the recommendation about what the serious adverse effects are, what the not serious adverse effects are and we will stand by our report because all these reports were generated at the time the vaccines were conducted following again the WHO recommendations.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CEB – MANUAL WORKERS PENSION FUND – FINANCIAL STATE

(No. B/457) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board Manual Workers Pension Fund and the Central Electricity Board Staff Pension Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the actual financial state thereof, respectively.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Central Electricity Board has two Defined Benefit Pension Schemes, namely the CEB Staff Pension Fund and the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund which were established on 01 January 1974 and on 01 January 1976 respectively and in accordance with section 8 of the CEB Act. Both funds, which are separate and distinct from the CEB, are governed by the Private Pension Scheme Act 2012, FSC Rules and Its Constitutive Documents.

Each Fund is administered by a governing body consisting of 6 members out of which, 3 members are appointed by the CEB and the remaining 3 members are elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting. As at 31 May 2024, both Pension Funds had a total of 1,429 pensioners and 1,486 members. Since 01 September 2016, the CEB is implementing a Defined Contribution Pension Scheme for all new employees and both the Defined Benefit Pension Funds are closed to new entrants since that date.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the information sought in the PQ regarding the actual financial state of the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund and the CEB Staff Pension Fund have been provided by the governing body of the Pension Funds through the CEB. I have been informed that the unaudited financial statements for year ended June 2023 for the CEB Staff Pension Fund reports an income of Rs258.8 million, additional CEB contributions of Rs484 million and expenditure
amounting to Rs307.6 million. Hence, the Financial Statements for 2023 show a surplus of Rs435.2 million.

As for the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund, unaudited accounts, as at 30 June 2023 report an income of Rs158.7 m., additional CEB contribution of Rs312.9 m., and expenditure of Rs345.2 m. Hence, a surplus of Rs126.4 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must add that the net assets of both pension funds have been constantly rising over the last three years. Net assets for the CEB Staff Pension Fund have expanded from Rs1775.6 billion as at 30 June 2020 to Rs3.414 billion as at 30 June 2023. Similarly, the net assets for the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund have grown from Rs981.2 m. as at 30 June 2020 to Rs1.598 billion as at 30 June 2023. These figures reflect that the Funds have been accumulating surpluses which are being invested and are earning returns.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the governing body of the Pension Funds and I would like to highlight that the CEB has been implementing the funding plan agreed with the CEB Staff Pension Fund and the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund, respectively. As such a fixed annual contribution of Rs312.9 m. has been committed and paid by the CEB to the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Moreover, a fixed annual contribution of Rs484 m. has been committed and paid to the CEB Staff Pension Fund in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as shown by the above figures, the financial state of both pension funds has been improving over the years. However, given the growing expenditure under the defined benefit pension schemes, the number of pensioners and the regular increases in the salaries of the staff under the Successive Collective Bargaining Agreements, the CEB requested consultancy firm Deloitte to make recommendations regarding a review of the pension funds for better sustainability.

A report was submitted to the CEB in April 2023, and the recommendations made were subsequently examined at the level of a committee comprising board members and members of management. The committee held several consultations with various stakeholders and submitted an action plan for implementation. The actions relate, among others, to a merger of the pension funds for greater sustainability, a shift from defined benefit to defined contribution pension
funds, use of average salary for calculation of pension, cash injection, governance of the pension funds, and reporting on the performance of the investment company.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the regular cash injections by the CEB into pension funds, and implementation of the recommendations of the consultant on the review of the pension funds for improved sustainability; it is expected that the position of the pension funds would further improved in the coming years.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: La direction du CEB avait pris l’engagement de verser dans les deux fonds de pensions, 2 fois R 400 millions par an. Peut-on savoir du ministre, si pour les années 2021, 2022, 2023, les R 800 millions, comme engagement pris par la direction du CEB selon la section 21 du Private Pension Scheme, ont été respectées ?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my main reply, I have already stated that for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023, an amount of Rs312.9 m. has already been committed and paid to the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund and to the CEB Staff Pension Fund, for the year 2021, 2022 and 2023, an amount of Rs484 m. has already been committed and paid. I understand that for the year 2021, 2022 and 2023 they have already paid, except for 2023, 50% have been paid, and for 2024 they have already committed that amount it will be paid before the end of this year. I understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, every effort will be made to settle outstanding balances by the end of the year and a letter has already been sent to the CEB Pension Fund to this effect.

Mr Assirvaden: Le ministre vient clairement démontrer que l’engagement pris n’a pas été respecté à la hauteur de R 800 millions par an. Ceci dit, puisque c’est le ministre lui-même qui l’a dit au parlement, plus de R 3 milliards ont été pris dans les caisses du CEB pour injecter dans les Consolidated Fund. Puis-je demander au ministre s’il compte voir avec son collègue, le ministre des Finances, pour faire retourner les R 3 milliards du Consolidated Fund dans les comptes du CEB pour que le CEB puisse renflouer ses deux fonds de pension comme convenu par la direction du CEB selon, encore une fois, la section 21 du Private Pension Schemes Act ?
Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already replied to this question, to a PQ which was asked to me sometimes back. With regard to the amount that I stated, I said that CEB has already committed that they will effect the payment before the end of this year.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL VACOAS-PHOENIX – FATAL ACCIDENT – SAFETY MEASURES

(No. B/458) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to a fatal accident which occurred on Wednesday 19 June 2024 involving an employee of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix and the scavenging lorry thereof, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to if all safety measures were complied with and, if so, give details thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir with your permission I shall reply to Parliamentary question B/458 and B/469 together since they relate to the same subject matter.

At the very outset I wish to convey my condolences to the bereaved family of Mr M.O.L. who passed away on Wednesday 19 June 2024 while he was on duty.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that on Wednesday 19 June 2024, a team comprising of 7 refuse collectors including Mr M.O.L. and one driver, was providing scavenging service at Rajaratnam Road, Grannum Vacoas. At around 8.50 a.m., Mr M.O.L and Mr H.S., who form part of the scavenging team, were in the garbage box of the municipal’s scavenging lorry of plate no. 5Z153 to empty refuse bins being handed over to them by their colleagues.

As per information obtained from the driver Mr D.B. while giving back an empty bin to another refuse collector, Mr M.O.L. lost balance and fell on the road. According to employees including the driver who were on the said site of work, the lorry was stationary at that time. The SAMU was contacted immediately and when it called on the said site the doctor declared that Mr M.O.L. had already passed away.
The Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, as well as, the Vacoas Police Station were informed, accordingly. An enquiry is ongoing to determine the cause of the accident.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard to similar previous incident on 14 September 2023, late Mr S. S., Refuse Collector, posted at the Council, fell from the refuse box while providing scavenging service at Camp Mapou, Phase 1, Henrietta. The incident occurred whilst the driver, Mr D. B. was reversing the municipal scavenging lorry in a dead end over a distance of around 25 metres to enter an off lane.

Late Mr S. S. who was on the refuse box with another colleague lost his balance when the driver applied the brakes and he fell. He was admitted to the hospital on the same day but unfortunately, passed away on 21 November 2023 at the hospital. The cause of death was attributed to pulmonary haemorrhage. The Occupational Safety and Health Division of the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training has initiated an investigation into the matter to determine the cause of the accident.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to safety measures, I am informed by the Council that all refuse collectors on roster basis are each provided with personal protective equipment on a yearly basis, namely –

- 2 pairs of rubber boots;
- 4 pairs of rubber gloves, double industrial layer, and
- 1 fluorescent waistcoat.

One rain suit is also provided every two years. All protective equipment are replaced upon request from the employee in case of wear and tear.

Furthermore, the Council has established a safe working procedure for refuse collectors on a roster basis following a visit by the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training at the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix on 14 March 2024. Same has been
circulated to all employees working in the scavenging section, including drivers, refuse collectors and supervisors refuse collection.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training that following its visit on 14 March 2024 – this was well before the present accident – the following recommendations have been made –

(i) to establish a safe system of work in connection with all high risk jobs at the place of work and ensure that all employees concerned are provided with appropriate training, instructions, information and supervision for proper implementation of such safe systems of work;

(ii) to ensure by strict supervision that the safe system of work is being closely followed by the employee concerned, and

(iii) ensure that the employees are provided with adequate safety and health information, instruction and training.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training has further informed that it has already held a consultation with stakeholders concerned for the introduction of a regulation to regulate safety and health conditions of refuse collectors and it is in the process of finalising same.

Moreover, it has scheduled visits with respect to refuse collection activities. On its part, the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix organised a yearly sensitisation exercise through its Senior Safety and Health Officer with all refuse collectors. The last exercise was effected on 20 March 2024. This exercise will be held on a more frequent basis. A risk assessment has also been carried out to identify the risk areas and the Council is monitoring same. I therefore reassure the House that safety measures are being taken by both the Government and Local Authorities in the interest of the employees of the Council.
Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Council that on the day of the accident, it has been reported by the Health Officer in charge of the said scavenging section that all the refuse collectors were wearing their personal protective equipment.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. Je présente également mes sincères condoléances à la famille L. de Sadally. Comme l’a si bien dit le Vice-Premier ministre, un accident similaire s’est produit il y a neuf mois et aucune compensation n’a été accordée à la famille de monsieur M. S.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Ms Anquetil: Peut-on savoir du Vice-Premier ministre quel soutien et quelles indemnisations ont été apportées à la famille L. de Sadally ? Merci.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have that information with me. I have to check with the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, le 5 décembre 2023, j’ai posé une question au Vice-Premier ministre concernant un accident. Donc, en l’espace de six mois, M. le président trois accidents : deux morts, un paralysé…

Mr Speaker: No! No! Put your question!

Mr Assirvaden: I am coming.

Mr Speaker: You are coming with a supplementary question. So, it should be direct. Do not make comments, observations and analysis and all these.

Mr Assirvaden: Le Vice-Premier ministre est-il au courant – depuis qu’il m’a répondu il y a six mois de cela – que la sécurité et les conditions de travail des travailleurs de la municipalité de Vacoas sont vraiment difficiles ? Pas de fishnet, M. le président, dans des voitures. Est-ce que le Vice-Premier ministre…

Mr Speaker: Let him reply!
Mr Assirvaden: Je dois lui demander !

Mr Speaker: Then go first!

Mr Assirvaden: Okay. Est-ce qu’il est au courant de l’état des camions de la municipalité de Vacoas ? Sur 20 camions, 8 camions sont en panne et les éboueurs sont obligés de travailler dans ces camions.

Mr Speaker: No, this is not a question. This is not a supplementary question. It may be a PQ for next time. This is not a supplementary question. So, I do not allow this question.

Mr Speaker: Let us go to the next question. Hon. Woochit!

MAURITIUS NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM (CLUB M) – MR G. M., COACH – WORK PERMIT APPLICATION

(No. B/459) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training whether, in regard to the application for a work permit for Mr G. M., a French national acting actually as Coach for the Mauritius National Football Team (Club M), he will state if same has been issued and, if so, give details thereof, indicating if his Ministry is in presence of a request therefor by the Mauritius Football Association.

(Withdrawn)

PAMPLEMOUSSES DISTRICT COUNCIL – HOUSEHOLD BINS – DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/460) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the distribution of plastic household bins by the District Council of Pamplemousses from January 2023 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the number thereof distributed in each village, indicating the respective dates thereof.
The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Pamplemousses that it has distributed 1,282 pairs of household plastic bins from January 2023 to date.

This distribution has been done in the villages which have not received bins during the first distribution from 03 July 2021 to 31 January 2022. I am tabling a detailed list of bins distributed from January 2023 to date in each village with their respective dates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that a press communiqué was made by the Council on 3, 5, and 7 April 2024 to inform all residents to collect their bins if ever they have not received same. The District Council has also met the Primary School Head Teachers on 15 May 2024 and is providing the school with a set of 15 bins.

Mr Woochit: Thank you. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what criteria have been used by the District Council to determine the allocation of the plastic bins to each village because most villages have not received their bins yet?

Dr. Husnoo: No, actually from the list that I am going to circulate, Mr Speaker, Sir, almost all the villages have received their bins and those which have not received it, that is why the second exercise was done to make sure that they get it.

Mr Woochit: What was the total budget allocated for the distribution of the plastic bins and how much of this budget has been utilised so far?

Dr. Husnoo: I do not have the information for the budget, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: So, we move to the next question, hon. Bodha!

ALCOHOL & SPIRITS BEVERAGES – QUANTITY IMPORTED – IMPORT VALUE & TAXES COLLECTED

(No. B/461) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to alcohol and spirits
beverages, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the number of bottles thereof imported since January 2024 to date, indicating the –

(a) cost thereof, and

(b) amount of taxes collected therefrom.

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that 2.1 million litres of alcohol and spirit beverages have been imported from 1 January 2024 to 19 June this year.

As regards part (a) of the question, the import value amounts to Rs530 million.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the total amount of taxes collected is Rs779 million.

Mr Bodha: I have two questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we have a list of the countries of origin from where the imports have been done?

Mr Bholah: I will table it. I do not have it in my possession actually.

Mr Bodha: My second question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is how many bottles were sold duty-free?

Mr Bholah: I do not have this information either.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Bholah: Maybe you can come up with another question.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – CONSULTANCY FIRMS – FEES

(No. B/462) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the Metro
Express Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Ltd., information as to the quantum of fees paid to the consultants/consultancy firms as at date, indicating their respective scope of work.

**Mr Ganoo**: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Metro Express Project is the most innovation and transformative project ever undertaken in Mauritius and it is contributing towards the modernisation of our public transport system by providing a safe, efficient, sustainable and alternative mode of transport. This project has been implemented in several phases as follows –

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<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
<th>Date of start of commercial service</th>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Port-Louis to Rose-Hill</td>
<td>10 January 2020</td>
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<td>Phase 1- 2A</td>
<td>Port-Louis to Quatre Bornes</td>
<td>20 June 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 1, 2A - 2B</td>
<td>Port-Louis to Phoenix</td>
<td>08 May 2022</td>
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<td>Phase 1, 2A - 2C</td>
<td>Port-Louis to Curepipe</td>
<td>10 Oct 2022</td>
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<td>Phase 1,2 and 3</td>
<td>Port-Louis to Curepipe and Rose-Hill to Reduit</td>
<td>23 Jan 2023</td>
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Presently, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Metro Express Project comprises of 32 km of railway track, passing through five major towns, 21 Light Rail Stations and 18 Light Rail Vehicles. The alignment is designed to connect six major bus interchanges, namely Port Louis, Victoria, the Immigration Square, Rose Hill, Quatre Bornes, Vacoas, and Curepipe, thus enabling a multimodal urban transit solution.

Further to the implementation of the Metro Express Project, some 45,000 passengers are enjoying a safe, comfortable, quick and affordable transport and which is environmentally sustainable, on a daily basis. In fact, I am informed by the Metro Express Ltd that over 30 million passengers have already travelled by this mode of transport, so far.
In this respect, the Metro Express Project should not be assessed solely on the basis of financial returns and we need to see beyond figures due the numerous benefits, both on the economic and social fronts linked with this project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given the complex nature of this project, involving technical risk and due diligence, the services of consulting firms were enlisted to ensure that all the necessary measures and concepts are considered and implemented to enable a safe, secure and a functional Light Rail system in accordance with the international best practices. This is a normal international practice for such a mega multi-faceted and interdisciplinary infrastructure project.

Furthermore, the overall project was considered as a network of systems, which means that the project was built up on various sub systems and each one of them was tackled as an individual system, bearing in mind its hard and soft characteristic integrated into a holistic system approach.

To ensure overall confidence in the project, five levels of assurance were implemented from the design to the implementation phase throughout the lifecycle of this project. A team of multidisciplinary experts, both local and international, with established reputation in their respective domains, were, thus involved to ensure safe planning, execution and implementation of the Light Rail Transit system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the consultancy services of the following firms were retained for the Metro Express Project –

(i) Larsen & Toubro, which following the procurement exercise for Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the project, was appointed as the main Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Contractor on this project, for a fixed lump sum contract. The latter had an internal assurance process, designed approval verifications and approval processes to ensure the delivery of the project as per the contract requirements.

As part of the funding requirements under the line of credit agreement with the Government of India, a Project Management Consultant was appointed. Since the project was financed by the Government of India, an Indian company, namely RITES, was selected by that Government and, subsequently, appointed by Mauritian authorities.

RITES Limited was responsible to carry out supervision task in relation to the Metro Express works, installation of infrastructure, electrical and mechanical systems, assist the Metro Express Ltd in defining the Safety, Environment Quality and Risk Management, report and monitor for the construction, pre-operation and commissioning, provide assurance support for commissioning and address any issues on the system integration and operation readiness and certified payments.

(iii) Under the G-to-G agreement between the Government of Mauritius and the Government of Singapore, the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise was enlisted to provide Delivery Support and Advisory Services and to ensure that the concept design of the project was being effectively implemented by the Engineering, Procurement and Construction Contractor.

Under the Delivery Support and Advisory Services, the scope of works comprise of the design and construct delivery services which focus on the Design and Contract Management integration, issues resolution, refinements, provision of technical support and briefings, and support the MEL on other enabling aspects related to the development of the project and ensure that the concept design is implemented effectively.

(iv) There was a need to capacity build the Operation and Maintenance team of the Metro Express Ltd to ensure that the staff and the executives are well-trained and equipped with the necessary expertise to operate and maintain the Light Rail Network. Therefore, in September 2018, the services of the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise/Singapore Mass Rapid Transit were resorted for the provision of Operation Readiness Services for the Metro Express Ltd in terms of support for effective operations and maintenance, recruitment and staff development and training to enable efficient Metro Express operations and maintenance.
(v) In accordance with international practice for railways, the services of an Independent Safety Audit Consultancy Firm were also enlisted to ensure that the system is safe for commercial operations.

The scope of the Independent Safety Audit comprise assessing the design, implementation, manufacture, installation, the operation and maintenance organisation processes and techniques that comply to the railway standards. For each phase, before transitioning to operation, an individual Independent Safety Audit was carried out by a team of international multidisciplinary experts in railway assurance, infrastructure design, operations and maintenance assurance.

(vi) Mr Speaker, Sir, approvals were also obtained from all relevant authorities at each stage of the project implementation.

With respect to the total fees paid for these consultancy services, Mr Speaker, Sir, same amount to Rs1.4 billion, representing 6% of the total construction cost for the project, out of which, 4% has been allotted for the Project Management Consultant, RITES Ltd, and the remaining is for the other consultancy services since the implementation of the project.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. I wanted to have a breakdown from the hon. Minister for each consultant, how much was paid. I thought he would have tabled it. So, can I ask the hon. Minister whether, in the light of the problems being faced by Metro, traffic jam, flooding, security and accidents, and profitability, are there any consultancy being done on these fronts?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must inform the hon. Member that, in fact, with regard to the question that he has asked, a team of multidisciplinary local and international experts, as I said, with established reputation in their respective domains, were involved to ensure the safe planning and execution and implementation of the system.

MEL has been working collaboratively with all the relevant local authorities, including the LDA, the NDU, the RDA, Municipal and District Councils, and others with regard to the drainage system all along the metro corridor. And as for any other works, Mr Speaker, Sir, MEL and L&T have been following all the procedures and approval requirements with the relevant authorities, especially the LDA.
With regard to the drainage system, detailed drainage designs have been submitted to the LDA for the recommendations and approvals and only upon receiving the necessary clearances, works have been carried out on site.

Mr Speaker: I think that this question has sufficiently been canvassed. We move to the next question. Hon. Ameer Meea!

NLTA – INTRODUCTION OF ONLINE SERVICES – UPDATE

(No. B/463) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of online services for the public at the National Land Transport Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to where matters stand, giving details thereof.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for giving me another opportunity to enlighten the House with regard to the online services being undertaken at the NLTA currently.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NLTA that vehicle growth is keeping an ascending trend over the years. Today, our vehicle fleet stands at 686,704 with an annual increase of around 4.4% and these figures did not change. This percentage did not even change during the COVID years, Mr Speaker, Sir. This has of course resulted in an upsurge in the number of transactions at the level of the NLTA counters involving more than 27,000 operations on a monthly basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that in accordance with the Road Traffic Act and the NLTA Act, the main transactions effected by the NLTA include among others –

- payment of Motor Vehicle Licence for Private, Company and other Vehicles operating under a Public Service Vehicle Licence;
- Issue of “Certificat de Gage sans déplacement”;
- transfer of ownership of vehicle;
- issue of removal permits;
• issue/Re-issue/loss of registration book (horsepower);
• amendments to particulars of vehicle;
• re-registration of vehicles;
• Inscription/removal of lien;
• change of name and address, and
• copy of entry of vehicles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with Government’s vision towards promoting digitalisation for ease of doing business, improving customer service and experience while streamlining procedures and processes, the NLTA has already embarked on several online services.

Given that the renewal and payment of Motor Vehicles License (MVL) in the transaction with the highest frequency, an online MVL Platform was introduced in November 2018, enabling owners of private vehicles only to pay their road tax (declaration) online without the need to call at the NLTA Counters physically.

The Online MVL Platform provides for the different payment modes, as per the integrated payment system of the Bank of Mauritius.

This E-Service is a one-stop service available from the comfort of home where users are able to make online payment for MVL by virtually connecting to the NLTA System and the Insurance System. The envisaged E-Service portal would provide the following benefits –

• Improve the work processes and business of the NLTA;
• Provide timely management information for decision making;
• Enhance the level of service delivered to stakeholders;
• Better control on revenue collection and significant minimisation of risks of fraudulent/fake documents, and
• New user-friendly Portal for dissemination of information and service.
However, Mr Speaker, Sir, there has not been a proper uptake of this platform as most vehicle owners still call at the NLTA Counters and Post Offices for the renewal and payment of their MVL. As such, my Ministry is proposing for a cut-off date of 31 July 2024 for the renewal of MVL by owners of private vehicles initially which involve some 350,000 vehicles. As many vehicle owners had been effecting transactions regarding renewal of MVL only at the Post Offices, in this case, a transition period up to 1 December 2024 would be given for such transactions to be effected at the Post Offices only and not applicable at the NLTA counters. Accordingly, Mr Speaker, Sir, the renewal and payment of MVL by owners of private vehicles would have to be carried out solely through the Online MVL Platform as from 2 December 2024.

A help desk is being set up by the NLTA to assist users encountering problems while using the online system. Furthermore, a sensitisation campaign is being organised to inform the public about this e-service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, an online platform is also available to the public since June 2020 with regard to the reservation and purchase of Registration Mark comprising a combination of two letters from FN to ZZ followed by numeric figures from 1 to 1000 subject to exceptions.

Additionally, with the introduction of Personalised Registration Mark comprising a combination of 3 to 9 letters followed by numerical between 1 to 9999 depending on the number of alphabets and subject to exceptions, the public may reserve or purchase these Personalised Registration Mark online.

The Online First Registration for Motor Dealers is yet another online platform which has been introduced in September 2023 to enable motor vehicle dealers to conduct the first registration process for new and second hand motor vehicles at the comfort of their offices. The system also provides motor dealers the facility to print horsepower at their end via the platform. The payment module relating to this platform is being fine-tuned and same is expected to be operational by end of June 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, arrangements are also underway for the enlistment of all Motor Vehicle Dealers on this online platform and as at date, four major Motor Vehicle Dealers are using this facility.
The NLTA has been requested to ensure the registration of all Motor Vehicle Dealers including second-hand motor vehicle dealers by end of this year to reduce the number of customers calling at its counters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to facilitate this process and making the transfer of motor vehicles less of a hassle, the Road Traffic Act is being amended to allow the Registrar-General’s Department to ascertain through its platform and lawful sharing of information between the NLTA as to whether a motor vehicle or trailer is burdened with a lien prior to the registration and transfer same. The aim of this is to make more convenient and less time consuming both for the former and the new owner. This is with regard to the certificat de gage sans déplacement, Mr Speaker, Sir.

And being given that the Registrar General department already has its appropriate platform which is providing the taxation and registration of transfer vehicle, this system would be enhanced to cater for the verification of any lien on a motor vehicle or trailer prior to the registration of transfer and transfer of ownership of same.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this system would initially be introduced for cases of an individual to another individual so that the NLTA would continue to cater for all other cases for the certificat de gage sans déplacement. A sensitisation campaign would be organised to inform the public on the new arrangement for the transfer of owner of a motor vehicle or trailer. Necessary amendments are being made today, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, under the Road Traffic Amendment Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are aware that this process for transfer of ownership is time-consuming for customers. There are currently some 51,000 certificats de gage sans déplacement which are issued mostly at the Emmanuel Anquetil Building on a yearly basis for the purposes of the sale of vehicle (individual to individual, company to individual, individual to company and company to company) and other instances involving 3 processes namely –

1) The issue of the certificat de gage sans déplacement which is manually effected by the NLTA;
2) The registration of the vehicle and payment thereof which is effected seamlessly online by the Registrar General Department, and

3) The transfer of ownership and issue of the horsepower manually at the level of the NLTA.

So, as we can see, there are 3 processes, Mr Speaker, Sir, which will be reduced once the Bill is adopted today by way of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill.

Therefore, in order to lessen the hardship of customers, my Ministry is working in close collaboration with the Registrar General Department, the NLTA and the Attorney General’s office to cater for this NLTA process online, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ameer Meea: Despite everything that has been said by the hon. Minister in his reply, can I ask the hon. Minister, why is that we still have long queues at NLTA offices and also is he satisfied with NLTA website portal and the service that is being offered?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since this question was only with regard to the online services to be offered by the NLTA, I did not touch up on other issues like the staffing issues. You know, for the past years the NLTA has been understaffed, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will not go through the details but yesterday five new MSO’s have been posted at the NLTA and now the total amount of MSO’s which have been transferred to the NLTA in the recent days/weeks amounts to about 61. I speak under the correction of the hon. Minister of Public Service, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Understaffing has been a major problem and so we have solved this problem at least for the moment. And, this is why these days we do not hear of the long queues and of the problems that we have been having during these past weeks. So, the staffing problem has been resolved. All the counters, Mr Speaker, Sir; we have 52 counters, Mr Speaker, Sir, distributed at Cassis, Forest Side, Flacq and the sub-office at Port Louis. So, today we have sufficient staff to man all these counters, this is one important point.

The second point, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are adding additional counters and we are at the moment discussing with the Minister of Local Government and we are going, in the days to come, Mr Speaker, Sir, to also set up new counters at Victoria Urban Terminal; Level 2 of this
building will be rented by the NLTA to provide more counters for owners of motor vehicles, Mr Speaker, Sir. And, in addition as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already embarked on different online services and we are satisfied with the measures that we are taking right now.

We will bring solution to the problem at the NLTA. We are confident about this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

**MSAW – CATCH, NEUTER & RELEASE PROGRAMME – WORLDWIDE VETERINARY SERVICES**

(No. B/464) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Catch Neuter and Release (CNR) Programme, he will state the –

a) decision taken by the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare (MSAW), if any, for the procurement of the services of the International Animal Welfare and Protection Coalition via Worldwide veterinary services for the conduct of mass sterilisation of dogs and, if so, give details thereof, and

b) number of stray dogs sterilised and released by MSAW thereunder since 2021 to date on a monthly basis.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2013, the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare (MSAW) is established as a body corporate operating under the aegis of my Ministry. Therefore, the Society carries out all its procurement activities in strict compliance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act 2006 and legal instruments under the Act.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that in June 2021, the Worldwide Veterinary Services (WVS) had on its own submitted a project proposal with cost implications to implement the Humane Dog Management Programme for Mauritius. The project proposal of the WVS was not accepted as it was not in response to a bidding exercise undertaken by the MSAW.
On 09 May 2023, following an amendment made section 2 of the Animal Welfare Act 2013 with a view to providing a ‘Catch Neuter and Release’, the Society launched an open international bidding exercise for the procurement of veterinary services to implement the Catch Neuter and Release programme under the ‘Sustainable Project for the Dog Population Control in Mauritius’. I am informed that only the WVS responded to the bidding exercise. The proposal did not have any cost implication and the bid validity submitted by the WVS was far less than that specified in the bid document. As such, the bid was non-responsive to the requirement of the bid document and was not retained.

On 29 January 2025, the Society conducted a second open international bidding exercise for the project. The only bid received was again from the WVS and it was price offer. I am informed that the bid was non-responsive as the WVS did not submit any evidence of experience of its team in accordance with the specifications of the bidding document and could therefore not be retained again.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Society has embarked on a soft launch of the CNR programme on a pilot basis since 2023 with in-house resources. The number of stray dogs sterilised and released by the Society under the CNR programme for the year 2023 and 2024 is 464 and 705 respectively, indicating 1169 interventions so far. It is worth noting, Mr Speaker, Sir, that since July 2022 to date, the MSAW has sterilised 14161 dogs out of which 12992 are owned dogs. I am tabling the details of the CNR interventions.

Ms J. Bérenger: La proposition de la Worldwide Veterinary Services, c’est à dire de procéder à la stérilisation de masse gratuitement a été faite à la MSAW, au ministre et au ministère. Le ministre peut-il nous dire, pourquoi est-ce que le ministère n’a pas choisi l’option de signer un accord ou un Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) avec la Worldwide Veterinary Services, pour cette stérilisation de masse comme ça été fait en 2019 avec la Humane Society International?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my main reply, I stated that the bid was received and the fact that it was not in compliance with the specification of the bidding document. The bidding committee could not retain that proposal, that’s why it had to re-launch the bid, and on
the second occasion, when they submitted their bids, they included a price on it but on the second occasion, the team that was supposed to conduct that exercise, they did not specify the expertise of the team. That is why again, the panel did not retain that offer.

Ms J. Bérenger: Le ministre ne répond pas à ma question. Pourquoi avoir choisi l’option d’un appel d’offres plutôt que de signer un accord avec la Worldwide Veterinary Services qui proposait de faire ce travail de stérilisation gratuitement. Pourquoi avoir choisi l’option de l’appel d’offres plutôt qu’un accord?

Mr Seeruttun: Well, again I am saying, in the first option they came up with that zero cost offer but in terms of validity time that they offered was much less than the one that the bidding document specified. And that is why it was not in conformity with the Public Procurement Act and that is reason why the Bidding committee could not accept the offer. They went for a second launch and the second time they came with an offer, but this time, costs were associated with it. It was no longer free.

Mr Speaker: Next question. MP Juman! I think this time you will need my guidance.

NATIVE TERRESTRIAL BIODIVERSITY & NATIONAL PARKS ADVISORY COUNCILS – COMPOSITION

(No. B/465) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks Advisory Council, he will state the –

(a) current composition thereof, and

(b) recommendations, if any, made to the Minister with regard to the conservation of wildlife since June 2023 to date.

(Withdrawn)

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION – LEASED OFFICE SPACES – RENTAL FEE

(No. B/466) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the
Financial Services Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of buildings being leased to house same and the offices thereof, giving details thereof, indicating in each case the –

(a) name of the lessor/s, and

(b) monthly rental fee.

**Mr Bholah:** At the very outset, I wish to inform the House that the head office of the Financial Services Commission (FSC) is located at 54, Cybercity Ebène.

As regards to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the FSC that there are currently three buildings on lease from the following lessors –

1. MauBank Ltd and Vivo Energy for two adjacent office spaces at Clyderlex Arcades in Rodrigues at a monthly rental cost of Rs30,266.88, and Rs21,966 respectively;

2. Nex Ltd for office space at Nex Tower Building situated at Ebène at a monthly cost of Rs2,079,951, and

3. PSH Investment Ltd for office space at 7 Exchange Square Building located at Ebène at a monthly cost of Rs4,655,150.

**Mr Juman:** Merci, M. le président.

**Mr Speaker:** No, I have not given you the floor! No ‘thank you’! Why ‘thank you’ for nothing? Let me give you my guidance this time. Now you need my guidance. My guidance to you, hon. Member, is that this Minister is not the substantive Minister of Finance. So, you only have the right to put questions relating to what he answered, what he replied, and relating to your question put on the Order Paper.

**Mr Juman:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. He is the substantive Minister because this is for FSC. Okay, thank you for your guidance.

**Mr Speaker:** What are you talking about?
Mr Juman: No …

Mr Speaker: No question! You always want to have the last word. No question for you! We move on to the next question!

Mr Juman: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have …

Mr Speaker: Now, the next question would be hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Mr Juman: Mr Speaker…

PRIVATE HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS – APPLICATIONS RECEIVED – CLEARANCES

(No. B/467) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the setting up of new private healthcare institutions, he will state the number of applications received therefor to date, indicating the –

(a) name of the applicants therefor, and

(b) number thereof –

(i) under construction;

(ii) having obtained clearances, and

(iii) awaiting clearances.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that for the period November 2019 to date, my Ministry received a total of –

- 22 applications for Health Care Units, out of which 17 obtained a license, 3 were issued a No objection to proceed further and 2 are still under process;

- 15 applications for Private Clinics, out of which 9 obtained a license, 5 were issued a “No Objection” to proceed further and 1 is still under process, and
• 22 applications for Private Laboratories, out of which, 19 obtained a license, 2 were issued a “No Objection” to proceed further and 1 is still under process.

With your permission, Sir, I am tabling the required information. Thank you.

Mr Juman: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of explanation, please. Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the advice you gave regarding the Minister, he is the substantive Minister. FSC falls under his purview. So, I do not understand your guidance.

Mr Speaker: Okay! What did you say? FSC!

Mr Juman: FSC!

Mr Speaker: If FSC falls under his purview, then your question should be related to the answer and also to what you stated as question on the Order Paper. This is my guidance.

Mr Juman: Of course, yes. Thank you. Can I proceed?

Mr Speaker: Wait! Please continue!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister in view of the increasing number of private institutions seeking to set up in Mauritius, has his Ministry ensured from all of them that they have the necessary manpower be it in terms of junior doctors and nursing staff to provide a safe and efficient service before permits being issued to them?

Dr. Jagutpal: Thank you, hon. Member. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is guided by the Private Health Institutions Act. In the Act, it is already mentioned whenever a license is being issued, there are the conditions that have to be fulfilled and that also is based upon the different conditions for the different setups as well.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister be able to share with the House whether the facility of having onboard at the very least, a four-bedded Intensive Care Unit for all new permits, and for those who are now requesting to renew the permits, since we are living in a very high-level care centre?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, so far the provision is under the Private Health Institution Act, so we are going according to this Act. Now, this Act is under review. The Ministry has
already called for a Consultant so that we can review this Act and soon, we will be coming with a new Act where such provisions will be made as per the recommendations and as per the decisions that would be taken henceforth in the future.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Juman, you wanted a clarification with regard to PQ B/466? Go on!

**Mr Juman:** Yes, two. Merci, M. le président! Est-ce que je peux savoir de l’honorable ministre la date depuis que la FSC loue le bâtiment 7 Exchange Square appartenant à Monsieur Gopee?

**Mr Bholah:** Janvier de cette année-ci.

**Mr Speaker:** Second question!

**Mr Juman:** M. le président, merci encore. M. le ministre de la Bonne gouvernance, vous venez de dire qu’on loue cela depuis janvier. Mais pourquoi, à ce jour, c’est toujours inoccupé, alors qu’on paie R 4.6 millions par mois?

**Mr Bholah:** Donc, j’ai été informé qu’ils vont rendre ce bâtiment, c’est-à-dire le Nex Tower Building…

**Mr Juman:** 7 Exchange!

**Mr Bholah:** Oui. Je n’ai pas compris la question.

**Mr Speaker:** No crosstalking. This is a Parliament!

**Mr Bholah:** Can you repeat the question?

**Mr Juman:** On loue le bâtiment depuis janvier. On paie R 4.6 millions par mois. On est en juin/juillet et c’est toujours inoccupé. Pourquoi?

**Mr Bholah:** They have to furnish it, because it has been rented unfurnished. Now they have to get all the furniture and equipment installed.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!
VACOAS-PHOENIX MUNICIPAL COUNCIL – ACCIDENT AT WORK –
SAFETY MEASURES

(No. B/469) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to a fatal accident which occurred on Wednesday 19 June 2024 involving an employee of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix and a lorry thereof, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the –

(a) circumstances thereof;

(b) number of such recent accidents, and

(c) measures being taken to enhance the safety of the workers of the Council

(Vide Reply to PQ B/458)

HYBRID & ELECTRIC CARS – BATTERY REPLACEMENT SCHEME

(No. B/470) Mr N. Bodha (Second Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to hybrid and electric cars, he will state if consideration will be given for a scheme to be devised to assist the users thereof for the replacement of the battery thereof.

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, this Government has set the objective to achieve 60% share of energy from renewable sources by 2030. One important element toward this transition is decarbonisation of the transport sector through a greener vacant fleet.

With a view to encouraging the shift, this government has abolished excised duty on hybrid and electric vehicles with effect from 20 June 2022. In addition government is granting a fiscal incentive of Rs200,000 on the purchase of an electric vehicle as from 01 July 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, government is adopting a holistic approach to the issue of replacement of hybrid and electric car batteries whereby any potential assistance for their replacement will be considered together with recycling strategies. In this context, I am also informed that the
Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities has prepared a 10 Year Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap 2020 for Mauritius which provides amongst others for the elaboration of electric vehicles, financial incentives including a National Battery Plan to ensure long-term battery sustainability.

I am also informed that the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA) under the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities has initiated a study on the development of an action plan for the recycling of used solar panels and electric vehicle batteries.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: Can I ask the hon. Minister how many hybrid and electric cars are running presently in the country?

Mr Bholah: I do not have this information. Maybe you can come up with…

Mr Bodha: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether a date has been decided by Government as regards to only hybrid and electric cars being imported into the country?

Mr Bholah: Not yet.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

TRIOLET BYPASS – OVERHEAD IRRIGATION SYSTEMS ON WHEELS – MALFUNCTION

(No. B/472) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the 23 overhead irrigation systems on wheels not functioning properly and affecting sugar cane and vegetable planters in the region of the Triolet bypass, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Irrigation Authority, information as to the urgent measures being envisaged therefor.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Irrigation Authority that there are 26 overhead irrigation systems on wheels also known as centre pivots in the Northern Plains Irrigation Project, which provide irrigation facilities to over 954 hectares of land belonging to small planters and, which are essentially under sugarcane cultivation.

For the region along the Triolet bypass, there are two centre pivots which serve some 200 planters. Unfortunately, these two centre pivots are for the time being not operational due to
thefts and vandalism. Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, these two centre pivots, which are located in remote regions, have been subject to frequent thefts over the past few years. I am told that the copper cables found in the pivots are being removed and stolen by thieves, thus, damaging the pivots and haltering irrigation activities in this area. Prompt action is taken by the Irrigation Authority each time to repair and replace the damaged parts. However, the copper cables are stolen again.

This problem has been recurring for a number of times now, the last one being in January 2024. In view thereof, the Irrigation Authority has taken the following actions to curb the problem of theft of centre pivots –

a) regular patrols around the irrigation areas of at least three times during the night are carried out. A team of workers have been designated specifically for this purpose;

b) the Police has been requested to increase the frequency of its patrols near the Triolet bypass in the vicinity of centre pivots;

c) the Irrigation Authority replaced all the copper electric cables with aluminium cables, following which, a decrease in theft was noted, but vandalism continued, and

d) finally, a security contractor has been hired to secure all the centre pivots in the Northern Plains Irrigation Project by installing electric fencing and alarm system around the control panel areas of centre pivots together with a first response service, which notifies the Irrigation Authority’s patrol team in case of any tampering with the equipment. The work is ongoing.

Once the centre pivots found along the Triolet Bypass are secured with the electric fence and alarm system, the stolen parts of the centre pivots which have already been procured, would be replaced. This is expected to be completed by end of June 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the meantime that the pivots are back to operation, the following measures have been taken by the Irrigation Authority to ensure proper water supply for irrigation to the 200 planters along the Triolet bypass –

a) the procurement of a specific hose reel meant to supply irrigation water to planters;

b) a new scheme has been launched for the allocation of separate water abstraction points to enable planters to abstract water from the Irrigation Authority’s network for
crop irrigation. So far, 25 planters have subscribed to the scheme and are able to irrigate their fields;

c) the Irrigation Authority is also encouraging the use of the drip irrigation method. It is to be noted that a grant of Rs150,000 is being provided as from last financial year to allow planters to purchase drip irrigation equipment. 34 planters have benefitted from this scheme, as at date. Mr Speaker Sir, I am circulating some pictures to show the situation in these fields. You will note that the drip irrigations have been installed and the plantations are well irrigated. In view of the success of this scheme, it will be extended to planters encountering frequent irrigation problems including those affected by the thefts I mentioned earlier, and

d) furthermore, the Irrigation Authority is contemplating to replace all old existing centre pivots by new and more effective irrigation equipment to ensure a more reliable and consistent irrigation water supply to planters of the northern region. This will cost quite an amount and will have to be undertaken over a number of years, due to intensive capital investment required.

Thank you.

Mr Woochit: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Has there been any assessment of the economic impact on the sugarcane and vegetable planters in the region due to the malfunctioning irrigation system as you just mentioned? And what immediate support…

Mr Speaker: No! You know what is a supplementary. This is a PQ, a very good PQ. Next time but not now!

Mr Woochit: It is very short. It is very short!

Mr Speaker: I give you a last chance, put supplementary questions!

Mr Woochit: Okay. Has there been any assessment of the economic impact on the sugarcane and vegetable planters in the region due to the malfunctioning irrigation system?

Mr Seeruttun: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, you must be aware that this year we have been having regular rainfall all over the island, of course, also in the northern area. So, for this year the rainfall has been sufficiently covered in that part of the island whereby as far as sugarcane
plantation is concerned, they have not noticed any kind of impact on the sugarcane fields affected in those areas.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NSLD LTD – 8000 SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS – COSTS & SELLING PRICE

(No. B/473) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the 8000 social housing units, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the New Social Living Development Ltd., information as to the –

(a) cost of construction thereof, indicating the amount already incurred and paid in relation thereto;

(b) cost of offsite infrastructural work in connection therewith, and

(c) proposed selling price of each housing unit.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the budget for fiscal year 2021-2022, Government announced a historically unprecedented project to build over a period of three years, 12,000 residential units across the island of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that initially the project cost in respect of 12,000 housing units was estimated at approximately Rs21.6 billion. However, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Statistics Mauritius assessed in 2022 the increase in construction costs to be the equivalent of 30% as compared to 2018. According to Statistics Mauritius, there has been a further increase of around 3% in 2023 as compared to 2022.

Now, contrary to what happened in other countries such as New Zealand where construction projects for social housing were abandoned following COVID-19, this Government decided to stand by its commitment and to proceed with this mega project, albeit in a phased manner. Accordingly, Government decided to build a first phase of 8,000 residential units corresponding to 400 units per constituency at an estimated cost, as at February 2023, of Rs2.74 m. per unit inclusive of onsite infrastructural works. Again, unprecedented social amenities onsite and novel provision of ecological measures such as rainwater harvesting, solar energy panels and appropriate waste disposal systems.
As at present, works are in progress on 37 sites across the island and will soon start on the last remaining site at Riambel for Phase 1. It is expected that delivery of the 8,000 housing units will begin as from August next.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, turning to the specifics of the question, with respect to part (a), I am informed by the New Social Living Development Ltd (NSLD) that the cost for the construction of the 8,000 residential units is now estimated to stand at around Rs21.9 billion. As at 24 June 2024, I am informed that the amount incurred and paid in that regard is approximately Rs8.8 billion.

As regards part (b), again, as per information provided by the NSLD, the cost of offsite infrastructural works stands at some Rs5.5 billion.

With regard to part (c), it is important to underline the fact that the announced State subsidy in respect of cost of construction of each residential unit stands at an unprecedented 67%. Despite the significant increase in construction costs, Government will endeavour to ensure that the final purchase price remains in the region of Rs900,000, as previously announced.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will start with the last answer, the selling price of Rs900,000. In answers to previous PQs, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister had indicated that for people at the lower end of the social ladder, Government was going to pay 80% subsidy but, now, I heard him say, 67%. So, may I know why has this figure changed from 80% to 67%?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The general rule remains 67%.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister being given that he has just announced that delivery will start in August, in one and a half month time, whether the NSLD has already worked out the income bracket of the beneficiaries, how many people earning less than Rs20,000 will be eligible for the houses, how many under Rs30,000, have the figures been worked out?

The Deputy Prime Minister: From what I recall, the ceiling household income for eligibility remains fixed at Rs30,000 per month. The NHDC has embarked, in respect of the sites
where construction will be completed first, with a verification exercise, if I may so term it, of the applicant’s list at the NHDC to confirm who is eligible and who is not.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

SAINT FRANÇOIS XAVIER STREET – CHILDREN PLAYGROUND – MAINTENANCE & REHABILITATION

(No. B/474) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the public garden situated at Saint François Xavier Street, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to the measures that will be taken for its maintenance and rehabilitation in view of the current state thereof and, if so, when.

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 there is only one children playground at Saint François Xavier Street and it is presumed that the public garden mentioned in the question refers to this children playground.

I am also informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that renovation works at the children playground were undertaken in September 2021 and the following play equipment were fixed thereat, integrated play game: one double seesaw, one double swing, one spring rider and one climber.

I am further informed that in April 2023, the following maintenance works were carried out at the children playground –

- painting of walls, benches, kiosk and platform;

- cutting and trimming of trees, and

- minor repairs.
Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister for answering honestly by saying that it was renovated in 2021 because I live nearby and…

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: …I can tell the House that parents no longer send their kids there as all the equipment is very old. So, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, if all the amenities, the equipment for the kids could be changed? Because they can no longer be repaired, renovated or rehabilitated, they should simply be changed.

Mr Speaker: Okay, let the Minister reply!

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in this present budget, 2024-2025, we have got additional finance. So, once we receive it by next week, we will start working on this and we are going to replace the equipment and renovate the garden.

Mr Speaker: Next question, Ms Anquetil!

CAP MALHEUREUX RELAY SHELTER – ABSCONDED MINOR – INQUIRY

(No. B/475) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to alleged escape of a teenager from the Relay Shelter at Cap Malheureux on 05 May 2024, she will state if her Ministry has initiated an inquiry thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Children’s Council, which has the responsibility of the RCI in question, that minor A.J.F.A., a male resident, aged 14 years, was admitted at the RCI L’Oiseau du Paradis on 25 April this year, following an emergency protection order issued by the Children’s Court. The minor absconded from the RCI on Sunday, 05 May around 2.00 p.m. The staff of the Shelter was mobilised to look for the minor in the immediate surroundings but to no avail. The matter was then reported at Grand Bay Police Station on the same day.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that as in all cases of absconding, there is an internal inquiry which is immediately initiated to establish the circumstances of the incident. The inquiry
revealed that the minor took advantage of the fact that there were construction works ongoing at the shelter and the minor made use of a barrel to climb over the boundary wall which is around 2.3 meters high and jumped on the other side. He then walked to a bus stop where he was given some money by a man. He took the bus to Port Louis, alighted at St Croix and walked home.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the minor was found safe and sound on 07 May by the Police at Cité La Cure Traffic Centre along with his mother. He was immediately taken into custody and thereafter conveyed to Jeetoo Hospital for a medical examination where he was admitted for treatment related to his ailments and there was also a psychiatric follow up.

Since his admission in the RCI, Mr Speaker, Sir, officers of my Ministry inquired into the possibilities of his reintegration with his relatives. Consequently, upon his discharge from the hospital on 13 June, the case was brought before the Children’s Court and due to favourable reports, the minor was discharged to the care of his maternal grandmother.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Police inquiry, I am informed that since there is no element of any criminal offence and based on the fact that the minor was found safe, the matter was classified.

I wish to also inform the House that since the coming into operation of Cap Malheureux Relay Centre, this is the first time that such an unfortunate incident has occurred and with a view of preventing its recurrence, the National Children’s Council has been directed to increase vigilance and to control, monitor movement of all minors within the premises of the shelter. In addition, the attention of caregivers and the security guards posted at the shelter has also been drawn regarding more alertness onsite. Thank you.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. J’apprécie pour une fois l’honnêteté de la ministre. Pour une fois !

Mr Speaker: No comments!

Ms Anquetil: Alors, par contre, Madame la ministre, vous êtes d’accord, et j’apprécie votre franchise…

Mr Speaker: No, don’t talk to the Minister! Don’t talk!
Ms Anquetil: C’est les travaux…

Mr Speaker: Don’t talk to the Minister! Talk to the Chair!

Ms Anquetil: I talk to you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Look at me; talk to me!

Ms Anquetil: I look at you and I talk to you.

Alors, la ministre est-elle d’accord que le mardi 21 mai 2024, suite à ma PQ immatriculé B/395, elle nous avait assuré…

Mr Speaker: No, this is not a supplementary question! I stop you there!

Ms Anquetil: Non, je reformule…

Mr Speaker: I don’t give you the chance.

Ms Anquetil: I look at you et je reformule ma phrase…

Mr Speaker: You are looking for too many chances. The next question would be for MP Osman Mahomed!

ABERCROMBIE MARKET FAIR BUILDING – MULTISPORT COMPLEX & MUSIC SCHOOL – RETENDERING EXERCISE

(No. B/476) 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 the construction of a Multisport Complex and Music School on the first-floor level of the Abercrombie Market Fair building, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if a retendering exercise has been conducted for the resumption of the works thereof, indicating the –

(a) outcome, and

(b) revised contract value thereof.
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 the contractor was AWL Trading & Contracting Ltd. Based on the legal advice received from the legal advisor of the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, the contract of the above mentioned contractor was terminated due to several problem encountered during implementation of the project. A technical team of the MNICD was thereafter set up to supervise the project, prepare the drawings and bidding document for the reinforcement work at the Ground Floor as well and for the completion of the remaining work on that First Floor of the building.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that bids have been invited on the 29 March 2024 through e-procurement. The closing date of the bid was on the 07 May 2024 with opening date on the 09 May 2024. The bids are currently being evaluated at a level of the CPB.

As regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the revise cost estimate of the project is now Rs174.6 m.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the initial tender value was Rs68.7 m. and now the same project is being evaluated at Rs174 m.?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, the initial costing was Rs68.7 m. but that was mainly on the first floor but now from the advice we have received, we have to consolidate the ground floor as well. I think the price has increased, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Minister how come the Municipal City Council of Port Louis has embarked on a project on a first floor which cannot sustain that weight because he said that the ground floor has to be reinforced and we all know that the Municipal City Council of Port Louis is the ultimate authority issuing Building and Land Use Permit itself?

Dr. Husnoo: There were people working on that. There were contractors, there were consultants and that was their advice. So, the Municipal City Council followed the advice that they have received.
BEAU-BASSIN – RECURRENT FLOODING & NON-MAINTENANCE OF DRAINS – MEASURES

(No. B/477) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to recurrent flooding and non-maintenance of drains in the region of Beau-Bassin, namely at Meldrum, Napier Broom, Colonel Draper and adjoining streets, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau-Bassin and Rose-Hill, information as to if consideration has been given to the petition dated 18 May 2024 from the inhabitants thereof, indicating the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NATIONAL TRANSPORT CORPORATION – ELECTRIC BUSES

(No. B/478) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of buses thereof currently propelled by electric engine.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is keen on decarbonising the land transport sector and several measures have been taken, through the previous Budgets, to accelerate the shift towards low-carbon emission vehicles.

However, we need to bear in mind that electric bus technology is quite nascent in Mauritius as we have only three such buses out of a fleet of some 2,000 buses. Out of the three electric buses, one is owned by the NTC and two by Rose Hill Transport Bus Services Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the NTC is currently operating one electric bus of the BYD make since February 2022. I need to highlight that the above bus was used as a pilot in order for the NTC to become conversant with the technical parameters of electric buses and gather insights as to the operational requirements thereof prior to proceeding with the acquisition of additional such buses.
However, as I stated in my reply to PQ B/1664, discussions are ongoing with the Indian Authorities for the sourcing of 200 electric buses for allocation to the NTC. The operation of these 200 new electric buses would, in fact, allow the Corporation to achieve significant savings in terms of maintenance and fuel costs as well as contributing in reducing the carbon footprint in the industry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to inform the House that we have made several strides in our discussions with the Indian Side and the electric buses are expected to be delivered in batches during the course of the Financial Year 2024/2025.

On the other hand, we are also expecting to receive 5 electric buses from the People’s Republic of China and for which arrangements are being made for the procurement of the necessary charging infrastructure.

Accordingly, we are expecting that the NTC would be operating 206 electric buses possibly in the course of the next financial year.

The fact remains that the sourcing of electric and diesel buses, are very much different from one another, as diesel propelled ones can be deemed as ‘off the shelf’ items while for electric buses, there is a whole eco-system to be put in place such as the charging infrastructure and training components for the bus crews and mechanics as these buses cannot be operated and maintained in the same way as diesel ones. In fact, we have to acknowledge that the electrification of the bus fleet would have to be carried out in a phased manner. However, necessary actions are underway to assist the NTC for renewing its fleet with electric-propelled buses as mentioned above.

Mr Assirvaden: Donc, le ministre vient confirmer qu’on a qu’un seul bus électrique. Deux ans, dans le budget de 2023-2024, M. le président, le gouvernement a proposé d’acheter 100 bus et aujourd’hui en 2024, le ministre vient nous dire que techniquement c’est difficile. Est-ce que le ministre va expliquer à la Chambre pourquoi en ces deux ans, en 2023 et 2024 - parce que le bus était acheté en 2022 - les 100 bus préconisés dans les budgets n’ont pas été achetés comme par d’autres compagnies qui achètent des bus électriques?
Mr Ganoo: M. le président, je n’ai jamais dit que le projet est un projet difficile. Ce que j’ai dit, M. le président, l’acquisition de 100 bus se fera dans un package suite à un accord qu’on a eu avec l’Inde.

En effet, M. le président, c’était en 2023 que moi-même, personnellement, j’avais discuté avec le ministre des Affaires étrangères de l’Inde, Monsieur Jaishankar et puis après quelques semaines, le Premier ministre est allé finaliser les discussions and it was at this time that this package was obtained by our Government.

We are very thankful to the Government of India, Mr Speaker, Sir, for having been willing to donate 100 electric buses and we can compute the amount that this represent, Mr Speaker, Sir, even if for one second, we all know the prices of electric buses today. One electric bus, at the minimum, costs about Rs10 m. So, that means Rs1 billion of grants from the Government of India and the other 100 buses will have to be acquired on a letter of credit basis.

So, this is the package, Mr Speaker, Sir. It was not a question of trying to buy from other sources. India offered to give us 100 buses as a donation and 100 buses which we were prepared to acquire on an LC basis. So, this is the delay, Mr Speaker, Sir, in procuring the electric buses as already been given in this Assembly in a former PQ which I answered, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said this project of electrification of the NTC fleet would be undertaken and under a G2G agreement which has involved wide and regular consultations between the two parties. All the relevant processes have had to be followed; all the necessary clearances had to be obtained at the level of both our countries. Extensive discussions, Mr Speaker, Sir, had to be held prior to both sides agreeing on the technical specifications of the electric buses so that the requirements therefore are properly framed and meet the local context.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, we had been discussing over 36 different specifications and 32 of them were cleared. Then it took us some more time to clear 3 other specifications –

- the lifetime of the battery;
- the corrosion aspect of the buses, and
- the AC.
Whether the buses would be provided with AC or not? If an electric bus is provided with air conditioning facilities, Mr Speaker, Sir, it means 20% less of electricity, that is, the AC will consume 20% of electricity.

So, I am informing the House, our buses which we will be receiving from India will not be provided with AC because at the end of the discussion, we thought that it would be in the interest of Mauritius to acquire such buses. So, what I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, – I am sure the hon. Member will understand that – it took some time to finalise all the specifications. Even if we are getting a bus for free, we cannot accept a bus with battery of 3 years lifetime. Nobody would accept that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, we also discussed on the lifetime of the battery and so all this took some time, Mr Speaker, Sir. Each party was also required to hold consultation with the local stakeholders, reverting back to the other party, trying to move ahead with each project milestone. Then, a tendering exercise is being undertaken at the level of the Indian Authorities prior to the placement of the purchase order. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the House will understand that all this have had an impact on the time frame of the project and we cannot depart from the established procedure in as much as I said this deal involves a Government to Government Agreement, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I said e-technology is much more complex than the acquisition of diesel propelled buses. The NTC and also the other bus operators because we also have other local bus operators, Mr Speaker, Sir, familiar with the sourcing of diesel buses, realised that procurement of electric buses are not routine ones. In the case of electric buses, Mr Speaker, Sir there are several issues to be considered –

- Charging Infrastructure and connection to the grid;
- Training of drivers to operate the buses;
- Upskilling the mechanics for the maintenance of the electric buses;
- Sourcing of specific spare parts;
- Redesigning the depot layout, and
• Identifying routes which most suitable for the electric buses based on terrain conditions.

So much time was devolved, Mr Speaker, Sir, to carry out this desk search to identify the best technology available on the market, given that e-mobility is also fast evolving and one technology may leapfrog another, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, attention has been paid by the NTC, by Government into assessing the most suitable type of buses adopted for our country as there is no one-size-fits-all the e-bus solution.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, to answer all the hon. Member, there has been neither any excessive delay, nor red tapeism in as much as this exercise involves two party states where each of them needs to have internal discussion with their own relevant stakeholders additionally given the novelty, the magnitude of this undertaking, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Question sufficiently canvassed!

Mr Ganoo: I am sure I have answered all your qualms.

Mr Assirvaden: J’ai demandé pour ...

Mr Ganoo: And I am speaking the truth, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I inform the House that the Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/465, B/480, B/483, B/484, B/485, B/486, B/490 and B/491.

I now call MP Ms Anquetil!

FLACQ DISTRICT COUNCIL – GARBAGE BINS PROCUREMENT – TENDER EXERCISE

(No. B/480) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the procurement of garbage bins by the District Council of Flacq in 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to if any tender was launched therefor and, if so, indicate the –

a) number thereof, giving details of the specifications mentioned therein;
b) list of bidders, giving details thereof, and

c) name of the successful bidders, further indicating the –

   i) date of the award of the contract, and

   ii) cost thereof.

(Withdrawn)

PURE MIND HAVEN SHELTER – MINORS’ ALLEGED ESCAPE – INQUIRY

(No. B/481) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the
Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the alleged escape of two
minors from the Pure Mind Haven Shelter in Vacoas on 23 May 2024, she will state if her
Ministry has initiated an inquiry thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Child Development Unit of
my Ministry that minor L. J, 13 years and minor K. M, 15 years were admitted in shelter Pure
Mind Haven on 19 July of last year and 26 April this year respectively following emergency
protection orders issued by the Children’s Court, absconded from the shelter on the 23 may 2024
around 10.30 p.m. When the care givers noticed their absences, they reported the matter at
Vacoas police station immediately.

However, on 05 June, they were found safe at the residence of the place of the mother of
minor K.M. Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, as in all cases of absconding, an internal inquiry is initiated
to establish the circumstances of the incident. The inquiry revealed that they absconded through
a window and went to the place of the mother of minor K.M. Both minors also stated that they
were eager to go back to their familial environment so they could meet their friends. Based on
that, they were provided with psychological support, active listening, counselling regarding the
time taken to rehabilitate the family from where they come from and their eventual reintegration.

With regard to the police enquiry, I am informed that statements have been recorded from
both minors and that no harm whatsoever was caused against them during their getaway and that
enquiry is still in progress. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also wish to inform the House that the
process of reintegration for minor K.M was already initiated well before she absconded from the
shelter and I am informed that she was handed over back to her biological father on 12 June 2024. As regards minor L. J, reintegration within the familial environment is not to be envisaged at this stage since the parents are unfortunately heavy substance abusers.

The risk of deprivation of basic needs such as food, hygiene, education could come up due to the conditions of the parents and in view of preventing that recurrence, the Shelter Manager has been directed to take remedial actions and increase vigilance at the shelter. Thank you.

**Ms Anquetil:** Je vous remercie, M. le président. La ministre peut-elle indiquer à la Chambre si c’est normal que la grand-mère de l’adolescente K.M. ait été informée de la fuite de l’adolescente du shelter douze jours après l’incident ? Merci

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as a matter of fact, the grandmother in question, I do not know exactly when she was informed about but the maternal grandmother did not have parental responsibility of the minor. The parental responsibility when the minor is within the RCI is c’est la responsabilité de l’État. When we had removed those children from the place of distress, which is a place where they were being neglected, the responsibility was not that of the grandmother. So, in fact, when we find the children or the police manage to locate the absconded minors, it is the person who has la responsabilité parentale qui est informée en premier lieu. So, not the grandmother.

**Ms Anquetil:** Je vous remercie, M. le président. La ministre peut-elle indiquer à la Chambre si elle est au courant de l’absence de discipline dans cet abri de Pure Mind Haven, permettant même aux résidents de sortir la nuit à leur guise ? Merci.

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member is in possession of such damning information. I would kindly invite you, Mr Speaker, Sir, to invite her to come forward instead of just coming to the House and alleging.

**Mr Speaker:** You are informed to come forward if you are serious.

So, Time over! Motion!
MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.