



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 06 JUNE 2023

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

MOTION

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

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

Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation
Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram	Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development
Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Avinash Teeluck	Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage
Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr Speaker	Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GCSK, GOSK
Deputy Speaker	Hon. Mohammad Zahid Nazurally
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
Acting Clerk of the National Assembly	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
Adviser	Dowlutta, Mr Ram Ranjit
Clerk Assistant	Gopall, Mr Navin
Clerk Assistant	Seetul, Ms Darshinee
Chief Hansard Reporter and Sub-Editor	Coopoosamy, Mrs Sheela
Parliamentary Librarian and Information Officer	Jeewoonarain, Ms Prittydevi
Serjeant-at-Arms	Bundhoo, Mr Anirood

MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 11 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 06 June 2023

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

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

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Competition Commission for the year ended 30 June 2022.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

CONTAINER PORT PERFORMANCE INDEX 2022 – PORTS’ RANKING

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*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 port of Port Louis, will he state whether he has taken cognizance of the ranking thereof in the Container Port Performance Index 2022 and, if so, further state if he will consider commissioning a study on the present state of affairs thereat.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to this Private Notice Question together with Parliamentary Question B/683 as they relate to the same subject.

I take it that both the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central are referring to the World Bank Report entitled “The Container Port Performance Index 2022: A Comparable Assessment of Performance based on Vessel Time in Port”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have indeed taken note of this Report released by the World Bank in May 2023 and the bulk of what I shall dwell on is in fact an echo of its contents.

The study first started in 2019 and, so far, three editions of the report have been published for the years 2020, 2021, and 2022.

The Container Port Performance Index is intended to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement that will ultimately benefit all stakeholders, from shipping lines to national Governments and to consumers. It is expected to serve as a reference point for improvement for key stakeholders in the global economy, including national Governments, port authorities and operators, development agencies, supranational organisations, various maritime interests and other public and private stakeholders in trade, logistics, and supply chain services.

The Report acknowledges that one of the major challenges to stimulating improvement in the efficiency of ports has been the lack of a reliable, consistent, and comparable basis on which to compare operational performance across different ports.

The Report further recognises that, while modern ports collect data for performance purposes, the quality, consistency and availability of data, the definitions employed, and the capacity and willingness of the organisations to collect and transmit data to a collating body have all precluded the development of a robust comparable measure to assess performance across ports and the time factor. The introduction of new technologies,

increased digitalisation and the willingness on the part of industry stakeholders to work collectively towards system-wide improvements have now provided the opportunity to measure and compare container port performance in a robust and reliable manner.

However, the Report further draws attention to the fact that the Container Port Performance Index is based on available empirical objective data pertaining exclusively to time expended in a vessel stay in a port and should be interpreted as an indicative, but not a definitive measure of container port performance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it should also be pertinently pointed out that the data used to compile the Container Port Performance Index 2022 includes 10 of the world's largest liner shipping companies that collectively operate close to 80 per cent of global fleet capacity. The liner shipping companies provide a series of data points comprising operational time stamps and other information such as move counts for each individual port call undertaken globally. The data are provided monthly and cover the full global networks of each liner shipping company and its subsidiaries.

Following receipt from the shipping lines, the port call data undergoes several validation and quality checks before mapping to historical Automatic Identification System vessel movement data, which ...

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. The Report is a public document; we can read the public document. I expected the Prime Minister not to just read the public document which is not correct. I think you should not waste time.

The Prime Minister: I am not wasting time, Mr Speaker, Sir. The question is about the Report. What do I answer? Yes or no, and that is it? That is it?

Mr Speaker: Allow me.

The Prime Minister: Do you want an answer 'yes' or 'no'? Let me explain to you and the population which is watching us; people do not know about this Report. So keep cool.

Mr Speaker: Both of you are cool now.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am cool, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, I was saying this Automatic Identification System vessel movement data which enables tracking and verification of the shipping line data.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the World Bank Report itself draws attention to the fact that although the Automatic Identification System is generally reliable, it also has limitations

that can impact the transmission and quality of the data captured. Some factors that may affect the signal could be the Automatic Identification System transponder being turned off deliberately, problematic reception, high traffic density areas, weather conditions, or anomalous positions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the third edition of the Report includes ports that had a minimum of 24 valid port calls within the 12-month period of the study for 2022, compared to 20 calls in earlier iterations. The number of ports included in the Container Port Performance Index 2022 is 348.

The two top-ranked container ports in the Container Port Performance Index 2022 are: Yangshan Port in China in first place followed by the Port of Salalah in Oman in second place. Three ports in the Middle East are ranked in the top ten namely, Salalah, Kahlifa and Hamad, as three of the large Chinese gateways, Yangshan, Ningbo and Guangzhou.

Port Louis ranks 327 and the 21 remaining ports ranked below Port Louis include –

- (i) Hamburg in Germany;
- (ii) Manila in Philippines;
- (iii) La Spezia in Italy;
- (iv) Houston;
- (v) Los Angeles;
- (vi) Long Beach;
- (vii) Oakland and Charleston in USA;
- (viii) Durban and Cape Town in South Africa,
- (ix) Prince Rupert and Vancouver in Canada.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the ranking of Port Louis Harbour for the three editions is as follows –

Year 2020	-	344 out of 351 ports
Year 2021	-	323 out of 370 ports
Year 2022	-	327 out of 348 ports

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Director General of the Mauritius Ports Authority that the Mauritius Container Terminal at Port Louis Harbour operates on a Fixed Berthing Window Scheme which allows the port to better plan and manage vessel arrivals, berth allocation, and cargo handling operations thereby reducing waiting times and minimising congestion for vessels.

Port Performance at Port Louis Harbour is measured using two main parameters, namely Ship Productivity and Crane productivity as recommended by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Thus, Crane Productivity measures the number of equivalent container movements per crane working hour whereas Ship Productivity is the output achieved per ship working hour and is used to measure the efficiency of ship operations. Ship Productivity is the most important measure to ship operators as it determines the total time for loading and unloading of containers. At Port Louis, the average crane productivity was around 21.1 moves per Gross Crane Hour in 2022.

The waiting time to secure a berth for handling operations was 1.8 hours in 2022 and the berth occupancy was 67.1%, indicating the availability of berth to service additional vessels without any congestion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Ports Authority, along with the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd, have analysed the Container Port Performance Index 2022 and found that the Index is based solely on the total time elapsed from when a ship first entered a port up to when it unberthed. In brief, the factors taken into consideration in the Report include –

- (i) the time container ships enter the port waters;
- (ii) waiting time at anchorage;
- (iii) time taken by pilot and tug services to berth the vessel at quay;
- (iv) duration of cargo container handling operations, and
- (v) unberthing and departure.

It must be noted that –

- (i) a vessel is considered to be in the Port once it crosses the Port limits and registers with the Harbour radio station. However, from the Report it could not be ascertained what time has been considered as the arrival time of vessel as data has been obtained from Automatic Identification System of vessels;
- (ii) the zone for vessel waiting and arrival referred to in the Report does not necessarily tally with the port limits of Port Louis;
- (iii) there are some feeder vessels that stay for a longer period at anchorage waiting for transshipment containers from mother vessels which impacts on the time of stay of the vessels in port;

- (iv) at times, vessels stay at quay after completion of cargo operation to unload bunker fuel or carry out other ancillary activities which increase the time spent in the port;
- (v) the Report contains only the findings of the study, but does not include any data that can be compared to figures compiled for the Port Louis Harbour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the average total time spent in port per vessel in 2022 stood at around 44.4 hours, whereas average time spent at berth by vessel for cargo handling operations was 33.5 hours and pre-berthing delays amounted to 1.8 hours and the remaining 7.10 hours in port are spent on all non-container handling operations such as bunkering, removal of garbage, sludge or waiting for containers arriving in mother vessels within the port limits.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since vessels are serviced according to the Fixed Berthing Window Scheme, there has been no outcry from shipping lines about delays in operations, but the report fails to capture this positive aspect.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is determined to make Port Louis a hub in the region, and, to achieve that position, an amount of Rs8.4 billion has been invested since 2015 on port projects as compared to Rs2 billion for the period 2005 to 2014. These include –

- (i) procurement of Tug Sir Edouard at the cost of Rs450 m. in August 2016;
- (ii) chartering of two big tugs as from the year 2023 at the cost Rs160 m.;
- (iii) upgrading and strengthening of berths at the Mauritius Container Terminal at the cost of Rs6.82 billion, and
- (iv) commissioning of the Vessel Traffic System in 2020 at the cost of Rs60 m.

The Mauritius Ports Authority is also implementing a number of projects to further improve efficiency and port performance. To that effect, a digitalised Vessel Clearing System at the cost of Rs7.5 m. is being implemented to facilitate entry of vessels at Port Louis. The system is expected to go live in July 2023.

The consultancy contract for the review of the Port Master Plan at the cost of Rs25 m. has been awarded on 30 May 2023. This Report, which will pave the way for future port development projects up till 2050, is expected by April 2024.

Four small tugs at the approximate cost of Rs700 m. would be procured. Moreover, the Mauritius Ports Authority is also proposing to procure two big tugs at the cost Rs1.2 billion. These acquisitions would significantly enhance marine services at Port Louis.

Additionally, the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd has invested an amount of Rs2.2 billion for the period 2015 to date for the procurement of key modern equipment to increase productivity, as compared to an amount of Rs1.53 billion for the period 2005 to 2014. These include the purchase of Super Post Panamax Ship to Shore Cranes, Rubber Tyred Gantry Cranes, Reach stackers, Tractors and Trailers.

Furthermore, the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd. appointed a Consultant to carry out a technical assessment on the existing equipment and make recommendations accordingly. To that end, the Consultant has recommended in his Report of February 2023 the disposal of three cranes procured in 1998 and their replacement by two Super Post Panamax Cranes. Recommendations have also been made for the acquisition of additional yard equipment. These equipment are expected to cost Rs2.2 billion and would further increase efficiency and performance of the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for all these reasons, the question of commissioning a study on the present state of affairs at the port does not arise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is fully alive to the fact that our port, which is our only maritime gateway, is a vital component of our national transport network and supply chains and acts as a catalyst for economic development. Government will therefore continue to invest massively in the modernisation and expansion of the port infrastructure and port operation with a view to further improving port productivity indicators and transforming the Port Louis Harbour into a major transport logistics and maritime hub connecting Europe, Africa and Asia, as highlighted in the Government Programme 2020-2024.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope you will give me additional time to cover this extremely important subject. I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister, despite billions of rupees spent apparently on equipment at the port and at the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd., he will agree that the productivity and efficiency situation has constantly deteriorated at the port of Mauritius, and he seems also to challenge the findings of the World Bank.

I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that - he has just said that the average moves, I think, is about 21 per crane - those cranes that were bought

can actually accommodate 40 moves per hour? So, we are doing half of the moves that we should be doing on these cranes that were very expensively bought.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not challenging the Report of the World Bank. As I have stated in my reply, the World Bank itself has cautioned against certain limitations with regard to this Report because it is based on the time that the ship enters a port and the time taken for it to leave the port.

As I have already stated, if you peruse the Report, you will see that, apart from loading and unloading containers and cargo, there are other ancillary activities that are carried out in a port. The ship can for example stay in the port for repairs and bunkering. In fact, if you peruse the Report, you will see that the authors themselves say that those ancillary activities have not been taken into account, but only the time that the ship comes and leaves. Therefore, we need to know a division of the time taken for and by the different activities of the ship. We do need to know when it calls at a port, and what does it do, so that we can compare like with like.

Mr Speaker, Sir, can you imagine! I do not pass judgment,...

Mr X. L. Duval: I should have the chance...

The Prime Minister: You put a question and you do not want me to answer?

Mr X. L. Duval: I should have the chance to talk.

Mr Speaker: Do not embarrass me!

Mr X. L. Duval: You mean, I cannot ask any supplementary question in a PNQ?

Mr Speaker: No! This is not my concern. Do not embarrass me!

Mr X. L. Duval: This is not your concern? It is.

Mr Speaker: The Prime Minister is replying to your question.

Mr X. L. Duval: It is my right to ask supplementary questions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: So, you talk.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am asking for...

Mr Speaker: You talk. When you finish, you tell me.

Mr X. L. Duval: I have finished.

Mr Speaker: Take your time!

The Prime Minister: The Leader of the Opposition is wasting time because I am replying and what I am saying is very relevant and pertinent to what has been said in the Report itself, Mr Speaker, Sir. People should understand and should know it.

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I ask another question?

The Prime Minister: But let me answer! When you ask a question, I do not interrupt you, let me answer!

Mr Speaker, Sir, can you imagine that in this classification of the ports, if I take one example, the port of Hamburg in Germany, one of the most modern and efficient ports, is classified just below Mauritius? There are also ports in the United States, in Canada which are well renowned and are classified after the port of Mauritius. We could have done better maybe, but I think we should try not to gauge so much from that Report. As I say again, the difficulty is that even the World Bank itself states that this report has limitations.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is an abuse!

The Prime Minister: And it is pertinent that I quote –

“The performance of a port may be assessed based on a myriad of measurements, such as: terminal capacity or space utilization, cost, landside connectivity & services, or ship to shore interchange. The CPPI - that is this report - is based on available empirical objective data pertaining exclusively to time expended in a vessel stay in a port and should be interpreted as an indicative measure of container port performance, but not a definitive one.”

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like now to ask the Prime Minister - he is the Minister for ports - about a report paid for by Government costing Rs25 m. delivered to Government in June 2021, two years ago, by Price WaterhouseCoopers. Is he aware of this report and does he know that this report in many ways is even worse than the World Bank report? It is 268 pages and it shows clearly that Mauritius is or can lose its hub status to other ports in the region – it says so black on white – like Madagascar which is fast developing. And does the Prime Minister know that none of these 50 Recommendations or so has been implemented by his Ministry?

The Prime Minister: This is not true, Mr Speaker, Sir. A number of Recommendations have been implemented. But let me say one thing, I know the report very well and there is one fundamental issue that the report has highlighted. It is the fact that the Cargo Handling Corporation is overstaffed with regard to the operations that it is

conducting. Would you believe that we have, in fact, inherited a situation wherein - just to give you one example - from 2006 to 2009, 700 workers have been recruited? Do you think it is now going to be easy to negotiate with the trade unions in order to try to restructure this organisation? Let me say it frankly that this is one of the main problems that we are facing.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition talks about productivity and efficiency. Of course, we need to know for example the conditions prevailing with regard to payment of salaries and the acquired benefits. That report, in fact highlights those issues. So, we need to see how we can discuss with all the partners concerned and how we can improve the efficiency of such an institution.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am very sad to note that the Prime Minister has nothing more to do than blame the poor workers of the Cargo handling Corporation and they will note that. They will note that.

Considering the workers, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is one person there, Mr P. E. P., who is presently the MD of Cargo Handling. Would the Prime Minister table a copy of his qualifications? I would like to know what his qualifications are because I am told that he has no relevant qualifications to handle exactly the thousands of people working in the port and secondly, no prior experience in the port at all before being appointed. This Mr P. E. P., who had some sort of backing, I don't know? So, would you kindly circulate a copy of his CV for the benefit of the House?

The Prime Minister: The Leader of the Opposition says that I am putting the blame on those poor workers and he asks me a question as to whether I am aware about the findings of the report. I hope he will acknowledge if he has read the report carefully, that one of the issues – I have said it clearly – that has been mentioned in the report is the issue of staffing. And this is what I said. I am not blaming the workers; I am saying what is contained in the report. I am aware of it.

I do not know the other question that you mentioned.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr P. E. P.

The Prime Minister: I do not have the qualifications. I shall undertake to circulate them to the National Assembly, of course.

Mr X. L. Duval: Why I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, that you are picking on the workers because this report – and I will circulate it later – gives every single reason, for instance,

the Navix operational system is only half operated. There are three cranes not working at the moment and no fitness certificate.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: No, but I have to explain!

Mr Speaker: You explain too much!

Mr X. L. Duval: If you want me to go away, I can go away.

Mr Speaker: You waste your own time!

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, there are so many things that have gone wrong at the port and it is extremely unfair in this House to pick only on the workers as if they are responsible for the person who is now General Manager or responsible for the cranes that are not working or responsible for the fact that three reach stackers have been purchased with some weird method and two have already broken down after two months.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am asking the Prime Minister to tell us which of these 50 Recommendations - or more, I have not counted all of them – he thinks he or his Ministry has actually implemented? It would be interesting for everyone to know because I cannot find anything that has been implemented.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition is again making *une fixation sur les travailleurs*. I have answered clearly and I repeat it again that one of the issues which are mentioned in this report concerns staffing. Now, let me repeat, maybe the Leader of the Opposition did not listen carefully to so many measures that have been implemented in terms of investment in the port –

- (i) extension of the Mauritius Container Terminal berth from 560 metres to 800 metres;
- (ii) expansion of the container yard, increasing the capacity from 550,000 TEUs to 750,000 TEUs;
- (iii) deepening of the navigational channel, enabling vessels up to 15,000 tonnes capacity to be accommodated;
- (iv) construction of the cruise terminal capable to handle up to 4000 passengers at a time;
- (v) land reclamation at Fort William of 35 hectares to enable future port development projects;

- (vi) procurement of three Super Post-Panamax ship-to-shore cranes and associated yard handling equipment;
- (vii) upgrading of the CCTV camera system and access control, and
- (viii) replacement of the Vessel Traffic System.

Now, there are actually some projects that are in the pipeline –

- (i) the procurement of four small tugs of 15 tonnes Bollard Pull;
- (ii) the procurement of two big tugs of about 80 tonnes Bollard Pull, and
- (iii) the implementation of a Vessel Clearance System to facilitate submission and processing of documents by different stakeholders on a common platform for clearance of vessels.

I do agree that there are other projects that have to be revisited. In fact, in the Master Plan, the list of projects has been mentioned and it is pertinent that I inform the public that the development of the island terminal, a Marina at the Caudan and a Fishing Port at Fort William will be revisited in the New Port Master Plan. I have already said that a Consultant has already been appointed and the report – I think I mentioned it – is expected some time next year.

Mr Speaker: Time over! Hon. Members, the Table had been advised that PQ B/681 has been withdrawn. Prime Minister's Question Time.

Hon. Juman!

HOME SOLAR PANEL PROJECT – LAUNCHING CEREMONY – INCIDENT

(No. B/672) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the incident which occurred during the official launching ceremony of the Home Solar Panel Project Phase 2 at Residence Muguët, Long Mountain on 27 May 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the outcome thereof, and
- (b) if any arrest has been effected as a result thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that between 14.00 hours and 15.30 hours on Saturday 27 May 2023, an inauguration ceremony for the Home Solar Panel Project Phase 2 was organised by the Central Electricity Board in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Around 200 persons including distinguished personalities attended the function.

At around 14.15 hours, whilst Ms A.S., Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme for Mauritius and Seychelles, was addressing the audience in English, one Mr D. H., aged 54, of no calling, and residing at Colombo Road, Long Mountain, came near the podium and uttered filthy words in a loud tone to the address of the hon. Minister of Energy and Public Utilities.

The Police officer on duty thereat ordered Mr D.H., who was smelling strongly of liquor, to behave himself and took him outside the marquee. Once Mr D.H. was outside the marquee, he hastily entered a private car and drove away. Later, at around 17.13 hours, the Police found Mr D.H. in the vicinity of his house. He was arrested and brought to Long Mountain Police station where he was informed that he would be charged for the offence of “Rogue and Vagabond”.

Whilst at the Police station, Mr D.H. was requested to submit to a breath test which he refused. He also refused to provide samples of blood and urine. Consequently, he was booked for the following offences after having been informed about them –

- (i) failing to provide specimen for breath test;
- (ii) failing to provide a sample of blood or two samples of urine;
- (iii) driving motor vehicle with alcohol concentration above prescribed limit.

As he was drunk, he was detained in Police cell at Piton Police Station pending sobriety.

On Sunday 28 May 2023, he was interviewed for his defence statement but he refused and stated that he would give his statement in presence of his Counsel. Thereafter he was released and was requested to call at Long Mountain Police Station for enquiry on Monday 29 May 2023 in company of his counsel.

On Monday 29 May 2023 at 09 o'clock in the morning, Mr D.H. called at Long Mountain Police station and informed the Police that his Counsel was not available and he would give his statement on Friday 02 June 2023.

However, on Tuesday 30 May 2023, he called at Long Mountain Police station in the company of his Counsel and his defence statement was recorded. On the same day, he appeared before the Pamplemousses District Court on a provisional charge of “Rogue and Vagabond”. He was, thereafter, bailed out upon furnishing a surety of Rs2000 and a recognisance of Rs10,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police, that the enquiry is proceeding.

Mr Juman: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister said that he refused to provide specimen of a breath test. Was he caught in his car or at his place three hours later?

The Prime Minister: According to the information that I have, he was arrested at his place. I just mentioned that. Let me check. He just drove away in a car. I do not know whether it was his car but at around 17.13 hours, the Police found Mr D.H. in the vicinity of his house where he was arrested and brought to Long Mountain Police station.

Mr Juman: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister must be aware *que le gouvernement est si impopulaire que même le DPM...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! Please!

Mr Juman: Let me finish! Let me finish!

Mr Speaker: Let me finish first! You cannot ask the Speaker to let you finish.

Mr Ramano: *Twa ki pou desid sa ?*

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet and there is only one orator, hon. Juman, not you! You do not have the floor! Put your question! This is a supplementary question; put your question directly to the main question.

Mr Juman: M. le président, parce qu'il y a un ministre qui a été insulté dans sa circonscription. La question, c'est à ça.

(Interruptions)

Le gouvernement est si impopulaire que même l'honorable député Dhunoo et le DPM Obeegadoo ne semblent pas avoir échappés aux insultes dans leur circonscription...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! No! I stop you if you do not have questions!

Hon. Tour, put your question!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Would the hon. Prime Minister have information on when the Home Solar Project started and the source of funding thereof?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: It was conceptualised and developed following measures enunciated in the Budget Speeches 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. In fact, Measure 185 of the Budget Speech 2017-2018 stated, and I quote –

“Some Rs700 m. will be invested in the ‘Solar Home Project’ comprising the installation of 10,000 roof top solar panels over the next 5 years for low income households in the social tariff category.”

The deployment of the 10,000 solar photovoltaic kits under the HSP was planned for implementation in five phases including a pilot phase. Initially, solar PV kits of 1 KW would have been installed on the rooftop of houses of eligible and qualified socially vulnerable households. This was done on a pilot basis. However, considering the falling prices of the photovoltaic and also the benefits to be derived by the eligible households while reaching the target of the project more effectively, it was decided then to upgrade the size of the PV kits to 1.5 KW.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, a feasibility assessment for the HSP was prepared by the CEB and submitted to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) for funding through the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities under the title ‘Deployment of 10,000 Solar Photovoltaic PV kits of 1 KW each to households in the social tariff category’.

While the funding proposal was under consideration by IRENA, in the meantime, the CEB kick-started the implementation of the first phase of the project which aimed at deploying 1,000 Solar PV kits of 1 kW. This exercise was fully funded by the CEB to the tune of Rs62,510,833 for capital investment.

The Phase 1 of the project was successfully completed in November 2021 and a total of 996 solar PV kits were installed in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Now, we have the Phase 2 where we have sought the funding from the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD). On 12 January 2019, a loan agreement was signed between the ADFD and CEB for an amount of 36.73 million AED, that is, equivalent to about USD 10 million.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether the Counsel defending that person is actually an active member of *PTR* party? Thank you.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I believe so.

An hon. Member: *Pe insit dimounn fer dezord!*

Mr Juman: *Met li dan prizon!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Pe insit dimounn fer dezord.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Both sides!

(Interruptions)

Both sides of the House!

(Interruptions)

Both sides of the House, order!

Mr Bhagwan: *Onorab Dhunoo fer twa pa gagn somey!*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I am informed that his Counsel is Mr M.D ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: ...who is actually a member of the Labour Party.

Mr Juman: *Pa pe kapav desann dan sirkonskripsion!*

An hon. Member: *Ki pa pe kapav desann?*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Juman: *Demann Obeegadoo!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Now, order! Let us finish on that count!

Mr Assirvaden: Le Premier ministre vient de faire mention...

Mr Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr Assirvaden: Oui, bien sûr ! Le Premier ministre vient de faire mention de l'arrestation d'un habitant de la localité de la circonscription numéro 4 suite à l'incident impliquant votre ministre de l'Énergie. Est-ce-que le Premier ministre peut confirmer à la Chambre que la personne se sentant offensée, donc, votre ministre de l'Énergie, a fait une déposition à la police contre cette personne arrêtée ?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me enlighten this hon. Member on legal matters. I can understand he is not versed in them. Let me *allumer son ampoule qui est peut être brûlée*. Hon. Assirvaden, I mentioned the charge is for rogue and vagabond. Regarding evidence which has to be gathered by the Police, I believe, the Police has, for example, already taken statements. Of course, I am not here to reveal from whom statements have been taken because there is an enquiry which is ongoing. I am sure you will appreciate that when an enquiry is ongoing, there are certain things that I can disclose publicly, but there are other things that will not be appropriate for me to disclose.

Mr Assirvaden: Votre ministre est un homme public !

The Prime Minister: Why are you interrupting?

Mr Speaker: Wait!

The Prime Minister: Let me finish. When you asked the question, did I interrupt you? *Soyez poli, M. Assirvaden!*

Mr Assirvaden: *Je le suis, je le suis ! Pas de leçons de vous !*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just said, the enquiry is ongoing, and ultimately, when the case will be completed, it will follow its course and if anyone has to answer for a charge, he will have to answer.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

LA TOUR KOENIG - SCRAP YARD - COPPER INGOTS SEIZURE

(No. B/673) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the 20 tons or more of copper ingots seized on a scrap yard at La

Tour Koenig on Monday 10 April 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the name of the company allegedly involved therein, and
- (b) if the sources thereof have been identified.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that following an intelligence report from the Financial Intelligence Unit received in March 2023, the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team and the Major Crime Investigation Team initiated an enquiry into a suspected case of Money Laundering and other likely criminal offences.

In the course of investigation, credible and reliable information was obtained that the case was linked to theft of copper to the prejudice of Mauritius Telecom.

In that respect, on Monday 10 April 2023 at 14.45 hours, following intensive intelligence gathering, and after continuous surveillance operations, the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team searched the premises of Tradeway International Ltd, a scrap metal yard, situated at Industrial Park, La Tour Koenig, by virtue of a Search Warrant issued by the District Magistrate of Black River Court.

During the search, 1062 ingots of copper each weighing around 22 kgs, 242 emptied PVC plastic cover insular from which copper wires have been removed, 24 moulds and 62 raffia bags, containing rolls of copper wires were found and secured by the Police as exhibits. An enquiry has been initiated into the case with respect to money laundering.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that twenty-one persons have been interviewed, out of whom, six persons have been arrested and released on bail, namely –

- (i) Mr D. P., Director, Tradeway International Ltd;
- (ii) Mrs R. B., Company Manager, Tradeway International Ltd;
- (iii) Mr V. B., Shipping Manager, Tradeway International Ltd;
- (iv) Mr F. S., Manager Procurement, Mauritius Telecom Ltd.;
- (v) Mr M. S., Director, GWS Technologies Ltd, and
- (vi) Mrs V. S., Director, Richmond Capital Ltd.

They have all been provisionally charged for the offence of Conspiracy to Money Laundering.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, the emptied PVC plastic cover insulars were identified as being the property of Mauritius Telecom. An in-depth enquiry has been instituted into this case.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Taking into consideration that there is an ongoing enquiry, can the hon. Prime Minister provide information with regard to the shareholders and the Directors of Tradeway International Ltd situated at La Tour Koenig? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Tradeway International Ltd has three Directors, namely Mr C. M., Mr S. M., and Mr D. P. Mr C. M. is the only shareholder of the company.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide the information as to whether statements have been recorded from the Directors and the shareholders of Tradeway International Ltd that he mentioned?

The Prime Minister: I am informed that statements have been recorded only from Mr D. P., the Director of Tradeway International Ltd. He was then arrested and charged for conspiracy of money laundering. He was released on bail on 24 May 2023 after furnishing a surety of Rs100,000.

Concerning Mr C. M. and Mr S. M., no statement has been recorded from them as they are abroad.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Much has been said about this case in different quarters of the media as well. The hon. Prime Minister mentioned that there are few directors or shareholders who are not in Mauritius. Can he inform the House if there has there been any action initiated on behalf of the Government or on behalf of the Police for the recording of their statements?

The Prime Minister: According to records, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr S. M. is the brother of Mr C. M. and is also the Director of Tradeway International Ltd. since 21 July 2020. He was born in India. He is the holder of a valid occupational permit as professional. He left Mauritius for France on 22 February 2023 and he is still abroad.

Mr C. M., who is also Director of Tradeway International Ltd since 20 November 2012, was born in India and is also a citizen of Mauritius by registration since 04 August 2021. He left Mauritius for Dubai on 08 April 2023, and therefore, he could not be interrogated in connection with the case, but nevertheless, depending on the progress of

the enquiry, the possibility of seeking assistance for the repatriation of Mr C. M. may be explored for the recording of statements as he is a Mauritian by registration.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware if Mr M. S. has any foreign Bank account?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to draw attention of the House that I, myself, while speaking at some political public meetings, have put a few questions, and I recall that, on one occasion when Mr M. S. was on radio, he was pressed with questions as to whether he held any foreign Bank account. After quite some time, he finally answered to say that neither he nor his wife has any Bank account abroad. But we leave it to the enquiry to reveal whether he is telling the truth or whether he is lying. We shall see.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know whether the hon. Prime Minister is aware of the imposition of any objection to departure for Mr M. S. and Mrs V. S.?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that prohibition orders have been issued by the Magistrate of Port Louis South, prohibiting Mr M. S. and Mrs V. S. to leave the country until the determination of their case by virtue of Section 14 of the Bail Amendment Act 2002. Their passports have been secured by the Police. Only Mrs V. S. has entered a case contesting the Prohibition Order and the case is coming for arguments on 07 June 2023.

Mr Lobine: Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that despite seizure of those copper ingots, the scrapyard at La Tour Koenig is still operating? No seizure has been made and the licence has not yet been suspended. Is he aware of that?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of the continued operation of that company as indicated by the hon. Member. What I have answered relates to whatever has been seized as exhibit for the purposes of the enquiry in this case. I shall find out from the Police and also from other authorities whether any other action is being contemplated and which is in line with what the hon. Member has stated.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, the company profile and business activities of Tradeway International Ltd and whether FIU also is doing an enquiry on them?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the FIU started investigating into the alleged case of money laundering to the prejudice of Mauritius Telecom as far back as 2021. Four ex parte applications were made by the FIU before the Judge in Chambers on 28 March 2023 with a view to obtaining a Restriction Order in respect of the number of persons. These ex parte applications were granted on 29 March 2023 by the Judge in Chambers after she considered affidavit evidence before her and such orders are not granted on the mere asking of the FIU.

The Judge in Chambers must be satisfied that the FIU has valid grounds for moving for a Restriction Order before she can grant the restraining order. Restriction Orders granted by the Judge in Chambers are valid for a period of 12 months and can be renewed. The test which the FIU must satisfy before successfully obtaining a Restriction Order is set out in Section 27(1) (a) of the Asset Recovery Act which reads as follows, and I quote –

“Where property is reasonably believed by the Enforcement Authority to be recoverable under Sub-Part B of this Part and to be proceeds or an instrumentality or terrorist property, it may apply to a Judge for a Restriction Order in respect of that property.”

While a Restriction Order is in force, authorities such as the FIU, MRA and Police must use these 12 months diligently to further enquire into the cases. A Restriction Order prevents a person from disposing of his property while the Restriction Order is in force.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is highlighted that proceedings before the Judge in Chambers are privileged and that only the parties to the case have access to the rulings and orders of the Judge in Chambers. In pursuance to Section 31 of the Asset Recovery Act, a party who is under a Restriction Order may apply to the Judge in Chambers for a variation or a rescission of the Restriction Order.

Currently, I am told that some parties who have been the subject matter of Restriction Orders have applied for variation of the orders. It will thus be for the court to decide whether to grant a variation or not.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Prime Minister mentioned that at the basis of this case, there is a theft to the prejudice of Mauritius Telecom. So, may I know from the hon. Prime

Minister whether at the time the theft was committed to the prejudice of Mauritius Telecom, Mr M. S. was his adviser and was neither questioned nor harassed as long as he remained his adviser?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member did not listen properly and carefully to me. I have never mentioned a case of theft. You must pay attention to my answer, not to anybody else speaking in this House. Maybe let me repeat what I said for his benefit, and I hope he listens carefully. I said that the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team and the Major Crime Investigation Team initiated an enquiry into a suspected case of money laundering and other likely criminal offences. So, it will be for the enquiry to reveal ultimately, if ever – I said if ever, I do not prejudge the issue – any offence has been committed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: I have listened carefully and properly, Mr Speaker, Sir and my question has already been canvassed. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT – OVERSEAS MISSIONS – COST INCURRED

(No. B/674) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to official overseas missions undertaken by Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament since 2019 to date, he will state the number thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) countries visited;
- (b) composition of the delegation, and
- (c) costs incurred, giving details thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the policies, procedures and rates of *per diem* payable to officials, including Ministers and Members of the Parliament proceeding on official missions overseas, are clearly spelt out in circulars issued by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Funding for overseas missions is provided under the “Centrally Managed Expenses of Government” vote of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

For the last five financial years, funding for the overseas mission has been provided as follows –

- (i) Rs160 m. for the Financial Year 2018/2019;
- (ii) Rs122 m. for the Financial Year 2019/2020;
- (iii) Rs48 m. for the Financial Year 2020/2021;
- (iv) Rs70.1 m. for the Financial Year 2021/2022, and
- (v) Rs174 m. for the Financial Year 2022/2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the main policy guidelines for mission overseas in accordance with the Circular Letter No.10 of 2017 issued by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development are as follows –

- (i) missions have to be prioritized on the basis of their importance;
- (ii) arrangements need to be made with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade for missions abroad not warranting the formal presence of a Minister or official, for our Embassies/Missions to be represented on same;
- (iii) for any mission, the number of delegates should be kept to the minimum, except for missions where specific technical expertise may be required;
- (iv) the route chosen should be the most economical and direct one;
- (v) the most appropriate officials should be designated for any mission, taking into account the expected objectives and outcome of the mission, and the level of representation required as well as the technical skills demanded, and
- (vi) maximum use should be made of teleconferencing and other modern telecommunication facilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is apposite to note that funds earmarked for overseas missions are used to pay only for the following –

- (i) international travel such as airfare and train ticket;
- (ii) *per diem* to meet costs of accommodation, meals, internal transportations and all other related expenses;
- (iii) entertainment allowance for mission abroad only, where applicable;
- (iv) hiring of cars for mission abroad only, where applicable, and
- (v) registration and training fees.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled and will be placed in the Library.

Mr Speaker: Time over!

Mr Armance: Just one question.

Mr Speaker: Time over!

(Interruptions)

It will be placed in the Library.

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn, B/678, B/679, B/680, B/686, B/689, B/690.

Also PQs B/692, B/696, B/723, B/725, B/726 and B/739 have been withdrawn. I now call on MP Dr. Gungapersad to proceed.

**PRIMARY & SECONDARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS –
WATCH & SECURITY SERVICES – CONTRACTORS' LIST**

(No. B/691) 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 watch and security services in primary and secondary public schools, she will give a detailed list of the contractors whose services have been enlisted therefor since January 2015 to date, indicating the terms and conditions therefor.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, watch and security services are provided in primary and secondary schools as per two contracts namely one for night watch and security services and the other for day time watch and security services. The procurement exercises that are carried out by my Ministry are through competitive bidding exercise based on approved specifications.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in respect of watch and security services, I am tabling the list of contractors as well as the terms and conditions of their contracts.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, given that millions of public funds are spent in the watch and security services, will the hon. Minister inform the House if cases of theft were reported in primary and secondary schools and to indicate the items stolen and the value of same?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware that there has been a number of cases where tablets have been stolen from schools and I am also told that they are normally replaced by the service provider, those responsible for night services or day

time security services. I don't have the exact value right now but I will be pleased to inform the hon. Member once I get the values.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House the number of contracts, if any, which have been terminated as a result of their failure to respect the terms and conditions and what steps have been taken to ensure that the watch and security services provided to primary and secondary schools are satisfactory for the welfare of students, staff and other stakeholders?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there is a monitoring service, monitoring system at the level of the Ministry. If I find it, I will table the information to the hon. Member.

PAILLES-GUIBIES SEWERAGE PROJECT – PHASE 2 – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/692) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Pailles-Guibies Sewerage Project – Phase 2, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to –

- (a) if the contractor has appointed a Health and Safety Officer for the project, and
- (b) the number of complaints received as at to date pertaining to –
 - (i) road accidents;
 - (ii) human injuries, and
 - (iii) damaged properties, indicating the quantum of compensation disbursed by the contractor as a result thereof, if any.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

STC - MODERN WAREHOUSE - RATION RICE STORAGE

(No. B/693) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the construction of a modern warehouse for storage of ration rice and other commodities by the State Trading Corporation, at Jin Fei, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) estimated cost thereof, and

- (b) source of funding thereof, indicating if same will be levied from Mogas and Gas Oil.

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to the question. With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the estimated cost for the new warehouse is around Rs1 billion. A more realistic figure will be available once it will be worked out by a Consultant.

With regard to part (b) of the question, given the strategic importance of the project, I am informed that the STC intends to approach financing institutions to raise the required funds to construct the warehouse. There is currently no provision in the price structure of Mogas and Gasoil to collect funds for the construction of a warehouse by the STC.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, before I start with my supplementary. Did the Minister say Rs1 m.?

Mr Bholah: Around one billion.

Mr Ameer Meea: One billion.

Mr Bholah: Billion.

Mr Ameer Meea: Billion. *Milliard?* Okay. No, this is what I wanted to clarify. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what we call - *après la mort, la tizan* . Can I ask the hon. Minister why is it that it is only after the discovery of rice which was found to be unfit for human consumption, that it is only then that the STC has taken the decision to build a new storage facility?

Mr Bholah: No, this is not so, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the project was announced in the Budget Speech 2019-2020 but after the budget was voted, the hon. Member will appreciate that we had the outbreak of the pandemic COVID-19 and STC had put this project on hold.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, we all knew what happened that rice was contaminated and had to be thrown away. I don't know exactly how much the country has lost in terms of monetary terms for this rice but can I ask the hon. Minister, if in the meantime, he can assure the House, the Country, the Nation that measures are taken so that such a thing does not occur again until this new storage facility is being finalized?

Mr Bholah: Of course, the STC has taken all steps in order to avoid recurrence of such things in the future.

Mr Speaker: Hon Mrs Mayotte!

PATIENTS - SURGERIES IN INDIA – 2019 TO DATE

(No. B/694) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to patients having undergone surgeries abroad in India since 2019 to date, he will state the number thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the total number of patients who proceeded to India for surgeries and treatment since 2019 is as follows –

- 335 patients in 2019;
- 176 patients in 2020;
- 173 patients in 2021;
- 335 patients in 2019;
- 176 patients in 2020;
- 173 patients in 2021;
- 277 patients in 2022, and
- 191 patients in 2023 as at 31 May 2023.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister give us more information about the hospitals in India where cases are referred? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes I have a table of the different treatment, for example, for cardiac patients, they have been sent to –

- Manipal Hospital, Bangalore;
- Apollo Hospital, Chennai;
- Apollo Hospital, Mumbai;
- Narayana Hospital, Bangalore, and
- Artemis Hospital, Delhi.

As far neurosurgical treatment, they are sent to –

- VIMHANS,
- Apollo Hospital, Delhi, and
- Apollo Hospital, Chennai and Mumbai.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister state how the follow up of the patients' post-operations are done in Mauritius?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, before these patients are sent abroad, there is a communication line between the treating doctors in Mauritius and those where these patients would be sent. So, following their surgeries, the post-operative follow up being done in Mauritius with the collaboration between surgeons, i.e, the doctors in India and in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MSC SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURES – CLEANING & MAINTENANCE

(No. B/695) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to sports infrastructures falling under purview of his Ministry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to the number thereof, indicating the amount of money spent in terms of cleaning and maintenance thereof annually, giving a list thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the list of sports infrastructures that are managed and maintained by the Mauritius Sports Council including the amount of money spent in terms of cleaning and maintenance on each site from 03 July 2022 to 21 May 2023. Thank you.

Mr Juman: *Mr Speaker, Sir,* je peux demander à l'honorable ministre s'il est au courant de l'état actuel de nos infrastructures sportives, surtout les stades, les gradins et autres infrastructures? Et s'il est au courant de l'état d'abandon, qu'est-ce qu'il compte faire pour remédier à la situation.

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, la question est très vague. Est-ce que l'honorable membre fait référence à un stade ou un gymnase en particulier ? Je pourrais répondre à ce moment-là.

Mr Juman: L'exemple de Stade Anjalay Coopen.

Mr Toussaint: Oui. Il a été rapporté récemment qu'au niveau du Stade Anjalay, il y a un souci avec les pigeons. Je profite de l'occasion pour lancer un appel à la population qu'il faut arrêter de nourrir les pigeons parce qu'ensuite ils viennent - je ne suis pas expert en pigeons. *Le Mauritius Sports Council* a commencé une série de nettoyage par rapport au Stade Anjalay et il me semble aussi qu'on avait le même souci au stade de George V. D'après les photos qui ont été circulé, qui m'ont fait parvenir, le nettoyage a commencé et ils ont mis au propre les gradins.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PUBLIC CONCERTS & EVENTS - CONDITIONS IMPOSED

(No. B/696) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to public concerts and events, he will state the conditions imposed by his Ministry for the holding thereof.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL GENDER POLICY - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/697) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the National Gender Policy launched on 08 March 2022, she will state the number of –

- (a) times the National Steering Committee thereof met under her chairpersonship, and
- (b) recommendations implemented by the public and private sectors, including the media and the Civil Society Organizations.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will provide combined replies to PQs B/697 and B/729 as both relate to the National Gender Policy 2022-2030.

I wish to inform the House that the National Gender Policy 2022-2030 aims at providing guidelines that underpin Government's commitment to integrate gender in all planned actions and provides the basis upon which every sector is guided to develop their sectoral gender policies and implementation plan.

Mr Speaker Sir, in line with the recommended actions of the National Gender Policy, my Ministry, in its capacity as National Gender Machinery and lead agency for gender mainstreaming, has strengthened the National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming by reviewing its functioning and *modus operandi* with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the strategies underpinned in the policy document whilst adopting a holistic approach.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Gender Policy comprises five recommendations, namely –

- 1) Setting up of National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming (completed);
- 2) Setting up of Inter-Ministerial Gender Technical Working Group (completed);

- 3) Reinforcement of Gender Cell;
- 4) Development of Action Plan for Public Sector, and
- 5) Setting up and launching of Gender Technical Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming in Private Sector, Academia and the Civil Society Organisations.

An initial meeting, Mr Speaker, Sir, was held under my chairpersonship with Supervising Officers of all Ministries and Departments concerned to stress on the need to align the recommendations of the National Gender Policy within their programmes and activities as well as to provide guidance on the implementation thereof.

In order to implement these recommendations, a Gender Cell has been set up in each Ministry. The Gender Cell is chaired by the Gender Focal Point, who should not be below the rank of a Deputy Permanent Secretary, and is usually co-chaired by an alternate member from the Technical Cadre. Senior Managerial Officers as well as a representative of each department/section are the members of the Gender Cell. The said Cell meetings are held on a regular basis in the presence of a representative of my Ministry as and when required to provide for technical assistance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been observed that, due to a lack of understanding of gender issues, officers are very often unaware of the broad gender concepts, thus this impedes on the permeation of gender in all sectorial policies and programmes. Therefore, in a bid to raise awareness on Gender Concept and Gender Mainstreaming amongst different cadres of the implementing Ministries, a series of capacity building have been carried out to provide the Officers with entry points to identify the gender gaps in their respective sectors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the following measures have also been taken at the level of my Ministry –

- 1) assistance and reinforcement across Ministries and Departments were provided to their respective Gender Cells based on the discussions and outcomes of the National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming;
- 2) two inter-Ministerial Gender Technical Working Committees have been held with Gender Focal Points of all Ministries to guide the process of gender mainstreaming in line Ministries and to take cognizance of gender responsive actions taken at the level of those Ministries/Departments;

- 3) Gender Cells have been consolidated in all Ministries with continuous support and technical assistance, in terms of provision of information, education and communication on gender issues which are of course duly adapted in their particular sectors so that they are able to identify whatever gender gaps within their respective sectors and devise the ways to address these effectively, and
- 4) action is being taken at the level of my Ministry to mainstream gender across all sectors of the economy, namely the private sector, the Academia, like I mentioned, the media and the civil society organisations. Each of these sectors will be assisted through a well-defined guideline for the gradual elimination of outstanding gender gaps. My Ministry is currently working on the guidelines which would be launched shortly.

I am, Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, submitting a copy of the report, which includes the list of recommendations and I also wish to inform the House that this document is accessible on the website of my Ministry.

Thank you.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. Concernant le comité national, peut-on savoir de la ministre qu'a fait chaque ministère concrètement sur la politique du genre ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, that would be quite lengthy for me to give it as an oral reply. I would be very happy to table the reply to the House.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. La ministre pourrait-elle nous indiquer s'il existe un *Term of Reference* sur la fréquence des réunions de chaque comité. On a compris qu'il y a quatre comités ; le comité national, privé, les institutions académiques, et le comité avec les medias. Sur quelle fréquence se rencontrent-ils? Merci.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am actually very grateful for the Member of Opposition to put this question so I can enlighten the House and the population at large.

Mr Speaker, Sir, just to put everything back into perspective, the meeting in connection with the whole setting up of the gender technical working group on gender mainstreaming for the four sectors that I have mentioned, was held on 17 May 2019 at the municipal hall of Port Louis in the presence of the international consultant, Mrs Lichuma who, herself, developed these four technical guidelines for the establishment of this platform.

For this meeting, seven representatives of each sector were present. In a nutshell, the following were encapsulated during the meeting –

- (i) For the private sector, Business Mauritius has agreed to act as the convener for the media and the academia. There was nobody who was agreeable to act as convener.
- (ii) For civil society organisations, the MACOSS agreed to act as convener.
- (iii) In general, though divergent views were there related to the guideline which you're mentioning, especially as regards the conveners, finally it was agreed that these guidelines will be prepared in line with the binary definition.

Unfortunately, thereafter, following the COVID-19 pandemic, it was viewed with a lot of concern that the gender cells at the level of public sector were almost inactive. Therefore, the Ministry deemed it more appropriate to reengineer and re-dynamise the institutionalisation of the gender cells in the public sector first, prior to going to the other four sectors. The Ministry started this in July of last year after the restriction of the pandemic was removed or reduced to ensure that all the gender cells are activated and fully institutionalised in the public sector.

Thus, given that the Gender Unit which is also the machinery, as I have said earlier on, initiated the following actions, like I said earlier on, with the launching of the policy, the National Steering Committee was held, it does not mean that... although we have encountered delays which I have explained why. The work has been ongoing, Mr Speaker, Sir. Around 2,979 targeted audiences have already been sensitised in an ad hoc manner at grass root level. Assistance as resource person are also being provided to the Mauritius Civil Service College in delivering set courses on the gender mainstreaming and gender concept in parallel.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry ensures actions towards reactivating and refreshing the commitment of these technical working groups for all four sectors and to that effect, the Ministry is pursuing all its effort in redesigning and developing a new version of the guidelines for the four sectors.

The guidelines set specific principles and rules within each of these technical working groups that they should follow and which will help pave their way towards and take onus in mainstreaming gender in their sector. And in that vein, my Ministry is

proceeding with the printing of the guidelines which will be launched in due course in the presence of those four respective sectors.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

WAGE ASSISTANCE SCHEME – FUNDS DISBURSEMENT

(No. B/698) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Wage Assistance Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the –

- (a) source of funds thereof;
- (b) total amount disbursed, and
- (c) mode of reimbursement thereof.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, suite à l'impact de la pandémie de COVID-19 sur notre économie, le *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été mis en place en 2020 par ce gouvernement afin d'apporter un soutien financier aux employés du secteur privé qui se seraient sinon retrouver au chômage technique.

Le gouvernement a également mis en place le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* et a accordé une subvention unique pour les travailleurs indépendants afin de préserver les moyens de subsistance de ces derniers.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, les sources de financement pour payer l'allocation dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* sont le *Consolidated Fund* et le *National Resilience Fund*.

Dans le cadre de ce régime, avant janvier 2021, un travailleur percevant jusqu'à 50 000 roupies par mois recevait une allocation équivalente à son salaire de base plafonné à 25 000 roupies. Ces montants ont été augmentés de 375 roupies à partir de janvier 2021 pour tenir compte de la compensation salariale.

Pendant les deux périodes de confinement national, l'allocation au titre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été versée à tous les travailleurs éligibles. Après la levée partielle du confinement, nos frontières sont restées fermées aux touristes et les arrivées de touristes sont restées faibles par la suite. Par conséquent, le *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été maintenu pour les travailleurs du secteur du tourisme pendant cette période.

En outre, afin d'empêcher la résurgence et la propagation de la COVID-19, un certain nombre de locaux ont dû rester fermés au public, tandis que d'autres entreprises ont été autorisées à ouvrir sous réserve de restrictions sanitaires strictes. Certaines régions ont également été déclarées zones rouges et certaines activités d'attroupement ont été interdites. Ces entreprises ont continué à bénéficier du *Wage Assistance Scheme*.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, j'ai été informé par la *MRA* qu'un montant total de 20,75 milliards de roupies a été déboursé dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme*.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (c) de la question, la *MRA* m'a informé que certaines entreprises ont retiré leur demande et ont volontairement remboursé, en totalité ou en partie, le montant précédemment perçu dans le cadre du programme.

Le deuxième mode de remboursement a été l'introduction d'un COVID-19 Levy pour récupérer une partie du montant de l'aide financière versée dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* aux entreprises qui ont réalisé des bénéfices.

Le prélèvement était payable sur une période de deux ans et ne dépassait pas 15 % du revenu imposable de l'entreprise pour chacune des deux années. Le premier paiement de la taxe a été effectué dans la déclaration d'impôt sur le revenu soumis en 2020/2021.

Afin d'alléger le fardeau des difficultés financières de certaines entreprises et aussi prenant en considération la compensation salariale en 2023, le gouvernement a décidé d'annuler toutes les dettes impayées, y compris les pénalités et les intérêts, du COVID-19 Levy au 20 janvier 2023.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/705, B/706, B/730, B/732 have been withdrawn.

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

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

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated. Hon. Ittoo!

HOLYROOD NO.1, VACOAS – NEW BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/699) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the

project for the construction of a new bridge along Royal Road, in Holyrood No.1, Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that in a reply made to Parliamentary Question B/494 on 25 May 2021, the House was informed that the Holyrood bridge is located along a non-classified road and as such does not fall under the purview of the RDA.

The reconstruction of the bridge was at that point in time being undertaken by the NDU but then, after a study and taking into consideration the complexities of the work that needed to be done, that work has been handed over to the RDA. Actually, the existing bridge is very narrow and is in a degraded state representing a safety hazard to road users.

Moreover, the Holyrood Road No. 1 wherein the bridge is located is a busy shortcut for traffic connecting the west to the upper Plaines Wilhems. Therefore, given the degraded nature of the existing bridge and its complexities, NDA has awarded a project to Gamma Construction Ltd on 28 February 2022. The work started on 17 March 2022 with an initial expected completion of 14 September 2023.

The scope of works comprises construction of a new bridge with two end spans of 12 metres and a middle span of 15 metres, road works, construction of footpath and drain, relocation of services.

As at date, the RDA is working on the clearing of sites and excavation. Foundation works on one site have been completed. Delays have been encountered on the project due to larger and deeper foundation which were required owing to poor ground conditions, re-rooting of major pipes of the Central Water Authority and the bad weather condition in that region.

With a view to proceeding with remaining works, full closure of Holyrood No. 1 road is required and a Traffic Diversion Scheme is being worked out with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit. Works are now expected to be completed on December 2023.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. As the hon. Minister must be aware, that new link road from La Vigie to Beau Songes through La Marie will intersect with the existing Holyrood road to Beau Songes. My question to the hon. Minister would be whether, that stretch from the bridge to the intersection would also be catered for by the RDA in the project.

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I said in my reply earlier, this road is a very busy one and is being used as a shortcut. Therefore, the RDA is now considering to link that newly built bridge to the motorway that will link La Vigie to Flic en Flac.

Thank you.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My question to the hon. Minister is with regards to the announcement made in the budget speech with regards to cycle tracks. Will provision for cycle tracks also be made in this new stretch? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that La Vigie till Flic en Flac, the whole stretch, provision has been made for cycle lanes. Therefore, in the same logic, we are also providing for a cycle track from the Holyrood bridge to the roundabout linking the new motorway to Flic en Flac and that stretch will have around 700 metres of cycle track.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 9, FLACQ & BON ACCUEIL – DRAIN WORKS – 2014-2023

(No. B/700) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to Constituency No. 9, Flacq and Bon Accueil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Flacq, information as to the number of drain works carried out thereat since 2014 to 2019 and 2020 to date.

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 Flacq that 40 street drain projects have been carried out in Constituency No. 9 from 2014 to 2019 and 55 from 2020 to date.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am hereby tabling the list of drain projects for the two periods requested.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister please inform the House if any request has been made by the District Council so that there is a waiving of LDA's approval on what we call the absorption drains.

Dr. Husnoo: I think that it has been discussed at the level of RDA and I think that they have agreed that we can do the absorption drains.

Mr Nuckcheddy: I think that the LDA is under the purview of the Ministry of National Infrastructure. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if there are any negotiations in that sense because actually the approval time that is being taken by LDA is too long and that is delaying some of the projects in the Constituency No. 9.

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, you know, there are a lot of drain works that are going on around the country. I think that is why. I think that the LDA itself is swamped by so many projects. I think that is what is happening but they are looking after the projects. There are some very big projects, some minor projects but they are looking at all the projects.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

RADIOTHERAPY SERVICES – AVAILABLE FACILITIES – CANCER PATIENTS

(No. B/701) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the radiotherapy services in public hospitals, he will state the facilities thereof available for cancer patients over the last 3 years to date.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to radiotherapy services, I am informed that presently teletherapy and brachytherapy services are being offered at Victoria Hospital.

The Radiotherapy Department is equipped with –

- (i) one Linear Accelerator;
- (ii) two Cobalt-60 units;
- (iii) one Brachytherapy Machine, and
- (iv) one 2D Simulator with cone beam CT.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, the Linear Accelerator which is far better than the Cobalt machine, is in use at present?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, this Linear Accelerator dates for more than 25 years. Every year, the apparatus undergoes some issues and there is a breakdown of the apparatus. I believe that at present the apparatus is not working.

Dr. Aumeer: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has been appraised by officers of his Ministry or the physicians working there about the continuous use of the Cobalt machine – what we so call the teletherapy – in terms of its limitations for the cancers that we have in Mauritius?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously. That is why the New Cancer Centre is coming. I believe my colleague, Dr. Husnoo, knows very well about it, how the Prime Minister has been engaged personally in the setting up of the New Cancer Centre. I will just give you a brief. The New Cancer Centre will be equipped with two new 3 Dimensional Linear Accelerators, one High Dose Rate Brachytherapy and at present, the evaluation exercise for the Linear Accelerators with treatment planning has already been completed and tender documents have been prepared.

So, this is the reason why there is a New Cancer Centre. It is not only that we are building but also with the new techniques, new machines, especially for the treatment with radiotherapy.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Bérenger: Can I have a supplementary?

Mr Speaker: Exceptionally!

Mr Bérenger: Thank you. Can we have an indication when the New Cancer Centre at Solferino will be operational?

Dr. Jagutpal: By end of this year.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

AU FREE MOVEMENT PROTOCOL - SIGNATURE & RATIFICATION

(No. B/703) **Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the African Union Free Movement of Persons Protocol, he will state where matters stand as to the signature and ratification thereof.

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am going to reply to this parliamentary question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment was adopted by the 30th Ordinary Session in the African Union Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 29 January 2018.

As at date, 32 countries have signed the protocol and only 4 countries have ratified it. The Republic of Mauritius has neither signed nor ratified the African Union Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment. However, it has gradually adopted some of the provisions of the protocol. The country is at an advanced stage in the relaxation of visas, easing of movement of labour, professionals, and trading services for the African region and beyond.

The Republic of Mauritius already has a liberal visa regime towards the majority of the AU member states who are exempted from visa requirement to enter Mauritius for short stay visit purposes. However, citizens of the following 6 African Union Member States, namely Libya, Mali, Saharawi Republic, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan are required to apply and obtain a visa prior to travel to Mauritius, as stipulated in the Eleventh Schedule of Passport Regulations.

On the other hand, Mauritius has neither signed nor ratified the COMESA Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Labour, Services, the Right of Establishment and Residence and nor the Protocol on Facilitation of the Movement of Persons in SADC region. It however implements an open visa policy and has exempted all COMESA and SADC member states from visa requirements for short stay visit purposes, that is –

- (i) a tourist visa up to 180 days in a calendar year, and
- (ii) business visa up to 120 days, provided that the period of stay during each trip does not exceed 90 days.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Republic of Mauritius does not intend to sign or ratify the African Union Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment at this stage.

Mr Speaker: Yes!

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many EU countries have signed and ratified the protocol?

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said in my reply that there are 32 countries that have signed the protocol and 4 of them have to date ratified the protocol. The 4 that have ratified the protocol are namely Mali, Niger, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**DOMESTIC & NON-DOMESTIC USE – WATER CONNECTION
APPLICATIONS – 2015 TO JUNE 2023**

(No. B/704) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to new water supply connection, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, for each of the years 2015 to 2022 and for the period January 2023 to date, information as to the number of applications received for –

- (a) domestic, and
- (b) non-domestic connections, indicating the number thereof outstanding.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that its customers are categorised in three categories, namely –

- (1) Domestic Consumer;
- (2) Non-Domestic Consumer, which includes Commercial, Industrial, Business Consumers (Hotel) and Vegetable and Livestock Producers, and
- (3) Public Sector Agencies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the Central Water Authority that since year 2015 till 31 May 2023, a total number of 71,822 applications have been received for new water supply for domestic connections and 7,693 applications received for non-domestic connections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling details on the applications received and those outstanding as from year 2015 onwards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worthy to highlight that there are several issues, according to the Central Water Authority, that impede the processing of new water supply connections and these include –

- way leave from the Road Development Authority and other local authorities for fixing of new supply connection;
- delay by the applicant to carry out pipe laying works;
- delay by the applicant in paying the financial contribution to the Central Water Authority;
- delay in submission of missing and additional documents by the applicant;
- bad weather conditions;
- temporary shortage of meters and other fittings;

- dispute between applicant and family and neighbours, and
- other technical issues such as no service main, low pressure owing to elevated areas and encrusted cast iron pipe.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to addressing the above and to accelerate the process for new water supply connections, the Central Water Authority has set up a Geographical Information System, that is, a GIS platform to georeference its water pipe water network and appurtenances with coordinates.

Moreover, a Joint Standing Committee between my Ministry and the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, with representatives of the Road Development Authority and the public utility bodies has been set up to facilitate wayleave issues.

The scope of work of the contractors fixing the new connections and the number of connections per contract is also being reviewed by the CWA. It is expected that the above measures would ease the process of new water supply connections. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Looking at the information tabled for the year 2023, there have been 2,961 applications received since January 2023. According to the information provided to us, 2,657 of the connection are outstanding. So, domestic consumers who have applied since January 2023, 90% have not been connected to the water supply. Can I know from the hon. Minister, if he is in a position to state today whether CWA has sufficient meters to connect these outstanding 2,657 domestic consumers?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the two main reasons for these figures are pending wayleaves and procurement of meters. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, after COVID-19, there has been delays in the procurement of meters. That is why we have these outstanding numbers.

Third thing also, Mr Speaker, Sir, is with regard to appointment of contractors and the number of connections to be done by the contractors.

There also, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have requested CWA to increase the number of connections to be done by the Contractor on a weekly basis.

Mr Uteem: Doesn't the hon. Minister agree that rather than subcontracting connection of these water supplies, the CWA should actually increase its manpower and carry out the connection in-house?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, many of those connections are done in-house and we use the CWA labour to do part of the connection but still, there is not sufficient labour to be able to cope with the demand in new water supply connection. We also need Contractors, Mr Speaker, Sir.

With regard to recruitment of workers of the CWA, Mr Speaker, Sir, as it is, the CWA has recruited a number of workers recently and we are putting those workers at good use. Mr Speaker, Sir, in case we find that in the future we need to recruit, we will do so.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NATIVE TERRESTRIAL BIODIVERSITY & NATIONAL PARKS ADVISORY COUNCIL - COMPOSITION

(No. B/705) Ms J. Berénger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks Advisory Council, he will state –

- (a) the composition thereof, indicating the –
 - (i) number of meetings held since January 2023 to date, and
 - (ii) respective dates thereof, and
- (b) the recommendations made by the Council to the Minister with regard to the conservation of wildlife.

(Withdrawn)

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE - GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

(No. B/706) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to Artificial Intelligence (AI), he will state Government strategy for the promotion, development and adoption thereof in Mauritius, indicating how his Ministry is ensuring that AI systems are developed and used in an ethical and responsible manner.

(Withdrawn)

CEB – STAFF PENSION FUND & MANUAL WORKERS PENSION FUND - QUANTUM OF DEFICIT

(No. B/707) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard, to the Central Electricity Board staff pension fund and the Central Electricity Board Manual Workers Pension Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the respective quantum of deficit thereof as at 31 December 2022, if any.

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, in accordance with Section 8 of the CEB Act. Both funds are governed by the Private Pensions Scheme Act 2012, FSC Rules and its Constitutive Documents.

Each Fund is administered by a governing body consisting of six members out of which, three members are appointed by the Central Electricity Board and the remaining three members are elected by the members of the Annual General Meeting. As at February 2023, both Pension Funds had a total of 1,384 pensioners and 1,559 members.

Since, 01 September 2016, the CEB is implementing a Defined Contribution Pension Scheme and both the Defined Benefit Pension Funds are closed to new entrants since that date.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to an actuarial valuation, there has been a net defined benefit liability since 1989 for the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund and since 1991, for the CEB Staff Pension Fund. The main reasons behind the financial position of these initially Defined Benefit Pension Funds are due to various increases in salaries and conditions of employment following successive salary reviews and the implementation of the different collective agreements over the years. Moreover, the actual returns of the Fund assets have been lower than expected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that the estimated net defined benefit liability as from 31 December 2022 is Rs5.7 billion.

It is worthy to highlight that following an actuarial valuation by the Pension Funds in 2017 and in order to alleviate the effects of the shortfall, the Central Electricity Board approved that a contingency plan be developed for these Pension Funds. Accordingly, in November 2020, the Central Electricity Board approved a 'Contingency Funding Plan' with annual contributions of Rs484 m. and Rs312.9 m. over a period of 18 years, to the CEB Staff Pension Fund and the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund respectively.

Thus, Rs350 m. was injected by the Central Electricity Board in the Pension Funds in September 2018, Rs748.5 m. in February 2021 and Rs796.9 m. in September 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to safeguarding the pension benefits of its current and past employees, the CEB had appointed a Consultant last year, to among others –

- a) take cognizance of the updated actuarial valuation reports of the CEB Staff Pension Fund and CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund and to advise on ways and means to reduce the short fall in both Pension Funds, and
- b) advise on the merging of the conditions of service and salary scales of manual and staff grades and eventually, the staff and manual pension funds.

The Consultant has recently submitted its report with the following recommendations –

- Review of the updated actuarial valuation reports of the CEB Staff Pension Fund and CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund;
- Appointment of an external Investment Advisor;
- Introduction of Performance Fees and Key Performance Indicators for Investment Manager;
- Investment strategy be revisited to ensure that investment risk is minimised, and assets are invested to closely match future cash outflows. Investment strategies such as Liability-Driven Investments or Pension Obligation Bonds would help to achieve this goal;
- Pension Plan Investments in Real Estate/Direct Property Investment;
- Conversion of Defined Benefit into Defined Contribution Scheme, and
- Merging of the Staff Pension Fund and Manual Workers Pension Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these recommendations are being considered by the Central Electricity Board.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, si j'ai bien compris la réponse du ministre, il y a un déficit de R 5.7 milliard dans les deux fonds de pensions. Le *Staff Pension Fund* et les *Manual Workers Pension Fund*. Donc plus de R 5.7 milliard. La direction du CEB, comme l'a précisé le ministre, a pris l'engagement de renflouer, d'alimenter ces deux fonds à la hauteur de R 800 m. par an. Un versement de R 400 m. est dû depuis juin de l'année dernière. Le ministre, peut-il indiquer à la Chambre pourquoi la direction du CEB

a refusé de verser ces R 400 m. dû comme c'est prévu dans l'accord pour renflouer ce fond ?

Mr Lesjongard: M. le président, effectivement, l'honorable membre a bien donné des chiffres. Il y a un déficit de R 5,7 milliards depuis 31 décembre 2022. M. le président, ce déficit remonte à beaucoup d'années de cela et c'est malheureux, je dois le dire.

Ce matin, le Premier ministre a éclairé l'ampoule de l'honorable membre mais ça ne s'allume toujours pas. Pourquoi je dis ça ? Parce qu'il a été président de ce conseil d'administration et pendant les années où il a été le président du conseil d'administration de cette organisation, on n'a jamais injecté de l'argent dans ses fonds. C'est pourquoi le déficit aujourd'hui est autant.

Deuxième chose, nous avons pris l'engagement et nous avons versé de l'argent dans ce fonds pour la première fois, M. le président, et nous allons le faire. Qu'il reste rassuré que le CEB va faire le nécessaire en ce qui concerne ces deux fonds de pension parce que comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, ils ont recrutés un consultant qui est venu de l'avant avec les recommandations et nous allons veiller à ce qu'on implémente ces recommandations, M. le président. Merci.

Mr Assirvaden : M. le président, la vérité est malheureusement tout autre et le ministre essaye de noyer le poisson. Ceci dit...

Mr Lesjongard : En, c'est vous que je dois ...

Mr Assirvaden : Permettez-moi de poser la question. Pourquoi vous êtes pressé ?

Mr Lesjongard : Vous êtes indécent de poser cette question-là vous-même.

Mr Assirvaden : M. le président, le fait demeure que le ministre est en poste depuis trois ans. Ce fonds de pension aujourd'hui a un déficit de R 5.7 milliards et le ministre depuis trois ans ne fait absolument rien.

Mr Lesjongard : Ah !

Mr Assirvaden : Absolument rien alors que l'avenir de 2,600 employés sont concernés par ce fonds de pension. Est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer la vérité c'est que ...

Mr Speaker: You would be making a speech. Put your question. You already put the question.

Mr Assirvaden : Non, est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer ?

Mr Speaker: You already put the question.

Mr Assirvaden : Non, ce n'est pas encore, je pose la question maintenant.

Mr Speaker: So what are you doing?

Mr Assirvaden : Non, mais j'ai dit au ministre d'attendre et de me laisser expliquer ma question.

Mr Speaker: But you can't do this. This is a supplementary question.

Mr Assirvaden : La vérité, est-ce-que le ministre peut confirmer ?

Mr Speaker: You don't have time to explain any question. Put your question directly.

Mr Assirvaden : Est-ce-que le ministre peut confirmer que la vérité c'est que R 3.6 milliards des fonds du CEB ont été pris par le ministère de Finances pour mettre dans le *Consolidated Fund* et c'est pour ça que le CEB n'a pas pu payer les R 400 millions dans ces deux fonds de pension des travailleurs ?

Mr Lesjongard : Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir. *Mais je pense que cette ampoule ne va jamais s'allumer, ça c'est clair.* Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I have stated that we have already put money into that fund and we will do so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: You have finished?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I have finished.

Mr Speaker: So, next question.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY - REPORTED CASES – 2019 TO 2022

(No. B/708) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to teenage pregnancy, she will state the number of reported cases thereof for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively, indicating the –

- (a) number of the teenagers having dropped out of school and the support given thereto, if any, to continue their schooling during and post pregnancy, and
- (b) maternal mortality rate thereof.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Child Development Unit of my Ministry that the number of reported cases of teenage pregnancy for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 stands at 309, 244, 238, and 172, respectively.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology that school drop outs among teenage

pregnant girls for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 stand at 6, 11, 11, and 12, respectively.

I am also informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that as per the policy of the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, leave of absence is granted to these girls during their pregnancy and post-delivery period. This allows them to take care of their health, prepare for the delivery and take care of their babies during the first months postpartum. Their right to education is also safeguarded by allowing the students to resume school after they have delivered.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the National Education Counselling Service has been providing support to teenage mothers and their families through the interventions of Educational Social Workers and Educational Psychologists so that we can ensure the students' well-being and their continuous education. The National Education Counselling Service also collaborates with other stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organisations such as *Mouvement D'Aide à la Maternité* to empower and guide teenage mothers and their families regarding issues surrounding pregnancy and to ensure their smooth integration back in school.

Psychosocial support through counselling sessions with the Educational Psychologist and regular home visits from the Educational Social Worker are also provided to these students.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry further assists these teenage mothers through psychological support whenever required. Officers, together with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association conduct sensitisation and awareness programmes at regular basis.

In respect to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness that the maternal mortality rate per 1,000 livebirths among teenagers in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 stands at 1.0, 4.1, 0 and 0 respectively. Thank you.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Vu le nombre alarmant du grossesse précoce, est-ce que l'honorable ministre a l'intention d'appliquer les recommandations de la rapporteuse spéciale des Nations Unies qu'une éducation sexuelle obligatoire face partie du cursus scolaire ou si elle a l'intention de conseiller à la ministre de L'Education de le faire ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah : Mr Speaker, Sir, I would agree with the hon. Member that it is a matter of concern that our society faces, like so many other societies across the world by the way, of this scourge but it is not totally correct to say that it is as alarming as being

portrayed by the hon. Member because we have been experiencing a decreasing trend in the reported cases of teenage pregnancy and also of maternal mortality rate as I have just said earlier in my main response but I also agree that education remains the core solution to this problem and I can reassure the House and the population that among all the stakeholders I have mentioned in my main reply, we do work closely with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health to sensitise, to bring solutions, to educate and there is a module as far as I understand on sexual education which happens, most likely, to have room for improvement and we shall be working on that Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Vu la vulnérabilité de la santé des adolescentes enceintes, est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire quel soutien prénataux leur sont offertes afin de réduire les taux de mortalité maternelle ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah : Mr Speaker, Sir, once again I refer to the hon. Member to the maternal mortality rate that I have just provided to the House and we have had a zero teenage maternal mortality rate for the past two years. So, that is already a good job being done but as to what preventive measures are undertaken there is a panoply of support, therapeutical services which is provided free of charge, sensitisation programmes across the whole island through our social welfare centres, our community centers, drop-in centers. *C'est fait en long et en large.*

Mr Speaker: Next question!

ST BRANDON ISLAND - SALVAGE OPERATION – DECEMBER 2022

(No. B/709) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the shipwreck at St Brandon Island in December 2022, he will state if the salvage operation has now been completed and, if so, give details of the cost incurred in relation thereto, including insurance claimed as at date, if any.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply made to his Parliamentary Question B/30 at our Sitting of 28 March 2023. In the case of fishing vessel Yu Feng No. 67, the operation was a wreck and pollutants removal operation as the vessel was no more salvageable. As opposed to salvage which means saving the vessel, in a wreck removal operation the vessel is recovered from being completely destroyed but cannot be used anymore.

Wreck and pollutants removal operation has not been completed. So far, no further payment has been made to the salvage company except for the mobilisation cost as mentioned in my reply of 28 March 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 11 May 2023, my Ministry had a meeting with the Taiwanese delegation who was in Mauritius to participate in the IOTC meeting to discuss about the need for pollutants and wreck removal operation of fishing vessel Yu Feng No. 67. On 12 May, an official letter was addressed to the Taiwanese Authorities on this matter for diplomatic channel and a copy handed over to the head of the Taiwanese delegation. I am informed that a reply is still being awaited from the Taiwanese authorities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that as at date, an amount of 50,257,604.36 representing cost of personal use of deployment and assets, salvage operations as well as accommodation and food provided to rescued crew members compiled by the Shipping Division of my Ministry, following submission from various Ministries, governmental bodies and other organisations in respect of the grounding was submitted on 01 June 2023 to the owner and insurer for reimbursement. However, compiling of claims is still ongoing and further claims will be forwarded to the owner and insurer.

My Ministry is following up the matter with the owner and insurer of the wrecked vessel with a view to recouping the above expenses incurred to date. Concurrently, my Ministry is consulting the AG's office regarding legal avenues possible for obtaining prompt settlement of all claims.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as at 01 June, no oil pollution has been reported, as confirmed by the NCG.

Mr Armance: M. le président, le bateau a fait naufrage en décembre de l'année dernière. Ma question date de mars de cette année-ci, et on est en juin. Est-ce que le ministre est en train de nous confirmer qu'il est entrain de laisser le bateau à l'abandon sur les récifs de St Brandon, y compris le diesel qui s'y trouve et je rappelle à la Chambre que le ministre n'était pas en mesure de me confirmer le volume de diesel et de polluant qui se trouvent actuellement sur le bateau, et qui, je le rappelle, est sur le récif de St Brandon.

Mr Maudhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my main response to the Parliamentary Question B/30, I did say that all that solid pollutants were removed through the Indian ship.

With regard to the diesel on board, still in the vessel, I had informed that Government decided that the responsible for the wreck and pollutants removal operation

would henceforth be looked into by the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management and at the level at the NDRMC, under the chair of the VPM. This is where it is treated now.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that the Minister is not aware that the diesel can cause serious environmental pollution in the area of St Brandon and the surroundings. This is my first point. I would like to know from you, there was a due diligence exercise that was supposed to be carried by the office of the Attorney General. Can you please give us the output of the due diligence, if it has been done?

Mr Maudhoo: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry conducted a due diligence exercise with regard other representations made by the salvage company as to whether the proposed plan of action could really have been executed being given the weather conditions and sea conditions at the casualty side are always rough with heavy swells.

The report of the due diligence exercise has been submitted to the State Law Office. I am informed that there was a meeting yesterday at the AG's office for the way forward with regard to the additional claim by the salvage company.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SHELTERS – CHILDREN 18 YEARS OLD – STRUCTURE

(No. B/710) **Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children placed in shelters, she will state the structure put in place by her Ministry for the accompaniment thereof on turning 18 years old.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Child Development Unit of my Ministry that as at date, there are 52 children aged between 16-17 years admitted in different residential care institutions and that reintegration plans are prepared for those children as from the age of 17 years so that they are successfully reinserted and mainstreamed. Schooling and skilling, as appropriate, are prominent in the *prise-en charge* of those 17-year-old residents.

Moreover, once these children reach adulthood, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry ensures that they are either reintegrated within their family setting, be it biological, next of kin or acquaintances, who were willing to accommodate them. However, those who cannot be reintegrated in family settings are placed with Non- Governmental Organisations (NGOs), which are mandated to rehabilitate young adults.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the National Children Council (NCC) under the aegis of my Ministry has a series of programmes for children who are about to leave the residential care institutions so as to prepare them for their reintegration in mainstream society.

As at date some 34 children have benefited from training programmes. It is to be noted that once a child is 18 years old, he/she is an adult and as adult, he/she has a right to self-determination.

Nevertheless, the Family Unit of my Ministry, in collaboration with NCC and other NGOs carries out a follow up on the children when they leave our Residential Care Institutions (RCIs). Thank you.

Ms J. Bérenger: Ma question n'était pas par rapport au *RCIs*. Ma question concernait les jeunes qui atteignent la majorité, qui doivent quitter les *shelters*, et qui n'ont pas de famille pour les accueillir. Clairement, la ministre parle de *reinsertion plans*, de *rehabilitations plans*...

Mr Speaker: No! You are taking the path of debate.

Ms J. Bérenger: Mais il n'y a aucune structure mise en place...

Mr Speaker: Please! Please! Listen to me! You are taking the path of a debate. You must be having good questions. Shorten the questions; put a direct question to the Minister!

Ms J. Bérenger: La ministre nous dit que ce sont les ONG qui accueillent ces jeunes à l'âge de 18 ans. Ne pense-t-elle pas que c'est la responsabilité de l'État de donner un emplacement à ces jeunes pour qu'ils puissent démarrer dans leur vie d'adulte. Parce que quand ils atteignent la majorité...

Mr Speaker: You see, you continue...

Ms J. Bérenger: Ils sont littéralement jetés à la rue!

Mr Speaker: Please! Listen to me!

Mr Bérenger: *Ey aret kriye!*

Mr Speaker: *Aret kriye! Aret kriye!* Please, listen to the Speaker!

Ms J. Bérenger: I continue with my question.

Mr Speaker: Do not listen to your father! Listen to the Speaker!

An hon. Member: Hey! Come on!

Ms J. Bérenger: So cheap of you!

Mr Bérenger: Shame on you!

Mr Speaker: What I mean ...

Ms J. Bérenger: So cheap!

Mr Speaker: Please!

Ms J. Bérenger: So cheap!

Mr Speaker: Please! What I mean, what I mean...

Dr. Boolell: Decorum!

Mr Speaker: Decorum! Yes, she should have decorum! She should have decorum!

Ms J. Bérenger: You should have decorum as well!

Mr Speaker: You are right!

Ms J. Bérenger: You should have decorum as well!

Mr Speaker: Let us follow the advice of hon. Dr. Boolell! Decorum!

Mr Bérenger: You are beyond this!

Mr Speaker: What I mean is you put your question directly to the Minister.

Ms J. Bérenger: I have already asked my question!

Mr Speaker: Do not make debate! Do not make statements!

Ms J. Bérenger: I have already asked my question!

Mr Speaker: Never!

Ms J. Bérenger: I have asked! Si la ministre ne pense-t-elle pas que c'est la responsabilité de l'État...

Mr Speaker: That's all!

Ms J. Bérenger: Et pas celle des ONG...

Mr Speaker: That's it!

Ms J. Bérenger: D'accueillir ces jeunes qui atteignent la majorité, de leur donner un logement pour qu'ils puissent commencer leur vie d'adulte alors qu'ils n'ont pas un sou, ils n'ont pas d'emplois et qu'ils sont littéralement jetés à la rue.

An hon. Member: *Bien bon!*

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has probably not paid due attention to the announcement made by the Minister of Finance in his Budget presentation, whereby an allocation of Rs20,000 is being given to any child in this country, be it from the shelters or across the island.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: So, *sans un sou, vous dites ? Sans un sou!* And responsibility of the State? We are fully taking care of our responsibility from the time a minor who has been suffering from distress or harm is placed under the care of *l'État* in those Residential Care Institutions. Therefore, it is extremely misleading for the hon. Member to purport that we are not fulfilling our responsibilities. Thank you.

Ms J. Bérenger: Ce n'est certainement pas R 20,000 qui leur permettra de commencer leur vie d'adulte décentement. Dans le budget justement - et je regarde que la ministre vient de faire ce commentaire déplorable - parce que j'ai écouté le discours du budget avec attention.

Mr Speaker: You are moving... If you are not putting any question, I will stop you!

Ms J. Bérenger: Dans le discours du budget, il est mentionné deux *halfway homes* pour les mineurs sortant du CYC. Est-ce que la ministre est-elle au courant qu'actuellement, il n'y a que 9 enfants dans le CYC, dont 3 qui iront directement en prison malheureusement ?

Donc, est-ce que c'est *halfway homes* - souvent elle accuse l'opposition de ne rien proposer, de faire que des critiques, je viens lui proposer une solution là. Est-ce que ces *half-way homes* ne peuvent pas être utilisés aujourd'hui pour accueillir ces jeunes qui atteignent la majorité pour au moins leur donner un logement pour qu'ils puissent commencer leur vie d'adulte ?

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Mr Speaker, Sir, not only is this supplementary not even related to the main question, but to indulge her with a reply because she is quite passionate as I am about this topic, we will give it a due consideration.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MACONDÉ ROAD CLOSURE – EXTENT, COST & SAFETY MEASURES

(No. B/711) **Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, whether in regard to the closure of the road at Macondé, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

- (a) nature of the works to be undertaken thereat, indicating the –
 - (i) estimated cost thereof;
 - (ii) expected duration thereof, and
- (b) measures taken to ensure the safe transit of the inhabitants thereat.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, over the past few years, severe rock falls have occurred during heavy rainfall at the bottom of the cliff at the Black River Savanne Coast Road B9 Macondé, endangering road users thereat.

As a result, the road had to be closed and traffic diverted through Baie du Cap-Chamarel-Case Noyale (B104) Road with a view to addressing this issue.

The Road Development Authority is implementing a project namely, the Design Build for Purging of Rocks and Provision of Rock Net at Maconde. The aim of the project is to stabilise the Maconde cliff over a length of 500 metres and to make the roads safer for road users.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the RDA that the scope of work comprises of the following –

- (i) design of rock nets;
- (ii) removal of loose rocks in the area;
- (iii) procurement and complete installation of rock nets over an approximate area of 3,600 m² with all necessary fittings, cables, anchors, among others, and
- (iv) traffic diversion and management scheme.

The project has been awarded to Sotravic Ltd. for an amount of Rs39.9 m. exclusive of VAT for a duration of five months.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard to part (b) of the question, with a view of ensuring safe transit of inhabitants thereat, a consultation exercise with Members of Parliament of the constituency, representatives of the NDU, of the District Council of Savanne and Black

River, Force Vive of Baie du Cap and Choisy villages was held on 17 April 2023 to explain the project and discuss appropriate measures to be taken. It has subsequently been agreed to proceed as follows –

- (i) the road will be completely closed from 04 May 2023 between 08.00 hours to 15.30 hours to enable the contractor to proceed with the works safely for a period of three months;
- (ii) the traffic will be diverted on the Baie du Cap-Chamarel-Case Noyale (B104) Road. Provision for a shuttle has been made as from 08.00 hours to 15.30 hours from Baie du Cap to Case Noyale, and as from 07.30 hours to 15.30 hours from Case Noyale to Baie du Cap at an interval of 30 minutes for each trip for both directions.
- (iii) the road will remain open at night and there will be no road closure during weekends and public holidays.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the above measures will ensure that inhabitants of the region and commuters will face minimal inconveniences owing to the ongoing works. The road closure will end on 04 July 2023 and the project will be completed in September 2023.

Thank you.

Mrs Mayotte: Can the hon. Minister state the reasons why the works that were supposed to start in 2021, started only in May 2023?

Mr Hurreeram: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to explain, and this is one of the reasons why some projects do get delayed at time.

So, in fact, true, the project was awarded to Sotravic Ltd. in September 2021 and given that at that point in time, the road from Case Noyale to Chamarel (B104) had been temporarily closed in the context of the ongoing works where landslides and slope stability treatment were being carried out, we couldn't implement this project as we needed another avenue. Otherwise, we would have closed the village completely. We would have closed B9 and B104. So, we waited for the project of B104 to be completed.

Then, we reached the end of the year. So, we did not want to close that road for the end of year. Then, we went into Maha Shivratri, and then we decided to wait for the Easter school holidays to be over and then, we will start with the works. So, this is exactly what we did for the convenience of the inhabitants out there. Thank you.

Mrs Mayotte: Merci, M. le ministre. Alors je voudrais juste attirer votre attention sur les détails que vous venez de donner sur le service d'autobus, des navettes, les horaires d'autobus. Je vous demanderais de veiller fermement...

Mr Speaker: Put your question! Put your question!

Mrs Mayotte : ... à ce que les travaux prennent fin en temps et lieu au mois prévu et de voir également ...

Mr Speaker: This is not a question! This is not a question! You stop there! You stop there, you have no question!

Mrs Mayotte: Non, je... M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Dr. Aumeer!

RUISSEAU LE POUCE, TRANQUEBAR – FLOODING – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/712) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the entrance of Ruisseau Le Pouce in Tranquebar, he will state where matters stand as to the remedial measures being envisaged to avoid repetitive flooding and overflowing of water during torrential rains and flash floods thereat.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the region of Ruisseau du Pouce and Tranquebar has been declared as a high-risk flood prone on 01 August and 23 September 2019, respectively, by the Land Drainage Authority following numerous flooding events thereat.

The NDU had implemented two drains projects near the entrance of Ruisseau du Pouce at Jules Mallac Street near the Kalimata Mandir and at end of Pouce Street and Jules Mallac Street, Tranquebar, for an amount of Rs23.2 m. in 2019 and 2020. These projects have contributed at attenuating the risk of flooding in the region.

In addition, the NDU appointed a Consultant to carry out the design and supervision of the upgrading of storm drain and provision of retaining wall at Nazareth, Tranquebar. Following the finalisation of the detailed design report by the Consultant, the LDA submitted its 'no objection' to the implementation of the project.

Subsequently, the NDU invited bids for the appointment of a Contractor in June 2022. However, one bid was received and was non-responsive. The bidding exercise was therefore cancelled in November 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to fast-track the implementation of the National Flood Management Programme, the DICL was created under the aegis of my Ministry and was entrusted the responsibility of this project.

The project was therefore handed over to DICL in November 2022 for implementation and the scope is as follows –

- (i) construction of a masonry and gabion wall along two sides of Pouce Stream over a stretch of 400 metres;
- (ii) desilting works along Le Pouce Stream over a stretch of about 125 metres, and
- (iii) riverbed lining work with reinforced concrete along Le Pouce Stream over a stretch of 400 metres.

It is expected that the bid will be invited for the appointment of a Contractor shortly. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Does the Minister have any time plan as to when the plight of these 150 families will be sorted out with regard to the implementation of the projects he just mentioned?

Mr Hurreeram: I have just explained the whole thing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Aumeer: Time plan of the execution, not of tender.

Mr Hurreeram: We need to find a contractor first!

Dr. Aumeer: My next question: does the Minister have any information whether officers of his Ministry will conduct or plan to conduct a site visit and assess the plight of these 150 inhabitants together with the help of the elected Members of Parliament there?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the Ministry, we have very competent engineers; they have already done their job. We have appointed a Consultant to advise. So, they are doing their job.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MEDICINES SHORTAGE – REASONS & REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/713) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to

medicines, he will state if there is a shortage thereof on the local market and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) reasons therefor, and
- (b) remedial measures being envisaged, if any.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, stock monitoring of drugs on the local market does not fall under the control of the Ministry. No official correspondence from suppliers on shortage of medicines on the local market is reported to my Ministry. It has only been reported in the press and social media.

However, if the hon. Member would have provided us with the specific drugs, I would have supplied the information.

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. As you mentioned that it has been reported in the press, so, I would have believed that you have read the newspaper because in Défi Quotidien...

Mr Speaker: No! No, no, no, no! Please, you must be having very good question!

Mr Ameer Meea: Of course, I do as usual!

Mr Speaker: Go directly to your supplementary question!

Mr Ameer Meea: I am coming! I am coming but you should let me do my job!

Mr Speaker: No, no, no, no!

Mr Ameer Meea: I am paid to do that!

Mr Speaker: Just respect the quality, the propriety of a supplementary question. That's all! Go directly!

Can I ask the hon. Minister if his Ministry is in favour of parallel imports as is the case in other countries because parallel import would have eased access to medicines at much lower prices?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding parallel import, there is a Ministerial Committee chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Commerce as well and the technicians who are working on the different modalities and how this would be implemented. We have to wait for that Committee to report before we know how to proceed with parallel import.

Mr Ameer Meea: But, Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been long since we have been having this issue.

Mr Speaker: Put a question!

Mr Ameer Meea: It is coming, Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: No!

Mr Ameer Meea: Let me introduce...

Mr Speaker: But you take too much time!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...my subject. I know how to do my job!

Mr Speaker: You don't...

Mr Ameer Meea: I have been here for more than 13 years.

Mr Speaker: Please, listen to my ruling!

Mr Ameer Meea: You cannot be showing me how to do my job!

Mr Speaker: Please, listen to my ruling! So many questions left every Tuesdays, so many questions!

(Interruptions)

You take too much time in your supplementary questions!

Mr Ameer Meea: I have only two supplementary and now you are stopping me...

Mr Speaker: It does not matter! I am giving you your two supplementary questions but it should be proper questions! Go ahead with your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister again if he is aware of the monopolistic situation that we have in Mauritius in terms of importation of medicine and...

Mr Speaker: Good question!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...and my question is again, would you agree with me that without...

Mr Speaker: No, now you are doubling your question.

Mr Ameer Meea: No, my question is coming.

Mr Speaker: The first question! Please, go ahead. Reply to the first question.

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: I am not finished!

Mr Speaker: No, you cannot! This is supplementary question!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ameer Meea...

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes.

Mr Speaker: You are a seasoned politician and parliamentarian.

Mr Ameer Meea: Of course.

Mr Speaker: You know, you know. I know that you know and you know that you know.

(Interruptions)

I know yes and you also you know!

(Interruptions)

So, Minister, reply to the first question!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should have given me notice of the question of parallel import. The question is on the shortage of drugs on the local market. Be specific with that. You should have told me which drug is not available. I will give you information for any drug.

Mr Ameer Meea: I shall send you the list.

Dr. Jagutpal: Tell me the list first for every drug. There is not one brand. I will give you. Analgesics there are – Paracetamol: 190 brands and dosage.

Give me the specific drug that is not available, I will give you the reply for that. If you do not have questions on...

(Interruptions)

No, you do not have questions on shortage...

Mr Speaker: Now you are debating!

Dr. Jagutpal: ...of drugs and you are coming up with other now.

Mr Speaker: Okay, finish with that. Next question!

(No. B/714) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the proposed extension of the Metro line to the North, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Limited, information as to where matters stand.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to Parliamentary Question B/714. I thank the hon. Member for this Parliamentary Question.

This Parliamentary Question demonstrates the inherent trust that the hon. Member has in the light rail system as a modern method of transit. This Parliamentary Question bears testimony to the fact that the Metro Express project is necessary for the development of the land transport system in Mauritius and that it is a viable, worthwhile and feasible project. In fact, our citizens all across the country are anticipating the extension of the light rail alignment in their region. The light rail leads to the development of the areas surrounding the alignment and its stations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the vision of the Government is to extend the light rail network throughout the island in phases. As such, the Metro Express Ltd would be developing a Strategic Railway Master Plan. The Strategic Railway Master Plan would provide a high level alignment of the light rail island wide, linking the major rural zones and future major real estate developments. It would also include multimodal infrastructural requirements along the light rail transit alignment together with the phase implementation plan.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that we do not have the substantive Minister but still I will ask the question. Will the hon. Minister inform the House – if he has the information – whether UNESCO is agreeable or not regarding the *tracé*, itinerary proposed by the Government as it impacts directly in the buffer zone and hence, can result in Aapravasi Ghat losing its status as a world heritage site.

Mr Hurreeram: This does not pertain to the main question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Gungapersad: It pertains!

Mr Speaker: The reply is for the Minister.

Dr. Gungapersad: Okay, I leave it to him.

Mr Speaker: I will give you another supplementary if you have one.

Dr. Gungapersad: Yes, I have. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister inform the House – if he can – whether any contract for the extension of the Metro line to the North was signed and if yes, is there any penalty fee which is being paid?

Mr Hurreeram: Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I just said, there is a Strategy Railway Master Plan that is in preparation and that will determine the future development of the railway implementation, deployment. Yes.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

ARABIAN TRAVEL MARKET 2023 – MAURITIAN DELEGATES’ LIST

(No. B/715) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Arabian Travel Market 2023 held in Dubai from 01 to 04 May 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to the list of the Mauritian delegates who participated therein, indicating the cost incurred therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall arrange to have the list of Mauritian delegates placed in the library of the National Assembly. As regards to costs incurred, I am advised that a total amount of Rs10.5 m. approximately was disbursed by the MTPA for participation in the Arabian Travel Market 2023.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Je n’ai pas bien entendu le montant pour les quatre jours.

The Deputy Prime Minister: R 10, 5 million à peu près.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: D’accord. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Est-ce que...

Mr Speaker: Do you have a question?

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Oui, j’ai une question. Ce n’était pas ma question, c’était juste pour éclaircir. Est-ce que l’honorable ministre peut nous communiquer la liste des groupes hôteliers qui ont participé à cet *Arabian Travel Market* et si quelconque assistance leur a été fournie par la MTPA ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a list of various participants. Now, which are hotel groups and which are not, I cannot say for sure. I know that the list includes –

1. Maritime Resorts and Spa;
2. Lux Collectives;
3. Sun Life Hotel;
4. Beachcomber Resorts and Hotels;
5. Shanti Maurice Resorts and Spa;
6. Sofitel Mauritius Imperial Resort and Spa;
7. Le Jadis Beach Resort and Wellness, and
8. Marriott, Sea Resorts Hotels Ltd.

I think those are the hotels, there are other participants within the tourism sector but the complete list will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House who led the Mauritian delegation?

The Deputy Prime Minister: What I understand is that there were 38 participants; three on behalf of the MTPA and 35 from the private sector. I am not informed whether, there was a designated personality to lead the delegation as such unless the hon. gentleman has anything more precise in mind?

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NSLD – PROJECT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS – CONSULTANCY SERVICES’ CLAIMS

(No. B/716) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Project Management Consultants in Construction recruited by the New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if the latter has received claims for –

- (a) consultancy services, and
- (b) loss of profits therefrom, if any, and, if so, give details thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the NSLD has indeed received claims in respect of consultancy services to the tune of approximately Rs337 m.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the NSLD that, as at 06 June 2023, five claims amounting to a total of approximately Rs104 m. have been received.

Mr Osman Mahomed: So, in total about Rs440 m. of claims have been received from Consultants who have not produced anything concrete so far.

Can I ask the hon. Minister how much has been disbursed to these consultants so far?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I take, Mr Speaker, Sir, strong objection to the remark that the consultants have not produced anything concrete. I refer to the PQ put by the hon. gentleman himself on 25 April, and this is what I stated –

“(...) those - consultants, PMCCs as they were called - PMCCs did what they were paid for. So, they did the topographical surveys, the geotechnical investigations, they oversaw the feasibility studies, they sought the preliminary clearances from authorities, preliminary master plans of sites, assessment of extent of offsite works. Now, all that information produced by the PMCCs is being used by the NSLD. All that information is being placed at the disposal of the Contractors . I understand there is no compensation but there is a prorated assessment of works undertaken.”

Mr Osman Mahomed: I put my question again which was: how much has been paid to these consultants? Because you have not given a figure so far and because the future developments will be on a design and build, meaning the contractors in question will have to recruit consultant anyhow. That is why I say they have served no purpose paying so much money. So, my question again is: how much has been paid to them so far?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a parliamentary question. The hon. gentleman has his opinion and I respect his opinion. We are not here to debate opinions. I have been asked a question and the hon. gentleman puts it to me that this work was unnecessary. I beg to differ and I have explained why.

Now, as regards payments in respect of Rs337 m., I understand, have been effected. This is for work undertaken and assessed. Which work? I have provided details of the nature of the work. That work is directly relevant irrespective of the change in approach.

Now, the new contractors have a contract with a contractual value. What they do, how they spend their money is for them to decide, but all the information that is available has been provided. For instance, geotechnical investigation in respect of the very same site

does not need to be undertaken anew. That stands to reason. This is just one example. The topographical survey is there for use by the contractor. So, the money has not been lost. It has been paid in respect of work undertaken, and which is still relevant, and is being used.

As regards the component for loss of profits, there have been no payments so far. This is still being assessed as to the actual basis of the claims, and as to the legal propriety of payment of any such loss of profit.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

METHADONE – DISPENSING PROTOCOL

(No. B/717) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to methadone, he will state the –

- (a) protocol for the dispensing thereof, and
- (b) reasons for the diversion thereof, if any.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for addressing this Parliamentary Question to me.

With regard to part (a) of the question, Methadone is a chronic treatment for the chronic disease of addiction. It is an opioid agonist substitution treatment, which is part of the harm reduction strategy for drug users who inject heroin and is used for this purpose in many countries.

As the UNODC points out in its 2022 report entitled ‘Establishing and delivering evidence-base, high-quality opioid agonist therapy services,’ this treatment is necessary to reduce overdose and prevent communicable diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C. It improves health and physical well-being, reduces delinquency and improves social ties. It also allows a synergy with the paramedical staff in order to facilitate and improve the quality of medical care.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the HIV epidemic, which began in 1987 in Mauritius, grew slowly in its early years. With the emergence, then the rapid increase in the number of injecting drug users, the HIV epidemic’s growth accelerated in 3-4 years with a peak in HIV occurrence in 2005, that is, 921 cases identified during that year, a huge proportion of which was caused by intravenous drug use. The prevalence of HIV among People Who Inject Drugs (PWIDs) was then around 90%. Based upon recommendations of the UNODC, Harm Reduction Strategies were set up in Mauritius during the year 2006 including, but not limited to Methadone.

Currently, around 7,800 beneficiaries are on the Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme. Methadone dispensing is carried out daily at 48 sites across Mauritius including 4 sites in Prison settings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to offer a comprehensive package of services to methadone beneficiaries, 5 Day Care Centres for methadone have been set up in different health regions across the island.

The services offered by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, are methadone induction, methadone dispensing, follow up clinics, psycho-social support, counselling, distribution of condoms and educational materials. The 5 centres are found at Sainte Croix, Cassis, Mahebourg, and the remaining 2 at Frangipane and Orchidée Drug Treatment & Rehabilitation Centre at Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre, Beau Bassin.

The previous written and revised Methadone protocol was dated back to 2018. It perfectly explained the method of dispensing Methadone, which is still in use today, and which will be gradually replaced by the new protocol.

Mr Speaker, Sir, methadone dispensing is performed by a Pharmacy Technician and a Nursing Officer as per Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) procedure. The Pharmacy Technician hands over the prescribed methadone container to the Nursing Officer who ascertains the identity of the beneficiary and hands over the sealed methadone container to the beneficiary. The latter has to ingest his methadone dose in front of the Nursing Officer and return back the container.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the new protocols which have been officially launched by my Ministry on 21 March 2023, have been worked out by a technical working group comprising officers of my Ministry and representatives of NGOs involved in the implementation of harm reduction strategies under the guidance of Dr. David Mété, *Chef de Service d'Addictologie, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de la Réunion*.

This protocol is bringing changes to both the methods of induction which is currently being done on an outpatient basis for most patients, thereby reducing and soon eliminating the waiting lists.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite all efforts made by the Ministry to enhance service delivery, it is true to say that yearly around 40 cases of methadone diversion are officially reported to the Harm Reduction Unit by the Police.

With regard to part (b) of the question, there can be several reasons as to why methadone diversion may happen. The reasons contributing to methadone diversion are mainly due to the number of patients at certain dispensing sites that can grow above 600 patients.

Often a crowd of beneficiaries can turn up at a particular time and create a complicated situation for dispensing and in such circumstances, certain beneficiaries seize the opportunity to take their methadone and may sneak away with the dose which can be diverted without injecting the dose in front of the team.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister aware that there has been reports of alleged methadone traffic, sometimes alleging involvement of officers from his Ministry and whether the Ministry has initiated an internal enquiry?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am very much aware of one officer of the Ministry involved in traffic of methadone and the enquiry is being conducted by ADSU and that said Ministry. I believe he is also having a court case and the Ministry has already interdicted him for the time being.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the Ministry envisaging the introduction of any other drug substitution for drug addicts?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes. The Ministry is envisaging to introduce a drug called Suboxone and this drug is being used for addiction in other countries. So, there would be a pilot study this year till the time we have the full comprehensive substitution, that is, a dispensing protocol of Suboxone.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs B/719, B/733, B/735, B/737, and B/738 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

CALEBASSES – INCINERATOR CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/718) 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 construction of an incinerator at Calebasses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Pamplemousses, information as to the date the contract was awarded, indicating the –

- (a) name of the contractor thereof;
- (b) total project value thereof, and

- (c) expected date of completion and/or coming into operation thereof as per the contract.

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 the construction of an incinerator at Calebasses consists of two distinct contracts, namely, the construction of an incinerator building and the supply, installation, and commissioning of an LPG-fired human incinerator. The total value of the project is to the tune of Rs13.7 m.

Regarding the construction of the building, the contract was awarded to Prakash Foolchand Contractor Ltd. on 28 October 2019 and the works were completed on 11 November 2020.

As regards the supply, installation and commissioning of the LPG-fired human incinerator and the gas network installation, the contract was awarded to Rey & Lenferna Ltd on 07 October 2021 and the delivery was expected within 6 months, that is, on 07 April 2022.

However, in view of the delay being encountered in the delivery of the incinerator equipment, the District Council of Pamplemousses has been holding several meetings with the supplier and on 29 May 2023, the latter has informed that the shipment of the equipment is expected by 19 June 2023 and could be reaching Mauritius in the first week of July 2023.

Mr Woochit: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister aware that lateness for operating this incinerator is causing much inconvenience to the inhabitants residing in the vicinity? These bereaved families have to go to Bois Marchand Cemetery, Triolet or Piton cremation ground. What action is being taken by your Ministry to remedy this situation as soon as possible?

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the last year we have installed about, I think, 13 incinerators. There was some lateness as well because we all know what happened during COVID-19 time and how the whole of India was under lockdown. We know there has been a lot of delay but in the last year, about 13 incinerators were installed across the island. So, we are doing what needs to be done. I appreciate in this case there has been some delay, but according to the contractor Rey & Lenferna Ltd, the incinerator will be reached in Mauritius in the first week of July, hopefully by next month, and is going to take about either 3 to 4 weeks to be installed and commissioned. So, I would hope that within two months' time, this would be ready.

Mr Woochit: Can the hon. Minister inform the House if there are any penalties attached to the contract that will be imposed on the contractor at fault?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes. I mean, this needs to be sorted out because if it was something that it is beyond his responsibility, we can't penalise him but anyway, we have to have a look at the clause and we will see what needs to be done. We will have a look at it.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

CAP MALHEUREUX RELAY SHELTER - MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT

(No. B/719) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter, also known as L'Oiseau du Paradis, she will state, if any monitoring and evaluation report has been submitted by the National Children Council to her Ministry in respect thereof during the last six months and, if so, give the details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

NSLD LTD. – BOARD MEMBERS

(No. B/720) 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 New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the names and terms of appointment of the –

- (a) Chairperson and board members thereof;
- (b) Chief Executive Officer, and
- (c) Chief Operating Officer appointed thereat since the date of incorporation thereof to date, indicating in each case the monthly remuneration drawn.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand the requested information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Uteem: It seems that each time I ask a question, we don't get the information. I asked about the Consultant also, I have not received the information. Can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether, he can at least tell the House if the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Operating Officer, subject matter of this PQ, have any experience in social housing construction projects?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, again I take objection to what is being stated. The subject matter of the question is not only the Chairperson and the Chief Operating Officer. I was requested to provide information as to names and terms of appointment of the Chairperson and all the board members plus the Chief Executive Officer plus the Chief Operating Officer, indicating in each case the monthly remuneration drawn. That is why, we require some time naturally to compile all the information and make it available to the honourable gentleman.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is about the qualifications. My question has not been answered. My supplementary question was that: at least, can you inform the House if the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer, mentioned in my question, have any experience in social housing because they are CEO and the COO...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes. I cannot at this point in time provide that information as to prior experience that the CEO has been in place now for quite a while and I am sure that he has acquired valuable experience, as has the COO.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

STC – BUDGET 2022-2023 – BASIC COMMODITIES SUPPLY

(No. B/721) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the allocation of Rs 500 million as provided in Budget 2022-2023 for the supply of basic commodities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the amount spent as at to date on rice, oil and pulses, giving a breakdown thereof.

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the provision of Rs500 m. as announced during the Budget Speech 2022-2023 to the State Trading Corporation was, to enable the latter to supply essential products such as milk, edible oil and pulses at subsidised rate to the public, to make these products more affordable.

I am informed that rice was not part of the products to be subsidised through this Rs500 m. envelope. Ration rice is already subsidised through the contributions collected under the price structure of Mogas and Gas Oil while Basmati rice is a luxury product and consequently, not subsidised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the State Trading Corporation has not applied for any subsidy on pulses as it has been able to procure and sell pulses on the market at the same or lower than the prices applied by private traders.

With regard to the amount spent of the Rs500 m. envelope, I am informed that the STC has claimed a total of Rs62.6 m. for the provision of subsidy on edible oil and milk powder, of which Rs59.2 m. has been used to subsidise the retail price of edible oil and Rs3.4 m. has been used to subsidise the retail price of milk powder.

Mr Juman: Merci, M. le président. M. le ministre, on vient d'entendre dans le budget que la population n'arrive pas à joindre les deux bouts.

Mr Speaker: No, you are making a speech.

Mr Juman: Attends!

Mr Speaker: Each time, I am telling you.

Mr Juman: C'est pour cela...

Mr Speaker: You have no question? Next question!

Mr Juman: I have one.

Mr Speaker: No, you have no question!

LAND INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS & LAND OWNERSHIP - MEASURES

(No. B/722) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Land Infrastructure Assets and land ownership vested into his Ministry, he will state the measures envisaged to address the shortcomings highlighted in the Report of Director of Audit for the Financial year 2021-22 in relation thereto.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning land vested in my Ministry, in the report of the Director of Audit for the Financial year 2021-2022, there is approximately 800,000 square meters of both State-owned and private-owned lands were allocated to my Ministry for the purpose of operating our existing 150 health facilities and facilitating the development of approximately 60 new construction projects.

To address the concerns raised by the National Audit Office, my Ministry initiated procedures to reconcile the land inventory we have at the Ministry level with the individual inventories maintained at each hospital. Additionally, the assistance of the

Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning has been sought to reconcile the lists. Once the exercise is completed and a comprehensive understanding of the situation is obtained and taking into account the upcoming new health infrastructure projects, my Ministry will determine the appropriate course of action.

Furthermore, it is important to note that we have currently started the process of registering all the assets under the purview of my Ministry on the Government Asset Register.

Mr Speaker, Sir, through our proactive ...

Mr Speaker: Private conversation should be abroad, not here outside the Chamber.

Dr. Boolell: Abroad.

Mr Speaker: Abroad and outside, private conversation. Not inside, respect!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, through our approach and concerted efforts with all related stakeholders, we have been actively addressing the concerns related to land allocation and diligently working towards optimal asset management with my Ministry. We remain in our commitment to upholding the highest standards of governance and ensuring that land and assets under our control are utilised for the benefit of the people.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have only one supplementary question. Can the hon. Minister table the list of assets once it is ready? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: You reply?

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Yes.

Dr. Jagutpal: I will table the list.

Mr Speaker: So, next question!

LE MORNE HERITAGE TRUST FUND BOARD – COMPOSITION

(No. B/723) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund Board, he will state –

- (a) the current composition thereof, indicating in each case –
 - (i) the date of appointment of the Chairperson and members thereof;
 - (ii) the fees and allowances payable thereto, and
 - (iii) other benefits drawn, and

- (b) if a review of the composition thereof is envisaged and if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

ELECTRICITY METERS – REPORTED CASES - ALLEGED TAMPERING

(No. B/724) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity meters, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the –

- (a) number of reported cases of alleged tampering thereof since 2019 to date, and
 (b) measures being envisaged to avert the recurrence thereof.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that it's Revenue Protection's section detects tampering and fraudulent abstraction cases through various ways and methods such as routine verification of consumer meters and metering installations, analysis of consumption data base and profiles, information escalated by the field service teams, anonymous complaints and systematic follow ups of previous tampering occurrences.

Further, the Central Electricity Board has also established a Fraud Squad comprising two engineers, two principal technical officers, seven technical officers and seven technicians for a continuous monitoring of these illegal acts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, tampering of electricity meter and illegal abstraction of electricity through unauthorised connections does not only constitute an offence according to Section 41 of the Electricity Act 2005 but is also a hazard which can lead to electrocutions and severe burns. Therefore, the penalty has been increased and on conviction, a person is liable to a fine not exceeding Rs100,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that over the last five years, that is, from the first of January 2019 to 31 May 2023, 1,488 cases of alleged tampering of electricity meters and illegal abstractions of electricity have been reported.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am further informed that the Central Electricity Board has embarked on the installation of smart meters on a large scale. These meters have enabled the timely notification of alarms including, cases of suspicious abstraction of electricity. Some 80,000 such meters have already been installed and the project is on-going and is expected to be completed in five years.

Further, citizens can report cases of alleged theft anonymously through CEB Contact Centre; *MoKouran* App or by email. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Regarding the alleged cases of tampering of meters, can I ask the hon. Minister whether there have been reported cases where, instead of tampering, it was defective meter that were causing excessive use of electricity? Is he aware of same and has this been reported to the Ministry?

Mr Lesjongard: No, there must be, Mr Speaker, Sir, meters which have excessive metering and in that case I think there is a normal procedure at the level of the Central Electricity Board where a consumer can make a complaint and the CEB will do the needful to check whether the billing is being carried out in an excessive manner?

Mr Armance: Now, regarding the 80,000 smart meters that have been installed already, all over the island, has there been any reported alleged case of tampering despite the use of the smart meter? Are you ensuring that the smart meter can prevent tampering?

Mr Lesjongard: Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have this information with me but I believe that it will be more difficult for somebody to tamper the smart meter.

Mr Speaker: Time over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Mr Toussaint seconded.

Question put and agreed to.