



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2023

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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
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional

Integration and International Trade

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
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 Agro-industry and Food Security
Dr. the Hon. Mrs Marie Christiane Dorine Chukowry	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Anjiv Ramdhany	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. Rameswar Doolub
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
Adviser, Hansard	Allet, Mrs Marie-Hélène Caroline
Acting Hansard Editor	Cooposamy, Mrs Sheela
Assistant Hansard Editor	Hurdoss, Miss Doushika
Parliamentary Librarian and Information Officer	Jeewoonarain, Ms Prittydevi
Serjeant-at-Arms	Bundhoo, Mr Anirood

MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 25 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 17 October 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)

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF COMMITTEES - ELECTION

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (7)(a) of Standing Order (7) of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly, I move that the hon. Third Member for Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, Mr Doolub, be elected Deputy Chairperson of Committees.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

Mr Speaker: Is there any counterproposal?

Hon. Members, there being no counterproposal, I declare the hon. Third Member for Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, Mr Doolub, to be elected as Deputy Chairperson of Committees of the Assembly and I offer him my sincere congratulations.

(Applause)

Mr Doolub: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am privileged and honoured to have been elected to serve the Assembly as Deputy Chairperson of Committees. I assure this august Assembly that I will, at all times, faithfully discharge the responsibilities bestowed upon me to the best of my abilities. I avail myself this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister and Leader of the House for the trust he has placed in me.

Thank you for your attention.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OBITUARIES

MR AHMED REZA GOOLAM MAMODE ISSACK

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we have learnt of the demise of two former Members of Parliament –

- (i) Mr Ahmed Reza Goolam Mamode Issack, on Wednesday 26 July at the age of 69,
and
- (ii) Mr Premdut Koonjoo, GOSK, on Thursday 12 October at the age of 79.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Ahmed Reza Goolam Mamode Issack, commonly known as Mr Reza Issack, was born in Port Louis on 11 June 1954. He pursued his studies at St Mary's college and in 1972, while still being a student, Mr Reza Issack joined the Star Newspaper as Journalist. In 1974, after his secondary education, he joined Bhujoharry College as Teacher where he taught

French, English and Sociology, a post he held along with the journalism profession. In 1984, he became the Chief Editor of the Star Newspaper and was thereafter promoted to the post of Director.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding his political career, in 2000, Mr Reza Issack stood as candidate for the General Election in Constituency No.2 - Port Louis South and Port Louis Central under the banner of the *Alliance Parti Travailleiste-PMXD* but was not returned.

In 2001, Mr Reza Issack ran for the Municipal Council Elections under the banner of *Alliance Parti Travailleiste-PMSD-MR* and was returned to serve the City Council of Port Louis as Municipal Councillor.

In 2005, he contested the General Election in Constituency No. 2 - Port Louis South and Port Louis Central under the banner of *l'Alliance sociale* and was returned as Second Member. In the same year, he also ran for the Municipal Council Elections and was returned.

On 07 October 2005, Mr Reza Issack became Lord Mayor, a position he held until 23 November 2007. He continued to serve as Councillor till 23 October 2008. In the same year, Mr Reza Issack was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary.

In 2010, Mr Reza Issack ran for the General Election for a last time under the banner of the *l'Alliance PTR-PMSD-MSM* in constituency No. 19 - Stanley and Rose Hill but was not returned. However, he secured a seat under the Best Loser System to serve the National Assembly. On 18 August 2011, Mr Reza Issack was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary, post from which he resigned in June 2013. In May 2014, Mr Reza Issack was again appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Reza Issack also founded the Star Secretarial School and the African Institute for Professional Training in Curepipe.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to kindly direct the Acting Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the spouse and the children of Mr Reza Issack and to the close members of his family.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, one thing that I would like to clear first. Is this now optional or are we still meant to use it?

Mr Speaker: Read the obituary.

Mr X. L. Duval: No, I am just asking first.

Mr Speaker: Read the obituary first.

Mr X. L. Duval: What about this?

Mr Speaker: Read the obituary, with due respect.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay. Mr Speaker, Sir, I, of course, associate myself with the tribute made by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Reza Issack, former Parliamentary Private Secretary, former Lord Mayor and talented journalist. I, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, kindly request you to direct the Acting Clerk to convey our condolences to his wife and children.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to the memory of the late, Mr Ahmed Reza Goolam Mamode Issack, former Member of Parliament by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Acting Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

MR PREMDUT KOONJOO, GOSK

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Premdut Koonjoo, GOSK, was born on 31 July 1944 in Fond du Sac. Mr Koonjoo pursued his secondary education at the Northern College in Plaines des Papayes.

In 1962, Mr Koonjoo started his career in the educational sector as Secondary School Teacher at the International College in Triolet. Thereafter, in 1964, Mr Koonjoo joined the then Ministry of Education as Primary School Teacher, a post he held up to 1969. He then proceeded to India for his tertiary studies at the Delhi University.

In 1972, he graduated with a BA (Honours) degree in Economics following which he undertook a postgraduate course and in 1974, he was awarded a Master of Arts in Economics.

In January 1976, Mr Koonjoo joined St Mary's College as Teacher in Economics, a post he held till June 1976 when he joined the Public Service as Administrative Officer at the Ministry of External Affairs and Tourism. In 1977, he resumed his teaching profession and became the Head of Department in Economics; he taught Economics at New Eton College in Rose Hill from 1977 to 1982 and at Imperial College in Curepipe from 1986 to 1991.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding his political career, in 1976, Mr Koonjoo contested the General Election in Constituency No.5 - Pamplemousses and Triolet under the banner of the *Mouvement Militant Mauricien* but was not returned.

In 1982, he ran for the General Election in Constituency No.5 - Pamplemousses and Triolet under the banner of *Alliance MMM-PSM* and was returned as Second Member. He was appointed Minister of Local Government. In 1983, Mr Koonjoo ran for the General Election for

the same Constituency under the banner of the *Mouvement Militant Mauricien*, but was not returned. In 1987, he contested the General Election in Constituency No.14 - Savanne and Black River under the banner of *L'Union MMM-MTD-FTS*, but was not returned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1991, Mr Koonjoo contested the General Election in Constituency No.5 - Pamplémousses and Triolet under the banner of *l'Alliance MSM-MMM* and was returned as Third Member. He was subsequently appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary and in 1993, Mr Koonjoo was appointed Minister of Local Government.

In 1995, he contested the General Election in his usual Constituency under the banner of Alliance MSM-RMM, but was not returned. In 2000, Mr Koonjoo contested the General Election in Constituency No.9 - Flacq and Bon Accueil under the banner of *Alliance MSM-MMM*. He was returned as Third Member and was appointed Minister of Co-operatives. In 2002, Mr Koonjoo was entrusted the responsibility of Minister of Co-operatives and Handicraft, thereafter, Minister of Commerce and Co-operatives and in 2005, Minister of Small Enterprises, Co-operatives, Handicraft and the Informal Sector. In 2005, Mr Koonjoo ran for the General Election in Constituency No.9 - Flacq and Bon Accueil under the banner of *Alliance MSM-MMM*, but was not returned.

In 2014, Mr Koonjoo contested the General Election in Constituency No. 11 - Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle under the banner of *L'Alliance Lepep* and was returned as Third Member. He was appointed Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands. In January 2017, following reconstitution of the Cabinet, Mr Koonjoo was appointed Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, a post he held till November 2019.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2022, Mr Koonjoo was conferred the title of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean, GOSK, for his significant contribution in the political field.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the demise of Mr Koonjoo, affectionately known as '*bhai Prem*', my party and the country have lost one of its prominent political figures and a loyal and dedicated servant.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to kindly direct the Acting Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the spouse and the children of Mr Premdut Koonjoo, GOSK and to the close members of his family.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I associate myself to the tribute made by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Premdut Koonjoo, former Minister and a prominent and well-appreciated politician. May I also request you to direct the Acting Clerk to convey our condolences to his family, in particular, our thoughts are with the hon. Minister, Mrs Kalpana Koonjoo-Shah, who is after all, a parliamentarian.

I wish to inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Opposition will be removing all Parliamentary Questions addressed to the hon. Minister today in view of her bereavement. Thank you.

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

Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: I come back to this issue of the mask. Is it now optional for us to wear mask?

Mr Speaker: You don't mind if I reply later?

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, thank you.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Office of the President

The Annual Report (2022-2023) of the Ombudsperson for children.

B. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Fisheries Bill. (No. XIII of 2023)
(In Original)
- (b) The Civil Aviation (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 102 of 2023)
- (c) The Disciplined Forces Service Commission (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 103 of 2023)
- (d) The National Identity Card (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 123 of 2023)

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

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority for the year ended 30 June 2020.
- (b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Rabindranath Tagore Institute for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (c) The Education (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 122 of 2023)
- (d) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Higher Education Commission for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (e) The Private Secondary Education (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 147 of 2023)

(f) The Financial Statements and Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Foundation for the following years / period:

- (i) 01 July 2006 – 30 June 2007;
- (ii) 01 July 2007 – 30 June 2008;
- (iii) 01 July 2008 – 30 June 2009;
- (iv) 01 July 2009 – 31 December 2010;
- (v) 01 January 2011 – 31 December 2011;
- (vi) 01 January 2012 – 31 December 2012;
- (vii) 01 January 2013 – 31 December 2014; and
- (viii) 01 January 2014 – 31 December 2015

D. Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Statutory Bodies Family Protection Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022.

E. Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail

- (a) The Motorways and Main Roads (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 113 of 2023)
- (b) The Light Rail Fares and Light Rail Tickets (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 150 of 2023)

F. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Ex-Services Trust Fund for the period ended 31 March 2023.
- (b) The Freeport (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 114 of 2023)
- (c) The Public Procurement (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 115 of 2023)
- (d) The Companies (Payment of Fees to Registrar) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 126 of 2023)
- (e) The Customs (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 128 of 2023)
- (f) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 129 of 2023)

- (g) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 130 of 2023)
- (h) The Excise (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 131 of 2023)
- (i) The Value Added Tax (E-invoicing) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 132 of 2023)
- (j) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Treasury Foreign Currency Management Fund for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (k) The Loan Agreement for the Construction of Rivière des Anguilles Dam Project between The Saudi Fund for Development and Republic of Mauritius (Loan No. 07/803)
- (l) Virement Warrant – Quarter 4 (April – June 2023): Nos. 48, 55-58, 58A, 59-220 and Nos. 222 to 224. (In Original)
- (m) Retrospective Virement – Quarter 4 (April – June 2023): No 225 (In Original)
- (n) Virement (Contingencies) Warrants – Quarter 3 (January – March 2023): No. 19 and 20 (In Original)
- (o) Virement Certificate – Quarter 4 (April – June 2023): Vote/Sub-Head (Certificates Nos.): 1-4(1-2), 1-5(9-20), 1-6(9-15), 1-7(6,9), 1-8(3,5), 1-9(3-7), 1-10(2-8), 1-11(2-7), 1-12(1-5), 1-15(4-13), 1-18(2), 2-1(9-11,13,17,19,21-23), 2-2(2-4), 2-3(4-8), 2-5(12-19,21-44), 2-6(9,13,15), 2-7(8,11), 2-8(12,16,18), 2-9(10,14,17,19), 2-10(5-8), 3-1(5-16), 3-2(4), 3-3(3-6), 4-1(5-9), 5-1(6-12), 5-2(2-4), 5-3(6,7), 5-4(5,6), 6-1(2-13), 6-2(3-7), 6-3(5-9), 7-1(9,11-12,13A,15), 7-2(6), 7-3(6-11), 7-4(3-12), 7-5(3-6), 7-6(6-14), 8-1(19-20,24,26), 9-2(4-32,34), 10-101(12-18), 10-104(5-6,8-9,11-12), 11-1(3-5), 11-2(8-11), 12-1(7-10), 13-1(9), 13-2(6-11), 13-4(4), 14-1(12-13), 15-1(9-26), 15-2(5-14), 16-1(11-28), 16-103(11-16), 17-1(5-7), 17-2(5-6,8-10,12-13), 18-1(20,30,32), 19-2(11-12), 20-1(6-9), 21-103(8), 22-1(4-5,7-9), 23-1(11-17), 24-1(10,13,16)
- (p) Virement Warrants – Quarter 1 (July – September 2023): No. 1 to 5 (In Original)
- (q) Virement (Contingencies) Warrant – Quarter 1 (July – September 2023): No. 1 to 3 (In Original)
- (r) Virement Certificate – Quarter 1 (July – September 2023): Vote/Sub-Head (Certificates Nos.): 1-7(1), 1-9(1), 5-1(1-3), 5-2(1-2), 5-4(1), 6-1(1), 7-1(2), 7-2(1), 8-1(1), 9-202(1), 10-102(1), 12-1(1), 14-1(1), 16-1(1), 16-103(1), 21-1(1), 23-1(1) and 24-1(1) (In Original)

- (s) Carry - Over Warrant (2022-2023): (No. 1-3) (In Original)
- (t) The Statutory Bodies Pension Funds (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 148 of 2023)
- (u) The Public Procurement (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 149 of 2023)
- (v) The Securities (Preferential Offer) (Amendment) Rules 2023. (Government Notice No. 152 of 2023)
- (w) The Finance and Audit (National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Fund Regulations 2020) (Revocation) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 153 of 2023)

G. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

- (a) The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 108 of 2023)
- (b) The Energy Efficiency (Labelling of Regulated Machinery) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 112 of 2023)
- (c) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Waste Water Management Authority for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (d) The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 120 of 2023)
- (e) The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 134 of 2023)

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

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Senior Citizens Council for the year ended 30 June 2022. (In Original).
- (b) The Social Integration and Empowerment (Crèche Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 110 of 2023)
- (c) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Economic and Social Council for the period 01 January 2015 to 30 April 2015.

I. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Rules 2023. (Government Notice No. 135 of 2023)

**J. Attorney General
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade**

The Financial Statement and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Curatelle Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022. (In Original)

K. Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Road Development Authority for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Construction Industry Development Board for the year ended 30 June 2022. (In Original)

L. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statement of the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022.

M. Ministry of Health and Wellness

- (a) The Dental Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 118 of 2023)
- (b) The Dental Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 119 of 2023)
- (c) The Quarantine (COVID-19 Restrictions) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 121 of 2023)

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

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Fishermen Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (b) The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Extension of Net Fishing Season) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 136 of 2023)

O. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Women's Council for the year ended 30 June 2020. (In Original)

P. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

- (a) The Annual Reports and Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Bhojpuri Speaking Union for the following years ended:
 - (i) 30 June 2020; and
 - (ii) 30 June 2021.
- (b) The Annual Reports and Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Chinese-speaking Union for the following years ended:
 - (i) 30 June 2021; and
 - (ii) 30 June 2022.
- (c) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund for the year ended 30 June 2021.
- (d) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Marathi Cultural Centre Trust for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (e) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for the year ended 30 June 2022.
- (f) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Council of Registered Librarians for the year ended 30 June 2018.

Q. Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security

- (a) The Irrigation Area (Riche Terre) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 104 of 2023)
- (b) The Irrigation Area (Arsenal) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 105 of 2023)
- (c) The Financial statements of the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation for the period 01 January 2012 to 18 March 2012.
- (d) The Plant Protection (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 111 of 2023)
- (e) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Sugar Insurance Fund Board for the year ended 30 June 2022.

- (f) The Sugar Insurance Fund (Reduced Premiums) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No.127 of 2023)

R. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Petroleum Products) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 106 of 2023)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 21) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 107 of 2023)
- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 22) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 109 of 2023)
- (d) The Consumer Protection (Safety Requirements) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 116 of 2023)
- (e) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 23) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 117 of 2023)
- (f) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 124 of 2023)
- (g) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 24) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 125 of 2023)
- (h) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 25) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 133 of 2023)
- (i) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 137 of 2023)
- (j) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 26) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 138 of 2023)
- (k) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 27) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 139 of 2023)

- (l) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Petroleum Products) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 142 of 2023)
- (m) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 143 of 2023)
- (n) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 28) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 144 of 2023)
- (o) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 29) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 145 of 2023)
- (p) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 30) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 146 of 2023)
- (q) The Toys (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. (Government Notice No. 151 of 2023)

S. Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

- (a) The Civil Establishment Order 2023. (Government Notice No. 140 of 2023)
- (b) The Civil Establishment (Rodrigues Regional Assembly) Order 2023. (Government Notice No. 141 of 2023)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

AGALEGA – INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS – DETAILS

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 construction works at North Island Agalega, and in view of the forthcoming inauguration of the facilities in December, he will state the –

- (a) estimated annual cost of maintenance, operation and functioning of these facilities thereat;
- (b) staff requirement in terms of Mauritian citizens and expatriates, and
- (c) date on which the commercial flights are expected to start.

The Prime Minister: M. le président, tout d’abord, laissez-moi remercier le chef de l’opposition pour la *Private Notice Question* qu’il m’a adressée ce matin. Étant donné que je demeure toujours le député de la circonscription numéro 8, Quartier Militaire et Moka, démocratiquement...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You may continue!

The Prime Minister: ...démocratiquement élu et avec le soutien des députés de *L’Alliance Morisien*, je suis toujours le Premier ministre de la République de Maurice, n’en déplaise à certains.

Hier, M. le président, la vérité a triomphé le mensonge. La démocratie est sortie renforcée avec le jugement du Conseil privé du Roi.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to this Private Notice Question together with Parliament Question B/1139 as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated on several occasions in this House, the Agreement signed with the Government of India on the Infrastructural Projects in Agalega is intended only for the implementation of measures to promote, protect and safeguard our maritime security needs in the following areas, among others –

- (i) surveillance and monitoring of our vast EEZ of 2.3 million square kilometres;
- (ii) counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics and human trafficking;
- (iii) controlling poaching; and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
- (iv) provision of hydrographic services;
- (v) promoting economic development, including blue economy initiatives;
- (vi) emergency response, including search and rescue;
- (vii) marine pollution response, and
- (viii) Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster relief activities.

The infrastructural development projects currently underway on the Island will also go a long way towards improving the standard of living of our Agalean brothers and sisters as it will generate significant economic activities on the Island. I seize this opportunity to once again, gratefully acknowledge the precious support and assistance that the Government of the Republic of India has constantly been extending to Mauritius.

I would refer the hon. Leader of the Opposition to my reply to Parliamentary Question B/810 at the Sitting of 27 June 2023, where I informed that there are two main projects that are currently being implemented in the island of Agalega, namely the construction of a new airstrip and a new jetty. These projects are being executed by AFCONS Ltd and are being entirely financed by the Government of India.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that civil works for both the new runway and the new jetty have already been completed. Works in connection with the associated infrastructure for the airstrip and the jetty are ongoing and are nearing completion and expected to be operational by December 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this context, a provision to the tune of Rs250 m. has been made in the 2023-2024 Budget for the acquisition of two tugs to enable the MV Trochetia to berth at the new jetty.

I indicated in my speech on the Appropriation 2023-2024 Bill, that the two main infrastructural development projects for improving sea and air connectivity to Agalega, that is, the airstrip and the jetty, will be operational at the end of this year. I also underlined that these infrastructural developments will broaden the scope of economic activities of Agalega and, thus, improve the standard of living of its inhabitants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over and above the two main projects, there are six other small-scale, people-oriented, developmental projects that are being implemented in Agalega. These projects relate primarily to socio-economic development, particularly creation of infrastructure in community development sectors and livelihood activities, amongst others. For these projects, the Government of India has extended a grant assistance of Indian Rupees 169,572,867. The six projects are –

- (i) a library with computers and IT infrastructure on the North Island;
- (ii) a larger shop for sale of items on the North Island;
- (iii) two kiosks at boat-alighting points on North and South Island;
- (iv) an Office-cum-Administrative quarters on the South Island;
- (v) a Fish Landing Station on the North Island, and
- (vi) a Community-cum-Multi-Purpose Hall at North Island.

All these projects are expected to be completed by the end of November 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that there are two other projects being implemented by the Outer Islands Development Corporation, namely the construction of a shed to shelter vehicles purchased by the Corporation and the acquisition of a barge for the transportation of cargo and passengers between the North Island and the South Island of Agalega.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is noteworthy that one of the main responsibilities of the Outer Islands Development Corporation is to provide decent accommodation to the inhabitants of Agalega, as well as to the personnel of Ministries and Departments on the tour of service in Agalega, whilst facilitating access to services such as health, education, water, electricity, and telephony and internet services.

In this context, following a request made by the Outer Islands Development Corporation, the National Housing Development Co. Ltd is proposing to construct 50 housing units at Agalega.

The Tender for works has been launched through the Central Procurement Board and the closing date is on 07 November 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of this question, I am informed that after completion of the airstrip and jetty projects, as per the Agreement signed between the Government of India

and the Government of Mauritius, all facilities will be vested in the Government of the Republic of Mauritius. A Committee has been set up under the Chair of a Senior Adviser of my Office to coordinate the operationalisation of the facilities and to evaluate and work out the cost related to maintenance, operation and functioning of these facilities.

The Committee also comprises –

1. The Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office (Cabinet Office);
2. The Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office (External Communications Division);
3. The Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office (Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity Division);
4. The Director of Civil Aviation, Department of Civil Aviation;
5. The Chairperson and the General Manager, Outer Islands Development Corporation;
6. The Resident Manager of Agalega;
7. The Technical Experts, Project Monitoring Team;
8. The Acting Director-General, Mauritius Ports Authority;
9. The Acting Port Master, Mauritius Ports Authority;
10. The Commander, National Coast Guard;
11. The Assistant Superintendent of Police, Police Department;
12. The Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development (National Infrastructure Division);
13. The Deputy Director, Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development (The Energy Services Division).

The Committee is pursuing its work regarding cost estimates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, except for scarcity areas necessitating foreign expertise or unavailability of adequately qualified local human resource, the facilities will be manned by Mauritian personnel and will be under the overall control of Mauritian authorities. The Committee I mentioned earlier is also looking into the human resource aspect.

Moreover, some inhabitants of Agalega, who have been provided basic training, will be further upskilled and their services will be enlisted as and when required in the operation of the facilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that a trial landing exercise was carried out on 01 March 2023 by the Dornier Aircraft. The Commissioner of Police reported that the landing exercise was successful. Moreover, the Department of Civil Aviation carried out a survey of the new runway and its associated facilities on 27 June 2023. Following the survey, the Department of Civil Aviation made certain recommendations with regard to operations of commercial flights, which are being looked into by the abovementioned Committee. These, *inter alia*, include –

- qualified personnel;
- Aerodrome Emergency Plan;
- licensing, and
- other regulatory requirements of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that once all the requirements have been met, the Director of Civil Aviation will promulgate the runway in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation standards. It is only then that commercial flights can be scheduled.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the development of all our outer islands forms part of my vision to propel the whole of our territory towards sustained, meaningful and inclusive socio-economic advancement.

Thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, '*gouverner, c'est prévoir*', and the facilities in Agalega will be fully completed and presumably operational in several weeks' time. I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister, with regard to this investment of about Rs14 billion, totally financed by the Republic of India, whether the cost will be borne by the Mauritian taxpayer or by the Indian taxpayer. In particular, it can easily be calculated that the running cost of this facility will be in excess of R1 billion per annum.

The Prime Minister: First of all, till now, we cannot say exactly what has been the cost of building those facilities. We have not yet completed. So, in the time to come, of course, I will be

able to communicate the exact figure. I will just remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that in the past PNQ that he, himself, has put to me, I had at that time already indicated an amount that those two projects would have cost.

Mr X. L. Duval: Nine million?

The Prime Minister: No, it was less than that. Anyway, we will come to a figure once all those projects are fully completed.

Now, with regard to building those infrastructures, I have said that India is financing the total cost of those two infrastructures. With regard to manning and operationalising these infrastructures, I have said that there is a committee that is already working on the human resources requirements in order to be able to have the operation of both the airstrip and the jetty.

Now, there are some of our technical people who eventually will be posted there, but there are certain technical people where probably we will not have the required expertise here. So, India stands ready to provide us with those personnel that are required and those personnel, of course, will be paid by the Indian Government.

In regard to our personnel, of course, they will be met by salaries under budget item from this Government. Again I say, it is still being worked out and eventually, once those two infrastructural projects are fully completed and become operational, then we will know exactly how many personnel are posted there.

Mr X. L. Duval: According to the Prime Minister himself, the inauguration will be in a few weeks' time. So, we are not talking about years. Is he seriously telling us that the Government has no estimate of the cost of running that facility, either to the Indian Government or to the Mauritian Government or as to the number of personnel that are going to be there? You have yourself said that 162 dormitory rooms and villas, etc., are there for the personnel. You do know at all who is going to man this as from in a few weeks' time?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have an estimate, but I have to be serious when I give a figure to this House. The hon. Leader of the Opposition wants me to give a figure of the cost for maintenance for operational matters. Well, once we have a final figure, I will definitely provide it to the House. As far as maintenance of the infrastructure is concerned, let me add that these maintenance costs will be borne by the Government of India. But, at this stage, I am not

able to provide the exact figure with regard to how much we are going to spend for operating those two infrastructures. So, yes, we are looking towards inaugurating those infrastructures, I hope, at latest by the end of December.

Now, I say 'I hope' because there has been a number of delays for different reasons on this project. We are nearing completion and I hope if these are fully completed, we will hold the inauguration. But, then, of course, in a few weeks' time, I will be able to give you the exact figure.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I didn't ask for the estimated; I never asked for the exact cost. Now, it's a wonder that the Minister of Finance can even do a budget every year if that would be the principle of how Government works. I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister, the Hindustan Times, a highly respected newspaper, has published recently an article saying that there are going to be, I think, 50 military officers from the Republic of India who are coming to operate this facility. Is the Prime Minister telling us that the Hindustan Times is more *au fait* about what is happening in Agalega than himself?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not rely on newspaper's reporting. I have not brought all the reporting from the media with me; I have some. All sorts of things have been said. There are so many. Some have even claimed that they are from the official source of Government, which is totally, totally false. Let me cite one which has been mentioned by our local media, and some people have taken it very seriously. Even I wanted to find out more about the Indian Defence Research Wing. Well, when you hear that, you are taken aback! Indian Defence Research Wing saying all sorts of things, that we are going to accommodate frigates, destroyers, fighter jets; all sorts of things have been mentioned. When I look at this site, what it says: 'the idea behind this blog was to bring all coverage from mainstream media to a one-stop destination which leads to the creation of IDRW.org.' Can you imagine? Not trying to find out reliable information; just basing on what any Tom, Dick and Harry has been publicising and bringing them altogether!

Now, I did not rely only on what it says about this organisation or whatever it is. I took the pain to ask the Government of India, and I have been communicated that this Indian Defence Research Wing is not an official source; if I can say, it is just *bla-bla-bla*. So, like that, there are other so many *bla-bla-blas* that have been reported in the Press. But, again, I don't rely on those.

I have systematically been saying to this House, upon being questioned by the Opposition about the agreement that we have with India, and I have been providing as much information as I could to the House.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question was never about the Indian Research Wing; it is about the respected Hindustan Times, and a very specific question. Nobody is saying good or bad. We are just trying to confirm whether there are 50 military officers from the Republic of India about to go and operate the facility there because you don't seem to be prepared with the Mauritian people to do so. Also, I would like to ask if these military officers are going to be under the command and control of our Commissioner of Police and/or will they require Work and Residence Permits to go there, in which case he will surely be aware of what is happening there.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I never said that I am not aware. I have said in my reply that the committee is already looking into the issue of the human resources. Probably, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has not heard me, I have said where we have the required personnel who are qualified, they are going to be posted and they are going to support the infrastructure there.

But where there is a lack of qualified personnel, we have an agreement with India that they are going to provide us with those human resources. This is what I said. In a few weeks' time, I will be able to inform the House about the exact number of people who are posted, and, of course, of their qualification and technical background. But, again, those personnel are going to be deputed from India to be able to operate those infrastructures. Therefore, again, I say, the Hindustan Times - I am not casting any judgement on what Hindustan Times is, but they can report anything. It does not mean to say that what they report is exact or correct. What is important to me is what the Government of India says. Now, that, I take it seriously, but I do not rely on so many of the articles which have been published so often. In fact, they are trying to do what? They are trying to discredit the relationship that we have between Mauritius and the Government of India. In fact, we should be thankful to the Government of India for all the support and the help that they are giving to us.

Let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he was himself part of a Government from 2005 to 2014. Can you imagine, this runway has been damaged and flights could not be

operated properly to transport passengers? Only emergency flights could be operated from 2005 to 2014, when the Labour/PMSD were in Government. Only emergency flights! And that also with the risk that something could have happened. Fortunately, I am happy that, so far, no accident has happened. But we can't risk peoples' lives just like that.

And when we are building such kind of infrastructure, I think we should have been applauded for what is being done. Never, never before; how many times - I have been in Government together with you also - we have been trying to upgrade this runway, upgrade the jetty! People do not realise that when the ship comes to Agalega, it has to anchor at a distance. There must be a barge that will transport passengers from the ship to mainland, and the barge has to also carry all the cargo also.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir...

The Prime Minister: No, I am saying what it used to be and is still now. But, let us say in a few weeks' time, this is going to change.

An hon. Member: Bravo!

The Prime Minister: This is why I say, *M. le président, ça c'est du concret! C'est ça qu'on est en train d'améliorer; la qualité de vie des gens.* Time will tell! Time will tell because *on a eu un procès d'intention non seulement des médias mais de la part de l'Opposition. Mais, time will tell and we will see!*

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am happy that the Prime Minister used the term 'runway', not 'airstrip' because this runway is 3 km long, longer by 1 km even compared to the new runway in Rodrigues. So, we have to get things right. And we would love to inform the Prime Minister, we would love to applaud what India has done, but we do not have any access to any of the agreements that you have signed. So, we are unable to applaud one way or another.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to confirm. Will these foreign military personnel be under the command and control of our Commissioner of Police and will each of them require a Work and Residence Permit to work on Agalean soil?

The Prime Minister: First of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, we are building a runway of that size. Do you think you can use the Dornier to carry out maritime surveillance effectively? Do you think you can use an ATR 72 to carry out maritime surveillance? Do you think you can use a

commercial flight like the Boeing, like the airbus to carry out maritime surveillance? You need specialised and well equipped aircraft to be able to carry out maritime surveillance. So, I do not know what kind of world you are living in. But, anyway, let me move on, I do not spend too much time on one or the other. You talked about the agreement. It is confidential. I said there is a confidential clause in this agreement and I have said repeatedly that both parties must agree to make it public, and India is not agreeable to make it public. In fact, let me correct one thing which you have said in your last PNQ on this matter. You said that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had publicly stated that India has no objection to make it public. Afterwards, I have enquired. This is not correct; this is not true. Minister Jaishankar has told me that they are not agreeable to make it public. So, it is good that I am able to correct this.

Now, you are talking about under whose responsibility or who is going to have control. I have said in my reply that the Mauritian Authorities will have the responsibility of both the airstrip and the jetty. I can't be clearer than that.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am trying to ask the Prime Minister a simple question: whether these foreign military officers meant to operate these military aircrafts will be under the command and control of our Commissioner of Police? What is difficult to answer that question? Is it confidential?

The Prime Minister: I replied.

Mr X. L. Duval: You have not replied. I want to know whether you will be giving them Work and Residence Permits. I'm not asking something which is impossible for you to answer, surely.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, if this Opposition does not understand the meaning of Mauritian Authorities, I believe that the people at large will understand what I mean by Mauritian Authorities.

Mr Speaker: Time over!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are other Members' questions!

Mr Speaker: Prime Minister's Question Time!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/1143 and B/1153 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. PQ B/1154 will be

replied by the hon. Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. PQ B/1150 has been withdrawn.

I now call hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – SOVEREIGNTY – MAURITIUS & UK

(No. B/1138) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the negotiations initiated with the United Kingdom on the exercise of sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to this Parliamentary Question together with Parliamentary Questions B/1144 and B/1148 as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the United Kingdom excised the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence, in violation of international law and United Nations General Assembly resolutions, including Resolution 1514(XV) of 14 December 1960. The decolonisation of Mauritius, therefore, remains incomplete.

Since we assumed Office in December 2014, no stone has been left unturned in our endeavour to secure the full decolonisation of Mauritius.

At the request of Mauritius and following extensive lobbying, the UN General Assembly decided by consensus in September 2016 to include on its agenda, an item entitled “Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965”. Subsequently, on 22 June 2017, the General Assembly adopted by 94 votes to 15 Resolution 71/292 to request an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on two very specific questions, namely –

- (1) “Was the process of decolonisation of Mauritius lawfully completed when Mauritius was granted independence in 1968, following the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius and having regard to international law, including obligations reflected in General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14

December 1960, 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965, 2232 (XXI) of 20 December 1966 and 2357 (XXII) of 19 December 1967?";

- (2) "What are the consequences under international law, including obligations reflected in the above-mentioned resolutions, arising from the continued administration by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland of the Chagos Archipelago, including with respect to the inability of Mauritius to implement a programme for the resettlement on the Chagos Archipelago of its nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin?"

On 25 February 2019, the International Court of Justice gave an Advisory Opinion in which it determined, with respect to the first question, that the process of decolonisation of Mauritius was not lawfully completed upon its accession to independence in 1968, in view of the illegal excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius.

With regard to the second question, the Court ruled that United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible. The Court also determined that the United Kingdom's continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes an unlawful act of a continuing character entailing the international responsibility of that State.

On 22 May 2019, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, by an overwhelming majority of 116 votes to 6, Resolution 73/295 to give effect to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. In this resolution, the General Assembly, *inter alia*, affirmed that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of Mauritius and that the United Kingdom's continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes a wrongful act entailing the international responsibility of that State. The General Assembly accordingly demanded the United Kingdom to withdraw its colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago unconditionally within a period of no more than six months, that is, by 22 November 2019. The United Kingdom failed to meet that deadline.

The General Assembly also urged the United Kingdom to cooperate with Mauritius in facilitating the resettlement of Mauritians, including those of Chagossian origin, in the Chagos Archipelago and to pose no impediment or obstacle to such resettlement. The General Assembly

also called upon the United Nations and its specialised agencies as well as all other international, regional and intergovernmental organisations, including those...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir...

The Prime Minister: ... established by treaty...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, a point of order.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, the Prime Minister is repeating the exact answer that he gave to the Leader of the Opposition on 04 July 2023; word for word. Exactly the same words!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Navarre-Marie: My question is a straightforward question requiring a direct answer.

Mr Speaker: Are you prepared to listen to me? Where is your point of order?

Mrs Navarre-Marie: The Prime Minister is wasting, is abusing the time of the House!

Mr Speaker: This is not point of order! You may continue!

The Prime Minister: *4 ans tonn perdi letan dimounn avek to petision!*

Mr Speaker: You may continue hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Four years they have wasted our time with their petition!

(Interruptions)

Ein, ena toupe!

An hon. Member: *Inpe pasians!*

Mr Mohamed: *4 ans!*

The Prime Minister: Culot!

Mr Mohamed: *4 ans!*

The Prime Minister: *Komie tan?*

Mr Mohamed: *Enn tipe moins.*

Mr Hurreeram: *Et l'argent public!*

The Prime Minister: *Enn tipe moins.* At least you agree!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the hon. Member is saying I am quoting word for word, when the ICJ says something, I have to quote word for word. I cannot put it in my own words. I hope she understands that!

So, let me say again, the General Assembly also urged the UK to cooperate with Mauritius in facilitating the resettlement of Mauritians, including those of Chagossian origin in the Chagos Archipelago and to pose no impediment or obstacle to such resettlement. The General Assembly also called upon the United Nations and its specialised agencies as well as all other international, regional and intergovernmental organisations, including those established by treaty, to recognise that the Chagos Archipelago forms...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Forms an integral part of the territory...

An hon. Member: *Bien vilain!*

Mr Speaker: Do not obstruct, hon. Member!

An hon. Member: *Pas fer vilain la do!*

Mr Speaker: Do not obstruct! Please, continue.

The Prime Minister: Well, it seems that she is answering. So, let us listen to her!

An hon. Member: *Liem poz kestion!*

The Prime Minister: *Mo ekout twa! Reponn!*

Mrs Luchmun Roy: This is such a shame!

An hon. Member: *Ena larogans sanala!*

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Inutile de continuer, je vais poser mes questions supplémentaires !

The Prime Minister: Well, I have not finished!

Hon. Members: Ha! Ha! Ha!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Aret riye moustas!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: *Pinokio!*

The Prime Minister: *Tonn dekonserte to pe riye!*

An hon. Member: *Dekonserte!*

The Prime Minister: *Bouffon!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Can you please withdraw that word?

An hon. Member: How can you shout?

An hon. Member: *Fou sa deor!*

Mr Speaker: Can you please withdraw that word?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Uteem: Why don't you call him to task? He provoked...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order on both sides!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order on both sides of the House!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bérenger, I heard you well ...

Mr Bhagwan: *To pann tann laba?*

Mr Bérenger: You did not hear him?

Mr Speaker: You said something which is unparliamentary!

Mr Bérenger: You did not hear him?

An hon. Member: *Kifer pann dir li?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: And, this is the last time I am asking you!

Mr Bérenger: If he withdraws, I will withdraw!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I did not hear anything! I heard you!

(Interruptions)

I heard you!

Mr Uteem: He is provoking!

Mr Bérenger: Ask him to withdraw, then I will withdraw.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am asking you to withdraw! If you do not withdraw this word, you will have to withdraw from the Chamber.

Mr Bhagwan: *Laba to pa tande?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please be careful!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I was saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, the General Assembly also called upon the United Nations and its specialised agencies as well as other international, regional and intergovernmental organisations...

An hon. Member: Ha! Ha! Ha!

The Prime Minister: ...including those...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Established by treaty!

The Prime Minister: Well, I am being disturbed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Arianne Navarre-Marie!

(Interruptions)

Please! Hon. Mrs Arianne Navarre-Marie!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Li pas tande la !*

Mr Speaker: You have put a question!

An hon. Member: *Li mank rol.*

Mr Speaker: You have to listen to the reply. Do not interrupt!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Navarre-Marie: J'ai déjà entendu...

Mr Speaker: And I maintain, I ask hon. Paul Bérenger to withdraw the word and...

Mr Bérenger: I am not withdrawing if he does not withdraw!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: And...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Laba to pa tande!*

An hon. Member: Shame!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: This is the last time I am asking hon. Bérenger!

(Interruptions)

I will rule!

Mr Bérenger: If he withdraws, I withdraw!

Mr Bhagwan: *Laba to pa tande?*

Mr Speaker: Continue!

Mr X. L. Duval: Withdraw!

The Prime Minister: But if I am going to be interrupted by the hon. Member, I think, I cannot continue like that!

Mr Speaker: Any Member who is interrupting will have to withdraw from the Chamber!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: I have already...

The Prime Minister: So, recognise ...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir...

The Prime Minister: Well, I am answering!

(Interruptions)

So, it forms an integral part...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Arianne Navarre-Marie, can you please withdraw from the Chamber?

Ms J. Bérenger: Why? Why?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Dominer!*

An hon. Member: Shame!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Pou ki rezon ?*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Kifer?*

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Il raconte des histoires !* I have supplementary questions!

(Interruptions)

Ms J. Bérenger: He is wasting the time of the House!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: So, may I continue?

Mr Speaker: Continue until...

The Prime Minister: Well, I have to start again! The General Assembly also called upon the United Nations and its specialised agencies as well as all other international, regional and intergovernmental organisations, including those established by treaty, to recognise that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, to support the decolonisation of Mauritius as rapidly as possible, and to refrain from impeding that process by recognising, or giving effect to any measure taken by or on behalf of, the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory”.

Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 73/295, the United Nations amended its official map in February 2020 to clearly depict the Chagos Archipelago as part of the territory of Mauritius. For its part, Mauritius undertook actions at the level of the Universal Postal Union, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and the North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission to challenge the membership of the United Kingdom in these organisations as the purported representative of the Chagos Archipelago.

Mauritius also brought a case before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to seek the delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the region of the Chagos Archipelago and in its Judgment of 28 January 2021 on the preliminary objections raised by Maldives, the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea fully endorsed the authoritative determinations made by the International Court of Justice in its

Advisory Opinion of 25 February 2019 and held that Mauritius has undisputed sovereignty rights over the Chagos Archipelago. It also ruled that the United Kingdom's continued claim to sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is contrary to the determinations made by the International Court of Justice, that the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius was unlawful and that the United Kingdom's continued administration of the Chagos Archipelago constitutes an unlawful act of a continuing character.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 24 August 2021, the Universal Postal Union, a specialised agency of the United Nations, adopted by a majority of 77 votes to 6, a resolution which formally acknowledges that, for the purposes of its activities, the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. The resolution also instructs the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union to cease the registration, distribution and forwarding of any and all postage stamps issued by the so-called "British Indian Ocean Territory".

As for the United Kingdom's membership of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, the Commission decided at its last meeting in May 2023 that the United Kingdom will have to clarify the criteria in respect of which it claims to be a member of the organisation before the end of this year.

It is crystal clear that under international law, the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the meeting which I had with the Rt hon. Elizabeth Truss in her capacity as the UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in November 2021 in Glasgow in the margins of the 26th Session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, I lengthily discussed with her the issue of Chagos Archipelago. She undertook to look into the matter and the way forward.

Subsequently, when the Rt hon. Elizabeth Truss became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, I met her on 21 September 2022 in New York in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly. During that meeting, I again discussed with her on how Mauritius and the United Kingdom could engage in discussions for the completion of the decolonisation process of Mauritius.

After further discussions and following the agreement of the United Kingdom that any agreement should be based on international law, Mauritius and the United Kingdom decided to start negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, as I had announced to the House on 03 November 2022.

Through negotiations, taking into account relevant legal pronouncements, it is the intention of Mauritius and the United Kingdom to secure an agreement on the basis of international law to resolve all outstanding issues, including those relating to the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago.

Mauritius and the United Kingdom have reiterated that any agreement between the two countries will ensure the continued effective operation of the joint UK/US military base in Diego Garcia.

The negotiations are between Mauritius and the United Kingdom, and not between Mauritius and the United States. Since Mauritius and the United Kingdom recognised the United States' and India's interests, they have agreed to keep them informed of progress in the negotiations.

In this regard, when I met hon. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, in New Delhi in the margins of the last G20 Summit, I briefed him on the status of the ongoing negotiations with the United Kingdom. This issue was also raised during the meeting which I had with hon. Richard Verma, US Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, last month in New York in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly.

I have also been able to brief the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the status of our negotiations, given the crucial role played by Africa in our *démarche*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since my statement of 03 November 2022 to the House, Mauritius and the United Kingdom have held six rounds of negotiations on 23 and 24 November 2022, 11 and 12 January 2023, 23 and 24 February 2023, 02 and 03 June 2023, 31 July and 01 August 2023, and 26 and 27 September 2023. Another round of negotiations will be held shortly.

The discussions between Mauritius and the United Kingdom have covered issues relating to the exercise of sovereignty by Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago whilst ensuring the continued effective operation of the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia; resettlement of

the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago; strengthening our cooperation on a range of issues such as environmental and marine protection, improving security and tackling illegal activities in the region, amongst others. The negotiations are being held at the level of Senior Officials alternately in London and Port Louis and in New York for practical reasons. The Senior Officials on both sides report to me and the UK Prime Minister respectively. I have personally been in touch with Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak on this matter.

Further to my phone conversation on 14 February 2023 with the UK Prime Minister, during which we agreed to pursue the negotiations with a view to arriving at an agreement in the coming months, I met him on 09 September 2023 in New Delhi in the margins of the G20 Summit. During our meeting, we assessed the progress made so far in the negotiations between Mauritius and the United Kingdom on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the illegal excision of the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius, all the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly removed by the United Kingdom in blatant violation of their basic human rights. Most of them were moved to Mauritius.

Government is fully sensitive to the plight of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago and supports their legitimate aspiration, as Mauritian citizens, to return and resettle in their place of birth. Government is sparing no effort for the effective exercise by Mauritius of its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago in order to enable the implementation of a resettlement programme which will facilitate the resettlement of Mauritians of Chagossian origin in full dignity and enjoyment of their basic fundamental rights as they currently do in Mauritius.

In line with the strong commitment of Government to implement a resettlement programme in the Chagos Archipelago, the special provision of Rs50 m. made in the Budget for Financial Year 2019/2020 has been maintained in the Budget for this financial year. This special provision is, *inter alia*, intended to meet expenses relating to preparations for eventual resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago.

However, Government is conscious of practical impediments to such resettlement, such as access to the islands of the Chagos Archipelago, lack of basic infrastructure and services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in preparation of an eventual resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago, Ministries/Departments concerned have already been requested to start the appropriate and necessary background work. Several Ministries and Departments have highlighted the need for onsite surveys to be carried out in the Chagos Archipelago.

Government, therefore, proposes to organise as soon as possible another trip to the Chagos Archipelago so that an assessment mission can be carried out on the requirements for a proper resettlement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has always seen to it that members of the Chagossian community in Mauritius are actively involved in its efforts to facilitate their return to the Chagos Archipelago. Although the negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago are between the Governments of Mauritius and the United Kingdom, Government has been having regular consultations with the Chagossians and will continue to hold such consultations. It will ensure that their rights are safeguarded.

In view of the injustice suffered by members of the Chagossian community, some countries have expressed a willingness to support their resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago. We expect the United Kingdom to cooperate with Mauritius in implementing a programme of resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago. This would allow the United Kingdom to redress the historic wrong which occurred.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated in my reply to the Private Notice Question on 04 July 2023, I am pursuing the struggle for Mauritius to exercise its sovereignty over its entire territory, including the Chagos Archipelago, with utmost zeal and determination. To borrow the words of late Sir Anerood Jugnauth who had fearlessly spearheaded this struggle, this is a “sacred duty” towards the Nation.

I hope that the negotiations with the United Kingdom will lead to the completion of the decolonisation of Mauritius and that Mauritius will soon be able to implement a resettlement programme in the Chagos Archipelago.

Let me conclude by recalling the relevant extract from my statement at the United Nations General Assembly this year on this matter, and I quote –

“It is now 4 years since the International Court of Justice gave its Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius prior to its independence. The ICJ made it clear that the Chagos Archipelago is an integral part of the territory of Mauritius and invited the colonial power to withdraw its administration from the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible. Ever since, the Government of Mauritius made a strong commitment to implement a programme of resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago for Mauritian nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin who have suffered historic injustice by being forcibly removed from their birthplace. We are hopeful that soon they will be able to resettle in the Chagos Archipelago. Indeed, Mauritius and the UK have started negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, on the basis of international law. We hope that these talks will lead to the completion of the decolonisation process of Mauritius and enable Mauritius implement its resettlement program.”

Thank you.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Le Premier ministre vient de faire référence à sa déclaration du 03 novembre de l’année dernière à la Chambre où il disait ceci, je cite –

“Mauritius and the United Kingdom have agreed to engage in constructive negotiations, with a view to arriving at an agreement by early next year.”

Meaning at the beginning of this year, 2023. We are nearly at the end of 2023 and there is still no agreement. Now he is saying ‘in the coming months.’ Will the hon. Prime Minister state whether he has let himself been taken for a ride by the British authorities or is he taking us, the population, for a ride?

The Prime Minister: M. le président, regardez l’attitude de cet honorable membre! Everything that we are doing; all that we have been able to achieve so far! Well, I think she has been in previous Governments and she has not been able to achieve anything in that regard. *M. le président, vous croyez que sur un sujet aussi compliqué et complexe, on peut arriver à un accord dans quelques semaines, quelques mois?*

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mais c’est vous qui l’avez dit !

The Prime Minister: Listen! Listen!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Listen there! Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: Do you have the answer?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: You already have the answer?

Mr Speaker: Order! Continue with the reply!

The Prime Minister: Well, they can't listen because they have not been able to achieve anything for the Chagossians and for decolonisation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am saying is when I discussed with Elizabeth Truss at that time, I insisted that we should have a timeline. In fact, I insisted that it should not be so far away because we need, at least, to move constructively on this issue. I must say that there was a will on both sides, and that is why I stated that we hope that we can come to an agreement early this year. But this hon. Member does not know! I can understand; she is ignorant of so many things! These matters...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Shame!

The Prime Minister: Shame on you! Shame on you!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Shame on you!

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Shame on you for having said that I am taking this population for a ride!

An hon. Member: *Li tro kone tou!*

The Prime Minister: She has the guts...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

An hon. Member: *Ene zoli kestion sa!*

The Prime Minister: She has the guts to say that I am taking this population and the country for a ride?

Ms J. Bérenger: *Li li ena guts...*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: What did you say?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, remember that you are already out of the House! I am waiting for my ruling. You will wait!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been able to adopt a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly to seek an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice. When some people here, including one Leader and former Prime Minister, *étaient en train de nous ridiculiser pour dire...*

An hon. Member: *Misier kone tou!*

The Prime Minister: L'honorable Paul Bérenger avait dit : on n'aura même pas dix votes ! On n'aura pas dix votes à l'Assemblée nationale...

An hon. Member: *La honte !*

The Prime Minister: *La honte sur vous !*

(Interruptions)

La honte sur vous !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order everywhere! Order! Both sides of the House, order! I am ordering you out there!

An hon. Member: *Ein? Kisanla ?*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Pa kone ki li gagne sa !*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: *Ki li gagne sa ?*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon...

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha, put your question!

Mr Bodha: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, when there is going to be an agreement between the UK and Mauritius, whether he will bring this agreement to the House for the approval of the House and for the proper debate in the House because of the complexity of the issue?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let us cross the bridge when we have already reached an agreement; then we will see.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. There has been an article recently published by the former British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson. May we know from the Prime Minister what is the reaction of our Government following this publication? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the recent article of Boris Johnson clearly shows that he is in total denial of the legal reality. As the International Court of Justice, the UN General Assembly and the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea have made it clear that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius and as Mauritius has conveyed on several occasions, both to the UK and the US as well as publicly, it has no objection to the continued use of Diego Garcia for defence purposes. In fact, in the context of the ongoing negotiations with the UK, Mauritius and the UK have reiterated that any

agreement between them will ensure the continued effective operation of the military base in Diego Garcia.

The continued illegal colonial occupation of part of the territory of Mauritius is in complete violation of international law and the rulings of the International Court of Justice and the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Let me add that Mr Boris Johnson has proved that he is not worth his own words. Following the decision of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016, that Mauritius and the UK should engage in discussions with a view to arriving at a satisfactory resolution of the Chagos ...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

The Prime Minister: No, I have not finished. I was cut off.

Mr Speaker: I thought you finished. Please continue!

Mr Bérenger: *Deziem fwa li pe koup so mikro la!*

Mr Bhagwan: *Trwaziem fwa out.*

The Prime Minister: The former Prime Minister, late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, had a meeting with Mr Johnson who was then the UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in New York in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly.

The former Prime Minister proposed that a meeting of senior officials be held in Mauritius in late October 2016 and insisted that the meeting should be productive and result-oriented unlike previous meetings which Mauritius had with the UK. In response, Mr Boris Johnson said, and I quote –

“We will make it work this time”.

We all know what happened. The UK has continued to maintain its claim that the Chagos Archipelago is its territory and the UN General Assembly requested in June 2017 an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. In the Advisory Opinion which it gave on 25 February 2019, the International Court of Justice authoritatively determined that the process of decolonisation of Mauritius was not lawfully completed upon its accession to independence in 1968 in view of the illegal excision of the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius.

The Court also determined that the United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible.

Subsequently, I have had meetings with Mr Boris Johnson when he was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to discuss the completion of the decolonisation of Mauritius and I must say, contrary to the Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, whom I met both when she was the UK Secretary of State for Foreign Commonwealth and Development Affairs and when she became Prime Minister, Mr Johnson had shown no willingness at all in finding a way forward for the completion of our decolonisation process.

Let me also mention that Mr Johnson had given to me an appointment for a meeting in the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Kigali, Rwanda, in June 2022. However, when I met him, he had opted a totally cavalier attitude and even said that the Chagos is far away from Mauritius.

Now, following the publication of the article of Mr Johnson, the UK Government issued a short public comment which reads as follows, and I quote –

“The United Kingdom and Mauritius have held five rounds of constructive negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and officials will meet again soon to continue negotiations. The UK and Mauritius have reiterated that any agreement between our two countries will ensure the continued effective operation of the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia, which plays a vital role in regional and global security.”

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister explain why a representative of the Chagossian community does not form part of the negotiating team with the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I have explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, the negotiations are being held between the two governments, that is, the Government of Mauritius and the Government of the United Kingdom, and I have always made it a point that even prior to our entering into negotiation, to keep the representative of the Chagossians here regularly informed about any developments that there have been prior to negotiations and, of course, during the negotiations, I have regular consultations with the representatives of the Chagossians here and this will, of

course, continue until the time when I hope we can come to a conclusion with regard to this negotiation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister what the amount of rent is, if any, which has been claimed for the lease of Diego Garcia? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: This issue of rent is something that will be discussed. Negotiations are ongoing and, of course, when we will come to an agreement - I must say there are many issues that are being discussed. Rent would be one of the issues because when we are discussing about an agreement for the military base to continue its operation in Diego Garcia, of course, we need to have a specific agreement with regard to their operation of the base, and one of the issues that will be discussed is the issue of consideration for that use.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I will suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour.

At 1.00 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. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/1190 will be replied by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. PQ B/1191 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. PQ B/1204 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

PQs B/1163, B/1181, B/1187, B/1188, B/1191, B/1208, B/1217 and B/1232 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Nagalingum!

**TAXI OPERATORS WELFARE FUND – CONTRIBUTIONS &
BOARD/CHAIRPERSON BENEFITS**

(No. B/1155) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) amount of money collected as at to date, indicating the mechanism put in place for ensuring transparency of fund management, and

(b) salaries and other benefits drawn by the chairperson and board members thereof.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund was established on 11 June 2021 by an Act of Parliament following several requests made by the taxi operators for such a Fund which could promote the advancement and welfare of taxi operators and their families on the same premise as the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund and the Tourism Employees Welfare Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all taxi operators are required to register against an entrance fee of Rs200 and make monthly contribution of Rs300 to the Fund in accordance with Sections 11 and 12 of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund Act. As a consequential amendment, Section 76 of the Road traffic Act was amended to encourage taxi operators to become members of the Fund and makes provision to the effect that a taxi licence will be renewed provided that *inter alia* the owner of such a licence has paid the one-off entrance fee or the annual contribution to the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund as the case may be.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am advised that as at date, out of 7249 taxi operators, 4,700 have already registered with the Fund and the amount collected stands at Rs21,914,475. It is to be noted that although the Fund came into operation in June 2021, payment of contributions was made effective only as from March 2022. Several schemes, including Death Grant, Educational and Hardship Schemes have been introduced and I am informed that as at date Rs485,700 has been disbursed in respect of the different schemes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the management of the Fund is guided by the Financial Management Regulations which are in force in the public sector and compliance to sound financial practices are adopted on the same line as other government bodies. The transparency of the Fund is ensured as follows –

- (i) the accounts are audited by the Director of Audit in accordance with section 21 of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund Act. In fact, the accounts for year 30 June 2022 have already been sent to the National Audit Office for auditing purposes;
- (ii) the balance amount collected is presented at every Board Meeting;
- (iii) all major expenditures are approved by the Board;
- (iv) the bank statements are reconciled on a monthly basis so as to promptly identify any discrepancies and attend to same, and

- (v) weekly cash counts and checks are carried out as a financial risk management practice.

In addition to the above, and to ensure transparency at all times, the Internal Control Section of my Ministry has also been requested to carry out regular audits thereat, the purpose of which is to ensure that the Fund has all the control mechanisms and systems for compliance with financial regulations and transparency. The last internal control audit exercise was effected on 31 March of this year.

Additionally, once the accounts are audited by the National Audit Office and laid before the National Assembly, same will be made public and will be uploaded on the website of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as to part (b) of the question, the composition of the Board is governed by Section 5(2) of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund Act. The part-time Chairperson of the Fund is Mr Mohammad Parwez Nunnoo. The Board also consists of representatives of the Ministries responsible the subject of land transport, finance and labour as well as a representative of the National Land Transport Authority. The Act also provides that four representatives of taxi operators serve as members on the Board. The four representatives of the taxi operators are appointed by the Minister, after consultation with Unions and Associations of taxi operators.

The Chairperson and Board members hold the office for 2 years. As the Chairperson and Board members are not employees of the Fund, they do not derive any salaries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the members are paid a fee of Rs935 on a 'per sitting basis' and a travelling allowance of Rs375 in case they use their car or an allowance of Rs75 if they travel by bus. The Chairperson, Mr Parwez Nunnoo is presiding the Board on a pro-bono basis. He is, therefore, not being paid any allowance nor deriving any benefits, but as the son of a taxi operator and now holder of a BA (Hons) Business Management and MA (Hons) in International Business Management and presently the Chief Executive Officer of the private company, he is putting his experience and competence at the disposal of taxi operators in this country.

Mr Nagalingum: Can the hon. Minister enlighten the House on how much money has been spent and how many taxi operators have benefited from the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I did answer that as at date Rs485,700 have been disbursed in respect of the different fees and I did mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, the amount collected so far stands at Rs21,914,475.

So, there have been different schemes, Mr Speaker, Sir, which account for the disbursement of this sum. There is a death grant of Rs30,000 and 13 families of taxi operators have benefited from this scheme as at date and the amount disbursed with regard to the death grant. So, it is the first time, Mr Speaker, Sir, that once a taxi man, a taxi operator dies, he is provided with a death grant. In fact, this was the purpose of this Taxi Operators Welfare Fund. It was set up for the benefit of the taxi operators and their families.

Now, 13 families of taxi operators have benefited from this scheme as of date and the amount disbursed is Rs380,700. A One-off Educational Grant of Rs20,000 allocated to laureates. Educational Grant HSC – One-off Grant of Rs10,000 allocated to best candidates, six taxi operators' children have benefited from the Scheme as at date and the amount disbursed is Rs60,000. Educational Grant SC – One-off Grant of Rs5,000 allocated to best candidates, nine taxi operators' children have benefited from the scheme as at date as the amount disbursed is Rs45,000.

There is another scheme related to hardship cases, that is, natural calamities. An allowance of Rs11,000 per month for a maximum of three months is granted to the taxi operator in case his car has been damaged by a natural calamity and there is another scheme concerning medical hardship cases, an allowance of Rs11,075 per month for a maximum of three months is granted if the taxi operator presents a medical certificate from a National Hospital or a registered clinic certifying that he is unfit for duty for at least 15 continuous days.

So, these are the different schemes and these are the ways the money has been spent.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House whether recently he has received representations from what we have gathered from one Mr Bahadoor – I think – there were some problems concerning the running of the fund with regards to the payment of road tax linked with the legislation. Can the Minister at least inform the House whether there have been some changes, whether he has met the Taxi Operators' Union?

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the law is very clear as I mentioned in my answer – Section 12 and Section 26 of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund state very clearly that a consequential amendment, Section 76 of the Road Traffic Act was also amended when we legislated, that is, the law as it is now, makes provision to the effect that a taxi license will be renewed only if the holder of such a licence has paid the one entrance fee or the annual contribution to the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund. Recently, there has been news that this provision has been breached in

the case of a few taxi operators. The NLTA is conducting an enquiry into this matter, Mr Speaker, Sir, and in due time, we will see clearer and I will report to the House in case any question is put to me.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UNPARLIAMENTARY WORDS – RULING

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, during Prime Minister's Question Time this morning, in the course of heated argument between the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Paul Bérenger, objectionable words were uttered from both sides. I am, therefore, kindly inviting both to withdraw the respective words.

The Prime Minister: I withdraw, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: I withdraw.

HON. MRS NAVARRE-MARIE – INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT – RULING

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Members, with regard to hon. Navarre-Marie, I have preferred to be lenient given the national importance of the question which was being asked and the reply was so important. So, I preferred to be lenient with her.

You may continue! Hon. Richard Duval!

MR J. I., HONORARY CONSUL – APPOINTMENT – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/1156) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, he will state if he is in presence of complaints made in regard to the appointment of Mr J. I., as Honorary Consul of Mauritius in Japan and, if so, indicate if he proposes to consider reviewing the decision for the appointment thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the appointment of Honorary Consul is governed by the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963) to which both Mauritius and Japan are parties. I wish to inform the House that Mr J. I. was appointed Honorary Consul of Mauritius in Tokyo, Japan on 4 September 2023. The Ministry has not received any complaint concerning the appointment of Mr J. I. as Honorary Consul of Mauritius in Tokyo. Therefore, the question of reviewing the decision for the appointment regarding the appointment of Mr J. I. does not arise.

Mr R. Duval: M. le ministre, n'est-il pas conscient que Monsieur J. I. est le Chairman de Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, opérateur du vraquier Wakashio qui exploite une flotte conséquente de 698

navires et que cette situation est conflictuelle? Est-ce-que l'honorable ministre pourra-t-il défendre Maurice en toute objectivité?

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps the hon. Member is referring to some ongoing litigation pending in our Courts. However, in those pending litigations – I will not go into the case in itself – but the applicant, the parties in the pending case, in fact, the case will be called this week, is not Mitsui O.S.K. Lines but the owner of the ship, namely, Okiyo Maritime Corp., which is their applicant and Okiyo Maritime Corp. as opposed to Mitsui, are two different legal entities. It is correct to say that Mr J. I. is the Chairman of the Board of M.O.L. that is, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines but the party to the litigation as at date is not Mitsui but Okiyo that is, the registered owner of the vessel in question.

Mr Armance: Can the Minister confirm whether, before the appointment of Mr J. I., there has been an exercise of a proper due diligence and that he, himself as Minister responsible, is happy that Mr J. I. meets all criteria to be appointed?

Mr Gobin: I reiterate that the appointment of Honorary Consul is governed by the Vienna Convention and Consular Relations to which both Mauritius and Japan are parties. Before the appointment, due diligence is carried out by both States, in this case, Mauritius and Japan. Insofar as our due diligence is concerned, we have followed all that is prescribed, Mr Speaker, Sir. I may also highlight that, in fact, Mr J. I. was appointed in replacement of our previous Honorary Consul who has tendered resignation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Léopold!

RODRIGUES – LIVESTOCK MOVEMENT – LIFTING OF RESTRICTIONS

(No. B/1157) Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the restriction on the movement of livestock from Rodrigues to Mauritius, he will state where matters stand, indicating when same will be lifted for the benefits of the breeders of Rodrigues.

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned in previous replies to Parliamentary Questions No. B/848 and B/1099, following the detection in March 2021 of Foot and Mouth clinical cases in Rodrigues, a total restriction was imposed on the movement of FMD susceptible livestock, that is, cattle, goats and sheep from Rodrigues to Mauritius. Subsequently, a vaccination programme was implemented as from May 2021 in Rodrigues to control the spread of the infection. As at date, a total of 19,964 livestock (6,077 cattle, 6,165 goats, and 7,722

sheep) out of a livestock of 26,000 heads has been vaccinated against FMD, representing a coverage of 77%.

The LVD provided assistance to the Commission for Agriculture of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) in pregnancy diagnosis of cattle, goats and sheep on 19 and 20 June 2023. In addition, Veterinary Officers of the LVD proceeded to Rodrigues from 04 to 06 October 2023 to conduct the sero-surveillance exercise.

In January 2022, upon advice of the Livestock and Veterinary Division (LVD) of my Ministry, the restriction on the movement of FMD susceptible livestock, that is, cattle, goats and sheep was partially lifted and only the Mauritius Meat Authority (MMA) was authorised, in the first phase, to move cattle, goats and sheep from Rodrigues under strict animal health conditions and for controlled slaughter at the slaughterhouse of the MMA and only under the supervision of the LVD.

Representations have been received from the Commission for Agriculture of the RRA and also from private entities and Butchers' Associations to allow the movement of live cattle from Rodrigues. Requests have also been received from the Rodriguan breeders that they are having excess of cattle, including female cattle, along with goats and sheep, which need to move to Mauritius, thus, providing financial relief to the breeders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this context, the LVD had consultations with the Association, the MMA and the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office (NAPRO), and I am pleased to inform the House that my Ministry has as from 06 October 2023 embarked on the second phase for the movement of livestock, that is, cattle, goats and sheep from Rodrigues by, apart from the MMA, private entities which include Butchers' Associations and registered companies involved in the sale of meat and meat products and holding a NAPRO Licence. These private entities would have to apply for a movement permit to be delivered by the Phyto-Sanitary Animal Health Sub-Committee of the LVD of my Ministry, and be in compliance with the animal health conditions stipulated in the movement permit, mainly those animals, including non-pregnant female cattle, which have been tested negative against FMD virus, would be allowed to be moved to Mauritius for slaughter.

With a view to looking into all aspects of animal health and veterinary public health pertaining to import and export of live animals and products of animal origin, I have broadened the mandate of the Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Animal Health Sub-Committee which would also

be tasked to monitor all permits issued by the LVD, as well as licences issued by NAPRO in respect of livestock, slaughter house, meat and meat products. Currently, this Sub-Committee is chaired by the Assistant Director, LVD and comprising officers of that Division. The membership has also been enlarged to include representatives from the following –

- a) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade;
- b) the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection;
- c) the Ministry of Health and Wellness;
- d) NAPRO, and
- e) the Mauritius Meat Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a communiqué was issued in the Press on 11 October 2023 in respect of the movement of livestock from Rodrigues to Mauritius. The Commission for Agriculture of the RRA has been notified accordingly. I am tabling a copy of the communiqué which was published in the Press.

The lifting of the restrictions will help in providing financial relief to the Rodriguan breeders and improve their livelihood as well, and make available fresh produce on our mainland.

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister when his Ministry is considering the total lifting of restrictions in Rodrigues?

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, actually, we have a team present in Rodrigues and they are carrying out the sero-surveillance exercise. Based on this result, we are going to see if we can raise the total restriction that has been applied till now. As I said earlier in my reply, we are coming up slowly, but surely.

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry is providing Rodrigues with sufficient amount of vaccines so as to reach that level?

Mr Hurdoyal: Yes, as I said in my reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, up till now 77% of the livestock have already been vaccinated. Right now, the vaccination process has been stopped and we are waiting for the final result of the sero-surveillance exercise.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that the following Questions B/1141, B/1142 and B/1151, addressed to the Prime Minister, have been withdrawn.

Next question! Hon. Quirin!

**MINISTRY OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, SPORTS AND RECREATION –
ADVISORS**

(No. B/1158) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to advisors attached to his Ministry, he will give the list thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) date of appointment and duration of contract of employment;
- (b) duties assigned thereto, and
- (c) salaries and other benefits drawn.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the information relating to the Advisors attached to my Ministry.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, comme je n'ai pas devant moi le document que dépose l'honorable ministre, je vous serai reconnaissant de me remettre une copie *as soon as possible*. Entre temps, je vais demander à l'honorable ministre, s'il peut nous dire par rapport à la section loisir de son ministère, s'il dispose des services d'un conseiller, si oui, de nous donner son nom et de nous dire ses compétences dans ce secteur.

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, non, je n'ai pas un conseiller spécifiquement pour la section loisir. Cependant, un de mes conseillers a eu la responsabilité de *oversee the Recreation Department of the Ministry*. C'est dans la fiche que je suis en train de soumettre.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, nous savons tous que le niveau du sport scolaire laisse à désirer. De ce fait, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire, si ce n'est pas le cas actuellement, s'il compte chercher l'expertise d'un spécialiste pour redonner un nouvel élan à ce secteur ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, c'est un peu vaste de parler de sport scolaire. Même si la question est par rapport au conseiller du ministère, si l'honorable membre peut venir avec une question spécifique parce que je dois aussi voir avec le ministère de l'Éducation qu'est ce qui est fait avec le *MSC*, etc. Donc, je n'ai pas la réponse avec moi parce que cette question comprend quand même beaucoup de *stakeholders*.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NEW ENT HOSPITAL – REOPENING & PAEDIATRIC UNIT

(No. B/1159) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the new ENT Hospital at Vacoas, he will state –

- (a) when it will become operational, and
- (b) if it is proposed to set up a new surgical paediatric unit thereat and, if so, when.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the New ENT Hospital was converted into a COVID-19 treatment centre dedicated only to the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

Consequently, existing ENT services were shifted to Victoria Hospital. Over the last six months, it has been observed that there has been an overall decline in COVID-19 admissions and in severity of cases.

Any new COVID-19 patients who may require admission will henceforth be hospitalised, if need be, in dedicated COVID-19 isolation wards which have been set up in each of the five Regional Hospitals across the country and at New Souillac Hospital.

Prior to its reopening, the ENT Hospital was disinfected and renovation works were undertaken. The ENT Hospital reopened to provide its normal services to the public as from Wednesday 20 September 2023 for Ear, Nose and Throat treatment. In addition, services such as speech therapy, audiology, oral and maxillofacial surgery would be available at the ENT Hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the bed occupancy for patients admitted at ENT Hospital was approximately 30 to 40%. Accordingly, to optimize this state-of-the-art infrastructure, my Ministry decided to shift paediatric surgical services from Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital to ENT Hospital. This will provide better comfort and health services to the children of the Republic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since 20 September 2023, the Surgical Paediatric Unit has already been set up with a bed occupancy of 30, manned by trained medical and paramedical team, to provide paediatric service care to children. In addition, a Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, with a capacity of six beds, will also be operational very soon at ENT Hospital. Thus, around 33% of the total bed capacity at ENT Hospital is being catered for surgical paediatric cases.

I am further informed that the first paediatric surgical case was performed on 02 October 2023 at the ENT Hospital. As at date, out of the 22 admissions for paediatric surgical cases at the ENT Hospital, 11 cases have already been operated.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House about the staffing, the different staff, the total number which will now be affected to the ENT Hospital?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as at present there are 180 in total, the staff being posted at ENT Hospital and obviously with coming into operation of the other units, more staff will be deployed at this hospital.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the hon. Minister inform the House all the services which will be available at the New ENT Hospital apart from the one you stated?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, in fact with the services that I have already mentioned that are already available and the Pediatric ICU Services which were not available in the past in any of the hospital specifically to treat pediatric patients in case they do need ICU care, so this will be available in the future. So, at this moment, we are only conducting all the arrangements to ensure that this project will be operational soon and as well as sustainable for the next coming years.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Dr. Boolell!

**GRA – MR L.S. – CASINO/GAMBLING LICENCE – CONDITIONS
ATTACHED**

(No. B/1160) Dr. A. Boolell (First Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if the Authority has recently issued a casino/gambling licence to Mr L. S. along St Jean Road near the Metro Express Station and, if so, when, indicating the conditions attached thereto, if any.

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, j'ai été informé par la *Gambling Regulatory Authority* qu'aucune licence de casino et jeux de hasard n'a été récemment délivrée à M. L. S. le long de St Jean Road près de la station Métro Express.

Merci.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Dr. Boolell: I am entitled to supplementary questions!

Mr Speaker: No, the answer is no. Do you still have?

Dr. Boolell: I am absolutely shocked and stunned with the reply of the Minister of Finance. Is he aware that there is a gambling, whether we call it gambling or casino, in the heart of St Jean? Is he aware of that? It's operating already

Dr. Padayachy: Non.

Dr. Boolell: Then, if I do understand, it's operating without a licence?

Mr Speaker: May I intervene here. Excuse me! The question was whether a gambling licence has been given to X. The answer is no. The question of whether he is aware or not is another question.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, laissez-moi vous expliquer.

Dr. Boolell: Is it the intention of Government to allow...

Mr Speaker: Do you have the reply for this? Okay, go ahead with the reply!

Dr. Padayachy: Je suis désolé, mais quand j'ai lu la question, c'était par rapport à Monsieur L. S. Je suis désolé. Etant un membre depuis je ne sais combien de temps à l'Assemblée, formulez la question comme il le doit – "whether, in regard to the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House obtain therefrom information as to if the Authority has recently issued a Casino Gambling Licence to Mr L. S." It's not whether we have delivered a gambling licence. It's to Mr L. S. I am replying that –

"No, we haven't given any licence to any Mr L. S."

Dr. Boolell: You are replying to this part, but, unfortunately, you are not. The licence has been issued.

Dr. Padayachy: A ce moment-là, honorable membre de l'Opposition, vous pouvez me poser la question...

Dr. Boolell: ... illegally !

Dr. Padayachy: Non, il n'est pas illégal.

Dr. Boolell: ... the question differently.

Dr. Padayachy: Non, il n'est pas illégal.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell, please!

Dr. Boolell: Enfin!

Mr Speaker: You may come with another question. Whatever question you want to ask, ask proper questions. So, I will move to the next question. I don't have to listen to anybody. I will move to the next question.

Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

TRIOLET BUS SERVICE LTD – NEW BUS ROUTE – UPDATE

(No. B/1161) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail whether, in regard to the request made by the Triolet Bus Service Ltd., to operate a new bus route from Cap Malheureux to Port Louis via Vingt-Pieds Road, Super U and La Croisette, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the application by the Triolet...

Mr Bérenger: encore!

Dr. Padayachy: Quel est le problème ? Quel est le problème là ?

Mr Speaker: What is happening?

Dr. Padayachy: M. Paul Bérenger, quel est le problème?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member!

Dr. Padayachy: Quel est le problème ? Vous avez quelque chose à me dire, vous me le dites !

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member! Hon. Minister of Finance!

An. hon. Member: Is this a point of order?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance, if there is any point of order, you raise it to the Speaker.

Dr. Padayachy: Non, il n'y a pas de *point of order*.

Mr Speaker: Please continue!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the application of the Triolet Bus Service (TBS) for a new bus route from Cap Malheureux to Port Louis via Vingt-Pieds Road, Super U and La Croisette, an enquiry was carried out by the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA). It was observed that the proposed new bus route would entail overlapping with 26 existing bus routes.

The road test carried out along Chemin Vingt-Pieds by the NLTA and the TMRSU was not conclusive in view of the following reasons –

- (i) encroachment of the bus on the opposite lane;
- (ii) the road narrowness at certain locus which was 5.6metres, and
- (iii) absence of footpath or road reserves along some stretch along the Vingt-Pieds Road.

In these circumstances, the application made by the TBS was not entertained at that material time.

Nevertheless, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am given to understand that the two Ministers of the Constituency No. 6, hon. Avinash Teeluck and Dr. Ramdhany have had protracted meetings with the NLTA on this issue. In fact, in view of the new developments in the locality and its vicinity, the NLTA, the TMRSU, the Police, the RDA would be requested to carry out a fresh survey accordingly. A new direct access would be provided thereafter from Cap Malheureux to Port Louis via Vingt-Pieds Road, Super U, La Croisette after taking into consideration road safety and traffic congestion issues. In that perspective, a fresh communication meeting will be engaged with stakeholders on this issue.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister envisage tabling a copy of the test report that you just mentioned which was carried out by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit?

Mr Ganoo: Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir. Unfortunately I don't have a copy of the report made by the Authorities but I will certainly look into the matter.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister envisage in the short term, some palliative measures in order to address the dire transport problem in that region whereby members of the public and inhabitants are suffering by proposing alternative modes of transport so that these inhabitants and users of that region can benefit from it?

Mr Ganoo: In fact, this is what I said in a gist, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have impressed on the stakeholders which I just mentioned to meet anew and to find remedial measures to this issue which has been raised and also what will be facilitating our task today, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that there has been a new amendment to the Road Traffic Act which enables the Ministry to direct the NLTA to grant a temporary road service license to an existing operator without having to go through all the process of applications, inquiries, publication in Government Gazette, hearing application, objections and so on. So, it's a way to fast-track the issue that we have unfortunately in certain areas of the country with regard to the provision of transport services, Mr Speaker, Sir and most probably, we will also see if there is need to proceed on a pilot basis.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the following questions have been withdrawn: B/1153, B/1167, B/1172, B/1179, B/1192, B/1193, B/1194, B/1197, B/1203, B/1204, B/1205, B/1213, B/1219, B/1220, B/1223, B/ 1226, B/1228, B/1230, B/1237, B/1239. So be it.

Hon. Ms Tour!

LANDSLIDE HAZARD – SURVEY

(No. B/1162) Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to landslide hazard, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Geotechnical Unit, information as to if a survey has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the advent of the climate change phenomenon and taking into account the pace of development ongoing around the island, especially on sloppy sites, the risk of landslide and other associated hazards is becoming more and more real for Mauritius.

It may be recalled that one of the first investigations carried out by the then Central Cyclone and other Natural Disaster Committee around 2011/2012, identified some 37 hazardous sites around the island. These sites were further studied by Experts of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in the years 2012 to 2015, and they shortlisted six sites as being prone to landslide, namely at –

- Chittrakoot;

- Vallée Pitot;
- Quatre Sœurs;
- La Butte;
- Camp Chapelon, and
- Candos Hill.

Of these, three sites, namely Chitrakoot, Vallée Pitot and Quatre Soeurs were identified as the most critical being affected by landslides.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the recommendations of the JICA, countermeasure works were implemented at Chitrakoot and thereafter, monitoring devices have been installed to survey the movement and behaviour of the ground thereat.

As for Quatre Soeurs, all the households who were at risk have already been relocated and the houses demolished. With respect to Vallée Pitot, the authorities are working on the relocation of some 19 households before any countermeasure works can be implemented in the affected area.

With regard to La Butte area which had been stabilised since long, given that line cracks have been observed lately along the Monseigneur Leen road, the Geotechnical Unit, in collaboration with other stakeholders, is conducting a detailed survey of the area, which will include a monitoring exercise during the forthcoming rainy season. As for Camp Chapelon and Candos Hill, there are no signs of ground movement or landslide.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that over the years, several new cases of suspected landslide have been reported to my Ministry with the alarming effects of climate change and heavy intensity rainfalls. It is anticipated that the likelihood of occurrence of landslide and other slope related disasters would increase.

Therefore, the need for controlled and adapted development of buildings and other infrastructure is felt more than ever before. In this context, the Geotechnical Unit of my Ministry, with the assistance of the Geotechnical Adviser from Japan, has been working on a Landslide Hazard Map for Mauritius. Using the Digital Elevation Models provided by the Land Drainage Authority, the Geotechnical Unit has carried out in-depth desk analysis using appropriate software and has plotted some 530 suspected risky sites in different regions of Mauritius. 62 of

them are considered as priority ones requiring further surveys and investigations to determine their level of risks taking into account the topology and the density of development thereat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that for such surveys, significant time and resources are required. In this context, my Ministry has solicited the collaboration and assistance of the technical staff of the local authorities. A workshop was organised in September 2023 with all concerned stakeholders to present to them the draft Landslide Hazard Map and to discuss the methodology and planning of the site surveys.

The surveys are scheduled to start in November 2023 and would take around 6 months. Based on the findings thereof, in-depth geotechnical and geophysical investigations may be required at certain sites.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the results of the surveys would give clearer indications about the possible occurrence of landslide activities and will enable the Geotechnical Unit to develop a Landslide Management Plan for Mauritius. This plan will recommend the course of action to be adopted at each site in short, medium and long terms. These may entail installation of monitoring devices, such as inclinometers and extensometers and implementation of countermeasure works.

The plan will be useful to all relevant authorities involved in the issue of construction permits and will also clearly demarcate the roles and responsibilities of each agency dealing with the mitigation of natural disasters, in particular landslides. Thank you.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will have two supplementary questions.

Mr Speaker: No, you start by one. It is not your right to say you have one, two, three or four. Your right is the first one.

Ms Tour: Okay, thank you. May we know from the hon. Minister whether he will consider publishing the Landslide Hazard Map he mentioned in his reply?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, at this stage, it is not advisable to publish any type of Landslide Hazard Map because the site identified so far, as I have said in my reply, is an in-depth study. From what we have as data from different authorities, with the JICA team, we will go on the several sites and have an in-depth survey of the 62 sites that we consider being priority sites. From there, we will develop a plan. Of course, at that stage, we will obviously make the plan known and give it to different authorities so that they can act upon. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Ms Tour: Thank you. May we know from the hon. Minister whether the Geotechnical Unit has the necessary equipment and resources to conduct such a survey?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, presently the Geotechnical Unit can only perform basic soil test. With a grant that we have obtained from the Government of Japan under the Economic and Social Development Programme, the Geotechnical Unit will be equipped with specialised geotechnical equipment which will enable advanced soil tests to be carried out. A first batch of the equipment is expected to be delivered in Mauritius very early next year. The total amount of the grant, if the House may wish to know, is 600 m. Japanese Yen. Thank you.

BEAU CHAMP, CHILD DAY CARE CENTRE – ALLEGED BABY PHYSICAL ABUSE

(No. B/1163) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the alleged case of physical abuse of a 7-month baby in a Child Day Care Centre in Beau Champ, she will state if an inquiry has been carried thereinto and, if so, indicate the findings thereof.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

NATIONAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME – DRAIN PROJECTS

(No. B/1164) Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the National Flood Management programme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, since January 2020 to date, information as to the number of drain projects –

- (a) completed, and
- (b) in progress, indicating the total amount disbursed to date.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/1164 and PQ B/1224 together as they pertain to the same subject matter.

I am informed that as at date, the Land Drainage Authority, which is the spearheading body for the National Flood Management Programme (NFMP) has identified 1,722 drain projects. These are being implemented by several institutions, namely the National Development Unit, the

Road Development Authority, the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd, and obviously, the local authorities.

These drain works which aim at reducing risks of flooding, comprise the construction of new drains as well as the upgrading and maintenance of existing drains across the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since the National Flood Management Programme in Financial Year 2021/2022, 501 projects for a total amount of Rs3.1 billion have been completed by different implementing agencies and they are as follows –

- (a) 219 projects by the NDU;
- (b) 13 projects by the RDA;
- (c) 1 by the DICL;
- (d) 267 projects by local authorities, and
- (e) 1 project by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

In addition, 147 projects amounting to some Rs4.2 billion are currently ongoing in the different Constituencies –

- (a) 60 projects are being implemented by the NDU;
- (b) 10 by the RDA;
- (c) 8 by the DICL, and
- (d) 69 by the local authorities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that 86 projects are currently at bidding stage. As regards the remaining 988 projects, 647 are currently at design stage, 32 at land acquisition stage and 309 projects are at survey stage. As at date, a total amount of Rs3.6 billion has already been disbursed. Thank you.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. With regard to the number of completed projects, if ever the Minister has got the statistics, may we obtain the number of projects completed in Constituency No. 12, so far? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, the number of projects completed in Constituency No.12 is 29. The number of projects under construction is 25; at tender stage is four; at design stage is 17 and in land acquisition process is three– a total of 78 projects.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister please provide the same information for Constituency No.16? Thank you.

Mr Hurreeram: Sure. So, in No.16, we have six projects completed; nine under construction; 13 at tender stage; 39 at design stage; one at land acquisition stage; eight at survey stage – a total of 76 projects is currently underway. Obviously, I may also add, unfortunately, my friend will agree in his Constituency, there are some people – *les oiseaux de mauvaise augures qui empêchent les gens et qui ont monté la tête des gens pour ne pas donner leurs terrains et après quand il va pleuvoir, ils vont venir se mettre debout avec leur camera pour dire que le gouvernement n’a rien fait.* We know about that and we are dealing with that also.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

An hon. Member: *Stéphanie pe dir pa li sa!*

An hon. Member: *Non, pa mwa sa!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer !

MEDICATIONS & VACCINES SHORTAGES – REASONS

(No. B/1165) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to medications in the public hospitals, he will state if he has been made aware of a shortage of regular and common medications/vaccines used in daily practice recently and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) medicines and vaccination concerned, and
- (b) reasons for the shortage thereof.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, shortage of some drugs in public hospitals as well as in the private pharmacies, for some time, is a recurrent phenomenon. Drug supply chain has always been a delicate and complicated process. Even countries with the most effective drug supply chain do face drug shortages at a given point in time.

In 2022, associations of pharmaceutical manufacturers have indicated that more than 3000 medicines of essential use were either out of stock or at risk of being depleted worldwide, compared to 1504 in 2019. In the USA, in 2023, the number of medicines subject to shortages was 309 – its highest since the last ten years. In 2022, in Europe, – depending on the country – between one-fifth and half of patients faced a shortage of at least one drug and this included medications as common as paracetamol or Amoxicillin.

My Ministry procures some 850 pharmaceutical products annually. These are grouped in some 40 different tender lots based on medical specialities for annual procurement (i.e Drugs used in Cardiovascular System, Oral Anti-Diabetic Drugs, Drugs used in Management of

Endocrine Disorders etc.) The Procurement Plan is prepared and submitted through the Committee of Needs for approval at the beginning of each financial year. Once approved by the Accounting Officer, bids are launched for the procurement of the pharmaceutical items.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling a list of regular and common medicines and vaccinations used in daily practice that are currently out of stock. For several of these items, substitutes are available in public hospitals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, there are several factors that may account for the shortages, namely –

1. Defaulting suppliers – cancellation requests at the time when delivery was expected;
2. Significant delays in delivery by suppliers;
3. An acute shortage of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) worldwide; export restrictions or limitations imposed by countries for certain critical pharmaceutical products;
4. A drastic price hike in the price of API;
5. Potential international bidders not interested in our market due to its small size, thus resulting in no quotes received and bidding exercise have to be relaunched;
6. Delay in delivery due to unforeseen circumstances, for example –
 - (i) a tornado that hit a Pfizer factory in North Carolina in July 2023, destroying a manufacturing plant and a storage unit there.
 - (ii) a serious and fatal adverse drug reaction occurred in Gambia due to impurities found in paracetamol and cough syrup manufactured by one of the Indian companies, leading to the Indian Drug Regulatory imposing new conditions prior to issuing export permits for those products.

I will take the examples of three of the regularly used medicines and the specific reasons for their shortages –

- Amoxicillin – 500 mg capsule

On 18 April 2023, contract was awarded for the supply of 8,749,800 capsules of Amoxicillin – 500 mg in two equal instalments to be delivered at latest by 18 August 2023 and 18 November 2023, respectively. The supplier delivered 688,200 capsules on 09 June 2023 and 1,382,400 capsules on 01 August 2023.

On 19 September 2023, the supplier sent a letter requesting to supply 700,000 capsules in packs of 10 without the label “MOH & W-Not for Sale” bearing expiry date August 2026 whereby same was approved by the Ministry and the supplier was informed accordingly on 22 September 2023. So, it means that there are some delays occurring due the default of the supplier.

689,100 capsules of Amoxicillin 500 mg have been received at the Central Supply Division on 13 October 2023.

- Enalapril Maleate 10 mg tablet

On 08 August 2023, contract was awarded for the supply 12,500,000 tablets to be delivered by latest 19 September 2023. The supplier did not respect the delivery schedule and, upon query by the Contract Management Unit of my Ministry, the supplier informed on 05 October 2023 that the item will be delivered by 19 October 2023.

The House may wish to note that this medication is currently available and there are different substitutes to use this medication.

I will cite the last example.

- Rotavirus Vaccine – Oral Suspension with VVM

On 27 April 2023, contract was awarded to the sole supplier of Rotavirus Vaccine, an Oral Suspension with VVM for the supply of 10,000 doses of the said item, to be delivered at latest by 19 August 2023.

On 25 September 2023, the supplier informed that there was unfortunately a slight delay for the supply of the item, which has been resolved and the doses will be supplied by the end of October.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister mentioned cancellation request at time of delivery, true, but then, may I also ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry will reconsider the abolition of penalty to pharmaceutical companies who are unable to fulfil supply of medication after award of a tender that has led to acute, immediate shortage of medical supplies in public services?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the abolition of penalties, I am not in a position to say whether this should be abolished. I believe this has to follow the normal procurement procedures as per the PPA. If this condition has been included during the award of the contract, so it has to be respected.

Dr. Aumeer: May I ask the hon. Minister among the many reasons he outlined regarding shortage of medical supplies in the public service, is the Minister aware of the artificial shortage of medical supplies, particularly liquid formulations, due to gross inaccuracy of stock of medical supplies and their conditions of storage at the central depot in Castel and Plaine Lauzun, having as proof lots of photos – which I can share with him – so that...

Mr Speaker: No, put your question!

Dr. Aumeer: ...appropriate actions are taken?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the conditions of storage have not been in a very good state for many years. I will cite one example: the Sunray store, since 2004 was already condemned as a building that should not be used to store medication. Fortunately, it is only last year after so many years that we have been able to relocate this store.

This is a process that the Ministry has undertaken to make better provision for the store facilities. That is why the Government is coming with a new warehouse at Côte d'Or. It is going to take time because there are so many processes in getting this store. I am sure in the years to come, we are going to have a modern warehouse facility for pharmaceutical products and also an IT system where we can control the medication that we are using, the store of medication, their condition as well as the quantity that we have.

The Government is already working on this and we have identified all the shortcomings. These will be properly addressed with the coming of the new warehouse that would be situated in the new Côte d'Or city.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Yeung Sik Yuen!

NEF'S CEO – APPOINTMENT & REMUNERATIONS

(No. B/1166) Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the National Empowerment Foundation, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the date of appointment of the new Chief Executive Officer thereof, indicating the remunerations drawn.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to reply to question B/1166 and B/1182 together as both questions relate to the same subject matter.

I am informed by NEF that Mr Berty Hans Margueritte assumed duty at the National Empowerment Foundation on 09 October 2023 on a contract basis of one year. I am further

informed that his terms and conditions of appointment are as recommended in the Salary Review Report made by a consultancy team of the PRB in 2023 –

- employment for a period of one year;
- a monthly salary of Rs123,075 plus salary compensation at approved rates;
- a monthly travelling allowance of Rs13,200;
- a monthly car allowance of Rs82,750 in lieu of duty free exemption upon application in writing;
- a monthly cellphone allowance of Rs2,100;
- payment of gratuity equivalent to two months' salary payable on completion of every twelve months satisfactory service, and
- passage benefit at the rate of 5% of annual salary.

I am further informed that –

- (a) He has read up to secondary level and has wide management experience of more than 10 years. Furthermore, he is very much involved in social work and has always been in touch with people at grassroots level. In addition, as we are aware, the gentleman has been the Mayor of Curepipe for some six years,
- (b) He has a clean certificate of character.

I wish to inform the House that the contract of employment of the former Chief Executive Officer was for a period of one year and lapsed on 21 July 2023.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether this gentleman, Mr B. H. M., has experiences in top-level management?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, as per the information I have received from NEF, he is well versed in management activities. He has an experience of ten years in the management field.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House whether he is a holder of a full School Certificate and also whether any due diligence has been effected with regard to his qualifications that he has deposited to the Board of the National Empowerment Foundation. Also, whether in his conditions of service, he has been given authority to do active politics?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, I have a letter from the college he attended. So, he has read up to Form 5 and he also has a clean certificate of character.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

MOGAS & GASOIL – RETAIL PRICE – REDUCTION

(No. B/1167) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the price structure of Mogas and Gasoil, she will state if consideration will be given for the review thereof to reduce the retail price thereof.

(Withdrawn)

JIN FEI – MONKEYS

(No. B/1168) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the monkeys found at Jin Fei, he will state the number thereof still alive, indicating –

- (a) the actions envisaged in relation thereto;
- (b) details as to the amount to be paid to Biosphere, if any, and
- (c) the outcome of any inquiry carried out thereinto by the authorities falling under the aegis of his Ministry, indicating the action envisaged in relation thereto.

Mr Speaker: Minister Hurdoyal?

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, following a site visit made on 17 March 2023 by officers of the Livestock and Veterinary Division and the National Parks and Conservation Service of my Ministry and the Police at Jin Fei, Terre Rouge, whereat a company by the name of Hammerhead International Ltd. was reported to be keeping monkeys in deplorable conditions in a disused building. Some 446 monkeys were seized thereat and transferred to Biosphere Trading Ltd. at Closel, Tamarind Falls as the latter has the facilities to keep the animals.

I have been informed by the vet services of my Ministry that during the procedure of transit, two monkeys had fled from the site, four died of tuberculosis and 52 died as a result of trauma caused mainly by fights and septic wounds. Hence, out of the 446 monkeys, 388 live monkeys are presently being kept at Biosphere Trading Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to part (a) of the question, my Ministry, through the Livestock and Veterinary Division, is monitoring the health of the monkeys through daily visits. I am informed that as part of its annual official animal health and welfare audit conducted by the livestock and veterinary service on 10 October 2023 at all establishments involved in the export of non-human primates, it was reported that all animals at Biosphere Trading Ltd. are clinically in good health.

Furthermore, I wish to inform the House that the company involved in the illegal holding of those monkeys has, on 04 April 2023, served a legal notice upon my Ministry and a *mise en demeure* prohibiting the sale and disposal of the 446 monkeys. The case against the Ministry has been fixed for hearing before the Honourable Judge in Chambers on 07 November 2023. My Ministry is awaiting the outcome of the court case and is also in consultation with the Attorney General's Office and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions on the way forward.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to part (b) of the question, my Ministry is in the presence of claims from Biosphere Trading Ltd in respect of expenses, funds incurred for the period March to September 2023 for the upkeep of the monkeys, for the various services, including an isolated and secured facility for group holding, cost of feeding, husbandry care, veterinary supervision and care, for dedicated workers for daily care, emergency treatment for injured and sick animals, medication and medical accessories and management and administration fee. The claims submitted by Biosphere Trading Ltd are being examined and funds for payment are being identified.

Furthermore, in view of the costs for keeping the monkeys being incurred and the case before the court, the advice of the Attorney General's Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions are also being sought as to how to dispose of the monkeys or otherwise.

In relation to part (c) of the question, the Livestock and Veterinary Division of my Ministry, had, on 17 March 2023, filed a case, under the Animal Welfare Act against ill-treatment of animals and the National Parks and Conservation Service has, on 24 March, reported the matter to the Terre Rouge Police Station on suspected illegal possession of monkeys at Jin Fei for breach of Section 25 of the Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks Act. My Ministry has been informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Director of Hammerhead International Ltd. has been provisionally charged for torturing animals and he has been bailed out upon furnishing a surety of Rs15,000 and a recognisance of Rs15,000. The bail has been enlarged up to 23 January 2024. Investigations on both cases are still under progress.

Ms J. Bérenger: J'aurais aimé avoir le montant si possible, réclamé par Biosphere. Je viens avec ma question supplémentaire. Le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il est au courant qu'une nouvelle déposition vient d'être donnée contre Monsieur S. J., qui se dit donc propriétaire des singes retrouvés à Jin Fei, il y a quelques jours de cela pour trafic illégal par le Département des

bois et forêts de son ministère, dont la référence est OB264/2023, à la station de police Cent Gaulettes?

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the information that I have in my possession, I am not aware of this case. I will have to inquire so that I can inform the House in case there are such cases that have been filed at the Police station.

Ms J. Bérenger: Selon mes informations, les singes étaient gardés sur un terrain de l'État, ce qui rend l'histoire encore plus grave. Le ministre pourrait-il nous donner le montant réclamé par Biosphere, s'il vous plait ?

Mr Hurdoyal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the case is at the court level, I would prefer to wait for the outcome of the case before I give the right figure that has been claimed by the company. As I said earlier in my reply, there has been a claim which has been submitted by Biosphere Trading Ltd. but my Ministry is still working out so that we can come up with a final claim.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

WHEAT FLOUR FORTIFICATION – PROGRESS ACHIEVED & BENEFITS

(No. B/1169) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the introduction of Wheat Flour Fortification, he will state where matters stand, indicating the benefits accruing to consumers.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Conferences of 2018, it was proposed that countries which have not yet started any fortification programme to initiate steps towards same.

As such, in the Budget Speech 2019-2020, it was announced that Government would encourage the supply of wheat flour that will be fortified with iron and folic acid to address the problem of high incidence of anaemia in women and reduce the prevalence of neural tube defects in new-borns. Just to note that neural tube is the developmental stage of the brain and spine during gestation.

To that effect, Mauritius initiated actions to embark on this programme to reach the global nutrition target of reducing anaemia by 50% by 2025 in reproductive-age-women as one of its targets.

The Mauritius Nutrition Survey 2022 revealed that the prevalence of iron deficiency anaemia was found to be higher among females across all age groups. Furthermore, 38.4% of women aged 20 to 49 years and 37.1% of girls aged 12 to 19 years had iron deficiency anaemia.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, wheat flour is the most commonly consumed staple food with a per capita intake of 241 grams per day and is the most appropriate food vehicle for inclusion in a fortification programme. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is good to note that we tend to refer to wheat flour to only as '*la farine de blé*' but, in fact, wheat flour is both *farine blanc* and *farine de blé*.

As such to set up the Food Fortification Programme, my Ministry had sought technical assistance and consultancy from the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Consequently, two consultants from the Food Fortification Initiative through the SADC were on official visit from 13 to 20 February 2022. The aim was to meet with key stakeholders to gather information prior to undertaking a landscape analysis for planning, implementation and monitoring of food fortification programme in Mauritius.

Following the recommendations of the consultants, it has been agreed that wheat flour would be fortified with iron, zinc, folic acid (vitamin B9) and vitamin B12.

In addition, the Mauritius Standards Bureau has worked out the Standards for the Wheat Flour Fortification based on the SADC Minimum Fortification Standards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the objectives of Wheat Flour Fortification Programme are to –

- i. reduce nutritional anaemia in female adolescents and women of reproductive age;
- ii. achieve the global nutrition target of reducing anaemia by 50% by 2025;
- iii. reduce the annual incidence of low birth weight babies by 30%, and
- iv. improve the nutritional status and quality of life of the Mauritian population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the materialisation of this programme, my Ministry has also worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection, the Mauritius Standards Bureau, the State Trading Corporation and *Les Moulins de la Concorde Ltd*, the local miller in the implementation of the programme.

I wish to inform the House that the Standards MS 262:2023 developed by the MSB for wheat flour fortification have been inserted in the draft Food Regulations which have been submitted to the World Trade Organisation for comments from members. Once the Regulations are in force, the manufacture of fortified wheat flour locally will be rendered mandatory.

As mentioned above, the wheat fortification programme is composed of a combination of two vitamins, B9 and B12 and two minerals, iron and zinc. Together, this combination of

vitamins and minerals will help to combat anaemia, boost the immune system and ensure that new-borns are protected from congenital abnormalities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *Les Moulins de La Concorde* has started to produce fortified wheat flour as from 01 October 2023 and the STC will start commercialising fortified wheat flour as from the third week of October 2023. This achievement will enable Mauritius to join the list of 92 countries worldwide as at date, including Australia, United States of America and countries of the SADC community such as, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, amongst others, who have already embarked on the food fortification programme.

I wish to inform the House that fortified wheat flour will maintain its original taste and appearance.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House, the question that everyone is asking, whether there will be a price increase in the fortified wheat flour compared to the original *la farine*? Thank you.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, no, there will not be any increase in the price of fortified wheat flour compared to original wheat flour. The cost of fortification will not impact on consumers. Government will absorb the implied additional cost which presently amounts to approximately less than 5 cents per kg.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you. Can the hon. Minister also inform the House whether import of fortified wheat flour will be allowed?

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the import of non-fortified wheat flour will be allowed in Mauritius. So, the Draft Food Regulation 2023 pertaining to wheat flour fortification is only applicable to locally available subsidised wheat flour, including both white and brown wheat flour.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following questions have been withdrawn: B/1200, B/1201, B/1211, B/1215, B/1221 and B/1227.

Next question! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

ANSE LA RAIE SURROUNDING REGION – STATE LANDS

(No. B/1170) 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 State lands in the region of Anse La Raie Youth Centre, he will state if –

- (a) same has been the subject of a Land Use re-planning exercise and, if so, indicate;
 - (i) the exact location and extent of land involved, and
 - (ii) table copy of the Master Plan, if any, and
- (b) any application has been received for a project thereat and, if so, give details of the letter of intent issued therefor, if any.

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr D. Balgobin): Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a), I must admit that I am unable to understand what the hon. Member means by re-planning exercise. I am however informed that Government agreed to a Masterplan over an approximate extent of 100 arpents of State Lands stretching from Paradise Cove Boutique Hotel to Anse La Raie Fish Landing Station.

I am further informed that the Mon Choisy-Cap Malheureux B13 Road is occasionally flooded and the existing bridge rendered impracticable. To address this issue, the Masterplan provides for the realignment of part of the Mon Choisy-Cap Malheureux B13 Road which will also consolidate the public beach into one single plot, thus creating more opportunities for additional amenities to the public.

The Masterplan also provides for a slight relocation of the existing Union Ribet Public Beach with enhanced amenities and facilities. A new regional outdoor education and recreation centre will also be constructed adjacent to the relocated public beach. These readjustments will release around 50 arpents of land for development of tourist related projects that will boost economic growth while ensuring social inclusiveness and the protection of the existing wet lands.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to (ii), I understand that certain components of the Masterplan are yet to be finalised in consultation with relevant authorities. Therefore, tabling a copy of the Masterplan at this point in time is very premature.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that since December 2015, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning has received 22 applications for various projects in that area. I am further informed that as at date, no letter of intent has been issued.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there are any works going on at the Youth Centre on the same State Land that we are talking about – 50 acres? Because a vehicle bearing matriculation number VG 17, belonging to contractor Nundun Gopee Co. Ltd., as per NTA copy of entry, a black Range Rover has been seen on the compound, as

evidence, photos sent to me by inhabitants of the locality. Is it in relation to works going on there or is he one of the applicants that the Minister has referred to? If the Minister wants a copy of the photo, I can give it to him.

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that no works are being carried out as the hon. Member has mentioned, and I am not aware of any vehicle (plate number) and of any complaints on the site. I am not aware of this.

An hon. Member: *Bizin vey vehicule aster!*

Mr Osman Mahomed: Is the company Nundun Gopee?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, don't mention names. Put your question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: It's a company name, Mr Speaker, Sir, Nundun Gopee Co. Ltd.

Mr Speaker: Put your question, second question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Is that company one of the applicants or is he one of the serious applicants being contemplated by the Ministry to give those 50 acres of land?

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned in my reply that there have been 22 applications received since December 2015 and as at now, no letter of intent has been issued.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

TERRASSON, POINTE AUX SABLES – SEWERAGE CONNECTION

(No. B/1171) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the sewerage connection network in the region of Terrasson, Pointe aux Sables, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to where matters stand, indicating if he is aware of the leakage of waste water on the main road at Pointe aux Sables and, if so, indicate the remedial action being envisaged, if any.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that the region of Terrasson is unsewered and is not connected to the wastewater network. Over the past years complaints associated with wastewater disposal, such as the overflow of cesspits and other nuisances have been received from the inhabitants. It is to be highlighted that the permeability of the soil in the region is very poor, causing overflow of cesspits and septic tanks.

A prefeasibility study was conducted by the Wastewater Management Authority in October 2015 for a wastewater project in the regions of Pointe aux Sables, comprising Terrasson, Verger

Mangues, Pointe aux Sables, Petit Verger and Kensington. The objective was to address the complaints and propose long terms solutions to connect the inhabitants to the public sewer network. Following the prefeasibility study, the cost of connecting these regions were estimated at more than Rs2 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to manage the significant investment, the project was planned to be implemented in phases. Thus, the Kensington Sewerage Project was completed in September 2018 where over 138 houses have been connected at a cost of Rs73.9 m. Subsequently, the Wastewater Management Authority implemented a sewerage project for connection of Flats Guillard at Pointe aux Sables which connected 64 apartments in January 2023. The cost was Rs25.1 m. These projects had addressed specific areas within Pointe aux Sables.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I had mentioned in my reply to PQ B/230 from the same hon. Member at our Sitting on 12 April 2022 that the Wastewater Management Authority would hire the services of a consultant to address the remaining areas to be sewerred. Taking into consideration the extent of remaining areas to be sewerred and the need for further assessment of the capacity of the existing pumping station at Cité Débarcadère, the Wastewater Management Authority has embarked on a consultancy service in April 2023 to find the most cost-effective solution for establishing a sewer network at Pointe aux Sables. The consultancy services include –

- (a) a feasibility study;
- (b) detailed design, and
- (c) the preparation of bidding documents.

The consultant is tasked with investigating five specific sites namely –

- (a) Terrasson;
- (b) Verger Mangue;
- (c) Camp Firinga I;
- (d) Camp Firinga II;
- (e) Pointe aux Sables, and
- (f) Petit Verger.

The proposed implementation of the project will occur in phases with Terrasson being a priority for connection of the public sewer. The consultancy is currently on-going. As at date, the inception report has been submitted and approved by the Wastewater Management Authority. Survey work for household connections and street sewers is in progress with approximately 220

houses out of 3,000 surveyed and the preparation of drawings is under way. The consultancy services are expected to be completed by mid-2025. Works will be carried out in phases starting with Terrasson. I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that works at Terrasson may start around mid-2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the issue of leakage of wastewater on the main road at Pointe aux Sables raised by the hon. Member, I am informed that hon. Dr. Mrs Dorine Chukowry, then PPS, had convened a site meeting on 22 June 2023 with relevant stakeholders following complaints by inhabitants on water stagnation which was suspected to be sewerage water along B31 that is, Pointe aux Sables near Exline factory.

During the meeting, it was observed that there was an overflow on the saturated septic tank from one house namely, Mr D. S. causing nuisance on the main road. At the request of hon. Dr. Mrs Dorine Chukowry and on humanitarian grounds, the Wastewater Management Authority exceptionally emptied the concerned septic tanks at the house of Mr D. S. and his neighbour, Mr A. A.

Since the region is not sewerred, the inhabitants were advised to have recourse to private operators for cesspool emptying to mitigate any such problem. In case of environmental issues in public places, the Wastewater Management Authority also intervenes by providing jetting unit and cesspool emptier.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is expected that the implementation of the sewerage projects subsequent to the completion of the consultancy study in the region of Pointe aux Sables including Terrasson will address the wastewater overflow issues in a more sustainable manner. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Armance: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a similar PQ last year in April, the Minister mentioned that there were 4,000 households that required connection in the region and the project would be implemented by phase; that was since 2015. So, eight years down the row, the Minister just confirmed that he has connected 202 households only in the region. Is this correct, hon. Minister?

Mr Lesjongard: No, this is not correct. You have to listen to what I said. I said that the Wastewater Management Authority hired a consultant and as at date, the consultant has submitted an inception report which has been approved by the Wastewater Management

Authority. Survey work for household connection and street sewage is in progress with approximately 220 houses out of 3,000 surveyed.

Mr Armance: Connected?

Mr Lesjongard: No, I am saying surveyed.

Mr Armance: Yeah, I said connected.

Mr X. L. Duval: They were connected.

Mr Armance: So, I maintain, hon. Minister, that in eight years, your concerned authority has connected only 202 households in the region of Pointe aux Sables. So, my second question is regarding the leakage on the main road of Pointe aux Sables. *Vous savez à l'heure où je vous parle....*

Mr Lesjongard: May I, Mr Speaker, Sir, because he is mixing issues?

Mr Armance: No.

Mr Speaker: Wait! You connected one statement with one question. You made a statement. Let the Minister reply.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I think the hon. Member is mixing issues. I replied in relation to a consultancy which is in progress; not what is already operational in that area.

Mr Speaker: Go to your second question, separately. You have right for a second supplementary. Go directly !

Mr Armance: A l'heure où je vous pose la question, M. le ministre, savez-vous qu'il y a de l'eau usée sur la route principale de Pointe aux Sables, celle que vous avez mentionnée un peu plus tôt, causant des incon vénients aux écoliers, aux piétons, aux usagers de la route ? Je comprends que pour une fois, les autorités ont fait pomper le *septic tank* mais c'était à court terme et le problème est *recurrent*. Donc, je veux savoir qu'est-ce que les autorités comptent faire pour régler le problème parce qu'on ne peut pas attendre mi-2024 que vous allez venir avec le projet de tout à l'égout pour qu'il n'y a plus d'eau usée sur le projet ?

Mr Speaker: No, you are explaining too much. Put your question directly!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, but unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said what I have said. You will have to wait because we have to go through a feasibility study which has not been done and after that feasibility study, we will implement the project. It cannot be otherwise.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

STC - RATION RICE – SUBSIDY & STOCK AVAILABILITY

(No. B/1172) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to ration rice, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the –

- (a) quantity thereof ordered and delivered during the last six months, indicating the –
 - (i) buying and selling price thereof, and
 - (ii) amount subsidized by government, and
- (b) actual available stock thereof.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

VACOAS – MODERN URBAN TERMINAL – CONSTRUCTION OUTCOME

(No. B/1173) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the development, construction and operation of a modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Request for Proposal (RFP) document for the Development and Operation of the Modern Urban Terminal at Vacoas was launched by my Ministry on Thursday 06 April 2023. However, no proposals were received as at the closing date on Wednesday 05 July 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following consultations with different stakeholders, my Ministry has reviewed the RFP document. It is expected that the RFP will be launched in the near future.

Mr Lobine: May I ask the hon. Vice Prime Minister, it is the second time that you are revisiting this RFP. On the last occasion, the joint venture Laxmanbhai-Manser Saxon declined to go ahead with the project when they were awarded the project, following an RFP launched in 2020. Now, can you inform this honourable House, hon. Vice Prime Minister, what would be different this time, on the third occasion, that private investors will come and bring forward investment projects with regard to this Vacoas Urban Terminal?

Dr. Husnoo: I must say that it was not declined by the joint venture but what happened is that they sent a long list of requests to be included in RFP. That is why the government did not accept. That's number one! Secondly, yes, it is very important – you are laughing but it is very important – secondly, now as I mentioned...

Mr Speaker: He is happy, he is happy. This is why he is laughing.

Dr. Husnoo: Very happy I can see. About the question that you have asked because recently, since no proposal was received at the closing date, my Ministry together with different stakeholders, had discussion on the reason for the lack of the interest shown by the promoters; we had all the stakeholders. Consequently the requirement of the project as well as the other conditions of the RFP has been revealed and further consultation had to be carried out. This has unfortunately proved to be very time-consuming but essential to ensure that the requirements of the RFP are attractive enough for the potential promoters in the future.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT MODERATION – MAURITIAN CITIZENS' RECRUITMENT

(No. B/1174) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to recruitment of Mauritian citizens for social media content moderation, he will state the –

- (a) number thereof, and
- (b) criteria used therefor.

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House my Ministry is not involved in the recruitment of Mauritian citizens for social media content moderation. However, my Ministry works in close collaboration with social media platforms insofar as incident handling is concerned. In July 2021, discussions were held with META (Facebook) and I had proposed to the latter that Mauritian citizens or people from Mauritian diaspora be recruited for social media content moderations, especially with regard to the Creole language.

Following further discussion I had with the Head of Connectivity and Access Policy for Africa of META, I have been made to understand that my proposal has been retained. However, details thereof pertaining to information which is privy to social media platforms.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition, a delegation from TikTok (ByteDance) was in Mauritius from 09 to 12 October 2023 to carry out activities in Mauritius with a view to sensitising

different target audience on the process of TikTok content moderation, incident resolution and on protecting authenticity and platform integrity. This was done in collaboration with the Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius (CERT-MU), which operates under the aegis of my Ministry.

During the visit of the team from TikTok, I have stressed on the importance for the social media platform to recruit Mauritian citizens or people from the Mauritian diaspora as moderators for the review and moderate contents in Mauritian Creole. I have been made to understand that its team already includes Mauritian or people from the Mauritian diaspora. However, no information has been shared to my Ministry as it is privy to them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will surely acknowledge the fact that my Ministry or Government has no control in any way on the recruitment process and criteria used by any social platform. We shall, nevertheless, pursue our interactions with the social media platforms with regard to incident handling as well as public awareness on the risk associated with the misuse of the platform.

Mr David: M. le président, je comprends bien que le recrutement en lui-même des salariés comme modérateurs des entreprises des réseaux sociaux relève donc de la prérogative de ces entreprises. Mais dans la mesure où il s'agit quand même de modération, notamment de contenus en *Kreol Morisien*, dans le cadre d'un partenariat entre le gouvernement mauricien et ces plateformes privées, puis-je demander au ministre si son ministère ou quel qu'autre autorité publique est impliquée dans la rédaction d'une charte éthique ou dans des lignes directrices pour encadrer la modération de façon objective, impartiale et non partisane, et notamment lorsqu'il s'agira de contenus à caractère politique ?

Mr Balgobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member would appreciate that the question was specific to recruitment of Mauritian and criteria rules for any recruitment. This is a question in itself. I would request the hon. Member to come up with a substantive question on that particular issue and I will be happy to reply to him.

Mr Speaker: Next question. Hon. Ramful!

MAURITUS-CHINA – FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

(No. B/1175) Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Free Trade Agreement with China which came into force on 01 January

2021, he will state the total value of goods and services exported and imported, respectively, by Mauritius thereunder to date, giving a breakdown thereof.

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is the first African country to have concluded a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China, effective on 01 January 2021. I am informed that under the FTA, Mauritius benefits from duty-free market access on some 8,000 tariff lines, including products of substantial export interest, such as rum, frozen fish, noodles, pasta, linen garments and watches, amongst others.

Total exports from Mauritius to China increased from Rs561 m. in 2020, that is, prior to the entry into force of the FTA, to Rs971.7 m. in 2021. Total exports under the FTA from January 2021 to September 2023 stood at Rs702 m. The main export items were, amongst others, articles of apparel, clothing, sugar, crude tuna oil, fish meal, plastic, jewellery boxes, amongst others.

With respect to imports, the total value of goods imported from China under the FTA in 2021 stood at Rs298 m., in 2022 at Rs376 m., and from January to September 2023, it stood at Rs361.8 m. So far, imports under the FTA amounted to approximately Rs1 billion. The main products imported under

FTA includes furniture, kitchen and other household articles, laminated safety glass as per the statistical information provided by the Customs Department.

Mr Speaker, Sir, trade between Mauritius and China is largely in favour of China, but it is to be highlighted that in January, more than 90% of goods imported from all foreign countries, including China do not carry duty, and that China was already the main import market of Mauritius, even prior to the FTA coming into force. For example, in 2020, that is, before the FTA, Mauritius imported Rs27.6 billion worth of total goods from China.

I am tabling the disaggregated figures for exports and imports of goods from January to September 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning services, the FTA also contains a comprehensive chapter on trade in services. It opens up market access opportunities in some 100 sub sectors, such as financial services, ICT, distribution services, professional services amongst others. In Mauritius, data on services are not disaggregated at country level and therefore statistics on exports and imports of services under the FTA are not available. However, it is worth noting that as per

publications of the Bank of Mauritius, the gross direct investment from China to Mauritius for the year 2022 amounted to Rs684 m.

I have been informed that both Mauritius and China agreed to use the mechanism of the FTA Joint Commission at the first meeting held in August 2023 in Mauritius to explore opportunities within the framework of the agreement to deepen cooperation in the areas of digital economy, tourism, air and maritime connectivity, intellectual property, fabric manufacturing, biopharma, traditional medicine, including herbal preparations, setting up of digital laboratory, innovation and research, fintech and coastal landscaping. We therefore expect, Mr Speaker, Sir, to see a further strengthening of our economic trade and investment partnership with China in the coming years.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ramful: Can I ask the Minister with regard to sugar, Mauritius benefits from a tariff rate quota of about 50,000 tonnes of sugar per year, can we know how many tonnes of sugar are we currently exporting to China?

Mr Gobin: Perhaps the hon. Member is highlighting a specific difficulty with regard to a specific good, that is, special sugar. That difficulty to export special sugar boils down to the fact that in China, there is a sole entity which is entitled to sell sugar as a commodity. That entity is called COFCO, that is, it is a Chinese state-owned food processing holding company. So, I am informed that there are discussions at present between the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate (MSS) and COFCO to find a way to get around this problem - the question of the special sugar. But I confirm that the tariff quota for sugar is 50,000 tonnes for the export of special sugar to China. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ramful: The hon. Minister mentioned about the Joint Commission that was held recently and I see from the press that there was an agreement for the export of litchis and pineapples - I see the Minister of Agriculture smiling at the back but then apart from these two products concretely, what agreements have we reached with China with regards to export of products?

Mr Gobin: Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to increasing our export of agricultural products, what will happen is that now a team of experts from the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) will travel to Mauritius. The expected date is the end of the month of November. The purpose will be to conduct pest risk analysis here to ensure compliance with the sanitary and

phytosanitary requirements to export, indeed, as the hon. Member mentioned, pineapple and litchis to China. We expect the team to come towards the end of November.

Furthermore, we have also worked with the Chinese authorities to enhance the visibility of Mauritius and Mauritian products on the Chinese market. To this end, I am informed that from 12 to 14 October, the Economy Development Board (EDB) has participated in the 109th China Food and Drink Fair which was held in Shenzhen to promote Mauritian products such as sugar, tea and rum. We expect to see an increase in the export of these products in the future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that the FTA sets the condition to propel Sino-Mauritius Corporation into mainland Africa as well. Mauritius is the perfect platform for Chinese investors to access the huge opportunities available in the African market. Coming to the Joint Commission, this was held in August of this year; it was the first meeting of the Joint Commission. As I have said, we have identified areas for further cooperation but that those areas are mainly, not totally, mainly in the field of services.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

CEB – COREXSOLAR INTERNATIONAL – AWARDED CONTRACTS

(No. B/1176) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Corexsolar International, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, since 2020 to date, information as to the number of contracts awarded thereto by the Board, indicating the value of each contract.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad that the hon. Member, through this question, is giving me the opportunity to address an issue that has been in the limelight for some time and also allow me to shed light on what needs to be the practice during the mandate of the Labour Party.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has set clear objectives for the decarbonisation of the energy sector including the achievement of 60% of renewable energy in the electricity mix and the phasing of coal by 2030.

Accordingly, my Ministry has reviewed the Renewable Energy Roadmap 2030 for the electricity sector last year and same is currently under implementation. At the level of the Central Electricity Board, several Prosumer Schemes – that is, where the consumer is given the opportunity to produce energy to offset his energy consumption – of capacity not exceeding 2

MW have been set up for the different categories of the population to produce, consume and sell energy. These categories include households, owners of electric vehicles, low-income families in the vulnerable group, residence of NHDC Housing Estates, NGOs, charitable institutions, religious bodies, the corporate sector, smart cities, hotels, commercial sector and public entities among others. In addition, CEB invites Request for Proposals for utility scale projects exceeding 2 MW with battery and without battery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, applications under the Prosumer Schemes are invited through open advertisement for greater participation and transparency. As for utility scale energy generation, the CEB invites bids through open advertised international bidding in order to obtain value for money and for greater competition and transparency.

M. le président, par rapport au *Prosumer Scheme*, le CEB a lancé des *open advertisements* et comme je l'ai dit plus tôt, pour une meilleur transparence et une plus grande participation du public. En ce qui concerne la production d'énergie à grande échelle, le CEB a lancé des appels d'offres internationaux afin d'obtenir un bon rapport, qualité-prix et d'accroître la concurrence et la transparence.

Il est bon aussi de rappeler, M. le président, le manque de transparence entre 2005 à 2014 où il était d'usage d'attribuer d'énormes contrats directement à des promoteurs à la suite d'offres non-sollicitées qu'on appelle *unsolicited bids*. Et là, je peux déjà citer ici trois projets dont Sarako, CT Power et Eole Plaine des Roches.

En premier, M. le président, le contrat de 20 ans signé en 2013 entre le CEB et Sarako Ltée. pour la fourniture d'énergie à travers l'installation d'une ferme solaire de 15 MW à La Ferme, Bambous, à un contrat alloué sans aucun exercice d'appel d'offres. Le tarif auquel le CEB achète l'électricité à Sarako est actuellement de R8.03 en comparaison à R2.74 payé à la compagnie GreenYellow qui a été alloué un contrat de 10MW récemment suite à un exercice d'appel d'offres. Les deux cas, M. le président sont comparable car les deux sont des fermes solaires sans batteries.

Un deuxième exemple est le tristement célèbre *CT Power* où à la suite d'une offre non-sollicitée reçue, le CEB avait attribué un contrat à *CT Power* et signé un *Power Purchase Agreement* le 27 Décembre 2013 pour la fourniture de 2 fois 55 MW d'énergie à partir d'une centrale à charbon. Des négociations entre le CEB et *CT Power* suite aux *unsolicited bids* avaient démarré en 2007 quand l'actuel honorable membre était président du Conseil d'administration du

CEB. Des millions de roupies du CEB ont dû être utilisés pour payer les frais des avocats. Et ce, M. le président, alors que le gouvernement de l'époque prétendait construire un avenir vert pour Maurice à travers la vision Maurice île Durable du Premier ministre d'alors et passer à des sources d'énergies renouvelables.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that contracts awarded to Corexsolar International since 2020 to date have been as a result of open competitive bidding exercises, either at the level of the CEB or through the Central Procurement Board. In all these exercises, the said company was the lowest evaluated substantially responsive bidder. Details of the contracts are as follows –

- (i) Setting up of a 30 MW Renewable Energy Hybrid Facility for a purchasing tariff of USD0.0786 and MUR0.9387 – that is, for Rs5.009 – following an open international bidding exercise launched in March 2022 where 13 offers were received from five bidders. I am informed that the two bids of Corexsolar International and one bid of Qair International were found by the Bid Evaluation Committee to be the lowest evaluated substantially responsive bids. The contracts were awarded on 31 January 2023 and the Power Purchase Agreement signed on 15 February 2023.
- (ii) The setting up of a 10MW Small Scale Renewable Energy Hybrid Facility for a purchasing tariff of USD 0.0835 and MUR 0.9988, that is, Rs4.80 following, again, an international bidding exercise launched in March 2022 where 25 offers were received from 10 bidders.

I am informed that the one bid from Corexsolar International Mauritius and three bids from Qair International were found by the Bid Evaluation Committee to be the lowest evaluated substantially responsive bids. Two other bidders which had a lower quoted price were found technically non-responsive. The contracts were awarded on 31 January 2023 and the Power Purchase Agreement signed on 15 February 2023.

- (iii) The supply, installation and commissioning of 3,000 Grid-Tie Roof-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Kits of 2KW each for a total amount of USD5,685,750 excluding VAT on 13 February 2023 following, again, an open advertised bidding exercise through the Central Procurement Board launched in March 2022, where three bids were received. Evaluation was performed at the Central Procurement

Board which approved the award to the lowest evaluated substantially responsive bidder, namely Corexsolar.

- (iv) The design, supply, installation, testing and commission of 1MW Solar PV Farm at Grenade, Rodrigues for the total amount of Rs103,411,615 excluding VAT on 25 August 2022, following an advertised bidding exercise, the Central Procurement Board approved the award to the lowest evaluated substantially responsive bidder, Corexsolar International. The two bidders which had a lower quoted price were found technically non-responsive.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that the bidding exercises carried out by CEB or through the Central Procurement Board have followed all prevailing and established procurement procedures.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, j'ai deux questions pour le ministre et à la suite de ma question, on verra si le ministre...

Mr Speaker: Vous ne pouvez pas choisir votre question.

Mr Assirvaden: ...veut jouer à la transparence. Le ministre est au courant que la liste des contrats donnés à Corexsolar, suite à un scandale établi dans la presse, c'est le *Renewable Energy Committee* du CEB qui recommande au *Board to award or not to award* des contrats. Dans la liste donnée par le ministre, est-ce que le ministre peut dire à la Chambre, dans la transparence, si dans les contrats alloués par Corexsolar jusqu'ici, lui en tant que ministre, a-t-il présidé ou participé à des réunions du *Renewable Energy Committee* au *Air Mauritius Building* à Port Louis dans son bureau ? A-t-il participé ou présidé le *Renewable Energy Committee*, qui était un comité technique, qui recommande au *Board* du CEB *to award or not to award* ?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I chair a lot of committees on a daily basis, but I have never chaired the Renewable Energy Committee which looks after the award of contracts at the level of the CEB.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, ...

Mr Speaker: Wait, wait. He asked to put a question. He already asked before you.

(Interruptions)

Before you asked for the question, he asked to put the question!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know from the hon. Minister who was the Chairman of the CEB when negotiations were concluded between...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ittoo: ...and unsolicited bidders...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ittoo: ...of the CT Power? Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: It is his constitutional right to ask questions.

Ms J. Bérenger: Mais nous aussi !

An hon. Member: *Les li poz kestion !*

Dr. Boolell: You deprived him of his right to put questions.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Relevant question!

Mr Lesjongard: Can I? Can I?

(Interruptions)

Can I reply, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: Yes. It is his constitutional right.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Member who has put the question to me was the Chairman of the CEB when the contract was awarded to CT Power, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I said in my reply, it was an unsolicited bid. What is good to say also, Mr Speaker, Sir, during that period, the CEB had identified a similar project to be carried out at Montagne Jacquot. Then, after receiving all the bids and when the evaluation was carried out, a decision was taken not to proceed with the said exercise. And by whom? By the then Chairman of the Central Electricity Board who is putting that question to me! And after that, it was the same Chairperson who chaired a meeting and allocated the contract to CT Power, that is, on 26 July 2016.

Ms J. Bérenger: *Poz to bann kestions!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ...

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président ! M. le président ! Vous m'avez dit que vous me donneriez une autre question !

Mr Speaker: B/1183...

Mr Assirvaden: Mais le ministre est en train de mentir, M. le président !

Mr Speaker: B/1185...

Mr Assirvaden: Le 11 septembre; le 12 septembre, le 21 septembre, le ministre a présidé une réunion !

Mr Speaker: B/1186, B/1189...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: B/1190...

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président!

Mr Speaker: B/1197...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: B/1199!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président!

Ms J. Bérenger: *Menter!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: Shame!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Assirvaden: On a point of order!

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: *Pa montre ledwa ! Aret montre ledwa.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: First, order!

Mr Assirvaden: On a point of order!

Mr Speaker: First, order!

Mr Bérenger: *Met sa ledwa la dan ou nene !*

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Do not show fingers!

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

Mr Bérenger: *Aret ...*

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

An hon. Member: Who are you?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet!

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président...

Mr Speaker: On a point of order!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président,...

Mr Speaker: On a point of order! You listen first!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: *Inacceptable ! Pire ki avant !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have already started announcing...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish. I start again.

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: PQs B/1177, B/1183, B/1185, B/1186, B/1189, B/1190, B/1198, B/1199, B/1207, B/1210, B/1212, B/1216, B/1231, B/1233, B/1235, B/1236. These questions have been withdrawn. Time is over!

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président ! M. le ministre doit...

(Interruptions)

Vous protégez le ministre !

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: *Sovaz !*

Ms J. Bérenger: *Corrompu!*

Mr Bhagwan : *La honte !*

Mr Assirvaden: Vous protégez le ministre ! Vous protégez le ministre !

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan : *La honte sa ! La honte sa !*

An hon. Member: Shame on you!

Hon. Members: Shame!

Mr Bérenger: *Alez do cosson ! Zako !*

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *La honte!*

Ms J. Bérenger: *To pas honter ?*

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, j'ai le droit de poser ma question.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Capon!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I reserve my right to name hon. Bérenger for his disorderly conduct!

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, permettez-moi de poser ma question.

Mr Speaker: After...

Mr Bérenger: *Sovaz!*

Mr Speaker: After tea time, I will come back.

Mr Bérenger: *Sovaz!*

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, permettez-moi de poser la question au ministre ! Le ministre a présidé la réunion !

Mr Lesjongard: Non, jamais !

Mr Assirvaden: Le 12 et le 21 septembre ! M. le président,...

Ms J. Bérenger: Corrompu ! Corrompu ! Corrompu !

(Interruptions)

Corrompu !

(Interruptions)

Corrompu !

(Interruptions)

To bann pese to pa dir!

(Interruptions)

Corrompu !

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: *Le 11 et le 21 septam tonn preside !*

Ms J. Bérenger: Corrompu !

Mr Assirvaden: *Dan to buro Por Lwi!*

(Interruptions)

Ms J. Bérenger: Corrompu !

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: *Et mo dir twa ene zafer ! Minutes of Proceedings pour sorti! Nou pou gete si li pan preside!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Bizin kassiete !*

Dr. Boolell: *Au-dela de kassiette !*

Ms J. Bérenger: *Enn koronpu sa !*

(Interruptions)

Hey, mo attan twa dan box!

(Interruptions)

At 4.40 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

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

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. P. BERENGER – UNPARLIAMENTARY WORDS – RULING

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, earlier today, I informed the House that I reserved my right to name the hon. Paul Bérenger for uttering outrageous, contemptuous, abusive and filthy words, namely ‘Sovaz’, *Cosson*,...

Mr Bérenger: *Na pa insilte Cosson!*

Mr Speaker: ...‘Zako’ amongst other things, to my address while I was leaving the Chamber. I consider his conduct was a departure from parliamentary convention and etiquette. I am reporting the incident to the House because, if left unchecked, it would represent a standing challenge to the authority of the Chair and the dignity of the House.

I leave the matter in the hands of the House.

MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, in view of your ruling and the gravity of the matter, I beg under Standing Order 17(3) to take the time of the House for urgent business.

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move under Standing Order 29(1) to present a motion without notice.

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your ruling and the gravity of the matter, I beg to move that the hon. Paul Bérenger be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next six Sittings, unless unreserved apologies are tendered to the House.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *La honte !*

The Prime Minister: *Zot envi al dormi!*

(Interruptions)

Zot envi ale dormi, ale casyet figir.

An. hon. Member: *Dehor!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Li vrai to enn cosson! To cosson meme twa !*

An hon. Member: *Ale dormi!*

Mr Speaker: I am naming you hon. Bhagwan! I am naming you!

Mr Bhagwan: *Lepep pu lev twa biento la!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please leave the House! Please leave the House!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *La honte! La honte !*

Mr Bhagwan: *Mo pu aler mem mwa!*

Mr Speaker: Leave the House!

Mr Bhagwan: *Pa mwa ki pu aler! Twa ki pu aler biento !*

Mr Speaker: Serjeant-At-Arms!

Mr Bérenger: *Sak cou to avoy Serjeant-At-Arms.*

Mr Bhagwan: *Pa tous mwa boss ! Mo pu aller mwa !*

Mr Hurreeram: *Taper li!*

Mr Bhagwan: *Eta ! Ey twa, ki ena ta!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Ale bwar Lysol! Ale bwar Lysol!*

Mr Speaker: All Police Officers, Serjeant-At-Arms, do your work!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Bane corrompu! Bane volere !*

Hon. Members: Lysol!

Mr Bhagwan: *Bane volere !*

Mr Nuckcheddy: Name him!

An hon. Member: *Bonne année !*

Mr Toussaint: *Arvind ale get li!*

The Prime Minister: *To p ale guet Ramgoolam?*

Mr Speaker: So, the motion is seconded? Are you following? The motion is seconded?

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

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: *Aler do ta! Twa?*

Mr Speaker: To the House!

Mr Bérenger: *Twa?*

Mr Speaker: To the House!

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

(Interruptions)

Members of the Opposition: No!

An hon. Member: *Deuxième victoire!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Serjeant-At-Arms, do your work!

Mr Bérenger: *Kuyon, dir mwa aler, mo va aller tout court !*

Mr Speaker: Serjeant-At-Arms, do your work!

Mr Bérenger: *Bane cosson!*

Mr Speaker: Do your work!

Mr Toussaint: *Quelle honte!*

Hon. Members: *La honte! Shame!*

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *La honte!*

An hon. Member: *Ey ale dormi!*

Mr Bérenger: *Banne cosson! Cosson tro bon pou twa!*

An hon. Member: *Colon!*

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Kieter?*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bérenger calling a Speaker 'Cosson'!

An hon. Member: *La honte!*

Mr Speaker: All countries in the world are listening to that! An hon. Member calling a Speaker 'Cosson, Sovaz'!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: On a point of order!

Mr Hurreeram: *En plein Durga Pooja !*

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Speaker: I have not finished!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Colon ? Ki, line dir sa mot la ?*

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Ah bon ? Ki mone dir ?*

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *To senti twa vizer? Mo penkor dir oken nom!*

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Monn senti mwa vizer...*

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Mone tane sa nom 'colon' la !*

An hon. Member: *To zoreil pa bon, ale ...*

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *B kifer twa ki p repone ?*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, order!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: *Kifer twa ki p repone?*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members...

(Interruptions)

Order!

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. P. ASSIRVADEN – INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT – RULING

Mr Speaker: Order!

At the end of Question time, when I had already announced that time was over and was raising to suspend the Sitting, hon. Assirvaden vehemently contested my decision and acted in a grossly disorderly and aggressive manner. I consider his conduct was a departure from parliamentary convention and etiquette and I am reporting the incident to the House because, if left unchecked, it would represent a standing challenge to the authority of the Chair and the dignity of the House. I leave the matter in the hands of the House.

Mr Assirvaden: *Ils veulent protéger le ministre!*

MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, in view of your ruling and the gravity of the matter, I beg under Standing Order 17(3) to take the time of the House for urgent business.

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move under Standing Order 29(1) to present a motion without notice.

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your ruling and the gravity of the matter, I beg to move that the hon. Assirvaden be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next five Sittings, unless unreserved apologies are tendered to the House.

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

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Mr Assirvaden: *Vous avez protégé le ministre !*

(Interruptions)

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Speaker: Yes!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I want to raise a point of order under section 40(3), which states as follows –

“No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member.”

Earlier today, the hon. First Member for Vacoas and Floréal, hon. Ms J. Bérenger, uttered the word ‘*corrompu*’ not less than five times *à l’égard de l’honorable ministre Lesjongard*. So, kindly request her to withdraw. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: I will review the recording and report to the House.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: I also have a point of order. I heard the word ‘*colon*’ uttered on that side of the House. Someone replied to me before. Kindly review the video also for that word please.

An hon. Member: Point of order *sa*?

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Yes! Section 40 (2).

Mr Speaker: I will review the recording and report to the House!

Mr Dhunoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. You gave a ruling before with regard to using mobile phones in the House against hon. Ms Anquetil when she took a picture, and she apologised. It seems that hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger has been filming the scene when the incident

was happening. If she has done so, I request if you could take the necessary actions at your end.
Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Ms J. Bérenger: He is imputing improper motives!

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr Speaker: So, I will look into...

(Interruptions)

Order! I will look into the matter and report to the House.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

11TH INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS GAMES - TEAM MAURITIUS

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement on the performance of Team Mauritius at the 11th Indian Ocean Islands Games. It is with immense pride that I address the House today to reflect upon the exceptional performances of Team Mauritius at the recent 11th Indian Ocean Islands Games which took place in Madagascar from 25 August to 03 September 2023.

Mauritius has achieved its best ever performance in an away games. Securing an unprecedented total of 281 medals including an outstanding 91 gold medals resulting in a second-place finish overall.

The Mauritian flag flew high in Antananarivo. The team Mauritius and our medallists deserved our heartfelt congratulations for their resounding victories; victories that not only showcase their unwavering dedication, but also served as a testament to the seriousness tenacity and selfless commitment to our nation.

Furthermore, the 11th Indian Ocean Islands Games have unveiled the relentless determination and resilience of team Mauritius in the face of daunting challenges; values such as teamwork, solidarity and mutual support shown through at various levels throughout this unforgettable regional sporting event. I, personally, had the privilege of witnessing the unwavering efforts and the burning desire of our athletes to surpass themselves and to proudly

hoist our national flag in the skies of Madagascar. Our medallists will be rewarded fittingly for their outstanding achievements.

Long live our sportsmen and our youth, and long live the Republic of Mauritius! Thank you.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Fisheries Bill (No. XIII of 2023) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE PRIVATE RECRUITMENT AGENCIES BILL

(No. XII of 2023)

Order for second reading read.

(6.04 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bill that we have before the House today pertains to the consolidation and strengthening of our legal framework relating to the recruitment of –

- a) our citizens for employment both locally and abroad, and
- b) non-citizens for employment in Mauritius.

Currently, such recruitment is governed by the provisions of the Recruitment of Workers Act 1993.

As the House is aware, this Act has, for the last two decades, served as the cornerstone of our employee recruitment policies. However, in view of the demographic shift that our country has undergone over the past few years and the evolving landscape of employment workforce mobility both locally and abroad, the 1993 Act no longer adequately fulfils our national requirements.

I am proud to be the Minister of Labour in a government that respects, protects and upholds the rights of workers as a national priority, be they our own nationals or migrant workers whose economic contribution to our industries is valuable and valued.

In 2015, under the Prime Minister's Office, the Government of Mauritius established the Migration and Development Steering Committee. In 2018, the National Migration and Development Policy was approved and aligns itself with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 10.7 to "facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well managed migration policies".

Mr Speaker, Sir, our own national history is deeply entwined in migration, the entire population being descended of workers from a plethora of countries and continents. To this end, this Island Republic has an entrenched tradition to welcome workers from abroad.

Over the last decade, migrant workers represent 17% of the increase in the workforce. As of April 2023, there are more than 35,000 expatriate workers in Mauritius engaged across multiple sectors, particularly manufacturing, construction, trade, hospitality and ICT, amongst others.

In my Ministry, whether it is a Mauritian worker moving overseas for employment or a foreign worker entering Mauritius, we believe in migration with dignity. It is notable that migrant workers in Mauritius are treated with the same rights and on equal footing as their Mauritian counterparts and their employment is governed by the Worker's Rights Act 2019. The officers in my Ministry work tirelessly to tackle any challenges as soon as they arise.

By constantly assessing how policy and practice can be improved, we have taken a number of measures to promote fair and ethical working relations. These measures include –

- a) the publication of a guide specifically for foreign workers called as "Know Your Rights," at least to inform them of their basic human and work rights. This guide, which is in six languages, is provided to all migrant workers and employers;
- b) ensuring that migrant workers are remunerated in accordance with the provisions of the law;
- c) regular inspections by officers of the Special Migrant Workers Unit are conducted in the workplace to ensure that the obligations of the employer are being met both contractually and ethically. They are also sensitised on labour and human trafficking issues and on the need of their passports and valid work permits to be in their possession;

- d) rigorous joint inspections are carried out by the National Employment Department, the Special Migrant and Occupational Safety & Health Units of my Ministry to ensure that the living and work conditions of migrant workers are in compliance with the Workers' Rights Act;
- e) ensuring that all enterprises set up a communication channel at their level to allow migrant workers to voice out and discuss any grievances they might have;
- f) by setting up of a One-Stop-Shop with a special mechanism to deal with issues related to migrant workers, grievances and complaints received are attended to promptly. The assistance of the Police is sought whenever the need is felt, and lastly
- g) thorough investigation of all requests to cancel work permits is carried out to determine that the dismissal is lawful and will not cause undue prejudice.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to ensuring fair and ethical recruitment at source itself, Mauritius uses bilateral cooperation as part of its means to ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration.

We proactively engage in labour agreements with our fellow nations. This includes a technical cooperation agreement with the Republic of Seychelles which was signed in 1990, a bilateral labour service cooperation agreement with the People's Republic of China (signed in 2005), and an agreement on the Regulation of Manpower Employment with the State of Qatar, Government of the United Arab Emirates, Nepal and India (signed in 2014, 2016, 2019 and 2023, respectively).

Furthermore, circular migration agreements have been signed with France, Italy and Canada. More Memorandums of Understandings are currently under process with Madagascar, Bangladesh and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has consulted the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the preparation of this Bill. The measures contained in the Bill are in line with the recommendations of IOM as well as the standards set by the International Recruitment Integrity System, commonly called as IRIS.

With regard to the employers' side, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry engages in regular consultation with the private sector in respect to workers' rights and to ensure that they are

actively fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations. Initiatives such as the recently developed Code of Conduct for employers in the export oriented enterprises is one such example of this.

Without a doubt, Mr Speaker, Sir, these actions are producing results. Nevertheless, they will be more forceful and impactful when they are supported by a strong legal framework. This is precisely the reason why today, I am advocating for the adoption of the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill in replacement of the Recruitment of Workers Act 1993.

I have absolutely no doubt, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this new Bill, will meet the specificities of employees' recruitment in the modern context, protecting both national and foreign workers from exploitation and allowing Mauritius to be a mobility hub benchmark.

This new Bill, as opposed to the existing one, focuses on inclusiveness as it applies to both our citizens as well as non-citizens seeking employment opportunities within and beyond our borders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now turn to present to you the key clauses of the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill.

Firstly, Clause 4 provides that –

“no person who operates in Mauritius shall recruit a worker to work in Mauritius or abroad unless he is licensed as a private recruitment agency.”

It will ensure that only genuine, reliable and trustworthy agencies who are committed to migration with dignity are engaged in the recruitment activity.

This clause also prohibits recruitment agents or agencies registered abroad from carrying out recruitment activities in Mauritius. This measure will increase local control and eliminate risks of abuses by foreign entities.

The recruitment of a non-citizen worker, other than a non-citizen resident worker, who is already in employment in Mauritius for employment with another employer in Mauritius or for employment abroad will also be prohibited so as to prevent exploitation and maintain employment stability.

Secondly, Clause 5 is based on the Employer Pay Principle. It makes it mandatory for the employer to bear all legitimate costs related to the recruitment of any worker including their travel expenses.

The rationale behind this very strong stance against workers being charged any fee is unequivocally to protect the worker, ensure that his financial vulnerability is not exploited in the pursuit of employment opportunities, and thus eliminate all risks of bonded labour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has a zero tolerance stance to bonded labour. Mauritius ratified the ILO Conventions No.29 on Forced Labour and Convention No.105 on Abolition of Forced Labour in December 1969.

In addition, this clause of the Bill will address the problem whereby some of our citizens, in search of employment overseas, are made to pay hefty recruitment fees for application processing. The Bill will give them relief against such practice.

Then, Clause 8 of this Bill, will bestow greater powers upon my Ministry in terms of variation, suspension and revocation of licences and power for inspection, seizure and summons in case of suspicion of illegal practices. Such powers will undoubtedly enable my Ministry to effectively regulate and oversee all recruitment activities; allow it to keep pace with the ever-evolving dynamics of labour markets; promptly respond to any emerging challenges and abuses related to the recruitment of workers and swiftly sanction non-compliance to the law. As it can be observed, this Bill will leave no option to recruiters than to be most accountable and refrain from any malpractice.

Lastly, Clause 21 explicitly prohibits deceitful and misleading advertisements and canvassing aimed at wrongful inducement of the recruitment of workers, thus, ensuring that the recruitment process remains transparent, ethical and in compliance with the law as well as eliminate any scope for prospective workers to fall victims to misinformation, false promises and unscrupulous recruiters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, of paramount significance, this Bill takes a staunch position against trafficking in persons. It explicitly prohibits any involvement in trafficking activities as well as recruitment agencies suspected of such heinous offenses. This firm stand is not only a legal

necessity but also a moral obligation. It affirms our commitment to combating human trafficking and protecting vulnerable individuals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will also note that under this Bill, non-compliant recruitment agents will be sanctioned. Subject to the seriousness of the offence committed, wrongdoers can be liable to fines ranging from Rs100,000 to Rs1 million and imprisonment of 2 to 5 years. This, in itself, will act as a powerful deterrent for recruiters seeking to engage in fraudulent activities.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be acknowledged that the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill has been presented after much reflection, extensive consultations and discussions with the relevant stakeholders and in line with international best practices. It is indeed the salient solution that enables this Government to provide our workers with a fair and just labour market, in line with the recommendations of ILO and IOM. By adopting this Bill, we will not only uphold the highest ethical standards in recruitment processes but also ensure that they are transparent and devoid of any form of exploitation and malpractice.

As the lawmakers of this country, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have today a golden opportunity to shape a brighter future for our workforce, our economy and our country.

I would therefore urge all Members; be it from this side of the House or the other side of the House, to put aside their political differences and join hands with us in the establishment of a fair and ethical employment system that will benefit every worker in our country.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I now commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Mr Speaker: I will ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair for a while. I have some recordings to review. Give me time.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated.

Hon. Uteem!

(6.21 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

This Bill, concerning the licensing of recruitment agencies for migrant workers, comes only a few weeks before the commemoration of the arrival of indentured labourers; the coolies, in Mauritius on 02 November. When the ancestors of several Members now sitting in this august Assembly came to Mauritius, according to historians, they were lured to come to Mauritius by false promises, by a mirage of a better future.

They were told that they would find gold underneath the soil. So, they embark in Mauritius, unfortunately, in overcrowded boats with little or no sanitary measures and without proper medical care. They signed an agreement; that is why, they were referred to as Girmitiya, but their condition of work in Mauritius was very different from what they signed up for. Their papers were confiscated and if they were found outside the compound of their designated residential and working areas, they were arbitrarily arrested and detained under the infamous Vagrant Act of 1867.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, years have gone by, centuries later, unfortunately, we still witness the same kind of abuse of migrant workers in some quarters. Migrant workers are still being lured by false promises of a better future. They are not given proper, transparent employment contract in a language in which they understand. When they do sign an agreement/an employment contract, the nature and condition of work all too often are very different to what they signed up for. Still today, there are thousands of migrant workers who are illegally smuggled sometimes in the back of trucks, in boxes, but often, in overcrowded boats which occasionally capsizes and wreck, killing the workers and their dreams.

Even today, certain unscrupulous recruitment agencies and intermediary exploit, if not, extort money from gullible workers and their families, corruption at its ugliest. To make sure that the worker will repay their debts, their passport and other travel documents are confiscated. They are threatened of termination of their employment contract and forced expulsion if they do not pay the fees that they owe to the recruitment agency. If the worker fails to pay the fees, then, their parents at home are subject to all kind of harassment and violence. I am not talking only about foreign workers who come to work in Mauritius. I am also referring to Mauritian citizens who pay huge sums of money to intermediaries who promise them employment in foreign land. All too often, these poor Mauritians are cheated and unable to find a job once they reach the foreign land.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, yes, there is a definite pace for regulating the recruitment of workers. Not only for foreign workers who come to Mauritius, but also are Mauritians who are recruited to work abroad. The International Labour Organisation has spent considerable amounts of time and resources to develop principles and standards for fair and ethical recruitment of workers. According to the ILO, recruitment of workers needs to be regulated to –

- (i) help prevent human trafficking and forced labour;
- (ii) protect the rights of workers, including migrant workers from abusive and fraudulent practice during the recruitment process, but also and importantly
- (iii) to reduce the cost of labour migration and enhance development outcomes for migrant workers and their families as well as for countries of origin and designated.

ILO Labour Protocol P029 was adopted in 2014. The protocol recognises the importance of protecting persons, particularly migrant workers from possible abusive and fraudulent practices during their recruitment and placement process in order to prevent forced labour. The accompanying recommendation of ILO No. 203 prescribes specific remedial measures that include –

- (a) ensuring that the recruitment fees and costs are not charged directly or indirectly to workers;
- (b) requiring transparent and written contract;
- (c) establishing adequate and accessible complaint mechanism;
- (d) imposing adequate penalties;
- (e) implementing mechanism for effective regulation of services, and
- (f) providing support to business to identify, prevent and mitigate the risk of forced labour.

Now, the question that we have to ask ourselves is: how far is the Bill before this House compliant with ILO recommendation, because paragraph 3 of the Explanatory Memorandum says –

“3. This Bill also reflects ethical recruitment standards in line with the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).”

Section 5 of the Bill provides that –

“(1) No private recruitment agency or employer, including an employer referred to in section 3(2), shall charge a worker any fee in relation to his recruitment.”

This is most welcomed and is in line with the recommendation of ILO, but there is nothing in this Bill about the requirement for transparent and written contract of employment in the language which the worker understands. This, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is in sharp contrast with the existing Section 7 of the Recruitment of Workers Act (1993) as amended which provides –

“(1) Every contract of employment entered into by an employer and a recruited worker shall contain such terms and conditions as may be prescribed.”

(2) A licensee shall, before a recruited worker leaves Mauritius, submit to the licensing authority a copy of the contract of employment signed by the employer and the recruited worker.”

But there is nothing in this Bill requiring a copy of the signed agreement to be forwarded to the Ministry of Labour.

It is crucial, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for a worker to agree to the term of employment before deployment. The terms of employment must be explained to him in a language that he understands. There should be no coercion and more importantly, the worker should not end up doing work in Mauritius or abroad for which he has not signed up.

The Bill also does not establish adequate and accessible complaints mechanism in breach of ILO Recommendation No. 3. Again, nothing in this Bill about how to file a complaint against a recruitment agency. You are a recruited worker and you have had to pay the recruitment agency money to come to Mauritius, which is contrary to the law, what is your recourse? What does the Bill say about your recourse? Nothing! You have been promised work in a foreign land, you take a loan, you travel and once you reach there, you find out that it was all false promises. What is your recourse? What is your recourse mechanism? Nothing! What is your complaint mechanism? Nothing in this Bill!

Section 8 of the Bill does confer power on the Permanent Secretary to vary, suspend or revoke a licence where he is satisfied that the private recruitment agency has acted in a manner which is detrimental to the interest of a person who has recourse to its services. The suspending or revoking the license of a private recruitment agency is of little comfort to a recruited worker. He is not going to get anything. The license will be suspended, but what about his remedy? There is absolutely no recourse mechanism in this Bill for a worker against the recruitment agency, and this is a serious flaw. The Bill also does not impose any obligation on the recruitment agency to ensure that the migrant worker has access to remedy without fear of re-employment.

Most migrant workers of this country are unaware of their rights and being in a foreign country, most of the time, they do not know anyone other than the recruitment agency which recruited them. If ever they are ill-treated, the first recourse they would want to have is towards the recruitment agency. But nothing in this Bill imposes any obligation on the recruitment agency to ensure that the recruited workers have a complaint mechanism if their rights are affected.

Paragraph 3 of the Explanatory Memorandum of the Bill also stated that –

“(…) ethical recruitment standards in line with the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).”

I have had a look at those recommendations. The hon. Minister mentioned IRIS, ethical recruitment, which is IOM’s flagship initiative to promote ethical recruitment of migrant workers. It has been created by IOM and a coalition of partners from various Governments, civil societies and private sector.

IRIS Standard, the last version being in 2019, has two overarching principles –

- 1) Respect for laws, fundamental principles and rights at work, and
- 2) Respect for ethical and professional conduct.

Then, it has five specific principles –

- (i) Prohibition of recruitment fees to jobseekers;
- (ii) Respect for freedom of movement;
- (iii) Respect for transparency of terms and conditions of employment;

- (iv) Respect for confidentiality and data protection, and
- (v) Respect for access to remedy.

I have already mentioned, there is prohibition on recruitment fees to jobseekers, but nothing on freedom of movement, on transparency of terms and conditions and access to remedy.

Now, one of the recommendations of the IRIS Standard is that the labour recruiter must ensure that migrant workers are treated equally throughout the recruitment process and are not discriminated on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, gender or nationality. This is one of the core principles of the IRIS Standard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I recall when I just came back to Mauritius as a young lawyer, 25 years ago, one of my very first assignment was to review a contract of recruitment for workers who were going to work in Diego Garcia and I was shocked that one of the criteria set out in that recruitment agreement was that the worker should not be a Mauritian citizen. So, they were recruiting people to go and work in Diego Garcia but it could not be a Mauritian and this is clearly discriminatory.

However, when we look at Section 8 of the Bill, which are instances where the Permanent Secretary can vary, suspend or revoke licences, there is nothing – no sanction if a recruitment agency breaches the right of equal treatment of workers; if they act in a way that is discriminatory, there is nothing.

Another core principle of IRIS is that the recruitment agency should not limit the freedom of movement of workers. For example, the recruitment agency should not withhold their travel documents, their identity cards or their permits but, again, nothing in this Bill imposing and sanctioning; imposing an obligation on recruitment agencies not to tamper with freedom of movement of the recruited members, not to confiscate their travel documents; no sanction if they do so. There is absolutely no sanction if tomorrow a recruitment agency decides to take hold of your passport and will only return your passport if you pay him all the fees that you owe him. Worse, there is a provision in this Bill which is blatantly in breach of the ILO Convention against discrimination and forced labour and in breach of the recommendations of the IRIS Ethics Standard.

I am referring to Section 4(3) of the Bill, which reads as follows –

“Notwithstanding subsection (1), no person, including a private recruitment agency, shall

—

- (a) recruit a non-citizen, other than a non-citizen resident, who is in employment in Mauritius or is in Mauritius without a valid work permit or occupation permit for employment with another employer in Mauritius or abroad; or”

So, essentially what Section 4(3) is telling us is that if you have a migrant worker in Mauritius, under an employment contract, it is an offence for a recruitment agency to contact that person and offer him a job with another employer in Mauritius or abroad.

Now, nothing prevents a recruitment agency today to contact any Mauritian in employment and offer that person a job in another company in Mauritius or outside Mauritius. In fact, you have recruitment agencies which do that all the time. They are head-hunters; they are paid for it and every employee gives the notice period in the employment contract and then goes to work with the employer who gives him a better working condition and better salary but, with this section 4(3), you are discriminating; you are creating to type of workers. For the Mauritian citizen, the recruitment agency can contact them, can offer them a job in Mauritius or outside Mauritius but for the migrant workers, no, they cannot do that. For the migrant workers, they cannot contact the migrant workers; they cannot offer the migrant workers better jobs in Mauritius or abroad.

So, the migrant worker is stuck with his employer in Mauritius, however bad his employer is, however bad the condition of employment is, he is stuck in Mauritius, and this is a blatant breach of freedom of movement! This is exactly what IRIS tells us not to do. This is exactly what ILO tells us not to do. You cannot coerce a migrant worker and force him to work with the employer with whom he has signed a contract. He should be free to leave. Now, there are consequences. If he needs to give a notice period, he will give a notice period but you cannot force him to work. There is no forced labour. The ILO Convention is a very clear. You cannot prevent a migrant worker to move and work for another person. Last time I checked, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, slavery has been abolished in Mauritius. So, I really hope that the hon. Minister will review the Section 4(3) of the Bill.

There is also not a word in the Bill on Principle 4 of the IRIS Standard, requiring the recruitment agency to respect the confidentiality and protection of data relating to workers.

Before issuing a licence, the Permanent Secretary ought to ensure that the recruitment agency has in place the necessary procedure on data protection to ensure compliance with Data Protection Act of Mauritius. This is not in the Bill. Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not correct to state in the Explanatory Memorandum that this Bill is compliant with all the recommendations of ILO and IOM because this is not the case. Several fundamental principles and recommendations of ILO and IOM to protect migrant workers are not in this Bill.

Now, very briefly, there are two other provisions of this Bill that I want to address before ending. First, it is in regard to Section 4, subsection 1. Section 4 subsection 1 provides that –

“(1) No person, including a person who holds a foreign recruitment licence issued in a foreign country, shall –

(a) on behalf of an employer, recruit a worker to work for that employer; or”

So, we are now making it illegal for a foreign recruitment agency to recruit workers to work in Mauritius.

Today, the practice is for example, if you have a big factory and you need workers, whether, it is in the construction sector or textile or anywhere else and let’s say you need a lot of workers from Bangladesh, what would you do? You would contact a recruitment agency in Bangladesh and ask that Bangladeshi recruitment agency to go and recruit the Bangladeshi workers. Why? Because in Bangladesh, a Mauritian agency cannot recruit workers in Bangladesh to work in Mauritius; because you need an agency which knows the laws of Bangladesh, which complies with the laws of Bangladesh, whose employment contract, to be signed by the workers, is compliant with Bangladesh’s law. So, that is why it is very important that foreign recruitment agencies in the country where the workers coming to Mauritius reside, have a licence. But, no, with this Bill, it will be illegal for them to do so.

So, with this Bill, if tomorrow a textile company or a construction company wants to recruit 1,000 workers from Bangladesh, they will have to go and see a Mauritian recruitment agency. That Mauritian recruitment agency does not have a permit to operate in Bangladesh, what will he do? Now, the Mauritian agency will now have to enter into a second agreement with the Bangladeshi recruitment agency for the export of workers. So, two contracts, delays and additional costs, why? Why additional costs? Why burden SMEs with this additional layer? Talking about Bangladesh, I hope that in his summing up, the hon. Minister will tell us that there

is no policy of this Government now to discriminate against recruitment of Bangladeshi workers because this is what I have been told by employers in the construction and textile sectors that they are unable to recruit people from Bangladesh. So, Section 4(1) should go out.

Finally, Section 6(6)(b) tells you that where –

“an applicant is aggrieved by the decision of the Permanent Secretary [so when an applicant finds his application rejected by the Permanent Secretary], he may not later than 21 days from having been informed of the decision, appeal to the Minister.”

So, you make an application, the PS who is an independent civil servant finds that you have not met the criteria and throws out your application, you go to see the Minister and the Minister gives you the permit on what basis? On the amount of *cari cerf* you received? On the number of black label bottles you have received? Come on, let's be serious, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! It's high time now to remove all these discretionary obituary powers from the hands of the executive of the Minister. It is high time now that we have a proper administrative tribunal manned by independent judiciary members either sitting magistrates, retired magistrates or retired judges so that any aggrieved party will have access to justice without having to go through the Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill is being introduced at a time where there is an increasing number of our citizens, our *fiils du sol*, who are desperately trying to migrate to other countries. People are queuing up to work on cruise ships. Almost every sector of the economy is complaining of the lack of workers. In the financial sector, there is a brain drain with our professional, our skilled labour force, our *crème de la crème* migrating to Luxembourg and Canada. Doctors, unable to get a job in local hospital, are migrating to the great despair of their parents who made such great sacrifice to give them the education that they have.

The proliferation of private recruitment agencies to recruit Mauritian citizens to work abroad is the testimony of this Government's inability to ensure that every Mauritian has a job which meets his expectation and aspiration in Mauritius. Our people and our youth in particular deserve a government who will work for them instead of pushing them to migrate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Bholah, please!

(6.46 p.m.)

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am intervening in support of the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill put forward by my colleague, the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training. It is a straightforward piece of legislation comprising of some 26 clauses and yet so important for each and every one, particularly for the business community.

The recruitment of Workers Act 1993 is being repealed. The Private Recruitment Agencies Bill when voted will act as a consolidated regulatory framework for private recruitment agencies. It indeed lays the foundations for orderly and ethical recruitment of foreign labour.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, migratory labour is a powerful driver of economic growth and social promotion. Around the world, over 280 million people have left their homeland, their country, in the universal pursuit of opportunities and its resultant dignity, a better life. I think we need to constantly remind everyone that we, ourselves, are the product of migratory labour and hon. Reza Uteem rightly pointed out about this, but in different words.

Despite the horrors of slavery and indentured labour, a crude reality remains: we are a country of migrants, many of whom came centuries ago back to work. Over the years, the economy evolved along with us. Modern Mauritius is a result of migrant labour. This necessity of having foreign labour to boost economic development was a reality back then. Just as it is a reality today. How can we forget the large number of Mauritians who moved to Europe, UK, France, Italy, Canada and Australia and their success?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will certainly recall hundreds of Mauritians, if not thousands of Mauritians, left for the UK in the early 60s or 70s to train and serve as nurses. Over the years, they brought along their family and today we can boast about a Mauritian diaspora that exceeds some 225,000 people. They are proudly contributing to the economy of their country of adoption, and equally, to the Mauritian economy through money transfers, that is remittances to support their parents and elders. I am sure we all have such a member in our family or an acquaintance. Cross border movements have existed in all continents –

- Latin American workers in the US;
- High flying professionals in the financial sector of Luxembourg,
- Fruit pickers that guarantee fresh produce in supermarkets throughout Europe.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 90% of United Arab Emirates' workforce is foreign labour according to its official authorities. Migrant workers in Singapore constitute 40% of its 3.4 million labour force. We are here talking about economies of 500 billion USD!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where would our own country be, had it not been for the contribution of migrant workers over the last decades? Or of the current ones, namely 37,000 foreign workers that are fuelling the growth of our economy. We have to be awake to a reality. If we do not have foreign labour in our bakeries, people say there will be no bread on your table for breakfast. Who will fill our cars at the filling stations? Because many of those employed in these jobs is foreign labour. Who would work on the tills of our supermarkets? Or write sophisticated programs for foreign multinationals?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, we boast of Rs50 billions of exports in the manufacturing sector. It is one of the major foreign exchange earners of our economy. How can we forget that out of the 33,000 employees in the export sector, 16,000 or 50% are expatriates?

On the international front, countries are competing for talent and skills and if we are to remain competitive in international markets, we have to accept the reality of foreign labour and its immense potential to contribute to economic development. And if we are able to keep crucial services running locally, we need foreign labour, but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how often have we not heard of sad stories of abuse? And this is where this Bill fits.

This Bill brings an appropriate legal mechanism and imposes requirements and criteria in the process of foreign labour recruitment, thus enhancing fairness and equity. This Bill seeks to put an end to stories of neo-exploitation. We want to portray Mauritius as a country of aspirations with shared prosperity; a country where dreams do not turn into nightmares. In this context, we have to set the rules for fair recruitment in the best interest of one and all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill also comes to protect our citizens who are seeking employment opportunities abroad; so many of them have fallen into the trap of illegal recruiters who promised them better jobs in Europe and the Middle East. In this process, the fake agents have asked for huge transfers of money and then disappeared in thin air. Unscrupulous private employment agencies are on rampage due to informal intermediaries and other actors operating outside the legal framework.

The Private Recruitment Agencies Bill will empower only licensed institutions to carry out recruitment activities, whether it is for Mauritians or foreigners, as specified in the explanatory notes of this Bill.

Clause 5 of this Bill clearly mentions that fees pertaining to the recruitment of foreign labour are borne by the employer. For many years, many agents have lied to and squeezed money out of foreigners who desire to work in Mauritius. To be able to repay their debts and to earn a living, many of these workers are compelled to take more than one job. And after their shift at their official workplace, many of them are on the lookout for additional work, very often, against a very low remuneration.

Fake agents have also been found responsible for serious violations of workers' basic rights. The Bill now puts a full stop to such practices. This is why a more robust legislation was required to balance the interest of private employment agencies with the need to protect the rights of workers.

The Private Recruitment Agencies Bill is in line with the International Labour Organisation Convention. It is gratifying to note that the Bill makes it mandatory for foreign companies wishing to engage in recruitment activities in Mauritius to be licensed by the Mauritian Authorities even if they already hold a license in their country of origin. It is clearly spelled out in Clause 4(1) of the Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how many times we have heard of employers who have gone through an ordeal to bring in workers. After a cumbersome process, trying to get the necessary approval and permits from different authorities and after ticking all the boxes, they finally get the "*précieux sesame*", to get the workers on our shores but then two days after their arrival in Mauritius, the workers just disappear, leaving no trace behind! Either they have illegally taken up jobs offered by a different employer who managed to lure them or they have simply used Mauritius as a platform to go elsewhere.

We all realise that this jeopardizes the situation of the employer who initiated all procedures of recruitment. Thankfully, this Bill remedies this situation. Clause 4(3) prevents an individual, even a private recruitment agency to indulge in such malicious activity. I note that hon. Reza Uteem who intervened before me had a different reading of this Clause and subsection and I hope that the hon. Minister during his summing-up will give more details about it. But it is

true that only after days that we have the foreign employees here in Mauritius, they just disappear and many people have come to see me from the textile sector and even some from the agricultural sector that they can't even locate where these workers have gone and it is very difficult to trace them.

Another trend, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the illegal recruitment of expatriates who are on the island without a valid work permit. This Bill puts the brakes on this practice. So, we can note that this Bill is filling all the gaps of the previous legislation. This Bill sends a strong signal to private recruitment agencies that they need to comply to legal provisions to uphold the dignity of expatriates who leave their country in pursuit of opportunities and better life. No more money-minting on the backs of vulnerable individuals!

Apart from correcting many wrongs, it is heartening to note that this Bill embraces customer requirements with regards to fair treatment of employees along the value chain. Many of the renowned brands that Mauritian manufacturers serve like Abercrombie and Fitch, Marks and Spencer, Tommy Hilfiger, Diesel, Woolworths, Guess, and Armani, impose strict conditions with regards to compliance with labour laws and the upholding of the dignity of workers. These brands owners even delegate officers to visit the manufacturing plants and thereafter they submit their reports. It is praise worthy that, as a country, we are being proactive on this customer requirement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Clause 8 lists all the conditions leading to the suspension and revocation of the licence of a private recruitment agency. The Directors of those companies cannot plead ignorance. I am particularly heartened to note that this Bill prohibits shady or convicted individuals to engage into recruitment activities. Indeed, Clause 13 of the Bill compels private recruitment agencies to employ fit and proper personnel. I think this further builds trust in the recruitment process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Clause 14 ensures that the Ministry of Labour is apprised of any change in directors and transfer of shares by the private recruitment agency. Failure to do so entails the revocation of the licence. I believe this provision prevents shady individuals from getting hold of the recruitment agency.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in comparison to the Recruitment of Workers Act 1993, the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill is making provision to tackle the issue of fraudulent

advertisement campaigns for recruitment. Many agents reach their victims via misleading adverts on social media, radio and even TV. And without prior verification, many have fallen into the trap. Clause 21 of the Bill prevents abusive marketing and advertisement campaigns. You will certainly agree that sometimes even when law exist, implementation and enforcement are often weak, unfortunately. Clause 17 of the Bill confers powers of inspection and seizure to the Ministry of Labour to carry out inspection on premises of private recruitment agencies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, lawbreakers should not be allowed to get way easily. Fines imposed should be severe and should serve as a deterrent.

I note that with the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill, fines for offences have been doubled and in some cases more than doubled, compared to the present legislation, that is, the Recruitment of Workers Act 1993. We are aware that to further curb down the activities of recruitment agencies, the Ministry of Labour has signed an MOU with India. This allows employers to recruit foreign labour directly from that country without retaining the services of any agents. I understand that similar MOUs are being negotiated with other countries namely, Madagascar and Bangladesh.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no society, anywhere in the world, can operate on the exploitation of labour.

As a thriving country that is full of exciting job opportunities, we are an ideal country to welcome foreign workers. To guarantee basic human rights, we have to ensure that those who come to work in this country are duly protected and not be part of an almost invisible, exploited group of workers. Such people have the right to expect fairness of treatment, and certainly the protection of their interests.

As a nation that has evolved a sense of fair treatment and equality for so long, it would be appalling if we were found to be treating those who come to our shores to seek work in an unacceptable and reprehensible manner. This is why I commend the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill, a Bill that adds up another milestone in the protection of workers' rights and the promotion of fair recruitment practices.

I am done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Allow me to say that Mr Speaker shall resume his Chair.

At this stage, Mr Speaker took the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HON. MRS K. FOO KUNE-BACHA – POINT OF ORDER – UTTERANCE OF WORD 'COLON'

Hon. Members, regarding the point of order taken by the hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha to the effect that she heard the word '*colon*' from the other side of the House, I have to report, as at now, I have not been able to ascertain who uttered that word.

However, hon. Members can rest assured I will look into the matter and report to the House accordingly.

HON. S. DHUNOO – POINT OF ORDER – FILMING IN THE CHAMBER

Secondly, with regard to the issue raised by hon. Dhunoo about filming in the Chamber, I have not been able also to ascertain such issue and so, I will be reporting to the House when I come to a certain conclusion.

HON. BHAGWAN – GROSSLY DISORDERLY CONDUCT – NAMING

After the hon. Bhagwan had uttered the words "*li vrai, to enn Cosson*" to the address of the Speaker, when we are in Durga Puja period, I name him for his grossly...

(Interruptions)

Order!

...disorderly conduct and for challenging the authority of the Chair.

MOTIONS

S.O. 17(3) & S.O 29(1)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to

name the hon. Bhagwan, I beg under Standing Order 17(3) to take the time of the House for urgent business.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move under Standing Order 29(1) to present a motion without notice.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. Bhagwan, I beg to move that the hon. Bhagwan be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's sitting and the next 5 sittings unless unreserved apologies are tendered to the House.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. MS J. BÉRENGER – WORD ‘CORROMPU’ – DISORDERLY BEHAVIOUR – NAMING

Mr Speaker: After the hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy took a point of order to the effect that hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger had uttered the word ‘*corrompu*’ to the address of the hon. Minister Lesjongard, I have checked the recording which confirms that the word ‘*corrompu*’ was uttered several times by the hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger.

I consider her behaviour to be grossly disorderly and contemptuous to the decorum of the House. I, therefore, leave the matter in the hands of the House.

MOTIONS

S.O. 17(3) & S.O 29(1)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your ruling, I beg under Standing Order 17(3) to take the time of the House for urgent business.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move under Standing Order 29(1) to present a motion without notice.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your ruling, I beg to move that the hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's sitting and the next three sittings unless unreserved apologies are tendered to the House.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Ms J. Bérenger: *Mwa ki pe al deor me li ki bizin demisione!*

An hon. Member: *Eh!*

(Interruptions)

Ms J. Bérenger: *Ou bizin demisione!*

An hon. Member: *Twa ki bizin demisione!*

An hon. Member: *Ale do ta!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Balgobin: *Swiv to papa!*

An hon. Member: *Papa-tifi!*

Mr Speaker: Who is the next speaker on the list? Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

(7.11 p.m.)

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I shall make a short talk on this very important Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this morning while listening to the radio, I could listen to the *titre du journal de 7 heures et 8 heures* saying: “*un gouvernement requinqué et une opposition sur le pied de guerre pour la rentrée parlementaire*”, and this is what we have been experiencing today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you can imagine the joy, on this side, of the Members who have always been tagged as illegitimate or elections *truquées*. Being given the opportunity now, of course, to lend my voice on this piece of legislation, let me share this with the Members of the House that this is very important for us because as we have always been saying it: ‘one election and *deux victoires!*’. *Voilà!*

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with great joy that I am lending my voice to this Bill today as this is my first speech where I am addressing the House as a Private Parliamentary Member for the Constituencies No. 1 and No. 4 as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, migration and internal displacement are among the most pressing topics on the international agenda and local as well. Leaders across the world, whether it is international community or civil society or even governments across the world, are raising concerns about migration.

Well, it might sound as being uncontroversial but if it is uncontrolled and poorly managed, then, this could lead to a controversy. Worldwide, we have around 250 million people living outside their home, amongst which we have a beautiful Mauritian diaspora and here, I would like to commend the beautiful speech and the really nice words uttered by the hon. Minister Bholah

who said it and who got us back to our grassroots that we are a country of migrants. This is what we should not forget as well, and even hon. Uteem mentioned *Girmitiya*. So, it is always good to go back to our roots and to remember that we are here debating but we should not forget our roots about us being a country of migrants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to the Bill, let me salute the effort of the hon. Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training for bringing the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill to the House. The recruitments offering workers have been the topic of discussion as I mentioned previously in different spheres, whether, it is within the Assembly through several PQs and just to name a few of them, we have had some PQs in 2023 where hon. Bodha asked about the data available at the Ministry for foreign workers who have been in the country for more than 10 years and it is 325. Some PMQTs addressed to the hon. Prime Minister stating that in Mauritius, we have 585 foreigners and tourists whose business/tourist visas have expired and 2,294 missing expats in our island. And, referring to the records available for PQ B/1116, there are 29,989 foreign workers who are registered here in Mauritius.

In 2011, there was a report as well which I think we need to bring back to the Table by Mr Jeppe Blumensaat Rasmussen – it was a report which is tabled at the Amnesty International – Inhumane Conditions of Migrant Workers which was later refuted by the then Minister of Labour, hon. Shakeel Mohamed. Now I understand why he withdrew his name from the list of orators.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Explanatory is clear and precise enough to understand the importance of the why of this Bill and I shall refrain from repeating what has already been said but if there are two sentences which got my attention and which I would like to share with the Members of the Assembly with your permission, I shall draw their attention to the very introduction of the Bill itself where at the third line, it says that –

“(...)The Recruitment of Workers Act, which was enacted some several years back, has stood the test of time but needs certain changes.”

Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we definitely agree that the Workers Act has stood its test of time, especially, one should not forget about the 137 school cleaners – especially women – to whom this Government gave a decent pay and their dignity as well. And, we have also stood the test of time during COVID-19 where this Government has provided the Wage Assistance Scheme and

Self-Employed Assistance Scheme amounting to Rs27 billion. One should also keep in mind that during the pandemic, the Government has supported the tourism industry by giving financial support and today, the tourism industry *a repris son envol* as we say. So yes, we have stood the test of time as well.

However, I would here like to refer to a sentence and a work that has often been uttered here in this Assembly, and today uttered by hon. Mr Uteem who once again drew the attention about ‘brain drain’. I would like to refer the hon. to an article published in ‘Le Mauricien’ on 14 August 2023 where there are the interviews of different Mauritians across the world and you also have the diaspora. I would like to refer to some interviews given here where at times, they clearly stated that it is a choice, it is not always ‘brain drain’. And, it is also mentioning that it is not a *phénomène* that dates now with this Government, *mais cela a existé depuis des décennies* to cite this article which I can definitely table as well.

So, there is another element that I would like to share in this Bill which is very important. It is Section 4 in the Explanatory Memorandum itself where it says that –

“(d) prohibits the recruitment of a non-citizen worker, other than a noncitizen resident worker, who is already in employment in Mauritius for employment with another employer in Mauritius or for employment abroad;”

Mr Speaker, Sir, as rightly said by hon. Minister Bholah that if we do not have those migrant workers here in Mauritius, we do not get our bread in the morning. Who will put the diesel/fuel in our cars? So, I think we have the duty to protect them. However, we should not go that far by ignoring their pain and the sufferings that they are going through and rightly so, because very often, I am sure all the Members here in the House have met a migrant worker who has tried to change employer and during that process of changing employer, he/she has faced several issues whether it concerns their health, their passport. So, I think this Bill comes at a good time where we are there to regulate them and give them the right to a support as well.

Part II of the Bill where it mentions about the recruitment, Section 4, Recruitment of workers stating that –

“(1) No person, including a person who holds a foreign recruitment licence issued in a foreign country, shall –

(a) on behalf of an employer, recruit a worker to work for that employer;”

This again reminds us of the *Girmitiyas* who came to Mauritius, being offered a job here and how it happened that we were given false promises as well. So, this is where we are trying to bring a change and to bring a legislation towards those people whether it is Mauritians going to work abroad or international people coming here, foreigners coming to work here where they can rely on the laws and the legislation here in Mauritius.

The Bill will regulate the recruitment agency. In simple words, if you do not possess a valid license to operate as a private recruitment agency, you would not be allowed to recruit workers. So, it furthermore prohibits the recruitment of a non-citizen worker other than a non-resident worker who is already employed in Mauritius for employment with other employers in Mauritius under part II, Section 3 and this, Mr Speaker, Sir, was long overdue as for too long we have witnessed how non-citizen workers leave one employer and they move to another company without having a proper contract between the agent and the employee which gets their contract to be void.

So, therefore, for the benefits of the non-citizen workers, this Bill is welcomed. I would here conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Bill is a Bill which has correctly identified the loopholes in the system for the recruitment. Thus bringing the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill will better regulate the recruitment of both international and local employees as well. There is certainly much work to be done but we are definitely trying our level best to address this situation and the humanitarian consequences related to migration would be addressed. And once again, I would like to say that we are a country of migrants and we do have a responsibility towards them.

I therefore support this Bill and I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Next orator!

(7.21p.m)

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all let me thank the hon. Members who have participated in the debates on the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill. I appreciate the fact that most hon. Members, even from the other side of the House – we had only one which is quite unfortunate

given the importance of this Bill –have been fair and objective in their comments. I must say that on the whole, there is a general consensus on the need for the introduction of the present Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be stressed that the primary motive of this Government has always been and will always be of placing people at the heart of the policies which affect them. Just to give some statistics, Mr Speaker, Sir, today, there are 99 million male migrant workers and 75 million female migrant workers across the world. And as stated by Felipe González Morales, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants in his report, in July 2023 –

“The labour and human rights of migrants is among the defining issues of our era.”

In Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, we currently have 37,985 migrant workers working in different sectors of the economy. Our Government cares about them regardless of their country of birth, and it is for this reason that I am introducing the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill as a new mechanism to our ever-evolving commitment to workers’ rights.

Mr Speaker, Sir, mobility of workers remains today, as it has historically, the world’s most powerful anti-poverty tool. When facilitated in an orderly, safe, regular and responsible manner, as prescribed in UN Sustainable Development Goal 10.7, it provides empowerment and self-determination. This Bill in its philosophy encapsulates this target.

Foreign workers who migrate from high poverty countries send home money each year than any foreign aid programme provides. Since 2020, Mr Speaker, Sir, migrant workers have remitted more than USD 702 billion to their home countries. Wealthier countries with declining population are desperately short of workers, with unfilled jobs costing the economy over 3 billion dollar per day.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius maintains strong links with international organisations and participates in several regional consultative processes. The country is part of the migration dialogue from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Member States (MIDCOM), the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) and since 2020, the Migration Dialogue for the Indian Ocean Commission Countries (MiDIOCC). In addition, the country implements the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Protocol on the Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visa Requirements.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to make some general comments on the remarks made by hon. Uteem in his speech. I would like, in the same vein, to thank hon. Bholah, who responded to a few points raised by hon. Uteem.

With regard to migrant workers being lured by false promises, Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned in my intervention that the Bill makes provision in Section 21 for deceitful and misleading advertisement in relation to migrant workers. This means that there is no scope for workers to be misled or lured by false promises by anyone.

Coming to the contract of employment, I wish to reassure the House and the hon. Member that all contracts of employment are duly vetted by the Ministry as it is the case now. It ensures that they are fair, legal and do not cause any prejudice to the worker.

There is another comment made by hon. Uteem concerning intermediaries exploiting workers, passport retention by employers, extortion, etc. I wish to remind him that the very purpose of this Bill is to eliminate all these malpractices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the comment he made on Section 4(1), that is, we are precluding an employer to recruit directly in the source country. The House may wish to note that my Ministry is signing MoUs with all the source countries through Government-to-Government (G2G) agreements, and one of the conditions of the MoU is that the workers shall not be subjected to recruitment fees. In addition, all the terms and conditions of employment of workers provided in our legislation are clearly spelt out, including the grievance mechanism.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are prioritising Government recruitment agencies in the source country. For example, if we allow any employer to recruit by themselves in any source country, as it is the case now, we will not be able to meet our obligations on forced labour or comply with ILO Conventions on ethical recruitment because these employers will prefer to recruit from private recruitment companies on which we will not have and do not have any control, compared to Government agencies where standards will be set by our Government.

Moreover, I deem it necessary to draw attention here, Mr Speaker, Sir, that since a few years now, cases of poaching have been reported to my Ministry, specifically to the point the hon. Member raised on Section 4(3)(a). Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been reported to my Ministry that foreign workers who are recruited to work in our country are being lured and poached for

employment in certain countries where such nationals would not have had direct access from their country of origin, thus leading us to conclude that Mauritius is being used as a *tremplin* for the recruitment of such workers to other destinations. The Private Recruitment Agencies Bill will now put a stop to such practice, which is highly unethical and bad for the image of our country.

Let me reaffirm that there is no embargo/no ban on Bangladeshi workers. It is known that recruitment fees are lawfully charged in Bangladesh, which is contrary to our practice following the promulgation of this Bill. We will sign a MoU with Bangladesh and we will prioritise, like I said earlier, Government recruitment agency. We have not put a ban. We are trying to put some order in the recruitment from Bangladesh, and eventually, we will allow work permit to be issued.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is another point which I missed on labour mobility. Since the migrant workers are on a fixed term contract for a specific duration in our country with a specific employer, we cannot allow too much flexibility because they could negatively impact on our labour market and jeopardise Mauritian jobs.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, provision has already been made in Section 4(3) of the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act for a migrant worker to be able to change employment only in circumstances where he/she is victim of trafficking, ill-treatment or is in a stranded situation in our country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, it is now undeniable that our country needs migrant labour to continue its prominent emergence as a high-income economy. Even though the government has multiplied its efforts to attract Mauritians into vacant jobs, we face the same challenges as many of a nation where there is a disinterest of local candidates in certain sectors. In spite of our significantly improved salary via the introduction of the national minimum wage in 2018, the investment in Skills Training and Reskilling Program, it is a fact that we are seeing less and less Mauritians keen to enter the construction or textile sector. This is why we are resorting more and more to migrant workers who are important and so as not to hamper the development and growth of our country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill does not only protect the rights of foreign workers being offered employment in Mauritius, it equally ensures the protection of Mauritian workers seeking to develop themselves and their opportunities by taking up work in other countries and who have

been at risk of exploitation by unscrupulous recruitment agencies charging unfair processing fee. The message is simple – no one should have to pay to get a job.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I now commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Private Recruitment Agencies Bill (No. XII of 2023) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Private Recruitment Agencies Bill (No. XII of 2023) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 24 October 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Seeruttun seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned! Adjournment matter, we have 30 minutes. Let's start with this lady, hon. Ms Anquetil.

MATTERS RAISED

(7.39 p.m.)

PETANQUE PITCH, BORD CASCADE – ELECTRIC POLE – HAZARD

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Ma requête s'adresse au Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Collectivités locales. J'ai reçu de nombreuses plaintes des habitants de Bord Cascade à Henrietta concernant un terrain de pétanque triangulaire non-conforme en termes de dimension avec des inquiétudes liées à la sécurité en raison d'un pylône électrique en danger d'effondrement sur place. Le terrain de pétanque est situé dans une gare routière sans mesures de protection adéquate pour les joueurs de pétanque. Je sollicite l'intervention du Vice-Premier ministre pour envisager de délocaliser ce terrain de pétanque dans le but de garantir la sécurité des joueurs de pétanque dans la région. Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will talk to the Chief Executive and see what can be done about this pitch.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

(7.40 p.m.)

CARO LALO, VALLÉE DES PRETRES - KOVIL - SPEED BREAKERS

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, hon. Alan Ganoo. The members of Draupadee Ammen Maha Sangam Society situated at Caro Lalo, Vallée des Prêtres are requesting the installation of speed breakers in front of their Kovil. I would kindly request the hon. Minister to look into the implementation of same, taking into consideration that there have been many accidents despite the fact that there is an existing pedestrian crossing there. Thank you.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): A request dated 10 October 2023 has been received from the Secretary of Draupadee Ammen Maha Sangam Society Kovil for the installation of speed breaker in front of the Kovil due to speeding vehicles at the locus. A sight visit is planned for tomorrow, Wednesday 18 of October, by the TMRSU. A survey will be done and after the result of the survey, the recommended safety measures would be implemented by the end of October 2023. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

(7.41 p.m.)

NEW CANCER HOSPITAL – BUS STOP

Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Ma requête s'adresse au ministre du Transport, l'honorable Ganoo, afin de soulager les malades souffrants du cancer qui doivent se rendre en autobus pour se faire soigner au New Cancer Hospital car un manque d'arrêt d'autobus à proximité de cet hôpital fait que ces malades doivent parcourir un long chemin à pied malgré leur état de santé. Ces malades endurent déjà une rude épreuve et je demande donc que des mesures soient prises pour les soulager et trouver des solutions pour qu'ils n'aient plus autant à marcher avant mais surtout après leur traitement de chimio et autres. Merci.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of the matter raised and I shall convey same to the responsible Minister. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(7.42 p.m.)

POINTE AUX CANONNIERS PUBLIC BEACH – AIR POLLUTION

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use, Minister of Tourism. Currently the leveling of ground is in progress at Pointe aux Canonnières Public Beach. However, the inhabitants of Pointe aux Canonnières, especially those who live in the vicinity of the Football Ground where work is in progress are facing a serious air pollution issue. The parking slot has been covered with a thick layer of rock dust which is obviously causing untold inconveniences to the inhabitants like breathing problems and other health issues. Aggrieved inhabitants of Pointe aux Canonnières have lodged police complaints regarding same and even sought the help of Citizen Support Unit but to no avail so far. I request the hon. Minister to look into the matter as a matter of urgency and remedy the serious health hazard issue; the sooner, the better. Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the message to the DPM.

(7.43 p.m.)

JAMES RUSSELL STREET, GRNW – WATER LEAKAGE

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête de ce soir s'adresse au ministre de l'Énergie et des utilités publiques et concerne une fuite d'eau qui persiste depuis bientôt trois ans à la rue James Russell à Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest. Il semblerait que les tuyaux de la CWA situés dans la rue parallèle, un peu plus haut, la rue Canal Dayot, fuient constamment et ces eaux descendent et inondent la rue James Russell, et cela, entraîne évidemment de nombreux inconvénients pour les habitants du quartier et pour les usagers de la route. Je tiens à préciser que d'innombrables plaintes ont évidemment été faites auprès de la CWA. Je demande donc au ministre de bien vouloir intervenir pour qu'une solution durable soit enfin apportée à cette situation qui dure depuis trop longtemps. Merci.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of the request made by the hon. Member and same will be conveyed to the Central Water Authority for necessary action to be taken.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(7.44 p.m.)

MMA – CASUAL WORKERS EMPLOYMENT

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I rise tonight to direct my adjournment matter to the esteemed Minister of Agro-industry and Food Security, hon. Hurdoyal. I am deeply concerned about the continued employment of casual workers at the Mauritius Meat Authority where a substantial number of individuals have laboured for several years under this precarious employment status. This pro-acted casual employment situation has given rise to severe hardship in the life of these dedicated workers affecting their job security, financial stability and access to essential employment benefits. Could the hon. Minister use his good office to look into the matter. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr T. Hurdoyal): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you to the hon. Member for saying these nice words to me and thank you for drawing the attention of the problem at MMA. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I met those casual workers during a site visit and I am concerned about their problems. My Ministry is having meetings with MMA and hopefully we are going to come up with a solution soon. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

(7.46 p.m.)

HENRIETTA & SHERAAWALEE MANDIR – EMBELLISHMENT WORK

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Environment and it concerns *les travaux d'embellissements* which are being held at La Chapelle, Henrietta and Sheraawalee Mandir in Henrietta as well. These works, I understand, have been approved and I would request the hon. Minister to please use his good office to start the works at the earliest. Thank you.

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): Oui, M. le président, je prends note des deux demandes faites et, bien sûr, je tiendrai la Chambre au courant.

(7.46 p.m.)

SERGE ALFRED SWIMMING POOL – RENOVATION WORKS

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, ma requête ce soir s'adresse au ministre des Sports et concerne la fermeture prolongée de la piscine Serge Alfred à Beau Bassin. Cette piscine, M. le président, est en effet fermée depuis février de cette année pour des réparations, et à ce jour, il n'y a aucun signe que les travaux vont, ne serait-ce, débuter. Je me fais donc ce soir, M. le président, le porte-parole des parents des nageurs des trois clubs qui sont sévèrement pénalisés en raison de la fermeture de cette piscine.

L'attention du ministre a été attiré par une pétition que les parents du club de CAMO lui ont fait parvenir le 29 septembre de cette année, et dois-je rappeler que la fermeture prolongée de la piscine Serge Alfred prive non seulement les nageurs de Beau Bassin et d'ailleurs d'une activité récréative essentielle, mais elle a également un impact sur le bien-être physique et le développement de leurs compétences sportives. Je demande donc à l'honorable ministre de

prendre les mesures nécessaires pour que des travaux de réparations soient rapidement effectués dans l'intérêt des nageurs. Je vous remercie.

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint):
 Merci, M. le président. Le problème de la piscine de Serge Alfred est assez complexe. Cependant, les nageurs des différents clubs sont offerts des options au même prix à la piscine de Côte d'Or. Donc, récemment, nous avons eu assez d'argent dans le budget, et donc, *le Mauritius Sports Council* va bientôt entamer toutes les procédures. Enfin, ce n'est pas une simple réparation, mais c'est de revoir tout le bassin qui à l'époque a été fait avec du carrelage. L'idée, c'est de remplacer le bassin avec de l'inox comme c'est à Côte d'Or afin que le bassin devienne plus solide.

Donc, dois-je rappeler à la Chambre que ce n'est qu'en juin que le *Mauritius Sports Council* a eu le budget nécessaire, c'est-à-dire, je crois, au tour de 40 millions. Bien sûr, il y a toutes les études à faire, le *tendering process*, etc. Donc, je fais appel aux nageurs, aux différents clubs, nous avons bien reçu les pétitions, mais on ne pourra pas trouver une solution dès demain. Cela va prendre encore un peu de temps et *hopefully* d'ici l'année prochaine, la piscine Serge Alfred sera à la norme encore plus moderne tout comme la piscine de Côte d'Or. Merci.

(7.49 p.m.)

CHAMP DE MARS - MAINTENANCE

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):
 Thank you. I would like to address the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Dr. Anwar Husnoo tonight regarding Champ de Mars, the maintenance level of which has reached an all-time low lately based on several complaints that I have received. It is very dirty. There are rubbish and litter all over the place, hundreds of rocks and bags have been placed along the exercise track and this is a source of dust-lifting during windy days. Champ de Mars is no longer the pleasant place it used to be.

Of course, there is COIREC, there is People PLC, there is a Chief Executive of the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, but my request of the hon. Minister tonight is to kindly ask *le premier parmi les citoyens*, the Lord Mayor of Port Louis, to kindly go and effect a site visit there and remedy the situation. Because the beautiful place that Champ de Mars used to be

is no longer the same. If you can go and have a look yourself, you are an elected member in Port Louis, you will be very disappointed. Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to check who is in charge of that situation and then deal with it afterwards.

(7.50 p.m.)

MUNICIPAL CENTRE – *ROUTE MILITAIRE* - INCIDENT

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the Minister of Local Government. On 22 September this year, there has been an unfortunate incident involving a nine-year-old girl whereby a door of the municipal centre at Route Militaire, the entrance door of the centre fell on this nine-year-old girl. The video is on Facebook and I can tell you that the images are really awful.

So, can I ask the hon. Minister to take necessary actions so that such an incident does not happen again, not only at the municipal centre at Route Militaire, but in all municipal centres, be it District Councils, municipal centres across the island and also if an enquiry can be done so as to ascertain who bears the responsibility for such an incident?

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very aware of that accident that happened. In fact, I went and visited that nine-year-old girl on the same night and I followed up on her over the next few days. The next day, we had a meeting in the Municipal Council of Port Louis. Investigation was done by MNI, Health and Safety, Municipal Council of Port Louis, not just at this particular place, but instruction has been given for investigation or rather checks to be done in all amenities run by the Council. I am not talking about just Port Louis, I am talking all the town councils around the island.

This has already been decided, so the work has already started and they are progressing because we have a lot of amenities around the island. So the works have started and they are progressing. As for the little girl, I am happy to say that she is improving. Thank you.

(7.53 p.m.)

BATHFIELD STREET, TRANQUEBAR – BROKEN PIPES – WATER SUPPLY

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Ma requête est dirigée vers le ministre de l'Énergie et des utilités publiques. Suite à des travaux effectués dans la région de Tranquebar depuis hier soir à la rue Bathfield, en face de l'école primaire Guy Rosemont, il y a eu un tuyau principal qui a été endommagé et une perte conséquente d'eau. Par conséquent, plusieurs maisons dans la région de Tranquebar se retrouvent sans fourniture d'eau depuis hier soir avec les inconvénients que cela comportent. Je fais donc un appel à l'honorable ministre de s'assurer que la Central Water Authority répare le tuyau au plus tôt possible et qu'entre temps, des camions citernes puissent approvisionner les familles affectées. Merci.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you. I have taken note of the request of the hon. Member and I can assure the Member that the message will be conveyed to the General Manager of the CWA just after Parliament is adjourned, today. Thank you.

(7.54 p.m.)

MAHEBOURG MUSEUM - BRANCHES - LOPPING

Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage, hon. Teeluck. We have an issue of branch lopping with regard to Mahebourg Museum. Attention of Management has been drawn but unfortunately up to now no concrete solution has been found. I am informed that the Fire Services have been contacted but they cannot provide the ladder to reach the height for lopping the branches. I would kindly request that you intervene for a timely solution because same is posing hazards for inhabitants residing on the adjacent road going towards Tombeau Cimetière which is a lane very frequently used. Thank you, hon. Minister.

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for highlighting this issue and bringing to my attention the problem of lopping. I will certainly take it up with the Board and the administration to sort out. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: You have the privilege to be the last Member.

(7.55 p.m.)

**DEBARCADERE, CITÉ ILLOIS & MORCELLEMENT ILLOIS – BROKEN PIPES –
WATER SUPPLY**

Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au ministre Lesjongard, ministre des Utilités publiques concernant la fourniture d'eau dans la région de Debarcadère, Cité Illois et Morcellement Illois. Donc, il paraît qu'il y a des tuyaux défectueux et cela diminue la pression depuis quelques semaines. Il y a des jours que les habitants restent sans eau. Donc, je souhaiterais dire qu'il y a des enfants, des jeunes, des écoliers et des maisons qui sont sans eau, des fois pendant de longues journées. Je demanderais donc au ministre s'il peut solliciter la CWA pour intervenir pour au moins améliorer la situation Debarcadère, Cité Illois et Morcellement Illois.

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr G. Lesjongard): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will convey the message to the CWA so that action can be taken.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much. We have come to the end of the Sitting.

At 7.55 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned for Tuesday 24 October 2023 at 11.30 a.m.