

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

HSC EXAMINATIONS – *KREOL MORISYEN* – CORE SUBJECT

(No. B/1344) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the forthcoming Higher School Certificate Examinations, she will state if students thereof will be allowed to sit for Kreol Morisyen as a main subject therein, indicating the measures taken to facilitate same.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, *Kreol Morisyen* was introduced in Grade 10 as an optional subject in Academic Year 2021-2022 for students who sat for KM as an optional core subject for the National Certificate of Education. This year, the first cohort of candidates comprising 182 students, is sitting for *Kreol Morisyen* Assessment Papers conducted by the National Examination Board. The Assessment will lead to a National School Certificate in KM awarded by the University of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, tremendous efforts were made to ensure the students pursue their studies in KM. These efforts have culminated into the current sitting of KM as a historic first at the National School Certificate Level and successful candidates will be awarded the School Certificate in KM pitched at level 3 of the National Qualification Framework.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it's important to highlight that this progress in achievement in KM Certification has been a long road which has been carefully planned and prepared for the successful outcome of the National School Certificate in KM. The MIE and the University of Mauritius have worked on the development of the curriculum educational resources and textbooks. My Ministry has set up a technical committee comprising representatives of my Ministry, the University of Mauritius, the Mauritius Institute of Education, the Mauritius Examination Syndicate and the National Examination Board to assess our readiness for the introduction of KM in the first place at advanced subsidiary level and subsequently at advanced level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the availability of an adequate number of educators to teach the subject at Grade 12 remains an imperative. Mr Speaker, Sir, the introduction of KM at Grade 12 Advanced Subsidiary Level is envisaged but we have to first build up experience at the School Certificate Level and carefully evaluate the performance of students. We are only at the first

sitting of the National School certificate in KM this year. We must engage in a thorough evaluation and monitoring of this assessment, gauge the performance of students and ensure that we put in place the building blocks for a successful drive towards the introduction of KM at AS and subsequently at AL Level.

Curriculum development is being effected at the level of the MIE and the University of Mauritius. The training of an adequate number of educators to teach KM at Grade 12 level remains another important aspect that needs our attention. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am confident that the House will understand that it is only through careful planning and capacity building that we would be able to move confidently ahead.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, le *Kreol Morisyen* a été introduit en grade 1 depuis 2012, soit 11 ans de cela. Gouverner, c'est prévoir. La ministre ne pense-t-elle pas qu'il était prévisible que les étudiants allaient prendre le *Kreol Morisyen* comme matière principale dans les prochains examens de la HSC ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: M. le président, nous savons que nous avons affaire, là, à des jeunes et nous sommes en train de parler des examens. Il nous faut vraiment assurer que l'évaluation est du niveau requis et c'est pour cela que nous sommes en train de *tread cautiously* et nous voulons qu'une fois terminée, ces examens ont le niveau qu'il faut et ont bien sûr la reconnaissance que nous voulons pour les élèves ayant pris ces sujets au niveau de la School Certificate tout comme plus tard au niveau du Higher School Certificate. Nous avons fait un gros travail. Nous savons qu'on a eu plusieurs difficultés au cours des années mais nous avons fait de sorte à ce que le sujet puisse être introduit au niveau du School Certificate et nous avons même été au-delà de cela en mettant sur pied le National Examination Board.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: La ministre pourrait-elle affirmer quand exactement est-ce que les étudiants pourront prendre cette matière comme sujet principal au niveau HSC ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: M. le président, je viens d'expliquer qu'il y a un travail qui se fait au niveau du comité. Ils sont en train de travailler sur le curriculum. Il va devoir aussi venir avec suffisamment de littérature au niveau du *Kreol Morisyen* dans le *standardised form* de la langue.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Plus de 11 ans de cela !

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**ABDOOL RAMAN ABDOOL GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – INFRASTRUCTURAL
WORKS – CONTRACT**

(No. B/1353) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Abdool Raman Abdool Government School, in Port Louis, she will state if tenders have been awarded for the implementation of Phase II of the proposed infrastructural works thereof, indicating the – (a) name of the successful bidder;

(b) contract value, and

(c) expected start and completion date thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ B/388 of 25 April 2023 wherein I had informed that bid for the project was launched on 23 April 2023 with 29 May 2023 as closing date. I am now informed that following the recommendation of the Central Procurement Board, my Ministry had, on 18 August 2023, informed all bidders that the bidding exercise has been cancelled in accordance with Section 39 of the Public Procurement Act. I am further informed that new bidding documents have already been sent to the CPB for vetting following which the tender documents will be launched again.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, yet again, this bidding exercise is being cancelled. This process of bidding exercise dates back to, if I am not wrong, maybe 10 years. Mr Speaker, Sir, the last bidding exercise, I recall, was since 2019 and then it was awarded to a Contractor and cancelled again. Now, referring to the last PQ by myself in April this year, bidding exercise was launched but can I ask the hon. Minister why again and again this bidding exercise is being cancelled?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as stressed by the hon. Member with regard to this project, hon. Dr. Husnoo has been following this project with me for a number of years I should say but I must say that we have been very harsh on the officers and we've been asking

them to make sure that things move on smoothly as from now but I thank the hon. Member for having put the question allowing me to follow up further on this particular project.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, but I am sorry to say. You haven't given a plausible explanation as to why the tender exercise has been cancelled. Why each time you say you are following the exercise when I want to know what the reason is?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, in July 2023, the Central Procurement Board wrote to the Ministry saying that there were missing bid documents and according to Section 39 of the Public Procurement Act, they had to cancel the bidding exercise but I must say that in spite of the fact that the project started long time back, there were phases I and II and this is the phase II that we are stumbling.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

- (i) The French-Speaking Union Bill (No. XV of 2023);*
- (ii) The Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (Amendment) Bill (No. XVI of 2023).*

Second Reading

**THE MAURITIUS COMMERCIAL BANK FOUNDATION (AMENDMENT)
BILL**

(NO. XIV OF 2023)

Order for Second Reading read.

(4.21 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I move that the Mauritius Commercial Bank Foundation (Amendment) Bill (No. XIV of 2023) be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to give a brief historical perspective for a complete understanding of this Bill. The MCB Foundation was founded in 1988 by the Mauritius Commercial Bank to mark its 150 years of existence. It was established as a body corporate under the MCB Foundation Act 1990, with the object of granting annually a scholarship, tenable abroad, to a Mauritian student to read for a first-degree course not exceeding 4 years in duration. The Scholarship, covering full tuition fees, airfares and living allowances as approved by the Board, is awarded on the Economics Side on the basis of the ranking of a student on a combined list after the State of Mauritius Scholarship. The name of the MCB Foundation Laureate is announced alongside the names of the State of Mauritius and the Additional Laureates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since its creation, the MCB Foundation has continuously strived to uplift the aspirations of our youth by granting scholarships to deserving Mauritian students.

To-date, a total number of 34 students have benefitted from this life-changing opportunity, a gateway to higher education overseas offered by the Foundation. Over the past five years, some Rs37 million have been disbursed by the MCB Foundation. Currently, the Foundation is sponsoring four laureates, with an annual cost of Rs2.5 million per laureate. It is also worth pointing out that many of the laureates have opted for higher studies in Economics and Finance, and one has chosen a law degree with financerelated modules.

As part of their journey, the laureates are expected to serve the country and the institution that has believed in and sponsored them. There is however no bonding system that formalises this requirement. In this context, the House would wish to know that four former laureates are currently working at the MCB, nine others are working in other organisations in Mauritius while the rest are either working overseas or studying.

It is worth noting that, as at now, the MCB Foundation, in line with its Act, requires its laureates to pursue studies in fields such as Economics, Accountancy, Computer Science, or related disciplines. However, the MCB Foundation Board has pointed out that, while traditional subjects like Accounting and Finance, Economics, Business and Management are still offered at highly rated universities, there are now new emerging programmes that match current and future employment needs. These include fields like Development Studies, Financial Engineering, Data Science, Risk Management Compliance, International Management, Finance and Law, Operational Research and Statistics, Cyber Security, Automation and Robotics. Unfortunately, these do not fall within the ambit of the scholarship.

In light of these developments and to respond to the present and future needs of the evolving world of work, the MCB Foundation Board has considered the possibility of offering scholars more flexibility in their choice of fields of study while keeping abreast of the ongoing developments in the banking sector, such as, increased investments and digital transformation. On the other hand, it is also believed that the possibility of providing scholarships in these new areas will contribute to further building and strengthening capacity in key future sectors of industry and provide a competitive edge to the public and private sectors on the regional and global scene.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the amendments being proposed. As Members of the House probably know, as per the existing legislation, Section 4 of the MCB Foundation Act provides for a scholarship to be awarded each year to a Mauritian student –

- (a) ranking after those who have been awarded a State of Mauritius Scholarship on the Economics Side at the Cambridge Higher School Certificate Examinations, or any equivalent examination, held the previous year;
- (b) who has passed in 3 subjects at Principal Level, including Economics and Accountancy or Mathematics, and
- (c) who intends pursuing his studies at university level in Economics, Accountancy or Computer Science, or in such any other subject related to finance or economics as may be approved by the Board.

The MCB Foundation Board has requested my Ministry to bring the following amendments to the MCB Foundation Act –

- (a) Section 4 (b) – the words “including Economics and Accountancy or Mathematics” be repealed and replaced by “as provided under Part III, SubPart C - Economics Side of the Second Schedule to the Education Regulations 1957”.

It is to be noted that Part III – Sub-Part C of the Second Schedule to the Education Regulations 1957 referred to here, provides for the different subjects to be taken by students in accordance with the syllabuses approved for the Cambridge Higher School Certificate (HSC) in respect of the Economics Side.

- (b) Section 4 (c) to be repealed and replaced by the following: “who intends pursuing his studies at University level in disciplines falling under Economics, Accountancy, Finance or Information Technology, or in any other related subject, as may be approved by the Board.”

With the amendments proposed by the MCB Foundation Board, the choice of subjects to be eligible for the MCB Foundation Scholarship is being enlarged. Furthermore, the proposed amendments will not entail any consequential amendments to the Education Act 1957.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, thus provides for amendments to be brought to this Section 4 of the principal Act, 1990, to, *inter-alia*, enlarge the range, the spectrum of subjects for candidates to be eligible for the MCB Foundation Scholarship.

Accordingly clause 3 of the Bill makes provision for existing paragraphs (b) and (c) to be repealed and replaced by the following paragraphs, paragraph (b) –

- “(b) who, at Principal level, has passed in 3 subjects, being subjects listed in Part III, Sub-Part C of the Second Schedule to the Education Regulations 1957; and
- (c) who intends to pursue his studies at University level in a discipline falling under Economics, Accountancy, Finance or Information Technology or such related subject as the Board may approve;”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I avail myself of this opportunity to recognise and improve upon an initiative that has not only positively impacted the lives of so many young Mauritian talents but has also demonstrated the unwavering commitment of one of our most esteemed institution the Mauritius Commercial Bank to our nation’s progress.

Allow me then to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the MCB Foundation for their unwavering commitment to the development of our human capital in line with our country’s developmental agenda. They have demonstrated that businesses can be powerful agents of change, shaping the future of our nation through their support to education and the empowerment of our youth. I can only applaud the MCB Foundation in its endeavour to supplement the existing 72 scholarships offered by the Mauritian government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now commend the Bill to the House. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I first of all wish to thank the hon. Members from both sides of the House who have intervened and contributed to the debates on the MCB Foundation (Amendment) Bill (No. XIV of 2023). This indeed demonstrates their keen interests and the keen interest generated on the matter of education and human capital development and the importance that this scholarship has. It provides to our students the possibilities for higher education, eliminating barriers and constraints for our high achievers. Indeed this scholarship, Mr Speaker, Sir, will give the opportunity to our young high achievers to acquire new knowledge, new competencies, new skills that will allow them to contribute positively to the development of our country or any other place where they decide to reside.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the most important things that we have to bear in mind is that when a young person gets the opportunity to go abroad to study, to develop his competencies, along with this new set of skills, knowledge that he acquires, he should also develop very important values. We have been talking about honesty, we have been talking about a lot of good characteristics.

*Mr Speaker, Sir, knowledge, c'est le savoir mais avec le savoir, devrait aussi venir le savoir-faire et le savoir-être. Ces bourses permettent certainement à nos jeunes d'acquérir de nouvelles connaissances mais en même temps, il devrait aussi permettre à ces jeunes de développer les valeurs requises et ces valeurs sont tellement importantes parce que nos jeunes quand ils iront ailleurs, ils seront nos ambassadeurs. Ils vont démontrer les traits de l'île Maurice. M. le président, je suis entièrement d'accord avec l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad quand il vient dire que ces bourses doivent être, bien sur le base de – il a utilisé les termes de méritocratie, de la transparence, de la redevabilité, *accountability, transparency and meritocracy.**

I would like here, Mr Speaker, Sir, to draw his attention that all scholarships, may they be those given by the Government of Mauritius or by donor countries, whenever they pass through the Ministry of Education, the students are selected on the basis of meritocracy, transparency and accountability. This is the way we function at the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, I was saying earlier – *le savoir, le savoir-être et le savoirfaire.*

M. le président, l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad a parlé des gens qui ne savaient comment se comporter, qui ne savaient comment se présenter vis-à-vis des jeunes et s'il est à raison de dire que les gens doivent démontrer leur savoir-être, il faut aussi qu'on souligne l'importance, surtout sur les *high achievers*, que quand ils vont ailleurs, acquérir les connaissances, ils doivent aussi faire montre des valeurs qui leur sont passées. Je parle ici des valeurs telles que l'honnêteté, la gentillesse mais aussi très souvent attribuée aux jeunes qui sont très performants, les valeurs de l'humilité. They have to be humble. And this is what we as adults, we as Members of the Parliament, we as Educators, we as Heads of Institutions, should implicitly pass on to our children, to your young students. Humility, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a very important value and I think this is something we should underline and this is something that we should definitely ask our young students to acquire as they move on for their higher studies.

As mentioned earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, the amendments brought to the Bill tonight will widen the choice of fields of studies of the scholars to meet the demands of the new economy, to meet the demands of the new pillars of the economy but also to make Mauritius more competitive, not only on the regional but also on the world scene.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have listened carefully to the contribution of my colleagues and I have noted with satisfaction that there is consensus for enlarging the fields of studies in light of the development in the world of work, in the future of work but I will also draw the attention of my colleague, hon. Dr. Gungapersad, on the fact that when Bills are drafted, they are drafted by the State Law Office and there is a general rule of interpretation where it is clearly stated that the words importing to a masculine shall include the feminine and the neuter. Hence, we would not move for any amendment of the legislation but I would also draw the attention of the House on the fact that the trend today is to use the word 'her' to include both masculine, feminine and neuter. This is the new trend but this being said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not be moving for any amendment to the legislation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank the Attorney-General's Office, the officers of my Ministry, the Chairperson and Members of the MCB Foundation for their commitment and their contribution to bring the amendments to this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having said so, I would like to commend the MCB Foundation (Amendment) Bill (No. XIV of 2023) to the House.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

