**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**(For written reply)**

**QUESTION N0.2484{NW3092E}**

**INTERNAL QUESTI0N PAPER NO. 40 of 2020**

**DATE 0F PUBLICATION: 23 October 2020**

**Mr J R B Lorimer (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:**

1. (a) What are the reasons that parts of the fishing industry which were given exemption from permits until September have been unable to get their permits renewed and (b)(i) why has the online system been down and (ii) on what date is it envisaged to operate again;
2. Whether she has been informed that the lack of permits has stopped he catching, import and export of fish; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) what is she doing to remedy the situation and (b) by what date will the situation be remedied?

**THE MINISTER 0F F0RESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIER:**

1. (a) Despite being given a one and half months notice B apply for new permits, the majority of the industry operators submitted their applications for new permits on the eve of the expiration of the exemption given to them until the end of Alert Level 2 of the National Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown. Furthermore, a number of fishing seasons also commence in the 9ummer months and right holders are therefore applying for new permits which have ‹exulted in the current backlog. The Department is currently working on clearing a backlog of Permit Applications that have been submitted by the industry.

(b) (i) The Electronic Application System is not down, it is currently operational. The Department is experiencing a slight backlog in processing permits for the reasons explained above.

(ii) The Electronic Application System is currently operational.

1. A large number of applications that have been submitted to the Department do not meet the minimum application requirements, and have been returned to applicants for resubmission with full and up-to-date documentation æ that the applications can be processed. This causes delays in the Department being able B issue new permits. The Department has also received a large number of new applications since the start of Alert Level 1 Lockdown and is working to clear the backlog.
2. The Department has engaged with Industry Associations as well as individual applicants to prioritise the processing and issuing of the outstanding permits and licences that meet the requirements and have been submitted to the Department timeously. Staff in the relevant permitting sections will also be working overtime to assist in clearing the backlog.
3. It is envisaged that the existing backlog should be cleared by mid November 2020.

Regards

**MS B D CREECY, MP**

**MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Date**: 6/11/2020