

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ELECTORAL REFORM

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Ruling of the United Nations Human Rights Committee in 2012 following the complaint by ‘*Rézistans ek Alternative*’ regarding the non-compliance by Mauritius with the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, he will state –

- (a) where matters stand at the level of the Committee, as at to date, and
- (b) how Government proposes to follow up on the said Ruling, indicating if an electoral reform Bill with ‘*une dose de proportionnelle*’ and to do away with the obligation imposed on every candidate at general elections to declare the community to which he or she claims to belong will be introduced and, if so, when.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, prior to the last General Elections, every candidate at any general election was required to declare his community, pursuant to section 3(1) of the First Schedule to the Constitution.

In 2007, the political party “*Rezistans Ek Alternativ*” challenged the above requirement before the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC).

The United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) concluded that the requirement of mandatory classification of a candidate for a general election constituted a violation of Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) also reminded that Mauritius was under an obligation to provide the complainants with an effective and enforceable remedy and avoid similar violations in the future.

This is precisely what Government is in the process of doing.

In December 2011, following a Judgment of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, the political party “*Rezistans Ek Alternativ*” entered two constitutional Plaints which are still pending before the Supreme Court.

Consequently, in July 2014, Parliament passed the Constitution (Declaration of Community) (Temporary Provisions) Bill which removed the mandatory requirement for a candidate to declare his community.

However, the above Act applied only to the first general election held after the commencement of the Act. For subsequent general elections, candidates will still have to declare their community, if no change is brought to the law. For this reason, “*Rezistans Ek Alternativ*” has maintained its constitutional complaints which have been fixed to 03 November 2015 for merits.

The House will appreciate that we can only report new developments to the Human Rights Committee once the matter has been resolved at the level of the Supreme Court.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) of the question, as the House is aware, with respect to electoral reform the Government Programme 2015–2019 provides as follows -

Paragraph 264:

“Our electoral system will be reformed to introduce a dose of proportional representation in the National Assembly and guarantee better women representation.”

The Government Programme also provides that Government will eradicate fraud, corruption, malpractices and irregularities in all aspects of public life and restore our national values based on discipline, work ethics and good governance. To this end, a Financing of Political Parties Act will be enacted.

Madam Speaker, since the year 2000, there have been several Reports and Commissions that have looked into the electoral system of Mauritius, namely -

- (i) the Sachs Commission (2001);
- (ii) the Report of the Select Committee on the “introduction of a measure of Proportional Representation in our Electoral System (2002);
- (iii) the Report of the Select Committee on the “Funding of Political parties” (2002);

- (iv) the Carcassonne Report (Dec 2011);
- (v) the Sithanen Report (January 2012);
- (vi) Modernising the Electoral System (March 2014).

This Government has pledged to adopt a genuinely decentralised and participative approach in decision making and a consultative approach in matters directly relating to the Constitution of the country in all cases where the interest of the public at large is at stake.

On the other hand, in line with its reporting obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Mauritius should have submitted its fifth National Periodic Report to the Human Rights Committee in 2010. This was however not done. I am proposing to submit the Report early next year.

Madam Speaker, upon the advice of the Solicitor-General tendered on 16 October 2015, Government proposes to inform the Human Rights Committee that Government stands committed to reform our electoral system so as to introduce a dose of proportional representation in the National Assembly and guarantee better women's representation. Furthermore, the Electoral Supervisory Commission will be given wider powers to control and sanction fraud, corruption and conflict of interests during election time and also to monitor political funding and abuse of position of power. The issue of mandatory declaration of community will be addressed in the wider context of the electoral reform proposed by the Government.

Madam Speaker, the last General Elections in December 2014 has in effect acted as referendum and thus people of Mauritius have made an unequivocal choice. I wish to draw the attention of the House, that the proposals of the previous regime, were more in the personal interests of two party leaders rather than in the national interest. The population rather opted for the programme proposed by *L'Alliance Lepep* which was for the clean-up of the country to create a conducive environment for sustainable development and economic growth.

Madam Speaker, this Government has pledged to conduct business on the principles of discipline, transparency and accountability. Good governance is the order of the day and we will restore trust and confidence in all aspects of public and institutional life.

Madam Speaker, I would like to state that I am not prepared to accept a PR model that will disturb the verdict of the Mauritian electorate and frustrate the will of our people. In this respect, I propose to set up a Ministerial Committee; to examine and make

recommendations on electoral reforms as proposed in our Government Programme 2015-2019. Appropriate consultations will thereafter be held with all stakeholders.

Mr Bérenger: I understand that Government has decided to wait for the case that is coming before the Supreme Court. Do I take it, therefore, that since the last general elections, the Human Rights Committee in Geneva has not been informed of the pending case and of the stand of Government and that it is now, from what I heard, that Government is going to inform the UN Human Rights Committee what is the situation?

The Prime Minister: That is so, Madam Speaker.

Mr Bérenger: Can I, again, ask there has been no correspondence from their end, from the side of UN Human Rights Committee on that case?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know whether there has been locally any representation as far as *Rezistans Ek Alternativ* is concerned - representations to the Government?

The Prime Minister: Not that I am aware of, but we are waiting for the verdict of the Supreme Court.

Mr Bérenger: The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has reminded us of what was provided for *une dose de proportionnelle*, in both the present Government's Electoral Programme and later on the 2015-2019 Government Programme. Does that include bringing down the threshold for parties to be qualified to 5%?

The Prime Minister: Well, I can't answer to that. When we will be taking decision, we will consider that.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the Rt. hon. Prime Minister must be fully aware that, as far as I can see, no one has ever proposed a proportional representation, *une dose de proportionnelle* - rather to use the very words which were used in their programme - no one has proposed a *dose de proportionnelle* that would overturn the result of the electorate. Does the Rt. hon. Prime Minister agree that, in fact, no one has ever proposed that?

The Prime Minister: Well, I don't think I'll agree to that. We all know that the kind of amendment that was being proposed by the MMM in the past would certainly have disturbed the verdict of the electorate.

Mr Bérenger: I hope the Rt. hon. Prime Minister is not referring to the time when he was in the MMM and proposed what we proposed then. Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister give me any reference, on what occasion, what proposal did the MMM make at any time down history lane which would have disturbed the result of the elections, that is, the result at the level of constituencies? Can I be reminded? Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister be kind enough to remind me on what occasion was that proposed, in what form?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the MMM has all the time in mind, the same type of amendment based on what had been done in Rodrigues.

Mr Bérenger: Reference has been made to Rodrigues. I need not quote from what the Rt. hon. Prime Minister said in the case of Rodrigues on 20 November 2001, where he said - I'll quote - when he was presenting the Bill for *autonomie* -

“Fear has been expressed that a party which obtains a clear cut majority at the local regional level – that is, constituencies – may find itself without a majority after the allocation of seats on an island region basis – that is, *à la proportionnelle*. With the system proposed, this is unlikely to happen. However, to allay such fear, provision has been made in clause 11(10) for additional seats to be allocated to the winning party so as to preserve its majority.”

And the hon. Prime Minister then continued -

“This is, of course, an exception. The proposed system may not be perfect - in fact there is no perfect system anywhere in the world - but it is the best for Rodrigues.”

As described by the then Prime Minister and now Prime Minister. Will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that what went wrong in Rodrigues is not the electoral system proposed, it is the fact that the then Chief Commissioner quarrelled with some of his people who left him and he found himself in a minority. It has nothing to do with the electoral system!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Well, the result of the electorate had naturally been disturbed. The majority was diminished. I must tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that he should know that I have always stood by the principle that the verdict of the electorate should not be disturbed. But since my Government at that time, all of them, decided that we should go with

that law insofar as Rodrigues is concerned, I brought the Bill in the House and as Prime Minister, was it not my duty to defend it? Could I have done otherwise?

Mr Bérenger: Yes, but would the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that there is no comparison possible between Rodrigues and Mauritius in terms of the number of elected people, Members of the elected Assembly, the size of the electorate and there is no requirement there to declare your community when you have elections for the Regional autonomy Assembly? Will he agree with me that the comparison does not apply at all and that therefore we should work out something for the whole of Mauritius, including Rodrigues, for this National Assembly and not go on this wrong track which he is adopting as if what has happened in Rodrigues - for the wrong reasons, in fact - can be duplicated here in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: Well, in fact, this is what we are doing. I have said it in my answer.

Mr Bérenger: Can I be provided with any detail of the Ministerial Committee that is going to be set up? Is it going to be set up even before the case in the Supreme Court takes place? Are we going to inform the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva that a Ministerial Committee is going to be set up?

The Prime Minister: The case is coming very soon. I hope the judgment will not be delayed. It will depend when the judgment is going to be delivered. If there is a long delay, then we will have to act.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he will agree with me that there are two completely different things: electoral reform has been with us for a long time and it had nothing and has nothing to do with individuals; *la deuxième république, le partage des pouvoirs* is another matter, but now we are talking about electoral reform and this has absolutely nothing to do...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bérenger: This has absolutely nothing to do with individuals. What is being discussed has been discussed for the last 30 years and that, therefore, we should not mix issues; mix the issue of electoral reform with the issue of the *rééquilibrage des pouvoirs entre*

le Président et le Premier ministre. Will he agree with me that we will not move forward if we keep on mixing those two issues?

The Prime Minister: Well, we don't agree with that.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister the following: in the decision of the Committee Experts delivered on 15 January 2015, following the communication of *Rézistans ek Alternative*, I read, at paragraph 15.5, a very important element which is reference to the 1972 Census. Here, the Committee Experts - if I may be allowed to quote - states that it has looked into it and it says –

“The Committee therefore finds, taking into account the State party's failure to provide an adequate justification in this regard (...)”

Here, it was in regard to the Census of 1972 that had not been updated -

“(...) and without expressing a view as to the appropriate form of the State party's or any other electoral system, that the continued maintenance of the requirement of mandatory classification of a candidate for general elections without the corresponding updated figures of the community affiliation of the population in general would appear to be arbitrary (...)”

The fact that it has not been updated –

“(...) and therefore violates article 25 (b) of the Covenant.”

Having noted what was said at paragraph 15.5 of the experts' opinion delivered, as I stated, on 15 January 2015, could the hon. Prime Minister tell us what exactly does his Government propose to do in order to address this particular remark of the experts that says that the stand of Mauritius not to update this Census of 1972 is itself a violation of Article 26 of the Convention because I am also aware, as everyone else, the hon. Prime Minister would recall...

Madam Speaker: Ask your question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: That's the last part.

Madam Speaker: You should give the opportunity as others also want to have the floor! Please, be accurate and short!

Mr Mohamed: That's the last part. The hon. Prime Minister would recall that this is also a view and whether he would consider re-actualising this Census as also agreed because I have seen also his partner, the actual Deputy Prime Minister, stated in public that he would be agreeable to that.

Madam Speaker: We have understood your question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, when we will come with the reform, there will be no reason to deal with any census.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, may I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware of the several representations made by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly or political parties in Rodrigues with regard to the issue of proportional representation in the sense that it does not represent *les vœux de l'électorat à Rodrigues* and that they have requested in the past - and this has never been entertained - that this be amended?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is a fact that representations have been made on several occasions. Recently, I was in Rodrigues, request has been made officially, I had been round, the feeling of the people in general is that they are fed up with the present system and that there should be remedial action. There should be a new electoral system for Rodrigues and I agree with them.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

(Interruptions)

Mr Leopold: Indeed, this **proportional** system in Rodrigues causes instability because out of six regions in Rodrigues we won four and we are ruling with only one majority in Parliament. So, it causes instability. I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister - because that system of allocation of proportional seats for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has caused instability to the First-Past-The-Post system - whether he will consider amending the law shortly?

The Prime Minister: I have just said it.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: I heard the Rt. hon. Prime Minister mention that there is going to be a Ministerial Committee which will look into this whole electoral reform. May I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether this Committee will have full powers or will it be bound by the commitment already taken during the elections and set out in the *manifeste électoral* of *l'Alliance Lepep*, namely, that –

« Une dose de proportionnelle sera introduite ; le seuil d'éligibilité pour les sièges proportionnels sera 5% des votes nationaux recueillis ; une représentativité d'un tiers des femmes sera assurée ; le système de Best Loser sera maintenu. »

Will this Ministerial Committee be bound by what has been in the *manifeste électoral*?

The Prime Minister: We will try to stick to our principles and our promises as far as possible.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: May I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, in view of the urgency of the matter and in view of the fact that the Bill, which is passed by the previous Government in 2014 was a sunset Bill, we have to find another formula for the next election, and also, in view of the fact that that the Privy Council said in his judgement in 2011, I quote -

“That if the issues cannot be resolved politically, they may be raised before the Judicial Committee in the future.”

And another sentence was –

“It remains open to the applicant to advance a constitutional challenge in the future.”

So, this is the invitation of the Privy Council for the complainant to come before the Privy Council to find a solution. The Privy Council ruled on the matter. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to take up the previous question that has been put? Political reform is a matter of compromise. Wouldn't the Rt. hon. Prime Minister think that it will be better to set up a Committee of the House so that all political parties as well as those outside the House - because we are all for political reforms in this House - can be heard?

The Prime Minister: When there have been Select Committees in the past and my personal feeling is that we will never come to a conclusion, we will never come to an agreement. We have taken the responsibility. We want to take the whole responsibility to discharge that burden which is on us and finally re-consult the population. I hope that the population will agree with us.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: A lot of detailed work has been done in the past; going back to the days when the Rt. hon. Prime Minister was Prime Minister and all the way back to 1982 and later on. A lot of work has been done, both at the Prime Minister Office's level, but also at the Solicitor General, the State Law Office and the Attorney General's Office. A lot of work was done at the Attorney General's Office until the eve of the last elections. I am not saying that the work was completed, but a lot of progress was made. Has the Rt. hon. Prime Minister been able to get help from the Attorney General to trace the latest drafts that had been ready at the level of the Attorney General's, Solicitor General's Office?

The Prime Minister: We will certainly consult all these. We will do that.

Mr Bérenger: Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister circulate whatever the latest version prepared at the Attorney General's and Solicitor General's Office is available?

The Prime Minister: I do not see any need for me to circulate.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, any questions?

Mr Bérenger: No.

Madam Speaker: That's all. Questions! Hon. Bhagwan!

**METHADONE SUBSTITUTION THERAPY PROGRAMME – MINISTER OF
HEALTH - STATEMENT**

(No. B/706) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit Whether he will state if he has taken cognizance of a letter addressed to him by the President of the association *Prevention Information et Lutte contre le SIDA* requesting the revocation of the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life, following a recent statement made by the Honourable Minister, in Rose Hill, with

regard to the drug addicts who are being treated under the Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme and, if so, indicate if he proposes to take any action in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the President of the association “*Prevention, Information et Lutte contre le SIDA,*” commonly known as PILS, has indeed addressed a letter to me on 07 October 2015 following a statement made by the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life.

Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the statement in question was made by the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life within the context of a political meeting of “*Mouvement Libérateur*” on Thursday 01 October 2015, but this has been blown out of proportion.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has explained to me that it was just a ‘*boutade*’ and he had no thought of offending anybody or any group through his comments. I do not think, therefore, that it is reasonable to ask a Minister to step down following such a remark made in jest during a political meeting, within a particular context, and which, I must say, did not warrant all the hue and cry, let alone a revocation. I am satisfied that there was no ill-will on the part of the Minister. Besides, the Minister is not guilty of any act of fraud or dishonesty, nor has he committed any breach of the oath of allegiance or the oath for the due execution of his office of Minister.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that since the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life had announced that alternative treatment strategies would be introduced for new patients, there has been an uproar from some NGOs. The new treatment proposed using Suboxone followed by Naltrexone, aims at working towards detoxification, rehabilitation and ultimately giving a chance to those persons to reintegrate the mainstream society.

Madam Speaker, my Government aims to rehabilitate drug dependent patients so that they come out of the vicious circle of addiction with the ultimate goal for their economic, social and welfare integration in the mainstream of our society.

Besides, in a spirit of collaboration with the NGOs, on 25 September 2015, the hon. Minister of Health had a formal working session at the PILS office in Port Louis with Mr Neelen Vencadasamy, President of PILS, Mr N. Ritter, Director and other staff as well as the senior staff of the Ministry to discuss the collaboration between the NGO and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life

Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life has made a Statement in this august Assembly on 13 October 2015 that experts from UNAIDS will carry out a full and comprehensive evaluation to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the Needle Exchange Programme and the Methadone Maintenance Therapy programmes since their inception in 2006 and to come up with appropriate recommendations.

Mr Bhagwan: In the reply made by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, it is clear that the Rt. hon. Prime Minister will not revoke his Minister. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has informed the House that he has been informed by the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, but following his visit to Cape Town, he met the Executive Director of UNAIDS and requested for a full comprehensive evaluation of the two programmes, namely the Methadone Substitution Therapy and the Needle Exchange Programme and to come up with appropriate recommendations as stated by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. With the Rt. hon. Prime Minister request his Minister of Health and Quality of Life to go back to what prevailed until the recent decision from the two programmes namely the Methadone Therapy and the Needle Exchange Programme?

The Prime Minister: I don't see the importance of this question. All this is being taken care of.

Mr Bérenger: If I can say something on that. What the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life proposed at one side disturbed completely both the Methadone System and the *Seringue* Distribution System and also the confidentiality clauses under which these programmes were being performed. Well, this happened at a given point in time. Can I be allowed to congratulate the hon. Minister that he has gone to Mr Michel Sidibé, Chief Executive Director of USAIDS and UNAIDS - UNAIDS which have been full of praise for precisely those two programmes. I congratulate him that he has requested that very UNAIDS to come with a full and comprehensive evaluation of the two programmes. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister would it not be in order to go back to what prevailed until that evaluation is fully carried out and then, *à tête reposée*, whatever changes need to be made will be made?

Madam Speaker: I just wish to draw the attention of hon. Members that the question is on the request for the revocation of the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life and that the Rt. hon. Prime Minister will not be able to reply to questions which concern the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: The Rt. hon. Prime Minister just mentioned that what was said by the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life was a '*boutade*'. In order to avoid this type of

dérápape, would the Rt. hon. Prime Minister consider coming forward with a code of conduct for Ministers?

The Prime Minister: Well, the amount of *dérápape* that we see every day from the other side, I am surprised.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Sesungkur!

POLICE - ARBITRARY ARREST

(No. B/707) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to alleged arbitrary arrests, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of complaints filed over the period 2009 to 2014, indicating if an estimate of the contingent liabilities pending on Government as a result thereof has been made, and
- (b) steps being taken for the prevention of the occurrence thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 5 civil cases related to alleged arbitrary/unlawful arrest had been lodged against the Police from 2009 to 2014 and damages amounting to Rs13.5 m. were claimed.

In 2 cases settlement has been reached between the two parties for a total amount of Rs625,000 without admission of any additional liability, and in the remaining 3 cases the Court decided in favour of the plaintiffs and awarded damages amounting to a total of Rs174,180.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, mention has been made in the Government Programme 2015-2019 for the proposed introduction of a modern legal framework modelled on the UK Police and Criminal Evidence Act to address the abusiveness and arbitrariness of the present system of “Provisional Charges”.

In view of the sensitive and complex nature of the issue, it is imperative to have wide consultations with all stakeholders before introducing a new Bill in the National Assembly. This consultation process, which will take some time, will start as soon as the fresh draft Bill is finalised by the Attorney General’s Office.

I also wish to inform the House that, as announced in the Government Programme, an Independent Police Complaints Commission will be set up and it is expected, among others, to act as a deterrent to any abuse from the Police, including arbitrary arrests. The relevant legislation is presently being drafted by the Attorney General's Office.

Mr Sesungkur: Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister agree that the past few years have been the darkest period of our democracy in regard to the number of arrests of innocent people, I am thinking of Pascale Bodet, Suda Singh and also of political opponents like hon. Sawmynaden, yourself, Madam Speaker, and the hon...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur, please don't mention names!

Mr Sesungkur: So, will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister agree that nobody is above the law but, at the same time, there should not be blatant abuse as it was the case under the previous regime?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have just said that we are looking into the whole matter; we will come with legislation so that what happened will be things of the past.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, may I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, being given that we are talking about liberty, a constitutional right, whether we have a time frame as to when this Government will come forward with that much awaited piece of legislation?

The Prime Minister: As I have said, the Bill is being worked out by the Attorney General's office. I can't give the exact time frame.

Mr Ganoo: The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has given us the number of arbitrary arrests that have taken place and millions of rupees that are being paid by the State as a result of these arbitrary arrests. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether the Attorney General's Office shouldn't review the limitation period that is given for a citizen of this country to sue the State, especially in case of arbitrary arrest? Today, the period is two years; whether in case of Police brutally only, perhaps, we should not review this limitation period and eliminate it completely?

The Prime Minister: These abuses have been tolerated by their past ally; we have said that we are going to do everything so that these things do not happen again, of course, as far as possible. In many countries, more advanced, more democratic there are always sometimes these unhappy things happening.

PROSTITUTION RELATED OFFENCES - ARREST

(No. B/708) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to prostitution related offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of raids carried out in brothels in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively, indicating the -

- (a) number of arrests effected in connection therewith;
- (b) amount of money seized as proceeds thereof, and
- (c) measures being taken to deal therewith.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of raids carried out in dwelling houses used as brothels in regard to prostitution of related offences are as follows -

Year	Number of Raids
2011	9
2012	5
2013	4
2014	2
Total	20

In regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am further informed that 49 persons, including three minors, were arrested during these raids and a total sum of Rs58,700 were seized as exhibits for the purpose of enquiry.

In regard to part (c) of the question, the following measures are ongoing to deal with prostitution related offences -

- (i) maintain Police presence and mobile patrols in risk prone areas;
- (ii) stop and search on suspected persons and vehicles;

- (iii) undertake crack down and joint operations with the support of different units such as Special Support Unit and Special Mobile Force;
- (iv) pre-position Police Response Team at identified locations;
- (v) deploy Community Policing Officers and Neighbourhood Officers for door to door sensitisation of the community in general, and
- (vi) deploy Field Intelligence Officers from the Divisional Crime Intelligence Unit for information gathering for proactive and targeted actions. I am also informed by the Ministry of Gender, Child Development and Family Welfare that a series of measures is taken by the Child Development Unit to deal with offences related to prostitution and involving children. Some of these measures are as follows -
 - (i) since all cases of alleged child prostitution are referred to the Child Development Unit, the latter carries out a social enquiry and where required, immediate and long-term protective and support services are provided at the six Family Support Bureaux across the island in terms of psychological counselling and legal advice. Sometimes the child victims are removed from dangerous environment and are placed in safe places where they are taken care of by qualified professionals;
 - (ii) a hotline/help number 113 is available for reporting prostitutions involving children;
 - (iii) assistance such as medical examination is provided;
 - (iv) through its Community Childwatch Committees, the Child Development Unit provides proximity service and surveillance of children exposed to any form of violence, and
 - (v) protocols of collaboration between the Child Development Unit, the Police and Ministry of Health and Quality of Life have been established to ensure continuous care to child victims.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister agree that our society took a dangerous slope of the past few years when we look at the degree of immorality about the *nation zougader* and the mentality to make easy money ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur, your question relates to prostitution related offences, now you are talking of *nation zougader!*

Mr Sesungkur: I was elaborating on the state of affairs of our society and how the Government is taking measures to remedy the situation.

The Prime Minister: Well, it is said *l'exemple vient d'en haut!*

(Interruptions)

So, I am not surprised of what took place; but I have already answered: all the steps that are being taken.

Mr Ramful: Madam Speaker, I think our law on prostitution, as it stands, provides for the offence of importuning, that is, those who solicit for immoral purposes and also for keeping brothel. However, the law is silent as regards those who incite others to prostitute for financial gains. Would the Rt. hon. Prime Minister consider the possibility of coming with amendments to provide for those offences?

The Prime Minister: Well, I will have to look up whether the law is silent.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

HORSE RACING - COMMISSION OF INQUIRY - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/709) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether he will state if he has inquired from the Secretary for Home Affairs if he has officially received copy of the Interim Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing submitted to him by the former President of the Republic and, if so, indicate the reasons why no action has been taken in regard to the recommendations made by the Commissioner and, if not, will he consider ordering an inquiry to be carried out to trace out the report at the Prime Minister's Office.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in view of the fact that we already have the final Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing and that my Ministry has already initiated actions to implement the recommendations, therefore the question of an inquiry to trace out the preliminary report does not arise.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether as recommended in the report, urgent criminal investigation has been set up to investigate concerns that criminal offences of cheating were occurring at the MTC?

The Prime Minister: We are acting on the recommendations of the final report.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether in the course of the inquiry he has inquired within the activities of the PMO where senior officers of his Ministry are very close to the MTC or even owners of horses, if not their relatives, like Polar Royale?

The Prime Minister: I never felt any necessity for such an inquiry.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will review the system of having clearances from senior officers of the PMO, giving clearance for the - I would say - hiring of jockeys from South Africa and other countries where themselves are owners of horses, their relatives are owners of horses and they are giving the clearances themselves at the PMO?

The Prime Minister: Well, I don't know since when this has existed, it has been in practice and they were cohabiting with those...

(Interruptions)

...who had been promoting this, but I have said...

(Interruptions)

I have said...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please! Order I said! Allow the hon. Prime Minister to reply!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I have said...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I have said order!

The Prime Minister: ... that we are implementing. We can't do everything in one go, in one day. Step-by-step we are putting order insofar as racing is concerned.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mr Bhagwan: I do respect the hon. Prime Minister. So, I will ask the hon. Prime Minister - *li dire moi bouce mo lagel*, I will never *bouce mo lagel*!

(Interruptions)

You have said so! You have said so!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Bhagwan, please sit down! Please sit down! Are you raising...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, I said! I am on my feet! Hon. Bhagwan, are you raising a point of order? Yes! What is your point of order?

Mr Bhagwan: I have heard the hon. Prime Minister, of whom I have a lot of respect personally, stating '*bouce to lagel*' when I asked a supplementary question. I am asking the hon. Prime Minister on a point of honour for the respect I have for him and for the respect he has for the House, to withdraw what he has said.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, sit down! Hon. Prime Minister, did you utter these words?

The Prime Minister: I asked him to shut up.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please sit down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please, I am on my feet! I am on my feet! You have to be silent! Hon. Prime Minister, if you did say this, will you kindly withdraw, but if you say you did not, then I will have again to have recourse to the recordings.

(Interruptions)

Is there any comment again on the ruling I have given? Next question, hon. Ramful!

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, did you just give a ruling? Did you just ask the hon. Prime Minister? I think the hon. Prime Minister did not hear what you just said.

Madam Speaker: No. He said. What I said is that if he feels he has said it, that he withdraws. If he said he hasn't said it, then I will have to have recourse to the recordings. This is what I have said and this is my ruling. No debate on my ruling, please!

Next question, hon. Ramful!

VILLE NOIRE - CAVENDISH BRIDGE - RENOVATION

(No. B/710) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Cavendish Bridge of Ville Noire, in Mahebourg, he will state if the National Development Unit will implement the project for the renovation thereof during the current financial year.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the RDA that the Cavendish Bridge is situated along Plaine Magnien-Mahebourg Road (A12). The bridge is a potential Heritage Site but not yet listed as one of our National Heritage Monuments.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, you are disturbing the hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: In the year 2000, the RDA constructed footpath on both sides of the bridge to allow safe movement of pedestrian from one side to the other. The footpath is a metal structure with wooden planks. Furthermore, in July 2011, the bridge was repainted by the RDA in the context of its centenary celebration.

However, it should be highlighted that the wooden planks are subject to theft, decay, wear and tear. Regular maintenance is, therefore, carried out by the RDA.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that RDA has made a provision of Rs500,000 for better environmental resistant material to replace the wooden planks. However, the implementation will be carried out upon receipt of the decision of the National Heritage Trust Fund as to the type of material that can be used.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Being given that a question was being raised in the past during the previous Government and nothing had been done by the previous Minister, will the hon. Prime Minister consider asking engineers of the NDU to go and carry out a full survey with regard to *l'état* of this bridge at Ville Noire?

The Prime Minister: Let's wait! Let's have the advice of what we must use as materials and then we will send engineers, if need be.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ganoo!

CHILDREN - SEXUALLY ABUSED

(No. B/711) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the children, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, for each of the years 2013, 2014 and since January 2015 to date, information as to the number of reported cases thereof having allegedly been victims of the offence of -

- (a) sexual intercourse with a minor under the age of 16;
- (b) attempt upon chastity, and
- (c) causing a child to be sexually abused.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, sexual intercourse with a minor under the age of 16 and attempt upon chastity are criminal offences under section 249 of the Criminal Code Act. Any person found guilty under such charges is liable to penal servitude for a term between 10 to 20 years depending on the case.

Regarding the offence of causing a child to be sexually abused, sections 14 and 18 of the Child Protection Act provide that any person found guilty may be convicted and sentenced for a period not exceeding 20 years.

I am tabling the number of such reported cases for the years 2013 to date, as submitted by the Commissioner of Police.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare that the following measures are taken in reported cases of sexual offences -

- (i) the Child Development Unit records the case for social enquiry whilst Police performs the criminal enquiry;
- (ii) children victims of sexual offences are also provided with immediate and long term protective and support services at the level of six Child Development Unit outstations across the island namely, at Goodlands, Flacq, Rose Belle, Port Louis, Bambous and Vacoas as well as at the Drop-in-Centre in Port Louis;
- (iii) there is close networking and collaborative efforts with the Brigade Pour la Protection des Mineurs and other stakeholders to assist in the identification of victims through crackdown operations;
- (iv) The hotlines 113, 148 and 999 are also available to provide emergency support services to any reported cases of sexual offences on children;
- (v) Joint interviews by the Police and Child Development Unit officers to avoid repeated narrations of incident and secondary victimisation;
- (vi) Immediate assistance to victims of sexual offences for medical examinations as well as HIV testings and pregnancy tests;
- (vii) Psycho-social counselling to victims and their families;
- (viii) Children victims of sexual offences who are assessed to be in immediate danger in their family environment are removed therefrom and placed in a place of safety as per the Child Protection Act for alternative *prise en charge* by qualified professionals;
- (ix) As regards victims who live together with their families, ongoing home visits are effected by the Child Development Unit officers on a regular basis to

ensure that children are being rehabilitated and geared for normal schooling and/or alternative skilling;

(x) In some cases, therapeutic activities are carried out at '*Jardin de la Paix*' at Calodyne managed by CEDEM for children victims of abuse inclusive of sexual offences and child prostitution, and

(xi) Sensitisation campaigns are carried out by the Child Development Unit and the National Children's Council.

Mr Ganoo: I thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for his elaborate answer, Madam Speaker. May I ask him whether it is not time for the authorities in Mauritius also to compile a list of all persons who have been convicted for sexual assault and for whatever offence they have been prosecuted, and it should be available at the Attorney General's Office or at the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and this list to be readily available and distributed to other law agencies and to places especially which are frequented by children, for example, private primary schools, private pre-primary schools as it is the case in other jurisdictions?

The Prime Minister: Well, we will consider this.

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, I am happy to hear what is being done by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, but obviously there is an issue. According to *l'organisation mondiale de la santé*, 20% to 25% of children have had serious child abuse in Europe. In India, it is 50%. According to the figures from the Ministry, in Mauritius, it is 0.3%. Obviously, there is an issue. Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the Ministry in charge to come with a serious study on child abuse in order to protect the children of our Republic?

The Prime Minister: Well, we will try to better the situation. I will pass on this to the Ministry concerned.

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/748 in regard to the proposed renovation of the Plaine Magnien football ground and A/16 in regard to the provision of lighting facilities at Cité Bassin football ground, addressed to the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports, will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Local Government.

The Table has also been advised that PQ Nos. B/731 addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development and B/734 addressed to the hon. Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training have been withdrawn.

Hon. Members, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has made a request to the Chair that PQs addressed to him be taken out of turn as he is proceeding on

official mission later during the day. I am, therefore, calling PQ Nos B/714 and B/718 immediately after PQ No. B/712. PQ No. B/712, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

BOI - TRADE AND INVESTMENT MANAGERS- APPOINTMENT

(No. B/712) Dr R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the proposed appointment of eight Trade and Investment Managers in strategic cities, as mentioned in the Budget Speech, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board of Investment, information as to the number of such managers having been appointed as at to date, indicating their respective –

- (a) date of appointment, and
- (b) posting.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Board of Investment (BOI) that following the announcement in the Budget Speech 2015-2016, a recruitment exercise is underway at the BOI for the selection of eight Trade and Investment Managers.

I am also informed by the BOI that so far suitable candidates for the Paris and Johannesburg offices have been identified and appointments will be made shortly by the BOI Board.

Dr. Sorefan: Will the hon. Minister consider, when recruiting or appointing those Managers, to go in the same line as the British High Commission has done in Mauritius recently, I think, in January?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I will look into it, Madam Speaker.

Mr Jhuboo: I would like to know from the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether these Managers will have objectives to attract FDI?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, they will have to perform.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

BOI – PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

(No. B/714) Dr R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Property Development Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board of Investment, information as to if –

- (a) an in-depth study has been carried out prior to the implementation thereof and, if so, table copy of the report thereof
- (b) any regulation has been finalized in relation thereto, and
- (c) the residents thereof will be charged local rates/residential tax.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, one of the measures announced in the 2015-2016 Budget Speech was the restructuring of the IRS and RES schemes as these two schemes have also brought undesirable consequences, the most serious one being that those projects are gated communities which constitute a serious risk to the very fabric of our society.

With regard to part (a) of the question, a Budget Implementation Committee was set up to carry out a comprehensive exercise including a survey with IRS/RES buyers and inputs from members of civil society, professionals of the construction industry and the public at large. I am tabling a copy of the report prepared by the committee.

Regarding part (b) of the question, on 18 June 2015, a single scheme namely the Property Development Scheme was laid down in regulations to the Investment Promotion Act based on the recommendations of the committee. The IRS and RES Schemes were revoked.

The new scheme is centered on inclusive development, doing away with gated communities and providing for a wide range of living, employment and leisure opportunities to both locals and foreigners.

The key change that has been incorporated in the regulations is the condition that 25 per cent of the residential properties in a project under the scheme must be reserved for citizens of Mauritius or members of the Mauritian diaspora registered under the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme.

As regards part (c) of the question, any immovable property situated within the jurisdiction of a Municipal City Council or Municipal Town Council is subject to the prevailing local rates, including a residence under the Property Development Scheme.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, regarding the rate, will the hon. Minister strongly consider those living outside the Municipal Council, that is, the District Council - mainly we have a lot in the Black River District where we have a state within a state with all apartheid going there - pay the rate to the District Council?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Yes, in fact the BOI is working on this.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development just mentioned that the IRS and RES Schemes certificates have been revoked. May I know from the hon. Minister of Finance what would happen to those promoters who have received IRS and RES certificates, but has not yet implemented their projects, whether they will have to make a new application or would their IRS/ RES licence be converted into new scheme?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, as far as I know, those projects which have been approved can go ahead, unless the Board of Investment decides otherwise.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister when the 25% of the residences would have been sold to Mauritians, will these complexes be still catered?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: In principle, it will not be, because the idea behind it is that we try to build up those projects and integrate as far as possible the local population and diaspora. So, the word 'catered' is used to mean building walls around, I don't know, but it is clear that this new project aims at unifying those development projects within the whole of our society.

Mr Jhuboo: I would like to know from the hon. Minister of Finance whether since the Property Development Scheme (PDS) has replaced the RES, is he satisfied with the number of projects approved by the PDS?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, the project is quite new. In fact, I have a list of those who have applied for investment under the scheme. There are eight and two have already been issued an approval.

Dr. Sorefan: May we know from the hon. Minister how many IRS/ERS have been approved, but started and abandoned in the country?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I need to check the information.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

BANK OF MAURITIUS - CMA SMALL SYSTEMS

(No. B/718) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the CMA Small Systems, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to when bids were launched in respect of each procurement exercise carried out therefor in 2009, indicating in each case –

- (a) the names of the –
 - (i) bidders therefor;
 - (ii) members of the Bid Evaluation Committee
- (b) the purpose thereof, and
- (c) if they are operational and, if not, why not.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that no bids were launched in respect of the procurement of software from CMA Small Systems AB.

As the Bank of Mauritius was selected by the Committee of Central Banks of COMESA to be the settlement agent for REPSS, the Bank of Mauritius had to adopt a compatible settlement software. Accordingly, the Bank of Mauritius chose the CMA Small Systems AB which was the software service provider of Regional Payment and Settlement System (REPSS) for the COMESA Clearing House.

I am also informed that, three other systems were acquired directly by the Bank of Mauritius from CMA Systems AB as they are all inter-linked directly with REPSS, namely -

- i. The Mauritius Automated Clearing and Settlement System (MACSS);
- ii. The Cheque Truncation System, and
- iii. Depository System for Treasury Bills

All the four systems are fully operational.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, the CMA has implemented RTSX using a dedicated network in some countries, whereby customers do not have to pay swift charges or all local real time settlement. Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether this option was proposed in the technical document of CMA for the RTSX system? If yes, did BOM pay for implementing the dedicated network and yet those to use swift and on what terms and conditions, BOM re-negotiated with CMA? What I am trying to say is that we have a system and BOM has paid a lot of money to the bank, has paid a lot of money to CMA and this is not being functional and, we, Mauritians, when we exchange money bank to bank, we are made to pay swift charges.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo Madam Speaker, the question might be most pertinent, but I need notice of it.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS & CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY - MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

(No. B/713) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research

whether, in regard to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the University of Mauritius and the Canberra Institute of Technology, on 20 February 2013, she will state if there has been, as a result thereof, any –

- (a) exchange of students and of academic staff members;
- (b) joint research project, and
- (c) capacity building for public officer.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the University of Mauritius that a Memorandum of Understanding between the University and Canberra Institute of Technology was signed on 20 February 2013. The duration of the MoU is of five years as from the date of signature and is renewable by mutual consent of both parties.

With regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed that as at date, there has been no exchange of students, of academic staff members, no joint research project and no capacity building of public officers.

The Faculty of Science of the University of Mauritius did express an initial interest to invite the visiting academic staff in Forensic Science in January 2014.

However, the phasing out of the course after having run for three years and due to this phasing out, this need for the visiting academy staff was no longer felt and, consequently, the Faculty of Science did not receive with the proposals and the matter has, therefore, not been pursued further.

Dr. Sorefan: Will the hon. Minister consider strongly of this MoU, because it will be to the advantage of our staff and students and research fellow that we do implement seriously, very soon?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, the Canberra Institute of Technology is a leading institution and can do a lot in the training of skilled labour force. I, indeed, will ask the University of Mauritius to consider taking full advantage of this MoU.

ASSOCIATION MAURICIENNE DE BOXE - MANAGING COMMITTEE

(No. B/715) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to boxing, he will state if his Ministry recognizes the present Managing Committee of the *Association Mauricienne de Boxe* and, if not, why not.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I have to inform the House that the procedures laid down at section 5(4)(c) of the fourth Schedule of the Sports Act 2013, regarding the removal of the president of the National Sports Federation have not been followed while effecting changes in the composition of the Managing Committee of the *Association Mauricienne de Boxe*.

This matter has become a dispute between the two persons claiming to be the president of the Federation.

In such circumstances, I have referred the matter to the Ombudsperson for Sports who has initiated an enquiry with a view to finding out an amicable settlement in the matter.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, peut-on savoir du ministre qui son ministère, actuellement, considère comme le vrai président de la fédération de boxe?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, as I have just mentioned, the procedures laid down have not been followed. Now the case is in front of the Ombudsperson for Sports and we hope that we will reach an amicable settlement.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, l'honorable ministre, dans sa réponse, vient de nous informer que les procédures n'ont pas été respectées par rapport à la révocation illégale du président Telvar. J'ai en ma possession copie d'une lettre, provenant du ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports, adressée à la fédération de boxe, où le ministère affirme que la révocation de M. Telvar, le président sortant ou le vrai président, s'est faite d'une façon illégale. La lettre du ministère le confirme. De ce fait, peut-on savoir - comme il l'affirme lui-même, et qu'il existe des instances de conciliation – pourquoi le ministère, avant d'affirmer que la révocation de M. Telvar a été faite de façon illégale, n'a-t-il pas référé ce cas devant ces instances de conciliation, tel que l'*Ombudsperson for Sports*, avant de venir affirmer que cette révocation a été faite de façon illégale ?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, this is an administrative procedure and when I took notice of that, then I have asked them to put the matter in front of the Ombudsperson because we are talking about sports, so we should reach an amicable settlement.

Mr Quirin: Ce qui veut dire, Madame la présidente, que le ministère n'a pas respecté sa propre loi, il a été à l'encontre de ce qui est spécifié dans le *Sports Act*. Peut-on savoir, effectivement, par rapport à cette lettre adressée par le ministère à la Fédération de boxe, qui a signé cette lettre, Madame la présidente?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, as I have stated, the matter is in front of the Ombudsperson, it is not a question of who signed or did not sign. We are talking about sports, we need to reach a settlement, we will reach a settlement. Both parties are agreeable to that.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, le ministre est en train de fuir devant cette question.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Quand même! Next question, hon. Quirin!

HIGH LEVEL SPORTS UNIT – ATHLETES - ALLOCATION CRITERIA

(No. B/716) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the high level sports, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the High Level Sports Unit, information as to if any change has been made in the allocation criteria for Olympic and non-Olympic athletes and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, verbal representations have been received from several quarters during cash prize ceremonies organised by my Ministry to reward athletes and coaches who have won medals in major international competitions, to the effect that, over the years, the philosophy behind the scheme pertaining to classifications of sports into Olympic and non-Olympic ones has not been adhered to.

The House may wish to know that initially there was a clear demarcation of sports into these two categories. All national sports federations are affiliated to their respective international sports federations. The international sports federations for Olympic Sports are in turn recognised by the International Olympic Committee and they have to strictly adhere to this charter. This is not the case for non-Olympic Federations which have their own respective rules. Besides, National Sports Federations are listed separately as Olympic Sports and non-Olympic Sports in the Fifth Schedule of the Sports Act 2013.

Furthermore, the number of countries affiliated and the number of licensees for international sports federations in respect of Olympic Sports are significantly higher than those of International Federations for non-Olympic Sports. Consequently, in any major competition, the number of participating countries and athletes are also very much higher in Olympic Sports. In the light of the reasons I have just given, the High-Level Sports Unit of my Ministry has deemed it appropriate to revert to the policy adopted initially.

Madam Speaker, as from 01 October 2015, the monthly allowances payable to high-level athletes have been categorised into Olympic and non-Olympic rates. The quantum of monthly allowances being paid to high-level athletes as from 01 October 2015 is as follows –

LEVEL	Range: Quantum of financial package (Rs)	
	Olympic Sports	Non-Olympic Sports
World	26,000 – 32,000	13,000 – 16,000
Inter Continental	13,000 – 20,000	7,500 – 10,000
Continental	6,500 – 11,000	4,000 – 6,000
Regional	3,500 – 5,500	3,500

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, vu que la nouvelle formule proposée fait une séparation entre les disciplines Olympiques et non-Olympiques, le ministre peut-il nous dire comment son ministère a évalué l'effort des athlètes de ces deux catégories avant de prendre une telle décision?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, the answer is in the question itself, Olympic and non-Olympic! We don't need to quantify what effort has been made or not.

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, à mon avis cette décision est non seulement injuste mais elle divise aussi le sport mauricien. De ce fait, je demanderai au ministre de bien vouloir revoir cette formule pour une autre qui ne pénalise pas principalement les disciplines non-Olympiques.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, Olympic is Olympic! It is governed by the Olympic Body and non-Olympic is non-Olympic. It is just like you have on this side of the House the Government and on the other side the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

The same thing!

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin: Une dernière question, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: I will allow you a last question!

Mr Quirin: Oui, une dernière question. La nouvelle formule, en fait, fait provision d'une récompense *pro rata* en fonction du nombre de participants dans une compétition. N'est-ce pas une décision injuste vis-à-vis des sportifs, que ce soit des disciplines Olympiques ou non-Olympiques ? En fonction du nombre de participants dans une compétition et la récompense est offerte par la suite en fonction de ça...

Madam Speaker: What is your question, hon. Quirin?

Mr Quirin: Je demande au ministre s'il ne considère pas cela comme étant injuste de déterminer l'effort par rapport aux nombres de compétiteurs dans une compétition, que ce soit Olympique ou non-Olympique ?

Mr Sawmynaden: *Madam Speaker, I think c'est plus injuste envers l'athlète qui pratique un sport Olympique que de voir tout le monde sur la même longueur d'onde. Il faut avoir une sorte de démarcation and this has always been the case even in Mauritius and worldwide.*

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Leopold!

OCTOPUS FISHING SEASON - YIELDING

(No. B/717) Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, following the closure of the Octopus Fishing Season 2015 in part of mainland Mauritius, he will state the outcome thereof in terms of the yielding of octopus.

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that a two-month voluntary closure of the octopus fishery on a pilot basis was launched on 10 August 2015. The closure applied only to Le Morne and Souillac regions.

The pilot project was initiated by the Indian Ocean Commission through its SmartFish and Biodiversity Projects with the assistance of the European Union and in collaboration with the Mauritius Marine Conservation Society and officers of my Ministry.

The closure of the octopus fishery was implemented after the carrying out of an awareness campaign by the Mauritius Marine Conservation Society with the fishers of the abovementioned regions.

The closure was lifted on 10 October 2015. According to records, the five-day period from 10 to 14 October 2015, a total of about 400 Kg of octopus was captured in Le Morne,

Baie du Cap and Riambel, compared to about 60 Kg for the month of June 2015 and about 90 Kg for the month of July 2015 in these same regions.

In view of the very encouraging results obtained during the pilot project, my Ministry has decided to introduce legislation to provide for a close season for octopus fishery from August to October as from next year. In this connection, I have given instructions to officers of the Fisheries Protection Services of my Ministry to carry out an awareness campaign among fishers island-wide.

This is being done in the interest of both the fisher community and the population at large.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leopold!

Mr Leopold: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister for coming up with a legislation. In Rodrigues we have been doing the closing season for four years now and it is ruled by a regulation so, if the hon. Minister comes with a regulation and we have a regulation in Rodrigues, will they not conflict with each other? Is the hon. Minister going to consult the Local Authorities of Rodrigues so that there is no conflict between the two laws as we are in the same Republic?

Mr Koonjoo: Obviously yes, Madam.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, being given that this has been a success for the past four years in Rodrigues and the same has been tried here on a pilot basis, and the Minister is coming with a legislation, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the same will be applied for Agalega and the outer islands?

Mr Koonjoo: Naturally yes, Madam.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister mentioned only two localities and he just praised the results that have been obtained. Does he intend to extend that ban on octopus to other areas in Mauritius also or will he restrict himself to the two localities?

Mr Koonjoo: I just said, Madam, that it will be taken everywhere in Mauritius.

Mr Leopold: So, during the closing season in Mauritius, were there any fraudulent operations that were done and, if yes, is the hon. Minister thinking of involving the National Coast Guard in the surveillance of this fishing activity?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, as far as I know, I don't think that there has been any fraudulent exercise in Mauritius. I don't know much about Rodrigues but, if there is anything like that, naturally it will concern both places to take care of.

Mr Jhuboo: Since the hon. Minister will come with a piece of legislation, has he thought of a compensation for the local fishermen during the closure period?

Mr Koonjoo: I don't think this has been done in Rodrigues; fishers in Rodrigues are *picker ourites* and they are done...

(Interruptions)

They are done there by the ladies, fisherwomen in Rodrigues. Unfortunately, we don't have *picker ourites* in Mauritius but, I presume that

(Interruptions)

I presume that we will take everything into consideration before putting forward a legislation.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: From a report of the COI, I can see that “*la lutte contre le braconnage a été un défi majeur des éditions précédentes* » and the authorities in Rodrigues decided « *d’impliquer 200 pêcheurs pour rejoindre l’équipe de surveillance locale.* » So, can I ask the hon. Minister also – I do not blame him for that, he cannot say whether there has been *braconnage* in Mauritius – to see to it that we can involve the local fishermen as part of the *surveillance* when the ban will be operational?

Mr Koonjoo: Yes, Madam, I will see to it.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.

At 12.58 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.38 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

CASINOS DE MAURICE – WORKERS

(No. B/719) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether he will state if he has received a letter from the State Investment Corporation Management Services Co. Ltd. for a reduction of the workers of the Casinos de Maurice, dated 02 October 2015 and, if so, indicate the number of workers proposed for laying off and the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Mr Callichurn: Madam Speaker, in fact, my Ministry has received a letter dated 02 October 2015 on the State Investment Corporation Management Services Co. Ltd, giving notice, under section 39B of the Employment Rights Act, of its intention to reduce the number of workers at the following Casinos managed by the Company –

- Le Grand Casino du Domaine Ltd;
- Le Caudan Waterfront Casino Ltd.;
- Sun Casinos Ltd.;
- Beach Casinos Ltd., and
- Casino de Maurice Ltd.

In its notification, the State Investment Corporation Management Services Co. Ltd. has not indicated the number of workers proposed to be laid off. It has however, indicated that –

- (i) it proposes to initiate the process of reduction of the workforce, in view of the fact that –
 - out of the five Casinos, two have ceased operation, namely, Beach Casino Ltd in 2009 and Sun Casino Ltd. in 2015;
 - the financial position of the companies managing the casinos have been in the red for quite a number of years and to date the accumulated losses stood at Rs581 m. and
- (ii) the management had no other alternative but to initiate discussions on the process for reduction of employees under section 39B of the Employment Rights Act, as all other options, including the offer of a Mutual Agreed Scheme to 317 Casinos employees aged 50 and above to take early retirement have not materialised. The option for a Mutually Agreed Scheme had not been accepted by the majority of the employees concerned and only 34 employees accepted the offer.

In line with the provisions of section 39B of the Employment Rights Act, my Ministry has started an inquiry into the matter with a view to determining whether the reason for the intended reduction of workforce is justified or not.

The inquiry has revealed that the number of employees to be laid off has not yet been determined and that the Management has initiated discussions with the Casino Employees Union on the proposed reduction of workforce. Both parties have had two meetings on 12 and 19 October 2015. Another meeting between the parties has been fixed for Monday 26 October 2015.

My Ministry is closely monitoring the situation.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inquire as to whether he has been informed on which ground the SIC is imposing that the employees that would be transferred to the casino of Grand' Baie should leave the union and that they should not join any union? Has the attention of the Minister of Labour been drawn to that particular condition imposed by the SIC Ltd.?

Mr Callichurn: Well, I have not been informed of the situation, but I have been informed that the employees currently working at different casinos will be transferred to the casino of Grand' Baie, the newly opened casino.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister of Labour explain to the House if the redundancy under the economic grounds applies to the casinos of Mauritius, knowing that overstaffing is the result of the management strategy and Government policy of liberalising the gaming sector and also whether the figures given for the losses have been double-checked by any other third party by the Ministry of Labour?

Mr Callichurn: My Ministry has initiated an inquiry and we are looking into this aspect, but I am given to understand that the economic reason is that the casino is facing a financial difficulty for quite some time now.

Mr Bhagwan: Concerning the casino of Grand' Baie, could the hon. Minister of Labour inform the House what are the grounds on which the SIC intends to transfer employees from the SICMS services? Could he also inform the House whether there are new terms of contract and whether the Ministry of Labour has been made aware of these terms and conditions for the new contract which are offered to the workers who are going to be transferred to Grand' Baie?

Mr Callichurn: I am given to understand that the new terms and conditions will be applicable to those who will be transferred to Casino of Grand' Baie.

Mr Mohamed: Could I ask the hon. Minister whether he could confirm that at some stage during the negotiations between the employees represented by the unions or by themselves and management in presence of the Ministry of Labour that the employer had unilaterally decided to amend one of the conditions of employment that had initially formed part of award namely to ensure that the transport allowance that they were entitled to, be purely and simply cancelled as well as the 14 months which they were entitled to as part of their package, forming part of an award and that also had, unilaterally, on the part of the employer been cancelled without consultations? And, lastly, that the Ministry of Labour rightly, I am informed, indicated to the employer that they were in the wrong.

Mr Callichurn: I will certainly look into the matter and I take good note of whatever the hon. Member has stated. But I must say that the negotiation is still ongoing and that no final decision has yet been taken.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I will go on the same line as my Colleague. There are several sums which are due to the workers and which are their normal entitlements. So, can the hon. Minister, at least, have a follow-up with his officers along with the SIC Management Services - we are reaching December and they are all human beings - that they be paid whatever sums which are due to them, especially to the lower grades and other grades and not the fat cows which have been appointed on political reasons and doing nothing there?

Mr Callichurn: Is the hon. Member referring to the 14th month bonus?

Mr Bhagwan: Including that and other allowances, sums which are due to them in the course of their normal duties which have not been paid since months.

Mr Callichurn: I will certainly look into the matter.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE - INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS

(No. B/720) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, he will give details of the infrastructural projects undertaken therefor, since January to June 2015, indicating the projects in respect of which the study and design phases thereof have been completed, indicating in each case –

- (a) when the bids therefor will be launched;
- (b) total estimated value thereof, and
- (c) amount of fees paid out to the consultants therefor in each case, if any, as at to date.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am informed that since the proclamation of the Public Procurement Act 2006, each Ministry and Department is responsible for the implementation of its own infrastructural projects. My Ministry provides technical assistance for the preparation of specifications, designs, cost estimates, bidding documents for floating of tenders and eventually for supervision during implementation and certification of payment claims.

With regard to projects on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, I am informed that since January to June 2015, actions have been initiated for the implementation of six projects as follows -

- New Long Mountain Hospital Phase II comprising conversion of the first floor to accommodate offices, conference room, mess and dormitories. The contract has been awarded for the sum of Rs2,906,000 out of which an amount of Rs1,633,306.60 has already been paid;

Extension to Pharmacy at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital for which the preliminary stages have been completed. The working drawings are being finalised and necessary clearances being sought from relevant authorities before seeking the approval of the Buildings Plan Committee. Bids are expected to be launched within the current financial year;

- Floreal Mediclinic project comprising construction of a two-storeyed building at the location of an ex-Community Health Centre. Preliminary designs have been completed and bidding documents and final drawings are under preparation and are expected to be ready by end of November this year for launching of tenders;
- Construction of New Phoenix Community Health Care Centre to replace the old building and provide additional space. The preliminary designs have been completed. The working drawings are being finalised and necessary clearances being sought from relevant authorities before seeking the approval of the Buildings Plan Committee. Bids are expected to be launched by March 2016;
- Extension of the Dialysis Unit at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital to accommodate additional dialysis machines to cater for more patients. The project is still at a design stage, and
- Rehabilitation of an existing building at Solferino, Vacoas to accommodate a Cancer Centre for which the preliminary designs are being worked out by a Consultant appointed on 14 September 2015.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, the total estimated value of the abovementioned projects, excluding the Cancer Centre, amounts to some Rs135 m.

As regards part (c), I am informed that no consultancy fees have yet been paid to any of these projects.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, the information given relates to the current year January to June 2015. I don't know if the hon. Minister has the information - because it was since January 2014 to June 2015 - on the list of projects that has been designed and paid to Consultants. The question was based on the amount of money paid to Consultants, designs ready but tenders that have not been launched.

Mr Bodha: I have answered the question as regard to the dates. What I can say to the hon. Member is that we have 33 projects which are at the design stage and 15 projects which are at the construction and supervision stage and they are being monitored by my Ministry. Now, if a specific question is put, I will be able to put a list of all the projects and consultancy fee which have been paid in relation thereto.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, we talked about a list of 30 or so projects. Can the hon. Minister confirm to this House if the area health center in the area of St Francois in Plaine Verte, Constituency No. 3, happens to be - if at all, not details required for that - on that list? Madam Speaker would understand why I am putting that question which is a very old story, indeed.

Mr Bodha: I don't have a list, but I can provide the information to the hon. Member.

Mr Rughoobur: May I suggest to the hon. Minister - like you have in the Ministry of Education, for those big Ministries where you have got huge capital projects, if he would consider proposing to those Ministries - I think the Project Implementation Unit, like you have in the Ministry of Education - the appropriate resources for the follow-up to ensure that whatever project is to be implemented. One is the question of project implementation for the big Ministries and also for the maintenance of those once the projects are completed, like for the Ministry of Health, for example, you have got a series of buildings for maintenance of these buildings once the projects are completed.

Mr Bodha: I think, Madam Speaker, that there have been cases where officers from my Ministry, engineers or others are attached to another Ministry to, in fact, do the design

and supervision later. Well, I think if that can help we will, but what we are doing is we have a meeting with the Ministry and we go project by project to see how to make them happen as soon as we can.

Mr Jhugroo: I just heard the hon. Minister, in his reply, saying that there are above 30 big projects in the pipeline. So, can I ask him whether he has got enough professionals in his Ministry to look after the design and monitoring of these projects?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, we never have enough professionals. What we do, in fact, we have a list of priorities. But I think the most important priority is the funding of those projects and as soon as there is a funding process, then we can have a hierarchy of priorities and make things happen.

DR BEERGOONATH GHURBURREN HOME - GRANT

(No. B/721) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Dr. Beergoonath Ghurburrun Home, she will –

(a) state -

- (i) the quantum of funds granted thereto since January 2014 to date, and
- (ii) if she is aware that the employees thereof whose employment have been terminated over the past 24 months have reported to the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training that they have been unfairly dismissed, and

(b) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to -

- (i) if it is being run in strict compliance with the legislation regarding residential care homes, and
- (ii) the procedures followed for the appointment of the Managing Committee thereof.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has, in a letter from Dr. Beergoonath Ghurburrun Home dated 05 October 2015, been informed that since 08 September 2015, the name of the Gandhi Breedh Ashram has been changed into that of Dr. Beergoonath Ghurburrun Home.

The quantum of funds granted to the Ashram from January 2014 to August 2015 was Rs12, 086,705 for both male and female units. The amount of funds for the month of September has not yet been included as it is the practice that payment for a particular month

is effected in the next month. Therefore, payment of funds for the month of September 2015 will be effected in October.

With regard to part (a) (ii), I am informed by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training that two complaints of alleged termination of employment of two employees during the past 24 months have been received. One of them has been reinstated and for the other one, his claim has been settled by way of compensation.

As regards part (b) (i), I wish to inform the House that the Home was founded in 1965 and has since then been running in accordance with the rules of the Residential Care Homes Act 2003 and the Residential Care Homes Regulations 2005. However, on 17 November 2013, Dr. Beergoonath Ghurburrun to whom the Residential Care Home Licence was issued passed away and a relative took charge of the administration of the Home.

I wish to inform the House that the licence of the Home expired on 07 September 2014. Payment of the licence fees by the Home for the period ending 07 September 2015 has been duly accepted and the licence will be issued as soon as proper documentation evidencing that the applicant is a fit and proper person is submitted to the Residential Care Homes Board and the appropriate procedure is followed.

Moreover, inspectors from my Ministry conduct site visits nearly every week to ascertain and ensure that the rules of the Residential Care Homes Act 2003 and the Residential Care Homes Regulations 2005 are complied with. I wish to point out that during these weekly visits some complaints have been received. One of the alleged complaints concerned non-compliance of choice of food of an inmate. Management was informed of the rights of inmates and proper action was taken. The second complaint concerned the installation of camera in the consultation room of the Doctor posted at the Home. The needful has been done and the camera removed. Both complaints have already been dealt with.

Madam Speaker, with an ageing population in Mauritius there is bound to be an increasing number of homes to cater for the needs of the elderly. I wish to reiterate the commitment of our Government to ensure the protection of the elderly people in our society. This has always been one of our top priorities. We shall leave no stone unturned to ensure that residents of homes are protected from ill-treatment, abuse, violence and non-respect of their rights. In case there is evidence of occurrence of such circumstances, we will see to it that immediate remedial actions are taken and severe sanction are meted out against the perpetrators or any other person responsible.

It is important to note that an amount of Rs1.4 m. has been budgeted for the installation of CCTV cameras in charitable homes with a view to detecting and preventing

abuse, violence and ill-treatment of our elderly people. A survey has already been carried out on the number of cameras required which receive capitation grant. On 06 October 2015, my Ministry has written to the Commissioner of Police to work out the specifications for the supply and installation of CCTV cameras for the purpose of ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I am sorry to interrupt you, but you may come with a statement later on, on questions of homes in general. I think you have answered your question and if...

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Madam Speaker, if you have a look at the length of the question, I am bound to give a lengthy answer.

Madam Speaker: Yes, but you have to reply to the question. If you want to come on the question of homes generally, then you can come with a statement.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Sometimes we have to give some explanations for hon. Members to understand.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Minister, this is my ruling. You have to go by my ruling.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: As far as the procedures followed for the appointment of the Managing Committee at Part (b) (ii)...

(Interruptions)

I am informed by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training that according to Rules 11 and 12 of the said association, the management of the association is vested in a committee of four persons to be elected every three years at its annual general meeting and the four elected members choose amongst themselves, a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. That's all.

(Interruptions)

Mr Rughoobur: Very quickly, can I ask the hon. Minister if she is aware of complaints from former employees who have been forced to resign - I find this is a serious matter - from the home there? Is the hon. Minister aware of this?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, as from information received from the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training, the two cases referred to alleged termination of employment, that's all. The nature of complaint: alleged termination of employment.

Mr Rughoobur: Well, in view of the list of complaints that we receive, may I ask the hon. Minister if she could look into the possibility - as per the registration of Care Homes Act under clause 24 is empowered - of setting up an Advisory Committee, on this specific issue, but at the same time, look at the overall functioning of those care homes in Mauritius?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, you will agree with me that it all depends on the seriousness of the complaint. If it is a minor complaint which can be dealt with, let's say, by mediation, for example, choice of food of inmates, well and good. But if there is serious offence, serious complaint, proper actions will have to be taken, rest assured.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether her Ministry receives annual financial statements from nursing care homes for scrutiny and to ensure that the grants or subsidies given to them are spent judiciously?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, I have been made aware that the financial statements are forwarded to the Registrar of Associations and as far as my Ministry is concerned, regular visits are made by our officers to inspect the record and if there is any discrepancy identified, my Ministry will take immediate and necessary actions for the security, protection of our elderly.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister how many inmates are there currently at the Dr. Beergoonath Ghurburrun Home and what is the number of staff currently serving them?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, there are presently 72 bed capacity, 48 male and 24 female and about 32 employees.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: May I ask the hon. Minister in this precise case of the Dr. Beergoonath Ghurburrun Home, there has been so far no financial discrepancy registered or noted by her Ministry and that, on the contrary, in the case of this Home, over and above the grants that are granted to the home, the family has to top up for the proper running of this Home?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: I am not aware of that.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to the accounts submitted to the Registrar of Companies, this is normal practice, but the fact that the Ministry is giving money to the nursing home, I think the hon. Minister should see to it that they have a say on the expenses, so they need to scrutinise the account and to see that the money is spent judiciously. Madam Speaker, I also wanted to know from the hon. Minister whether donations - what hon. Ganoo has just mentioned - given to the inmates directly by the parents or well-wishers, whether there are guidelines on how their money is spent or whether they have control on the money, whether the Ministry has control?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, I don't have the answer now. If my friend can come with a substantive question, I will look into the matter and answer properly.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

TOURISM AUTHORITY - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/722) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the Tourism Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the -

- (a) number of new recruits thereat, since January 2015 to date, category-wise, indicating in each case, the qualifications held;
- (b) composition of the Enforcement Division thereof, indicating the total amount of contraventions booked over the past six months, and

(c) total amount of money earmarked for the training of the staff thereof, indicating the amount thereof spent, since January 2015 to date and the categories of staff concerned therewith.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Tourism Authority as follows -

With regard to part (a) of the question, a Director has been recruited in September, on a two-year contract. He holds a Master in Business Administration and reckons more than 30 years' experience at senior management level in the field of tourism development and hospitality management.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Monitoring and Compliance Unit currently manned by an Acting Manager and four Tourism Enforcement Officers. Over the past six months, it has established 166 contraventions as compared to 101 contraventions for the corresponding period of 2014.

I wish to inform the House that, in the performance of its enforcement duties, the Monitoring and Compliance Unit is also assisted by Police Officers, Officers of the National Coast Guard and Inspectors of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. Moreover, actions have been initiated for the reinforcement of the monitoring capacity of the Unit, with a recruitment of ten additional Tourism Enforcement Officers, which is currently in process.

With regard to part (c) of the question, for the Financial Year 2015-2016, an amount of Rs3 m. has been earmarked for training purposes for the benefit of front liners of the Tourism Industry, including the staff. So far, officers of the grade of Tourism Enforcement and IT have followed a training course on 'Tourism in the Digital Age'.

I further understand that the current training plan is being revisited for implementation during this financial year.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister in my reply to PQ No. B/322, it is a couple of months earlier, the Tourism Authority was to embark on a human resources audit and the need was felt for the recruitment of additional Enforcement Officers. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned about the

recruitment of officers, was he speaking about the recruitment of those Enforcement Officers itself?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I read this again, Madam Speaker. I said ‘the recruitment of ten additional Tourism Enforcement Officers’. So, we are recruiting Tourism Enforcement Officers. As regards the HR audit, I think I will leave it to the new Director who just joined to decide whether such is required.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister has talked about the number of people who have been recruited as goes the question. Would he be able to answer my question as regards the number of people in the same corresponding period who have lost their jobs? If he cannot, I can come with a substantive question.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Let’s come with a substantive question.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether apart from the one he has informed us who has been recruited, there have been people of minor grades who have been recruited and whether those who were on contract, we still remember those who were having problems, contract workers, whether these have been solved?

The Deputy Prime Minister: There are still a number of people on contract, Madam Speaker, and I agree we need to find a solution for these people. There has been no other recruitment. There have been one or two people who have been transferred, I think, from SPDC to the Tourism Authority.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: I would request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister if he could consider probably amending the Tourism Authority Act to ensure that the taxis based at hotels are issued with a tourist enterprise license as well. I know it is not directly related to the question, but if he could?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, they have a taxi licence. I think it is probably enough, too many licences will not, too many cooks will spoil the broth, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

**AFRICAN CHARTER ON DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND GOVERNANCE
- SCHOOL CURRICULA**

(No. B/723) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, she will state the specific and concrete proposals that will be made to lead our students to be fully aware of the substance thereof and of their role in the building process of a democratic society, following the Joint Experts Consultative Meeting held in Abuja, in Nigeria, between 28 and 30 September 2015, to engage the African Ministers of Education in the mainstreaming thereof in the school curricula.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight at the outset that the specific objectives of the Joint Experts Consultative Meeting which was held in Abuja (Nigeria) from 28 to 30 September 2015 in order to engage African Union Member States Ministries of Education in the inclusion and mainstreaming of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) in the school curricula, are to -

- (i) popularise the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance among young citizens so that shared values reach the grass root level;
- (ii) design activities in the school curriculum to promote the values of this Charter, and
- (iii) to enable students to have an active voice in the promotion of democracy in their country.

This would imply the inclusion of these shared values enshrined in the Charter, into the existing modules or curricular activities at the school level. It would also mean engagement of Ministries of Education in the development of comprehensive training kits and programme on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance or teachers and students.

Madam Speaker, a New Curriculum Framework is being elaborated and which makes provision for the inclusion of cross curricular themes and the development of 21st century skills and competencies, which embraces core principles of a democratic society such as -

- Citizenship Education
- Intercultural Education

- Values
- Human Rights Education (which is being integrated in the Form I Social Studies syllabus as from January 2016, on a pilot basis), and
- Sustainable Development

Work is in progress at the level of the Ministry and at the MIE on the above issues.

However, I wish to point out that according to information obtained, the outcome document of the Joint Expert Consultative Meeting has yet to be tabled and for any decisions to be taken thereon to be binding, the recommendations as may be endorsed by the Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Education, Science and Technology, need to be adopted at the AU Summit in January 2016.

Therefore, as explained above, the report of the STC has to go through the decision-making process of the AU and adopted by an AU Summit before its adoption.

Nonetheless, Madam Speaker, in spite of the above, I wish to reassure the House that we are leaving no stone unturned in our endeavor through the National Curriculum to instill in the youth those values that would contribute in the building a more democratic, peaceful, unified and prosperous society.

Mr Rughoobur: May I ask the hon. Minister to please ensure, because we are talking a lot about the reforms, whether it is the nine-year schooling or any reform that will be coming - we are looking forward to - that it should be aligned with the recommendations of the African Union? And will the hon. Minister, please, look into this issue and ensure that in her Ministry, the recommendations are taken on-board while the hon. Minister is speaking of reform in her Ministry?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: As mentioned earlier, Madam Speaker, this is being taken care of, in spite of the fact that the Charter has still not been ratified.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

LE BOUCHON PUBLIC BEACH – ACCESS ROAD

(No. B/724) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to Le Bouchon Public Beach, he will state if consideration will be given for the construction of a

secondary access road thereto, as the only one road leading to the beach is narrow and traffic congestion occurs thereat and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that the existing access road leading to the public beach is not classified under the Roads Act and as such, is under the jurisdiction of the Local Authority, that is, the District Council of Grand Port.

The upgrading of the existing access road/or the construction of a new secondary access will, therefore, have to be considered by the concerned Local Authority, that is, the District Council of Grand Port.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY – NON-REVENUE WATER

(No. B/725) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, for the period January 2015 to date, information as to the-

- (a) percentage of non-revenue water and
- (b) pipe replacement project works carried out, indicating the costs thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that -

- (i) the average level of Non-Revenue Water is 58%, that is, for the period January 2015 to date;
- (ii) there are presently 30 ongoing projects to replace 130 kms of pipelines throughout the Island of Mauritius for a total cost of Rs976.9 m. These projects are scheduled to be completed by March 2016, and
- (iii) 200 kms of pipeline will be replaced over the next 8 years for a total cost of about Rs2.3 billion.

I am also informed that under the sewerage projects being implemented by the Wastewater Management Authority, 103 kms of pipes have been replaced as at September 2015.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, what action, if any, is the CWA taking to reduce the non-revenue water?

Mr Collendavelloo: Well, first of all, we have got to divide it in two. First of all, there is the physical loss, which is about 45% and the rest is commercial loss. Commercial loss is

pilfering, wrong metering, errors, etc.; that is easy to cure. It requires manpower and some brainpower as well.

The second one is physical water losses. Well, we have got 4,000 kms of pipes in Mauritius. 1,570 kms, that is, some 40% require replacement. So, these projects are part of the action plan to diminish the non-revenue water loss. This is part of the development plan of the CWA.

Mr Uteem: In 2013, the Government recruited the services of Singapore Corporation Enterprise to prepare a Memorandum for the CWA, precisely to reduce non-revenue water. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether Singapore Corporation Enterprise has completed and submitted its report and what action has been taken since then?

Mr Collendavelloo: I understand they are still working, but I am sure this could be the subject of a substantive question and I shall gladly give all the information.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister indicate to the House what will be the percentage of the non-revenue water after the works, which he just mentioned, will have been completed? Does he have an idea?

Mr Collendavelloo: I wouldn't be able to hazard a guess. So, we are now at 58%. All the plans are intended to reduce it, but I am not aware off-hand as to what is the percentage that we would reach.

Mr Uteem: I have not heard the hon. Vice-Prime Minister properly. Can he repeat it - if he has done so - what is the amount that has been spent for this year by the CWA in replacing defective pipelines?

Mr Collendavelloo: Well, I don't have the answer year by year. What I know is that we have 30 ongoing projects to replace 130 kms of pipeline for Rs976.9 m. If the hon. Member wants the breakdown year by year, I will have to come back.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister stated that he doesn't have an indication with regard to what would eventually be the percentage loss in non-revenue water when works are completed. Can we have an indication what are the international norms with regard to non-revenue water?

Mr Collendavelloo: No, I am sorry. This is not a quiz. This is Question Time. I don't have it.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, may we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister if he is aware that in Quatre Bornes, in conjunction with Wastewater Authority, they replace the old pipe with the new pipe, but we are still getting water from the old pipe? The new pipe has not been connected to the residents for nearly one year.

Mr Collendavelloo: I am sure they will do something about it. This is a matter of so little detail that I am not aware of this for the moment.

Madam Speaker: Last question on this, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Earlier this year, to justify increasing the contribution to Mauritius Growth Fund, the levy that has been put on petroleum products and where around Rs1.3 billion additional would be provided, the Minister of Finance stated that the rationale for it is to give money to the CWA to replace pipelines. So, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister how much money has CWA obtained from the SIT coming directly from the Rs1.3 billion that have been imposed on petroleum products?

Mr Collendavelloo: I will need notice of that.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

**FORMER BAI - BRITISH-AMERICAN INVESTMENTS COMPANY (KENYA) LTD
- SHARES**

(No. B/726) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the shares in the British-American Investments Company (Kenya) Ltd. held by the former British American Insurance Co. (Mtius) Ltd. and its related companies, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to the –

- (a) offers received as at to date for the purchase thereof, indicating in each case, the price and terms and conditions thereof;
- (b) value thereof at the time of the appointment of the conservators of the British American Insurance Co. (Mtius) Ltd., and
- (c) current value thereof.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Financial Services Commission that an acceptable offer has been received for the purchase of 23.3% shares held by the Former British American Insurance Co. (Mtius) Ltd. in British American Investments Company (Kenya) Ltd.

Madam Speaker, British American Investments Company (Kenya) Ltd. is listed on the Nairobi Stock Exchange. At this stage, it would be inappropriate to disclose information of a sensitive nature.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Conservators were appointed on 03 April 2015 and the quoted share price of British American Investments Company (Kenya) Ltd. was 26 Kenyan shilling per share.

With regard to part (c) of the question, Madam Speaker, the shares of British American Investments Company (Kenya) Ltd. were being traded at 15 Kenyan shilling on 15 October 2015.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Minister aware that the Administrators – at that time they were Conservators – had actually informed the FSC that they had received two offers, one for Rs4.1 billion and one for Rs4.7 billion for the sale of the shares in Britam? If this is the case, can I know from the hon. Minister why the FSC did not go ahead for the sale of those shares?

Mr Bhadain: This is not the case, Madam Speaker. There was a verbal conversation between the Special Administrator and the Chairperson of the FSC informing that there was an offer, but there was no mention about the figure that the hon. Member has mentioned and also there has been no expression of interest or any documented offers received at that time, when the previous Special Administrators were there. However, as I have just stated, there is an offer which has been received and accepted by the FSC which is, shall I say, more than the loan which has been taken from the Central Bank of Mauritius of Rs3.5 billion at a rate of 3.6% interest payable within one year; it is much more than that, but, of course, I can't give precise details because it is of a confidential nature.

Mr Uteem: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether he is aware or not that at the point when the Conservators were going to sell the shares in Britam back in June 2015 to pay the Super Cash Gold, the FSC or someone else had requested that the transaction be carried out through a designated broker from South Africa?

Mr Bhadain: Again, that's not correct, Madam Speaker. Firstly, the Special Administrators at that time were never going to sell the shares in Britam, Kenya because there is a process to follow. The Central Bank of Kenya has to be informed in such a case. They were looking into the possibilities of getting people to express their interests on those shares.

Now, true it is that there was a company in South Africa whose services had been retained to look into the possibilities of attracting investors to express an interest as well; that was Barclays Investment in South Africa. I must say, Madam Speaker, that to go back on the

share price, there is always a premium which is attributable to a shareholding of 23.3%. When you are talking about it is taken in a big insurance company like that and that premium, today, has been materialised and, hence, the value which has been obtained by the FSC on shares which is well above what has been borrowed from a central bank for repaying the people of Super Cash Back Gold on 30 June 2015.

Mr Bérenger: Will the hon. Minister agree with me that the comparison should not be with the money that has been borrowed, but the comparison should be the value of the shares at a given point in time and now? Will he agree with me?

Mr Bhadain: Yes, I certainly agree, but the reason as to why I mentioned the loan is to give the assurance that public funds are not being taken to repay the loan which was taken from the Central Bank. With regard to the share price which was quoted, the price of 26 shillings at the time when the Conservators had looked into the matter, the offer now is better than that.

Mr Bérenger: I think I heard the hon. Minister say that there is at present a firm offer being considered by FSC, but I think I did not hear him make any reference to what the hon. Minister of Finance has said, that is, that a sovereign fund to be created will be used to buy those shares. Is there any reason why no reference has been made to that statement from the hon. Minister of Finance who had this idea of a wealth fund, sovereign fund to be set up purchasing those shares, has this been abandoned?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, firstly, let me say that the FSC has already approved the offer. So, we are at an advanced stage and the buyer has also committed to pay 10% into an escrow account which is in the process of being done.

With regard to the sovereign fund, I must say, Madam Speaker, that the Financial Services Commission falls well into my portfolio and this is what has been decided by the FSC and as Minister for that particular sector, Financial Services, I think it is a big achievement.

Mr Mohamed: Is the hon. Minister telling us that the hon. Minister of Finance is not really aware of what has just happened or that they are not on the same wavelength? Is that what he just said to us?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has the habit of misunderstanding things. I never said that.

(Interruptions)

Certainly not! And I can reassure him that the Minister of Finance is well aware of what is happening.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

COURTS ASIA & HILLBROW (MAURITIUS) LTD. - CLAIMS

(No. B/727) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the claims made by Courts Asia and Hillbrow (Mauritius) Ltd. against the Special Administrator of the British American Insurance Co. (Mtius) Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to –

- (a) if it agrees with the content thereof, and
- (b) the actions it has taken in relation thereto.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I am again informed by the FSC that Courts Asia Ltd has written a letter dated 27 August 2015 to the Special Administrator to signify its intention to claim damages for breach of obligations by Iframac Ltd (Special Administrator appointed).

Inasmuch as this is a matter between two private parties, Madam Speaker, it would be inappropriate for me to make any comments thereof.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I heard what the hon. Minister has said, but has he taken cognizance of the letter written by Courts Asia and the serious allegations made in that letter and does he agree with those allegations bearing in mind the statement made in this very august Assembly by the hon. Minister on the sale of Courts to Mammoth instead of Courts Asia?

Mr Bhadain: I am not aware of any serious allegations, Madam Speaker, but to be honest, Courts Asia was one of the parties who had engaged with the Special Administrator at that time. They were probably misled by the Special Administrator at that time. They chose to write a letter to the FSC to say that we intend to claim against the Special Administrator. As far as I am aware, there is no case which has been entered to date and these are issues between two private parties. I don't see why we should get into it.

Mr Uteem: The reason why we should get into it, Madam Speaker, is because in this august Assembly, the hon. Minister told this House that the offer from Mammoth was better than the offer from Courts Asia and it is clear from the letter that has been sent from the Administrator that Courts Asia's offer was better and was not even given the chance to improve on their bid or so unlike Mammoth.

Mr Bhadain: Well, Madam Speaker, this is certainly not the case and I think that the hon. Member is again misinformed. The offer of the other company, Mammoth Ltd. was better in the assessment which has been conducted by the FSC and the FSC has decided to go ahead with that at a specific period.

With regard to Courts Asia and Mammoth, they were both informed that the consideration for the FSC and also for this Government was the social aspect. That was the prime consideration. People's jobs had to be safeguarded in the light of the massive fraud which has been conducted with BAI and the people who were running it at the time. These people were in no way party to that fraud, the employees who were working in Courts. 900 employees, Madam Speaker! 720 jobs have been safeguarded out of 900 in Courts. 180 have been compensated well above what the law provides, that is, the Employment Rights Act and also they have integrated the Workfare Programme. I think again, this Government has done the maximum it could and the FSC has rightly taken the decision to go for Mammoth and I have no qualms whatsoever as Minister for this sector about the decision which has been taken by the FSC.

Mr Uteem: *Ex facie* the claim, it is clear that what is in the claim is different from what the hon. Minister is saying because in the claim, Courts Asia is stating that they were willing to retain 85% of the employees unlike Mammoth who retained only 80%. They were willing to pay Rs26 m. compensation for people who are going to lose their jobs whereas Mammoth gave only Rs6 m. and requested the Government to pay Rs6 m. So, in the light of these facts, would the hon. Minister still maintain that the offer of Mammoth was better than Courts Asia?

Mr Bhadain: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. And the reason for that is because those figures which have been quoted by the hon. Member came after the decision of the FSC. When The Board had already decided and evaluated the bids which were in its presence, then the gentleman from Courts Asia went to the press - we know how the press functions in those issues - to come and say: "I would have done this, I would have done that. I would have

employed more people. I would have paid more!” If we are to run a Government like that, then we will run into a brick wall!

Madam Speaker: Next Question, Hon. Uteem!

VEDIC SOCIAL ORGANISATION – SHELTERS - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/728) Mr R. Uteem (First Member For Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the shelters administered by the Vedic Social Organisation, she will state if she has received complaints in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Mrs Perraud: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Vedic Social Organisation is presently managing three shelters for children under Court Orders. Two of the shelters are owned by my Ministry. Management services contract have been signed with the Vedic Social Organisation for the management of the shelters. As regards the third one, a capitation grant per child accommodated is given to that organisation. Various complaints have been received on the functioning of the shelters through letters received at the level of my Ministry. Furthermore, both the internal control of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, as well as the Director of Audit, have highlighted shortcomings on various issues in the management of those shelters.

Madam Speaker, as Minister responsible for the development of children, I have been very attentive to what stakeholders in the sector had to say. And the conditions prevailing in shelters were common in our discussions. I have made it a point to visit several shelters personally, in the company of officers of my Ministry, and make an assessment.

In the light of my observations, the hon. Prime Minister and Cabinet agreed upon my recommendation, to the setting up of a Fact-Finding Committee on Residential Care Institutions/Shelters for Children on 17 April 2015. The setting up of a Fact-Finding Committee on shelters only four months after my appointment as Minister of Child Development is a clear signal that we mean business and will do all that is necessary for the optimal development of children. The report is awaited and its recommendations would be considered for implementations for an enhanced ‘*prise-en-charge*’ of the children placed in Residential Care Institutions/ Shelters for children in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Madam Speaker, we have not waited for the conclusion of the Fact-Finding

Committee to act or else it would have been very damaging. We have been proactive in our approach and the following measures have been taken –

- (i) meetings were held at the level of my Ministry with the service provider, drawing her attention on all shortcomings and representations made and this was followed through official letters addressed to the latter.
Madam Speaker, I would like, however, to underline that in the light of the shortcomings in respect of this particular shelter, the Management Services Contract has not been renewed and is presently on a month to month basis;
- (ii) my Ministry has already called for expression of interest to identify NGOs, and individuals who are willing and who have the capacity to manage shelters for children according to set norms. But unfortunately the response was very low. We want and we need to appoint a new service provider following procedures, but we must have people who have the knowledge, the competence but above all a heart to care for children;
- (iii) close monitoring visits are presently being effected by the officers of the Child Development Unit (CDU) to ensure that the best interests of the children accommodated therein are safeguarded at all times.

And as monitoring of work at shelters is important, my Ministry has lately recruited Family Welfare and Protection Officers (FWPOs) to strengthen monitoring and service delivery to the family as a whole. The CDU needs a critical mass of social workers/FWPOs with the right knowledge, skills and attitudes to attend to the needs of complex and difficult cases. There was a need to reinforce and strengthen monitoring and supervision of shelters. FWPOs presently working at monitoring of shelters are doing a good job, bringing into light all potential threats to the physical and emotional well-being of the children in shelters.

We have also recruited, Madam Speaker, new Psychologists because we had only six Psychologists posted at the CDU to cater for six outstations, 21 Residential Institutions, Foster Care Department, Child Mentoring Programme and cases referred by Family Court and the DPP.

Mr Bérenger: I did not hear the hon. Minister give us the composition of that Fact-Finding Committee. Can I know who chaired it and who were the other members of that Fact-Finding Committee?

Mrs Perraud: The composition of the Fact-Finding Committee: we have Mr Henry Vellien, Mrs Karuna Rajiah and Mr Cliff Grenade and as Secretary, the Deputy Permanent Secretary of my Ministry, Mrs Jaunbocus.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can the hon. Minister give an indication of the Chair also? Who is chairing this committee?

Mrs Perraud: Yes, excuse me, it is Mr Vellien.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, may I know from the hon. Minister when were the complaints received and when were the meetings held by her Ministry?

Mrs Perraud: I must inform the House that we got several complaints. I can't actually give a date. Immediately after receiving the complaints letters, anonymous letters or telephone calls, I visited the shelter and after my visit I asked for the setting up of the Fact-Finding Committee and then meet the service provider/Manager.

Mr Uteem: Is the hon. Minister aware that the person in charge of this organisation is currently on bail for an offence relating to assault on children and his son-in-law is also interdicted on the ground of sexual intercourse with minor in that shelter?

Mrs Perraud: As I have already said, we had many serious allegations. This is one of the reasons why I asked for a Fact-Finding Committee. So, we have to let the Fact-Finding Committee work.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

PARIS & LONDON EMBASSIES – MAURITIAN DELEGATION - RENTED CARS

(No. B/729) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Embassies of Mauritius in Paris and in London respectively, he will state the number of times they had rented cars to be put at the disposal of the former Prime Minister, of the members of his delegation and of other persons at his request, over the period July 2005 to December 2014, indicating the –

- (a) make and model of the cars rented, and
- (b) total cost incurred therefor.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, I have been able to obtain only bits and pieces of information, since the question covers a period of nine years. The information sought is still being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly in due course.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House what amount of money has been paid in London with regard to the rental of cars stating their make and model?

Mr Sinatambou: The total amount of money paid for cars rented for the former Prime Minister over the period is £257,130.96. That is an average amount of Rs13.2 m.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many times cars had been rented for the former Prime Minister in London when our Mauritian embassy has in its fleet two BMW series 5 and one series 7?

Mr Sinatambou: In fact, our mission in London has one Mercedes 250, one BMW X5 make and one BMW serie 7 30. And the number of times for which cars have been rented over that period in London is 36.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Lesjongard!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, I have already asked for the next question, you should have asked your question quickly. Yes, hon. Lesjongard!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, just tell me, are you challenging the ruling I just gave. When I have asked for the next question, you can't come back on this question.

(Interruptions)

CEB - ST LOUIS POWER STATION - BIDS

(No. B/730) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Tender CPB-20-2015 for the development of the St Louis Power Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the –

(a) number of bids received;

(b) names of the bidders therefor, indicating in each case the -

(i) bid value thereof

(ii) name and make of the engine manufacturer associated therewith, and

(c) price quoted in respect of each engine therefor.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavello): Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that at the closing date of 01 October 2015, the Central Procurement Board received five bids. The names of the bidders and the price quoted are posted for public information on the website of the Central Procurement Board. I am tabling a copy as posted on the website.

With regard to part (b)(ii) and (c) of the question, I am informed by the CEB that it has no information at this stage as the Central Procurement Board is currently carrying out the evaluation of bids.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, in a reply on 01 September, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister himself stated with regard to engine manufacturers that we do not have many of them running around the world. Does he confirm that this is the case with this tender?

Mr Collendavello: Well, there are not many people who manufacture these machines. The matter has not changed in the last three months.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he is aware that one of the engine manufacturers in the present tender has been imposed fines of the order of USD150 m. by a court of justice for paying bribes to secure contracts?

Mr Collendavello: I am not even aware of what are the engine manufacturers who are in the bid. I am not aware of the engine makes. Only the CPB has got that information.

Mr Bérenger: It is a bit surprising, I am sure the hon. Vice-Prime Minister must be aware of the Volkswagen issue, which MAN is a subsidiary of Volkswagen and it is now across the world that MAN was fined by courts of law for bribes for falsifying figures. Can I know whether those assessing those offers will take into consideration such matters or will they stick to purely technical issues?

Mr Collendavello: I am not aware whether Man is one of the engines quoted. The CEB ...

Mr Bérenger: You should know.

Mr Collendavello: I am sorry.

Mr Bérenger: Everybody knows this.

Mr Collendavello: Well, everybody may know, but I do not know.

Mr Bérenger: You should know.

Mr Jahangeer: In view of a strain situation we have actually, one of the bidder according to the website which the hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned, namely VWSCs, are suing the Government and, at the same time, they are bidding for the same project. Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inquire about the eligibility of the VWSCs in accordance with

section 3 of evaluation and qualification criteria, taking into consideration the corruption case of the VWSCs in Malta?

Mr Collendavelloo: This is a matter which will be taken by the CPB and I do not interfere in procurement matters.

JIN FEI PROJECT – RELOCATION - PLANTERS

(No. B/731) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the planters of the Riche Terre region who had been relocated in the wake of the implementation of the Jin Fei Project, he will state where matters stand as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

SUBOXONE - DRUG SUBSTITUTION THERAPY

(No. B/732) Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of Suboxone as a new substitution therapy for the treatment of the drug addicts in replacement of Methadone, he will state if amendments will be introduced to the Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs Act to cater therefor.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, let me first of all say that the proposed introduction of Suboxone only applies to those who wish to join the programme for drug therapy. Suboxone, Madam Speaker, is a branded product containing two components: buprenorphine and naloxone.

Buprenorphine which is a dangerous drug is already listed in Schedule II of the Dangerous Drugs Act 2000, whereas Naloxone is an opiate antagonist and is not considered as a dangerous drug. There is, therefore, no need to amend the Dangerous Drugs Act for the listing of Suboxone.

Dr. Joomaye: I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that introducing Suboxone will automatically facilitate the import and the traffic of Subutex which contains buprenorphine on the local market.

Mr Gayan: Well, whatever will be done, Madam Speaker, will be done by Government under strict control.

Mr Leopold: Would the hon. Minister agree that Suboxone and Methadone are just substitute for risk management and also to prevent the propagation of HIV/AIDS among drug users, especially IV drug users. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is coming with a comprehensive treatment so that drug users get off of Suboxone, Methadone or over dangerous drugs.

Mr Gayan: Well, that is the ultimate objective of Government not to have anybody on any of these therapies, but we have to start somewhere and this is why we consider that Suboxone is more likely to wean off people from drugs than Methadone.

Dr. Joomaye: Is the hon. Minister aware that the implementation of any new substitution programme needs the pilot project, studies and all these will take time. During the meantime, will the hon. Minister consider bringing back the Methadone programme as it was because it would take months and the patient won't have medication in the meantime?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, let me once again say that all those who are on Methadone therapy are continuing to get the Methadone therapy. What is being considered is for the new ones who wish to join the programme. We have started a programme where we consider that a screening has to be done so that these people are motivated to get off the drugs; this is the whole purpose. And let me also say, Madam Speaker, that we have heard a lot about Suboxone and all this. In 2005, Mr Nicolas Ritter declared –

« ... ne pas comprendre pourquoi les autorités mauricienne n'ont toujours pas réalisé que le Subutex a davantage de côté positif et qu'il peut nous aider dans ce travail. »

Mme Nathalie Rose, Cordinator of CUT said –

« Nous ne pouvons pas être plus royalistes que le roi ! Dans le monde entier, les avantages du Subutex ont été reconnus. Alors, à quand le tour de Maurice? »

So, we have not invented anything, Madam Speaker, it is already there.

Mr Mahomed: Madam Speaker, when the subject of Suboxone was first evoked in Parliament, the hon. Minister had suggested that we do some search on Google and I have done some googling, and my question is as follows.

(Interruptions)

Is the hon. Minister aware that the subject of Suboxone does not have a clean sheet at all, and I am to refer here a report that I found upon googling, “30 Years of Harm Minimisation – How Far Have We Come?” An australian perspective. And, in there, it is said that the record of Suboxone is even worst than Methadone as Suboxone is poorly accepted by drug addicts. Is the hon. Minister aware of such a report?

Mr Gayan: Well, my information, Madam Speaker, is that Suboxone is an approved treatment for opioid dependence that had a significant role in expanding access to effective

opioid dependence treatment. Suboxone is a fixed dose combination tablet containing Buprenorphine and Naloxone in a 4 to 1 ratio. The tablet which is administered sublingually - that is, you place a tablet under the tongue - is in established substitution treatment for opioid dependence. It is currently available in Europe, the United States and in more than 30 countries worldwide.

Mr Bérenger: In a PQ that I asked earlier on, I congratulated the hon. Minister because when in Cape Town he met Mr Michel Sidibé, the Executive Director of UNAIDS, and they are very serious people. I am sure they will come here, they will look at all these Methadone, Suboxone - Saxophone ...

(Interruptions)

All these different drugs and so on! They are very, very serious people and they are going to make recommendations. So, can I appeal to the hon. Minister, we should not be discussing the details and quoting Mr Ritter and so on. Let us give the UNAIDS the chance to do a good job and make recommendations but, in the meantime, why not go back to what prevails. Because what has happened now is that the way Methadone is distributed has changed, people are not turning up. The way seringues are in front of the Police Station, people are not coming along and the confidentiality that used to prevail is being challenged and you know once this is damaged, it becomes very difficult to repair. So, I appeal to the hon. Minister why not go back gently to what prevails, give UNAIDS the chance to make firm recommendations.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, let me say once again that it was not *de gaieté de coeur* that we had to decentralise the distribution of Methadone. There were serious security issues - I can see hon. Bhagwan shaking his head in agreement. He knows the problems that I also know in Beau Bassin.

(Interruptions)

What the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said, that people are being discourage from attending the compounds of the Police Station where this is being done is not true. The number that we had at the beginning of decentralisation - people who are taking the Methadone - is still the same today. What has happened is that the NGOs have informed the Ministry that there are about 200 people who would like to join the programme. For these people we have said, let us see if they can be motivated to get out of it so that they do not

become dependent for life on Methadone. Let me also say that out of the 200 whom we started to screen - when I say 'we', it's the Ministry - only 100 turned up, the others have been untraced; the NGOs have not been able to help us to find them out. There is no contact address. So, there is a problem and this is what we are trying to address and when I met Mr Michel Sidibé in Cape Town, I explained to him all these difficulties. I explained to him how the Needle Exchange Programme, for example, which was being distributed at 10,000 per month last year has shot up 60,000 this year. There is a problem ...

(Interruptions)

People must listen to what I am saying! What has happened is that needles are being distributed both by the NGOs and by the Ministry. Where the Ministry is distributing needles there has been no increase. The increase has only happened where the NGOs are distributing. So, there is an imbalance and I need to understand why this is so. I explained all this to Mr Michel Sidibé and he has agreed. In fact, I will be sending him the letter today to invite him to come to carry out this evaluation. Let us see what comes out of that evaluation.

Mr Mohamed: In 2013, I myself visited the World Health Organisation on this particular issue of Methadone distribution and I also met with Professor Zullino of the CHU in Geneva where this particular issue of Methadone distribution was discussed. In 2013 itself, Professor Zullino and a team from the World Health Organisation were sent to Mauritius with the idea of analysing our Methadone distribution methodology, whether we could improve it, identify the *lacuna*, see whether the dosage was right and to ensure that not only it was provided but it could be properly monitored and that it brought positive result. That report was given to the Ministry of Health sometime in 2014. Could the hon. Minister consider tabling this report and telling us why does he not consider implementing that report first that the World Health Organisation themselves standby since they sent their own people and experts to Mauritius to study it, prepare it and give it to us?

Mr Gayan: Well, Madam Speaker, I am a bit confused. I heard the hon. Member speak of a report carried out by HUG, the hospital in Geneva, or WHO. Well, I am not aware of such a report, but if there is one we will certainly look for it. But let me also say that we had lots of reports on this but, since the programme started in 2006 until today, Madam Speaker, out of about 6,000 people who have been on this programme only 40 have been rehabilitated. Only 40 over 9 years! We are saying, we need to look it and look at it very seriously.

ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/733) Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of the Allied Health Professions Bill to regulate the activities of chiropractors, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech therapists, nutritionists, dietitians, phytotherapists and homeopathy practitioners, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, with the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat, my Ministry has prepared a draft Health Professions Bill which is going to cater for 20 professions which had not yet regulated. The Bill was posted on the Website of my Ministry from 10 February to 30 April 2015 to seek views and suggestions from members of the public in general and stakeholders in particular.

The draft Bill is now with the Attorney General's Office for finalisation.

Dr. Joomaye: I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that any complaint has been received by the Medical Council of Mauritius or his Ministry regarding any of these professionals who might be doing illegal practice of medicine?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I received these kinds of representations on a daily basis. This is why we need to regulate all these professions.

Dr. Joomaye: I would like to know whether there will be necessary amendments brought to the Medical Council Act to give it enough powers to refer cases of illegal practice of medicine to the Police directly.

Mr Gayan: Well, let the Bill come to the House. If there are amendments to be made, I am sure the hon. Member will make them and we will consider.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME - UNEMPLOYED GRADUATES - PLACEMENT

(No. B/734) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the unemployed graduates, he will state the -

- (a) number thereof aged between 18 and 30 registered with his Ministry, as at 31 December 2014, indicating the number thereof having obtained placements under the Youth Empowerment Programme, and
- (b) steps taken by Government to assist them secure employment.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Sesungkur!

SOCIAL AID & PENSIONS - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/735) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)

asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to social aid and pensions, she will state the -

- (a) number of people with disabilities or unhealthy conditions who are benefitting therefrom, since 31 December 2014 to date, indicating the main causes of the disabilities and unhealthy conditions;
- (b) amount of funds disbursed therefor in 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively, and
- (c) steps being taken to improve the living conditions of the beneficiaries thereof.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Madam Speaker, I would, first of all, thank the hon. Member for this particular question as I consider this to be indeed an opportunity to speak on a subject which concerns the population at large and is therefore of significant importance.

I am informed that about 51,200 persons with disabilities have been benefiting from social aid and pensions since December 2014 to date.

The main causes of the disabilities as reported by the Medical Unit of my Ministry are diabetes with its complications such as blindness, renal failure, amputations and non-healing wounds, cerebral-vascular accidents, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, old age debility, epilepsy, hearing impairment, Alzheimer, dementia, congenital disorders and injury.

As regards part (b) of the question, the amount of funds disbursed thereof in 2012, 2013 and 2014 are as follows –

Year	Amount (Rs) Billion
2012	Rs1,992,945,285
2013	Rs2,067,418,202
2014	Rs2,275,546,042

As regards part (c) of the question, there are indeed a series of measures taken by my Ministry to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities benefiting from social

aid and pensions. There are around 20 measures but, Madam Speaker, due to time constraints I will enumerate only a few of them.

1. Persons with disabilities who are beneficiaries of Basic Invalidity Pension benefit from free travel bus pass. Students with disabilities too benefit from the same facility.
2. To enable easy access to public places, free parking coupons are provided to eligible disabled persons.
3. Training of informal carers is given to relatives of family members who take care of people with severe disabilities.
4. Financial assistance provided by Government for treatment abroad has been increased from Rs500,000 to Rs800,000. On top of that, the National Solidarity Fund provides an additional assistance of Rs200,000 and meets the return airfare of two persons.
5. Assistance is also provided by the National Solidarity Fund for the purchase of assistive devices such as –
 - nappies to persons suffering from incontinence and bedridden;
 - spectacles;
 - dentures, and
 - medical bed.

Madam Speaker, it is also to be noted that apart from the provision of the abovementioned facilities, my Ministry has also increased significantly the pension rates and social aids provided to persons with disabilities causing an increase in expenditure of around Rs60 m. monthly.

We have also noted with serious concern that, children who are below the age of 15 and who are either bedridden or who suffer from disabilities of not less than 60% are not entitled to the Basic Invalidity Pension. They qualify only for Social Aid which is means-tested. This means that these children are entitled to Social Aid only where their parents earn less than Rs350,000 yearly. My Ministry is in the process of bringing a positive change in

this area whereby it is proposed that children who are below the age of 15 and who are either bedridden or who suffer from disabilities of not less than 60% will benefit from Invalidity Pension irrespective of the annual earning capacity of their parents.

Moreover, with a view to revamping the Medical Unit, we are in the process of recruiting more medical practitioners to –

- (i) enable more domiciliary medical visits to be effected with a view to providing even more efficient medical care to patients, and
- (ii) facilitate the timely determination of applications.

I also wish to highlight that currently the extent of disability suffered by a person is determined in accordance with the Sixth Schedule of the National Pensions Act as well as with the help of comprehensive medical guidelines prepared by medical specialists. We intend to include these guidelines in the National Pensions Act to give it “*force de loi*” in the near future. This will not only ensure transparency, but will also make it mandatory for medical practitioners to comply with these guidelines in practice.

Beneficiaries of pension or social aid will henceforth be notified by way of letter two months preceding the date on which their pension or social aid is due to be discontinued. This procedure will allow beneficiaries to undergo their medical re-boarding with a view to determining whether they are eligible for the pension or not.

With regard to persons who are assessed by the Medical Board as being permanently disabled, these persons will be entitled to Basic Invalidity Pension for life without the need for them to constantly attend the Medical Board to undergo medical re-boarding to determine their eligibility.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Sesungkur!

Mr Sesungkur: Is the hon. Minister aware that the current practice at her Ministry level is that the only means of livelihood of these persons are being suppressed abruptly and then procedures restarted? So, can the hon. Minister consider to give a humane approach to the whole system and show some flexibility in the approach and to ensure that the only means of livelihood of these people are not suppressed and that they benefit from the pension and social aid for a period of transition? Thank you.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes. Madam Speaker, this is what I have said in my answer. That's why I am revisiting the Medical Board and see to it that we can facilitate the timely determination of applications.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regards to disability pension to people who have lost either arms or legs, many at times - and which we know they are not going to be in good condition again, their arms and legs are not going to grow again - they have to be revisited by doctors apparently for obvious reasons because doctors are paid an allowance for that. So, may I ask the hon. Minister what is being done at the level of her Ministry to address this problem?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, if you have listened carefully to my reply, I have already mentioned that this is being taken care of and they will no more have to attend the Medical Board.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, we listened carefully.

(Interruptions)

Can we know from the hon. Minister the number - if she has the figures - of people who were in receipt of these disability aid and pensions in 2014, but who no longer receive those social aid and pensions in 2015?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Unfortunately, I don't have the figure. If you can come with a substantive question.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano!

QUATRE BORNES - DECONGESTION PROGRAMME

(No. B/736) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)

asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to Quatre Bornes and the vicinity thereof, he will state if consideration is being given for the elaboration of a Decongestion Programme therefor, respectively for the -

- (a) short term, and
- (b) long term.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am fully aware of the acute congestion problem at Quatre Bornes the moreso during peak hours in the morning and in the afternoon. The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has worked out a Traffic Management Scheme with a view to making the most effective use of the existing road system and this scheme will basically involve the following -

- Restrictions on turning movements along roads where traffic flows will be reversed [*d'Epinay Avenue and Osman Avenue*];
- Conversion of roads into one-way [*Buswell Avenue, d'Epinay Avenue, and Avenue des Rosiers and Avenue Ylang Ylang*];
- Re-routing of buses *along Odette Ernest Avenue and Murphy Avenue*;
- Provision of traffic lights at major road *junctions [junction at Osman Avenue and St. Jean Road and Murphy Avenue and St. Jean Road]*;
- Provision of pelican crossings on roads which have high traffic volumes and high pedestrian flows [*St. Jean Road near Post Office, Candos-Vacoas Road near Kalimaye, and Palma Road near Taxi Stand*];
- Provision of additional lanes on roads which have high traffic volumes [extension of the left merging lane along St. Jean Road up to the left turning lane going towards Tulipes Road and extension of the left filter lane along St. Jean Road at the junction at La Louise for traffic heading towards Candos];
- Relocation of bus stops at Palma Road near taxi stand, Candos-Vacoas Road near *kalimaye* and Victoria Hospital.

We have also tried to reduce the number of parking on the main roads.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the traffic scheme will be implemented in phases. In the short term, that is, Phase 1 has already started with traffic signs and road markings

being provided on site for one additional lane along St Jean Road for traffic heading towards La Louise. This additional lane will be operational in two weeks' time during the afternoon peak from 15.00 hrs to 19.00 hrs.

In the longer term, it is proposed to implement the following measures -

- Extension of the left merging lane along St. Jean Road up to the left turning lane going towards Tulipes Road with the provision of raised footpath, and
- Extension of the left filter lane along St. Jean Road at the traffic lights at La Louise.

Mr Ramano: Le nombre de problèmes est vraiment énorme. Une des solutions peut-être c'est que si on pourrait envisager de déplacer le *taxi stand* de La Louise dans un autre endroit pour mieux régler le trafic dans la région de La Louise.

Mr Bodha: Madame la présidente, toutes les propositions sont les bienvenues. Je propose, au fait, d'en parler avec l'honorable Ramano.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Is the hon. Minister aware that recently from La Louise to the St Jean round-about, we have seven traffic lights in a way to decongest, but is he aware that this is causing a lot of problem? Every 500 metres, we are having traffic light and since they are not synchronised, we have to stop and that is creating a lot of problems at St Jean Road.

Mr Bodha: I will definitely look into the matter, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: PQ B/737, B/744 and B/745. Next question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

SUBOXONE - IMPORTERS

(No. B/737) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to Suboxone, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pharmacy Board –

- (a) a list of the importers thereof, and
- (b) information as to the cost thereof as opposed to Methadone.

(Withdrawn)

HALAAL FOOD - REGULATIONS

(No. B/738) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to *halaal* food, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed amendments to be brought to the Food Act

and the regulations made in relation thereto, indicating when the regulations that had been finalized last year would come into operation.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the matter regarding the proposed amendments to be brought to the Food Act and regulations is still being looked into. Contact has been established with the *Halaal* Research Committee which is headed by a Mufti.

However, the issues that remain to be determined are as to whether the regulations for *halaal* foods have to be made under the Public Health Act or under the Trade Laws, inasmuch as no definitive conclusion has been reached, whether it is a health issue or a certification issue, marking or labelling issue.

Mr Mohamed: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. The same question was put some few months back when the hon. Minister was being replaced by another Minister here and the same answer was given actually: "it was being worked on." Is the hon. Minister aware that ever since 2011, the then Minister of Health had already chaired several committees, had already had meetings with representatives of various mosques and organisations concerning *halaal* certification, representative from the State Law Office and had even prepared draft regulations that were already approved as far back as 2011. Is the hon. Minister aware of that?

Mr Gayan: Well, I am aware, Madam Speaker, that this issue has been studied for a number of years, but the problem is that I asked the question to my officers and the answer that I was given was that it is impossible for a doctor or for any inspector to know whether something is *halaal* or is not *halaal*. It is impossible medically or from public health point of view to know that. So, this is why I said that it looks more like a trade issue where the customer has to be sure that the person or the supplier is a reputable and reliable supplier that is supplying *halaal* food, but it is not a health issue. This is why it has taken so long and it is likely to take a bit longer. This is why I have, myself, given instructions to contact the Jummah Mosque. The people there informed my Ministry that there is a mufti who is the expert on *halaal* issues and I have asked my officers to get in touch and to do something. It is not that we are unwilling to do something, but we need to do something that is implementable and that is workable. As it is, it is impossible for my inspectors to go and say whether this is *halaal* or this is not *halaal*. It is a question of, as they say in latin, '*caveat emptor*', the buyer must beware.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Is the hon. Minister aware - I mean, since he has just said that it is impossible as such for inspectors to look at things and to decide what is *halaal* and what is

not – that not only in various other jurisdictions, as the hon. Prime Minister put it: “more democratic than us”, such laws already exist and are being enforced by Central Government? Is he also aware that the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, together with the World Health Organisation, have a book, a standard which they go by, which is called Codex Alimentarius Commission and in the Codex Alimentarius, this is where the definition of what ‘*halaal*’ is, as a guidance to other jurisdictions to implement it in our local laws? Therefore, if this has already been worked upon at the time when the former Minister of Health in 2011, was then Minister of Health, it had already been looked into and all the legal issues have been worked out, why is it that today it seems as though - I am not accusing the hon. Minister of anything, Government may change, people may go, new ones can come in - officers of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life have a serious issue with trying to find hurdles, not to stop the implementation of a project that has already started long time back and to which there is no problem, but they keep on inventing new ones?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, my information is that there is a *Halaal* Industry Development Corporation and the Trade Description Act, in the countries that we have talked about, that regulates the issue of *halaal*. And ‘*halaal*’ from what I understand is an expression that means that –

“The food or goods neither is nor consist of or contains any part or matter of an animal that is prohibited by Hukum Syarak (...)”.

It is not that we are not looking into the matter, but the issue is: is it a health issue or is it a trade issue? That is the main concern that we have because it is impossible - from what I am told from my officers - for enforcement purposes for them to go and say this is *halaal* if the label says something else.

Madam Speaker: One last question because time is over already!

Mr Mohamed: Is the hon. Minister aware - with regard to solutions to the problems that may exist, but in my humble view do not exist – that what was proposed in 2011 was precisely that there would be a National *Halaal* Certification Committee set up under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and on that committee there would be muftis of various schools of thought who are qualified to work together with officers of the Ministry, thereby, circumventing the alleged problems of enforcement that they may have? So, the solution was worked out by the then Minister who is now the Speaker.

Madam Speaker: You have made your point; allow the hon. Minister to reply!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I also explore this avenue and then I was told that my predecessor in the Ministry was looking at the *halaal* issue. And then, the issue of who is going to certify whether vegetarian food is really vegetarian. So, there are all sorts of issues that come into play.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, this House is aware of the problems that India is facing today with beef that is being exported and sold in India. So, we have a serious problem. I say again, we have contacted the mufti. Let us see what the mufti says and we will be guided by what the mufti says.