



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 07 APRIL 2015

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Members

THE CABINET**(Formed by the Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC)**

Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit
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Hon. Showkutally Soodhun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, GCSK	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Youth and Sports
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Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Local Government
Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
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Hon. Sudarshan Bhadain	Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms
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Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform

Institutions

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Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training

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Hansard Editor	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
Serjeant-at-Arms	Pannoo, Mr Vinod

MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 17 of 2015

Sitting of 07 April 2015

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Papers have been laid on the Table -

A. Office of the President

The 41st Annual Report of the Ombudsman – January to December 2014.
(In Original)

B. Prime Minister's Office –

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Local Government (Amendment) Bill (No. V of 2015). (In Original)
- (b) The Protection of Human Rights (Application to Human Rights Division for Enquiry) (Prescribed Form) Regulations 2015 (Government Notice No. 42 of 2015).

C. Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation –

The National Identity Card (Extension of Validity Period) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 (Government Notice No. 38 of 2015).

D. Ministry of Local Government –

- (a) The Municipal Town Council of Beau/ Bassin/ Rose Hill Chebel Crematorium Regulation 2015 (Government Notice No. 36 of 2015).
- (b) The Municipal Town Council of Beau Bassin/ Rose Hill (Fees for Classified Trades) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 (Government Notice No. 37 of 2015).

E. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection –

- (a) The Hire Purchase and Credit Sale (Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 (Government Notice No. 39 of 2015).
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2015 (Government Notice No. 40 of 2015).
- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2015 (Government Notice No. 41 of 2015).
- (d) The Consumer Protection (Export Control) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 (Government Notice No. 43 of 2015).

ANNOUNCEMENT

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - ZAMBIAN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – DELEGATION

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that we have in our VIP Gallery today, Members of the Zambian Parliamentary Committee on Education, Science and Technology who are on a study visit to Mauritius. In my own name and on behalf of hon. Members, I extend a warm welcome to the delegation and wish them a fruitful study visit.

Thank you.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

BRAMER BANK & BRITISH AMERICAN INSURANCE (MAURITIUS) LTD – RECEIVERS & CONSERVATORS – APPOINTMENT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the revocation by the Bank of Mauritius of the banking licence of the Bramer Bank and the appointment of conservators to take charge of the British American Insurance (Mauritius) Ltd. by the Financial Services Commission, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –
 - (i) the number of employees, depositors, insurance policyholders and shareholders concerned therewith, and
 - (ii) why receivers were appointed regarding the Bramer Bank and conservators were appointed regarding the British American Insurance (Mauritius) Ltd., and
- (b) state the measures being taken to protect –
 - (i) the employees, the depositors and the pension policyholders concerned therewith, and
 - (ii) the image of Mauritius as an international financial hub.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, at the very outset, I would like to state that we are dealing with a crisis of national proportion that goes well beyond party politics. I kept the hon. Prime Minister fully informed from day one. He not only gave me his full support, but also decided that we should move immediately and not wait until the situation gets out of control.

The Cabinet was also fully supportive of this approach as well as all Members of the National Assembly on the majority side.

As it is a national issue, I also decided to brief the hon. Leader of the Opposition who was fully conscious of the ramifications of such a Ponzi Scheme and the earthquake effect that this crisis could have on our financial system and country at large. I wish to thank him for having understood the need for a non-partisan approach to deal with this crisis.

I also wish to thank the media. I have personally shared with the Editors-in-Chief the unfolding of this crisis and its seriousness and they have played their role in an objective and responsible manner.

Madam Speaker, before answering the question, I would like to briefly highlight the main events that led to the revocation of the banking licence of the Bramer Bank by the Bank of Mauritius.

Following its last on-site examination at the Bramer Bank, from 22 January to 20 February 2015, the Bank of Mauritius had noted a number of serious deficiencies which it conveyed to Bramer Bank on 27 February 2015.

Bramer Bank had failed to comply with statutory requirements and a number of guidelines to ensure safety in banking. All these deficiencies could undermine the financial soundness and pose serious systemic risks to the domestic financial system.

On 27 February 2015, the Bank of Mauritius required Bramer Bank to inject fresh capital of Rs3.5 billion by 31 December 2015, in a phased manner. This was to start with an initial capital injection of Rs350 m. by 31 March 2015.

Concurrently, the Bank of Mauritius imposed a restriction on Bramer Bank in respect of the grant of new credit facilities to related parties. This restriction was motivated by the need to preserve and protect the interests of depositors.

On 24 March 2015, Bramer Bank notified the Bank of Mauritius about the continuing pressure on its liquidity position. The situation deteriorated further when Bramer Bank could not raise funds from the interbank market.

Initially, it had been borrowing from the domestic interbank money market on an *ad hoc* basis. But as from 23 January 2015, it had been borrowing on a daily basis.

As banks scaled down their interbank lending to Bramer Bank, as from mid-February 2015, the latter resorted to overnight credit facilities from the Bank of Mauritius. It had been relying heavily and continuously, on a daily basis, since 06 March 2015 on overnight facility from the Central Bank as lender of last resort.

Bramer Bank also failed to maintain the minimum cash reserve requirement as from 05 March 2015.

Bramer Bank also requested the Bank of Mauritius to provide it with a special line of credit of Rs1.0 billion to meet its persistent liquidity shortfall against security of immovable properties.

As such a move would further increase its related party exposure, and because the request was outside the scope of its regulatory authority, the Bank of Mauritius informed Bramer Bank, on 26 March 2015, that its request for the special line of credit could not be acceded to.

On 27 March 2015, Bramer Bank apprised the Bank of Mauritius that there were massive withdrawals of deposits and that its liquidity situation had seriously deteriorated.

Bramer Bank failed to comply, by the deadline of 31 March 2015, with the requirement of injecting a first instalment of fresh capital of Rs350 m.

On 01 April 2015, the Bank of Mauritius took note of the leakage of an internal confidential note, addressed to the senior management of Bramer Bank, in the public domain, which stated that –

“The Board of Directors of the bank has decided that no premature encashment of deposits shall be allowed with immediate effect”.

This leakage further amplified the loss of public confidence in Bramer Bank exposing it to a run on its deposits. The Bank of Mauritius was receiving numerous phone calls from the public enquiring about the soundness of the bank.

The likelihood of the liquidity crisis in which Bramer Bank was trapped became increasingly evident. The Bramer Bank was on the verge of collapse.

In the light of information to the effect that the run on Bramer Bank had started gathering momentum, the Bank of Mauritius, as the authority responsible for regulating the banking sector, decided to revoke the Banking licence of Bramer Bank on 02 April 2015, under section 17 of the Banking Act 2004. This decision had to be taken expeditiously to protect the interest of depositors and the public at large. This was in line with Bank of Mauritius duty to preserve and protect confidence in the stability of the financial system.

On the same day, the Board of Directors of the Bank of Mauritius appointed Messrs André Bonieux and Mushtaq Oosman as receivers pursuant to section 75 of the Banking Act 2004.

Following the financial difficulties faced by Bramer Bank which led to the cessation of its banking activities, a total of Rs5.25 billion of debentures held directly and indirectly by the BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd. have consequently been impaired. This caused the solvency margin of the insurer to be deficient.

The FSC had, therefore, the responsibility to safeguard the assets of the BAI and protect the policyholders. It did so by appointing Messrs Mushtaq Oosman and André Bonieux of PWH as Conservator of BAI, pursuant to section 106 of the Insurance Act 2005.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that the situation is as follows concerning the Bramer Bank –

- 401 employees
- 50,524 depositors holding 64,403 accounts
- 1,578 shareholders, of which 4 Special Purpose Vehicles wholly owned by the British American Investment (Mtius) Ltd and which held a total of 74 percent of Bramer Bank. In addition, BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd held 5.3 percent of Bramer Bank through Bramer Property Fund Ltd.

Madam Speaker, information now as regards the BAI, it has 407 full-time employees and 895 insurance agents and sales persons. The BAI has 159,458 policies, of which 24,175 are in respect of Single Premium Endowment Policies – “THE NOTORIOUS SUPER CASH-BACK GOLD SCHEME” - and the balance of 135,283 are Recurring Premium Insurance and Pension Policies.

The BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd. is a wholly owned subsidiary of British American Investment Co. (Mtius) Ltd. The ultimate holding company of BAI is KLAD Investment Corporation Ltd incorporated in Bahamas.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the basic reason for having recourse to Section 17 of the Banking Act 2004 and not Section 65 of the Act which refers to the appointment of a Conservator was guided by the consideration that the Bramer Bank was already facing a run on its deposits. There were strong indications that the liquidity crisis that the Bramer Bank was experiencing had heightened and its collapse was imminent. The risk of a systemic crisis was clear and present. The Bank of Mauritius had no alternative, but to have recourse to Section 17 of the Act which stipulates that the Central Bank may in cases of urgency and in the public interest revoke a banking licence.

In case the Bank of Mauritius had opted for conservatorship the Bramer Bank would have still been subject to continuing deposit withdrawals. Depositors' interests would certainly not have been safeguarded.

Whereas in the case of the BAI (Insurance), the FSC had reasonable cause to believe that the solvency margin of the insurer is or is likely to be deficient. It thus chose to appoint a Conservator under Section 106 of Insurance Act 2005.

The Conservator has taken charge of the business of the insurer and all of its property, books, records and effects and is exercising all powers necessary to preserve, protect and recover any of the assets of the insurer, collect all monies and debts due to it, assert causes of action belonging to the insurer.

As regards part (c) of the question, following the decision of the Bank of Mauritius to revoke the banking licence of the Bramer Bank, Government took immediate steps to protect the clients and employees of the Bank. Government gave the assurance that deposits of all clients would be safeguarded and took the following actions -

- (i) all Bramer Bank's customers holding a debit card could access their funds through ATMs of the bank as from Saturday 04 April 2015 in the afternoon;
- (ii) a new entity, National Commercial Bank Ltd, has been set up to take over the assets and liabilities of Bramer Bank. Once the formalities of the transfer of assets and liabilities have been completed, the National Commercial Bank Ltd will be in a position to provide full banking services. In the meantime, the receivers have been authorised by the Bank of Mauritius to provide core banking services to the clients of Bramer Bank, with the managerial support of

the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd. Thus all the branches of Bramer Bank are open to the public as from this morning, and

- (iii) the BOM will issue a new banking licence to the National Commercial Bank Ltd by the end of this week, and
- (iv) the National Commercial Bank Ltd will start full-scale banking operations at all places of business of the Bramer Bank once the formalities have been completed.

Moreover, the staff of Bramer Bank, except for certain executives, was requested to report for duty as from Monday 06 April 2015.

Concerning, the BAI (Insurance) Government gave the assurance that interest of all recurring premium policyholders would be fully safeguarded and took the following actions -

- (i) a new entity will be set up by Government to take over the 135,283 recurring insurance policies of BAI;
- (ii) all employees of BAI, except the top management, have been requested to report for duty on Monday 06 April 2015.

Moreover, the Conservator has issued a communiqué addressed to clients and employees of BAI dated 06 April 2015 informing them that -

- operations of BAI resume normally as from 06 April 2015;
- all health insurance products are honoured;
- all recurring premium products are maintained;
- all payments due under the above-mentioned policies are executed normally as from 06 April 2015, and
- all Super-Cash-Back Gold policies are not covered by the new entity – we are referring here to the 24,143 investors who invested Rs21.6 billion in this scam.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the image of Mauritius as a financial hub, I have to underline that Mauritius will finally emerge out of this crisis as a stronger, cleaner and more credible financial centre, especially in view of the prompt, effective and determined actions taken by Government and the regulatory bodies.

Madam Speaker, the country was on the verge of a major social crisis on Saturday last. The strong and timely decisions taken by Government and the national solidarity expressed by the Opposition, the media and the nation at large has allowed us to avert a major social and financial crisis. Thank you.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister made the difference between some 135,000 ordinary - if I can call them that - insurance policyholders and some 24,000 that went through the notorious - as the Minister said - special scheme and so on. Do I take it that the absolute guarantee that the policyholders' interest will be fully protected by Government and anybody else concern applies to these 135,000 only, and what is going to happen to the others?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, we have guaranteed the 135,000 and something holders of insurance policies, that is, those who are paying regularly their premium on a monthly basis; all those policies are totally covered. I must here emphasise, I am not talking of policyholders, but policies. Why? Because out of those 135,000 there are a few of them who have also invested in the Ponzi Scheme and those who have invested in that Ponzi Scheme will not be covered. This is for the 135,000 and something of policyholders. The remainder, that is, the 24,143 investors who believed in this Super-Cash-Back-Gold Policy scam invested a total of Rs21.6 billion, is not covered by the Government guarantee. This instead will be dealt with by the Conservator, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Mr Oosman and Mr Bonieux.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister will allow me to disagree with the Bank of Mauritius, that they used the liquidation process, revoking of the banking licence, instead of going through conservators; and conservators could have stopped the activities of the bank to prevent any further run on the bank, but that is already a thing of the past. Can I know, on a point of clarification - I heard the Minister say that the branches of Bramer Bank, as from this morning, are functioning and so on. Who is functioning? The licence has been revoked; has the revocation been revoked? How are the Bramer Bank's branches functioning?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: That is a great question because, in fact, we spent the full of Sunday afternoon and yesterday trying to find a solution. In fact, there was a transitional measure which was necessary in-between the revocation of the banking licence and the National Commercial Bank moving in. Secondly, we had to give one week of time for Bramer Bank's Board of Directors to react, if any. So, we had a problem until Wednesday this week, that is, tomorrow. So, the Bank of Mauritius very exceptionally, yesterday, issued a temporary banking licence for Bramer Bank which will lapse naturally on Wednesday, once the new banking licence is issued. This is probably the only solution we had. I need to say that we are moving at crisis speed. Maybe, looking back further down the road, we might be

wiser, but for the time being I have no doubt that the team at the Bank of Mauritius, FSC, my Ministry - we worked until late last night - came to the only viable legal solution, and that was the transition period of two days.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, as we know, the law provides that insurance companies cannot invest more than 10% of its assets in its related companies, and I understand that they were way above 50%. The issue was raised in 2013 in the House. Can I know - what has happened has happened - what percentage was the BAI Insurance Company holding in terms of assets in its related companies? Did it bring it down? Was there a progress? Or were we stuck with figures of over 50%?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, I will give the information. As at 31 December 2014, BAI was involved with related parties up to 58%. That is a huge percentage compared to the law that provided for a maximum of 10% of the BAI's assets that could be invested in related parties. So, we are very far. The second question: has the situation improved? Yes, it has improved. In 2009, it reached a peak of 85% ...

(Interruptions)

That's incredible! Shocking! But that's what happened.

It then moved down very gradually to 83%, then pushed up in 2011 to 85%; in 2012, it went down to 84%; in 2013, to 66%, and we are now, today, at around 58% of the total assets of BAI which are invested in related parties instead of 10%. So, we were well before that in a dramatic situation.

Mr Bérenger: The Government has given the total guarantee that the employment of all employees - from what I understood and heard - of the Bramer Bank would be safeguarded. Can I know whether they will be employees of SBM or defunct Bramer Bank or the new Bank that is going to be set up, and what is going to happen to their years of service?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: We are moving in a transition basis. In fact, I must say one thing. The CEO of Bramer, Mr Esmael, has been fully cooperative with Government in this transition period. He is still there. A management team from SBM has also moved in since yesterday. So, as at today, we have the CEO of Bramer Bank who is still there, plus a management team from SBM who are helping and managing the branches.

Mr Bérenger: I understand that a new bank is being set up. Can I know what will be the involvement of the State Bank of Mauritius, which will put in money in the new bank, and which is going to take charge of all the toxic assets that will be found at Bramer Bank?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: There are two questions. First, the State Bank of Mauritius was initially requested to take over the activities of Bramer. But, then, the SBM is also a holding company quoted on the Stock Market of Mauritius, and we can't just play with it. We realised, therefore, that adding this amount of responsibility on SBM could not be in the interest of the depositors.

So, yesterday, you must have seen that there was a run on the SBM shares, and then it went back, fortunately, to the way it was. But that's just to show how investors are extremely sensitive on such issues. So, we met on Saturday and took the decision with the Bank of Mauritius, SBM, FSC and the Ministry of Finance of creating a new bank, a new entity, which is the National Commercial Bank, and which will be fully owned by Government - 100%.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the BAI Insurance Company and Group are concerned, now that Government has given a total guarantee that the interests of all the 135,000 policyholders will be fully supported, do we have an estimate what the exposure of Government will be? Do we have an estimate to help us in that direction, of the value of accumulated contributions that Government is now taking over in terms of responsibility?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: The hon. Leader of the Opposition will be shocked again. The total long-term insurance liabilities of BAI amount to Rs25.8 billion. Out of these, Rs21.6 billion are represented by the Ponzi Scheme itself. So, we are left with Rs4.2 billion, which represent the total long-term insurance liabilities of the BAI. This is something which we can handle.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know whether we will put in the Budget any sum of money to help face those responsibilities in billions, and what is going to happen to the employment of the employees of the BAI?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I have not got the hon. Leader of the Opposition's question very well. It's the employees for BAI.

Mr Bérenger: Yes. If the hon. Minister of Finance will allow me; he has guaranteed the employment of all the employees of the Bramer Bank. What is the situation as far as the employees of BAI Insurance and related companies?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I gave the figures just now in the reply; I will give it once again. For BAI, we have, therefore, 407 full-time employees and their employment is fully guaranteed. There are also 895 insurance agents and sales persons. We have also taken the responsibility for them too, which amount, therefore, to some 1,302 full-time employees, part-time employees and also sales agents who are working on a commission basis.

As for the policyholders, I have just said that there are 135,283 recurring premium insurance policyholders. I would like to stress again that we are guaranteeing the insurance policies that are being paid regularly by insurance holders, not the holders. Because some of the holders have invested also in the Ponzi Scheme, and we can't guarantee security for that.

Mr Bérenger: The BAI Group had been looking - from what I understand - for a strategic partner. Can I know whether the conservators will be looking eventually for a strategic partner for the BAI group?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: That's a question I can't reply now, because we had to move in fast during the weekend to safeguard the employment of BAI and Bramer. Then, we had to safeguard also the deposits of depositors in Bramer Bank, and then we had to safeguard also those honest insurance policyholders who have been contributing for years in the scheme. So, this was our priority. I feel still very deeply that we had to avert a social crisis. I am not playing on words. If we had not moved that fast, the country would have been in a deep social crisis today. So, that was my priority during the weekend.

Now, with regard to the question of what will happen as from now on, the Conservator - Pricewaterhouse - will have to manage all those assets. We all know that Apollo Hospital is losing money, Iframac is losing money, Courts is losing money. It is quite a situation which will have to be managed, but not by us. We, as Government, intervened to protect the savers, to protect the policyholders, to protect the workers, and we have done it. We have, in the course of this weekend, protected some 220,000 people. We did not want those people to be on the street today. So, they have been safeguarded. Now, I think that Pricewaterhouse will have to manage hereon the situation. It has got its own facilities, it has confirmed therefore quite a few things. Now, will Pricewaterhouse, Mr Bonieux and Mr Oosman decide on finding a strategic partner, it will depend on them. I think that we have moved for the essential now and now I need to take some breath and relax because we have gone through the most difficult part of the crisis itself.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, do you have many more questions?

Mr Bérenger: Can I have one? I understand that, although the BAI group was in such trouble in Mauritius, they have managed to invest in Kenya and that the value of their investment, especially in Equity Bank and Housing Finance Corporation of Kenya, is to the value of some Rs6 billion. Has this been looked into, what is going to happen? Will that be available, here, in Mauritius to help in the local situation?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: In the night of Friday to Saturday last, in-between 1 a.m. to 5 a.m., negotiations went through and something incredible happened, Mr Dawood Rawat signed and sold the whole group for Rs1; he must know what he was doing. But we have a document signed by him, whereby he was relinquishing all the rights of the whole group. I am speaking of some 500 companies! Ponzi Schemes are always very complex to explain. We are dealing now with subsidiaries companies, hidden companies, indirect companies and we are expecting now that this commitment of Mr Rawat will materialise in a formal document on which his lawyers are working, here, in Mauritius. So, my first reaction was one of pleasant surprise, but I also feel that if he moved that quickly to relinquish all his rights then it might be fishy also.

Madam Speaker: We are running out of time. I will allow one question for hon. Shakeel Mohamed and then I will come back to the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his last question.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister has been talking about scam and Ponzi Scheme. Does he have any report from any institution that has enquired into all the aspects of this case, as being expatiated upon by himself, be it the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Bank of Mauritius, the Financial Services Commission, the Police or be it any institution or any private institution, that confirms what the hon. Minister is saying, Madam Speaker, that, indeed, there is a scam or indeed there is a Ponzi Scheme? Because we have heard outside independent lawyers, who have no interest of their own to protect, have come out very independently, have said there is no Ponzi Scheme, there is no scam!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, you made your point! We are running out of time.

Mr Mohamed: So, on what, therefore, does the hon. Minister base himself to say that? If he bases himself on something substantial, can he now come up with it and deposit it on the Table of the Assembly?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I won't be surprised that the hon. Member, himself, knows since quite a long time that BAI is a Ponzi Scheme! Therefore, let's not play on words.

(Interruptions)

The Leader of the Opposition knows very well, we have been working. In fact, I must confess ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed, please allow the hon. Minister to reply! You have asked your question, you have made your point!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: No, I don't want to hurt any feeling here. I can just tell you that we all know that this is a Ponzi Scheme, a scam that has been set up to steal poor people savings.

(Interruptions)

Let us not play on words! And if the Government had not moved fast this weekend, we would have had a social crisis of unlimited dimension in this country and the House knows also. You know why ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: ...the Leader of the Opposition is adopting a very serious approach because we have been working on this file since 2010. We know each of us that the scam – this one - has been copied and pasted from Trinidad; that BAI Trinidad collapsed in 2009 and the then Prime Minister of Trinidad, Kamla Persad, went to Parliament and said and confessed that 'BAI is a Ponzi Scheme'. The chance we had here is that Trinidad & Tobago, the Caribbean islands, are still fighting even now to refund insurers policy of their money ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed, you have made your point! No cross-talking!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, I will come to the hon. Member in one second ...

(Interruptions)

I wish to tell the hon. Member ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please don't get excited!

(Interruptions)

Last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: I have a last question. I know it is early, but has the Ministry of Finance started looking at what impact this whole mess will have on GDP growth? I know it is not an easy question, but is the beginning of an answer available and, if not, will the hon.

Minister keep us informed as we go along, as the drama develops, what impact this whole mess will have on GDP growth?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Just as a matter which concerns the whole House, I need to say that predators, vultures don't have religion, don't have race, don't have colour. They are there to steal poor people's money, that's all. Let us not give to predators, to vultures a community, a name or a religion because this is not true. I wanted to make this very clear because I don't want anyone in this country, even for one second, to doubt that we are dealing with a Ponzi Scheme of incredible proportion, planned, master minded to steal people's money. But, there is nothing on this issue that can concern a religion, a community or a race, that is number one.

The Leader of the Opposition has put the question. I can tell you that I will keep the nation informed and the Leader of the Opposition and the media also. I will keep you all informed on a day to day basis of what we are doing to save the situation. What I can say is that we have come out of the most substantial part of the crisis and this is something which is great for the country, for the nation. So, the Government will certainly keep the public, the nation, the Opposition, the media fully informed about the evolution of the situation.

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/254 and B/261 have been withdrawn. Parliamentary Question No. B/263 addressed to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Agro Industry and Food Security!

NDU - DISTRICT CONTRACTORS

(No. B/252) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the National Development Unit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, the names of the district contractors region-wise for works carried out, over the past three years, indicating in each case –

- (a) the contract value thereof and the variation costs, if any, indicating the authorized limit thereof;
- (b) if procurement procedures were complied with;
- (c) if works were delayed and, if so, if new performance bonds were provided therefor and, if not, why not;

- (d) any sum of money still overdue thereto, and
- (e) if assessments of the quality of the works and procedures observed before disbursement of funds will be made.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform that the names of the Zonal Contractors and the works they effected for the National Development Unit during period 2006-2014 were provided as part of my reply to PQ No. B/161. The description of the projects were also given.

As regards the contract value of each project and the variation costs thereof, if any, same are being compiled and will be tabled at the earliest. All additional information requested and pertaining to variations, delays, performance bonds and amount still overdue, will also be provided.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, will the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House that under the Emergency Rehabilitation Programme an amount of Rs1,000,376,000 were voted and, out of it, one contractor was awarded works amounting to almost Rs742.5 m. and out of these sums, an amount of Rs569.7 m. was awarded by direct procurement? Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister - I don't know if he has the information - confirm these figures for the benefit of the House?

The Prime Minister: I am not really sure about the figures, but the trend has been like that.

Mr Rughoobur: When we look at the figures, Madam Speaker, we also note that there has been in June 2013, an advice that the NDU took from the Attorney General's Office where the Attorney General advised the NDU not to go through direct procurement for such huge sums of money. Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister confirm that the then Minister and the Ministry went against the advice of the Attorney General's Office and awarded contracts worth more than Rs500 m. to one of the contractors through direct procurement?

The Prime Minister: That is confirmed, Madam Speaker. There was '*pourriture*' everywhere.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Last question!

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, I just wanted to have confirmation from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister as to whether all the payments that are still due under these direct

procurements, investigation will be carried out and that no payments will be effected unless it is ensured that works were carried out as per scope of works, and that all the procedures relating to the Public Procurement Act were followed. Will the hon. Prime Minister confirm that the payment will not be released unless the inquiry is completed?

The Prime Minister: Yes, that will be so.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We know that there is an inquiry going on on the NDU, but in previous PQs and in my last intervention at Adjournment concerning Canal Anglais, the hon. Rt. Prime Minister stated that there are no funds at the NDU because of various reasons that he gave to the House. Therefore, there is a Budget that is going to be voted. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister when will the NDU start working again and when funds will be made available, because with recent heavy rainfalls, there are so many works to be done, especially in the Capital?

The Prime Minister: Well, we will have to wait. I can't answer this right now. The inquiry is on. We will have to see how much we are really indebted, how much we owe, how much we will have to pay from what we get from the Budget, what will be left, and how it is going to be distributed among all the different Constituencies.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Following the reply of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to hon. Rughoobur, will the hon. Rt. Prime Minister consider referring this case to the Police for inquiry?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Well, we are having an internal inquiry first and then, if need be, we will ask the Police to inquire.

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

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA CENTRE - DRAINS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/253) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the project for the construction of drains at the Swami Vivekananda Center, awarded through the emergency procurement method, he

will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit, information as to the -

- (a) cost thereof;
- (b) names of the -
 - (i) contractors, and
 - (ii) subcontractors thereof;
- (c) date of award of contract, and
- (d) contractual period thereof, indicating the expected completion and commissioning dates thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as regards the construction of drains at the Swami Vivekananda Centre through emergency procurement, I am informed by the National Development Unit (NDU) that three Works Orders were issued to the Zonal Contractor for that region, namely Safety Construction Co Ltd on 12 November 2013 and an additional Works Order on 31 December 2014.

The details of Works Orders issued on 12 November 2013 are as follows -

- (i) Cut-Off Drain at Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre for an amount of Rs15,474,860 (Incl. of VAT). The Works apparently started on 13 November 2013 and were scheduled for completion on 31 December 2013. However, they were completed on 15 September 2014 only. An amount of Rs425,000 (Incl. of VAT) was deducted for the delayed completion of the works. The project is under maintenance until September 2015.
- (ii) Culvert at entrance of Domaine Les Pailles for an amount of Rs11,177,338.75 (Incl. of VAT). The Works started on 15 January 2014 and were scheduled for completion on 14 July 2014. However, due to delay caused by Mauritius Telecom to divert its services and by the CEB to relocate one electrical pole thereat, the completion date was revised to 09 October 2014. The Works were however, completed on 12 December 2014 only. An amount of Rs325,000 (Incl. of VAT) was deducted for the delayed completion of works. The project is under maintenance until December 2015.

- (iii) Rehabilitation Works at Dolce Vita Restaurant premises for an amount of Rs3,317,681.00 (Incl. of VAT). The Works started on 13 November 2013 and it was scheduled for completion on 31 December 2013. The completion date was, however, subsequently revised to 05 May 2014 by the Consultant, Mega Design Ltd due to the change in the structural design. The Works were completed on 30 July 2014 only. An amount of Rs432,741.00 (Incl. of VAT) was deducted for the delayed completion of the works. The project is under maintenance until 30 July 2015.

The Works Order issued on 31 December 2014 comprises, *inter alia*, the construction of 1400 mm wide precast drain at the back of Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre to replace the blocked pipe culvert 900 mm diameter. The Works started on 12 January 2015 and was completed on 20 March 2015, within the contractual period. The Works will be handed over to the Municipal Council of Port Louis shortly. The project will be under maintenance until 20 March 2016. The Works Order was for an amount of Rs8,556,177.10 (Incl. of VAT).

Madam Speaker, I am further informed by the National Development Unit that the latter works only with zonal contractors and does not have dealing with sub-contractors.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister has mentioned that no subcontractors are involved but, according to my information, the Safety contractor has been given so many works by the ex-Minister of the last Government that he could not comply with and has subcontracted it to an ex-Minister's relative - Mr Bundhoo?

The Prime Minister: Well, that may be so. We will have to inquire into it.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the bridge at the entrance of Swami Vivekananda Centre forms part of that contract and, to my knowledge, this bridge is falling down already before completion and is being 'colmater', as we say in Creole?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I won't be surprised.

(Interruptions)

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MR P. T. - ARREST

(No. B/254) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the arrest of Mr P. T. at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, in March 2015, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the reasons thereof and table a list of the belongings thereof that had been seized by the Police in the course thereof.

(Withdrawn)

GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY – BOARD MEMBERS

(No. B/255) 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, in regard to the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to -
 - (i) the composition of the Board thereof, indicating the terms and conditions of appointment of the Board members thereof, and
 - (ii) if urgent consideration will be given for the purchase and installation of a central server to better control betting in anticipation of the forthcoming horseracing season, and
- (b) if a new Gambling Regulatory Bill will be introduced in the Assembly and, if so, indicate when.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Board members of the Gambling Regulatory Authority have been appointed in accordance with Section (5) of the Gambling Regulatory Act 2007, as subsequently amended. I am tabling the information as regards the composition of the Board together with the terms and conditions of appointment of the Board members.

I am advised that all the Board members have duly signed the “Declaration Form” provided under Section 5(4) of the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act 2007, as subsequently amended, to the effect that they did not have any direct or indirect interest in any activity, regulated by the said Act, in the previous 5 years as from the date of their appointment as Chairman or member of the Gambling Regulatory Board.

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that, in the wake of the Budget Speech 2013 and further to the amendments brought to the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act, following the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2012, the Horse Racing Betting Control System, which was located at the seat of the Gambling Regulatory Authority, was transferred to the Mauritius Revenue Authority, in March 2013.

Following this transfer, the Mauritius Revenue Authority has effected several improvements on the server hosting the Horse Racing Betting Control System namely, with respect to -

- (i) recording horse racing betting transactions on the central server, on a continuous on-line basis, by all on-course and off-course bookmakers;
- (ii) resolving the frequent electrical outage, abrupt shutdown of GRA server, data corruption of horse racing transactions and guarantee continuous online recording of betting transactions, and
- (iii) improving compliance of bookmakers with regard to taxes through the use of Business Analytics Tools.

The Mauritius Revenue Authority has also investigated the use of an electronic fiscal device, on a pilot basis, to record betting transactions of bookmakers in a more reliable and secured manner.

The Mauritius Revenue Authority has further informed that a Request for Information is under preparation with a view to seeking consultancy services to conduct a study on “monitoring system for gaming activities” and for preparing the Request for Proposal document for the setting up of Central Electronic Monitoring System. This exercise will take on board the findings and recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on “Horse Racing in Mauritius” with regard to betting and tax collection. The decision to purchase and install a new central server will be taken on the basis of the results of this exercise.

In respect to part (b) of the question, the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing in Mauritius has stated, in its Report, that the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act 2007 provides an excellent statutory backing for the Authority to discharge its duties for the regulation of gambling activities in Mauritius.

However, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing and Government’s own assessment of the situation prevailing in the

gambling industry, I envisage to come forward with necessary amendments to the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act in order to leave no loophole for the gambling mafia to pursue their illegal activities.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I have two supplementary questions, Madam Speaker. The first one is: can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he will give directives to the Board members and the Chairperson of the GRA, the newly appointed ones, to declare their assets and liabilities, as we have been doing ourselves, despite the *diverses lacunes dans la loi* pending the coming into operation of a new Declaration of Assets of Act?

The Prime Minister: I don't know whether there is legal obligation for that. I leave it to the members.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether the MRA will look actively into the findings, as he has just stated, of the Commission of Inquiry on "Horse Racing in Mauritius" concerning those operators; there is one, 'SMS Pariaz' which has been operating outside the purview of the law, without going to the central server for, at least, four, five or six years?

The Prime Minister: I said in my answer that we will be looking into all these.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Teeluckdharry.

**GOVERNMENT PRINTING DEPARTMENT –
ASSISTANT GOVERNMENT PRINTER - POST**

(No. B/256) **Mr K. Teeluckdharry (Second Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the post of Assistant Government Printer at the Government Printing Department, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Printing Department, information as to the –

- (a) official and approved qualifications and experience required therefor;
- (b) qualifications and experience required in the advertisement in relation to the recent recruitment of the incumbent thereof, indicating the date of advertisement, and
- (c) name and qualifications of the incumbent thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that, as per the prescribed Scheme of Service for the post of Assistant Government Printer, the post is filled by selection from among officers of the Government Printing Department who hold appointment in a substantive capacity in the grade of Senior Graphic Artist or Printing Officer.

Candidates for the post should possess -

- (i) a diploma in Printing Technology or Printing Administration or Management or Business Administration or in a related field from a recognized institution or an equivalent qualification acceptable to the Public Service Commission;
- (ii) interpersonal and communication skills, and
- (iii) leadership skills.

The Scheme of Service also includes a “Note 1” which provides that, in the absence of candidates possessing the above academic qualifications, selection will be made from amongst officers in the grade of Senior Graphic Artist and Printing Officer who -

- (i) reckon at least five years’ service in a substantive capacity in the respective grade, and
- (ii) possess a certificate in Printing Technology.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the vacancy for the post of Assistant Government Printer was advertised on 27 August 2014. According to the Circular, the post was to be filled by selection from among officers of the Government Printing Department as per the prescribed Scheme of Service.

However, I am further informed that the “Note 1” was not inserted in the advertisement as in the absence of qualified candidate; the vacancy would have been re-advertised with the qualifications as provided in “Note 1”.

In regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed Ms Genevieve Taryn Knubley is the incumbent. She was a Senior Graphic Artist holding a Degree in Public Administration and Management and an MBA.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo! Next question!

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO - UNITED NATIONS ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL - RULING

(No. B/257) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third 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 Chagos Archipelago, he will state if the Chagossian community will be fully involved in the way forward, following the recent Ruling of the United Nations Arbitral Tribunal.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, forms and has always formed an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. In fact, all persons born in the Chagos Archipelago, whether before or after 1965, are regarded as being born in Mauritius and are Mauritian citizens.

My Government is deeply sympathetic to the sufferings which Mauritian citizens of Chagossian origin have endured as a result of their forcible removal from the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom which illegally excised the Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence.

Madam Speaker, in reply to the Private Notice Question on 20 March 2015, I had informed the House that my Government would study carefully the award delivered by the Arbitral Tribunal in the case brought by Mauritius against the United Kingdom in respect of the Chagos Archipelago.

I had also indicated that in the coming period, we would define the steps that would now need to be taken to give effect to the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago and to all our rights over the Archipelago, including those relating to fisheries, and oil and minerals which the Arbitral Tribunal unanimously affirmed. I had further informed the House of my proposal to chair a committee which would consider the best way forward.

Madam Speaker, the longstanding struggle of Mauritius to effectively exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and the right of Mauritian citizens, including those of Chagossian origin, to return to and resettle in the Chagos Archipelago are indissociable.

In this regard, I would welcome any views or proposals which our fellow countrymen of Chagossian origin may have on the way forward with regard to the Chagos Archipelago issue. Such views or proposals can be submitted in writing to my office, and I shall see to it that they are brought to the attention of the Committee which I shall be chairing. The House may wish to know that I have already conveyed this message to Mr Olivier Bancoult, Chairman and leader of the Chagos Refugees Group, who wrote to me following the award delivered in the case brought by Mauritius against the United Kingdom in respect of the Chagos Archipelago.

I am pleased to inform the House that the Committee will meet for the first time next week.

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for his answer. Since the Mauritian legal team has made use of several documents provided by Mr Chance, the UK Legal Adviser of the Chagos Refugees Group of Mr Bancoult, we felt that in return Government should keep the Chagossian community fully aware of the way forward. Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House which entity is responsible in the following-up of the claim of our legal rights over the Chagos Archipelago? Is it the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or both?

The Prime Minister: I do not follow the question.

Madam Speaker: Can you repeat the question, hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: I would like to know, Madam Speaker, which entity is responsible in the following-up of the claim of our legal rights over the Chagos Archipelago? Is it the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or both?

The Prime Minister: It is the Government through the Prime Minister's Office.

POLICE FORCE – VACANCIES

(No. B/258) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Police Officers from the grade of Police Sergeant to that of Assistant Commissioner of Police, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of vacancies that presently exists in each grade, indicating when –

- (a) they will be filled, and
- (b) the competitive examinations for the rank of Police Sergeant and Inspector of Police will be held.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of vacancies which presently exist in each grade from Police Sergeant to Assistant Commissioner of Police is as follows –

Grade

Number of Vacancies

Assistant Commissioner of Police	03
Superintendent of Police	27
Assistant Superintendent of Police	08
Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Police	16
Cadet Officer	05
Chief Inspector of Police	11
Inspector of Police	176
Police Cadet Inspector	11
Sub Inspector of Police	23
Police Sergeant	278

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am further informed that procedures have already been initiated with respect to the promotion exercise to fill vacancies from the rank of Inspector of Police up to that of Assistant Commissioner of Police.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that once the Budget 2015-2016 is approved, the necessary procedures, including competitive examinations, will be initiated to fill in all the existing vacancies by the end of this year.

POLICE FORCE – RECRUITS

(No. B/259) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police a list of the recruits, since the last semester 2014 to date.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since July 2014 to 03 April 2015, 666 Trainee Police Constables have been enlisted in the Mauritius Police Force.

I am tabling the list of the recruits.

PUBLIC SERVICE – RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

(No. B/260) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the public service, he will state if consideration will be given for amendments to be brought to the existing legislation with a view to reinforcing chances of equal opportunities for all, regarding the –

- (a) recruitment procedures, and
- (b) provision of -
 - (i) accrued powers to the Equal Opportunities Commission and to the Equal Opportunities Tribunal respectively;
 - (ii) increased facilities and avenues of redress to victims of discrimination or in relation to other complaints, and
- (c) tougher penalties for violations of the law.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Equal Opportunities Commission was set up to work towards the elimination of discrimination, the promotion of equal opportunities and the promotion of good relations between people of different status. Where complaints on these issues cannot be resolved through conciliation at the level of the Commission, these are referred to the Equal Opportunities Tribunal.

Regarding the public service, appeals concerning recruitment procedures of public officers, including all matters pertaining to discrimination and equal opportunity are dealt with by the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal. This Tribunal has the power to hear and determine any appeal made by any public officer against any decision of the Public Service Commission pertaining to an appointment exercise or to a disciplinary action taken against that officer.

It is to be pointed out that since a decision of the Public Service Commission may only be reviewed by the Supreme Court or the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal, the Equal Opportunities Commission cannot exercise any of its powers under the Equal Opportunities Act with respect to the Public Service Commission.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) of the question, section 27(3) (b) of the Equal Opportunities Act provides for the Commission to submit to the Attorney General proposals for amendment to the legislation if required. I am informed by the Attorney General's Office

that in 2013 and 2014, the Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission had made proposals to the Attorney General for amendments to be brought to the legislation. These include, *inter alia*, the amendment to be made to the Constitution to enable the Equal Opportunities Tribunal to entertain cases involving the Public Service Commission. The proposals were examined at the level of the Prime Minister's Office, and it was recommended at that time not to proceed with piecemeal amendments, but to adopt a holistic approach and examine the policy and legal implications thereof before taking a decision.

Madam Speaker, there are clear lines of demarcation between the roles and responsibilities of the three institutions and there may be a risk that any amendments to the Equal Opportunities Act in order to enable the Equal Opportunities Commission to investigate into complaints regarding decisions made by the Public Service Commission would create an overlapping with the existing role of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal and this would not be in the public interest. It is, therefore, not proposed to proceed with the amendments referred to in the question.

FINANCIAL SCANDALS - MRS N. S.

(No. B/261) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the financial scandals in which Mrs N. S. is allegedly involved, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if measures have been taken to secure her return to assist in the inquiries, indicating if the assistance of the investigating authorities/or law enforcement agencies of European countries where she is suspected to be currently residing, under the Mutual Legal Assistance, has been sought and if our Embassies and Consuls have been requested to co-operate therewith.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/265 has been withdrawn. Time is over!

With regard to questions addressed to hon. Ministers, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/281, B/282, B/283 and B/294 have been withdrawn.

Parliamentary Question No. B/284 addressed to the hon. Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms will now be replied by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications.

Parliamentary Question No. B/287 addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management.

Parliamentary Question No. B/297 addressed to the hon. Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment will now be replied by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands.

Hon. Members, the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports has to attend an official function and he has made a request for his questions to be called out of turn. I have acceded to his request. The same request has been made by the hon. Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and I have acceded to his request too. So, now I will call upon hon. Quirin for Parliamentary Question No. B/271!

IOIG 2015 – ATHLETES - DOUBLE NATIONALITIES

(No. B/271) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the forthcoming Indian Ocean Islands Games 2015, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the sports federations, information as to if athletes possessing double nationalities are being invited to form part of their respective selection therefor and, if so, will he obtain and table a list thereof, indicating in each case, the –
 - (i) other nationality held, and
 - (ii) performance level thereof, and
- (b) state if his Ministry is agreeable thereto.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the sports federations that there are 21 athletes possessing double nationalities who have been preselected for the forthcoming Indian Ocean Islands Games 2015.

I am tabling a list of these athletes giving details of their nationalities and their performance.

As regards part (b) of the question, in the event any of these athletes are selected for the Indian Ocean Islands Games of 2015, my Ministry will ensure that they are the best in

their respective category and discipline and also that they do not contravene the provisions of the charter of the Games.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, peut-on savoir même si ces athlètes qui je suppose ont réussi les minimas dans leurs pays respectifs, ne serait-il pas souhaitable qu'ils viennent aussi à Maurice participer à une épreuve de sélection avant les jeux des îles?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, those athletes are only pre-selected. That does not mean that they will be selected for the Indian Ocean Islands Games. All the selection will be based on performance. So, once they perform they will be selected.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, j'aimerais que le ministre nous dise s'il est au courant qu'il y a un boxeur nommé Samuel Kistohurry qui est actuellement en France et qui a fait une demande pour intégrer la sélection nationale de boxe en vue des jeux des îles. Peut-on savoir si la fédération a répondu favorablement à cette demande ?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I don't have an answer to this question. I will look into the matter with the federation and will give an answer to the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister made reference to the forthcoming Indian Ocean Islands Games. Is he aware that there is already big trouble on the issue of Mayotte taking part as a department of France, which has been a problem in the past, but now Mayotte is legally a department of France and there is big trouble already brewing, is he aware of it and is Mauritius helping to find a way forward?

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, the president of the *Comité International Olympique* who is part of the committee of the Indian Ocean Islands Games is looking into the matter very closely and we are monitoring. Definitely, if there is any help, we will help.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

NATIONAL SPORTS ACADEMY – SETTING UP

(No. B/272) **Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the project for the setting up of a National Sports Academy, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I have to inform the House that neither this Government nor *l'Alliance Lelep* had made any reference to the setting up of a National

Sports Academy. However, one of the measures announced in the Government Programme 2015-2019 is the setting up of a high-level football academy in the context of the consolidation of the professionalisation of football in Mauritius. The project has already been enunciated in the electoral manifesto of *l'Alliance Lepep*.

Madam Speaker, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the project for the setting up of a National Sports Academy which was provided for in the political manifesto of the defunct *Alliance Parti travailliste/MMM*.

However, if the hon. Member has in mind the setting up of a Football Academy, I would refer him to the reply I made to my Parliamentary Question No. B/164.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, je dois rappeler au ministre que j'ai fait référence au *National Institute of Sports* qui, d'ailleurs, figure en bonne place dans le *Sports Act*. De ce fait, le ministre peut-il nous informer - vu que c'est un projet qui date de pas mal d'années, qui a régulièrement figuré dans les différents *estimates* et budgets qui ont été présentés, ici même, à l'Assemblée nationale - s'il y a eu des travaux préliminaires qui ont déjà été effectués par rapport à ce projet et de bien vouloir nous les indiquer?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I think no one is agreeable to the Sports Act and in my speech, last week, I did mention that we are reviewing the Sports Act and I invited the hon. Member to give any suggestions. I am not going to reply on something that we are going to amend. The best is that after amending the Sports Act, we can see whether we are going ahead with the National Sports Academy as in the Sports Act.

Mr Quirin: Donc, Madame la présidente, le ministre est en train de confirmer qu'il n'est pas d'accord avec la mise sur pied d'un *National Institute of Sports*? Est-ce que c'est ce qu'il veut dire?

Madam Speaker: But he has already replied, hon. Quirin!

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, cela figure dans le *Sports Act*. Comme il vient de préciser qu'il va amender la loi, cet institut figure dans le *Sports Act*. C'est pour cela que je fais référence à la réponse du ministre.

Mr Sawmynaden: As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, we are going for the amendment of the Sports Act and if the National Sports Academy is still into it, definitely we will consider for the best interest of sports.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

GROS CAILLOUX – HOUSING PROJECTS

(No. B/286) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to Gros Cailloux, in Petite Rivière, he will state when were the housing projects thereat initiated, indicating the –

- (a) name of the consultant appointed therefor, giving details as to the –
 - (i) procedures followed for the recruitment thereof, and
 - (ii) quantum of fees paid out thereto, and
- (b) number of housing units built, indicating the –
 - (i) size, and
 - (ii) cost thereof;
 - (iii) number thereof delivered and occupied todate;
 - (iv) expected date of delivery and of allocation of the unfinished ones;
 - (v) criteria used for the allocation thereof, and
 - (vi) if structural defects have been noted in relation thereto and, if so, indicate if remedial actions have been taken.

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, thank you for having called this Parliamentary Question out of turn. I am tabling part of my reply to the question as a long list of details has been requested for. I wish, furthermore, to thank the hon. Member for this question as it provides me with an opportunity to underscore the travails this project has been subjected to.

In December last, immediately after assuming duty, I effected an informal site visit accompanied by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry to take stock *de visu* as to why these houses had not yet been allocated.

It was noted that all on-site and off-site works were completed and the houses which appeared as being completed were lying idle. I immediately queried the NEF on this matter and was informed that the contractor had been requested to attend to a list of snags identified by the MHC and same were to be completed by the end of January 2015.

In view of the fact that the deadline of end of January was not met by the contractor, I convened a meeting on 05 February where both the NEF and the project manager were present and gave instruction to impress upon the contractor to expedite matters and complete all outstanding works by end of February.

I was then informed by the MHC that upon completion of the outstanding works; the latter will have to submit a practical completion certificate before formal handing over of the site is effected.

It was only on the third meeting held on 18 March that it was revealed that the contractor has still not completed the remedial works whereas the retention money has already been released by the NEF without prior approval of the MHC.

To date, the contractor has still not effected any remedial works. This state of affairs is, to say the least, Madam Speaker, appalling and I have already instructed the Permanent Secretary to refer this matter to the ICAC and I am informed the latter is already in presence of a formal request made by my Ministry.

On the other hand, my Ministry, in collaboration with the MHC, is exploring ways and means to have outstanding works completed by end of May.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he could give the name of the contractor and when he was allocated the contract?

Mr Roopun: In fact, this forms part of the written reply. The works have been entrusted to T&T construction on 12 September 2011 and the construction period was to be 10 months.

Mr Bhagwan: Has the attention of the hon. Minister been drawn - I draw his attention this morning - that there are structural defects on all the roofs/slabs of the remaining houses which have not yet been allocated? And even those which have been allocated to flood victims of the flash floods in Port Louis.

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, I asked MHC, but they confirmed that there are no structural defects on the constructions.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the hon. Minister agree to have a site visit with all the MPs of the constituency, at least, to see *de visu* that the information which has been given to him is wrong information?

Mr Roopun: If need be, we will arrange for a site visit.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I make a request to the hon. Minister that, pending all the procedures of allocation of houses which were meant for the poor people, at least, the NEF sees to it that there is some order there; that the region is clean, all the set-up infrastructure is being maintained, and even the children's playground which has been left there for months without being used?

Mr Roopun: It will be looked into, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

SIT - MANAGEMENT - INQUIRY

(No. B/266) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Sugar Investment Trust, he will state if consideration will be given for an inquiry to be carried out on the overall management thereof during the tenure of office of Mr R. B. as acting Chief Executive Officer thereof.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am informed that Mr R. B. joined the Sugar Investment Trust in October 2005 as Chief Operating Officer. His contract of employment was renewed for a period of three years in 2010 when the appellation of the post was changed to Chief Executive Officer. The contract was not renewed at its expiry in 2013, but Mr R. B. continued to stay in employment at the Sugar Investment Trust until his resignation in February last.

On 14 January 2015, the Board of the SIT decided to suspend Mr R. B. with immediate effect, as it has come to light that he has committed a number of irregularities in the performance of his duties. A disciplinary committee was accordingly set up to hear his defence with regard to the following charges –

- (i) he deliberately bypassed a Board decision by granting salary increases in December 2014 ranging between 34% and 111% to a number of employees, that is, at rates higher than what was approved by the Board, which was 27%;
- (ii) in November 2013, he appointed an employee as team leader up to December 2014 against payment of a monthly allowance of Rs32,500 without seeking the approval of the Board;

- (iii) he has, on his own, and without seeking approval of the Board, granted allowance to two members of the staff for the period November 2013 to December 2014 for a total amount of Rs660,000 without seeking the approval of the Board;
- (iv) on 15 December 2014, he willfully and criminally commit an act of forgery in a private writing, and
- (v) in December 2014, he willfully and without authority made use of the premises of the SIT for the holding of political activities during the last general election.

At the hearing of the disciplinary committee, on 18 February, Mr R. B. submitted his resignation and undertook not to enter any case against the SIT for payment of compensation, subject to the management of the SIT not taking any legal action against him. His resignation has been accepted by the Board. But at the Annual General Meeting of the SIT held on 12 February 2015, the shareholders present strongly requested for the institution of a Commission of Inquiry on the Management of the Trust in particular with regard to –

- (a) the agricultural *morcellement* project at Ile d'Ambre;
- (b) the Aurea residential *morcellement* project;
- (c) the construction of the CORE building;
- (d) the acquisition of the NG Tower at Ebene, and
- (e) the recruitment of staff.

An internal audit, with emphasis on these complaints, is being currently carried out at the SIT. A decision will be taken in the light of the report as to whether an inquiry should be carried out into the management of Mr R. B. during his tenure of office at the SIT.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, after taking note of the answer of the Minister, I think the House will unanimous agree that this is simply unacceptable.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, what is your question?

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, can the Minister confirm whether there were a few abuses that were undertaken? Because in 1994, the SIT had almost 7,000 *arpents* of land, and in 2015, as a date, the SIT holds less than 200 *arpents*. Can the Minister confirm this?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, it is indeed the case that, when the SIT was created, they had 7,000 *arpents* of land but, to date, they have only 2,479 acres left.

Mr Jhugroo: Would the hon. Minister refer this case to the Police for further inquiry, being given that we have heard several *maldonnes*?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I have just said in my reply that an internal inquiry is being undertaken. So, further to that, we will see whether the matter will be referred to the Police.

Mr Gobin: Will the hon. Minister confirm that, out of the numerous charges that were laid against Mr R. B., one was clearly that of forgery? What is the need of any further internal audit when the charges are already laid? At least, why not refer this particular charge to the Police right now, and then, eventually, if any other criminal matter comes up, refer the rest to the Police?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, as you probably know, the decision rests with the Board of the SIT. But I will look into it myself, so that the suggestion made here will be taken into consideration.

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

At 1.04 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.36 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

RDA – DISTRICT CONTRACTORS

(No. B/267) 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 Road Development Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, the names of the district contractors region-wise for works carried out over the past three year, indicating –

- (a) the estimated value of each contract and the actual value of works undertaken in the different districts;
- (b) any approved variations in each contract awarded and the authorized limit as per the Public Procurement Act 2006, and
- (c) the region where the highest value of works were executed and the reasons thereof.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with regard to PQ No. B/267, with your permission, I am tabling the required information in respect of parts (a) and (b) of the question. As regards

part (c) of the question, the House would not be surprised that the highest value of contracts executed was in Zone 4 (Districts of Moka and Flacq).

Madam Speaker, RDA is responsible for the construction and maintenance of main roads and maintenance works are works which are carried out on also some existing roads. As these are of a repetitive nature, they have, over the years, been executed using rates contracts. For that purpose, the RDA divided the country into four Zones as follows -

North (Districts of Pamplemousses and Riviere du Rempart);

East (Districts of Moka and Flacq);

Central (Plaine Wilhems, Black River and Port Louis);

South (Grand Port and Savanne)

District Contractors were last appointed by the RDA in 2012 under a Maintenance and Minor Works contract. They were as follows -

North	-	General Construction
East	-	Colas
Central part of Mauritius	-	Gamma Construction
South	-	Transinvest

The contracts became effective on 26 April 2012 and they were to last 15 months. Given that there was no standard bidding documents, an exercise was carried out by the PPO, the CPB and the RDA to devise an appropriate document which was floated at the end of December 2013.

The actual variations on the contracts are as follows -

North:	6.9%
East:	20.7%
Central:	12.2%
South:	11.55%

Then there was a Framework Agreement which became effective on 31 July 2014. The contractors who have signed the Framework Agreements are as follows -

Zone North:	General Construction, Colas and Gamma Construction
Zone East:	General Construction and Colas

Zone Central: Gamma and Transinvest

Zone South: Gamma and Transinvest

Mr Rughoobur: Again with RDA as well, similar to NDU the hon. Minister will confirm that under the Emergency Rehabilitation Programme, contracts through direct procurement were awarded worth Rs523 m.. But *pire*, in this case, will the hon. Minister confirm that there was no approval from the Ministry of Finance when those works were executed?

Mr Bodha: Well, I cannot confirm whether there was an approval from the Ministry of Finance, but I think and we know that, as regard to works done by the RDA and at the NDU, there is a backlog of more than Rs1 billion. Just to take an example, in the East where Colas was the constructing company in the District of Flacq, the sum was supposed to be between Rs100 m. to Rs350 m. and it ended up being Rs600 m.

Mr Rughoobur: The hon. Minister just mentioned that most of the works were carried out in the region of Moka and Flacq. Will the hon. Minister look into it that, from now on, there is a better distribution of the budget that is awarded to the RDA? And will the hon. Minister make a survey in the northern region where the coastal areas have a high concentration of tourists, and also to look into the possibility of asphaltting the roads - works that are executed normally by the RDA?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I can assure the hon. Member that there will be a fair distribution of the budget. As regards coastal roads, I think he is right; I have seen it myself. I have received a number of complaints. In fact, I have requested the hon. Minister of Finance to give us a budget for the resurfacing of '*Chemin 20-pied*' ,which is the by-pass in the North and is used by many road users, including those who are in the tourism industry. I have also received a number of complaints as regard to roads leading to the main hotels which are in a very bad state. We will do whatever we can because we have to see to it that we have the best road system to service the tourism industry.

IVTB-PHOENIX ROUNDABOUT – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. B/268) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the IVTB-Phoenix roundabout, he will state the permanent remedial measures that are being contemplated, if any, to address road traffic congestions thereat during peak hours and to allow fluid traffic to and from Petit Camp and from Valentina.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am fully aware that there is a serious and acute problem at the IVTB-Phoenix Roundabout, especially during peak hours.

The Pont Fer Roundabout is a strategic traffic intersection where traffic from Port Louis via the M1, the Lower Plaine Wilhems, the Upper Plaine Wilhems, the West and the South converge. In addition, the Dowlut and Jumbo Roundabouts represent adjacent bottlenecks. Hence, the severe traffic congestion during both peak and off-peak hours.

As a temporary measure to mitigate the traffic congestion, the third lane from St Jean has been extended to bypass the Pont Fer Roundabout and its operation has been found to alleviate the problem significantly. However, this measure gave rise to strong protests from the inhabitants of Petit Camp and Valentina since it prevents, for road safety reasons, direct access to the motorway via the Pont Fer Roundabout. Consequently, in order not to penalise the inhabitants, the bypass is opened and operated by Police during the morning and peak hours only.

Madam Speaker, taking into consideration the high traffic volume, the bottlenecks caused by the three roundabouts and the difficulty to access these regions, the construction of a complex interchange which will replace all three roundabouts, is the only feasible solution and is high on the priority list of the Government projects.

Provision has been made in the Budget 2015-2016 for the funding of the preparation of the bidding documents in respect of the grade separation of the Pont Fer, Jumbo and Phoenix Roundabouts which will also connect to the Terre Rouge-Verdun Road.

The terms of reference for the consultancy services are being worked out by the RDA for the implementation of the project on a "Design and Build" basis. The calendar is set for the project to start off at the beginning of the next financial year.

The fluidity of the traffic to and from Petit Camp and Valentina will be addressed within the project. Pending its implementation, the present arrangements to alleviate the traffic congestion will be maintained.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has just said that to alleviate the problem we now have Police Officers there, but when we were together in the Opposition, we know very well that Rs55 m. were spent just for that additional lane. Can the hon. Minister consider that, instead of flyovers, to consider the new project now to have underpass under the roundabouts?

Mr Bodha: This is a question which requires engineering expertise. I will consider that, but what I can say is that a double level - they call it the spaghetti - flyover has already been designed. The budget is going to be Rs1.9 billion. The feasibility study is being done and this is what we have thought to connect the three roundabouts at two levels and connect also with the Terre Rouge-Verdun coming from the South.

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, hon. Minister, but all this 'spaghetti junction' we have it in England and it is unaesthetic. We have this region with very aesthetic views and with these flyovers, I am sure you will destroy them. But with underpass, it might cost slightly a bit more. So, will the Minister consider to go for underpass, which is a normal design?

Mr Bodha: I will make this request. I can understand the holistic and aesthetic view of the area, but the problem is whether we can have tunnels at two levels, this has yet to be seen. But, I will definitely ask the experts to see some solutions in that direction.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, being given that we addressed several PQs in this august Assembly for the past ten years to alleviate the traffic flow at the roundabout of Phoenix, so it is good news that it is starting very soon. So, can the hon. Minister give us a timeframe when this will start and when it will finish?

Mr Bodha: The project is to be funded from Government funds and we believe that the works can start at the beginning of the next financial year. All the bidding documents, all the procedures would have been done by then.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gobin!

Mr Gobin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister give fresh consideration to the new set of circumstances which have emerged, namely after having heard the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development this morning? I am saying this in the context that in the vicinity of that roundabout is a building called Phoenix Les Halles which, if we have understood from the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, will change hands, the ownership thereof will change hands since all the shareholdings have been transferred, will the hon. Minister, therefore, give fresh consideration of the construction of...

(Interruptions)

That's my question, whether a fresh consideration will be given to that.

Madam Speaker: Allow the hon. Minister to reply.

Mr Bodha: We will consider the matter, Madam Speaker.

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

MOTORWAYS – DECONGESTION – MASTER PLAN

(No. B/269) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the motorways, he will state if Government proposes to come up with a Master Plan for the decongestion thereof as soon as possible and, if so, indicate -

- (a) when, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the roundabouts to be replaced by traffic lights and underpasses at some roundabouts, wherever appropriate, especially at the Place d'Armes.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the preparation of a Master Plan for the decongestion of motorways within the Terre Rouge-Curepipe corridor was initiated by the RDA since 2009. The endeavour culminated into a PPP project with the selection of PLAN Consortium as the Preferred Bidder and Group Five Strabag as a Reserved Bidder in 2012.

However, the contract was not awarded since the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development raised concerns on the financial implications in view of the prevailing economic environment and Government's commitments and priorities. That was in 2012.

Madam Speaker, in the light of several decisions taken by the present day Government in relation to the shelving of the Mauritius Light Rail Transit System, a new definition to the city of Port Louis, smart cities and techno poles, the Master Plan is being reviewed by the Transaction Adviser upon request from my Ministry. In fact, we had a meeting and we have changed the scope of works. The new Master Plan will be presented to Government in two weeks' time, that is, at the end of the week.

The new Master Plan will also address traffic issues in and around Port Louis and in relation to traffic congestion at Place d'Armes, budgetary provision has been made for the preparation of bidding documents for the construction of a new entrance into Port Louis via Decaen Street. Works are expected to start very soon after we have done the design and the bidding procedures.

The decision to replace roundabouts by traffic lights and underpasses at some roundabouts will also be addressed in the new Master Plan for road decongestion.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. Minister mentioning advisers. Are they the SPP advisers who were in the last Government, and we have paid a lot of money to them and nothing has been executed so far? Are we talking of the same transaction adviser?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, we are, but they have reached the end of their contract and, in fact, they came to present the final design according to the contract they had been given with the selection of the Preferred Bidder and the Reserved Bidder. What we have done, in fact, we have told them that we have changed the scope of works, we have reduced them and we are going to have a final presentation in April, and that would be the end of the contract.

Dr. Sorefan: Will that cost the Government a bit of more money?

Mr Bodha: No. In fact, they had come with a plan which covered the Dream Bridge, the Ring Road Lot II and Lot III. We have reduced the scope of works so that would be the final undertaking with the consultant.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister to reconsider about the Dream Bridge between Quay D to Caudan?

Mr Bodha: Well, in the new Master Plan, the Dream Bridge is out and the LRT is out. So, we are thinking of, in fact, doing the A1 M1, that is, the bridge over the Grand River North West to connect at Sorèze, improve the Ring Road Phase 1 which is being repaired, implement the tunnel and then, do the third leg which will be connecting the end of the tunnel to Mer Rouge with the development of the port. We believe that with this circular design, we should be able to provide for the traffic entering into Port Louis with this new access at Decaen Street and then, going around Port Louis to the Ring Road.

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

Dr. Sorefan: Regarding Place d'Armes, will the hon. Minister consider here also the design of underpass so as not to jeopardise the scenery?

Mr Bodha: We have thought about this idea of having an underpass at Place d'Armes, but it is under water.

(Interruptions)

Yes, because the only possibility is to do an underpass on piles. I think technologically this can be done, but it will cost us a lot of money.

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

PUBLIC HOSPITALS - NEUROSURGERY

(No. B/270) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to neurosurgery, he will state if same is performed in the public hospitals, and, if so, indicate -

- (a) if it is performed by individual surgeon;
- (b) the number thereof performed, since 2010 to date -
 - (i) which have been unsuccessful and referred abroad, and
 - (ii) in which the patient has suffered severe consequences like blindness and paralysis, amongst others.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, neurosurgery or neurological surgery is a medical speciality concerned with the precaution, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation of disorders which affect any portion of the nervous system, including the brain, the spinal cord, the peripheral nerves and extra-cranial cerebrovascular system.

I am informed that neurosurgery is performed in public hospitals mainly at Victoria and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospitals. A few emergency cases are operated at Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Jeetoo Hospitals.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that 2,140 neurosurgeries have been performed by five surgeons since 2010.

It is a common practice worldwide that only one Neurosurgeon operates on his patient, but he is usually assisted by an RMO (Registered Medical Officer) from the Department itself.

With regard to part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed that only one unsuccessful case of neurosurgery, which was operated at SSRN Hospital, was referred to VIMHANS, New Delhi in July 2013 following initial urgent surgery for decompression of the optic nerve at SSRN Hospital.

With regard to part (b) (ii) of the question, I am further informed that the same patient as mentioned at part (b) (i) of the reply, Mr M. J., 35 years old, who was referred abroad for

pre-operative embolization and definitive treatment in the form of complete excision of the tumour, had lost vision in both eyes on his return, but there is no evidence of any paralysis.

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, hon. Minister. You are talking about only one neurosurgeon worldwide. This is not true. I come from England. It is a teamwork of neurosurgeons. Some neurosurgeons come here to gain experience.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan, please ask your question. Don't make a statement, please!

Dr. Sorefan: I have to clarify a bit that in Mauritius, foreign doctors come and get experience on their own and there is one case that you have mentioned, he is blind, because he did basal cranial surgery. Will the hon. Minister come with a specific guideline that certain tumours of the brain should be taken at certain level by neurosurgeons and the rest go abroad? Do not open here and send abroad, it's too late and he just happens to be - I will say it in this House - my nephew. They did the wrong surgery with him; one surgeon going in the basal of the brain has caused havoc to that young man with two children. So, I don't want that to happen to others. Please, come with a guideline! If they can't do it, they must send him abroad, they must not poke their nose into it and cause havoc to that 100% human being!

Mr Gayan: Well, Madam Speaker, I have taken good note of what the hon. Member has said, but I am informed that in the case of any adverse emergency or incident happening to the neurosurgeon who is carrying out the operation, help is always available because there is always a team of neurosurgeons who are in the hospital premises all the time. That is my information, and help can be obtained from the other hospitals within a short time and during that time the patient remains attended by the anaesthetic team and the Registered Medical Officer. But in the case which has been mentioned, I must say, Madam Speaker, that this patient had complained of headache and left eye blindness and severe visual impairment of the right eye since the end of May 2013; that was pre-operation. But unfortunately something went wrong and he had to be sent overseas. I am sure that, in ideal circumstances, to the best, you have, at least, two neurosurgeons carrying out an operation of this nature because it is dealing with the brain or the spinal cord, it is very serious.

Dr. Sorefan: Will the hon. Minister consider of introducing an apparatus that is called Gamma Knife, which uses gamma rays without opening the skull, a non-invasive surgery? It costs some money; you enter in the morning and you leave in the afternoon

without any consequences and you do not have to open the brain. Will the hon. Minister consider of procuring one such apparatus?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I am sure that we can entertain that suggestion of the hon. Member, but I must also say that, in the hospital services today, we have four neurosurgeons who are Mauritians and one is from overseas. Most of them have either retired or on the point of retiring. So, what I am doing? In fact, that's what I mentioned in my intervention on the Budget, that we need to build capacity and the only way to build capacity is to get the young ones to be trained in these specialised areas. Unfortunately, the training for neurosurgery takes a long time. Not many people are interested, but we will have to do it. If we cannot get the Mauritians to do it, then we will have to import specialists from overseas. I am also concerned that many operations dealing with the brain surgery and neurosurgery have to go overseas when we could have them operated in Mauritius if we had the expertise and we have to build the expertise.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, after listening to the answer of the hon. Minister; would he consider to have a specialised neurosurgery unit like the one we have for the cardiac patients at Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care?

Mr Gayan: Neurosurgery is already, Madam Speaker, considered a specialised care system. We have a team at Pamplemousses and another team at Victoria and in emergency cases...

(Interruptions)

The problem is that if there is a serious road accident, let's say, in the North, then everybody will be taken down to Victoria; it might take long. So, I think that, because of the nature of those operations, it is best to decentralise in my opinion.

FORM IV STUDENTS – DIGITAL TABLETS

(No. B/273) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the project for the allocation of digital tablets to the students of Form IV, she will state if all the students of Form IV have been allocated with a digital tablet, including those of the prevocational sector and, if not, indicate the reasons therefor.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Madam Speaker, with your permission I am going to reply to this question.

The Tablet PC project was implemented by the Ministry in 2013 following a measure announced in the Budget Speech 2013 to allocate Tablet PCs to all Form IV students and educators of State and Private-aided Secondary schools, and also to Year 4 students of the pre-vocational schools.

The process of the procurement of Tablet PCs for Form IV students and educators of the year 2013 started in July 2013, but due to lengthy tendering procedures, the award of the contract was made in December 2013 with delivery, commissioning and registration of the Tablet PCs taking place from January to June 2014.

The distribution of the Tablet PCs to students could, therefore, be effected only as from July 2014 and since, at that time, the Form IV students of 2013 had already moved to Form V, it was decided to distribute the tablets to the Form V students of 2014.

The students of the pre-vocational sector who were in Year 4 in 2013 were not allocated the Tablet PCs given that, at the time of distribution, they had already left the pre-vocational schools in October 2013. As regards students who were in Year 4 in 2014, since at the time of the distribution in July 2014, they were nearing completion of their studies, no Tablet PC was distributed to them.

Madam Speaker, the 2014 procurement exercise for Tablet PCs, which started in September 2014, has not yet been completed due to two challenges received on the tender exercise upon notification of award to all bidders.

Since my Ministry currently has a stock of 2,263 Tablet PCs, and so as not to penalise this year's Year IV students of the pre-vocational schools, my Ministry will proceed with the distribution of these Tablets to the students during the second term of this year.

As regards the distribution to Form V students and educators of 2015, that is, Form IV of 2014 and educators, same will be effected once the issue of challenge is sorted out and the contract is awarded.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Barbier!

ROCHE BOIS - PIG BREEDING

(No. B/274) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to pig breeding in

the region of Cocotterie, in Roche Bois, he will state if the relocation thereof to St Martin is being contemplated and, if so, indicate when.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the site at St Martin is saturated and the existing waste disposal system does not allow for additional breeders to be accommodated there.

My Ministry is proposing to establish specific breeding zones across the island and once the land has been identified and all facilities set up, consideration will be given to the relocation of pig breeders operating outside St Martin and Bassin Requin.

Mr Barbier: Madam Speaker, this is not the first time I am raising this issue in this august Assembly and I was told some time back that once the site will be made available at St Martin, these breeders will move there. I am surprised today that there is no more land available. So, may I ask the hon. Minister to give a top priority to this problem? Today life is becoming very, very impossible in this area where the region is becoming more and more densely populated. May I ask the hon. Minister to give an urgency to this matter and to see to it that site be available for the transfer of pig breeding outside the residential zone?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I must inform the House that, following the outbreak of the disease of the African Swine Fever in the year 2007, those pig breeders who were in Roche Bois and in its vicinity were asked to be transferred to St. Martin. There were 77 pig breeders, and of those 77 pig breeders only 71 opted to move to St. Martin and 6 were not keen to move to St. Martin. To date, only 26 have moved and are doing breeding activities at St. Martin; the rest is still yet to be moved to St. Martin. There is some resistance of some breeders to move to St. Martin. But like I said, of the 77 initially, 71 agreed to move to St. Martin but they have not all moved over there yet. With regard to the new breeders who have come after that outbreak of the African Swine Fever, those new breeders won't be considered to be moved to St. Martin because that area is now already allocated to whoever was interested in that activity during the time that we set up that region for pig breeding purposes.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am sure the hon. Minister is well aware that this relocation process has long been in the cards and couldn't be performed yet for several reasons. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he could advise his officers to perform a new survey - an updated one - on the number of pig breeders actually in the Roche Bois

region? Many of them have stopped their activities, but those of them who are still there are reluctant to move outside this region. As you know, it is a densely residential area; therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister if he could look urgently into the matter?

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

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Barbier!

FISHERS – PROFESSIONAL CARDS - ISSUE

(No. B/275) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the fishers, he will –

- (a) give a list thereof registered as such over the past five years for mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues respectively;
- (b) state the number of applications for the issue of a professional fisher card received, since January 2015 to date, and
- (c) state Government policy in relation to the issue of fisher professional cards.

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I am tabling a list of registered fishers year wise since 2011 for mainland Mauritius.

I have been informed that with regard to registered fishers in Rodrigues, the list is still being compiled by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and will be tabled in due course.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that since January 2015 to date, 20 applications have been received in my Ministry for the issue of professional fisher cards.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the policy of the previous Government since 2010 had been not to issue any new fisher cards. However, I have reconsidered the issue and I have already set up a committee with the following objectives –

- (i) to assess whether each and every registered fisher is a *bona fide* fisher;
- (ii) to deregister *mala fide* fishers;
- (iii) to monitor closely the activities of each applicant for a fisher card over the period of six months, and
- (iv) to consider any new applications to fisher card for only off lagoon fishing.

Mr Barbier: I think the hon. Minister is on the right track, he is doing the right things. May I know from these past five years whether there is a change in number, that is, the number of fishers we have five years back is not the same today? So, the hon. Minister just tabled the list, but what about the movement from year to year, does he have this information so that we may base on that to know how many new cards can be issued to those who are waiting for so long?

Mr Koonjoo: Yes, Madam Speaker. For the information of the hon. Member, in 2011, there were 2,214 fishers; in 2012: 2,160 fishers; in 2013: 2,136 fishers; in 2014: 2,082 fishers and in 2015, as at now, it is 2,065. So, there is an outstanding demand for 148 fishers as at now and we are working on that to distribute the cards, but we have to see that the fishers make their applications, they have certain conditions to satisfy before they are registered.

Madam Speaker: Next question! Do you have any question on fishers?

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon Minister whether - he can consider for the fishermen of Constituency No. 12 - since several years they are looking for fisher cards, to see to it if he can do something?

Mr Koonjoo: Yes, Madam Speaker, that will be done on the same exercise.

Mr Ganoo: I heard the hon. Minister replying that at his Ministry, therefore, the number of applicants for a new fisherman card is only 148. Therefore, can I ask him why is it that in case the fisherman card will be granted, it is only for offshore lagoon fishing?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, we are working on that, because people who go outside lagoon are despatched with special boats. Those who are fishing inside the lagoon can go with small boats and all other devices. So, we are looking into that. We will see to it that people who are willing to go off lagoon and in lagoon are both supported with the same facilities.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister, therefore, to consider this possibility that when the cards will be distributed to the fishermen the Ministry considers also giving them the possibility of fishing inside the lagoon, because for years now the number of lagoon fishermen has been dwindling? 10 years ago, there used to be 4,000 fishermen and now we just heard that the figure has been reduced by about 50% and has come down to only 2,000. The Ministry has implemented a policy of replenishing the lagoons during the past 10 years,

therefore why not consider the possibility of allowing the fishermen to fish inside the lagoon when the new cards will be distributed to fishers?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, my Ministry is looking into all these factors and I want to give a new impulsive to the fishing sector. I have got it in mind, we are working upon that and in the future we want to make the fishing sector a very attractive sector where more jobs will be created. Not only that, we are also looking forward to put some restrictions on the issue of licences to foreign fishing vessels. We have got an area of more than 2.3 million kilometres of ocean, in our ocean we have plenty of fish and in spite of that Mauritius is suffering from the consumption of fish. I want to make Mauritius a healthy country where people will have more fish to eat which is good for health. We are working upon that at my Ministry and definitely we will come forward with a serious plan after this Budget.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No! I think we should pass on to the next question. Hon. Barbier, next question! We have canvassed the issue!

POINTE AUX SABLES – BUS TERMINAL – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/276) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to Pointe-aux-Sables, he will state if consideration will be given for a modern bus terminal to be constructed thereat for the benefit of the inhabitants thereat and of the users thereof.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the construction of a bus terminal at Pointe-aux-Sables is included in the list of priority projects for my Ministry. We are fully aware of the fact that the location of the existing bus stand in that region is a major source of hazard and inconvenience for the inhabitants.

I am informed that the project plan for the construction of a bus terminal at Pointe aux Sables has already been prepared and land has also been identified, but it seems that we have some land swapping issues with the Ministry of Housing and Lands and I will look into the matter.

Mr Barbier: May I ask the hon. Minister to give us a time frame now because this project is so long overdue?

Mr Bodha: The time frame will depend upon the availability of funds. First of all, we will have to finalise the project plan, address the issue of the swapping of land and then we will go to the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Armance: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider enlarging the main road to and from the new bus terminal, because the road is actually very narrow and we have noted that we have several accidents recently?

Mr Bodha: I will look into the matter.

POINTE-AUX-SABLES/PETITE RIVIERE – ROAD WIDENING

(No. B/277) **Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the road linking Pointe-aux-Sables to Petite Rivière, he will state if consideration will be given for the widening thereof to avert risks of accident.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, the Pointe aux Sables road which is B31 extends from Albion Road at Petit Verger to the bus terminal at Pointe aux Sables which is about 2.6 kms long and its width ranges from only 4 metres at some places to about 5.5 metres. It is very narrow by normal standards.

The Road Development Authority has already worked out a preliminary design and the project will be included in the new master plan taking into account the upcoming projects like the smart city being proposed at Bambous and the Coromandel Bridge A1M1 which will attract traffic from the A3, that is, that road in the west whilst also taking into account the proposed development of a ferry service from Pointe aux Sables to Port Louis.

Mr Barbier: May I draw the attention of the Minister that my question is about the road linking Petite Rivière to Pointe-aux-Sables, but may I ask, in the same trend, whether he would consider also the possibility of enlarging the coastal road of Pointe-aux-Sables from the bus terminal to Grand River North West?

Mr Bodha: I will look into the matter and I will ask the RDA, in fact, to see to it because we agree that it is too narrow in many areas so we will have to realign it and enlarge it.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Osman Mahomed!

SAMOA - SIDS - THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

(No. B/278) **Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, following the Third International Conference on the Small Islands Developing States, held in Apia, Samoa, from 01 to 04 September 2014, he will state if his Ministry has set up a standing committee to coordinate the implementation of the actions taken under the various related and cross cutting themes discussed thereat and, if so, indicate the progress achieved and the outcome thereof.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, the Mauritius delegation at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was led by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and comprised the then Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development as well as other officials.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, hon. Mahomed was himself a member of the delegation. As the hon. Member should therefore be aware, the main outcome of the Third International Conference on the Small Islands Developing States was the adoption of an Accelerated Modalities of Action, otherwise known as the Samoa Pathway. This was endorsed on 14 November 2014, by the United Nations General Assembly.

I am informed that on 19 September 2014, it was approved by Cabinet that the ad-hoc Core Group, set up prior to the Samoa Summit for coordination purposes, be converted into a Standing Committee in order to follow up on the implementation of the Samoa Pathway.

I am also informed that under the previous Government, two meetings were held on 13th and 21st October 2014, but that the committee then went on sleep mode.

However, since the advent of the new Government in December 2014, four meetings have been held and, I understand that a fifth meeting will be convened this month.

In this regard, Madam Speaker, let me highlight a number of implementing measures taken by and/or implemented under the stewardship of a standing committee to date.

First of all, a training programme on climate finance is currently being held for officers of relevant Ministries, the private sector and non-government organisations (NGOs). This programme was, in fact, inaugurated not later than yesterday itself and will last from 06

to 10 April 2015. This training programme is in line with paragraph 37 of the Samoa Pathway.

There is also the 2050 Pathway Calculator which is designed to assist the country in proactive planning for our future energy efficiency strategy. This is in line with paragraph 49 of the Samoa Pathway and was launched a few weeks ago. There is also work which is being pursued as regards the setting up of a climate finance skills hub which is in line with paragraph 44 (d) of the Samoa Pathway.

The SIDS Dock Statute which is an institutional mechanism designed to facilitate the development of a sustainable energy economy with Small Islands Developing States is also currently being worked upon in line with paragraph 50 (c) of the Samoa Pathway.

Work is also being done as regards the 21st conference of parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which is scheduled for December 2015. This is in line with paragraphs 31 to 46 of the Samoa Pathway.

Mr Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I believe what the hon. Minister referred to a sleeping mode was due to the general elections and then the change of Government. May I ask the hon. Minister the dates of the four meetings and if there is any time frame that has been set going forward?

Mr Sinatambou: No, I must say that I am not referring to elections because elections were in December and the first two meetings were in October. It was indeed on sleep mode, but maybe it was the *coze cozer* period! As for the four meetings, Madam Speaker, they were held respectively on 05 January 2015, 19 January 2015, 22 January 2015 and 31 March 2015. These are the four meetings and the fifth meeting is scheduled some time in April.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Being given that this Samoa meeting and the work that is being done, all this is part of a build-up towards the December Paris United Nations Conference which will be crucial and, a few days ago, a deadline was met for all countries to put in their offers, what they are going to do individually at the level of each country. There was a deadline. Can I know whether Mauritius has put in its commitments?

Mr Sinatambou: With all due respect, let me allow myself, Madam Speaker, to however correct the hon. Leader of the Opposition. What is being done is not a build-up to COP21 of December 2015. No, Madam Speaker! All the work which is being done under the

Samoa Pathway is about the three international conferences on Small Islands Developing States. The first one was in 1994 in Barbados. The second one was in 2004 in Mauritius and the third one was in Samoa in 2014. Therefore, these are the three ten yearly conferences which are held for Small Islands Developing States and whatever build-up regarding COP21 is not under the Samoa Accelerated Modalities of Action. But, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition would like to come up with a Parliamentary Question regarding COP21 which is about climate change, this is a matter for the Ministry of Environment and I would request him to come up with a substantive question as this deadline has nothing to do with the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action under Samoa.

(Interruptions)

I know a little bit more than you on this one!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mohamed, next question!

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/279) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the recommendations made by the consultants in 2012 for the Development of an Inundation, Flooding and Landslide National Risk Profile, Maps, Strategy Framework and Action Plans for Disaster Risk Management for the Republic of Mauritius, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, indicating the timeframe set therefor, if any.

Mr Dayal: Madam Speaker, the consultants had submitted their final report in 2013 with key recommendations. They had proposed that same be implemented within a timeframe of two planning cycles; the first planning cycle being from 2013 to 2018 and the second cycle from 2019 to 2025.

Based on those recommendations, the following actions have been taken –

- (i) a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC) was set up in 2013 to serve as a national platform on Disaster Risk reduction. This Centre is also responsible for coordinating the implementation of the recommendations in the report;
- (ii) regarding the need to reduce risk in areas prone to very high and high-risk and the need to adopt a sound development strategy, the NDRRMC had

consultations with stakeholders concerned, including the Ministry of Housing and Lands. In the first instance, it was proposed to develop high resolution danger zone maps. Further consultations will be held on this matter. In the meantime, my Ministry is developing toolkits for the Local Authorities based on the vulnerability maps produced by the Consultants which will help Local Authorities in identifying risk areas to guide sound development;

- (iii) several measures are being taken by my Ministry to preserve our natural environment, including Environment Sensitive Areas. Moreover, the EPA will be amended this year to provide for the better management of our environment;
- (iv) with a view to embrace a culture of risk, in September 2014 an international consultant was hired through the UNDP to prepare school safety plans and to ensure the integration of DRR in primary and secondary schools curriculum. The report of this study has been referred to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research for appropriate action;
- (v) with regard to emergency response, my Ministry is at present finalising the National Disaster Scheme (NDS) 2015, which defines the roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders before, during and in the aftermath of specified disasters;
- (vi) the report also highlights the need for a consistent Spatial Data Infrastructure for conducting risk assessment. The Ministry of Housing and Lands has initiated action for the development of a National Spatial Data Infrastructure with the assistance of the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD) from Kenya;
- (vii) the NDRRMC has embarked on the implementation of a national Multi-hazard Early Warning and Emergency Alert System. This system will allow the sending of emergency notifications, messages to all first responders and the public about impending hazards;
- (viii) as regards the recommendation for the setting up of an emergency fund and insurance scheme, the NDRRMC has been working very closely with the Indian Ocean Commission under the ISLANDS project on a programme

‘Financial protection for our people and our economy against natural and climatic disasters’.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, can I know how long is your reply?

Mr Dayal: Only a couple of seconds.

Madam Speaker: If you have got two or three more pages, then it is better to circulate.

Mr Dayal: No, it is the last page, Madam Speaker.

As part of the programme, a report on ‘Building capacities for increased public investment in integrated climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction’ has been produced. I wish to inform the House that my Ministry is organising a national workshop on 13 April 2015 whereby this report will be presented.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that implementation of the recommendations involves billions of rupees and requires participatory, multi-agency and multi-stakeholder engagement. A copy of the report has been circulated to all stakeholders concerned with the adoption of the ‘Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030’ in March 2015, my Ministry will ensure that the recommendations of the consultants are implemented in line with the new Framework.

ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE ACTION PLAN

(No. B/280) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the proposed preparation of an Ecological Agriculture Action Plan, in line with *Maurice Ile Durable*, as decided by Government in March 2013, he will state where matters stand, indicating if a list of the pesticides, chemical fertilizers, fungicides, insecticides and herbicides which can be withdrawn from the market, either immediately or in a phased manner, is available and, if so, indicate the actions, if any, taken or that will be taken in relation thereto.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am informed that a High-Level Steering Committee was set up in August 2013 at the level of the Ministry to work out a list of pesticides which could be withdrawn from the market, either immediately or in a phased manner, and to prepare an Ecological Agriculture Action Plan for both Mauritius and Rodrigues. A list of 20 pesticides was consequently identified for withdrawal and safer pesticides/bio-pesticides

were proposed as alternatives. I am tabling the list of pesticides which have been recommended for withdrawal.

Upon the recommendation of the High-Level Steering Committee, the Dangerous Chemicals Control Board, which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, decided to stop issuing permits for the importation of three pesticides in January 2014 and six pesticides in January 2015. These pesticides are highlighted in the statement I am tabling.

This new Government, Madam Speaker, is conscious of the abusive use of pesticides in agricultural production, and the problem will be tackled in a holistic way. My Ministry will now be implementing the bio-farming/organic farming projects where the use of agrochemicals in agricultural production will be minimised.

As regards the withdrawal of additional toxic pesticides from the market, this is currently being worked out by my Ministry, and the specific timeframe for the total ban of these products from the market will be established.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that, in regard to the preparation of an Ecological Agriculture Action Plan for Mauritius and Rodrigues, technical assistance from FAO has been solicited.

Mr Mahomed: Would the hon. Minister clarify, for the benefit of the House, whether the list that he has just tabled will be active, meaning all these pesticides will be immediately banned in the country?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I have just mentioned that all those pesticides that are on that list have already been banned. So, no import permit is granted for the importation of those pesticides.

SIC – BUILDING - PURCHASE

(No. B/281) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the purchase by the State Insurance Company Ltd. of a building located in Ebene from Arushi Development Co., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company, information as to the –

- (a) total purchase price thereof;
- (b) total amount of money paid in relation thereto, and

- (c) date of delivery thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CRIMINAL CASES - FOREIGN STATE - MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/282) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to criminal cases, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of request made on behalf of the State of Mauritius to the competent authorities of a foreign State for mutual assistance in proceedings commenced in Mauritius in relation thereto, since 2003 to date on a yearly basis, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) nature of the assistance sought and obtained, if any, and
 (b) outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MPCB LTD – BOARD - COMPOSITION

(No. B/283) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius Post and Co-operative Bank Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) composition of the Board thereof;
 (b) names, qualifications and terms and conditions of appointment of the General Manager thereof, and
 (c) aggregate amount of non-performing loans thereof, since 2010 to date.

(Withdrawn)

AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS LIMITED – RECRUITMENT & CONTRACT ALLOCATION - INQUIRY

(No. B/284) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Airports of Mauritius Limited, he will state if his Ministry will consider initiating inquiries in respect of all the decisions taken by Mr S. P., former Chief Executive thereof, wherein the approval of the Board thereof were not sought, especially with

regard to recruitment and contract allocation and at the conclusion thereof, if so required, for the referral thereof to the Independent Commission against Corruption and to the Police.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am replying to PQ No. B/284. The information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled as appropriate and will be forwarded to the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms for any action deemed necessary.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

**PARASTATAL BODIES & GOVERNMENT-OWNED COMPANIES –
CHAIRPERSONS & BOARD MEMBERS**

(No. B/285) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the parastatal bodies, Government-owned companies and private companies wherein Government is a majority shareholder, he will state if Government has approved a new set of guidelines in relation to the Chairpersons and to the Board Members thereof and, if so, in each case, give details thereof regarding the payment of salaries, allowances and other fringe benefits attached thereto, including the enjoyment of office car facilities and of office space.

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr P. Jugnauth): Madam Speaker, following Cabinet's approval, the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms issued a circular letter on 13 February 2015 to all Ministries and Departments informing them of a clear line of demarcation between the roles of Chairpersons and Chief Executives Officers to be adopted in public sector organisations.

As regards parastatal bodies, the fees payable to Chairpersons and members of Statutory Boards and Committees fall under the purview of the Pay Research Bureau.

Regarding the Government-owned companies and those not governed by the PRB, Government has approved that part-time Chairpersons and other members of Boards be categorised in four groups and the monthly fees payable to them be revised as follows –

- Chairpersons, ranging from Rs30,000 to Rs70,000;
- Vice-Chairpersons, ranging from Rs20,000 to Rs45,000, and
- Board members ranging from Rs10,000 to Rs25,000.

Furthermore, transport facilities will be provided to the Chairperson for attending Board meetings as well as official functions.

Concerning office space, the Chairperson makes use of the Board room of the organisation for meetings, but he is not provided with a permanent office in view of the part-time nature of his office.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know from the hon. Minister whether he has a list of all the full-time Chairmen?

Mr Jugnauth: I have a list of the institutions concerned that fall under the different categories, namely A, B, C and D. But I am not aware of full-time Chairpersons. I know the Chairpersons are part-time. But I can provide, of course, a list of those Chairpersons.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

PLASTIC BAGS - BAN

(No. B/287) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the banning of plastic bags, as announced in the last Budget Speech, he will state –

- (a) when same will be implemented;
- (b) the alternatives identified, if any, giving details thereof, and
- (c) the measures that will be taken to preserve the industries involved therein, indicating the expected number of job losses in relation thereto.

The Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management (Mr R. Dayal): Madam Speaker, the battle against the abusive use of plastic bags is a long standing concern. It is acknowledged that various measures have been undertaken to reduce the use of plastic bags since 2002. These measures include amongst others, promulgation of regulations, introduction of levy and awareness raising. However, these measures to curtail excessive use of plastic bags have been largely unsuccessful.

As you know, a zero plastic strategy was also advocated by the previous Government since 2011. However, the absence of a sustained action plan to implement the strategy, coupled with inadequate monitoring and enforcement, coordination and follow-up of the measures failed to achieve expected results.

Consequently, the use of plastic bags has continued to increase over the past decade, amounting to some Rs300 m. annually. The situation has been worsened after the liberalisation of import of plastic bags in 2013.

The decision to ban plastic bags, as announced in the recent Budget, is indeed a very bold measure, which will allow leapfrogging from the throw-away society to an ecologically responsible one.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that, as announced, plastic bags will be banned as from 01 January 2016.

My Ministry is already working on the modalities and strategies, including awareness raising as well as promulgation of regulations for the ban of the local manufacture, import, trade and use of plastic bags under the Environment Protection Act. I would like to reassure the House that exceptions will be made for plastics used for packing purposes, in view of hygienic and sanitary reasons.

With regard to part (b) of the question, current alternatives produced and sold on the market include, among others, –

- Jute bags;
- Cloth bags made of cotton, linen, polyester and jean;
- Bags made of recycle cloth;
- ‘*Tente vacoas*’;
- Raffia bags; recycled paper bags, and
- Leather bags.

We have seen from the experience of other countries and Rodrigues that the industry is market-driven. The business of the entrepreneurs of alternative bags has expanded in Rodrigues and so will be in Mauritius. We are confident that the ingenuity of Mauritians and Rodriguans will forge lots of innovation in that sector.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, as far back as 2009, Government had hired the services of a Technical Consultant to conduct a study on the reengineering of the plastic industry.

The consultant conducted in-plant audits for each enterprise and had made specific recommendations mainly in terms of machinery modification, acquisition of additional accessories and purchase of new equipment for product diversification. The enterprises did

not implement the measures recommended due to uncertainty about the viability of the proposals made by the consultant.

I am informed by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection that there are presently some 12 enterprises producing plastic packaging materials, including plastic bags. Most of the enterprises are SMEs, except for three. I understand that the number of jobs concerned is about 280. The larger enterprises have adequate resources and know-how to further diversify their products range.

I am also informed that the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection is envisaging the following course of action –

- Assessment of the diversification potential of the enterprises by Industrial Engineers of the Ministry.
- Evaluation of the needs of the enterprises, and
- Assistance to the enterprises to address the needs through support institutions.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, according to the reply given by the hon. Minister, whereby part (c) of my question I stated that the number of job losses that would occur due to this measure, the hon. Minister did not reply about any number or any sort of this. Can I inform the hon. Minister, according to information that has been published in the press, there are actually 25 plastic companies, and ten companies out of these 25 would close down because all their machines can produce only plastic bags, they can't be reengineered as the hon. Minister just stated. And all these ten companies are SME's, they have taken loans, overdraft and they employ so many employees. So, therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister - this is why this question was firstly addressed to the Finance Minister - what would be done to these specific companies, which only produce plastic bags and those SME's that have so many employment at risk?

Mr Dayal: Let me just clarify the points. Part (c) of the question I answered. I said, I understand that the number of jobs concerned is about 280. Let me add now that, yesterday itself, I received three manufacturers in my office and I wanted to get first-hand information concerning how they are going to adapt to what the Government is proposing. I can tell you that all of them said they are going to reengineer their processes, but that will take some time. Only in certain cases, they are going to have problems because they only deal with a certain type of plastic. So, therefore, the issue of reengineering is possible.

Mr Bérenger: I think I heard the hon. Minister say that there will be exceptions and he gave a few examples. Can I know from the hon. Minister how widespread would be those exceptions and how will this be administered? These permits - I suppose - which are exceptions are going to be delivered by somebody. How is this going to be administered?

Mr Dayal: Madam Speaker, as I said, we are working on the various aspects governing this very important environmental issue and it is being done by our technicians. We are going to sensitise the whole nation how we are going about certain type of plastics, as I said - I have just quoted one - for hygienic reason, for health concerns. Therefore, we are going to communicate and inform the public how we are going about it in a timely manner.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister clarify whether the plastics used by households will continue to be manufactured because these are used for dustbins?

Mr Dayal: Madam Speaker, we are going to announce how we are proceeding with what type of plastic and what we are doing. This will be communicated in a timely manner, as I said, and we are working on it.

Mr Ganoo: I wanted to ask the hon. Minister more or less the same question. In the specific case of *les grands sacs noirs* that all households have in their kitchen and used by all housewives, will these be banned also?

Mr Dayal: All these issues will be taken on board.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, we are not contesting the fact that plastic bags do a lot of damage to the environment, this is not the point. My point is, some of those companies will close down. The hon. Minister said he met some of these plastic bag companies, but not all of them. I can table a press cutting from '*Le Defi Quotidien*', where already a company, Meeshy Plastic Bag Company Ltd. said -

« Il ne sait plus quoi faire. Affirmant qu'il a contracté des dettes pour financer son entreprise, il confie que cette fabrique est le gagne-pain de sa famille ».

Therefore, if the hon. Minister cannot answer on this issue, maybe I may come back with another substantive question to the hon. Minister of Finance who can reply. Secondly, Madam Speaker, paradoxically the tax on paper bag actually is 30% . If we want people to use paper bag, we should reduce this amount of tax so that it can be accessible at a good price for all people to use it.

Mr Dayal: Madam Speaker, as far as the issue of manufacturers is concerned, my office is open to everyone. I received the three persons because they asked for an interview on that specific issue. So, therefore, the hon. Member can ask that person to come to my office and we will meet with our technicians and discuss about these issues. We are here to help, but then, it has to be within the framework of Government policy. The policy is of national interest and on environmental interest. Concerning the tax on paper, I would communicate that to my colleague the Minister of Finance and he will see what can be done.

Mr Bhagwan: In order to sensitise the population, will the hon. Minister and the Ministry consider also investing in the manufacture of cloth bag, and then distribute to school children and other poor families as a first step?

Mr Dayal: Thank you very much, hon. Member. I would like to say that we are already sponsoring the manufacturer of cloth bag through our community-related projects and one of them is in Quatre Soeurs where they have produced already thousands of those bags, we are distributing free of charge because it is funded by an international concern. So, these issues are there.

Madam Speaker: Last question!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the plastic bags used by retail pharmacies to put sugar coated tablets will be banned?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, did you declare your interest?

Mr Dayal: Can I have the question again, please?

Mr Jhugroo: Will the hon. Minister confirm whether the plastic bags used in retail pharmacies to put sugar-coated tablets, which may be damaged, will be banned?

Mr Dayal: This is something that I will take on board. It's a very valid suggestion. We will take it on board, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

NICE COMMITTEE – CHAIRPERSON - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/288) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the

appointment of Mr V. M. as Chairperson of the National Institute for the Cooperative Enterprise Committee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Committee, information as to his -

- (a) qualifications;
- (b) address, and
- (c) terms and conditions of appointment.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, Mr Vishal Maurachea was appointed Chairperson of the National Institute of Cooperative Entrepreneurship (NICE) on 13 February 2015.

With regard to part (a) of the question concerning his qualifications, I am informed that he has a Cambridge School Certificate and has also followed a 'Practical Spreadsheet Processing' examination conducted by the Pitman Examinations Institute. He has wide experience in business activities.

As regards part (b) of the question, his address is Royal Road, Montagne Blanche.

As for part (c) of the question, regarding the terms and conditions of his appointment as the Chairperson of the National Institute of Cooperative Entrepreneurship, this is determined by section 114 of the Cooperatives Act 2005 (as amended). It is stipulated at section 114, subsections (2) and (3) that -

- (i) The Chairperson shall hold office for a period of two (2) years and he shall be eligible for re-appointment, and
- (ii) The Chairperson shall be paid such fees or allowances as the Minister may determine.

Consequently, I am informed that he is paid an all-inclusive allowance of Rs12,350 per month. Moreover, he has no office at the National Institute of Cooperative Entrepreneurship.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: The population and the country will be pleased to know that this gentleman is actually on bail for possession of stolen property, Cause No. 547/14 and other cases. He was convicted for assault on 01 October 2014, convicted for insult on 22 October 2010, and other cases also. I will be tabling it later.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bholah: I don't have any such information at hand, but I will look forward and inform the House accordingly.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I enlighten the hon. Minister more. He has been caught again in another case these days and the hon. Minister may inquire. I will give the hon. Minister several information. OB No.1688/2010, Cause No. 1142/12. Secondly, OB 536/07, Cause No. 6164/09; Cause No. 1408/012, allowing licence premises to remain open during prohibited hours. There are several other cases. Can the hon. Minister, at least, inform the House whether he has asked for a *certificat de moralité* before appointing such persons? And this is the example which he, as a Minister of Government, has recommended to Government.

Mr Bholah: I have no such information at hand, but, again, I will look for the information and inform the House.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the hon. Minister, at least, inform the House and give information to the hon. Prime Minister that this person will be sacked immediately, because these are true information?

Mr Bholah: If this is the case, yes, it will be so.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano!

BELLE MARE - FRENCH TOURISTS - DEATH

(No. B/289) **Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the recent death of two French tourists at sea in the region of Belle Mare, he will state -

- (a) the outcome of the inquiry, if any, carried out thereinto by his Ministry and the actions taken in relation thereto, if any, and
- (b) if his Ministry proposes to introduce new policies in relation to the nautical sports activities within our lagoons.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a Police inquiry is being carried out and is still ongoing.

However, pending the completion of the Police inquiry, the following actions have been taken by my Ministry and the Tourism Authority -

- (i) the licence of the skipper involved in the accident has been suspended and the pleasure craft has been impounded at Belle Mare National Coast Guard post;
- (ii) A snorkelling zone has been demarcated by marker buoys at Trou Corn, where snorkelling which was temporarily prohibited has resumed, and
- (iii) procedures have been initiated for the demarcation of speed limit zones in the lagoon of Belle Mare, which are expected to be completed by next week. In the meantime, towing and water ski activities have been prohibited thereat.

In addition, a flying squad has been set up by the National Coast Guard to carry out regular inspections and continuous monitoring, including surprise checks.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, the following new policies have been introduced to reinforce safety and security of sea users -

- (i) suspension of skipper's licence for an approved period upon establishment of a minimum of 3 contraventions within a period of 12 consecutive months;
- (ii) suspension of pleasure craft licence for an approved period upon establishment of a minimum of 3 contraventions within a period of 12 consecutive months, and
- (iii) obligation on owners of commercial pleasure crafts to ensure that their skippers attend every two years refresher courses dispensed by the Tourism Authority to keep them abreast of new safety standards and norms.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the House that there will be no compromise on the issue of safety and security. In fact, it would be pertinent for me to highlight some of the measures which were introduced as far back as 2005 to step up safety and security at sea and which are still being pursued. These include, *inter alia* -

- (i) a new legal framework for the Tourism Authority through the Tourism Authority Act in 2006 complemented by policies, regulations and guidelines for the conduct of nautical activities in a safe and orderly manner;

- (ii) a comprehensive programme for the zoning of lagoon to demarcate snorkelling zones, speed limit zones, ski lanes, swimming zones, mooring zones and installation of navigational aids and passes;
- (iii) setting-up of a Competency Test Panel to assess the competency of skippers;
- (iv) printing of Creole edition of the *Code de la mer*;
- (v) survey of pleasure crafts to assess their seaworthiness before delivery of licence;
- (vi) pleasure crafts operating outside lagoons to be equipped with 2 engines, and
- (vii) setting-up of a Monitoring and Compliance Unit at the Tourism Authority.

Safety and security is a topmost priority of my Ministry. An Action Plan to reinforce safety and security at sea has been elaborated for implementation and an amount of Rs13 m. has been earmarked in the budget of my Ministry.

But, as always, Madam Speaker, enforcement remains a major issue. Since taking office, I have had regular meetings with the Coast Guard in this respect.

Also, the Tourism Authority will build up its enforcement capability as a matter of urgency.

Mr Ramano: Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre si des actions ont été prises contre l'hôtel en question pour opération sans permis, notamment en ce qui concerne la plongée sous-marine?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, there are two things: one is the hotel and the other one is the boathouse. In fact, the boathouse also did not have a licence and it did not have a licence because it had no security boat.

Now, it has a security boat and a licence has been delivered, but we are waiting for the whole inquiry to finish before taking any further action. But we have not taken any action against the boathouse itself.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: With regard to the insurance cover for the skippers or for passengers of the pleasure craft, can the hon. Minister indicate to the House if the law makes it imperative for the owner of the pleasure craft or the skipper to take any insurance cover to protect the passengers?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am sure that the requirements cover the existence of an insurance policy by all concerned, but I will check what the situation is. I am quite sure that it is the case.

Mr Bérenger: In very sad occasions like that, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether the Ministry - the hotel probably does its part, but the Ministry and the Tourism Authority whether we do something special, we do something human in the direction of the relatives, the family of those tourists that come here to spend good time and meet with death?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, Madam Speaker. This was a very, very tragic incident, in fact, where the parents died and their daughter stayed in Mauritius. We visited the girl obviously and we provided all the assistance necessary for relatives to come to pick up the girl and return back to France.

Mr Ganoo: It would seem that on the day of that fatal accident, the weather was not very good. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister indicate the House whether new policies should be taken on days of bad weather to ensure that pleasure crafts owners and skippers should be warned or should be sensitised about the weather conditions and should be discouraged from taking tourists or other local passengers outside the lagoon.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Member is confusing between this accident and the one at Flat Island. This particular accident was inside the lagoon and I have not been told that the weather was particularly bad at that time. We have taken additional measures concerning out of lagoon excursions involving commercial pleasure crafts.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano!

PAVILLON - RECEPTION HALL - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/290) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the construction of the new reception hall at Pavillon, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to the –

- (a) contract value thereof;
- (b) names of the bidders thereof;

- (c) provisions, if any, made in regard to pollution hazards to the surroundings thereof, and
- (d) nature of the complaints received from the inhabitants thereof, if any, and if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, with regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that –

- the contract value for the extension and sound proofing of the Pavillon Reception Hall is Rs5,417,615.50, inclusive of VAT and contingencies, and
- only one offer was received from Messrs New Horizon Builders Ltd, following a procurement exercise conducted by the Council.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that the new concrete building is being constructed with sound proofing measures. These specifications include that all the openings be doubly gazed, air conditioners be installed and air curtains be fixed at exit location. The reconstruction is being done in order to address the noise emanating from activities held at the Hall which was due to the fact that the roof of the building was made up of iron sheets.

As far as part (d) of the question is concerned, I am informed that the inhabitants of the region have complained that –

- they were not aware of the project;
- they are concerned with the green space which is already very scarce in the town, and
- if there was any tender process.

I am further informed that the following actions have been taken by the Council to address these complaints –

- a notification plate with all relevant information on the project, the contractor's name and the implementing agency has been placed on the site;
- a meeting was held on 01 April 2015 in the office of the Mayor with representatives of the *Regroupement Citoyen de Quatre Bornes* whereat all details were made available to them, and
- as regards the green space, the turfing and the shrubs will be reinstated after completion the project.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Baloomoody!

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – NON-TEACHING STAFF - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/291) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the recruitment of the non-teaching staff of the primary schools, she will state the tests, if any, the prospective recruits are made to undergo before they are assessed to be fit and proper persons to work in an environment involving children.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Madam Speaker, I am informed that the non-teaching staff posted to the primary schools comprise the following grades:

- (i) Assistant School Superintendent and School Clerks recruited by the Public Service Commission, and
- (ii) Head/Senior School Caretaker, School Caretaker and General Worker recruited by the Ministry under delegated powers from the Public Service Commission.

Appointment to the above grades are made either by selection from serving employees/officers of the Ministry/Civil Service or by selection from outside candidates or by promotion depending on the qualification requirements of the post. All candidates joining the Civil Service for the first time, prior to their appointment on the permanent and pensionable establishment or confirmation in their post, are required to undergo a medical examination carried out by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life as soon as convenient after their assumption of duty in order to assess whether they are medically and constitutionally fit for employment in the Civil Service. If found medically unfit, their appointment is terminated immediately as stipulated in the offer of appointment made to them when joining the service on probation or in a temporary capacity or on a casual basis.

Prior to joining the Ministry, police clearance is sought as well in respect of outside candidates to check whether there is any adverse report or police case against them.

It is also to be pointed out that School Caretakers recruited, following a selection exercise from among officers in service, are offered appointment in a temporary capacity in the first instance, and they are required to undergo a fresh medical examination carried out by

the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to certify whether they are fit to work in schools. In case they are found medically unfit, the appointment is terminated and they are reverted to their previous substantive post.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Minister - of course he is not the substantive Minister - whether that medical test includes psychological test especially when we know that these people are going to work with young children, young girls and boys?

Mr Seeruttun: Well, Madam Speaker, I don't think I am in a position to confirm whether it includes a psychological test. Probably I will have look into that.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rutnah!

STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SUPPLY TEACHERS – RECRUITMENT

(No. B/292) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the supply teachers in the State Secondary Schools, she will state the number thereof employed over the past two years, indicating –

- (a) on average the -
 - (i) shortest, and
 - (ii) longest engagement contract allocated thereto, and
- (b) if her Ministry will consider adopting and implementing the policy of recruiting the supply teachers on the permanent establishment.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Madam Speaker, I am informed that Supply Teachers are enlisted in respect of State Secondary Schools for both mainstream and pre-vocational stream in order to palliate the shortage of staff and to replace Educators proceeding on sick/maternity/vacation leave and leave without pay.

For the past two years, the number of Supply Teachers enlisted for mainstream and the pre-vocational stream are as follows:

Mainstream	Pre-Vocational stream
Year 2013 : 332 (short and long periods)	31 (long periods)

Year 2014 : 397 (short and long periods)	31 (long periods)
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Madam Speaker, I am also informed that, generally -

- (i) the shortest period of enlistment of Supply Teachers is 19 days to replace Educators who have proceeded on vacation leave, and
- (ii) the longest period is one full academic year, that is, as from the resumption of studies in January up to the end of the third term, normally in the first week of November.

As regards part (b) of the question, the enlistment of Supply Teachers is made every year under delegated powers from the Public Service Commission on the terms and conditions specified by the Commission. In the offer of appointment made to the Supply Teachers, it is clearly stated that their enlistment would be on a purely temporary basis as and when required.

It is also specified that in the offer of appointment that the enlistment will not give them any claim for permanent appointment as Educator and may be terminated without notice or compensation in lieu of notice in the event of incompetence, misconduct or insubordination or in case their services are no longer required.

Should they wish to be considered for appointment to the grade of Educator, they will have to submit their application anew as and when the post is advertised by the Public Service Commission. Hence, it is not envisaged to implement a policy for employment of supply teachers on a permanent basis inasmuch as there already exists a mode of recruitment for Educators on a permanent basis.

However, it is also to be pointed out that, with the approval of the Public Service Commission, around 125 Supply Teachers were enlisted in the years 2004/2005 for the pre-vocational stream. Their enlistment was on a month to month basis as and when required. As at date, 30 supply teachers prevocational are still in employment. They are enlisted at the start of the academic year in January and their enlistment is terminated at the end of the third term in October/November and they are re-employed at the beginning of the following year on the same terms and conditions. Given that the 30 supply teachers are serving since 2004/2005, the approval of Cabinet was obtained in May 2014 to absorb them on the establishment of the Ministry.

In this respect, the scheme of service is actually being amended to take on board the Supply Teachers in conformity with the Cabinet decision. It is expected that their situation will be regularised shortly as a special case.

Mr Rutnah: That is the answer that the hon. Minister gave in relation to making some of the teachers permanent once the Cabinet will meet. Is the hon. Minister aware that for the last 10 years, there is a shortage of teachers in, at least, three State Secondary Schools in my constituency, for example, at the Piton State Secondary School, at Mapou State Secondary School and at Ramsoondar Prayag State Secondary School and in the last 10 years, only supply teachers have been teaching on and off?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, if this is the case, then probably I will have to ask the officers of the Ministry to look into it and see what are the measures they intend to take to correct that situation.

Madam Speaker: Yes, next question, hon. Rutnah!

BOI, SIC & STATUTORY BODIES – STATE LAW OFFICERS - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/293) **Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Board of Investment, the State Insurance Company Ltd. and the other statutory bodies falling under the aegis of his Ministry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from each of them the –

- (a) names of the State Law Officers whose services are presently retained thereat, indicating in each case,
- (b) the date of appointment thereof, and
- (c) remuneration drawn.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, with regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, I am tabling the information requested in relation to State Law Officers who are called upon to provide their services by Statutory Bodies and Government-owned companies falling under the aegis of my Ministry.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jahangeer!

STATE-OWNED SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE – FEES

(No. B/294) **Mr A. Aliphon (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the State-owned sports

infrastructure and facilities, he will state if the Mauritius Sports Council had consulted his Ministry before increasing the fees payable by the general public to have access thereto and, if so, indicate the stand of his Ministry in relation thereto, especially in the light of the policy of his Ministry to encourage the practice of sports by the mass.

(Withdrawn)

**MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY – SCAVENGING & CLEANING SERVICES –
CONTRACT**

(No. B/295) Mr A. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the Mauritius Ports Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom and table a list of the contractors who have been awarded contracts for scavenging and cleaning services thereat, as regards the ships and ports area, since 2005 to 2015, indicating in each case, the amount of money paid thereto.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am tabling, as requested by the hon. Member, the information regarding scavenging and cleaning services contracts awarded by the Mauritius Ports Authority for the period 2005 to 2015.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Armanace!

POINTE-AUX-SABLES - AREA HEALTH CENTRE

(No. B/296) Mr P. Armanace (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the existing area health centre in the region of Pointe-aux-Sables, he will state if he has been informed of the derelict state thereof and that it is too small to accommodate the number of patients attending thereto on a daily basis and, if so, indicate –

- (a) if urgent remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto, and
- (b) where matters stand as to the proposed construction of a new mediclinic thereat, indicating the time frame set for the implementation thereof, if any.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, the Pointe-aux-Sables Community Health Centre is a single storey building of 45 metre square located on a plot of State land of 46.8 metre square. This Community Health Centre has been operational since more than 25 years. I am informed that the building does not suffer any structural distress and as such can be considered safe.

The average yearly attendance for the last three years at Pointe-aux-Sables Community Health Centre is 8,643 patients and the average daily attendance is 43 patients.

In view of the space constraints thereat, in 2010 and 2011, my Ministry decided to carry out an extension project which did not materialise as no responsive bids were received on four occasions to temporarily house the Committee Health Centre in a rented building pending completion of the extension project.

In October 2013, the inhabitants of Pointe-aux-Sables made a request for the construction of a new Community Health Centre in order to provide more facilities for the patients and the staff.

On 03 April 2014, the Ministry of Housing and Lands was requested for the vesting of a plot of land of 580 metre square, situated behind the Community Health Centre, in my Ministry for an extension project. They informed the Ministry that the land was vested in the Ministry of Local Government for use by the Municipal Council of Port Louis for the construction of a sports complex.

On 09 May 2014, my Ministry requested the Ministry of Local Government to consider releasing the said plot of land for vesting in my Ministry for the extension of the Pointe-aux-Sables Community Health Centre.

The Ministry of Housing and Lands has informed that the said portion of State land has been retrieved from the Ministry of Local Government and vested in my Ministry on 02 April 2015 for the extension of the Pointe-aux-Sables Community Health Centre.

Regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that there was some leakage after heavy rainfalls, and waterproofing as well as painting works have already been carried out. Now that additional land has been vested in my Ministry, the Community Health Centre will be extended to accommodate the following facilities –

- (i) a record room;
- (ii) one pharmacy store;
- (iii) one family planning/antenatal care clinic;
- (iv) one mess room;
- (v) additional toilets for both patients and staff;
- (vi) extension of the pharmacy, and

(vii) a waiting area.

As regards part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, there is no project at present for the construction of a mediclinic at Pointe-aux-Sables.

Mr Armance: May I ask the hon. Minister if he will intend to provide dental services at the new health centre?

Mr Gayan: On the list that I have just mentioned, dental services do not appear, Madam Speaker, but it can always be considered.

Mr Barbier: Is the hon. Minister aware that in the recent past the NDU circulated a list of projects for Constituency No. 1 and amongst the extension of the health centre at Pointe-aux-Sables with a proviso of Rs18 m. for the project?

Mr Gayan: Well, I listened to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister early this morning on the NDU. It would appear that there does not seem to be much scope for that, but at the level of the Ministry, steps are being taken to revamp this particular project.

GRNW & PORT LOUIS WEST - SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS

(No. B/297) **Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the numerous applications and demands for social housing units in the Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state –

- (a) the number of social housing units constructed, since 2005 to date, indicating the expected date of delivery thereof;
- (b) the names of the beneficiaries of the social housing units
 - (i) constructed at Sugar Planter, and
 - (ii) under construction at La Pointe, and
- (c) if any project for the construction of new social housing units in the said constituency is in the pipeline.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to this Parliamentary Question.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the NHDC Ltd. that during the 9-year period running from 2005 to date, 235 housing units have been constructed and delivered in Constituency No. 1 as follows –

- (i) 198 housing units constructed at Pointe-aux-Sables in February 2006, and
- (ii) 37 housing units at La Tour Koenig in December 2011.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) (i) of the question which refers to the beneficiaries of housing units constructed at Sugar Planter, I wish to inform the House that there is no project implemented by the NHDC Ltd. there.

Regarding parts (b) (ii) and (c) of the question which refers to the housing project at La Pointe, I am informed that some 24 housing units are being constructed by the NHDC Ltd. The project is expected to be completed in July 2015. The allocation of these housing units will be made once the project will be completed.

Mr Barbier: Maybe hon. Armance is referring to those housing units already completed now at Sugar Planter which, I suppose, is under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment. Is the hon. Minister aware of that project and will he inform the House as to who are going to be the beneficiaries of all these housing units?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for his question. Concerning the NEF project, I am not in a position to answer because I have no information as such. Surely, I am going to liaise with the hon. Minister concerned and communicate same to him.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Minister, with regard to the construction at La Pointe, when will the inhabitants be made aware that these houses are available for occupation so that they can apply and by what means will this be done?

Mr Soodhun: 24 housing units are being constructed. Madam Speaker, I am coming with a new plan. Really, we have a big problem concerning the registration and now I am going to work in close collaboration with the Prime Minister' Office, that is, NDU and the CAB office where people can go and apply for a housing unit, for land, roof slabs or materials. In this case, they have to go to the NHDC of Rose Hill.

(Interruptions)

They are informed.

Mr Barbier: Regarding the housing units at Pointe-aux-Sables, may I know from the hon. Minister whether they are for the *classe moyenne* or low-cost housing units because we don't have any precise information on the types of housing units being constructed there?

Mr Soodhun: As it is considered like *boîte allumettes*, they are still like *boîte allumettes*.

(Interruptions)

We are going to change because still the same types of houses are being constructed.

BOI – COMPOSITION & INVESTMENTS

(No. B/298) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Board of Investment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, for the period 2009 to date, information as to the –

- (a) composition thereof;
- (b) remuneration paid and fringe benefits to which the Chairperson thereof was entitled, and
- (c) number of trade/other missions conducted by the Board, indicating the –
 - (i) outcome thereof, and/or
 - (ii) total amount of investments attracted to Mauritius.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling the information requested.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that the previous Chairman of the Board of Investment did not take any fees and was not paid any fringe benefits. However, the costs of promotion missions in which he participated were incurred by the Board of Investment.

The current Chairman draws an all-inclusive monthly fee of Rs70,000 and is not paid any fringe benefits.

As far as part (c) of the question is concerned, I am further informed that from 2009 to date, the Board of Investment has undertaken 60 investment promotion missions. These

include State Visits with a business component, Minister-led investment promotion missions, as well as BOI-led ones.

I am informed that as a direct outcome of the missions conducted by the Board of Investment from 2009 to 2014, there have been 82 projects with a total project value of Rs43.5 billion, of which Rs23.6 billion of FDI and that some 9,700 jobs have been created.

Furthermore, the BOI-led export of services promotional initiatives have contributed in increasing the number of foreign students, the number of global business companies as well as the number of foreign patients following medical treatment in Mauritius.

Mr Sesungkur: Given that BOI is an important arm of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and that the Government is targeting a lot of FDI, is the Minister satisfied with the current structure and the team that he has within the BOI to deliver in the forthcoming days and months?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: The structure of the organisation is being reviewed to make it more compatible with our own vision. So, this is being carried out presently. On the question of team, we are presently understaffed and following the results of the reorganisation, we will take the measures. But, still, we have advertised recently some five or six jobs at management level and we have received more than 600 applications which are being processed.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister has just informed us that the former chairperson was not taking any salary. But, will the Minister be surprised to learn - and he can enquire - that that person was giving contracts to his close relatives! Even his son! Can I make a request to the Minister to go and check whether photographs were taken by the son of the previous chairperson and paid out of public funds for the annual report of the Board of Investment?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, we have so much information on the former chairman! For the moment, what the hon. Member said on the question of whether he was involved in the allocation of contract for the identity card which, I remind the House, was to cost Rs400 m. and finally cost Government Rs1.5 billion. So, the question is whether I should investigate into the matter, yes, we will.

Madam Speaker: Time is over, hon. Bhagwan! The Chair has been informed that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/301 and B/302 have been withdrawn!

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE - PARACETAMOL
INTRAVENOUS INFUSION - COUNTERFEIT MEDICINES**

(No. B/301) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if a stock of 70,000 units of paracetamol intravenous infusion, 10mg/ml x 50ml, and 90,000 units of paracetamol intravenous infusion, 10mg/ml x 100ml, of counterfeit medicines were delivered to his Ministry on 27 March 2014 and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) name of the supplier thereof;
- (b) cost incurred in relation thereto, and
- (c) actions, if any, taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

AIR MAURITIUS LIMITED – AIRPLANES & PILOTS

(No. B/302) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to Air Mauritius Limited, he will state the number of –

- (a) airplanes it has, and
- (b) Mauritian national pilots and foreign national pilots employed thereat, indicating –
 - (i) in each case, the terms and conditions of employment thereof, and
 - (ii) during the last recruitment exercise, the number of Mauritian national pilots and foreign national pilots recruited.

(Withdrawn)

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.20 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

DENGUE FEVER – PREVENTION & CONTROL

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr A. Gayan): Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the dengue fever. Madam Speaker, a first case of locally transmitted dengue fever was detected on 30 March 2015. The patient was admitted at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and kept under mosquito net to prevent any disease propagation. All necessary public health measures in terms of fogging and larviciding were carried out to the vicinity of the residence of the case detected. Furthermore, I immediately initiated the implementation of the operation of plan for prevention and control of dengue fever in Mauritius.

On 31 March 2015 another case of locally transmitted dengue fever was reported. On 01 April 2015 there were eight cases which have been reported. Surveillance was increased, but other cases were reported as follows –

On 2 April - 2;

On 3 April – 3;

On 4 April – 3;

On 5 April – 1;

On 6 April – 2; bringing the cumulative number of cases to 21.

The Health Surveillance Officers carried out fogging and larviciding. Mosquito repellent creams have been distributed to more than 2,000 households in Port Louis. Communiqués have been issued and there has been a distribution of pamphlets to sensitize members of the public on preventive measures.

Programmes on radio and TV are being broadcast. The public is being advised to eliminate all mosquito breeding places and accumulation of water in the yards and on rooftops and to trim overgrowing bushes and shrubs.

An inter-sectorial meeting was held on 02 April 2015 and I held a press conference on the same day to make an appeal to all stakeholders, including the private doctors, to collaborate to curb the spread of dengue fever. Emphasis has been laid on the urgent need for a cleaning campaign to be carried out in the region affected and eventually, across Mauritius.

Three patients affected by dengue fever have recovered and they have been discharged. The surveillance and vigilance programme against the spread of dengue fever is being intensified.

Following the detection of the locally transmitted case of dengue fever, the response was immediate and health sanitary and health surveillance personnel have been on the alert. The Communicable Disease Control Unit has promptly initiated implementation of the operation of plan for the prevention and control of dengue fever in Mauritius. All this has contributed to prevent the spread of dengue fever in the country.

Thank you.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Local Government (Amendment) Bill (No. V of 2015) was read the first time.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour for tea.

At 4.24 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.00 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2015) BILL

(NO. III OF 2015)

&

THE APPROPRIATION (2015-2016) BILL

(NO. IV OF 2015)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2015) Bill (No. III of 2015) and the Appropriation (2015-2016) Bill (No. IV of 2015).

Question again proposed.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is my turn now to address you on the Budget that was presented to this

House, which was entitled 'Mauritius at the Crossroad.' And, indeed, we are today in the history of not only politics, but history of economic and history of our society at a real crossroad. And if we are not going to be cautious in formulating and implementing our economic policies, especially contemporary economic policies, then the crossroad where we are at, we are going to take the wrong turn.

But what this Budget has brought about is an introduction to a new way of economics and a new way of dealing with the real issues that today affect our country, in terms of its development and in terms of where our society is.

Since this Government has come to power, people are happy. When the Budget was presented, people all over Mauritius expressed their happiness. It reminded me of Thomas Hardy's 'Far from the Madding Crowd', in which he said: 'Happiness is an occasional episode in the general drama of pain.' There were lots of pains and sufferings going on in this country because we were governed by a regime that was so corrupt, so much of illicit matters were going on, so much of immorality that people were living in pain, and there came happiness when we took power. And there came happiness when the Budget was presented.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there were a number of great moments when the Finance Minister was making his Budget Speech, and I will come to those great moments later on. But the greater moment in the Budget Speech was when the Finance Minister, in his very introduction, spoke about the principle of sharing. The principle of sharing meaning that both the private sector and the public sector have to work together to move towards what we call progress; economic progress, social progress, and progress in all spheres of activities of our daily life.

The second greater moment was when the Finance Minister announced that 6 m³ of water will be free to every citizen or every household of this country. And the third greater moment of the Budget Speech was when the Finance Minister announced that this is a No-Tax Budget. The greatest moment of the Budget Speech was when the Finance Minister dedicated that Budget to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

All these great moments did not just come as if from the air, it came through lots of focus, of hard work, of thinking, because at the crossroad where we are, we have to put the economic priorities of this country in the right direction and in the right track. It is, indeed, a Performance-Based Budget so that clear objectives are set.

Secondly, so that there will be adherence to the principle of accountability. Thirdly, so that we will experience, what is called, improved performance and, fourthly, that in economic terms we have what we call a wider margin of appreciation of economic activities in our

country so that everything is done in such a scientific way that our country as a whole progress. This is what the Budget is all about, bringing progress to our country, our nation and our people.

I will now be dealing with a greater moment of the Budget. I was glad to hear that for the first time, with partnership, as between the Government and the private sector there will be the creation of 13 Mega projects - Smart Cities. In my Constituency, in Roches Noires, there will be one of these kinds of cities. There will be also the Phase 2 of Azuri. When I went to my Constituency, where I was electioneering together with the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and the hon. Minister of Finance, we noticed quite a large number of people who are living in poverty or even below poverty line. This development in my Constituency, insofar as the Mega city project is concerned and the Phase 2 of Azuri, will, indeed, give an impetus, an encouragement to our youth to obtain employment.

This Budget reflects what it is all about, about creation of wealth and distribution of wealth. Creation of wealth - it reminds me of Adam Smith, one of the greatest economists, who is also known as the father of modern economics.

He described the creation and distribution of wealth in his seminal work, which is called the Wealth of a Nation, and he said, 'Wealth is not only material, it is also mental, it is also physical'. Because to create wealth, we have to have the right approach to apply our mind, we have to have the requisite labour force and the requisite capital to invest in order to bring about the creation of wealth, which, in turn, will be distributed in such a way that it is equitable and fair. And against this background, the hon. Minister of Finance announced the creation of SMEs bank in order to bring about a new generation of business, a new generation of businessmen who would obtain advances, loans from a bank without even putting or providing for a *lien* on their property. Then, what are they going to do with it? They are going to actually create employment and opportunities. There is also the Port Louis Harbour which is going to be transformed in a regional hub. What is going to be this regional hub? It is going to place Mauritius at the centre of trade and at the centre of international commerce.

Mauritius, during the colonial era was, indeed, a regional hub for trade because all the vessels that were travelling to the Indian Ocean, going to India or elsewhere were using Mauritius as a port of transit and a port of trade. Mauritius is coming back in modern day a centre for trade by the creation of the hub.

The Budget also deals with education at all levels, not only University but the creation of a Polytechnic in order to educate middle management; to render our economy efficient, education in ICT at Montagne Blanche, the project of the hotel industry school and the MITD

programme where people will be trained to become plumbers, electricians - *Les Chambres de Métiers* where those who have a skill can be trained properly and given a *Carte de Compétence*.

There is also provision for law and order where this Government will provide Rs7.9 billion to the Police Force - and to do what? We know how poor, below-average some of our high-ranking Police Officers were, and still are. We also know that the majority of Police Officers in this country work very hard and in very difficult condition. Everybody in the House was present when the Rt. hon. Prime Minister answered my question last week, that, in Mauritius, in the year 2010 up to now, there was a Police post that was housed in a derelict building. It is not only in Rose Hill, it is not only in Beau Bassin, it is in a quite large number of areas in our country where Police Officers work in derelict buildings and in poor condition. These are the kind of things that this Government is now addressing; provision is also made for the creation of a Police Complaints Commission. A Police Complaints Commission not like the one we have known before. At least now there will be a former Supreme Court Judge who will be chairing that Commission to ensure that there is going to be never a second Iqbal Toofany in this country, to ensure that there is never going to be another Ramlogun in this country, to ensure that there is never going to be a Legends 2 Lux Hotel, a Legends 2 case in this country. It is important that the Police get all the facilities in terms of tools so that they can work and deliver and not to think that they are a Police Force but the Police should be rendering a service. It should be a service and this is what comes about when we read the Budget Speech that has been presented in this Assembly.

How can I not speak about the Judiciary? The Judiciary is going to get Rs600 m., an unprecedented sum of money in order to go and innovate our Judiciary. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, me being in the legal profession, I know quite a lot about the Judiciary in this country. But I am not going to say anything here, otherwise people are going to say that I speak under the cover of immunity, but I have said quite a lot about the Judiciary, about the Police outside the House and I will always say it with candour and without any hesitation.

What do we need in our Judiciary? There is a lot of injustice that goes on because there are no proper record keeping and I anticipate this Rs600 m. will be used to provide technologies from the lowest Court of this country to the highest Court of this country so that every proceedings could be video recorded and every proceeding be properly recorded by way of digital recording. And I hope that there will be change in law, in particular, section 74 of the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act so as to amend that piece of legislation to make it mandatory for all Courts to have digital recording system in

every single Court of this country so that there is no ongoing injustice that goes on in our Courts on a regular basis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is also provision for small sugarcane planters. In my Constituency, we are a community of small sugarcane planters who produces less than 60 tonnes of sugar and I was glad when it was said that despite the decreasing price of sugarcane that there will be compensation in the region of Rs3,400 to sugarcane planters who are small in size.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a number of measures that have been announced in the Budget which have been acknowledged as good by the whole nation, especially by the workers of this country. However, there are a few people, only a handful, who say that this is a *'l'occasion ratée, ene budget décousu'*. This is a statement made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, of a Budget which has been acclaimed by more than 80% of our country; similar remark from hon. Shakeel Mohamed on the very day of the Budget. But those who walk fast, they don't carry out any assessment or any exercise like any right-thinking member of the society does on the street.

(Interruptions)

And I find it extraordinary that there have been such comments by those who sit on the other side of the House.

How can I not talk about the BAI and the Bramer Bank saga? And this is very well planned when now I think about it what Dr. Sithanen as Finance Minister did in this House when he imposed tax on savings. That time no one in this House would have realised that when he was imposing tax on savings, in other words, when he was imposing it to discourage people from saving money in the bank, he was, on the other hand, encouraging people to take endowment policy at BAI and all this saga was well planned and now we know it.

Today, if our Minister of Finance and if our Prime Minister would not have worked hand in hand last week, this country today would have been on the brink of economic collapse like when the Barings Bank collapsed. We are in a similar situation of the Barings Bank. The Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister took control of the situation and last time when I addressed this House, I said this was Act 1 Scene 1, but today it is Act 1 Scene 2. Act 1 Scene 2, doubtful it stood as two spent swimmers that do cling together and choke their art; like two soldiers, they saved this country from economic collapse.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the BAI saga is not about a particular community. It is wrong, it is not responsible, it is intellectually dishonest to go around and try to invoke that

this is about a particular community or it is about, if I can say it candidly, Muslim bashing. No! This cannot be right!

If we would have been complacent against all prone to corruption; against all those who have stolen in this country like current allegations being faced by the ex-Prime Minister of this country, Navinchandra Ramgoolam. There is enquiry on Nandane Soornack. There is enquiry on Mr Bheenick. There is enquiry going on and more enquiries will come up: Betamax, etc. This is not called hindu bashing. There is no hindu bashing or muslim bashing or community bashing. Read the papers! Perhaps the hon. Member can extend the courtesy of listening rather than making comments when I am on my feet.

(Interruptions)

I am not pointing at him!

(Interruptions)

We are a Government that is governing with a degree of responsibility that reflects the promise that we have made to the people of this country during the elections. All the thieves will be chased and smoked out of their holes whether they are living in a hole in Italy or in any other country. They will be brought here to face the full machinery of justice. In all, this was indeed a Ponzi scheme that BAI was operating. If Charles Ponzi of Boston, who created the Ponzi scheme in 1919, is still alive, you can go and ask him whether the BAI is a Ponzi scheme or not and he will say: "Yes, it is my baby".

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the Budget Speech, there is quite a lot to say. Indeed, I am now getting ready to speak but I see...

(Interruptions)

...the Chief Whip who is sending me a signal.

(Interruptions)

He is looking at his watch and saying time is up. But let me assure the nation today that this Government is going to leave no stone unturned to create the right economic condition for growth at the rate of 5.7% which we have promised - an economic development for the future of our country, of our nation, of our people and of our children.

On this note, I thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

(5.28 p.m.)

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East): M. le président, la préparation d'un budget au-delà des chiffres et de la technicité requière tout un effort artistique. Ce budget n'est pas une exception. Il est d'un optimisme

insolent. Les phraséologies et les mots ont été cliniquement choisis pour éviter toute référence à la dure réalité quotidienne que nous constatons sur le terrain. L'approche tout comme l'emballage laisse à désirer. Si c'est pour doper le moral, c'est tant mieux mais si c'est pour endormir l'opinion, c'est raté. D'ores et déjà et dans les mois à venir, la population comprendra la supercherie et gare au retour de la manivelle.

M. le président, un budget est une occasion pour fixer un nouveau cap. L'honorable ministre des finances pouvait donner l'élan nécessaire pour relancer l'économie mauricienne mais il a raté l'occasion. Tout le monde est sorti de l'exercice du 23 mars avec une drôle impression, celle d'avoir raté quelque chose.

M. le président, il est vrai qu'on n'attend plus rien du budget; celui de 2015-2016 intervient dans un contexte économique incertain et tourmenté. Ce budget est tout sauf rassurant pour l'avenir. Qu'y a-t-il à l'horizon? Pas grand-chose qui embrigade la nation. Un budget est surtout une occasion pour insuffler un nouveau dynamisme à l'économie.

Si l'idée était de séduire, de créer l'optimisme et de booster le moral des gens, après plus de 100 jours que ce gouvernement est en place, les gens attendent toujours une amélioration de leurs conditions de vie. Tel n'est pas le cas. L'enthousiasme et l'espoir créés après des élections se sont estompés.

Si nous partons du principe qu'un budget c'est une présentation chiffrée et non pas une ébauche des dépenses et des revenus de l'État sur une période donnée, nous pourrions dire que ce budget, tel qu'il est présenté, n'a rien d'un budget. Il est manifestement incomplet. Car nous ne savons pas comment ce gouvernement compte s'y prendre pour trouver autant d'argent pour réaliser tous ces projets sans recourir à des taxes de façon déguisée.

En répétant que c'est un '*no tax budget*' on veut faire croire qu'il n'y aura pas de taxes. Or, un pays ne peut rouler sans la taxe. On aurait dû dire '*invisible tax budget*'. Cela aurait été plus honnête. Le gouvernement, pour motiver la croissance de nos exportations traditionnelles sur le moyen et long terme n'a trouvé d'autres moyens que de dévaluer la roupie vis-à-vis des principales devises notamment le dollar qui s'est dévalué de façon systématique et continuelle, depuis l'installation du nouveau gouvernement, de 20 %. Cela a augmenté les revenus du gouvernement par le truchement de la TVA et des taxes d'exportation qui se basent sur une roupie faible. C'est une supercherie et c'est une taxe invisible juste pour pouvoir dire un '*no tax budget*'. Nous payons cette taxe invisible et nous le finançons déjà à travers une réduction du pouvoir d'achat. Les compagnies opérant dans le manufacturier sont actuellement asphyxiées par la hausse dans le coût de production suite à l'importation des matières premières à des prix élevés.

En ce mois d'avril une série de produits importés en dollars sont majorés et cette augmentation salariale de six cents roupies va être dérisoire vis-à-vis de la hausse du prix. C'est un coup dur pour les consommateurs. C'est un coup dur à *Lepep* et au niveau de leur porte-monnaie.

A peine les 100 premiers jours terminés, le *feel good factor* dans la population commence à se dissoudre par la façon de faire de ce gouvernement. La population commence à se rendre compte qu'elle s'est fait embobinée. Pour cela, laissez-moi parler sur la pauvreté et sur le Plan Marshall, dont mention est faite dans le budget. Le Plan Marshall contre la pauvreté est la mesure budgétaire qui a provoqué une onde de choc au sein de la classe politique. Son premier volet consiste à développer le concept de parrainage par le secteur privé - concept permettant aux institutions de contribuer au programme sociétal des entreprises, connu comme la *corporate social responsibility* - pour prendre sous leurs ailes ces poches de pauvreté.

D'après l'honorable ministre des Finances, ils sont 5,478 ménages qui vivent dans 38 endroits considérés comme des poches de pauvreté, alors que nous savons que c'est beaucoup plus, deux fois, trois fois ou quatre fois plus que cela! C'est le secteur privé qui aura pour mission de sortir ces personnes de la pauvreté absolue !

Le ministre des Finances a expliqué que le deuxième volet du Plan Marshall est de revoir la structure du programme sociétal des entreprises afin de le rendre plus efficace ! Ainsi le gouvernement a décidé, pour le rendre plus efficace selon les mots du ministre des Finances, d'enlever les lignes directrices, c'est-à-dire les *guidelines* réagissant le CSR ! M. le président, en enlevant les *guidelines*, ce sera la pagaille totale. Et pour le ministre des Finances c'est une approche innovante dans le combat contre la pauvreté. Au fait, M. le président, le gouvernement est en train de se dédouaner dans le combat contre la pauvreté !

C'est, en fin de compte, un prolongement du discours-programme, pour épater la galerie, pour faire perdurer l'euphorie, pour bercer les gens dans des rêves chimiques. C'est une opération de mystification et un tour de passe-passe digne d'un magicien de haut calibre. Mais les gens ne vont pas tarder à s'interroger et à découvrir la supercherie. Ils se diront qu'ils se sont fait mener 'en croisière'. Il y a des zones d'ombre à éclaircir au plus vite pour qu'il y ait cette dynamique d'adhésion de la population aux efforts nationaux pour une vraie relance économique digne de ce nom, comme nous le souhaitons tous en tant que patriotes.

Que l'île Maurice devienne un vaste chantier de construction, c'est tout à fait possible. Comment cela va changer la vie des mauriciens, il faudra faire une étude approfondie pour ne pas constater plus tard qu'on a été '*off target*' avec le gros de la population se sentant nullement concerné et que le développement n'a pas répondu aux attentes.

Faire, toutefois, de l'île Maurice une nation d'entrepreneurs, cela fait sourciller. Après une tournée auprès des jeunes chômeurs gradués ou pas, en quête d'un emploi, l'enthousiasme n'y est pas. Ils sont très sceptiques, ne sachant pas comment lancer une entreprise. Ils ne comprennent pas trop comment d'une petite île avec un marché restreint, ils pourront faire une percée. Déjà, ils constatent une saturation dans le secteur de l'artisanat. On ne fait pas d'un jeune qui a passé le plus clair de son temps à l'école et qui a nourri des grandes ambitions, se convertir à un entrepreneur du jour au lendemain ; le chômage restera un problème épineux dans les années à venir, malheureusement.

Le sort des jeunes doit nous interpeller tous, car ils représentent la vraie richesse de ce pays à l'état brut. A leur intention, tout un programme doit être soigneusement élaboré, axé sur quatre aspects fondamentaux : une éducation de pointe par rapport aux exigences du marché du travail, un programme de loisir et de distraction sain à leur portée, de réelles perspectives d'emploi et une protection efficace contre la toxicomanie et le HIV-SIDA.

M. le président, laissez-moi venir sur un dossier qui me tient à cœur, parce que cela affecte toute l'île Maurice, mais surtout ma circonscription, notamment Plaine Verte et Roche Bois. C'est le dossier de la drogue où aucune mention n'a été faite dans ce présent budget. M. le président, il n'y a rien de sérieux dans le budget pour donner un nouveau souffle au combat contre la drogue. La toxicomanie persiste et, là-dessus, je le dis – que la drogue c'est un fléau qui doit être placé au-dessus de la politique partisane. Nos travailleurs sociaux engagés semblent prêcher dans le désert. Pire que l'indifférence, il y a de la complaisance. Le mouvement anti-drogue mène une croisade, et ne bénéficie d'aucun soutien digne de ce nom de l'Etat. Nous croyions que le gouvernement allait se ressaisir et tenterait de reprendre du poil de la bête avec de nouveaux textes de lois très musclés pour casser les reins des magnats de la drogue. Mais silence radio, là-dessus, M. le président !

Au lieu d'utiliser la MBC/TV à des fins de propagande, on aurait dû la mettre au service de ceux qui militent, au péril de leur vie, contre tous ces fléaux qui gangrènent notre société, tels que la drogue et le SIDA. En effet, dans le budget, rien n'a été prévu contre ce

phénomène et on ne peut éternellement se fier à la bonne volonté des travailleurs sociaux. Il faut professionnaliser ce secteur avec des moyens musclés. Des écoles spécialisées pour permettre aux enfants affligés par ce même problème de se rattraper et l'encadrement financier et psychologique à ces familles pour lutter contre le stigma afin d'intégrer le 'mainstream' de la société. D'ailleurs, l'institution d'une commission d'enquête sur la drogue se fait toujours attendre.

Maintenant, M. le président, laissez-moi parler sur l'administration locale. Pas mal de gens se demandent si l'honorable Dr. Husnoo est toujours le ministre des Administrations locales. Il s'est muré dans un silence de cathédrale sur les amendements qui seront apportés au *Local Government Act* en prévision des prochaines élections municipales. Il a été devancé par l'honorable ministre Gayan qui a animé une conférence de presse, suite à une réunion du comité exécutif du Mouvement Libérateur comme quoi les députés ne pourront être candidats aux prochaines élections et que les élections municipales se tiendront probablement en juin ! Comme quoi se la coule douce pour le ministre de tutelle et encore le *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, lui aussi, a commenté, parce qu'il préside cette réunion, les amendements qui seront faits par rapport à l'administration locale. Je ne crois pas que l'honorable Dr. Husnoo est très occupé. D'abord, c'est un comité ministériel qui a eu la tâche de proposer les amendements. Ensuite, l'honorable Dr. Husnoo est à la tête du ministère le plus – je ne dis pas cela méchamment – squelettique de ce gouvernement. Son ministère a été amputé de la *Beach Authority* et du *Solid Waste Management*. Il n'est responsable que des collectivités locales et des services de pompes à incendie. C'est malheureux pour les mandants de la circonscription No. 3 !

Sans l'ombre d'un doute qu'il dispose suffisamment, voire abondamment de temps pour se concentrer sur le problème des marchands ambulants. Là aussi, c'est le silence radio. Quoi qu'il soit prévenu que l'oisiveté n'est non seulement la mère de tous les vices mais c'est aussi une bombe à retardement. Le plus longtemps qu'il dort sur le dossier des marchands ambulants, le problème ne fera que s'empirer. Les marchands ambulants sont dans l'expectative et ils ont de quoi de se faire des soucis. Et là, M. le président, en lisant le discours de l'honorable Dr. Husnoo, il fait mention dans son discours que le problème de marchands ambulants est un problème humain et qu'on doit prendre en compte les *shop owners*, les *market traders* et les *hawkers*, et que deux places ont été identifiées à la gare du nord. Il y a seulement la gare du nord dans son discours. Mais cela a été fait depuis belle lurette, depuis plus d'une année ces deux sites ont été identifiés. Il y a quatre mois que ce

gouvernement est en place, la majorité du travail a été fait par la municipalité de Port Louis.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence !

Mr Ameer Meea: Pas un *survey*, deux, trois *surveys*, il y a tout ce qui a été fait. Il faut seulement reloger ces marchands ambulants ! Il a besoin d'une année pour ça ! C'est vraiment incroyable ! Et il dit qu'il travaille avec le ministre de *Public Infrastructure and work will start very soon*. Donc, on attend toujours le relogement des marchands ambulants.

(Interruptions)

Et je peux vous dire que...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No interruptions, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: ... le problème des marchands ambulants demeure entier, M. le président. Ces marchands ambulants craignent que le gouvernement *Lepep* ne tienne pas ses promesses de trouver une solution durable à leurs problèmes en déclenchant l'opération de les chasser des trottoirs. En parlant de la chasse aux indésirables, comment peut-on faire l'impasse sur les protégés de ce gouvernement? Il ne faut pas aller trop loin. Ici même, dans l'hémicycle, le premier *Serjeant-At-Arms*, choisi par ce gouvernement *Lepep* n'a pas tardé à décevoir tout le monde en assistant à un anniversaire d'un trafiquant de drogue présumé et de sa fiancée! Avant cela, on a eu l'occasion, à travers un *parliamentary question* de l'honorable Bhagwan de savoir qui a été nommé par le ministre des Coopératives. Un *habitual criminal (HC)* qui a été condamné et inculpé, vient d'être nommé par ce nouveau gouvernement!

En parlant toujours des nominés politiques, comment oublier la protégée du ministre Anil Gayan? Pour la défendre, il est allé aussi loin que de brandir l'arme du communalisme contre le député, l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed! *Let me quote what Minister Gayan said in his speech in this august Assembly*, M. le président. *I quote –*

“It must be mentioned that it is the first time in the history of independent Mauritius that a non-Hindu is sitting as a Leader of the Labour Party in this House!”

On croyait que ce type de discours était réservé à des organisations sectaires et d'un autre temps! On croyait entendre M. *Dulthumun*! C'est une attitude infecte, ignoble, rétrograde, honteuse et écœurante et ce n'est pas digne d'un ministre de la République en 2015! Le Premier ministre aurait dû le révoquer sur un tel commentaire communal. Mais la plus choquante, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

M. le président, c'est la déclaration du Vice-Premier ministre, l'honorable Ivan Collendavelloo. Qu'est-ce qu'il dit ? « Je suis solidaire d'Anil Gayan. » Et il cite : « Je comprends le sentiment de blessure qu'il exprime - Anil Gayan - au Parlement. » *Ena là!* Il comprend le sentiment de blessure et le discours communal que le ministre a fait ! Et l'appellation de ces mêmes gens est quoi ? C'est le Mouvement Libérateur, M. le président !

(Interruptions)

Quand même ! C'est ça le changement ? Laissez-moi venir par rapport aux promesses électorales et je ne peux m'empêcher de citer le discours de l'honorable Hurreeram. *Let me quote –*

“L'Alliance Lepep had made electoral promises during the campaign which the other side of the House said could not be achieved. We have kept our word and within hundred days those promises were fulfilled.”

Je conseillerai bien à l'honorable Hurreeram d'aller relire le manifeste électoral de *l'Alliance Lepep* !

(Interruptions)

S'il l'a lu ! Moi j'ai pris la peine de le lire. Qu'est-ce qu'on voit dedans ? On dit : « les 12 priorités des trois premiers mois au gouvernement... »

(Interruptions)

« Les 12 priorités des trois premiers mois au gouvernement ! »

Qu'est-ce qui est dit dedans ?

« Introduire un salaire minimum pour les travailleurs au bas de l'échelle. »

(Interruptions)

«... offrir les chances égales... »

(Interruptions)

« ... offrir les chances égales à tous et amendement à la loi pour assurer la transparence et la méritocratie dans les recrutements effectués par la *PSC*, la *LGSC* et la *DFSC*. »

Je vais revenir là-dessus, M. le président. On parle de méritocratie et de transparence ! Dans ce manifeste électoral - je vais retourner comme j'ai dit là-dessus - pourtant le *leader* du Mouvement Libérateur, le Vice-premier ministre, l'honorable Ivan Collendavelloo n'est pas passé par quatre chemins jeudi soir, ici même, dans cette auguste Assemblée pour dire que ce sont des gens compétents mais proches de 'nous', '*nous*

dimounes', qui vont être nommés à la CWA, au CEB et à la *Wastewater Management Authority* !

(Interruptions)

Le ministre des Finances avait annoncé avec tambours et trompettes que les postes importants dans les corps paraétatiques seront remplis par appels de candidatures, or il est le premier à faire le contraire en nommant le controversable Rajah Pillay au Casino!

Revenons aux promesses électorales, le titre est « 12 priorités des trois premiers mois au gouvernement » et je continue –

« *Le ID Card...* »

(Interruptions)

Le commencement est d'introduire un salaire minimal. Le deuxième est d'offrir des chances égales. Et là je viens aux *ID cards*. Lors des divers meetings dans leur programme les dirigeants de *l'Alliance Lepep* avaient promis de détruire la banque des données où sont stockées les empreintes digitales recueillies après l'utilisation de la nouvelle carte d'identité nationale. C'était la priorité! C'était la promesse électorale et mention est faite des trois premiers mois du gouvernement mais rien n'a été fait, M. le président!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, silence!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Et je continue sur les promesses –

« Offrir un service Wi-Fi gratuit dans tous les endroits stratégiques et assurer une connexion Internet rapide à travers l'île. »

On attend toujours!

« Institution d'une commission d'enquête sur la drogue afin de finir avec la mafia. »

On attend toujours!

« Combattre la fraude et la corruption, la *Declaration of Assets Act* sera amendée pour inclure les propriétés acquises sous les prête-noms et la publication de toutes les informations dans la gazette du gouvernement ».

On attend toujours!

« Redonner à l'ICAC et la police une indépendance opérationnelle et autoriser les policiers à se syndiquer. »

On attend toujours!

« Introduire la télévision privée pour élargir l'espace démocratique. »

On attend toujours !

« Réorganiser la MBC pour qu'elle puisse fonctionner comme une vraie radiotélévision publique. »

On attend toujours!

(Interruptions)

M. le président, voilà peut-être...

(Interruptions)

... peut-être l'honorable Hurreeram...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Ameer Meea: ... a eu la mémoire rafraîchie mais des 12 mesures annoncées, une seule a été faite! Une seule sur 12 mesures, les promesses électorales qui ont été faites par l'Alliance *Lepep*.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, maintenant laissez-moi dire quelques mots par rapport à Agalega qui se trouve dans ma circonscription qui est la circonscription No. 3. A travers la *Private Notice Question* du *leader* de l'Opposition on a pu constater que le ministre ne connaît rien par rapport à Agalega. Il n'a pas pu répondre aux questions malgré la *Private Notice Question* du *leader* de l'Opposition par rapport à la sécurité de l'île, l'installation des radars, à quand est-ce que les développements vont commencer. Il n'a pu donner aucune date, aucune information par rapport à Agalega. D'après mes informations - parce que j'ai communiqué avec des gens qui sont là-bas - le ministre n'a pas encore pris contact avec les gens qui se trouvent à Agalega. L'île est très petite, et il y a peu de gens qui habitent à Agalega. Donc, on attend toujours que le gouvernement bouge dans la bonne direction par rapport à Agalega.

Autre mesure qui a été débattue dans cette Chambre est l'importation du bétail. On sait que l'ancien gouvernement avait lancé des *tenders* pour le transport et l'importation du bétail mais on a su, à travers le ministre Gungah, que ce n'était pas viable pour la STC d'importer le bétail et il a balancé cela sur son collègue, mon bon ami, l'honorable ministre Seeruttun; ce n'est pas viable pour la STC mais ça va être viable pour la *Mauritius Meat Authority* d'importer le bétail. C'est ce qu'il a dit au Parlement. Donc, je vous donne le bénéfice du doute. On attend, parce que je sais que l'honorable Soodhun aussi s'en est mêlé. Il a fait des déclarations à la presse par rapport à ça. On attend toujours, et on y reviendra plus tard.

M. le président, dans l'affaire *BAI*, en voulant soi-disant mettre de l'ordre, le gouvernement n'a fait que créer de nouveaux désordres. D'abord, on a l'impression que le Premier ministre et son ministre des Finances se sont substitués aux institutions. C'est clair et net de l'ingérence dans les institutions.

Pire, pour justifier cette ingérence, le Premier ministre et quelques-uns des ses ministres ont accusé la *BAI* de pratiquer le *Ponzi Scheme*. Et là, je vais revenir sur la déclaration faite par rapport au *Ponzi Scheme*. Le Premier ministre avait dit que –

« *Sa zaffaire BAI là li un Ponzi de R 25 milliards. C'est un projet prémédité pour arnaquer des personnes. Trois-quarts sa l'argent là ine fini alle à l'étranger.* »

J'aurais aimé intervenir ce matin sur la *PNQ*, mais je n'ai pas pu. Mais, j'aurais aimé quand même que le ministre des Finances, dans son *summing-up* sur le discours du budget - puisque le Premier ministre a annoncé que trois-quarts de la somme ont été transférés à l'étranger - nous dise où cette somme a atterri et comment on va faire pour la récupérer, puisque le ministre détient des informations par rapport à ça.

Et voilà que la majorité des professionnels du secteur financier et des avocats d'affaires ont prouvé le contraire dans les médias. L'économiste Chandan Jankee, un proche de l'Alliance Lepep, était hier à la radio dans le Grand Journal. Il a tenté d'expliquer que c'était du *Ponzi Scheme*. Mais il a fini par accepter - aujourd'hui même on a entendu ça à la radio - que ce n'est pas un *Ponzi Scheme*. Même le conservateur, M. André Bonieux - un professionnel - a déclaré qu'on ne peut pas utiliser à ce stade le terme *Ponzi*. Cela a été dit par l'administrateur.

Actuellement, avec tout ce qui se passe dans le secteur bancaire et des assurances, où des centaines de milliers de braves gens ont placé leur argent, il faut craindre un refroidissement d'ardeur de la population à s'aventurer dans le monde de la finance.

Il faut venir avec des mesures concrètes au plus vite pour rassurer tous ces gens. Sinon, leur crainte pourrait devenir contagieuse et se répandre dans la société, créant une psychose générale, ce qui serait très mauvaise pour la relance de l'économie.

Peut-on être si naïf pour croire que les investissements étrangers vont se bousculer à notre porte, et les valises pleines de capitaux, pour se disputer les secteurs où ils vont investir? Déjà, nous avons une image à refaire, tout un climat de confiance à établir. Pour qu'on nous prenne au sérieux, il faut envoyer des signaux forts, et surtout nommer des gens hautement crédibles dans des secteurs vitaux de l'économie.

Pour terminer, M. le président, je souhaiterais voir une île Maurice émergente, prospère, juste et généreuse ; une nation unifiée, avec chaque individu jouissant de droits égaux. Souhaitons à notre auguste Assemblée moins d'agressivité verbale et de démagogie inutile de la part du ministre Gayan, et des attaques viles et personnelles ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ameer Meea: ... et davantage de débats d'idées, et surtout moins de commentaires communaux.

M. le président, je vais conclure en citant le *Leader* de l'Opposition, et dire: '*Arrette badiner mam, arrette bluffer mam!*'

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissezon!

(5.59 p.m.)

Mr E. Boissezon (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): M. le président, je vous remercie de me permettre de participer aux débats sur le budget présenté par le ministre des Finances.

Avant, avec votre permission, je voudrais exprimer mon soutien aux clients et les employés de la *BAI* et de la *Bramer* qui ont été affectés moralement par l'un des plus grands scandales financiers qu'a connu le pays. Je remercie et félicite le gouvernement qui a été prompt à sécuriser les emplois et les épargnes de la population.

M. le président, d'habitude je suis calme, tolérant, j'accepte les bonnes réparties qui existent entre l'Opposition et le gouvernement, et j'ai tendance à bien souvent mettre beaucoup d'eau dans mon verre.

Aujourd'hui, pendant les débats du discours, j'ai senti un consensus entre l'opposition et le gouvernement ; qu'il fallait faire un effort pour travailler. J'avais cru que l'opposition avait compris le premier message de Sir Anerood Jugnauth le soir de notre victoire quand il avait dit: '*nu ena un grand defî où tous dimounes bizin travay ensemble*'.

Même si je n'acceptais pas certains points dans les discours des précédents orateurs de l'opposition, j'ai senti ce besoin de travailler ensemble. Et, aujourd'hui, je suis déçu. Complètement déçu par l'attitude du précédent orateur. Peut-être qu'il n'a pas compris. Moi je mets ça sur l'incompréhension. Lui-même a si bien résumé son discours en venant parler d'agressivité, de démagogie, d'attaques viles et de personnalisation.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member can do what he wants, but he said that! Those words are from him!

C'est faire insulte à la population que de venir dire que la présentation du budget par le ministre des Finances a essayé d'endormir la population. Parler d'un budget de supercherie ! Venir dire qu'il n'attend plus rien de ce budget, M. le président, alors qu'aujourd'hui tout le monde parle de 15% de dévaluation de la roupie envers le dollar...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed ! Hon. Members, please, no cross-talking! I would ask hon. Mohamed not to interrupt. Hon. Member, please continue!

Mr Boissezon: Merci, M. le président. Vous voulez des preuves ! Venir parler d'une dévaluation de la roupie envers le dollar de 20%, alors que vous savez sciemment que ce n'est que 15% ! Vous savez vous-même que la dévaluation envers le dollar est un peu 'pile je gagne, face tu perds'. Parce que comment expliquez-vous, qu'aujourd'hui, le secteur agricole et le tourisme bénéficient de cette dévaluation ? Pensez à combien d'employés aujourd'hui qui se réjouissent de cette situation ! Venir parler de mystification ! Peut-être les résultats des élections ont été la preuve d'une démystification. Vous parlez d'entrepreneurs sceptiques. Tout à l'heure je viendrai vous dire que vous avez mal fait - *you have not done your homework* - et que vous n'êtes venu ici que pour faire du mal.

Vous avez essayé de parler du *local government* alors que nous avons des amendements au projet de loi. M. le président, l'honorable membre aurait pu attendre les débats qui vont venir demain ou après-demain pour parler des amendements au *Local Government Act*. Maintenant quand vous parlez de ce *Local Government Act*, oubliez-vous que le *Leader* de l'Opposition, lui-même, n'est pas satisfait de la loi que nous avons aujourd'hui et tout le temps il parle de *back to memory lane* quand il parle du budget présenté par le gouvernement MSM/MMM.

(Interruptions)

Vous avez causé ! Maintenant quel est votre problème avec le Mouvement Libérateur ?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissezon, please address the Chair!

Mr Boissezon: Quel est le problème de l'honorable membre avec le Mouvement Libérateur ? Est-ce cette vérité que nous avons montré pendant la dernière campagne électorale qui fait mal ? Aujourd'hui, venir profiter d'un débat de budget pour venir régler son compte avec l'honorable Ivan Collendavello alors qu'il n'est pas là, c'est de la lâcheté !

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: *M. le président*, on a point of order. The hon. Member is imputing motive, *il a dit 'c'est de la lâcheté'*. So, he should withdraw his words.

(Interruptions)

Mr Boissezon: I withdraw! Mais s'il a eu à venir encore

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please allow the hon. Member to continue!

Mr Boissezon: M. le président, venir parler de la politique de recrutement de ce gouvernement, peut-être que l'honorable membre ne sait pas que les membres des *Corporate Bodies* ne sont pas régis par la *PSC*, la *Local Government Service Commission* et la *DFSC*. Apprenez Monsieur ! Si vous voulez être dans le gouvernement, il vous faut apprendre...

Mr Deputy Speaker : Hon. Boissézon, please address the Chair!

Mr Boissezon: M. le président, j'ai comme l'impression que l'honorable membre a encore la nostalgie de la *MBC* qu'il voulait faire devenir une *BBC* mauricienne. M. le président, je ne prendrai pas encore le temps de la Chambre mais je terminerai pour dire une fois pour toutes, laissez l'honorable Gayan tranquille. Le choix de la personne choisie est une personne qualifiée. Elle a été recrutée de par ses compétences. Vous personnalisez des attaques viles et personnalisées. Cessez avec cela! Soyez sérieux, honorable membre ! D'autant plus que je pense que vous faites sciemment des erreurs pour embêter la salle. Vous parler de liste de 38 ...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissézon, please! Once more you have to address the Chair and no one else!

Mr Boissézon: M. le président, l'honorable membre tout comme un membre de L'opposition précédemment, ils savent, et on leur a dit que dans cette liste de poches de pauvreté - il y a un mot, « *indicative list* » ça veut dire à titre indicatif, ça ne veut pas dire 38 poches. Il y a plus de 200 poches de pauvreté, mais nous nous retrouvons avec une liste indicative, c'est-à-dire vous pouvez choisir dedans.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, l'honorable Benydin a qualifié ce budget de *smart budget*, je lui emboîterai le pas en faisant un acronyme du mot pour dire – 's' pour simple, 'm' pour magistrale, magnifique, 'a' pour audacieux et ambitieux, 'r' pour réalisable et 't' pour tentant.

M. le président, nous avons eu droit à un budget simple et facile à comprendre et c'est pourquoi que tout un chacun, dans tous les quartiers, ils ont accepté ce budget et l'ont plébiscité. Peut-être que l'honorable membre qui m'a précédé n'a pas compris. C'est un acte de foi. Le ministre va dans le sens que pour créer les emplois il faut des investissements. Pour investir il faut de l'argent, pour avoir de l'argent, faisons appel au secteur privé - pas

Rawat - et aux mauriciens, serrons-nous les coudes. Je vais répéter une phrase du Premier ministre –

‘Nou ena enn grand defi, tou dimoune bizin travay ensam’.

Ici-même, dans cet auguste Assemblée, le premier intervenant, l’honorable Uteem n’a pu s’empêcher de dire, et je cite –

«I am not saying that it is a bad Budget, there are many good measures, popular measures... ».

Oui, ce budget a le mérite d’être un brillant exercice économique, montrant l’éminence de ce gouvernement à maîtriser les tenants et aboutissants d’une bonne gouvernance économique, d’une bonne connaissance des besoins et aspirations, craintes et soucis des mauriciens.

Ce budget a le mérite de remplir les aspirations des mauriciens, tout en prenant compte de l’environnement économique du moment et du besoin de partage entre tous les *stakeholders*. Je cite, M. le président, Monsieur Azad Jeetun, économiste réputé –

“This is thus some sharing already which account for the general acclaim of the budget. The rich, the poor, businessmen, planters, taxpayers, professional, the unemployed, consumers, the youth, SME s, all can say that they have not been let out. They are part of the budget, they have got a share of the cake, and the budget does not deviate from the top priority which remains investment, growth and unemployment and delves at length on all these issues”.

Contrairement aux commentaires de l’Opposition qui parle de mirage ou de supercherie, ce budget vient à un moment où Maurice est à la croisée de sa destinée. Contexte économique difficile, inflation et contrainte par la baisse du prix du pétrole, la déflation pointe ; le chômage est une réalité. Comment résoudre le problème du chômage quand nous savons qu’au cours de ces trois dernières années il y avait plus de 2,500 pertes d’emplois ? Comment réduire la dette publique décriée pas tous, alors que le gouvernement précédent n’a rien fait pour ramener le déficit budgétaire à 50 % du PIB ? Comment investir pour créer des emplois, comment investir pour avoir un meilleur taux de croissance quand nous savons qu’aujourd’hui il y a eu une perte de plus de 3,500 emplois dans l’industrie de la construction ?

Le gouvernement a choisi de faire du PME la colonne vertébrale de l’économie. Tenant en ligne de compte que, dans le passé, plusieurs tentatives de développer ce secteur de l’économie n’ont pas eu les effets escomptés, cette démarche révèle plus de l’audace que de

l'ambition. Plus de 5,000 compagnies ont mis la clé sous le paillason au cours des 10 dernières années, mais le moment est propice.

Dans le monde du travail l'attitude a changé, les employés de la génération X, suivant les pas des *baby boomers* entraient dans une entreprise en empruntant la première marche de l'échelle d'une grande carrière.

Aujourd'hui, s'il est plus difficile de trouver un emploi pour la vie, les jeunes ont plus d'opportunités de travailler à la maison, échanger plusieurs carrières ou devenir *self-employed*.

Une étude effectuée en Angleterre qui reflète la tendance universelle révèle les points suivants -

- 69% des personnes âgées entre 16 et 30 ans ont déjà changé d'emploi depuis qu'ils ont quitté le cycle scolaire ;
- 45% pensent changer de carrière ;
- 41% pensent qu'ils pourront être sans emploi à un moment donné, et
- plus de 33% rêvent de créer leur propre entreprise.

La génération Y n'est-elle pas qualifiée de la génération des *start-ups*? Mais, M. le président, même si un sur trois pense avoir sa propre organisation, beaucoup ne franchissent pas le cap en raison des points suivants -

- ne pas avoir suffisamment de financement ;
- de la conjoncture économique ;
- la peur d'échouer ;
- de ne pas avoir la bonne idée, et
- un manque de support.

À Maurice nous devons créer une culture d'entreprise. Nous ne cesserons pas de dire que notre système d'éducation doit être revu et on ne peut pas le refaire dans 100 jours. Ce budget vient répondre aux questions des jeunes et vient leur dire: « N'ayez pas peur d'avoir peur. » Pour le financement, la banque est là parce qu'il y aura une banque spécialement pour les PME.

Mais, pour aider le support que les jeunes ont besoin, nous devons avoir un regroupement de penseurs, capables de développer des entreprises qui permettraient aux jeunes d'avoir des entreprises *off-the-shelf*.

La SMEDA tant décriée par tous les partis à Maurice, devra revoir son opération. Elle devra travailler conjointement avec les divers ministères, le secteur privé, le *Board of Investment*, *Enterprise Mauritius* et *Air Mauritius* pour informer les entrepreneurs des niches possibles. Car, savez-vous à Maurice, les entrepreneurs ont peur de perdre de l'argent. Aussi dès qu'une entreprise, dès qu'il y a une niche, tout le monde plonge dans cette niche. Tout le monde est marchand de kebab, tout le monde est marchand d'achard, tout le monde est marchand de X, Y, Z et dès qu'il y a trop de concurrents, le secteur n'est plus rentable et c'est la faillite assurée.

M. le président, j'ai beaucoup de points, mais vous savez, nous avons quelqu'un ici qui a la guillotine, aussi je concentrerais un autre jour pour parler du développement que nous pouvons faire avec les petites et moyennes entreprises. J'ai dit que c'est un programme, un budget réalisable, un vaste chantier de développement et je pense que nous pouvons vraiment, avec les actions prises, comme nous le faisons, nous allons vers une victoire pour le pays Maurice.

Pour terminer, je dirais –

« Maurice, fais-nous à nouveau rêver,

Redevient le pays où tout est possible,

Montre que les mauriciennes et mauriciens ont l'audace d'espérer. »

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Callichurn!

(6.20 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me, at the very outset, join my other colleagues to congratulate the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, for coming up with such a Budget that will remain a major landmark as he has been able to reconcile the economic imperatives to our social objectives through a gamut of bold measures.

Indeed, this much awaited first Budget of this Government has been positively acclaimed and welcomed not only by the private sector and business community, but also by the Trade Unions and social workers and, most importantly, by the population in general.

The nation, as a whole, is convinced that the path that has been traced out by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, under the able leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the Prime Minister, for sustainable development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government assumed duty less than four months and has already taken firm and bold decisions by breaking the unfair rules of the previous regime. We have all heard comments from the Opposition inside and outside the House.

One cannot be more *'royaliste que le roi'*. Indeed, how can one criticise this Budget, when the majority of the Trade Unions, workers, representatives of *Forces Vives* and NGOs, have acclaimed most of the measures proposed by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development. Indeed, this is a budget which is fair and responsible, and perfectly addresses the expectations of the population, the workers as well as the business community. The focus is on investment, employment creation, sharing of the national wealth in a fair manner and on addressing the problem of poverty. It is a budget that further strengthens our Welfare State by providing adequate funds and proposing innovative and pragmatic measures to such important and vital sectors as education, health, social security and housing, which remain the backbone of our social fabric.

Clearly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Opposition has no arguments, no proposals and no credibility at all. I think that the only place where the comments, opinions and statements of the hon. Leader of the Opposition and hon. Members of the Opposition are accepted is at the *Assemblée des délégués* of the MMM.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development has rightly indicated in this Budget that we are "At the Crossroad". We are, indeed, at crossroads. We need a new vision, a new direction in the way things are done in this country.

My colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has rightly stated in his Budget Speech, I quote -

"It will not be enough to plan for the creation of greater wealth. We also need to be concerned with better sharing and that we should put the principle of sharing at the very heart of our policies."

This statement, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, indeed perfectly translates the vision of this Government as underlined in its Government Programme. This Budget has come up with concrete and bold measures in order to realise the aspirations of our people and to improve the quality of life of each and every Mauritian citizen. As a caring Government, we have come up with a Budget that lays the foundation for a better Mauritius for our children.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the majority of Mauritians still bear the nostalgia of the 80's when, thanks to the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth and hon. Seetannah Lutchmeenaraidoo, the Government managed to achieve full employment and thus achieved the first economic miracle. With these two stalwarts back in business, there is no reason why we cannot achieve

the second economic miracle. All the ingredients are there for us to realise the second economic miracle. All the ingredients are there for us to realise the second economic miracle. It is time to take hard decisions and we are prepared, as a responsible Government, to take the appropriate decisions to ensure a better life to the present generation as well as the future generation. The people of Mauritius voted for a change in December last and have given us a clear mandate to set up a new economic order to end all economical disorders and mess left by the former Government. We won the election with a comfortable majority but that does not mean we should sit back. We vowed to bring a change for the people and no change can come without courageous and innovative measures which aim at bringing back economic prosperity. We have decided not to opt for economic survival in this competitive global economy but we want creation of wealth and fair sharing of such wealth among our people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has qualified the Budget of the hon. Minister of Finance as a 'show *de Lutchmeenaraidoo*'. His attacks were against my colleague, the hon. Minister Finance, who, let me remind this House, had been his economic spokesman for many years, his favourite shadow Cabinet Finance Minister for nearly a decade. The only difference was that our colleague refused to embark on a Labour Party/MMM coalition. That is the main reason for the attacks against the hon. Minister Finance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister Finance took several courageous decisions against gambling and the use of plastic bags. He decided to go forward against a tax budget. Benjamin Franklin said that two things that are certain in life were taxes and death. Our hon. Minister of Finance is ready to go with a no tax budget. Very few Ministers of Finance in the world are able to play with such an economical move.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we also all know that unemployment is related to poverty. The Anti-Poverty Marshall Plan, which is a major innovative approach, aims at addressing the acute problem of poverty which is linked to various social issues. The new concept of 'parrainage' and new formula for CSR will help to tackle these problems at community level in a well-structured manner. The private sector has a responsibility towards eradicating poverty in our country. Fighting poverty is also the responsibility of the Government. We have just changed some rules aimed at eradicating poverty.

One cannot expect an improvement in law and order with so much poverty in some areas in our paradise island. Some Members of the former Government are accusing this Government of *privatiser la pauvreté*. They have forgotten how huge amounts of taxpayers'

money were given to close friends of the former Prime Minister through the scheme called the Stimulus Package.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all the criticisms of the Opposition heard so far in this House are unjustified. Same applies for the issue of new smart cities where the Opposition claims that the Government is being pro-private sector.

With the creation of smart cities in rural and urban areas, our island will be transformed into a *chantier de construction* where thousands of job opportunities will be unlocked for the unemployed while a boost will be given to the construction sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in addition, the commitment taken by the Government for the SME sector to become the backbone of our economy, and in that context the panoply of measures and facilities announced, especially regarding the one-stop shop to be put up by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, clearly demonstrate the political will of this Government to build a nation of entrepreneurs. As rightly pointed out by the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, business should not be as usual, it is time to change the way things have been done so far and adopt a new mind-set in the face of the challenges ahead. We need to inculcate in our youth the entrepreneurship culture. It is our responsibility, as a farsighted Government, to provide them with the necessary tools and guidance for them to be successful in their endeavours.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the transformation of Port Louis Harbour into a modern regional hub will undoubtedly create immense opportunities for our SMEs and again, thousands of new jobs for the labour force. In fact, the making of Port Louis Harbour into a hub for bunkering, seafood, transshipment, cruise and petroleum is a laudable initiative.

I equally welcome the initiative regarding the strengthening of regional cooperation, namely the opening of Africa where we can explore job opportunities for our professionals, as many regions in Africa are facing a shortage of doctors, teachers, and accountants amongst others. In this context, we will have consultations with various countries for the placement of our jobseekers abroad through signing of bilateral agreements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as highlighted in the Budget Speech, we currently have an education and training system that is not capable of producing skills at the pace and quantum that the economy requires. Recent employment surveys have revealed that 54% of enterprises across all sectors in Mauritius could not recruit the right number of candidates with required skills, appropriate experience and proper attitude. The situation is more prominent in the manufacturing sector where there is a substantial demand for plant and machinery workers, and in emerging sectors such as ICT and financial services.

It is imperative that our education and training systems adapt to the realities and the requirements of the employment market. The socio economic growth of our country increasingly demands on people who have the right skills and knowledge to join the services and the knowledge economy.

I am, indeed, grateful to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister who has added training to the portfolio of my Ministry as education, training and employment are interrelated. Without training, it is difficult to ensure the employability of jobseekers.

My colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, has rightly pointed out that we must have an education and training system which caters for the need of the new economy. I welcome the provision whereby 3,000 *gradués chômeurs* will follow tailor-made crash courses for which Government will meet the costs up to Rs80,000 per student. I am confident that the population will appreciate the Government's efforts to address the problem of unemployment, especially among the youth. I reiterate that support services are essential to jobseekers to assist them in finding jobs.

Accurate information on labour market, different training schemes, job requirements and other counselling activities should be available at a one-stop shop. We will soon set up the National Employment Agency which will find suitable job placements for the unemployed. This agency will be a modern, client-oriented institution; it will be equipped with necessary resources to unlock job opportunities.

An integrated career counselling system will be set up to provide information to people about the current and future labour market to enable them to make career decisions over the life spans.

Moreover, with a view to curbing the problem of unemployment, my Ministry will enhance the employability of young jobseekers and fresh graduates through the Youth Employment Programme. The Back to Work Programme, targeting specifically women above 30 years and Dual Training Programme for our diploma and degree holders will be launched soon by my Ministry.

To address the skills mismatch problem, my Ministry would collaborate closely with institutions such as the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, the Human Resource Development Council and other specialised training institutions on this issue. Training will be given utmost priority for our local workforce to update the skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of the employment market. This will also reduce our dependency on foreign labour.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the same vein, the MITD is being called upon to make necessary provision for training required for the construction sector. I would like to point out here that there is a great demand abroad for skills such as *masons*, carpenters, welders, plumbers and electricians. The trained Mauritians in these occupations will secure jobs in local companies as well as abroad through labour migration programmes.

I also welcome the setting up of the *Chambre des Métiers* which will give due recognition to our tradesmen who have acquired experience and skills in trades but do not have formal certificates. After necessary testing by the *Chambre des Métiers* a “*Carte de compétences*” will be delivered to them, thus facilitating their integration in the world of work.

I also wish to mention that under the bilateral agreement signed between France and Mauritius, my Ministry will benefit from the technical and financial assistance to reengineer the present Employment Information Centres based on the concept of “*Pôle Emploi*” which is in line with the Government Programme for the setting up of a modern National Employment Agency.

Contrary to what is being said by the other side of the House, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has foreseen through his Budget the creation of thousands of jobs in the public and private sector in short and medium-terms. It is expected that thousands of jobs will be created through the 13 megaprojects, in the Regional Hub at Port Louis Harbour, and in the private sector through “*parrainage*” of pockets of poverty; qualified personnel in the ICT sector, doctors, paramedical staff, additional police officers, forensic, accountants, analysts and computer and mobile phone experts; and additional Court personnel will also be recruited, amongst others.

There is, no doubt, that cruising has become a major part of the tourism industry, with over 20 million passengers carried worldwide in 2014. This figure is expected to increase significantly in the years to come as a result of the growing interest of the people around the world to travel on board of cruise ships. Moreover, jobs pertaining to cruise ship are also well remunerated. I am informed that a significant number of vacancies exist in occupations like cooks, stewards, waiters, housekeeping staff, security officers, massage and beauty therapists, hairdressers, nail technicians, fitness instructors, amongst others.

I will soon be coming forward with a scheme for this sector in view of job opportunities to be tapped at various levels as mentioned. The investment in Port Louis

harbour, as announced, will open the ways for prestigious cruise ships to stop over in Mauritius. Not only this will facilitate employment of our local people, but the tourists sector will also be given a boost with tourists stopping by.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to move to the Labour and Industrial Relations issues. I wish to express my gratitude to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, who has acceded to my request to increase the number of Labour Inspectors with a view to enabling the officers to meet fully the objectives of that Division.

With the increased number of staff, I am proposing to review the inspection system through the setting up of a Special Squad to carry out inspections to ensure strict compliance with legislation and better protect workers' rights.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are also reviewing our labour legislation which essentially aims at encouraging the development of an industrial and working environment that will be mutually beneficial to workers and employers.

This Government firmly believes that any amendment brought to the Employment Relations Act and the Employment Rights Act are fully in line with its vision to provide a legal framework whereby the workers' rights, interests and welfare are fully safeguarded. In this context, I am pleased to inform the House that I have already started consultations with other stakeholders.

In the same breath, other Industrial Relations Institutions, such as the National Remuneration Board and the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation will be revisited and reinforced, if the need arises.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has reviewed the National Occupational Safety and Health Policy so as to address the emerging challenges in the place of work.

It also proposed to review the Registration of Associations Act with a view to improving the legal framework for the registration of associations and trade unions and the legal requirements for internal governance, in according with the best international regulatory practices.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the task of this Government is extremely tough, but not impossible. The challenge is not only to ensure proper implementation of the various measures proposed in this Budget, but we also have the delicate task to put some order in many of our parastatals and State enterprises where *le gaspillage* was the order of the day.

We have to put them back on rail so that they can effectively contribute to the development of the country.

This Government has unveiled its first Budget in line with its electoral promises which set out a vision to enhance prosperity and to establish a foundation for greater equity and social justice. The measures outlined in the Budget are designed to stimulate economic growth and employment in all sectors, particularly in the SME sector. It has also unleashed opportunities for all stakeholders with a strong focus on immediate growth driven by the rapidly implementable megaprojects, without forgetting the social imperatives.

Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have all the reasons to believe that ultimately we would be able to achieve the Second Economic Miracle.

I thank you all for your attention.

(6.43 p.m.)

Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me take the opportunity of this speech to congratulate my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, for the Budget he presented to this House in March 2015.

The crossroad, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where Mauritius was standing at a very low growth and a very high unemployment rate, where social justice was only an illusion and the truth about the economy of Mauritius was only the hidden agenda of the former Government. Maybe, I should say there was no agenda at all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I stood as candidate in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West. I have been elected there to serve the people. Unfortunately, this constituency has been neglected for many years. I cannot continue my speech without mentioning that the MMM was ruling at large in this constituency at Parliament as well as Municipal level. “*Dépôt fixe*” that was the consideration of the MMM until the result was proclaimed on 11 December where *dépôt fixe fine cassé*. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we strongly believe that soon we will clean up the municipalities with all the *carapates* as well.

M. le président, les mesures annoncées dans ce budget ne peuvent que réjouir la population que l'Alliance *Lepep* œuvre pour le bien-être de tous les habitants. Les mesures annoncées viendront assouplir la misère et la souffrance que subissent les mandants depuis

tant d'années. Je vais maintenant commenter sur certains points de ce budget qui touche directement à ma circonscription.

13 mégaprojets ! Pas un, pas deux, pas trois mais 13 mégaprojets, M. le président! Des milliers d'emplois vont être créés et cela va redynamiser le secteur de la construction, ce secteur, M. le président, qui a subi une baisse considérable depuis 2011. Nombreux sont les habitants de ma circonscription qui sont maçons, aide maçons, contracteurs ou qui travaillent directement avec des compagnies de construction. Je ne peux que me réjouir devant ce prochain vaste chantier de développement. Je remercie le ministre des Finances et du Développement économique.

Our SMEs in the constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, have been left by themselves for so many years. With the ambition to empower more citizens to become entrepreneurs and the goodwill of the Government to create a *nation d'entrepreneurs*, I must say we have now taken the right path at this crossroad to move into a better, safer and greener Mauritius.

M. le président, je suis aussi très satisfait de la décision de ce gouvernement de promouvoir la production d'énergie verte pour une île Maurice durable dans le vrai sens du terme. De plus, je convie les sincères remerciements des mandants au Vice-premier ministre et ministre des Utilités publiques pour l'abandon du projet CT Power qui était une épée de Damoclès sur notre tête.

Several regions in our constituency do not have a proper waste water system. In the Budget, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development mentioned that Rs3 billion will be invested by June 2018 on this matter. We trust that due consideration will be given in regions like Pailles and Pointe-aux-Sables to provide a better, proper sewerage system to the inhabitants.

Autre mesure, M. le président, qui réjouit les habitants de ma circonscription est l'accès à l'eau potable. En projetant de remplacer les tuyaux défectueux, le gouvernement donne un signal fort que les attentes du peuple pour pouvoir avoir de l'eau potable ne sont plus des rêves mais des rêves qui deviendront réalité très prochainement. L'eau c'est la vie ! Je remercie le ministre des Finances et du Développement économique pour ce beau geste de comprendre la souffrance du peuple et mettre les moyens nécessaires pour remédier à la situation.

Le rapport de la Commission Justice et Paix publié par le Diocèse de Port Louis, paru en novembre 2014, est un document qui vient confirmer qu'il y a une augmentation des pauvres et de l'inégalité à l'île Maurice. Ce rapport démontre que les pauvres sont devenus pauvres année après année. Il faut reconnaître que ce n'est pas possible à une famille touchant

R 6,200 par mois de se nourrir, de s'acquitter des loyers, des factures d'électricité, d'eau et d'autres dépenses nécessaires. Le *Household Budget Survey* de 2012 estime que le seuil de pauvreté pour une famille de quatre personnes est de R 13,330 par mois. La famille moyenne dépense environ R 6,540 en mois pour se nourrir.

M. le président, pour aider à combattre la pauvreté, le ministre des Finances et de Développement économique a proposé à la Chambre le concept du parrainage du Plan Marshall contre la pauvreté. Ce même concept sera un atout majeur à court et à long terme pour pouvoir améliorer les conditions de vie tout en combattant le fléau qui touche notre société. L'élimination du *guideline* permettra aux ONGs de bénéficier d'aide du *CSR* pour pouvoir continuer leur travail sur le terrain et, en même temps, aider à combattre la pauvreté. À Pointe-aux-Sables, à la Tour Koenig, Pailles, Grande Rivière, Richelieu, Plaine Lauzun, Cité Vallijee, il y a des centaines de compagnies qui sont établies. Je fais un appel à ces compagnies contribuant au *CSR* de contribuer au développement de la localité. Soixante pour cent des cas reportés au *Citizens Advice Bureau* de Pointe-aux-Sables et Résidence Vallijee concernent les demandes de logements sociaux. Nombreux sont les attentes des mandants pour pouvoir avoir un logement décent pour abriter leur famille. Ces pères et mères de familles se battent depuis des années pour bénéficier des logements sociaux mis à la disposition par le gouvernement.

On note dans le budget que la superficie des maisons sera augmentée de 39 m² à 50 m², ce qui va offrir un espace plus convivial aux bénéficiaires. Je demanderai au ministre concerné de bien vouloir prendre en considération l'attente des habitants de ma circonscription lorsque les 1,000 maisons seront construites ainsi que les 700 autres logements sociaux sous la NEF. Je remercie le Vice-premier ministre, l'honorable Soodhun pour la garantie qu'il a donnée à la Chambre que certaines de ces maisons seront construites dans ma circonscription et je reste convaincu de la transparence de son ministère à la distribution des maisons par ordre de priorité et de méritocratie.

M. le président, en voyant la situation aggravante de la montée des jeux du hasard, j'accueille favorablement les mesures prises pour promouvoir la nation entrepreneurs au lieu de continuer avec la nation *zougadère*. Ceci dit, M. le président, je me réjouis de ne plus voir les gens gratter les cartes dans l'espoir de devenir millionnaire. Je me réjouis de constater que le ministre des Finances et du Développement économique a pris le devant pour responsabiliser la nation vis-à-vis de l'entreprenariat au lieu de vivre dans l'illusion.

Dans la même foulée, la réduction des intérêts sur les crédits viendra assouplir les forts taux d'intérêt que subissent ces achats et, en même temps, améliorer le pouvoir d'achat

parmi les habitants. Ceci viendra réduire considérablement les dettes domestiques de nombreuses familles. Je suis d'avis que ces mesures vont protéger les droits des consommateurs et que *l'Ombudsperson on Financial Institutions* sera un chien de garde contre les abus des frais bancaires pratiqués par certaines banques commerciales.

M. le président, une attention spéciale est donnée aux femmes et aux enfants en détresse dans ce budget. Le recrutement du personnel à la *CDU* vient renforcer l'effectif des gens en place et va rassurer la population que la *CDU* sera plus efficiente pour traiter les nombreux cas des enfants dans le besoin.

Pour conclure, je souhaiterais dédier ce budget au peuple mauricien. C'est un budget de relance, un budget qui va assouplir la misère et la souffrance du peuple. Je remercie le vice-Premier ministre, le *Deputy Prime Minister* et l'honorable Premier ministre pour leur volonté à bâtir une île Maurice meilleure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say it loud, I love my country, I love Mauritius. I strongly believe in the performance of the Government and I am proud to be part of the architects who will rebrand our country leading to a second *miracle économique*. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(6.52 p.m.)

Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Although I know that it is customary for the next orator to comment on the speech of hon. Armance, I pray your indulgence and that of the House that I may do that later.

I first have a few points to clarify on a statement that the hon. Hurreeram made on my person during his speech on the Appropriation Bill. We now know how sharp and accurate his intervention, his observations can be. Hon. Ameer Meea mentioned elaborately on that earlier. According to hon. Hurreeram, I have returned a *zéro bilan* at the Head of *Maurice Ile Durable*.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I must beg to differ for it is an undeniable fact that it is under the *MID* initiative that we are today producing electricity from the sun, wind and waste on a commercial basis in this country.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please continue!

Mr Mahomed: And that there are many more to come from the many contracts that we have already signed, about 70 MW worth of them by the previous Government in the

wake of the *MID* project. For this Government, *MID* may be officially dead and buried, but these projects have some of its children who are alive and kicking.

The Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Collendavelloo, in his earlier speech has listed some of the benefits that we are currently reaping from *MID*. Indeed, I was pleased to hear the following from him, and I quote –

“It is the addition of the little by little that makes us become energy sufficient.”

Is this a *zéro bilan*? Without wishing to resurrect the past, I feel bound to add, to correct the record that it is in line with our efforts on *MID*, as hon. Minister Dayal stated so proudly in this august Assembly, that some 59,000 families benefitted a solar water heater from the *MID* Fund and that besides the environmental and social benefits, there are economic savings as well, Rs54 m. per year. The Scheme has a simple payback period of 2.7 years. 2.7 years! Now, where else could you find that kind of return? So, let us not throw the baby of *MID* with the bathwater of the old regime. The outcome of *MID* remains a valuable gift to the nation and I am pleased to see that the new Government is reaping some of the rewards of this long-term investment in the interest of the people of this country. We have just heard today the contribution of *MID* to the agricultural sector and that at the Samoa Conference.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2011, we expanded our vision of what could be taken on board on the flagship of *MID*. We moved beyond a focus on energy and embraced the broader social remit of the 5Es: Energy, Environment, Employment, Education and Equity.

Hon. Dayal rightly said it. Without equity, sustainable development is a vain word. By equity, we mean a fair distribution of the benefits and of the costs. In socialist terms, that has been succinctly put as ‘to each according to his needs from each according to his means’.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I add that these benefits of our studies and wide-ranging consultations in the pursuit of sustainable development remain on offer, carefully gift wrapped with the technical support and backing of the UNDP and the *Agence française de développement* in the form of a Policy Strategy and Action Plan. May I add that, by October 2014 - just before I stepped out to become candidate in this election - nearly two-thirds of the action proposed was already being implemented, with some having already been completed.

Now, this is truly no zero *bilan*!

For the record and, with your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to table both the *Maurice Ile Durable* Policy Strategy and Action Plan and the *MID* Progress Report as at October 2014 - which I would like now to table - which I hope will enable the new Government, fully committed to sustainable development as a core policy, to get off to a

flying start in the further elaboration of the Budget process, the allocation of funds and in the engagement of the private sector in these ventures for the benefit of the people.

This is not pie in the sky. For those who wish to follow up these ideas - and I commend hon. Hurreeram to do so - they will find that the European Union has already planned the disbursement of Euros 3 million (meaning Rs120 m.) under the Global Climate Change Alliance for the implementation of the *MID* Action Plan. Additionally, the European Union was insisting on inserting an *MID* Policy Indicator for the disbursement of a fixed tranche of Euros 15 million (approximately Rs600 m.) given that the EU considers that the *MID* Policy and Action Plan is an important reform which is stated not only locally, but in international fora. Indeed, at the UN SIDS Conference in Samoa in 2014 where the *MID* Commission hosted the Mauritius pavilion, the only non-commercial pavilion besides that of Samoa, Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), who inaugurated the pavilion stated the following, and I quote -

“Mauritius has become a model for sustainable development with its *Maurice Ile Durable* Programme”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I now pass on to some other issues raised in the Budget and in the current debate.

First, Land Management. It has been announced that the *Morcellement* Act will be amended to expedite the processing of *morcellement* permits.

Yet, according to the Environment Statistics of 2011, the built-up area combined with infrastructure already stood at some 27% of the total land area of this country in 2005. By world standards, this figure is very high. In some European countries, for example, the built-up area is limited to 15%. The official statistics of 2005 means that this figure of urban blight is now much higher given the number of *morcellements*, IRS, RES, housing and road infrastructure developments that have occurred in the last ten years.

What is Government’s long-term strategy for building? Do they intend us to end up like Malta, with concrete from shore to shore? What is our target? What is best suited to a small island State, where most people live happily with their families in villages surrounded by open fields? What do we need to conserve to continually attract tourism and to become self-sufficient on food? These issues need to be more carefully examined. The true value of land is not what we sell it for housing, but the provision of essential environmental services that it offers. The real value of the remaining unbuilt land is in clean air, in its function for the provision of ground water, in its habitat for pollinators for growing fruits and vegetables and in its use for leisure, sports and the pleasure of silence and solitude.

The fundamental truth is that the sustainable future of Mauritius depends on conserving its limited land stock for food security, energy, climate change mitigation for water provision, be it green space, for precipitation or from ground water sources. 50% of the water we consume comes from underground water sources, and excessive development will pollute the quality of water available to the people now, our children and our grandchildren. This is a serious issue buried in the Budget.

Do we really need more *morcellements*? If you look at those we have, there is a surplus. Moreover, many of the lots on them have been left undeveloped for years or have been built on and left vacant as mere repositories of value, yet at the same time undermining the quality of our environment and vital ecosystems. Our children are learning about this at school in environmental studies. May I suggest, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we start to mug up on it too. This delinquent urban sprawl is visible all over the island. The abandoned building plots and the tatty unoccupied houses is not merely an eyesore, but a source of nuisance as well and also a key of the gap in our vision for a sustainable future. So are we going to encourage building more *morcellements* for speculation purposes?

Instead of going for more *morcellements*, we should make a fresh assessment of our real needs for land use and put it in the equation of the ecological value of land. If we are still convinced there is a demand for such homes, first we should have fiscal measures to create disincentives to worthless unoccupied buildings, and then where there is a real need for living space, construct vertically inland and only below the tree line on the coast.

I will now touch on water. I am wondering whether the provision of 6 m³ free to all households, although on the face of it seems attractive, is really in the interests of conserving water in a land of water scarcity.

In my case, this will amount to a savings of Rs48 a month. When something is given free, people tend to use it irresponsibly. I am just fearful people will start using water as if there is no tomorrow - there could be other ways of doing it - at a time when consumption is already on the rising.

Last week, California Governor Jerry Brown ordered officials there to impose state-wide mandatory water restrictions for the first time in their history, as surveyors found the lowest snow level in the Sierra Nevada. Now, Mauritius does not possess these reserves of water in snow-capped mountains. Every year, when it does not rain, we are in big trouble!

Are we investing massively in more reservoirs for people to waste water? Catchment areas are being reduced with each passing day in this country, with the creation of more

underused *morcellements* and now the 7,000 acres adversely allocated for the so-called smart cities. This will affect rainfall pattern and our groundwater quality.

And smart cities – any cities, any urban expansion means more roads, more cars, more dissection of the essential ecology, more pollution of the air and the land. The lack of a strategy for land management as a backdrop to the Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a real sustainability issue, especially now that the Light Rail Transit project has been shelved.

An hon. Member earlier stated in this House, and I quote –

“Notre planète est en détresse”.

He is not wrong. Bit by bit action being taken in this Budget adds up to more stress on our environment and that it is without considering the real inescapable future impact of climate change, which is really upon us now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this country needs not just a land strategy but also a water strategy which is based on economical use and conservation. A case in point is that of free agricultural water. None or very few estates and planters have adopted wide scale drip water feeding, which has high merits on water economy, simply because they do not have any compelling reasons to do so. Much of the water gushing out of those overhead irrigation systems is wasted through evaporation.

Industry and agriculture use 70% of our scarce water. Now, let us examine the policy of concealed subsidies and the impact these have on wasteful use.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now turn to the part of the Budget that deals with energy. We have industrial and manufacturing sectors where there is very little incentive to encourage resource efficiency, be it on water or even energy. These are really low-hanging fruits to improve competitiveness in enterprises.

We find in the Budget no measures at all to convert our grid, and to quote the hon. Minister of Energy, which is a “dumb” grid into a smart one to accommodate the huge proposed entry of renewable energy in there. In his reply to my additional question on the PNQ on Electricity of last week, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities has stated that, the Government hopes all these smart cities will be self-sufficient insofar as energy is concerned.

A smart grid is a *sine qua non* requirement for that to become a reality given the intermittent nature of renewable energy. And what about extending that from the smart cities to smart villages so the bulk of ordinary households have a chance to be in on the savings as well?

Now about ethanol which is part of the energy chapter, it was mentioned in the Presidential Address but does not appear in the Budget. I look forward to a policy statement on that one.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in his speech the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities mentioned that coal can be of zero emission. I just don't believe that, but I, for one, would be more worried about the coal ash disposal. This is a real sustainability issue which will contaminate our land and, hence, affect the quality of the food we grow and our groundwater supply. Business as usual is not an option here.

Insofar as social housing is concerned, there are some good measures there. However, I am informed that tenders were launched prior to the general elections for the construction of some 550 housing units at Chebel, Quatre Cocos, Camp Ithier, Sebastopol, Beau Bois and also some 142 service plots as well. These are mainly being built on land that the previous Government had negotiated with the sugar industry. I hope the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands will clarify whether the announced 1,000 units for 2015 will be over and above those launched by the previous Government.

As regards plastic bags, I think this is a bold initiative which needs to be commended. The only challenge we were facing in the past, was how to allow households to do away with their home waste in properly closed bags, disposed in the bins that have been distributed. Plastic bags are one element here and a more crucial one is the separation of waste. Let us hope that the bag ban is the first step in a new era of strategic waste management and not a half-baked gesture.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with my experience of the evidence based for sustainable development, I welcome many of the elements in the Budget that touch on this. But I also remain hopeful that the Government might begin to fashion a real strategy which joins up the dots. They could do worse than starting with the *MID* Policy Strategy and Action Plan which I have just tabled.

I thank you for your attention.

(7.11 p.m.)

At this stage, Madam Speaker took the Chair.

The Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands (Mr P. Koonjoo): Madam Speaker, I would start with, like most of the Members, if not all the Members on this side of the House have done, by congratulating the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development and his technical and consultative team for the innovative ideas and effort put in towards the achievement of this exceptional working

document. I would also like to highlight that the inspiration and motivation of our Rt. hon. Prime Minister has contributed significantly in putting the pieces together and to produce the vision and major strategies contained therein and reflecting naturally the manifesto of *L'alliance Lepep*.

There is a unanimous feel good factor within the population outside that the Budget has touched immediate and short-term needs of one and all. Madam Speaker, the document contains serious commitments covering relevant aspects of the legislative framework that need action and regulations, such as combating crime, drug abuse, domestic violence, gaming syndrome, wage policy, tax administration, finance, and incentives and interest relief. It is with a great sense of satisfaction that the population is welcoming the strategies for ensuring transparency, accountability and good governance. There is no doubt that, these measures, together with the support of the forthcoming Civil Service College, will improve the performance output in the public sector and parastatal bodies. It is hoped that coordinating agencies of the private sector will also take appropriate steps to satisfy the aspirations of its workforce, improve efficiency and overall companies output through better transparency, productivity and good governance, and I have no doubt about this.

Madam Speaker, indeed, Mauritius is at a crossroad and faces challenges on various fronts. On the domestic front, since 2005, the growth rate has been below past trends, averaging 3.0 per cent per annum, with an unemployment rate of 7.8 per cent. In 2014, the current account deficit and the trade deficit have been as high as 10.3 per cent of GDP and 19.9 per cent of GDP respectively.

The previous Government has been inactive while facing the erosion of our trade preferences and stalling global economy. Our vulnerability is being intensified as the drivers influencing economic activity are changing. This is the first reason.

Secondly, we have to grapple with, among others, geographical remoteness from established markets, small domestic market, effects of climate change and food and energy insecurity.

And thirdly, a crucial requirement is filling the inadequacy in highly skilled technicians and professionals, to help drive emerging economic sectors such as ICT, ocean economy, biotechnology, manufacturing electronics, robotics, nanotechnology and the shipping and sea transport industry. It is in this context that this Budget has been designed.

On the economic front, we can note that emergence of new growth poles, such as –

- the creation of 13 megaprojects;

- consolidation of SMEs strategies for making “*Ile Maurice, une Nation d’Entrepreneurs*”, through the creation of SME Bank, and the setting-up of a comprehensive one-stop shop;
- reform to the ICT sector and development of biotechnology parks;
- development of the Port Louis Harbour into a regional hub, and
- development of the ocean economy.

Madam Speaker, permit me now to highlight on the policies and operational activities of my Ministry.

The Mauritian economy, including that of Rodrigues, depends heavily not only on the inland resources and lagoons, but also on the ocean. The ocean supplies thousands of jobs, as well as support related industries that contribute to the national Gross Domestic Product. As a new economic pillar, the current Government is laying much emphasis on the ocean economy as an important sector to sustain economic diversification, job creation, wealth generation and benefit - naturally everybody, especially all income groups. Indeed the creation of a Ministry dedicated to the ocean economy is instrumental in addressing the challenges concerning fisheries, aquaculture, land-based oceanic industry, non-living marine resources and shipping development.

The thrust of our strategic direction depends on the following, namely -

- (i) setting-up of the appropriate regulatory framework for the ocean economy;
- (ii) promotion of marine research, innovation and sustainable ocean development;
- (iii) promotion of innovative SMEs in the sector;
- (iv) addressing the skills gap in the sector;
- (v) introducing appropriate incentive schemes;
- (vi) improving our ocean health index;
- (vii) promotion of the ocean sector as a linchpin for our vision of high income level country, and last but not least,
- (viii) inclusiveness and international cooperation.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry proposes to embark on the ocean economy in a planned and systematic manner. You would agree with me that no serious and responsible Government can contemplate developing the ocean economy without a Strategic Plan.

In this connection, Government has signed an MoU with the Republic of India during the official visit of His Excellency, Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of

India to Mauritius in March to promote cooperation in the development of the ocean economy during the period 2015-2019.

Furthermore, my Ministry is seeking technical assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat for consultancy services for the elaboration of a National Ocean Economy Strategic Plan as well as the setting-up of a National Ocean Economy Council, National Ocean Authority and enactment of an Ocean Economy Act to give legal force to our initiatives.

Madam Speaker, before embarking on the strategic fit of this crucial sector, it is important to note that the fishermen community is facing several constraints and challenges.

My Ministry is according high priority to the sustainable development of the artisanal fisheries subsector, because of its crucial role in providing employment opportunities and protein diet to some 4,000 householders in the marginal coastal region.

It is being planned to increase the supply of fish products through commercial aquaculture. In the short-term, my Ministry is aiming to create opportunities in the development of fish farms in our lagoons and inland.

Fisheries and related activities contribute approximately to 1.6 per cent of GDP, with a workforce that nears 13,000. Total export for fish and fish products which accounted for 22.0 per cent of the national export in 2014 was estimated at Rs13.9 billion, which emanated mainly from the processing of imported fish. Total imports of fish and fish products (mainly frozen and canned) amounted to Rs10.3 billion, thus resulting in a positive trade balance of some Rs3.6 billion for 2013.

Madam Speaker, despite some progress made in the fisheries sector, much still remains to be done. My Ministry proposes to make the fisheries sector, principally industrial fishing sector, a major subsector of the economic development in the near future.

In this connection, a new Fisheries and Maritime Resources Bill will be introduced to ensure refined policies and best management practices. And, the first one of this is, naturally, aquaculture. Aquaculture is the fastest growing food production sector in the world, growing at an annual rate of 8.0-10.0 per cent. It is internationally acknowledged that the increased supply of fish products to meet demand will be sourced through aquaculture.

In this context, potential cage culture sites are being identified along the coasts, which would be leased to small scale entrepreneurs and fishermen cooperatives. Mechanisms will be sought to embark them on cage aquaculture jointly with the private sector. My Ministry would closely monitor these activities, and within the financial year 2015-2016, ten cage

culture platforms, free of charge, will be allocated to the fishermen community. Rs8 m. would be injected into the project, and some 200 direct additional jobs would be created.

There is a need to protect consumers, and ensure the sustainability of the industry. Without consumer confidence on the safety of fish as food, the demand can shrink, thus causing damage to the industry. Food safety and quality assurance are, therefore, key elements for access to the international market. With a view of ensuring food safety, a National Aquatic Animal Health Strategy would be elaborated by the Competent Authority-Seafood.

Training in fish handling, preservation and marketing for quality and safety of seafood, in line with international norms, will be provided to fishers and fish processors.

To accompany fishermen communities to engage in fish cage farming, comprehensive technical support will be provided through training in cage culture techniques. Fingerlings will be provided free of cost in the initial phase. To support the development of aquaculture and enhance infrastructure, modern jetties and slipways will be constructed at fish landing stations.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry, through research and development, will redynamize the aquaculture industry. Research will be carried out to improve the growth, productivity, competitiveness and environmental sustainability of aquaculture, including offshore aquaculture. Such research would also spearhead the development of sea ranching for culture of octopus, sea-cucumbers, prawns, oysters, seaweeds, pearl and crab farming.

Furthermore, my Ministry would restock the lagoon areas with some two million fingerlings of *siganus* which we call normally *cordonnier* and *gueule pavé* for the benefit of the artisanal fishermen, as well as for stock enhancement of the lagoon ecosystem. Protection of the coral reef, and coral reef farming are not being neglected, as it serves as living and feeding habitat for lagoon fish.

So far as the offshore fisheries are concerned, my Ministry will impart specialised training to fishermen, including those using fish aggregating devices, to enable them to fish further offshore, using long lines, and target species other than tuna fish. Fishermen, following this training, would be provided with a stipend of Rs300 per day.

The training will also include placement of FADs. The fishermen community will be provided with FAD's for placement themselves, and this will be monitored by my Ministry.

My Ministry would ensure that twenty-eight FADs are active and operational throughout the year, through regular maintenance and replacement of lost FADs. Rs3 m. are earmarked for the procurement of FAD's.

Since fishermen will be required to travel further offshore and stay longer at sea, safety equipment like hand-flares, radar reflectors, life jackets, life rafts, first aid box and fire extinguishers, and also fluorescent tarpaulins to improve security and safety at sea will be provided free of cost. A sum of Rs1.5 m. has been earmarked under the Budget from January to June 2015, and Rs2.5 m. in 2015-2016.

Moreover, to enable fishermen to operate in the off-lagoon areas - I hope the Member of the Opposition, hon. Barbier, who asked me is there - a 50% grant on the purchase of “*canottes*” up to an amount of Rs200,000 per “*canotte*” would be allocated. A sum of Rs5 m. would be allocated for a total of 25 “*canottes*” to start with.

Training will also be provided to skippers, for fishing boats of less than 24 m. in length, with a view to addressing the shortage of skippers for the maintaining of these boats. A first batch of twenty fishers would be enrolled in the skippers’ course starting very soon.

My Ministry is very sensitive to the outcry of fishermen regarding damage and loss of gears due to weather vagaries which cost a fortune for the vulnerable groups. We would arrange to relieve them through the provision of wires, free of cost, to construct basket traps for their daily subsistence.

A budgetary provision of Rs2 m. has been made for the procurement of wires for outward distribution to fishers, for the construction of basket-traps; as loss of the latter have been reported to Fisheries during bad weather days.

Turning to sea food industry now, Madam Speaker, the present national fish production of 15,000 tonnes is expected to increase by twenty-five per cent by the end of 2016.

At present, the EU is the main export market for fish and fish products for Mauritius. Promoting aquaculture production and meeting the requirements of international markets for aquaculture products, would therefore spearhead diversification in the fisheries sector, and help an increase in growth.

In the quest to prospect other markets for our fishers, bilateral/multilateral cooperation to accede to new markets and expand trade opportunities for fish processing and export would be prospected. Japanese, Chinese and Russian markets are now within the reach of our seafood operators. Export of canned tuna to New Caledonia is being explored.

We would also be carrying out studies with the help of overseas assistance to examine how we can attract international fishing companies to land their catch for processing and transshipment from Port Louis; and equally promote development of new fish processing factories. In the medium-term, a second fishing port can be probably accommodated within the proposed port expansion plan which the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has mentioned.

This can be supported by the fact that development of the port area from Grand River North West to Baie du Tombeau would be the much needed catalyst to spearhead innovation and valorisation, and also harbinger micro enterprises which will be the key elements of competitiveness in the fishing industry. SMEs would gravitate around the development, to ensure a better adequacy between fish supply and the real need of the fish market.

Currently, fish transhipped in Mauritius Port has reached 65,000 tonnes. The anticipated expansion of the Port Area will, no doubt, double transshipment within the next five years, as well as justify for a second fishing port, and new shipyard facilities for ship repair, maintenance and refurbishment.

Madam Speaker, I wish to make fisheries a model of sustainability, and enable effective integration at the international, regional and national level. We will thus focus on SADC, COMESA, EU, US, Asian and Middle East markets. In this endeavour, bilateral cooperation will also be pursued with Brazil, Gabon, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mayotte, Mozambique, Seychelles, and Tanzania.

Mauritius relies heavily, Madam Speaker, on the sea transportation for its import of goods. It also provides intermediate service in the production process of the industrial, agricultural and manufacturing sectors. High maritime connectivity has proved to be important for our global competitiveness. As liberalisation continues to reduce artificial barriers, the effective rate of protection provided by transport costs is now higher than the one provided by tariffs. Today, high maritime connectivity has enabled the ailing sugar sector to move to higher value added activities such as refinery. Taking cognizance of the importance of logistics in economic development, it should be noted that the development of industrial fisheries in the ocean economic context would be largely influenced by the competitiveness of port logistics.

Port Louis has become an important transshipment hub after Durban, and has improved maritime connectivity, enabling us to compete for markets. However, we must always be on our lookout, as hub ports are at the mercy of the ocean carriers they serve. This business segment is facing competitive pressure from regional ports, as regional capacity might be ahead of demand, following major expansion strategies undertaken in recent years. This situation could intensify our transshipment volatility and thus impact negatively on our maritime connectivity.

Over and above policies and challenges facing the sector regarding the volatility of transshipment activities, my Ministry would promote Mauritius as a decoupling location to integrate the global supply chain system and attract global shippers to reduce our reliance on footloose shipping lines.

Despite our effort, Madam Speaker, to improve our trade logistics, in particular our maritime connectivity, it is still being felt that much remains to be done. The World Bank has emphasised in its report of 2014, that in this respect, Mauritius is currently lagging behind middle income countries, due to lack of appropriate infrastructure and competence in modern logistics. Consequently, our logistics performance index has been downgraded from 72th position in 2012 to 115th position in 2014.

In view of international trade becoming transport intensive and time sensitive, the importance of good logistics performance for economic growth, diversification and poverty reduction is now firmly established in an increasingly liberalised world.

Madam Speaker, shipping development is high on the Government's agenda, as it helps to create jobs and also save jobs in a globally competitive market.

I would like to point out that the development of our shipping sector can create thousands of jobs for our unemployed youth, provided there is a vertical integration, supported by training and skills development. We have lessons to learn from countries such as Singapore, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Philippines, China and India. In the immediate, we are reviewing the performance of the Shipping Division, the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy and the Mauritius Shipping Corporation. Subsequently, we would have to make course corrections in their budgetary allocation and in line with the Ministry's strategic plan.

Madam Speaker, another import sector is about the registry of ships. An example is the case of the Ship Registry which has been much neglected over the past years. It is a mainstay of the shipping hub. My Ministry will spare no effort in developing this subsector as an important segment of the Ocean Economy.

The vision of my Ministry regarding the Shipping Sector is to attract high quality ships that would boost ancillary services, such as maritime financing, banking and insurance. It will also be an important source of employment opportunities to Mauritian seafarers.

In this connection, my Ministry will enhance the visibility of the Mauritius Ship Registry as a reliable and reputable flag on the international arena, with a view to attracting more ships to register under our flag.

Madam Speaker, another example is the case of maritime training. Most of our seamen are aged above fifty. There has been no succession planning in this discipline.

The Mauritius Maritime Training Academy, which functions under the aegis of my Ministry, is presently elaborating a comprehensive Training Strategy to enable greater access to employment by our youth in the Shipping Sector, including the cruise industry.

In this connection, our objective is to capture a bigger chunk of this market to provide new job opportunities for the young generation. For this purpose, my Ministry is planning, through the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy, to increase the number of seafarers to be trained by fivefold, during the period 2016. We thus hope to train a total of 2,000 seafarers. To achieve this target, my Ministry will provide the required human resources, logistics and equipment. On completion of the training, successful candidates will have the opportunity to secure employment on board cruise or passenger vessels as the certificates issued by Mauritius, enjoy worldwide recognition. It is worth noting that Mauritius is on the International Maritime Organisation White List.

Since the opportunities for employment on board cruise vessels are increasing, my Ministry will also consider authorising private sector or private service providers to deliver training on basic safety, in line with IMO convention and requirements.

Madam Speaker, in order to sensitize the young to get interested in maritime jobs, my Ministry proposes to organise an Open Day. This action will also indirectly address the problem of ageing seafaring elite in Mauritius.

My Ministry will also address the severe shortage of technical and professional staff and Pilots. Contacts have been established with the Faculty of Ocean studies at the University of Mauritius for joint action in this regard.

Madam Speaker, I have observed with much concern that there is a lack of qualified personnel in the fishing industry to serve on fishing vessels of 24 metres long and beyond. In this connection, my Ministry proposes to come up with a new training programme. It is proposed to conduct four classes in parallel, both in the navigation and engineering fields at the MMTA; the objective of which is to train a maximum of 200 persons per year.

Let me turn now towards the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. I seize this opportunity, Madam, to thank my colleague the Minister of Finance and Economic Development to put at the disposal of the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. fund for the chartering of M/V Anna for a period of six months. The hon. Minister has also agreed to finance the purchase of a new cargo-cum-passenger vessel to service Rodrigues and the Outer Islands as well as countries of the Indian Ocean region.

Following consultations, I recently had with the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, I am taking the following actions regarding the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd.-

- (i) I will ask the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms to carry out a forensic and financial audit of all transactions done by the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. during the past ten years, including the sale of M/V Mauritius Pride, all dry docking costs as well as the inception of Betamax project. It is good to note, Madam Speaker, that the egg of Betamax was laid there in the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd;
- (ii) a profound restructuring of the MSCL (financial, operational and Human Resource) under the direct supervision of the Chairman who was the Turnaround Project Leader at Rogers Group and has successfully re-engineered Rogers Shipping & Logistics as well as several major companies operating in the port and shipping sector of Mauritius, and
- (iii) following the return from dry docking of M/V Trochetia, Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. to implement a strategic action plan to make optimal use of both vessels at its disposal so as to considerably improve its services in the region, and also generate additional revenue to make it financially independent.

Now, I will turn towards Agalega. Madam Speaker, it is comforting to note that the Government in its Programme 2015-2019, *inter alia*, stated that it will equip Agalega with appropriate amenities, including an airstrip and a new jetty to improve accessibility and connectivity. It is also good to note that Rs750 m. provided as a financial grant by the Indian Government will be devoted for the construction of a new airstrip, new jetty facilities and other infrastructural development in Agalega. It is good to note also that it is the first time in the history of Agalega that such a huge amount of money is being involved in infrastructural development and this amount is being invested in two main activities which would enable Agalega to effectively take off in its socio-economic development.

Regarding port development, it is worth mentioning that the only infrastructure available is a jetty of 60 metres, which is more than 30 years old! I am speaking of Agalega again, Madam. Vessels anchor at approximately 400 m. from the shore and all goods as well as passengers disembark in the high sea into barges up to the jetty. This has been a very risky on-going activity. In this connection, Government proposes to construct a T-shape jetty, 150 m. long to accommodate the vessel at berth.

As far as the airstrip is concerned, provision has been made for a resurfacing to allow an ATR72 plane to land. At present, due to its very poor condition, there is no regular flight to Agalega. Flights are effected only for medical evacuation. The scope of work would, *inter alia*, consist of -

1. grading and re-profiling of the existing runway by 1,300 m x 30 m;
2. construction of two aircraft parking stands;
3. provision of a Navaid;
4. facilities for night flight as well;
5. provision of electrical power sources (primary and secondary) to include solar power facilities;
6. provision of aviation fuel storage facilities;
7. provision of airport rescue and fire fighting station and associated facilities;
8. provision also of a terminal building, and last, but not least,
9. provision of a control tower including communications equipment.

It is also relevant to note that the provision of Rs3.0 m. has been earmarked in the current Budget for the setting up of a Cold Room on North Island. This will enable better supply of foodstuff and safe storage between two voyages. Government also commits itself to improving internet connectivity with Agalega.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, let me now come to emerging economic sub-sectors. Emerging sectors such as deep water applications, marine biotechnology, ocean technology, including desalinization and marine renewable energy are areas that will also be focussed upon. In this context of energy security, my Ministry is looking forward to further diversify our energy mix. Ocean waves, tidal and non-tidal ocean flows, collectively known as Ocean Renewable Energy, are attracting increasing interest worldwide as a potentially viable source of renewable energy. Recent research suggests that wave energy alone can theoretically cover three-quarters of the total energy consumption of the European Union by 2030. Under such

scenario, we can envisage to rely less on fossil fuel, as marine renewable energy can amply contribute to our energy security and help in exceeding the planned target of 35 per cent of our electricity production from renewable resources in the long-term. Preliminary research on offshore Mauritius and Rodrigues has demonstrated encouraging results. My Ministry together with the relevant stakeholders would follow up this development.

Last, but not the least, Madam Speaker.

Mauritius Oceanography Institute

For hon. Members of this House who are new, I would like to inform them that the main aim of the Institute is to advise Government on the formulation of policies and programmes in respect of oceanography and related matters; and secondly, to disseminate the results of the research and importance of oceanography in the conservation, management, utilisation and development of marine and coastal ecosystem. I remember, last time in the House, I said that this was already found by our Rt. hon. Prime Minister long a time back in the 1980s.

The newly constituted Board will be reviewing the current activities of the Institute and bring reform to adapt to the research and development needs of an ocean economy, including shipping development and seafood industry, ocean technology and marine resources.

I would also like to inform the House that the construction of MOI building in Albion is on-going. The budget earmarked for the construction may exceed the budgeted estimates of Rs142 m. by Rs20 m. Due to absence of planning, the anticipated launching is expected to take place in July 2017. Capital estimates covering period July 2015 to July 2017 have been earmarked for infrastructure such as laboratory, physical facilities, laboratory equipment, furniture, sea water pumping, fit-out, covered parking, CWA and CEB underground installation.

However, my Ministry will endeavour to achieve the completion of the building and all infrastructures by the end of 2016. All steps will be taken for the timely installation of all laboratory equipment, amenities and services.

Madam Speaker, this Budget 2015-2016 will go down in history as one of the social and economic reconstruction after a decade of fraud, corruption and mismanagement. As the saying goes 'jackpot for some selected few, *la misère noire* for many.' We are confident, Madam Speaker, because we have got the conviction, we have got the vision, and we have got the desire to fulfill our promises to this *lepep admirable*. I thank them, the *lepep admirable*, for reversing the situation and voting our Rt. hon. Prime Minister as the next future Prime Minister.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one hour for dinner.

At 7.59 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.18 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW and Port Louis West): Madam Speaker, as I did not intervene during the debate on the Presidential Address, may I seize this opportunity to congratulate you for your election as Speaker of this august Assembly. In doing so, in giving you this opportunity of chairing this august Assembly the Government '*L'alliance Lepep*' makes you the first woman of this Mauritian Republic to occupy such an important position in our democracy and it is a positive signal to the country and to the whole world. I hope and I wish that all Members of this Assembly give you all the support and the due respect you deserve as the first lady Speaker of the Republic of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, I will seize this opportunity also to congratulate all newly elected Members of this National Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I personally have no big quarrel with this *budget de L'Alliance Lepep*, but I would like to express some *inquiétude* and I will expect some clarification also. First of all, let me reply to my friend, hon. Armance, who in his speech talked about the last 10 years, the recent past when the Constituency No. 1 have elected Members from the MMM party, which, I would say, unfortunately, I was one of the Members of the MMM. During the past 10 years we were not in power and the hon. Member knows well who were in power for the past 10 years.

May I just remind, *en passant*, the hon. Member that from 2000 to 2005 the MMM and the MSM alliance made so many projects in Constituency No. 1. Just to remind the hon. Member a few of them : *Ecole de pêche à Pointe-aux-Sables, terrain de football à La Tour Koenig, la foire de Pointe-aux-Sables - où le membre y va souvent. Il y a aussi la Cité Firinga, La Tourelle Housing Estate, Le Coquillage Housing Estate, le terrain de football de la Tour Koenig, Le Centre Polyvalent Emmanuel Anquetil à la Tour Koenig, le Richelieu Women Centre, le Richelieu parcours de santé, le basketball pitch toujours de Richelieu, le Centre Polyvalent à Pailles, la construction de la Cité Flamboyant pour remplacer les longères qu'il y avait à l'époque, the football ground at Camp Chapelon, sewage project in Richelieu, Cassis, Borstal, just to name a few realisation of the MMM/MSM alliance from 2000 to 2005. Je voulais quand même amener certaines précisions for the sake of the record.*

Madam Speaker, as I have just said, I don't have a big quarrel with this Budget but I think some clarification is needed on the part of my good friend, the hon. Minister of Finance

and Economic Development, who, unfortunately, is not in the House today. The hon. Minister of Finance, at page 2 of the Budget Speech, gives us a very important figure on our trade deficit and the current account deficit which are Rs76.8 billion and Rs39.6 billion respectively. It represents 19.9% and 10.3% of our GDP.

Madame la présidente, c'est une situation extrêmement inquiétante. Comment et pourquoi sommes-nous arrivés à cette situation économique que je dirais dangereuse ? On peut engager un très long débat rien que sur cette question, mais le plus important c'est de se demander comment renverser cette situation, sans compter que les dettes publiques frôlent actuellement la limite autorisée pour qu'on puisse rester économiquement fiable.

Madame la présidente, quoique c'est un budget politiquement correcte, qui donne de l'espoir, qui rassure, qui crée le *good feeling factor*, - tant attendu - je dirai que c'est très bien. C'est très important comme signal lors d'une présentation du budget parce que, quand même il faut gagner d'abord ce combat au niveau psychologique. C'est très important. Mais dans les faits, du point de vue technico financière, je reste sur mes gardes. Le ministre ne nous dit pas concrètement comment adresser ce lourd *trade deficit*, *current account deficit* ou même le déficit de la dette publique. Il nous faut chercher les réponses, Madame la présidente, à travers les différentes propositions budgétaires qui ne nous donnent pas de réponses à court terme. Est-ce que cela veut dire que le ministre vise dans le long terme ou même dans le très long terme ? Le ministre lui-même se dit optimisme, mais il est lui-même inquiet quand il prévoit une situation économique mondiale non favorable.

Permettez-moi de citer, avec votre permission, ce que dit le ministre à la page 3 au paragraphe 13 de son discours du budget, je cite –

« However, there are risks and uncertainties at the global level. Deflation is looming. Growth is fading. The outlook for the global economy is rather grim. Any major black swan event can and will play havoc in the world economy, and affect us negatively”.

Ce sont les mots mêmes de l'honorable ministre des Finances et du Développement économique quand il parle de la situation économique au niveau mondial. Madame la présidente, ce paragraphe exprime le fond même de la pensée du ministre par rapport au challenge qui nous attend au niveau de l'économie mondiale.

Madame la présidente, ce paragraphe en dit beaucoup de la préoccupation actuelle de notre ministre des Finances et du Développement économique. Avant de fixer ses objectifs pour ce budget, le ministre lui-même se pose plusieurs questions aux pages 4 et 5 du *Budget Speech*, et je suis d'accord avec le ministre quand il dit qu'on est à la croisée des chemins.

J'aimerais ajouter encore quelques questions à notre réflexion sur ce budget pour, je dirais, élargir le débat par rapport aux problèmes économiques réels qui se posent actuellement au niveau régional et international. Ce sont des questions sérieuses, mais j'aimerais aussi poser d'autres questions, par exemple -

- (1) Jusqu'où allons-nous laisser le *dumping* des produits venant de l'Asie, en particulier de la Chine, sur le marché mauricien ?
- (2) Sommes-nous obligés de pratiquer ou d'implémenter une politique de non-imposition de tarifs douaniers dans le long terme quoi que c'est une des raisons de notre *trade deficit* ? N'y a-t-il pas là un élément, un fait qui pourrait être revu au niveau de l'organisation mondiale du commerce ?
- (3) N'est-il pas le moment d'essayer de contrôler l'importation ou du moins de freiner la consommation des produits importés ?
- (4) Comment augmenter substantiellement l'exportation des produits locaux à court et à moyen terme ?
- (5) Le gouvernement ne devrait-il pas subventionner et assister ceux qui se lancent dans le secteur manufacturier à des fins d'exportation ?
- (6) Est-ce que nous ne manquons pas d'agressivité et de constance dans notre quête d'exploiter d'autres marchés des économies émergentes ?
- (7) Ou même, je me permets de dire, qu'avons-nous profité jusqu'à maintenant du point de vue économique de notre appartenance à la *SADC* et d'autres zones économiques régionales ?

Bien sûr, on peut y aller comme ça, il y en a beaucoup d'autres questions mais il nous faut quand même pouvoir aussi penser sur l'exploitation optimale de notre zone économique exclusive qui, d'après moi, est un de nos plus grands atouts vers lequel on doit se tourner impérativement : la mer, l'économie bleue, *ocean economy* qui, jusqu'ici, n'est qu'un rêve ou même par rapport au port de Mahebourg dont j'ai toujours entendu l'écho des différents discours mais il nous faut prendre au sérieux cette possibilité d'exploiter économiquement à fond notre économie bleue. Le ministre de la pêche en a touché rapidement sur ce propos mais je pense que ça dépasse largement le ministère de la pêche. Il faudrait que ce soit un projet beaucoup plus vaste, beaucoup plus large et que le gouvernement doit donner beaucoup plus d'attention à cette possibilité d'exploitation qui pourrait éventuellement apporter beaucoup plus dans l'économie mauricienne et combler ce lourd déficit de notre balance commerciale.

Je pense qu'il nous faut évidemment exploiter toutes ces nouvelles possibilités économiques durables. Nous devons accélérer nos efforts par rapport aux recherches des possibilités de nos ressources marines. Encourager la production des produits de qualité, c'est très important pour pouvoir insérer le marché international. Pour pouvoir y accéder, il nous faut quand même rehausser le niveau de nos produits surtout dans le secteur manufacturier. C'est très important. L'île Maurice ne peut pas rivaliser avec les produits de bas de gamme. Donc, c'est impossible parce que nous avons quand même un coût de production qui est nettement supérieur aux pays asiatiques tels que la Chine, Malaisie, l'Indonésie, l'Inde, entre autres. Mais nous pouvons quand même former, encadrer, faire la promotion et acquérir de nouveaux marchés, subventionner nos PME dans un premier temps et gagner des dividendes nationaux dans le long terme. Il nous faut freiner ou arrêter la conversion de nos terres arables et encourager d'autres types de plantations susceptibles d'être exportées pour un apport supplémentaire en devises étrangères.

La sécurité alimentaire mondiale est une préoccupation dans le moyen et long terme. Donc, ne perdons pas de temps et ne perdons pas aussi des terres qui sont sous culture à des fins pour être transformées ou converties en des terres commerciales. Cela nous rapportera des bénéfices à court terme mais dans le long terme j'en doute, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker, the project of smart cities will generate growth in the economy for sure, but it will stimulate the economy only in the short-term. We need to have a vision for the economy to be sustainable in the long-term. We can have a look, Madam Speaker, at the shopping malls which are flourishing here and there in the country. It is encouraging us to become more and more *une société de consommateurs* and what is worst is that foreign products are preferred, exposed and promoted more than local products. We should not be surprised that this new phenomena is contributing a lot to our trade deficit.

Just imagine what will happen with these smart cities if we go ahead in the same direction with the same type of products, same *société de consommateurs*? Its setting will improve our GDP in the short-term, but once completed with the development or even promote the occidental culture of living, I doubt, for the long-term. We may have a more difficult economic situation, especially on our balance of trade, as I just mentioned. Developing our economy is one thing but developing a sustainable economy is something else. I am most in favour of the development of the technopoles. I am fully for this type of development which, according to me, will bring more wealth to the country and will give employment to our fellow countrymen, and will have a long-term and sustainable income through the technopoles. So, I have a preference for the technopoles which, according to me,

by definition, will bring more wealth and employment also to one and all. So, it is a win-win situation for the Government and the population.

Madam Speaker, concerning the SME Bank, let me tell the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development that it is not the institution which matters but the delivery of service. What's in a name? What is most important is the seriousness of the service with a professional approach. Madam Speaker, I have myself witnessed how in the past some entrepreneurs were creating *des entreprises fictives, rien que pour avoir des loans*, gather quotations here and there, and then go to the DBM with recommendation of a particular Minister - I won't name.

(Interruptions)

Ex-Minister, yes, you are right, thank you. With the recommendation of a particular ex-Minister and they get the total sum of the loan at one go. They never reimburse these loans because '*misié la ine dire pa gagne tracas, nou pou write-off après ça*'. This is what happened in the recent past when the last Government was in power, Madam Speaker.

I am much worried about giving loans without guarantee. Yes, it is a good decision because for some entrepreneurs who don't have access to financing facilities, maybe it is good for them to start something sustainable for the long-term, but believe me, we have to be very cautious. Don't forget about the millions of wastage in the Stimulus Package which the Government gave without any collateral. I am not sure that we have been able to have this money back and it is public money. This was a wastage of public fund, believe me. Public money is our money. I am for giving facilities, but I think it should be by phase and the enterprise should report progress before any further disbursement is given. The Government needs to have a very close monitoring on that issue, Madam Speaker.

Madame la présidente, sur une question de principe, je ne suis pas d'accord que la SMEDA joue un rôle de collectionneurs de *trade fees* pour les collectivités locales. C'est encore une fois dépouiller davantage les collectivités locales de leur rôle dans la vie de tous les jours. Depuis sa création à ce jour, Madame la présidente, les différents gouvernements qui ont subséquentement occupé le pouvoir ont porté atteinte aux collectivités locales, à la démocratie régionale. Dans le passé, il y a eu la *CWA* et le *CEB* qui étaient sous la tutelle des administrations régionales. Je comprends que pour ces institutions il fallait quand même mettre en place ce qu'on a mis en place, donc c'est bon pour le pays. Qu'en est-il maintenant de la *Tourism Authority*, de la *MRA* entre autres qui, en ce moment, collectionnent tout ce qui était dû aux autorités locales il n'y a pas longtemps de cela. Donc, ce qui fait quand même des revenus d'un manquement considérable aux autorités locales du pays. À la moindre

décision qui porte atteinte à cette démocratie régionale, Madame la présidente, je crie au loup. Je dirai au gouvernement de faire bien attention. Donc, comme j'ai dit, il y a eu certaines décisions dans le passé qui étaient quand même rationnelles, mais aller encore plus loin maintenant dans ce que nous sommes en train de faire, je pense que c'est un crime. Il faut faire attention. Je note quand même que, par rapport aux autres décisions concernant la SME, à part cette décision de se transformer en collectionneur de *trade fees*, beaucoup d'autres décisions sont très encourageantes. Par rapport au financement, il faut quand même un suivi très ingénieux parce qu'il y en a - comme je vous ai dit, concernant les *loans* - qui se frottent les mains déjà. Ils pensent pouvoir abuser de la générosité du gouvernement.

For those SMEs who will obtain an operating space on the SMEs park, I will ask Government to make it a cut clear criteria for eligibility to obtain same, because for the already delivered ones at La Tour Koenig and Roche Bois there is a complete dark. Il y a flou total. Il n'y a pas eu de transparence. On ne sait même pas comment le gouvernement a procédé pour donner aux *SMEs* ces différents bâtiments dans ces complexes-là.

Madame la présidente, par rapport au développement portuaire je n'ai pas de doute que c'est vital et très important pour atteindre nos objectifs économiques. Mais je suis très triste qu'à chaque fois qu'il y a des développements dans la région portuaire, les pêcheurs en font les frais et aucun gouvernement ne pense à priori à prendre en considération ces hommes et femmes pêcheurs qui se battent pour leur survie. Est-il trop de demander qu'ils soient contactés, qu'ils soient informés, qu'ils soient dédommagés pour les conséquences négatives de ces développements sur l'exercice de leur métier? Je fais un pressant appel au gouvernement. Je l'ai déjà fait à travers une question parlementaire que j'ai récemment adressée au Premier ministre adjoint, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval. Je vais faire le même appel ce soir. Donc, je me permets, encore une fois, de réitérer cet appel au gouvernement en faveur des pêcheurs de Pointe-aux-Sables, Grande Rivière, Sable Noire, Les Salines, Roche Bois et Baie du Tombeau. Tous ces gens-là sont concernés par tout ce qui est développement dans la région du port. Donc, je pense que les gens *should be at the centre of development* car des développements sont faits et à côté il y a des gens qui souffrent. Ils ne sont pas intégrés dans les projets de développement qu'on dit modernes pour l'avenir économique du pays.

Madame la présidente, je salue la décision du gouvernement en faveur du recyclage de trois milles gradués chômeurs pour qu'ils puissent être éligibles à trouver du travail et aussi je salue les facilités qui accompagnent. J'ai tout mon temps. Mais, par rapport à la Chambre des métiers, je suis sceptique en ce qu'il s'agit de la livraison des Cartes de compétences parce que nous avons déjà, Madame la présidente, au niveau de *MITD* et d'autres institutions,

le *MQA* qui reconnaît certains certificats pour la compétence des métiers. Je pense que c'est dangereux d'avoir une autre institution qui va donner des certificats ou des compétences par rapport au métier car il y aura des conflits d'intérêts. Je pense que c'est très important que le gouvernement uniformise tout ce qui se rapporte aux métiers.

Madame Speaker, concerning the omnibus permits to tourism operators, I will ask the hon. Minister to give some clear information about which operators he is talking about, as there are many different types of operators in the tourism industry.

Madam Speaker, concerning waiving of interests on loans up to Rs100,000 to planters, fishermen and breeders, I think the ceiling of Rs100,000 is very, very low. This is not enough. So, may I ask the hon. Minister to raise the ceiling up to, at least, Rs400,000 and extend the same facilities which the hon. Minister is giving to the planters, fishermen and breeders to other SMEs and traders such as manufacturers and small commercial businesses?

The hon. Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands just mentioned aquaculture, but I am not sure that this project of aquaculture is benefitting our country because the pilot project which we have at Pointe-aux-Feuilles, Mahebourg is not giving any positive results. I think Government needs to study this pilot experimental project very seriously. Before going ahead with any further project, we need to know what has happened and is happening to the project at Pointe-aux-Feuilles, Mahebourg. This type of project needs to be assessed - the environmental impact and the quality of the fish on the farm. The quality of these fish should be compared with those who are living in their natural ecosystem.

Madam Speaker, concerning the vegetables wholesale markets, I welcome the project. This is a long overdue project. I will be glad if the hon. Minister can tell us where it is going to be situated and what is the time frame for its implementation.

Madam Speaker, concerning the Rs442 m. to be provided to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection to support the manufacturing industry - paragraph 81, page 15 - I think the hon. Minister should give us some more details on how he proposes to use this fund, though I welcome this funding which is very important for our manufacturing industry.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the increase in free wifi hotspot from 15 to 350, the hon. Minister did not give us any information in his Appendix to the Budget on the location of these new wifi hotspot. May I suggest that the hon. Minister circulate the list to hon. Members of the National Assembly and state the approximate implementation date and the location of the wifi hotspot.

Madam Speaker, I welcome again Government's decision to do away with asbestos contents in public buuidlings. May I seize this opportunity to make a request to the hon Minister to include also the old EDC housing units across the country which also contain asbestos and which is a threat to the people living there.

Madam Speaker, concerning housing, I welcome all the Government's suggestions in that Budget. But let me make a request to the hon. Minister to review and update the conditions for eligibility to obtain a housing unit within the NHDC. Very often, people are refused a housing unit because the family income is too low. Let's say if a family has a monthly revenue of Rs7,000 or Rs8,000, they are not eligible because their salaries are too low and the repayment represents more than one third of their salaries. Obviously, they won't be able to cope with their minimum cost of living and pay their housing loan at the same time. So, they are denied the allocation of NHDC housing lots. Now, those families, with an income which is around Rs15,000 or more, are not eligible because their income is too high. I think everyone in this House is aware of the situation and all these are obsolete and need a review and updating. May I ask the hon. Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment to state clearly who are those eligible for CIS and CIS Cum housing types with blocks or wood and ironsheets. All these are not clear and I would like the hon. Minister concerned to give us a clear tableau of the eligibility criteria for obtaining all the facilities which Government is giving, but, unfortunatly, which is not well-known to the population at large and even to hon. Members of this House. I think detailed information should be made available to the public, NGOs and parliamentarians.

Madame la présidente, je salue la decision du gouvernement de mettre en place un *task force* pour se pencher sur le sort de la culture à Maurice. Comme le gouvernement nous propose d'amender le *Local Government Act* pour plus de démocratie, je fais une requête au ministre des Arts et de la Culture pour que la loi soit amendée, pour que les artistes puissent avoir une représentation équitable au sein de la *Mauritius Rights Society* telle qu'elle était avant à la *MASA*. Une injustice a été faite aux artistes à travers cette loi qui est passée l'année dernière au Parlement par l'ancien régime, et sous ce nouveau gouvernement c'est une occasion pour qu'il puisse corriger cette injustice envers les artistes. Je fais un appel au ministre pour qu'il se penche sur la question.

Je félicite le gouvernement pour son projet de mettre en place un stade musical. Bravo ! Mais, je demanderais au ministère concerné de mettre un comité pour commencer à

travailler au plus vite possible sur ce projet. Les artistes mauriciens, je crois, sont les seuls dans ce monde à ne pas y avoir une telle infrastructure culturelle.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister is giving a lot of incentives to those Mauritians who have chosen to stay abroad after their study and work there. I am told by those who have chosen to stay here and work for their country, as a patriot, that they feel as if this is a discrimination envers ceux qui sont restés malgré les conditions parfois très difficiles et malgré les avantages qu'ils auraient pu avoir ailleurs. Je vous dis cela, Madame la présidente, parce qu'on m'a dit, dans ma circonscription, qu'il faut absolument attirer l'attention du gouvernement, qu'il ne faut pas, en encourageant la diaspora mauricienne de revenir, en même temps décourager ceux qui sont là, qui restent et qui travaillent pour le pays.

Madam Speaker, I will conclude by drawing the attention of Government on a few problems of my constituency, very rapidly, as my good friend, hon. Armance did earlier -

- (i) the water problem in Pailles and Pointe-aux-Sables;
- (ii) the sewerage problem in Pailles and Pointe-aux-Sables;
- (iii) the road congestion problem at Pointe-aux-Sables, Canal Dayot, Cité Vallijee;
- (iv) frequent flooding at Cité Vallijee, Cité Richelieu, Grande Rivière, Sable-Noir and Canal Dayot;
- (v) enlargement of road at Pointe-aux-Sables, – the issue was raised this morning – coastal road linking Pointe-aux-Sables, Petite Rivière;
- (vi) housing;
- (vii) the ZEP school - I will not elaborate on this, I will come with Parliamentary Questions, and
- (viii) fisheries.

(Interruptions)

I am nearly finished. Madam Speaker, allow me to end by adding a few things. Madam Speaker, this is my fifth consecutive mandate in this House.

(Interruptions)

...

Madam Speaker, as you know, I have always been a faithful and *loyal serviteur* to the MMM and my constituents. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, following false information

given to the hon. Leader of the MMM by an hon. Member in this House, and supported by an *ex-collistière*...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Barbier:...who was an hon. member of this august Assembly...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Barbier: ... I was suspended from the MMM on 18 February, *le jour où j'ai commencé mon carême chrétien*. I was accused of having organised a meeting at my place or elsewhere, which meeting was never organised or planned. Later on, as you know, Madam Speaker, you received a letter from hon. Bhagwan informing you that I am no more a Member of the MMM.

Madame la Présidente, le grand défenseur de la démocratie qui se prétend être l'honorable Paul Bérenger, m'a suspendu à la fin des travaux du bureau politique, alors que dans la constitution du MMM, il n'y a que le comité central qui puisse prendre des actions disciplinaires. Et il l'a fait publiquement dans une conférence de presse que j'ai assistée le même jour à la *MBC*. C'est incroyable ! Ce grand défenseur de la démocratie qui ne m'a même pas donné la chance de venir m'expliquer devant le comité central et le comité central n'a même pas eu le temps de prendre de décision...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order !

Mr Barbier:...et moi j'ai été suspendu. Pire ! Pire maintenant, Madame la présidente ! La lettre que vous avez reçue, qui m'expulse du MMM, cette lettre là...

Madam Speaker: Please, do not bring me in the debate.

Mr Barbier: Yes. I would like to do otherwise, but it is a fact that it was Madam Speaker who announced me that she received a letter that I am no more a Member of the MMM. and when I asked for some clarification...

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Member, I just informed you that I had received a letter and that your seat had to be changed.

Mr Barbier: Hon. Bhagwan informed me: “*Ou conné mo pas capave écrire sa sans mo gagne instruction*”. *Faire sa sans mo gagne instruction!* So, the instruction as we know, comes from the hon. Leader of the Opposition, hon. Bérenger. This is again...

(Interruptions)

This is again a vice de procédure du grand démocrate qui n’a même pas consulté son bureau politique, ni même le comité central. Je pense que c’est la honte du siècle!

(Interruptions)

La honte du siècle pour un *leader* qui a toujours prôné la démocratie ! Madame la présidente, je vous dis que, moi, Jean-Claude Barbier, pour mon cinquième mandat je servirai mes mandants avec le même zèle, avec la même détermination et le même principe. La différence, aujourd’hui, Madame la présidente, c’est que maintenant je suis libre.

(Interruptions)

J’ai la liberté d’expression...

(Interruptions)

J’ai la liberté d’expression, la liberté d’opinion et la liberté d’action. Vive la République de l’île Maurice !

Madame la présidente, je dis merci.

(9.56 p.m.)

Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Madame la présidente, avant toute chose, je souhaiterai féliciter le ministre des Finances, l’honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo, pour ce formidable budget qui est en faveur des plus démunis et ainsi réduire l’écart entre les riches et les pauvres. Pour ne pas être répétitif, je ne ferai pas d’éloge des bienfaits des différents points du budget car cela a été très bien fait par mes collègues et je partage leurs opinions.

Madame la présidente, pour moi, c’est un très bon budget malgré le fait que l’Opposition partage un avis contraire et trouve que d’autres mesures auraient été mieux à la place. Ce qui est plutôt normal comme opinion afin de mériter le titre de l’Opposition. Mais cela n’est pas grave car 83 pour cent de la population est favorable à ce budget, l’Opposition fait donc partie des 17 pour cent de ceux qui ne sont pas favorables. Madame la présidente, la suite de mon discours sera axée sur l’utilisation de ce budget au profit de ma circonscription.

La première mesure qui me tient à cœur est l’ouverture de la banque des PME. Les facilités qui seront offertes aux petits entrepreneurs permettront à ces personnes compétentes et talentueuses de monter un dossier convenable afin de bénéficier des avantages. Pour cela,

je pense qu'il faut donc guider ces entrepreneurs dans leurs projets et gestion d'un *cashflow* afin de les aider à la bonne gestion de leurs petites entreprises.

Au niveau de la circonscription No. 20, des mesures sont déjà prises afin de les guider dans la mise en place de leurs dossiers pour une demande d'emprunt. Au sein de cette circonscription nous avons beaucoup de plombiers, électriciens, maçons opératifs qui ne savent pas comment faire pour monter leurs propres entreprises. Je dis bien, maçons opératifs, pour que certains ne pensent pas que ce sont des francs-maçons!

(Interruptions)

Une fois leurs entreprises mises en place, en tant que gouvernement, nous devons leur donner la chance de participer aux appels d'offres sur les maisons de 50 m² qui seront construites. De cette manière, les coûts seront réduits et par la même occasion ces entrepreneurs pourront prendre goût au monde du business. J'ai personnellement été témoin, à plusieurs reprises, des situations où les grandes firmes soustraient leurs contrats aux petits entrepreneurs avec un écart de prix conséquent entre le contracteur et le détenteur du contrat. Cela démontre que le coût peut être réduit si on s'adresse directement à ces entrepreneurs.

Madame la présidente, dans ma circonscription il y a une centaine de maisons qui sont en projet et je souhaiterais que les petits entrepreneurs de cette circonscription aient la chance de proposer une cotation si leurs dossiers sont convaincants en ayant un suivi de l'ingénieur du ministère avant chaque déboursement. Cette mesure permettra de créer l'emploi, par exemple, sur 100 maisons un partage peut être fait entre 10 petits entrepreneurs compétents. De mon côté, je suis en train de guider ces personnes afin qu'elles puissent avoir leurs propres entreprises mais aussi être formées dans la gestion de celles-ci pour être profitable.

J'ai actuellement ouvert un bureau à la rue Dr. Reid où je reçois régulièrement les personnes de ma circonscription en faisant de mon maximum afin de les aider dans différents secteurs. À ce jour, j'ai fait embaucher une cinquantaine de personnes dans le privé. Ce budget vient conforter les ambitions à aider ces personnes qui ont la capacité de monter leurs propres entreprises. Le bureau est ouvert de lundi à samedi, une secrétaire est présente à temps plein pour prendre des doléances ou prendre des rendez-vous. Je souhaiterais avoir le soutien des ministres concernés et de les solliciter afin d'aider ces personnes à réussir dans le lancement de leurs entreprises.

Lors de mon dernier discours, j'avais fait part de ma volonté à combattre la pauvreté dans la circonscription No. 20. Le nouveau système du CSR me permettra plus facilement de solliciter le soutien de toutes les firmes qui opèrent dans ma circonscription pour mener un

combat contre la pauvreté et aider les sportifs à mieux s'épanouir. Ainsi, cela me donne l'occasion d'atteindre mes objectifs prioritaires lors de mon mandat.

Madame la présidente, je souhaiterais exprimer mon opinion sur les nominations qui font un peu la une en ce moment. J'ai constaté que suite à certaines nominations, l'Opposition fait un brouhaha. En ce qui me concerne, du moment que les nominations suivent toutes les procédures et les qualifications et compétences sont respectées, il n'y aurait pas dû avoir de problème. En tant que député gouvernemental, je ne pense pas que mes proches ou encore mes enfants forment désormais partie de la catégorie B. Si demain un de mes enfants ou un proche fait acte de candidature à un poste au gouvernement, il doit avoir le même traitement s'il a les qualités et qualifications requises.

Je vais citer l'exemple d'un proche qui avait obtenu une bourse d'études pour poursuivre ses études. Cette bourse permettait à cette personne de travailler pour le gouvernement après ses études. Aujourd'hui ayant un *Masters II*, cette personne travaille dans le privé et, donc est-ce qu'elle ne peut pas être considérée pour un poste vacant dans le secteur gouvernemental étant proche de moi car je fais partie du gouvernement? Je pense qu'il faut que l'Opposition arrête de polémiquer sur ces soi-disant problèmes et de se concentrer à contribuer à faire avancer le pays. Car il ne faut pas oublier que nous sommes payés par les contribuables pour apporter notre contribution à faire avancer notre pays. Et alors, un peu plus de respect à la Présidente et au Président de la Chambre !

Madam Speaker, as a Member who just joined this House after the last general elections, I was looking forward to participating in the most important forum of the country in the spirit of a mutual respect between the Opposition and the Government. I must confess, Madam Speaker, that I have been let down by what I have seen and heard from the Opposition. Their hostility is an indicative of the fact that they have not reconciled to their crushing defeat on 10 December 2014.

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, avant de terminer, je souhaiterais faire quelques commentaires sur le *leader* de l'Opposition concernant le budget exposé par l'honorable ministre des Finances et du Développement économique. Madame la présidente, après que le ministre ait présenté son budget, j'ai écouté les commentaires de l'honorable *leader* de l'Opposition à la télévision. Commentaires très déplacés de sa part alors que tout récemment l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo était le conseiller financier du MMM. Je cite ces remarques –

« *Enn budget kot narien na pas bon et lor la bann la pé tap la table alor ki zott pas finn comprend narien.* »

(Interruptions)

Avec ces remarques cela sous-entend que nous sommes des imbéciles. D'ailleurs comme il a toujours fait en supposant que nous sommes des imbéciles, il sous-entend, encore une fois que la population de l'île Maurice est imbécile ayant voté pour nous. Je suis conscient que je suis nouveau dans le Parlement mais je peux quand même constater la jalousie de ces membres de l'Opposition...

(Interruptions)

... qui s'attaquent souvent au PMSD, le parti auquel j'appartiens. Je fais quand même remarquer, Madame la présidente, que le PMSD et le MMM ont un point en commun. Ces deux parties ont fait trois à la suite mais, la seule différence c'est que le PMSD a fait un trois à la suite dans le gouvernement et le MMM...

(Interruptions)

... a fait...

(Interruptions)

Et le MMM a fait un trois à la suite dans l'opposition ! Sur les circonstances actuelles au sein du MMM, dans les cinq ans à venir, un quatre à la suite, avec quatre députés dans l'Opposition, comprenez qui pourra!

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, je vais m'arrêter là parce qu'il est déjà tard. Je vous remercie.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jahangeer: Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Gobin rose and seconded.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing & Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday 08 April 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Gayan rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 10.06 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 08 April 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SYRIA – MAURITIAN CITIZEN

(No. B/262) **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 the recent case whereby a Mauritian citizen was found dead and buried in Syria, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if –

- (a) other such cases and/or of Mauritian citizens suspected to be involved in holy war in Syria has been detected, and
- (b) the anti-terrorist cell is actively monitoring the situation both inland and outside our territory to detect terrorist practices and/or attacks.

Reply: I am informed that there is no official record of any Mauritian citizen who has either been found dead and buried in Syria or has been involved in holy war in Syria.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to assure the House that the Counter Terrorism Unit of my office is closely monitoring the situation both inland and outside our territory to detect any terrorist activities.

BELLE MARE LEISURE WATER PARK –

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY - FEES

(No. B/263) **Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry set up by Government in relation to the Belle Mare Leisure Water Park, he will –

- (a) state who recommended the payment of fees to the Chairperson, assessors and supporting staff thereof, and
- (b) give a list of those who have been paid their respective fees, indicating -
 - (i) in each case, the quantum thereof, and

(ii) when the supporting staff thereof will be paid their respective fees.

Reply (Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security): I am informed that a Committee of Enquiry was set up to inquire into the circumstances of the death of two children at Le Water Park Leisure Village. Payment of fees to the Committee members was not determined prior or following the setting up of the Committee of Enquiry.

After the submission of the report to my Ministry, a claim was forwarded on 14 February 2014 for the payment of fees to the Chairperson and members of the Commission as well as the supporting staff.

As the fees claimed were not in line with the approved rates of fees usually payable to Chairperson and members of Committees of Enquiry, on 19 February 2014, the advice of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms was sought.

On 03 July 2014, the Standing Committee on Fees and Allowances approved the payment of fees to the Chairperson and members of Committee of Enquiry in line with the existing guidelines approved by Government on fees payable to Commissions of Enquiry, Adhoc Committees and Technical Committees.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that in August 2014, the Sugar Investment Trust has effected payment of the following fees –

The Chairperson	-	Rs 46,500.
Members (50%)	-	Rs 23,250.
Secretary (30%)	-	Rs 13,950.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that on 10 September 2014, the Chairperson of the Committee has also made a request for the payment of fees to the supporting staff comprising an Assistant Secretary and Transcriber, a Police Officer and an Attendant. Advice on the quantum of allowance to be paid was accordingly sought from the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms.

On 09 September 2014, the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms has advised that my Ministry should stand guided by the provisions of the PRB Report.

However, as no such provisions exist in the PRB Report, my Ministry has requested the Sugar Investment Trust to effect payment to members of the supporting staff at rates to be determined by its Board.

ROCHE BOIS – POLICE QUARTERS

(No. B/264) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Police quarters located at the Abattoir Road, in Roche Bois, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the proposed pulling down thereof, indicating the projects earmarked for implementation on the site thereof and if procedures have been initiated therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that it is not envisaged to pull down the Police Quarters at Abattoir Road, Roche Bois. In fact, the quarters comprise three blocks, one of which has been allocated to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life since 2011 and is being used as a Methadone Drop-in-Centre.

One of the two unoccupied blocks was previously earmarked to be pulled down, as it stands on the track identified for the Port Louis Ring Road Project. The Commissioner of Police has requested the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, to carry out a survey to assess the state of these two quarters to determine whether it would be cost effective to renovate them in the meantime. In the affirmative, the two blocks may eventually be converted into warehouses for the storage of serviceable and unserviceable items.

Furthermore, the compound where the quarters are located will be rehabilitated as it is subject to water accumulation and flooding during heavy rainfall.

GOVERNMENT CAR POOL – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/265) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second 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 persons who have been allocated with an official car from the Government car pool and who have been provided with the services of the Very Important Person Security Unit drivers over the period July 2005 to 11 December 2014, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, a list thereof, indicating the –

- (a) capacity in which they have been granted same;

- (b) make and model of the car put at the disposal thereof;
- (c) duration thereof, and
- (d) reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

COMMERCIAL BANKS – PENALTY INTERESTS

(No. B/299) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the alleged abuse of imposition of penalty interests on arrears by some banking and financial institutions, he will state if he will consider –

- (a) introducing legislation for the elimination thereof, and
- (b) requesting the issue of clear guidelines, by the –
 - (i) Bank of Mauritius regarding the recognition of interests income, especially regarding non-performing credits, and
 - (ii) banks, asking that a moratorium on capital and interests payment be granted to the customers undergoing hardships and come up with a stimulus package for borrowers who are encountering difficulties in repaying their debts.

Reply: We are fully aware of the issue being raised by the hon. Member and we are working on it.

In fact, as announced in the 2015 Budget Speech, the Bank of Mauritius will be implementing the recommendations in the report on abuses of commercial banks released recently. Furthermore, we are also setting up an Office of Ombudsperson on Financial Institutions which will deal with complaints received and recommend appropriate remedial action.

BANKS - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY SYSTEMS

(No. B/300) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the recent leakage and publication of sensitive information pertaining to the banking transactions of some corporate bodies and individuals, he will state if he will consider requesting the Bank of Mauritius to ensure that banking systems are safe in general and that the Information Technology security systems of banks are strengthened to avoid reputational damage to the country.

Reply: I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that in line with provisions of the Banking Act, the Information Technology security systems of banks are continually reviewed, strengthened, tested and upgraded so as to avoid, *inter alia*, any reputational damage to the country.

Furthermore, the Bank of Mauritius has also issued a guideline on “Maintenance of Accounting and other Records and Internal Control Systems” to ensure that adequate internal control measures are maintained by banks in respect of their information systems.

As such, the Banking Act provides appropriate legal safeguards for the maintenance of confidentiality of information and also the sanctity of the information system.