



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 03 MAY 2016

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

BILL (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS (*Written*)

Members

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 of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit
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Hon. Sudarshan Bhadain, GCSK	Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions
Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands
Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 06 of 2016

Sitting of 03 May 2016

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. **Prime Minister's Office** –

The Digest of Education Statistics 2014

B. **Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research** –

The Annual Report 2014 of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority.

C. **Ministry of Health and Quality of Life** –

The Dental Council (Board of Examination) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 101 of 2016).

D. **Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection** –

(a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 12) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 102 of 2016)

(b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 13) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 103 of 2016)

E. **Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reform** –

(a) The Securities (Disclosure Obligations of Reporting Issuers) (Amendment) Rules 2016. (Government Notice No. 104 of 2015)

(b) The Captive Insurance (Pure Captive Insurance Business) Rules 2016. (Government Notice No. 105 of 2016)

F. **Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands** –

The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Safety and Security Measures for Fishermen at Sea) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 100 of 2016)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

BAI – ASSETS & LIABILITIES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the post-BAI, he will state –

- (a) the total insurance liabilities of the National Insurance Company Limited;
- (b) the annual sums payable to the policyholders of the Super Cash Back Gold Scheme and of Bramer Asset Management, indicating the cash to be received therefor from the sale of shares in the National Insurance Company Limited and in Maubank Ltd.;
- (c) where matters stand concerning the –
 - (i) Rs3.5 billion loan from the Bank of Mauritius;
 - (ii) sale of the –
 - A. Britam (Kenya) Ltd. shares;
 - B. Apollo Bramwell Hospital Mauritius, and
 - C. British American Exchange Co. Ltd., the representative of Western Union money transfer, and
- (d) the sums received from the sale of Iframac Ltd. and Courts Ltd.

The Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms (Mr S. Bhadain): Madam Speaker, on 04 April 2015, the hon. Leader of the Opposition rightly qualified the BAI Scandal as a “*tremblement de terre financier*” and stated that “*les signes avant-coureurs étaient visibles depuis déjà quelque temps*”.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition rang the alarm bells during his PNQ on 21 November 2013, referring to a Ponzi Pyramid Scheme and reiterated the concerns of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with regard to BAI. He quoted paragraph 55 of the IMF report and stated, and I quote -

“(...) it suggested that the Bank of Mauritius and the FSC should carry out what it called ‘war games’ in a prevision of a possible financial crisis.”

Madam Speaker, BAI was a huge fraud. The KPMG, its own auditors, not only identified and detected the issues as far back as 2009 and 2010, but also reported to its Board of Directors and to its Audit Committee that it was insolvent and it had involved in major fraudulent transactions involving, including others, the round tripping transaction of Rs3.6 billion from *Banque des Mascareignes* in order to window dress and to give an appearance of solvency. The ultimate holding company KLAD Investment, based in the Bahamas, was also audited by KPMG Mauritius, who reported that the Group had excess liabilities over assets of USD302 million as far back as 31 December 2012. These audited accounts stated, and I quote –

“The existence of a material uncertainty which may cast significant doubt on the subsidiaries ability to continue as a going concern.”

Amazingly, Madam Speaker, they did not qualify those accounts.

The NTan Report, which was prepared by NTan Corporate Advisory PTA Ltd. and dated 20 December 2015, states at paragraph 2, and I quote –

“The introduction to the BAI Group website reads: *“Profits with integrity, through marketing of innovative products and services using the best employment practices, for the benefit of all stakeholders”*. As this report will show, the very first word, “profits”, was not true and that negates the whole phrase *“Profits with integrity ... for the benefit of all stakeholders”*.”

It goes on to say, Madam Speaker, -

“While the BAI Group was presented as a successful conglomerate and was ranked as one of the top groups in Mauritius, the BAI Group incurred massive losses year after year.

In the four-year period ended 31 December 2013, according to the BAI Group records, the BAI Group lost some Rs14.7 billion. Even the best capitalised companies in Mauritius would stagger under such losses (and the BAI Group was not one of the best capitalised companies in Mauritius).”

They also state that the BAI Group was insolvent in terms of its balance sheet. According to the BAI Group’s records as at 31 December 2013, the BAI Group had accumulated losses that exceeded its share capital by some Rs12 billion.

And lastly, Madam Speaker, in terms of the reports on the BAI issue, I will refer to the IMF Report of 2015, Article IV, Consultation with Mauritius, which states at Annex I – Mauritius: The Failure of British American Investment Co. (BAI) -

“The BAI Group, a mixed international financial conglomerate and one of the largest conglomerates in Mauritius, comprised a number of entities operating in insurance, banking, asset management, retail and commercial services, with cross border operations in other SSA countries. The Insurance Company had substantial proportion of its assets invested in related companies. In addition, it issued single policy premium products promising relatively high returns, but suffering from high lapse rates, that were only sustainable as long as fresh cash was injected into the scheme from new policies, from the investment proceeds from old policies (mostly in related companies), or from other entities in the group. The BAI Group is now being resolved.”

Then, they went on to say, Madam Speaker, that the episode also highlighted ...

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. We have heard all this many times. It is a thing of the past. Is this being adopted as a strategy not to reply to the questions, in fact?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I have given you the leeway to give some background information, but you should not take the time of the House regarding PNQs to give all your background information. You can now come with replies to the questions which have been asked.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, if I may be allowed just to finish those two lines. This is the latest IMF Report which has never been quoted before. It is 2015. It goes on to say –

“This episode also highlighted issues of regulatory forbearance, political leaning and coordination problems among financial regulators. The consultation discussions noted the systemic importance of mixed conglomerates, of which several banks are part, highlighting the importance to upgrade consolidated supervision and cooperation among regulatory agencies - in particular between the BOM and the Financial Services Commission (FSC). The authorities have already taken steps to improve supervisory cooperation.”

Madam Speaker, before answering the specific parts, if I may be allowed to state that this whole thing started with the Bank of Mauritius revoking the licence of Bramer Bank on 02 April 2015.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, please sit down. I have just drawn your attention to the fact that I have given you sufficient leeway to give background information. I think it is fair that you must allow sufficient time for supplementary questions as well. So, could you please come back to the question?

Mr Bhadain: With regard to part (a) of the question, Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Financial Services Commission that the Special Administrators had made a request for the transfer of assets and liabilities, which also include insurance liabilities, from BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd and its related companies to the then newly created National Insurance Co. Ltd and NIC General Insurance Co. Ltd, in line with section 110B of the Insurance Act, as amended, which provides that –

“A Special Administrator shall, after consultation with the Commission, transfer, in whole or in part, the undertaking of an insurer and any of its related companies to such insurer and any of its related companies as the Minister may approve”.

For this transfer of assets and liabilities, the Special Administrators had performed an independent actuarial valuation, which also involved the Actuarial team of *PricewaterhouseCoopers* (PwC) in South Africa.

I am informed that the Board of the Financial Services Commission (FSC) considered the recommendations of the Special Administrators and recommended the approval of the transfer by my Ministry on 04 August 2015. On 07 August 2015, after that I apprised Cabinet of the FSC’s recommendation, Cabinet agreed “to the transfer of part of the undertaking of BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd and its related companies to the National Insurance Co. Ltd, the NIC General Insurance Co. Ltd and their related entities.”

As at 07 August 2015, that is, the date of the transfer of undertaking, the total insurance liabilities for the long-term insurance segment, which was transferred to the National Insurance Co. Ltd, was Rs6,273,619,665, while for the general insurance segment, total insurance liabilities of Rs336,142,121 were transferred to NIC General Insurance Co. Ltd.

These insurance liabilities were backed by assets valued by the Special Administrators and independent property valuers [Vincent d’Unienville] and were approved

for transfer by the Financial Services Commission (FSC). For National Insurance Co. Ltd, total assets amounted to Rs6,520,408,991 while for NIC General Insurance Co. Ltd, total assets amounted to Rs351,339,304.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the NIC that, since the transfer of undertaking and the launch of their operations, the National Insurance Co. Ltd and NIC General Insurance Co. Ltd have been servicing the policyholders' obligations and have to date effected total payment of Rs606,066,966 for some 18,752 claims. The latest unaudited position of NICL's insurance liabilities as at 31 March 2016 amounted to Rs5,940,290,230 (as compared to Rs6,273,619,665 in August 2015), while for the general insurance segment, the latest unaudited position of NICG's insurance liabilities as at 31st March 2016 amounted to Rs264,442,362 (as compared to Rs336,142,121).

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, there were 16,341 victims regarding those notorious Super Cash Back Gold policies, out of which 223 were not eligible for repayment, that is, 168 did not register and 55 were corporate bodies. The total number of policyholders eligible for repayment was 16,118 policyholders.

Madam Speaker, to date, 10,211 policyholders have been repaid in full and final settlement out of the 16,118. Thus, the remaining 5,907 policyholders are awaiting payment of their capital amount or the remaining balance thereof.

Madam Speaker, out of the remaining 5,907 policyholders, 536 cases have been identified as being suspicious and those include both foreigners and Mauritian citizens. These cases are being looked into by the Financial Intelligence Unit.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, the remaining number of Super Cash Back Gold policyholders to date is 5,371 only and the total amount repayable is Rs5,391,957,383. The annual sum payable over 5 years is Rs1,078,391,477.

Madam Speaker, with regard to Bramer Asset Management Limited, 3,021 investors registered for payment, 979 have been fully repaid, and 153 cases have been referred to the Financial Intelligence Unit because they are suspicious cases. The remaining amount of investors to be repaid is 1,889 amounting to Rs1,601,952,799. The annual sum payable is, therefore, Rs320,390,560.

This gives a total annual sum payable of Rs1,398,782,037 for both Super Cash Back Gold and Bramer Asset Management Ltd.

Madam Speaker, the maximum amount payable as at date to the holders of Super Cash Back Gold and investors over a five-year period which will be repaid from the following sources.

#	Item	Rs billion
1	Bank balances of NPFL	0.7
2	Disposal of shares in Britam Kenya	2.6
3	Securitisation of HP Book	0.2
4	Disposal of BA Exchange	0.2
5	Disposal of Kapu Kai Complex	0.2
	Total available	3.9

These are the figures provided to me by the Special Administrators and out of that figure of Rs3.9 billion what we have to pay by 30 June 2016 is the figure I have stated just before, which is Rs1.4 billion and Rs3.9 billion is coming in.

Regarding part (c)(i) of the question, the credit facility of Rs3.5 billion bearing an interest rate of 3.75% per annum extended by the Bank of Mauritius to the National Property Fund Ltd. is repayable by 30 June 2016. The credit facility was duly approved by the Board of the Bank of Mauritius at its meeting of 11 June 2015. I am informed that the Bank of Mauritius has no objection for an extension of the credit facility to 30 June 2017 on the same terms and conditions. I must say, Madam Speaker, that the Bank of Mauritius does not fall under me, but I have gathered the information for the purposes of answering the PNQ of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c)(ii)(A) of the question, I am informed by the Special Administrators that an MOU has already been signed with the existing shareholders of Britam Kenya on 11 March 2016 for an amount of Rs2.9 billion of which Rs2.6 billion will be paid by 15 May 2016.

The signing of the escrow agreement was delayed by virtue of the different law firms involved in different jurisdictions. The agreement was finally signed on the night of 29 April 2016.

As yesterday was a bank holiday in Kenya, Madam Speaker, funds are expected to flow in the escrow account as from today and I am pleased to announce that, as at this morning, we have already received a first swift transfer. Since this is a consortium of investors, I am made to understand by the Special Administrators that the remaining swift transfers will flow within the next two weeks, that is, by 15 May 2016.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c)(ii)(B) of the question, the House may wish to note that on 28 August 2015, Cabinet took note that Apollo Bramwell Hospital has been transferred to NIC Healthcare and agreed to issues to Apollo Bramwell Hospital being dealt with under the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. At the material time, the proposal was to create a *Centre Hospitalier Universitaire (CHU)*, however, I am informed that the Sale and Purchase Agreement (SPA) is being finalised with Omega Ark Healthcare Investment Ltd, the preferred bidder at an agreed price of USD 60 million. A legal team from Omega Ark is expected to come this week and the signature of the SPA is scheduled before the end of this month. Again, Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the hon. Leader of the Opposition that Apollo Bramwell Hospital does not fall within the purview of my Ministry, but I have gathered the information for the purposes of answering his PNQ.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) (ii)(C) of the question, I am informed that two offers were received and the transaction adviser did an evaluation exercise of bids received. On 20 November 2015, it submitted a report recommending Capital Sterling Investment Ltd. as the preferred bidder with a cash offer of Rs255 m. The other offer was from Change Express, an existing operator.

The application of the Preferred Bidder was made to the Bank of Mauritius on 17 February 2016. The Bank of Mauritius rejected the preferred bidder on 25 March 2016 because the findings of an apparent due diligence were “revealing”. This contradicts the due diligence done by the Special Administrator as none of the shareholders have criminal records, they have clean records with World Check and Passport Check and shareholders are not acting in nominee capacity. The source of funds has been disclosed in complete transparency and had been transacted through international bank of repute regulated by the Central Bank, by the Bank of Mauritius for the last 15 years. A revised submission was made and the Bank of Mauritius on 06 April 2016 maintained that the shareholders are not fit and proper persons.

I am informed that negotiations are now being conducted with the second bidder, Change Express, with a view to completing the transaction within a reasonable timeframe before 30 June 2016. But, again, Madam Speaker, that will depend on the Bank of Mauritius giving its green light.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (d) of the question, there is no Courts Ltd. Both Courts and Iframac were operating under the legal entity Iframac Ltd. The proceeds from the sale received were Rs360 m. and Rs229 m. were paid to banks within which Rs44 m. were paid to the SMEs. 189 employees were paid *Ex Gratia* payment of Rs13 m. This transaction has saved the jobs in Mauritius of 622 families, Madam Speaker.

Iframac Motors, the brands were lost with BAI Directors appointing an Administrator. Cars and spare parts were sold for Rs89 m., Rs44 m. were applied for *Ex Gratia* payment of 138 employees and 125 jobs were saved through redeployment to Leal and to IMC.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, if I can start with the first part of my question, with the 135,000 poor people who had pension policies with BAI and now with NIC or the sister company. I am sure the hon. Minister is aware that on 07 April, the former Minister of Finance and Economic Development said that the long-term liabilities, pension liabilities were Rs4.2 billion. Today, if I heard correctly, it has gone up to Rs6.6 billion. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the FSC has satisfied, is satisfied and has certified that the National Insurance Company and its sister company can face that kind of liability in the future? Is the FSC satisfied that the solvency ratio requirements under the Insurance Act are being abided by the NIC, and not like the BAI not being abided by?

Mr Bhadain: Yes, Madam Speaker. The FSC has, of course, conducted all the due diligence that it should conduct according to law and also based themselves on the evaluation of the then Special Administrators, PricewaterhouseCoopers who are assisted by a team from South Africa. The liabilities in NIC are backed up by assets and, if I recall correctly, I stated that the liabilities were Rs6.3 billion and the assets were Rs6.5 billion on the balance sheet. Then, Rs600 m. have been repaid to policyholders whose policies have matured.

Mr Bérenger: He repeated and again. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is telling us that the FSC has certified that they are satisfied?

Mr Bhadain: Absolutely, Madam Speaker, because the FSC would never give a certificate to an insurance company if it is not satisfied.

Mr Bérenger: That is what it did in the past; the hon. Minister has just said it. Not the same FSC. Now, it is worse.

(Interruptions)

If I can move on to the second part of my question because we are running out of time, is the hon. Minister – because of so many figures quoted, we have to digest that – saying that, as far as the payment of 30 June to the Bramer Bank Asset Management and Super Cash Back Gold policyowners, the money is available and can I have the figures every 30 June over the following four years, how much will be paid annually?

Mr Bhadain: I have already given those figures, Madam Speaker. It is Rs1.4 billion, if I am not mistaken, in terms of the annual sums when you cumulate both Super Cash Back Gold and Bramer Assets. I have also given the figures, as I am informed, by the Special Administrators that by 30 June 2016, an amount of Rs3.9 billion will be in the account of NPFL. As at to date, there is Rs700 m. which is in the account of NPFL. The deal with Britam has already been signed. Money has been received today and will flow through according to the agreement which has been signed. That is that Rs2.6 billion. So, for the 30 June 2016, commitment of paying 20% debentures to those policyholders and investors, I think there is no reason as to why we should be worried.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Minister the sum injected to date by Government and special funds, whatever, linked to Government, into NIC to bring us to that financial situation?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I must say, if I may be allowed to explain on this one, when this whole scandal came up to light following the revocation of the licence by the Central Bank, the insurance company was also hit. Now, as the then hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development stated to Parliament on 07 April 2015, the long-term insurance policies were being safeguarded; 135,000 policies that were the recurring policies because the maturity dates were all over to 2030 and beyond.

Mr Bérenger: My question is how much funds, if the hon. Minister has the figure, have been injected by Government?

Mr Bhadain: I am coming to that.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister, can I just ask you to reply to questions which have been asked? Don't go back again into the history of what happened. Reply to the

question which had been asked because you have already taken a long time to reply to your question!

Mr Bhadain: I fully agree, Madam Speaker, but I must give some context to how much we are talking about or else it will be a figure in a vacuum.

(Interruptions)

I will give the figure! Then, don't tell me that you don't understand!

(Interruptions)

The figure for NIC, no public funds have been used for repaying Super Cash Back Gold and Bramer Asset Management Limited. This is a commitment that was given to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister that we will not take public funds.

(Interruptions)

However...

Madam Speaker: Please, sit down, hon. Minister!

Mr Bérenger: The question is not whether public funds have been used. My question is: how much public funds have been injected by Government and other bodies linked to Government into NIC, not into the pockets of the others?

Mr Bhadain: I have just stated, Madam Speaker, as regards NIC, no public funds have been injected for the repayment of Super Cash Back Gold and Bramer Asset Management Limited. However, when a company is formed...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, you will have the opportunity to ask questions!

(Interruptions)

Now, don't make comments! I have told you that you will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Mr Bhadain: However, Madam Speaker, when a new company is formed and you need to grant a licence to an insurance company, it must have a minimum capital. That minimum capital was injected for the company to be formed, but no money has been used, public funds injected for repayment of Super Cash Back Gold or Bramer Asset.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know when the debentures - that have to be paid over five years, if I understood correctly – will be issued and when they are issued, will it be for the whole of the debentures, and can we know whether, if that is the case, that goes straight into the public debt?

Mr Bhadain: The first thing, Madam Speaker, is that the commitment which has been given by Government to all these people suffering is that they have already been paid Rs6 billion. Now, the debentures will start as from 30 June 2016. That's the date. I don't know why everybody is getting worried before 30 June 2016. They will be issued prior to that date. Now, as I have explained, money is flowing into the account of NPFL and we have a commitment of Rs1.4 billion, together Super Cash Back Gold and Bramer Asset. But if we are getting in Rs3.9 billion, we are also looking into alleviating the suffering of people with hardship cases. When we look at the table, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that if, out of the Rs3.9 billion which is going to flow in, we repay another Rs250 m. for people who have invested under Rs1 m. into Super Cash Back Gold, that would take care of 1,141 families. So, we will do that. We will not only repay the 20% as committed, but as the funds flow in, we will try to do better than that. That is what we are working towards, day in day out.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, as far as the Bank of Mauritius is concerned, we have been told that it is not their role - I don't think it is legal - but they have extended that Rs3.5 billion. Can I know the date on which the Bank of Mauritius confirmed that?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I must say - if I may be allowed to give some background - on 30 June 2015, we repaid Rs3.5 billion to the policyholders. Now, at that time, it could have been the case that the shares of Britam could have been sold. But the then hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development decided that those shares would go into a Legacy Sovereign Fund and instead to get a Rs3.5 billion loan from the Bank of Mauritius. Now, the Bank of Mauritius approved that on 11 June 2015, if I am not mistaken, Madam Speaker.

Mr Bérenger: The extension, I want to know about, not the loan in 2015! The extension which the hon. Minister has mentioned!

Mr Bhadain: There is no need to shout! Ask nicely!

Mr Bérenger: You don't understand.

Mr Bhadain: I'll tell you.

(Interruptions)

It was at the beginning of May 2016, only a few days back, Madam Speaker.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, I think I heard the hon. Minister say that we are supposed to get money for the BAI shares in Kenya worth Rs2.9 billion. He will remember that on 20 October, he said here, it is on record –

“We would obtain much more than Rs3.5 billion”.

Can I know what has happened in the meantime? Why now we are accepting Rs2.9 billion?

Mr Bhadain: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. We had an offer from MMI which was negotiated with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development under the then hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development. That offer was, if I am not mistaken, Rs4.3 billion. MMI went ahead with their lawyers to conclude the deal with the existing shareholders of Britam in Kenya and, of course, according to law, we have pre-emption rights. Their consent is necessary, but they decided not to give that consent and also the regulatory requirements in Kenya had to be met with the Central Bank, so MMI could not finalise that transaction. The existing shareholders of Kenya came to Mauritius, but the Special Administrators had a meeting with me at the Ministry and all the team and they basically came up with that proposal of Rs2.9 billion. In view of the fact that, after having worked the figures, we could accept that figure; we went ahead and the Special Administrators accepted that by signing a MoU and now it is a done deal.

Mr Bérenger: Regarding Apollo Hospital, initially it was expected to get more than Rs5 billion. Now, from what I heard, it keeps on going down and the deal is being finalised according to the hon. Minister because I heard what kind of due diligence BDO have done in other cases a few minutes ago. Can we know whether the due diligence has been carried out to know who is behind that offer by Omega Ark?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, as I have stated before, Apollo Bramwell Hospital does not fall under the purview of my Ministry because a decision has been taken by Cabinet that it should be under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development when it was decided that it would become a *CHU* which is a *Centre Hospitalier Universitaire* and the model was a different model. Now, that did not go ahead and I don't have all the details regarding Apollo Bramwell Hospital because it is not within the purview of my Ministry. However, what I do know is that Omega Ark has made that bid and that figure which I mentioned of USD60 m. As to who is behind Omega Ark, I, personally, have not conducted

any due diligence, neither has my Ministry. Question could be put to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development. I believe they are people from England.

Mr Bérenger: Regarding the last part of my question, as far as this offer for BA Exchange Western Union is concerned, I listened carefully to the tone of the hon. Minister. Although he has requested the Bank of Mauritius or rather Government to extend this Rs3.5 billion, the tone is very negative as far as the Bank of Mauritius is concerned. Can I know whether, in spite of all the negative comments and the facts that we are obtaining concerning BDO, the Minister will keep on defending BDO where it cannot be defended?

Mr Bhadain: Well, I am not defending BDO, Madam Speaker. I know in what situation they are working because it is very complex in terms of how they have to raise those assets to recover to be able to repay those people. I know they are putting a lot of hard work into it and I have no reason to come and say that they are not working hard. On the other hand, there are commercial realities. We all know how it happens when you are disposing of a property and, especially, when you are in a distressed sale condition because you have a deadline and you have people suffering out there and you want to get the money to be able to pay them. This is not a normal sale. If BDO had all the time in the world, they would have, of course, looked for even better offers.

Now, with regard to BOM, the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned my tone when I was answering the question. I must say that I was not very pleased of the fact that BA Exchange, the licence should have been granted by BOM for money to be raised through the sale to be able to pay the Super Cash Back Gold people. The Bank of Mauritius took an enormous amount of time and then decided not to go ahead with it. Now, I do hope that they are going to go ahead with the second bidder very quickly so that money is raised.

Secondly, in terms of another case for the transfer of Rs390 m. which had to do with the hire purchase book of Courts which was transferred to Bramer Bank, the Bank of Mauritius decided to go to Court to prevent that money coming into the Special Administrators' Funds to be paid to the special - we had to go to Court and fight, we lost time. Then, hon. Shakeel Mohamed came up with another application for his client, Mrs Laina Rawat, and attached the BOM application to his application and then, at the end of the day, we had to go to Court for a few weeks. All this prevented us from moving quickly.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, may we know from the hon. Minister where matters stand regarding certain floors of Bramer House at Ébène, whether they have been sold?

Mr Bhadain: No, these are still assets to be recovered because there are long lists of assets to be recovered, Madam Speaker. When I mentioned that figure of Rs3.9 billion, this is as at 30 June 2016. Diplomat Gardens, for instance, there are many properties which are there, which is in the process of being sold by the Special Administrator; the same thing about the floors of Bramer Asset, there is land at Plaine Lauzun, there is land at Montebello and there are other assets which are going to be recovered. As you know, selling properties and recovering takes more time, Madam Speaker. This is why, at one point in time, I stated to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the two biggest assets are National Insurance Co. Ltd asset, the insurance company and MauBank. So, we can open up the share capital of NIC and MauBank to raise money coming in as and when required to meet those commitments and to repay people quickly. That is why we have made those offers.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, finally, this week we got the figures in relation to liabilities and assets of the NIC which is Rs6.3 billion to liabilities and Rs6.5 billion to assets. Clearly, the net assets value is Rs200 m. well below the Rs5.6 billion that the hon. Minister wanted to sell the shares to SICOM and NPF. My question to the hon. Minister is that last week, answering to the same question, he stated that –

“An offer from Prudential plc UK has been received on 24 February 2016.”

May I know how much this offer is for the NIC?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, if I may be allowed to explain because there are so many issues which are being raised by the hon. Member which are not correct. Firstly, I never stated that the current liabilities are R6.3 billion. I said Rs5.9 billion. I said Rs600 m. has already been repaid between August and now. So, the hon. Member is talking about assets of Rs6.5 billion and about liabilities to date of Rs5.9 billion. That’s the first correction. The second correction is in relation to Prudential. I stated, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: I am answering. The second correction, Madam Speaker - correcting the hon. Member, not correction by me – is in relation to Prudential. I stated last week that an offer has, indeed, been received by Prudential UK for the acquisition of National Insurance Co. Ltd, the life insurance part and the hon. Member asked me to disclose the figure. Now,

that offer is still valid for 180 days until August this year and a non-disclosure Agreement has been signed. I am sure everybody in this House understands that we cannot, even though I want to be transparent, I want to go and give you the figure, I am bound by law not to do so and, if I do so, then you will have lawsuit from Prudential UK. That has to be understood.

Thirdly, in relation to whether the valuation of Rs5.6 billion which has been mentioned by the hon. Member offered to SICOM and SBM Holdings and he is talking about liabilities of Rs5.9 and assets of Rs6.5, this is not how you value an insurance company. These are the assets and the Balance Sheet which is basically the Balance Sheet value. An insurance company, Madam Speaker, is based on the NAV value. There is a different actuarial methodology to calculate the value of an insurance company and it is also based on the cash flow forecast of the company. The hon. Member should know that. They should not mislead the population.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister mentioned that when Courts and Iframac were sold, the money was repaid to the lenders, the bank of Iframac and Courts. So, may I know from the hon. Minister why was that money not paid to policyholders and whether the Special Administrators will apply the same logic whenever they sell other assets with the BAI Group, meaning that the secured lenders are paid first before all the policyholders?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, in all honesty, what happened with Iframac and Courts and the banks was a meeting which was conducted by the then Minister of Finance and Economic Development with those banks to ask them to allow the sale to go ahead, even though they had charges on certain assets, and it was agreed that the banks would be repaid a certain amount and the priority of Government was to safeguard employment.

With regard to Courts and Iframac, because of the number of people working in Courts and the number of people working in Iframac, it was not a priority to recover the maximum amount possible to repay Super Cash Back Gold policyholders and to risk losing 700/800 jobs in Mauritius. So, we prioritise on that and this is not what is going to happen in other cases. However, I have also had meetings with the banks, Barclays in particular, with regard to certain charges which are on Phoenix Les Halles and we are working an arrangement. We are working with the banks, but we are telling them: 'Look, this is a

national issue and you have to basically help us as well! You have kids who walk on the street too.'

Mr Bérenger: My last question is and it will go on record. I am asking the hon. Minister whether he is giving the guarantee to the House today that those 135,000 poor people who had pension policy with the BAI, their long-term pension rights are guaranteed, are safe and the FSC is watching that carefully and that as far as the 30,000 policyholders of Super Cash Back Gold and Bramer Asset Management are concerned, they will be paid on time?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, with regard to the recurring premiums, the 135,283 policies at the time when this whole scandal broke out, Government gave a commitment that these people will not lose the premiums they have been paying and at maturity they will all be paid. True it is that the then Minister of Finance and Economic Development mentioned a figure of Rs4.2 billion, I have stated the figures as at date and Government will honour that commitment. NIC is working very well. I gave all the figures last week; I am not going to repeat for the sake of being stopped by the Opposition. But all the indications are that NIC is a flourishing company, it is doing very well. It is opening up its capital and I very much believe that there is no reason as to why these policies are at any risk. However, on the Super Cash Back Gold and Bramer Asset Management, I have given the figures, Rs1.4 billion will have to be repaid on 30 June 2016. And, yes, Madam Speaker, I am giving the guarantee, we will honour that commitment.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Hon. Sesungkur!

**NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - POLICE OFFICERS –
COMPLAINTS AGAINST**

(No. B/338) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Police Complaints Division of the National Human Rights Commission, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to -

- (a) the number of complaints lodged thereat against members of the Mauritius Police Force, since March 2015 to date, indicating the number thereof which have culminated into prosecution and eventually conviction, and

- (b) if consideration will be given for a review of the manner in which investigations into the complaints are carried out.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Human Rights Commission that since March 2015 to 29 April 2016, 693 complaints have been lodged at the Police Complaints Division against members of the Mauritius Police Force.

Out of which -

- (i) 1 case has been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions in accordance with section 14(b)(i) of the Police Complaints Act;
- (ii) 4 complaints have been withdrawn;
- (iii) 366 complaints have already been set aside, and
- (iv) the remaining are still under investigation.

As the case referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions is still under Police enquiry, there has been no prosecution so far.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that it is not envisaged, at this stage, to review the manner in which investigations are carried out, but to build the capacity of the investigators by providing additional training.

Madam Speaker, as already enunciated in the Government Programme 2015-2019 and Budget Speech 2015, a full-fledged Independent Police Complaint Commission presided by a former Judge of the Supreme Court will be set up to ensure that fundamental human rights of citizens are respected.

I am informed that the relevant Bill is nearly finalised and it will soon be introduced in the House.

Mr Ramful: I have been given to understand that at the Police Complaints Division, as it is right now, there is a problem about the interpretation of the law. The officers are not being able to exercise their powers because of a problem in the law. They are not using the normal Police procedures that they are supposed to do. This is why the DPP's Office is having problem to conduct prosecution in those cases.

Madam Speaker: Ask your question now!

Mr Ramful: Can I invite the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to look into the matter and come up with amendments, if need be?

The Prime Minister: Well, anyway, I don't know where the hon. Member gets his information, but I don't have that sort of information and I don't see any reason why the Police don't follow the same procedures in all investigations.

TAXI DRIVERS, BUS DRIVERS & CONDUCTORS – ASSAULT & LARCENY

(No. B/339) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to reported cases of assault on taxi drivers, bus drivers and conductors and larceny at the expense of the latter, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, respectively, since July 2012 to date, indicating the measures that have been or will be taken to curb the incidence thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are 212 reported cases of assault and 64 reported cases of larceny on taxi drivers, bus drivers and conductors for the period July 2012 to 28 April 2016.

I am also informed that the Commissioner of Police has taken the following measures to address the problem -

- (i) regular patrols are being effected by Police at bus terminals and taxi-stands;
- (ii) Police checks are also carried out in buses particularly early in the morning, at off-peak hours during the day and late in the afternoon at specific bus stops along certain bus routes;
- (iii) mobile patrols escort buses along certain routes in some areas particularly at specific times;
- (iv) the Special Supporting Unit is deployed during the week-end at specific locations to ensure the safety and security of bus drivers, taxi drivers and conductors as well as of their passengers, and
- (v) working sessions are held with public transport employees on a regular basis to sensitize them on the necessary precautions to be taken to avoid such incidence while on duty.

Mr Ganoo: Madam Speaker, some time back, I raised the question of a bus conductor who was assaulted by a member of the public, nearly losing one eye. The unions have made

representations to the authorities to examine the possibility of toughening the law with regard to aggressions exercised upon bus conductors and drivers in the exercise of their function, that is, when they are at work, if they are assaulted by members of the public. Could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister look into the possibility of making the law more severe when these drivers and conductors are working and are in the exercise of their function?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I don't see any use of making laws more severe. The laws are there, the penalties are already prescribed. But it all depends on how they are applied. It is the Courts that apply and we know that the Courts very often are very lenient. So, what is the use of making it more severe? It will come to the same thing, to the same result.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gobin!

Mr Gobin: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. I am going to be more specific after my learned friend hon. Ganoo. Is the Rt. hon. Prime Minister agreeable to consider, at least, that amendments be brought to our law to make offences, such as assaults on drivers and bus conductors, an aggravating factor for the purposes of sentencing, just the same way as for larceny if committed on a public road or by band? Can this be considered, at least, for purposes of sentencing only?

The Prime Minister: Well, what takes place, is an offence. How can it become by itself an aggravating factor? I can't see the reasoning.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister confirm that, in the foreseeable future, more Police officers will be recruited in order to strengthen security on our streets and on buses?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have already asked the Commissioner of Police that we must recruit more Police officers not only for that purpose, but for many other purposes and we are trying to get the necessary funds in the Budget.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

MBC – RESTRUCTURING EXERCISE

(No. B/340) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit

whether, in regard to the television channels of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation of the proposed privatization thereof, indicating if the Prime Minister's Office has received any offer from the private sector in respect thereof and, if so, give details thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/139 on 12 April 2016, I informed the House that I had already given instructions for the restructuring of the Corporation, in line with the Report of the Public Sector Efficiency Bureau, under the aegis of the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms. The Bureau has in its Report, *inter alia*, recommended that an in-depth survey should be carried out to gauge the extent of television channel preferences among its audience. The whole issue of allocation of MBC/TV channels will be looked into in the context of that restructuring exercise.

Madam Speaker, there is no record at the level of my Office of any offer from the private sector in respect of the privatization of the television channels of the MBC.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that one French firm, *NRJ Maurice*, has been discussing with the MBC/TV on the possibility of having a channel, either radio or TV, and that these discussions have been going on since long, and it has reached far enough?

The Prime Minister: Well, here the question is about television, and I have answered. If there is anything about radio, the hon. Member should come with a specific question.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I have said both radio and television. Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inquire whether there have been discussions at the level of the Prime Minister's Office, officers, Advisers and even at the level of the senior personnel of the MBC/TV, which have discussed with that firm, *NRJ Maurice*, as I mentioned, which is a French firm?

The Prime Minister: Well, we will try to find out.

Mr Bérenger: The issue of *privatisation* of some MBC channels has been with us for a long time. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister must be aware that, under the previous Government, requests were made by certain people from the private sector to utilise this or that channel in the context of *privatisation, la télévision privée*. We are supposed, including the Government

side, to be in favour of *télévision privée*. This idea of waiting for a complete restructuring of the MBC and then it will be considered, is that not a way *de renvoyer aux calendes grecques*, that is, to get rid of the whole issue *de la télévision privée*?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, himself, said that it has been there for a very long time. We have not been here for a very long time yet. So, let us have patience.

BEL OMBRE, BERRY LANE – DRAINS

(No. B/341) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the proposed works to be carried out by the National Development Unit to address the problem of flooding in the region of Bel Ombre, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Development Unit that, following torrential rain of last February, a drain project at Berry Lane, Bel Ombre, was identified.

Invitation to provide Consultancy Services under the Framework Agreement was issued on 25 April 2016, and the closing date has been set for 25 May 2016.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, I understand that now invitation for tendering procedures has been initiated. May I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that on 08 March, a former Minister visited the flooded area and he came by helicopter to show the inhabitants how fast Government could react to such a situation, and he promised that, in a matter of weeks, the problem will be solved ...

Madam Speaker: Please, ask your question!

Mr Lesjongard: ... and until now not much has been done?

The Prime Minister: I have already said what has been done and what is being done. I cannot say what more we can do right now.

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, this is an issue I had raised in 2015 and the answer that I had from the then Minister of Environment was as follows –

“Protective measures have been designed to desilt the river.”

And up to now, nothing has been done, to the extent that the Village Council, along with the *Forces Vives*, had to themselves clean the riverbanks. So, can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister look into it urgently, please?

The Prime Minister: Well, as a matter of fact, the District Council of Savanne has, from January to March 2016, cleaned drains in the region of Bel Ombre as follows –

- Cité Bel Ombre;
- Bouba Street;
- Michael Leal Street, and
- *Morcellement* St Martin.

Well, at the level of the District Council, they are doing their job! What is wrong with it?

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker, in order to deal with the problems of flooding nationwide, can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister ...

Madam Speaker: Excuse me, hon. Rutnah, I told you that the question relates to the region of Bel Ombre and that your supplementary question has to relate to Bel Ombre and not nationwide.

Mr Rutnah: Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister confirm that Government is considering setting up a Land Drainage Authority to deal with the problem of Bel Ombre and elsewhere?

The Prime Minister: I understand this is being looked into.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the NDU or officers of the NDU have identified what is the real problem concerning the flooding?

(Interruptions)

No, it is not. It rains everywhere, but you do not have flooding everywhere.

Is the NDU aware that people in the area have said that the problem of flooding is related to the Golf course nearby that region?

The Prime Minister: Golf course! Well, I am learning it right now. We will try to find out whether the real cause is the Golf course.

IBA – DIRECTOR - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/342) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance

and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Ms Y. C., Director of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the –

- (a) post she occupied immediately prior to her appointment thereat, indicating the date on which she resigned therefrom;
- (b) date on which she submitted her application therefor, and
- (c) number of applicants who applied for the said post, indicating their respective qualifications.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the post of Director, Independent Broadcasting Authority, is vacant since 15 December 2014, following the demise of the holder. Section 11 of the IBA Act provides that the Authority shall appoint a Director on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit.

In regard to part (a) of the question, Ms Y.C. was the Chairperson of the IBA prior to her appointment as Director. She resigned as Chairperson of the IBA on 25 March 2016, date on which her appointment as Director took effect.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the IBA that, following approval by the Board, the vacancy for the post of Director was advertised by the Authority in the local press on 26, 27, 28 and 29 October 2015. The closing date for submission of applications was 10 November 2015.

In response to the advertisement, two applications were received, including one from Ms Y.C., Chairperson of the IBA.

In view of the poor response received, the Board decided to cancel the exercise and to resort to the services of a private recruitment agency to carry out a fresh selection exercise for the filling of the vacancy for the post of Director.

The vacancy for the post of Director, IBA, was advertised anonymously by the private recruitment agency in the local press on 14, 15, 16 and 17 February 2016. The closing date for the submission of applications was 28 February 2016.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed by the IBA that, from information obtained from the private recruitment agency, a total of 20 candidates, including Ms Y.C., submitted their application in response to the advertisement. The private recruitment agency shortlisted seven candidates for a first round of interviews on 08 March 2016. Following that exercise,

four candidates were shortlisted and were convened for a second round of interviews on 15 March 2016. For this leg of the selection exercise, one member of the IBA Board formed part of the selection panel.

As a result of the final interview assessment, Ms Y.C. was ranked first by the selection panel.

By virtue of the powers conferred upon it by section 11 of the IBA Act, the Board made an offer of appointment as Director to Ms Y.C.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that, since Ms Y.C. was an applicant for the post of Director, she had declared her interest and did not participate in deliberations pertaining to second selection exercise undertaken by the private recruitment agency. The then representative of the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation on the Board of the IBA had presided over all meetings relating to the appointment of the Director of IBA.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the IBA that Ms Y.C. submitted her application for the post of Director in response to the two advertisements when she was the Chairperson of the Authority.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (c) of the question, I am advised that it would not be appropriate for me to disclose the information requested by the hon. Member in regard to the qualifications of the applicants.

Madam Speaker, as the House may be aware, both the Independent Commission against Corruption and the Equal Opportunities Commission are currently investigating into the recruitment exercise carried out by the Board of the IBA for the filling of the post of Director.

As I indicated earlier, the post of Director is filled by the Authority on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit. Any person who feels aggrieved by the decision of the Authority can appeal to appropriate independent institutions for redress.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he can confirm that the Board which took the decision to advertise for that post, that lady was chairing that Board?

The Prime Minister: I said it already, she was the Chairperson.

Mr Baloomoody: So, will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister confirm that, as Chairperson of that Board, she was aware that this post was being advertised?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, even if she would not have been the Chairperson, she was there, she must have known.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, how can he, with his answer, reconcile the fact that that lady has publicly said that when she applied for that post, she was not aware for which post she was applying?

The Prime Minister: Well, that's what she said. I don't know.

Mr Baloomoody: Does the Rt. hon. Prime Minister find it proper that not only the Chairperson of the Board, but a member of the Board who sat on the second selection was given questions to be answered by the applicant 24 hours prior to that application and that lady is also a member of the Board?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of that.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House and the nation that the whole process of going to a private firm for the filling of that post was just a gimmick, because it was well known that Government wanted that lady to become the MD of that institution because she was an active and still is an active member of the MSM?

The Prime Minister: Well, this is ridiculous. There is nothing to show that Government was concerned or took part in this exercise. I have just said how the whole thing took place and I could have refused to answer because the whole matter is being investigated by ICAC and the other institution. I was good enough to give you information that I thought is proper and fair that you should be aware.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister mentioned that the lady chaired the IBA when the post was being advertised. So, may I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, since we don't have the Minutes of Proceedings, whether at that meeting it was decided what are the qualifications which a candidate should have in order to be appointed as a Director?

The Prime Minister: Well, let us wait for the result of the investigation, then we will know, in fact, exactly what happened. I don't have the Minutes of Proceedings.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he can confirm that one of the profiles for that post was, by the list, to have a minimum of proven track record of five years' working experience in a senior position and that lady does not have this profile?

The Prime Minister: This would be for the enquiry to find out and let us know.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, you have a question? No! Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he has enquired whether that Senior Government Officer who sat on that Board of interview received instruction from his Minister to go for the appointment of Ms Choomka?

The Prime Minister: Well, I am not an Enquiring officer. I did not enquire into it.

Madam Speaker: Last question!

Mr Baloomoody: Now, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister just mentioned that there are two enquiries being carried out by EOC and ICAC and we have learnt that ICAC is having difficulties in inquiring because there are certain Board papers which are missing. So, can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he will ask that lady to step down, pending the termination of these two enquiries, so that all the facts and documents are made available to the Enquiring officers?

The Prime Minister: Well, that is not my duty.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

PMO - FORMER SENIOR ADVISER - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/343) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Professor A. S., Senior Adviser on Economic Matters who was formerly attached to the Prime Minister's Office, since March 2006 to November 2014, he will state -

- (a) if his attachment thereat was on a full-time or part-time basis, and
- (b) the number of visits he had undertaken during that period, giving details as to the countries visited and expenditure incurred by Government, if any, in respect of his good self and of members of his family.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as indicated in the reply to PQ B/616 on 06 October 2015, Professor A. S. was employed on contract at the Prime Minister's Office as Senior Adviser on Economic Matters on a part-time basis.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that according to records available at the Prime Minister's Office and the Accountant-General's Office, no expenditure has been incurred in connection with any overseas visits undertaken by Professor A. S. in his capacity as Senior Adviser to the former Prime Minister.

I must point out that this person was domiciled in UK and he was acting as part-time Adviser to the Prime Minister. Well, if there have been visits from there elsewhere, it is only our Embassy - if they still have records available over there - that can ascertain and tell us whether there have been or not.

Insofar as his visits to Mauritius are concerned, as indicated in the reply to PQ B/616, from March 2006 to November 2014, Professor A. S. had effected 44 visits to Mauritius and the expenditure incurred by Government for air tickets and accommodation in respect of Professor A. S. and his family members, amounted to Rs5,273,459.

Mr Jhugroo: As just mentioned by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Professor A. S., personal friend of the former Prime Minister, effected 44 visits. So, can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether during his visits to Mauritius, he was accompanied by his family and on two occasions by his mistress

The Prime Minister: I am sorry, I have said in my answer that he was accompanied by his family members. Now, whether it included mistress, I don't know. I don't know whether Professor A. S. had a mistress.

Madam Speaker: How would you know?

The Prime Minister: I know the former Prime Minister had one.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether Professor A. S. was paid an allowance of £2000 on a daily basis and was also provided with free accommodation, chauffeur-driven car and benefited a VVIP treatment...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, are you asking a question or providing information?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, I have not converted into Pound Sterling or Rupees. The information I have got is in Rupees and I have said it was for his accommodation, for his air tickets and all that. I don't know what the hon. Member wants to know more.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the Rt. hon. Prime Minister aware that the Special Economic Adviser of the former Prime Minister - *qui était vachement nourri* - had never submitted any Economic Mission Report to any Finance Minister of the former Government because these two playboys were busy smoking long cigars and drinking long glasses of Blue Label?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, I am on my feet! Please, don't use words which are unparliamentary! Please!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the duty of Professor Scott was to advise the Prime Minister on strategic international and economic issues. The former Prime Minister, in his reply to PQ IB/674 on 23 November 2010, stated that Professor Scott was regularly submitting his reports to him, but such reports were meant for internal use and policy formulation. There is, however, no record of any such report at the Prime Minister's Office; therefore, I take it that they were meant for personal use of the Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I take this opportunity to draw the attention of hon. Members of the House that they shouldn't cast aspersion on persons who are not in the House and who are not able to defend themselves. Time is over! Yes, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

SSRN HOSPITAL - CT SCAN - REPAIRS

(No. B/351) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the CT-Scan equipment at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, he will state –

- (a) since when it is out of order;
- (b) the number of times it has undergone repairs, indicating the total cost thereof, and

- (c) when request was made for the replacement thereof, indicating the outcome thereof.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the CT-Scan at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital has been out of order since 31 December 2014.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed the equipment has undergone repairs on four occasions at the cost of Rs551,155.00

Concerning part (c) of the question, the request for replacement was made by the Consultant-in-charge on the 23 January 2014.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the CT-Scan is still functioning or is it out of order right now?

Mr Gayan: Well, I understand it is still out of order, but arrangements have been made for patients to be sent to other hospitals.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: May we know from the hon. Minister how old is this CT-Scan at SSRN Hospital?

Mr Gayan: From the information I have, Madam Speaker, that equipment was commissioned on the 29 May 2002. So, it is about 14 years old.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: May we know from the hon. Minister when patients are recommended by Specialists for a CT-Scan investigation, what actions are taken? Are they taken to other regional hospitals, for example, Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, which I hope has a functional one or are they referred to private clinics?

Mr Gayan: Well, Madam Speaker, I thought that this was going to be one of the questions. So, let me give some figures. In 2014, 1,847 patients were sent to other regional hospitals, namely Dr. A. G. Jeetoo and Victoria; in 2015, 2,444 and this year already we have 798 patients who have been referred to Dr. Jeetoo and Victoria Hospitals where, I understand, the CT-Scans are operational. In 2014, 34 patients were sent to private clinics, and before a supplementary question is asked, I will give the amount that was spent, Rs175,000 for the private clinics. In 2015 and 2016, no one has been referred to private clinics because I have given instructions that they should be sent to the public hospitals.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the hon. Minister if there is a policy to allocate maintenance contracts generally for medical equipment in the Ministry or the Ministry rather waits for breakdown and orders repairs afterwards?

Mr Gayan: Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we have the legacy of the previous Government and the legacy is that there has been no maintenance agreement with regard to the suppliers. But instructions have been given that henceforth, all major medical equipment that will be acquired will have to be accompanied by a maintenance agreement. At present, it is the Biomedical Engineer who supervises the repair works.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Minister aware that since long very often we have PQs with regard to breakdown of medical equipment in hospitals. Will the hon. Minister consider to open an enquiry or ask the Police to open an enquiry because I think that, maybe, there is sabotage on behalf of some people dealing with these medical equipment.

Mr Gayan: Well, Madam Speaker, I am very concerned about the state of equipment in the hospitals and we are exploring all avenues to see how we can deal with that problem.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Can we know from the hon. Minister, now that this CT-Scan is out of order, what procedures have been set up to replace it? Is it because we have a financial constraint, if yes, whether this will be taken in the next budget to really have a CT-Scan at the SSRN Hospital?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, in fact, arrangements have been made for the CT-Scan to be funded in the next budget, not only for SSRN Hospital, but also another hospital, and we are also trying to see if we can expedite the procurement procedures because the procurement procedures are too lengthy when we come to deal with medical equipment which need to be procured very fast.

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

AVENUE BERTHAUD, VACOAS - ONE-WAY TRAFFIC SCHEME

(No. B/352) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to Avenue Berthaud, in Vacoas, he will state if he will consider recommending the extension of the partly one way road coming from the Vacoas road, near the Mosque found thereat, to the main St Paul Road, at the level of the shell filling station, so as to ease traffic and to minimise risks of road accidents in the vicinity of the Visitation RCA School at Vacoas.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry is conducting a traffic survey in the vicinity of the Visitation RCA School at Vacoas with a view to easing traffic and minimising risks of road accidents. This study will consider the feasibility and impact of extending the one-way traffic scheme up to St. Paul Road whilst taking into account the adjoining network of roads whereby some roads are already operating as one-way traffic in peak time.

As a more integrated solution to the traffic congestion problems in the morning and afternoon peaks, the traffic patterns along adjoining roads namely 'Jackson Road', 'Club Road', 'Lagesse Lane', 'Visitation Avenue' and 'Couvent de Lorette Avenue' will also be assessed and appropriate traffic and road safety measures implemented accordingly as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker, as a matter of policy, my Ministry is, in fact, considering the possibility of operating a one-way traffic system wherever this is applicable, with no parking zones in congested areas of our towns.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

SME – FUNDS - ALLOCATION

(No. B/353) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the 10 billion rupees allocated to the Small and Medium Enterprise Sector, as announced in the Budget Speech 2015-2016, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority, information as to how same has been spent, indicating the outstanding amount thereof as at to date.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the hon. Member that -

- (i) the information sought is not available at the SMEDA, but rather at MauBank which came into operation only in January, this year, and
- (ii) the Rs10 billion, as mentioned in the last Budget Speech, is to be made available over a period of 5 years for financing of new SME projects, but no provision has been made in the Budget.

However, Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has released an amount of Rs135 m. to MauBank to provide financial assistance to SMEs that are eligible for the SME Development Scheme which became effective on 12 February, this year.

I am further informed that to date MauBank has received 20 such applications from MyBiz, the SME One-Stop Shop, for financial assistance for a total amount of Rs74 m. under the MauBank SME Financing Scheme. Two of these applications for loan for an amount of Rs4.2 m. have already been approved and funds are being released. As regards the 18 remaining projects, additional information have been sought from the applicants by MauBank in order to ascertain that these qualify as bankable projects.

Madam Speaker, furthermore, the SME Development Scheme Committee has approved 12 applications that are being transmitted to MauBank for financial assistance under the MauBank SME Financing Scheme. This will involve disbursement of an additional amount of Rs56 m.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, already out of the Rs135 m. provided by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to MauBank, a total amount of Rs130 m. have been earmarked for loans to be provided as seed capital to the eligible applicants.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to know that under the MauBank Financing Scheme, eligible SMEs are granted loans at the current preferential interest rate of 3.4%, a maximum of 90% project financing with maturity of up to 10 years, no personal guarantee, and an amount of up to Rs10,000, as part of the special grant, for the carrying out of a feasibility study of the proposed project.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he is confirming that as at to date, the MauBank has not disbursed any money to SMEs?

Mr Bholah: As I said in my earlier reply, Rs4.2 m. is being disbursed.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: In the last Budget, there are not less than 25 paragraphs relating to the SME sector. The hon. Minister himself, in a past PQ, stated that the Board is considering urgent modalities for restructuring the SMEDA with a view to meeting the needs and aspirations of the SMEs. So, can I ask him where things are in relation to this restructuration?

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, we have seen from the past that as high as 65% of start-ups do fail even though finance has been adequately provided for. There are factors other than finance, and which are not less important than finance, that do help in the success of SMEs. These are -

- Lack of local skills and talents;

- Lack of industrial space;
- Lack of technology;
- No new scope for economic activities, and even
- Limited and restricted local market potential.

SMEDA is working on all these things.

Mr Mahomed: Madam Speaker, what kind of follow-up is being provided for by the SMEDA in order to ensure that things move better and faster?

Mr Bholah: Well, SMEDA is contemplating putting up incubators in different parts of the island in order to provide the handholding and maintaining services to start-ups.

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, the rapidity at which one can secure a permit, whether it is for a *tabagie* or a factory is of utmost importance. Now, being given that we have been relegated from the 17th place to the 32nd place of ease of doing business in the world, doesn't the hon. Minister think that it is urgent to look into the matter of ease of doing business?

Mr Bholah: Well, the setting-up of MyBiz is towards addressing the issue.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Minister, he seems to have forgotten that Government promised a bank for SMEs - not MauBank or whatever - and Government, through the Budget, promised Rs10 billion over five years, but Rs2 billion last year in 2014, plus this SME Bank was supposed to be a one-stop shop doing all the procedures, helping and disbursing? Is the hon. Minister aware that we don't even have a one-stop shop, now they have to go to MyBiz, follow the procedures and so on, then they go to MauBank for finance and it is redone all again? So, when is something decent going to be proposed to the SMEs?

Mr Bholah: I don't recall the one-stop shop to be adhered together with the SME Bank. The SME one-stop shop was to be within SMEDA.

Mr Bérenger: No. Go and read back your Budget! It was promised that this SME Bank would do both things, help, treat all the *dossiers* and so on and do the disbursing. That is what we call a one-stop shop. Now, we have two shops that have stopped.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, the one-stop shop which analyses projects and which certifies that each project can be allocated an SME certificate is within SMEDA and this is MyBiz. Now, the bank which sanctions loans has their set of criteria which any project should pass before disbursing loans.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, SME is the lung of this population to create growth and SMEDA is supposed to help those SMEs to raise finance. So, at the moment, wouldn't the hon. Minister agree that today the criteria for eligibility are too strict and most of the SME sectors in Mauritius, those, for example, involved in trading are excluded from getting any help from SMEDA under the scheme?

Mr Bholah: Initially, the SME Development Scheme was targeted for those companies that were set up only after 02 June 2015. This was extended to individuals and cooperative societies as well.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister confirm that one of the reasons which explained the delay or the small amount of financial assistance granted so far to the SMEs, in spite of the promise of Rs2 billion per year, is the fact that the MauBank now, has imposed one of its criteria being that the SMEs must have been set up after the 02 June 2015 and it is only after that date that they are entitled to financial assistance?

Mr Bholah: I just said that this has been extended to individuals and cooperative societies as well.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/366 has been withdrawn.

I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.

At 1.02 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

HERITAGE CITY – MINISTRIES – RELOCATION

(No. B/354) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Heritage City, he will –

- (a) give a list of the six Ministries that will be relocated thereat;
- (b) state, in relation to the Prime Minister's Office, the National Assembly, the State Law Office and the six other Ministries concerned with the relocation thereat, in each case, the –
 - (i) actual expenditure being incurred as rent for the office space presently being occupied therefor and extent thereof, if any, and

- (ii) terms and conditions of the lease agreement for the rental of office space thereat, including the rent that will be payable.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions No. B/354 and No. B/377 together as they both relate to Heritage City Project.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of Parliamentary Question No. B/354, I am informed in addition to the Prime Minister's Office and the National Assembly, the six Ministries that have initially been earmarked to relocate to Heritage City are as follows –

- (i) the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development;
- (ii) the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms;
- (iii) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade;
- (iv) the Ministry of Local Government;
- (v) the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation, and
- (vi) the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

In addition to the above, the Attorney General's Office and part of the State Law Office are also proposing to relocate to Heritage City. Moreover, a request from the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management has also been made and was received last Friday at my Ministry.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) (i) of Parliamentary Question No. B/354, the information is currently being compiled by the different Ministries and organisations and will accordingly be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to part (b) (ii) of Parliamentary Question No. B/354, the project is still at its initial stage and the lease agreement and the terms and conditions therein will be finalised only when the detailed Master Plan, the Schematic Design and bill of costs are ready. It will be premature at this stage for parties to already engage in a lease agreement.

However, I am informed by Heritage City Co. Ltd that, according to the figures worked out to date by the financial consultants, the rental will range between Rs41 to Rs45 per square foot according to the financial model, but again, this is not final, we are waiting for the final schematic design as per my answer to the Private Notice Question of 19 April 2016.

Madam Speaker, with regard to Parliamentary Question No. B/377, the 'foreign State' with which the agreement has been entered into as per the provisions of Section 3 (1) (b) of

the Public Procurement Act is PCFC Real Estate, an entity wholly-owned by the Government of Dubai. This entity has designated Stree as its agent to assist the Government of Mauritius in respect of Heritage City Project which will be executed by Heritage City Co. Ltd. a company wholly-owned by the Government of Mauritius. This is in line with the provisions of section 3(1) (1B) (a) of the Public Procurement Act.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the Government of Mauritius by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry on 23 February 2016.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, so, finally, apart from the Parliament, the Prime Minister's Office and the SLO, now we are being informed that, in fact, eight Ministries are moving...

(Interruptions)

The hon. Minister said six Ministries, but according to my count, including the Attorney General's Office and the Ministry of Environment which has been approached, it amounts to eight Ministries. If the hon. Minister wants, I can list them because I can count it is eight Ministries. In a reply to a PNQ on the Heritage City Project, the hon. Minister stated that a feasibility study for the Heritage City Project which consists of a list of requirements from all relevant Ministries, the concept Master Plan, cash flow and financial forecasts including impact on GDP growth and national debt, the legal due diligence report, the value-for-money assessment report and so on have been performed. So, my question to the hon. Minister, in terms of good governance and transparency is: is he ready to - not now if he doesn't have it - place a copy of the cash flow and the financial forecasts in the Library of the National Assembly?

Mr Bhadain: Yes, absolutely, Madam Speaker. I mean there is no reason as to why these figures cannot be made public. However, we would, of course, wait until the process is complete before making them public and then, of course, I will table it in the National Assembly. No issues with that. With regard to the six Ministries, I say again, we are talking about the Ministry of –

- (i) Finance and Economic Development;
- (ii) Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms;
- (iii) Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade;
- (iv) Local Government;
- (v) Technology, Communication and Innovation (ICT), and
- (vi) Housing and Lands.

I said a request has been received from the Ministry of Environment, I did not say it was accepted. With regard to the State Law Office, I said part of the SLO because there are Barristers and Attorneys who have to go to Court and they are going to be based here in Port Louis. But they will have an office there too because they have to advise the Prime Minister's Office and sometimes the Assembly also.

Mr Ameer Meea: In his reply, the hon. Minister informed the House that the price per square foot is Rs41.45...

(Interruptions)

Rs41.00 to Rs45.00. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that last week, in a Parliamentary Question answered by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, in relation to SICOM Tower, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister informed the House about the SICOM Tower where the Minister of Finance would have moved, covering a space of 88,000 square feet at a monthly rental of Rs34.00 per square foot, inclusive of VAT, Syndic fees, amenities and parking facilities. So, the SICOM Tower is a new building and new applicable rent that has been agreed recently...

Madam Speaker: Yes, what is the question of the hon. Member?

Mr Ameer Meea: So, my question is: will the hon. Minister agree with me that, in fact, the Heritage City is more expensive than the actual rate that we have now?

Mr Bhadain: Two things, Madam Speaker. One is Rs41.00 to Rs45.00 rent for the next 10 to 15 years, not today! Today if it is Rs34.00 which the price list...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, I have asked you several times not to do crosstalking!

Mr Bhadain: When we are looking at the next 15 years for Rs41.00 to Rs45.00, it is very cheap because you have to discount it to the present value and then do the comparison.

Secondly, you can't compare the Heritage City with the SICOM Tower because Heritage City is a model where you will have all the infrastructure, technology and also e-governance principles. We have seen those buildings where the public officials are working now. This is for the next generation of public officials. It is not comparable.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Can the hon. Minister give the guarantee to the House that this rent of Rs41.00 to Rs45.00, as he just mentioned, would be fixed in time, that is, during these 15 years because according...

(Interruptions)

...to my understanding, rent is incremental, you increase it every year. But what the hon. Minister just said, can he give a guarantee that this sum is fixed.

Mr Bhadain: According to the financial model which has been prepared, Madam Speaker, there is an escalation clause of 10 percent every five years. So, if you take...

(Interruptions)

That is why...

(Interruptions)

That is why we said Rs41.00...

(Interruptions)

That is...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't make remarks, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Bhadain: That is why we say Rs41.00 to Rs45.00 because there are escalation clauses. It is in line with commercial practice.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has just made reference to a company based in Dubai, that is, a Dubai Government-owned company. Had it been a local company, the Standing Orders would have told me to go and fetch the information here. But, since it is a company based in Dubai, could the hon. Minister, therefore, consider laying all the certificates of incorporation or its equivalent on the Table of this Assembly with all its shareholders as well as the relevant document that states - as he has just said - that it is the Government of Dubai that recommended Stree Consulting? Whether he could also consider tabling that particular document where the recommendation is made, by whom and when?

Mr Bhadain: Yes, Madam Speaker. During the answer to the PNQ, a couple of weeks ago, I mentioned that there was a legal due diligence which was conducted. I have no problems whatsoever to table that legal due diligence report by a law firm in Dubai and also

the shareholders are the Government of Dubai. They are the shareholders. It is a 100 percent Government controlled entity; there are no private parties in there.

Mr Mohamed: He has not answered the other question, Stree Consulting?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: It was recommended, that document, recommending...

Mr Bhadain: Absolutely, the legal due diligence was conducted on all these entities because when we asked the law firm to do a due diligence, it included...

Mr Mohamed: The recommendation...

Mr Bhadain: No, of course because, Madam Speaker, there is a process in law which has been followed. The process in law for a G2G is that there is an arrangement and agreement between the two Governments and then all the documents have been submitted to the High-Powered Committee which have been scrutinised by the Solicitor General, by the Financial Secretary and also by the Secretary to Cabinet before being forwarded to Cabinet and Cabinet approved it. All these documents are there, but in due time, when it is permissible, according to law, I will table everything. I have no problems.

Mr Mahomed: Will the hon. Minister shed some light on the following please? On the one hand, we are promoting the Heritage City as a work, live and play destination and, on the other hand, we are moving public officers, civil servants by thousands over there. Will public officers be buying these kinds of properties? Because they are in the habit of buying their own plot of land usually and building their own houses on the very basis of which the model is being based.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, again, a couple of weeks ago, I mentioned the structure of Heritage City Project. I mentioned that it is an ellipse shape, meaning that you have a public side, a private side and, at the end of the day, it is a synergy which is drawn between the public and private aspects of it.

With regard to public officials buying, things are changing in Mauritius, Madam Speaker. Young people joining the public sector will have no problem buying apartments and town houses also.

These were in the days of my grandfather, when you bought a plot of land, had a cow in the garden, and then you were constructing your house.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, may I know from the hon. Minister the type of finishing that will be in that? When you pay a price for rental, will that price – the price mentioned – include the finishing, I mean all that will have to be done by each Ministry? What would happen to all the existing offices that are being presently occupied by the Ministries that are going to move to Heritage City?

Mr Bhadain: The hon. Member is absolutely correct. It will be up to the individual Ministries to basically do their layout and their furnishing, as is normally the case. When my Ministry moved to SICOM Tower, it was a different set-up because we decided to rent furnished, whereas when the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development was going to move there, it was unfurnished, I believe. But, in Heritage City, it's core and shell, and then, of course, the individual Ministries will have to do their partitioning and furnish according to their requirements.

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, my question pertains to the administrative part of Heritage City. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether the stream of future rentals from Government will be able to meet the financial requirements of servicing both the interests and the capital of, let's say, Rs10 billion?

Mr Bhadain: Absolutely. This is what hon. Ameer Meea has been referring to as the cash flow forecast. I must state, Madam Speaker, that when the financial structure has been put in place, it took three months to actually come up with the right model. The figures, in terms of the rental income flowing in and in terms of the VEFA profits which are going to flow in, will be in a defined period of time sufficient to redeem the shares. This is what the model is all about.

Mr Mohamed: I heard the hon. Minister say, both to hon. Ameer Meea and several other Members, that, in due course, if the law permits, he is going to table those documents. At this particular stage, I have asked him for specific documents, and so have hon. Members. What are the legal impediments, if any, that exist to stop him from tabling those documents right now?

Mr Bhadain: I am sure my friend, the hon. Member, as a lawyer, would know that when you are dealing with Heritage City Co. Ltd. and when you are dealing with Stree, there are engagement letters which have been exchanged, with all the different aspects of the work.

There is a commercial aspect to it. Now, if the company law permits, there is no problem, I will table it. I mean, I do not have any problem.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Minister giving the House a guarantee that there will be no Mauritian partner in this project like that we had in the Neotown project, where *la petite copine* of the former Prime Minister was a shareholder?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I have understood the question properly. But I can assure the House that this project is a challenge ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, you are constantly disturbing the proceedings of the House.

Mr Bhadain: It is a challenge for my newly created ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Is it your turn, hon. Rutnah? Hon. Minister, please carry on!

Mr Bhadain: I was saying, Madam Speaker, that it is a challenge for my newly created Ministry, dealing with good governance, to ensure that this project becomes a benchmark for good governance. There will be no commissions, no variations, no hanky panky, and this will benefit the people who are going to go and buy those properties at a cheaper price, because of all this nonsense that we have seen in those contracts mentioned by hon. Members in the past.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions has just informed me that she has to attend to the funeral of a close relative and has made a request that the question asked to her be taken out of turn. I have acceded to her request. So, I am calling hon. Sesungkur.

SALE BY LEVY - NATIONAL SOLIDARITY FUND - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/382) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Sale by Levy, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Solidarity Fund, information as to the composition of the Committee that considers disbursements therefrom, indicating the -

- (i) criteria used for the granting of assistance and for the determination of the quantum thereof, and
 - (ii) number of requests for assistance received, considered, turned down/granted and quantum disbursed, and
- (b) state where matters stand regarding the proposed setting up of an Asset Management Company to provide, *inter alia*, for the replacement of the Sale by Levy procedure.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the National Solidarity Fund that, following budgetary measures for financial years 2007/2008 and 2008/2009, three structures were set up to examine applications for assistance and make recommendations as to eligibility.

Information with respect to all applications was compiled by a Technical Committee chaired by the then Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and having as members two representatives of the Ministry of Finance as well as two members of the National Solidarity Fund Board. The information on each case was then submitted to the National Solidarity Fund Board. The National Solidarity Fund Board comprised the Chairperson, a representative of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, the Mauritius Tax Payers Association, the Mauritius Labour Congress, MACOSS, and the Mauritius Employers Federation. Recommendations were then made and submitted for financial clearance by a High Level Committee set up under the chair of the Financial Secretary and comprising representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Attorney General's Office and the Ministry of Social Security.

Regarding part (a) (i), I am tabling the two sets of criteria that were applied for financial years 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 respectively to assess eligibility.

With regard to part (a) (ii), I wish to inform the House that, out of 468 applications received for both budgetary measures, 54 cases were found to be eligible and 414 were turned down. A sum of about Rs15 m. from the National Solidarity Fund has been disbursed as at date from the amount earmarked for beneficiaries of assistance.

I am informed that five beneficiaries are being paid a monthly rent allowance of Rs1,250 subject to the presentation of a life certificate.

As regards part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Bank of Mauritius released, on 08 January 2016, a consultation document on the setting up of an Asset Management Company in Mauritius. The Bank of Mauritius invited submissions, both oral and written, on the document, by 16 February 2016. A number of representations from various stakeholders were received by the Bank of Mauritius. Their representations are being considered and, where appropriate, will be taken on board in the setting up of the Asset Management Company.

I am tabling the two sets of criteria, as they are quite lengthy.

Mr Sesungkur: From the information communicated by the hon. Minister, we can see that the majority of the applications have been rejected and only 50 were approved. In the light of this information, is the hon. Minister prepared to review the criteria, so that a majority of those people benefit from the funds which have been allocated under the NSF?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, this is Government policy. The two sets of criteria have been set up in the budgetary measures 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. So, we will look into it and see if we can come up with a new set of criteria, if need be.

Mr Sesungkur: With regard to the Asset Management Company, I would request the hon. Minister to see to it that this measure is implemented as soon as possible because of the tragedy which many Mauritians are facing with the sale by levy. I would request her to ensure that this measure comes into force as soon as possible.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Madam Speaker, Government is much aware of the hardship caused by the sale by levy procedure to debtors. We are fully aware of the plight of the debtors. Following a Commission of Inquiry, chaired by Magistrate Ms Rangan, a report was drawn up and 13 recommendations have been made. So, with a view to address the non-performing loans, the Bank of Mauritius came with a proposal of the setting up of the Asset Management Company. The main objective of the Asset Management Company would be to acquire, in a phased manner, the non-performing loans which have been secured both by residential and commercial properties. We do hope that the coming into force of the Asset Management Company will help, to a great extent, both the debtors and the financial institution.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister just mentioned the Sale by Levy Commission of Inquiry which has submitted its report and in this House the Rt. hon. Prime Minister mentioned that there was a Committee looking into these recommendations. So, may

I know from the hon. Minister, in addition to this measure of setting up the Asset Management Company, are there other measures out of these recommendations that are being implemented at the level of her Ministry?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, as I have said, we are in the process of setting up the Asset Management Company but, at the same time, we are looking at the recommendations. We will soon come with some proposals, if need be.

Mr Baloomoody: Pending the final setting up of the Asset Management Company, and taking into account the recommendation of Magistrate Ms Rangan, can I ask the hon. Minister whether she can intervene vis-a-vis her colleague with regard to the NHDC Houses because this is Government Property, at least, pending the outcome of the final instrument which will come, that the NHDC freezes the selling of houses at the Sale by Levy? Even last week there were many houses which were sold by levy because of such a financial situation.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: If I may explain. Madam Speaker, with the coming into force of the Borrowers Protection Act, I am given to understand that the number of cases before the Master's Court has considerably diminished. In the past, there were about 20 to 25 cases of Sale by Levy before the Master's Court, but now we have about 10 to 15 cases only.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - VISA ENTRY

(No. B/355) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the United Arab Emirates, he will state where matters stand as to the exemption of the visa entry requirement for Mauritians proceeding thereto.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that on 20 March 2016, Mauritius and the United Arab Emirates signed a bilateral Agreement on "Mutual Exemption of Entry Visas for Holders of Diplomatic and Special Passports". The said Agreement which was signed in Abu Dhabi by hon. Showkutally Soodhun, GCSK, Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands on behalf of the Government of Mauritius and by Mr Anwar Mohammad Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The Agreement will allow nationals of Mauritius holding valid diplomatic passports to stay in the UAE for a period not exceeding 90 days while Mauritius will allow nationals of the UAE holding diplomatic and special passports to stay on its territory for the same period without entry visa and without fees.

Mauritius has, on 31 March 2016, informed the UAE Authorities that Mauritius has completed all internal procedures for the entry into force of the Agreement as laid down in Article 12 of the Agreement.

We have been informed by the UAE Authorities that they are completing the ratification procedures for the entry in force on the Agreement.

I wish to inform the House that the Ministry, on 18 March 2016, has through a *note verbale*, requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the UAE to “(...) consider granting, on a reciprocal basis, free visa on arrival to Mauritian nationals travelling to the UAE with ordinary Mauritian passports”. The above request was reiterated on 28 April 2016 by our High Commissioner in Islamabad.

As matters stand, Madam Speaker, the issue of Mauritian nationals travelling visa free to the UAE with an ordinary passport is still under consideration by the competent UAE authorities.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: I just wanted to know what is meant by special passports. I heard the hon. Minister say that it had been agreed to grant this visa free facility to diplomatic and special passports, what is meant by special passports?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I would think that diplomatic passports would probably be more specific to civil servants, but I won't confirm it.

(Interruptions)

Officials travelling.

(Interruptions)

I don't have the definition at hand.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, we have been made aware that an agreement has been reached for diplomatic and special passports, but the thing is how many official

missions do we have to UAE on a yearly basis? It is only a handful of officials that go to Dubai every year. My question to the hon. Minister is: is he aware that ordinary passport for all Mauritians travelling to Dubai for a 96-hour visa costs Rs2,400; for 90 days, it is Rs7,000 and for 90 days multiple entry it is Rs17,000? We understand that the United Arab Emirates is a partner to Mauritius, but this partnership should be a two-way traffic. So, will the hon. Minister use his Ministry to ensure that on an urgent basis this agreement for ordinary passport is signed so that we all benefit from it?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: In fact, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister on his official visit there put up this question. The hon. Member is right; the rates which are being applied are quite high. I see here that the cost of visa single entry is Rs3,375 for a duration of either 14 or 30 days and for a multiple entry short-term visa for 30 days, the fee is Rs6,750. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister was quite aware of it as this issue was raised by my friend also here, and negotiations are underway to ensure that, as soon as possible, all Mauritians with a Mauritian passport can access to the UAE free of charge.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: May we ask the hon. Minister whether what has been granted to diplomatic and special passports, supposedly, and what has been requested for ordinary citizens, whether the request was made in the past and now to United Arab Emirates or to the Dubai Government?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: It has been made. Well, Islamabad recently reiterated this request to the UAE.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano!

WESTMINSTER FINANCIAL LTD. - CLOSURE

(No. B/356) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Westminster Financial Ltd., he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to the -
 - (i) amount of money invested therein, and
 - (ii) outcome of any inquiry undertaken in relation thereto following the closure thereof, and

(b) state if Government proposes to financially assist the victims thereof, if any.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, this is yet another fraudulent Ponzi scheme which was perpetrated under the Prime Ministership of the then Prime Minister. I am informed that Westminster Financial Ltd. (WFL) was incorporated on 03 October 2011 and applied for an Investment Advisor (Unrestricted Licence) with the Financial Services Commission (FSC) on 25 June 2012. The FSC issued the licence on 30 October 2012 and the directors of WFL were: Mr Feroz Aslam Dahoo, Mr Subudh Caussy and Mr Miheerannand Nunkoo. It is worthy to note that prior to the issue of the licence, WFL had been operating and taking deposits from the public prior to the issuance of a licence from the FSC, which is in breach of Section 33 of the Securities Act.

In April and May 2013, the FSC received queries from the public as to whether WFL was licensed by the Commission and whether WFL was allowed to give 'such returns'.

Following enquiries by members of the public in April and May 2013, FSC carried out a general inspection of the activities of WFL on 28 June 2013. The initial findings were, *inter alia* -

1. The activities being carried out by WFL were in contradiction from the business plan it submitted at the time of the application with the FSC. The investigation revealed that all monies collected from the investors were being channelled to Westminster Singapore instead of being invested in a portfolio of securities. From Singapore, the monies were purportedly transferred to various money managers for investment purposes, which was in contradiction with the business plan on the basis of which the licence had been granted;
2. The Company was not providing any investment advisory services, and
3. Several departures were observed from the initial business plan.

Madam Speaker, in the meantime, the CCID had already started an enquiry on the activities of WFL and its directors following a dissemination report from the FIU. On 17 July 2013, I am informed that one of the directors, Mr Feroz Dahoo, was interviewed under caution, arrested and bailed out on the same day. The enquiry revealed that Mr Feroz Dahoo had been taking deposits from the public prior to the issuance of a license from the FSC on 30 October 2012.

On the next day, 18 July 2013, WFL made representations to the FSC, which were not to the satisfaction of the regulator.

Subsequently, on 29 July 2013, the FSC issued directions for WFL to -

- (i) not accept any new investors;
- (ii) to seize its business operations since the company was not conducting the business activity for which it was licensed;
- (iii) disclose to the FSC, the total assets under administration, and
- (iv) start returning the funds raised from the members of the public upon an agreed framework with the FSC.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that after the FSC issued directions on 29 July 2013, WFL stopped its operation, but failed to comply with the 'direction' to reimburse funds raised from members of the public. On 23 October 2013, the legal representatives of WFL (BLC Chambers) made representations to the FSC that any immediate disinvestment of funds would imply material penalty losses and, as a result, proposed a timeframe within which the money from disinvestments will be repaid to the investors.

In November 2013, FSC continued receiving complaints from members of public that WFL were still canvassing clients to invest money privately despite the directions issued by the FSC on 29 July 2013 preventing them from taking new investments from the public.

On 18 November 2013, the legal representatives and the directors of WFL were summoned to attend a meeting at the FSC where they were queried on three things –

- (i) whether repayment of existing investors is being effected;
- (ii) whether the company is still operating, that is, canvassing clients to invest money, and
- (iii) provide a written undertaking duly signed by the directors that WFL is not advertising its services to the public. This written undertaking was submitted to FSC on 18 November 2013.

Following that, FSC continued monitoring the execution of the repayment plan. As from January 2014, FSC noted that WFL was not adhering to its repayment plan and the capital investments were not being repaid.

On 28 March 2014, FSC issued a letter to WFL informing them that their repayment plan is still outstanding following which they responded in April 2014 to say that investments

are still locked into money managers abroad and, as a result, WFL submitted a new repayment plan in which the company proposed to start effecting payment in June-July 2014.

The FSC was not conformable with the details of a proposed repayment plan. With the assistance of a financial company, they conducted a full-fledged investigation into the affairs of WFL from July to December 2014 with the objective to locate the funds invested by WFL. The investigation revealed that money is collected from the public in Mauritius...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, can you tell me whether your reply will be long? If it is too long, then you better circulate it! I think it is better for you to circulate your reply.

Mr Bhadain: I will nearly finish, Madam Speaker, if you will allow me. The funds went to Westminster...

Madam Speaker: I can give you two additional minutes, not more!

Mr Bhadain: Okay. The funds went to Westminster Singapore Pte Ltd; other related entities namely, Aurcan Ltd and Multiport International Trading; in Madagascar entities G-tech & Mahere; individuals, namely, the Directors of WFL.

The Police investigation is still being conducted, as I understand, and I would very much like to take this opportunity to ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to see with the Commissioner of Police that this case is looked into quickly.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre si les autorités internationales ont été sollicitées pour recouvrer la somme qui a été *syphoned* et aussi si on peut traquer les coupables au niveau international parce que, selon mes informations, les responsables ont déjà quitté le pays?

Mr Bhadain: Yes, Madam Speaker, the FIU has already initiated those procedures. In fact, the money, after having left Singapore and Madagascar, has gone into numerous jurisdictions. So, it is going to take an enormous amount of time to conduct the trail and then, of course to go through the mutual ...

(Interruptions)

... legal assistance procedure.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Minister who was Minister of Finance during this Westminster Financial Ltd. saga?

Mr Bhadain: Well, I don't know...

(Interruptions)

I would suppose it would have been the current Deputy Prime Minister, but the Prime Minister was Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: May we know from the hon. Minister, he has mentioned that – I have to mention the name – Mr Feroz Dahoo was arrested after an enquiry of the ICAC, where matters stand? Because nearly one year has lapsed and we don't see any action so far, especially for Mr Subudh Caussy, like my friend has mentioned, who is Interpol listed, where do matters stand on these two persons?

Mr Bhadain: I understand that the foreigners have already left Mauritius a long time back. Mr Feroz Dahoo was arrested and I believe, the Police must act fast and they must, basically, progress this enquiry. I am also aware that Mr Feroz Dahoo is subject to another investigation, in the Bagatelle Dam case together with Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Could the hon. Minister inform us, I mean is he aware - it is unfortunate that he gave the name of someone just like that in Parliament, Mr Feroz Dahoo and painting him a black picture; he is still on a provisional charge - of any information, I mean for how long will this provisional charge go on? Because he has not been found guilty of any offence whatsoever, we only have the report of the FSC. So, what is going on with this provisional charge? Is there any main case that has been lodged or does he still benefit from the presumption of innocence? Maybe the hon. Minister could tell us?

Mr Bhadain: Well, Madam Speaker, as I said, I only wish that the Police would have acted much faster in a case like this because money from members of the public who have contributed are at stake and this money has gone into different jurisdictions. Now, with regard to provisional charges, I think the hon. Attorney-General has already explained that this Government is working to bring PACE into play and we will do that soon.

Dr. Sorefan: Will the hon. Minister confirm to this House whether the Ponzi scheme set up by Westminster Financial Ltd. was giving 12% interest and what did FSC do at that time when they were selling their product at 12% interest?

Mr Bhadain: I have already answered in terms of what the FSC has done and has not done over that particular period, but like any other Ponzi scheme, the returns which were being offered to the people were so high and this is again a message for the public that if it is too good to be true, then you should not invest into those kinds of products.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister mentioned that the Government is not going to compensate any of the victims, but is the hon. Minister considering asking the Financial Services Commission to make it compulsory for all licensees, anyone who is being issued a licence at the FSC, to either set up a compensation fund or take compulsory insurance cover to protect victims of any future Ponzi?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, the FSC has set up so many compensation funds lately for hit and run and for different other types, but, in this case, Madam Speaker, I mean, we can't set up a compensation fund for stupidity of people who want to put their money into things they shouldn't invest into. These people are also to be blamed because they are greedy. They want to get high interest. I have said that the FSC has stated that they started selling even before being licensed, but people should not be attracted to those kinds of products. This is what Mauritius has to understand. And then, at the end of the process, when we look at Ponzi schemes like Sunkai, Whitedot, Westminster Financial, BAI, it is high time for us to come up with a Financial Literacy Programme for people across ages and I will definitely speak to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research on this issue if that can be introduced in the curriculum.

LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS - MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

(No. B/357) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Ministerial Committee set up to look into the viability of the use of Liquefied Natural Gas in Mauritius, he will state the –

- (a) composition thereof;
- (b) date on which the meetings thereof have been held, and

(c) date of submission of the report thereof and table copy thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Madam Speaker, in its report dated October 2013, the National Energy Commission chaired by Mr Dev Manraj recommended that a feasibility study on Liquefied Natural Gas be completed as soon as possible. I quote –

“As natural gas plants are ideal backup capacity for renewable energy, are less polluting than coal, diesel and HFO, and will act also as anticipated investment for future semi base and peak load needs. Furthermore natural gas can be of relevance to transport fuel needs.”

Unfortunately, no action was taken on that report. When I assumed office, I started exploring avenues for the implementation of that recommendation.

After internal discussions at the level of my Ministry, a Ministerial Committee was set up to examine the issue.

I chaired that Committee - and I am still chairing that Committee - which is also composed of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development and the Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management.

Officials of the two Ministries as well as representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and External Communications, the Mauritius Ports Authority, the General Manager, Central Electricity Board, were in attendance at that Committee. Also present were Messrs Dev Manraj and Mr Graeme Robertson, the latter being my personal Adviser.

The Committee met on 14 July 2015. In view of the numerous technical issues related to the project, it set up a technical working group chaired by my Ministry, to look into all the aspects related to the project.

The technical working group comprises representatives of my Ministry, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, Disaster and Beach Management, the Ministry of Tourism and External Communications, the Central Electricity Board, the State Trading Corporation and the Mauritius Ports Authority.

The working group has held six meetings and I understand has almost finalised the Request for Proposal for a full feasibility study of the project. It is expected to submit a report

to me shortly. A representative of Marena has also joined the Committee with a view to migrating the whole process to Marena under the relevant legislation.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether this call for offers for a full feasibility study has already been issued?

Mr Collendavelloo: No, it has not been issued yet. We are expecting the report first.

Mr Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I must beg to differ with the hon. Vice-Prime Minister. I was a Member of the National Energy Commission. My question is as follows: would the hon. Vice-Prime Minister shed some light on the WorleyParsons Report, pre-feasibility study for assessing the potential of using LNG for electricity generation in Mauritius of 31 July 2014 which states the following –

“Import and use of LNG for power generation and transport, commercial and industrial sectors, is technologically feasible, but commercially challenging in the current conditions due to mainly low demand from the sources considered.”

Now that the Inter-Ministerial Committee has been set up, what is the mandate of that Committee against this backdrop and how have things evolved in the meantime?

Mr Collendavelloo: Thank you. That is precisely the point. The WorleyParsons Report did stress these difficulties. What we had was the National Energy Commission which recommended this and WorleyParsons told us: ‘Be careful! There are certain pitfalls.’ This is why there is a Technical Committee. I have gone through the Minutes of Proceedings of all the meetings of this Technical Committee, not easy reading and certainly not very pleasant as bedtime reading, but the problem is, of course, the commercial challenge trying to find whether it is commercially viable. This Government is not going to take any risk with spending huge amounts of money unless we are sure that this is commercially feasible and viable. Well, in a nutshell, the question is the transport of this gas. So, we are trying to work with the Board to see what are the other means. I am not a technician. There is a Technical Committee which is dealing with all this.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the Technical Committee has had meetings with the private sector or they have been called in the working session?

Mr Collendavello: No, not at all. The Technical Committee is composed of several members and in this Technical Committee we have no member of the private sector. This is a Government Body.

Mr Uteem: I am happy to hear the hon. Vice-Prime Minister mention that we are not going to go forward unless this feasibility study makes it viable for Mauritius to use LNG. But, this being the case, wouldn't the hon. Vice-Prime Minister agree with me that it is premature, today, to already require in all requests for proposals of new electricity plant that they should be compatible with LNG and, therefore, you know already binding our arms into limited technological plants?

Mr Collendavello: We are travelling outside the purview of the question. So, I am answering offhand. The two new gas turbines which are being contemplated are combined cycles so that they can be adjusted to LNG. But, I grant that we are right to be very careful. I grant that.

AIR QUALITY - MONITORING

(No. B/358) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the monitoring of the quality of the air around Mauritius, he will state the results obtained over the period January 2016 to date from the fixed stations and mobile stations respectively in respect of the regions concerned with the exercise, indicating if the quality of the air in the vicinity of the bus terminals have equally been monitored and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, with regard to monitoring using fixed stations, I am informed that my Ministry is equipped with two fixed stations since August 2015. One is located at the Islamic Cultural Centre in Port Louis and the other one at the Mauritius Meteorological Services at Vacoas. These stations are continuously monitoring the quality of ambient air with respect to airborne particles which is called Particulate Matter or PM10.

Particulate Matter (PM10) average values at Vacoas is 12.4 microgrammes per metre cube (Mg/m^3) for the period January 2016 till date and in Port Louis it is 12.5 Mg/m^3 cube for the same period. The results so far are well within the Mauritian Air Quality Standard of $100\text{Mg}/\text{m}^3$.

Madam Speaker, regarding monitoring with respect to mobile stations, the National Environmental Laboratory of my Ministry is equipped with mobile ambient air monitoring stations which include particulate matter analysers, gaseous analysers (such as sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide and oxides of nitrogen) and a portable gas analyser. These mobile/portable analysers are used to monitor air quality especially at hotspots for appropriate enforcement measures to be taken as and when needed.

Since January 2016, the mobile units were deployed in the region of Pointe aux Sables, Goodlands Industrial Estates (March 2016) and Coromandel Industrial Estates (April 2016). Parameters tested include sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide and oxides of nitrogen. Particulate matter was also measured at Pointe aux Sables. All the results obtained were within the relevant standards.

Madam Speaker, regarding Air Quality in the vicinity of bus terminals, so far, monitoring at Vacoas Bus Terminal and Immigration Square Bus Terminal (Port Louis) have been carried out.

The fixed station at Vacoas is approximately 500 metres from the bus terminal of Vacoas. The data recorded from the continuous monitoring of this fixed station indicate that the Vacoas Bus Terminal does not impact on the ambient air quality in its vicinity with respect to particulate matter.

Monitoring at Immigration Square Bus Terminal (Port Louis) was conducted in December 2015 using the mobile station. Parameters such as particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide were monitored. All the parameters monitored were well within their respective standard limits.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that monitoring of air quality in the vicinity of two other bus terminals, namely at Curepipe and Rivière du Rempart, will very soon be conducted.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether there is a set-up for the monitoring following results with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in order to exchange information and act accordingly?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: As soon as I will get the information, I will do that.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the monitoring of air quality at the level of power stations, especially at St Louis and Fort Victoria is being done?

Can the hon. Minister inform us about the latest tests carried out in the vicinity of St Louis and Fort Victoria?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I am informed that there are some air monitoring exercises that have been carried out. At Fort Victoria, there was a caravan during the period of 21 to 28 January and the parameters were within the standards.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know what are the latest results for St Louis and whether there are any tests forthcoming?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, as far as I am concerned with the information, I don't have it now. We will carry them out if there is a need to do it, if there are some protestations or requests.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Up until 2014, we were ranked second worldwide by the World Health Organisation insofar as our overall air quality is concerned. What is the ranking today?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Will the hon. Member please repeat the question? Thank you.

Mr Mahomed: Up until 2014, we were ranked by the World Health Organisation as having the second best air quality in the world. What is the ranking today?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Minister does not have the information, say so!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Thank you. I don't have the information, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, last!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, since there have been repeated complaints...

(Interruptions)

Since there have been repeated complaints from the inhabitants of Canal Dayot and Pailles regions concerning the air quality in the region of St Louis, can the hon. Minister, at least, inform the House whether he intends to carry out stack emissions and also other tests to measure the quality of air and then have the results laid in the Assembly?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I will do that, thank you.

COCONUT TREES – PLANTING PROJECT

(No. B/359) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the project for the planting of coconut trees around Mauritius, he will state the number of coconut trees which have been planted as at to date, indicating –

- (a) the location thereof;
- (b) the names of the suppliers thereof;
- (c) the cost thereof;
- (d) the procurement method used therefor;
- (e) if a monitoring exercise has been carried out to determine the success rate thereof, and
- (f) if prior technical expertise was sought on the use of coconut trees as an effective method to combat soil erosion on the coast and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, a total of 955 coconut trees have been planted so far at 11 different locations.

Information being sought for in respect of parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, is being tabled.

With regard to part (d) of the question, I am informed that the Beach Authority had recourse to procurement methods as provided in the Public Procurement Act namely through quotations at the initial stage and then the open advertised bidding method whereby coconut trees had to be supplied on an “as and when required” basis.

With regard to part (e) of the question, regular maintenance and watering of the plants are undertaken and the success rate is 87%.

With respect to part (f) of the question, I am informed that the primary objective of planting coconut trees along the coast was to embellish the coastal belt and increase the green cover.

However, I am also informed that the Department of Environment provided technical advice as follows -

- (i) besides embellishing the coastal scenery, coconut trees have a functional role in mitigating beach erosion. Coconut trees have a fine fibrous root system and large root ball which tends to withstand wave and wind action and stabilise the beaches better than other trees with lesser root balls, and
- (ii) the required set back from the High Water Mark for planting of the coconut trees should be at least 15 metres.

Mr Bhagwan: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he can inform the House in which Consultant Report it has been recommended to carry on the planting of coconut trees to combat soil erosion, especially on the coast?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, no consultant has been sought for this.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. In Parliamentary Question No. B/105 with respect to contractors who are maintaining our beaches, I did ask the hon. Minister a question about whether the maintenance of these trees fall under their responsibility and he said that he would look into the matter. Would the Minister be able to tell us today whether the maintenance of the coconut trees - many of which are dying off - falls under the responsibility of these beach contractors?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, as from the information I am given, there is only one contractor which is in Cap Malheureux, who has this contract of maintenance of the coconut palms.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister - he is a freshly appointed Minister of Environment - whether he can guarantee to the House that there have been no corrupt practices - which looks like an innocent coconut tree matter - therein? Is he in a position to give that guarantee to the House, and if not, what? You need advice from in front of you? No?

(Interruptions)

Therefore, are you satisfied, and if not, are you going to have an enquiry carried out by the proper persons?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, as far as I am concerned, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition just mentioned, I have no factual evidence that there has been any corruption because if there is any, I think anybody who has this type of information, should go to the Police.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has enquired with the Beach Authority - he has informed us of the procedures which have been used for the purchase of these coconut trees - which is that company, who are those persons who have supplied these coconut trees and at what rate?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, there are different types of methods that have been used, as I have already said in my answer. They are done in such a way as per the Public Procurement Act namely, through quotation at initial stage.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Dayal, you had a question?

(Interruptions)

Mr Dayal: I would like...

(Interruptions)

I would like the hon. Minister to confirm whether before 2014 coconut trees were planted in the general area of Caudan, who was the Minister and whether any coconut trees are standing there at present?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please do not impute motives!

(Interruptions)

Mr Dayal: On a point of order, Madam...

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I don't have such information.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dayal, I will take your point of order after Question Time!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I don't have such information as at now, but what I know is that coconut trees are planted near all the hotels around the littoral. This is for embellishing and this is to procure a tropical aspect to the country for the tourists.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Next question, hon. Lesjongard!

(Interruptions)

Now, you are disturbing the proceedings of the House with crosstalking! Hon. Lesjongard, ask your question!

CEB – EX-BINANI SITE - LAND LEASE

(No. B/360) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if it has submitted a request for land to the Mauritius Ports Authority and, if so, indicate the purpose therefor.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that CEB holds a lease of a portion of land of the extent of approximately 1.2 hectares on a site near Fort George Power Station.

On 12 January 2016, CEB proposed to the MPA that a larger portion of land of 2 hectares near Fort George Power Station be leased to CEB.

On 18 March 2016, MPA offered two hectares of land found on the ex-Binani site. An agreement in principle has been reached between CEB and MPA and will be finalised soon.

The purpose is to install two heavy duty industrial gas turbines, configured in open cycle mode, each rated between 35 MW and 40 MW.

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

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the MPA has agreed for these two new gas turbines to be purchased and installed there?

Mr Collendavello: The MPA has agreed in principle to the lease. This agreement was reached yesterday. So, I do not have the details yet. But I shall come to the House with a statement.

Mr Lesjongard: I understand that an agreement has been reached now between the CEB and the MPA. Was there a formal objection from the MPA before that agreement was reached?

Mr Collendavello: I am sorry, I cannot understand the question. What happened is that MPA has offered land to CEB, and the offer came from MPA.

(Interruptions)

No, on 18 March. Of course, in the past!

(Interruptions)

No, in 2016! I know it is a bit confusing. Let me give the chronology. At first, it already had the CT Power land of 1.2 hectares. Then, CEB wanted to get a portion of land of two hectares somewhere in the Port area, and that was in January. Then, they discussed and MPA came with another portion of land, and that was on 18 March 2016. Another portion of land - that is the confusion - but still of two hectares. Yesterday, they have reached an agreement and it is too early for me to give details ...

(Interruptions)

In the Port area, at Fort George. It is the ex-Binani site. It is where Binani was going to have its operations.

CEB - SMALL SCALE DISTRIBUTED GENERATOR NET METERING SCHEME

(No. B/361) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Small Scale Distributed Generator Net Metering Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the number of –

- (a) applications received thereunder since its inception in September 2015 to date, and
- (b) consumers thereunder connected to the grid of the Central Electricity and exporting power.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Madam Speaker, in September 2015, the Central Electricity Board launched the Small Scale Distributed Generation Net Metering Scheme (SSDG) for a total capacity of 5 MW in Mauritius and 200 kW in Rodrigues, allocated to two categories of customers as follows –

- Category 1 – single phase domestic customers for a total capacity of 4 MW in Mauritius and 150 kW in Rodrigues, and
- Category 2 – the three phase domestic customers IRS, RES and other customers having a declared load less than 20 kVA, for a total capacity of 1 MW in Mauritius and 50 kW in Rodrigues.

I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that, as at 02 May 2016, it has received 1,618 applications in Mauritius and 26 in Rodrigues. The allocated capacity for Category 2 consumers has already been reached while Category 1 is still open both in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

According to the records of CEB –

- (i) 137 Undertaker's Permits have been issued, 11 installations have been completed; three have already been connected to the grid;
- (ii) 78 permits will be issued by CEB this week;
- (iii) 292 applicants have completed publication of notices, as required by the Electricity Act, and 152 applicants still have to submit their published notices, and
- (iv) technical surveys are being carried out for 828 applications.

I have had the occasion in the past to draw the attention of the CEB that I was entirely dissatisfied with the lengthy processing time of the SSDG applications, and I have asked CEB Management to review the procedures.

I am also proposing to bring necessary amendments to the legislation ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Sorry, I have several times asked hon. Members or hon. Ministers not to bring their phones in the House, please!

Mr Collendavello: I am also proposing to bring necessary amendments to the legislation to facilitate the processing of Undertaker's Permit for SSDGs.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister for his reply and for stating to the House his dissatisfaction in the rate requests are being approved and consumers connected to the network, because out of 1,618 applications, only three have been connected to the network. It is at a very slow pace. My question pertains to a category which is neither found under the SSDG and the MSDG, that is, consumers ranging from 5 to 15 kW. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House what the CEB intends to do to include that category of consumers under either SSDG or the MSDG schemes?

Mr Collendavello: I have raised this question with CEB. Now, to be fair to CEB, let us agree that this is new for them. They have been used to be working in a particular engineering surrounding, and that has been a little bit slow in taking off. For this grey area, we have had several requests, that is, several applications like petrol stations and similar medium scale enterprises. What CEB is doing, is to do *ad hoc* contracts just as it is doing for the MSDGs like Bagatelle, Super U, etc. So, it is not satisfactory, I agree, but let us say that, very soon, when MARENA will take over the whole operation, we hope that there will be a new impetus to the matter.

Mr Mahomed: Madam Speaker, once upon a time ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Mahomed: ... the procedure was quite cumbersome, comprising requirement of the assent of the President of the Republic for each and every power producer in the country. But I do believe this has been revised.

(Interruptions)

Not yet?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, ask your question!

Mr Collendavello: No, it has not been revised, but that administrative side of the process is not the problem because once it has left CEB, it comes to my Ministry and - I have checked today - it takes about three days between the receipt in my Ministry and the President's signature. So, that is not really the problem. You want to see the problem? This is the problem. That is the flowchart between the time an application comes in - and it goes

through all this. It is like a long-term underground map - until you get your permit. So, that is unacceptable. We are working on it. A new Head of the Division has been appointed, with specific instructions to try and speed up the process. There is a new organigram that is being worked out. To be fair, as I have said, it was a new matter. They are very scared of safety issues. They want to check everything before they grant the permit. They are engineers. I do not want to play with safety as well.

Mr Ganoo: I think the hon. Vice-Prime Minister highlighted one of the reasons which are causing this delay in the granting of the permits, that is, the necessity to amend the law, the legal framework.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether regulations cannot be passed to change the law to help to expedite matters or do we have to come up with a new Electricity Act to review the Utility Regulatory Authority in which law, in fact, this Authority is given the power to grant licences in respect of utility services? So, can it not be done by regulations to expedite matters?

Mr Collendavelloo: Well, we are both lawyers. We have, of course, thought of this. I do not think that regulations would have been *ultra vires* should we do it. It is better to pass a law, come to Parliament and review the whole process. It won't take a long time. The law is ready. We just need to go through the process. That will not be very difficult.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Lesjongard!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will get back to the earlier question I put to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister concerning the category of consumers between 5 kW and 50 kW, which comprises mostly of small and medium entrepreneurs. What is the difficulty in bringing that category of consumers under the ambit of the SSDG? Do we have a problem in bringing them because it is the same type of metering that will be proposed to those consumers at the end of the day?

Mr Collendavelloo: Let us be frank over the whole issue. The issue is that CEB was dragged into a process. For years and centuries, they have been used to the same sort of power plant. Now, we are asking them to go into a paradigm shift and that has been the great difficulty. Now, for your precise category, yes, I have seen the list. I have worked on the list, they are many; most of them petrol stations because they have got additional facilities and they are contracting. They are doing contracts with each and every one until we work. Don't forget, they have done it in phases. The first phase is almost finished, the 4 MW, and we have

the IRS, RES and all these. When they have gone through the learning process, they will come on the second phase. I hope they do it. If you want to help, you can go back to CEB.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye! Your question!

MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE - BAN

(No. B/362) Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to monosodium glutamate, he will state -

- (a) if the banning of the importation thereof has been recommended by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, indicating -
 - (i) if this measure has been extended to all imported food containing same, and
 - (ii) the number of countries where similar measures have been applied, and
- (b) if any complaint has been registered from any local consumer thereof in relation thereto.

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that in July 2015, my Ministry had consultations with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life as well as with other relevant authorities to consider introducing a ban on the importation and sale of Monosodium Glutamate (MSG), most commonly known as Ajinomoto used in food preparations in view of its adverse effects on health.

My Ministry was apprised by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life that there is no convincing scientific evidence that MSG is a significant factor in causing systemic reactions resulting in severe illness or mortality. However, MSG has a high degree of sodium content, and is thus a silent killer causing several reactions such as headaches, fatigue, disorientation, facial pressure and tightness.

Moreover, I have been informed that in Mauritius, it is estimated that some 242,000 adults aged between 20 to 74 years suffer from hypertension, and the 4% of all deaths are attributed to hypertension as underlying cause. Mauritius also has one of the highest rates of diabetes and prediabetes, a condition associated with increased risk of heart disease. The high

rates of diabetes and prediabetes, coupled with those of obesity, dyslipidaemia and hypertension constitute a significant threat in terms of social and economic burden, be it for direct or indirect medical cost.

According to a Survey on Household Out-of Pocket Expenditure on Health, the households' spending on health amounted to approximately Rs10.81 billion in the Financial Year 2014; and hypertension and diabetes were at the top of the list of the most commonly reported diseases.

While the highly controversial past of MSG and the accompanying ambiguous research have led people to believe MSG is harmless, a study has linked MSG intake to obesity and other diseases mentioned above. It is, therefore, appropriate to ban the sale of MSG in Mauritius as it is likely to bring more harm than good to the population, taking into account the Mauritian context and not based on international surveys.

Government has decided that it is not worth the risk to let our population continue consuming MSG, so as to prevent the health of the population from deteriorating any further.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) (i) of the question, the decision is to ban importation of MSG as such only. It does not apply to imported food containing MSG.

In respect of part (a) (ii) of the question, I have not been made aware of any country where, currently, importation of MSG is not allowed. As I stated previously, we should focus on the local context and not just adhere to what is being practised elsewhere.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that, as at date, my Ministry has not received any complaint from any local consumer in relation to MSG.

Dr. Joomaye: Madam Speaker. I wish to thank the hon. Minister for his answer. According to international Good Manufacturing Practice, the safe dose for MSG in food preparations - because I understand that MSG on its own has been banned but not MSG in food preparations which are imported - would be 5 mL, 5 mL per KG. So, would the hon. Minister consider introducing a threshold dose for importation of food preparations to be authorised for import?

Mr Gungah: Can the hon. Member repeat the question, please?

Dr. Joomaye: Since MSG has not been banned in food preparations, will the hon. Minister consider introducing a threshold dose in the food preparations being imported which would be 5 ML per KG, which is internationally accepted?

Mr Gungah: In fact, I welcome the suggestion of the hon. Member, because I think it is very important that products that are imported into the country have specifications of not only the presence of MSG but as well as the quantity, the percentage.

Dr. Joomaye: MSG being a flavour enhancing ingredient in the light of the information that the hon. Minister has given, will he consider allowing the food manufacturers, the food technology industry to continue to import MSG to add in their food preparations, for example, the preparation of dried noodles industry, one of which is very well-known locally?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, the main problem is that we cannot control the amount of MSG that is being used in, for example, dried noodles. It is just like going to a restaurant and ordering for a meal without knowing the quantity that the chef has used in the food. So, the issue of having a partial ban does not arise, the ban is applied to each and all.

Mr Mohamed: Since the ban is on all food that is produced in Mauritius as well as the importation of MSG itself and does not apply to MSG that is already in food imported to Mauritius, which is in itself a partial ban because it is coming to Mauritius within food that exists already. Would the hon. Minister consider the possibility of having regulations to the effect that state obligatory on labels that MSG is present, be it for imported food, be it for food that is sold in restaurants or food that is even manufactured in Mauritius? So, have it as a label pre-conditioned, but in bold characters so that the consumers can decide whether they want to buy or not, at least the choice resides in the consumers.

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I fully agree with the hon. Member. In fact, what I replied earlier is that the presence of MSG is normally written on the package. Some of the packages have also the quantity, that is, the percentage, but we should ensure now that all the products have their specified quantities and it is, of course, up to the consumers to decide the right choice.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Doesn't the hon. Minister think that this banning of the MSG should have been, in view of the reasons that he just gave to the House, accompanied by a wider campaign among the population in terms of salt consumption which seems to be on the high side among our population.

Mr Gungah: Campaign is already being done, but we have to keep on doing it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Being given that there has been no scientific evidence that it causes harm to people consuming MSG, so, on what ground, the hon. Minister thinks that we should ban it in Mauritius?

Madam Speaker: But the hon. Minister already replied!

Mr Gungah: As I said, Madam Speaker....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please! You want to reply, hon. Minister! Please, do!

(Interruptions)

You have already replied.

Mr Gungah: As I said, Madam Speaker, there have been adverse reports and I can refer to one of the reports that came from the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Gungah: ... which was commissioned by the FDA and the report listed a range of possible symptoms associated with MSG consumption like burning sensation in the back of the neck, forearms and chest, and so on. In fact, as I said, Government does not want to take the risk to let the population consume products that may even lead to death.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Next question, hon. Dr. Joomaye!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Joomaye, Next question!

(Interruptions)

HOSPITALS - CORONARY ANGIOPLASTY – STENTS

(No. B/363) Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the cardiac patients who underwent coronary angioplasty in 2015, he will state the number of –

- (a) drug eluting stents used during that period and
- (b) stents purchased by his Ministry over the same period.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, concerning part (a) of the question, I am informed that 420 drug eluting stents were used in the year 2015 on patients who underwent coronary angioplasty during that period.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry procured 52 stents in 2015. The balance of stents used was made up of those which had been procured in 2014.

Dr. Joomaye: I would like the hon. Minister to confirm if he is aware that drug eluting stents are much more efficient than normal stents and that the hon. Minister would spare no effort to make these stents available for the patients undergoing coronary angiography in our public hospitals?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, the jury is still out on this issue. In fact, we have both kinds of stents that are being used in our hospitals. We have the drug eluting stents. For example, in 2014, there were 1200 drug eluting stents that were used and bare metal stents were 1330 and this has been the current practice.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life spends lots of money on cardiac services and coronary angiography and on buying stents. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he has an internal audit of services for follow-up of patients who have had these procedures and to know whether these procedures have been done correctly, and the rate of relapse is according to international norms?

Mr Gayan: As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, I have asked for statistics on the use of drug eluting stents and metal stents and to see which is more effective. But I must say that I have not been communicated the result of that audit and when I pressed my officers on that, they sent me articles from other countries. But I said, "I need to know what is happening here", and they said: "They don't have the capacity for research". I said, "No, but we need the statistics", and I hope I get them.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Is the hon. Minister aware or has he been made aware that there is an acute shortage of stents in certain hospitals; Jeetoo Hospital

being one of them whereby I have constituents of mine who are waiting for two months, three months now for a stent? Can the hon. Minister, please, look into the matter? I have attended too many funerals these days, I don't want to attend so many because it is life threatening. They are waiting for stents.

Madam Speaker: You have made your point!

Mr Gayan: Well, Madam Speaker, in fact, I must say that whenever there is urgent need for stents, stents are being procured at the hospitals by way of local purchase. But I must say that the issue of stents has been a problem because there was invitation for bids in November 2014 and when the process was on, an aggrieved bidder went to the IRP and it was only in October 2015 that the IRP gave its decision and the decision was to annul the tender exercise. So, the whole thing had to be started again, but, in the meantime, stents are being procured at the level of each hospital.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Precisely, following from what my Constituency colleague left, there is a big shortage of stents in Jeetoo Hospital and the hon. Minister has said that "as far back as October 2015". I am very aware of this IRP case. So, more than six months ago, there has already been a ruling that a new tender should be launched. So, may I know from the hon. Minister why is he taking so long for his Ministry to launch a new tender when we are talking about life saving devices here?

Mr Gayan: Tenders were launched in January 2016, Madam Speaker. But as I have said repeatedly here, the tendering procedure, the procurement procedures are very lengthy and then, there is always the possibility of an aggrieved bidder challenging the decision and then it has to go to the IRP. But I must say that there has been no case of urgency where a stent has not been procured at the level of the hospitals.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Leopold!

PLASTIC BAGS - BAN

(No. B/364) **Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the plastic bags, he will state the difficulties being encountered by his Ministry for the enforcement of the ban

thereof since January 2016 to date in mainland Mauritius, indicating the remedial measures taken in relation thereto.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that no major difficulty is being encountered by my Ministry for the enforcement of the banning of the plastic bags. This bold measure requires, first and foremost, a change in people's mindset from a throw-away society to an ecologically responsible one. It is by far, one of the most challenging national environmental initiatives which has involved many stakeholders from manufacturers, importers, traders to all of us, as customers.

At the very outset, my Ministry has laid emphasis on sensitisation and awareness raising on a national basis with a mix of communication tools for maximum outreach, namely TV clips, radio spots, flyers, posters, banners, billboards and delivery of talks.

Madam Speaker, regarding enforcement -

- (i) Firstly, there has been strict enforcement at the level of importation. To date some 180,500 banned bags have been seized. The *modus operandi* for disposal of plastic bags seized is through recycling with the local recyclers.
- (ii) Secondly, the *police de l'environnement* and officers of my Ministry have already embarked on enforcement on retail outlets namely supermarkets, markets, fairs and shops. The approach has been rather to sensitise the concerned operators.

Observations made indicate that, in general, there is a compliance to the regulations.

However,

- (i) some traders are still supplying the non-woven polypropylene bags as these are mistaken as being of textile material.
- (ii) some traders are also supplying the transparent non-biodegradable roll-on bags for packing of fruits and vegetables.

So far, the enforcement officers have sensitised the operators through dissipating their confusions, providing explanations, clarifications and distributions flyers.

To date, after four months of on-ground sensitisation, I can say that I am fully satisfied with the response we are getting with stakeholders -

- (i) 9 local manufacturers are already producing biodegradable and compostable bags from 105 tons of duly certified potato-starch and corn-starch pallets imported from France and Italy;
- (ii) 3 manufacturers of non-woven polypropylene bags have already registered to shift to production of non-woven biodegradable bags, and
- (iii) about 4 million biodegradable and compostable bags have also been imported from Italy since 01 January 2016.

Biodegradable and compostable bags are now available at the local markets at a reasonable price.

Madam Speaker, now that we are witnessing a real change in the mindset of Mauritians against the use of plastic bags, we will embark towards strict enforcement of the legislation.

My Ministry has worked out a protocol to be used as guidance by authorised officers, namely Police Officer and authorised officers of the Department of Environment and Local Authorities to ensure enforcement in a harmonised manner.

Mr Leopold: Madam Speaker, would the hon. Minister inform the House how many contraventions his Ministry has undertaken since the enforcement of this law?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: I don't have this information with me, Madam Speaker.

Mr Mahomed: With regard to the difficulties the Ministry is facing - perhaps this has got to do with the substitution available on the market, the price of it being too high - would the hon. Minister consider bringing forward in the next Budget exercise some sort of subsidy for the replacement?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, I have drawn your attention. This is the last warning I am giving you.

(Interruptions)

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, to answer the question, I think there are proposals in this sense, but we have to analyse if it is possible to do so. It is a national consensus. We know that it is a very courageous measure to be taken, but for the environment problem that we had, we have to stop using plastics in the future.

Mr Mahomed: I was not referring to the *sac cornet*. I was referring to the bags that are sold in supermarkets. They are sold for Rs45 and Rs50. That is what I was referring to.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I think people have the option. They don't have to use the bags which cost Rs45. Even if they cost Rs45, they are reusable.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Now, hon. Jhugroo, out!

(Interruptions)

I order you out!

(Interruptions)

You can't continue like this!

(Interruptions)

Now, don't take your time! You are losing the time of the House.

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/372, B/373, B/376, B/378 and B/380.

CITÉ ROMA, RICHE TERRE - SEWERAGE SYSTEM

(No. B/365) Mr G. Oree (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the low cost housing estate in Cité Roma, Riche Terre, in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Long Mountain, he will state if he is aware that the residents thereof have to regularly avail themselves of the services of the Wastewater Management Authority at the cost of two thousand rupees per intervention due to a lack of proper sewerage system thereat and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the NHDC Ltd., information as to if remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that Cité Roma, Riche Terre is an ex-CHA Housing estate constructed in the 1980's. As such, it does not fall under the purview of the National Housing Development Co. Ltd (NHDC).

The housing units are of duplex type and a common cesspit has been provided for two houses. Some of the families have carried out concrete extensions to their ex-CHA houses and have put up individual septic tanks on their plot of land.

All the residents have purchased their housing units from Government at the nominal price of Rs1,000 per unit in the 1990's. As full-fledged owners of their houses, these families are expected to look after their property, including the maintenance of their cesspits, at their own costs, in case of overflowing.

GLOBAL BUSINESS SECTOR - GROWTH RATE

(No. B/366) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Global Business sector, he will state the growth rate thereof over the past three years, indicating the expected growth rate thereof in respect of the current financial year.

(Withdrawn)

LOW COST HOUSING UNITS - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/367) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the low cost housing units, he will give a list of the applications received for the allocation thereof in the course of the current financial year to date, indicating the ones which have been approved, indicating if the said applicants have been delivered therewith.

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that following Government decision in April 2015 to the effect that only vulnerable households living under the poverty threshold of Rs6,200 registered in the Social Register of Mauritius would be provided with appropriate support by the National Empowerment Foundation. An island-wide survey was carried out from June to December 2015.

Based on the new survey, I am informed that the Foundation has, as at end of March 2016, received 334 applications for housing facilities and the status is as follows –

- 111 of the applicants are land owners;
- 43 lessees of State land, and
- 180 have authorisation to construct from the owner.

A further survey is presently ongoing to determine the technical specificities in terms of land topography, the actual extent of land available and the size of the individual housing unit to be constructed thereon. These will be fed into the tender documents to be launched shortly.

I wish to inform the House that the new policy is to construct fully concrete housing unit of up to 50 square metres. Hence, the need to have this detailed survey.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that before the new policy came into force, NEF was providing Corrugated-cum Iron Sheet housing units of 31.5 square metres at a unit cost of Rs276,000 to beneficiaries who were either land owners or in possession of a State land lease or having obtained authorisation from parents and relatives. These beneficiaries had to reimburse an amount of Rs42,000 in monthly instalments of Rs500 over a period of seven years.

Madam Speaker, in respect of landless beneficiaries, NEF was, in the past, also involved in the construction of integrated housing units.

With regard to hardship cases of landless beneficiaries, they were referred to the Ministry of Housing and Lands for consideration for provision of State land lease.

Currently, consultations are ongoing between my Ministry and the Ministry of Housing and Lands/NHDC for the provision of full concrete housing units to beneficiaries who are not owners of land.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, from the reply of the hon. Minister, I note that more than 50% of the applicants do not own a plot of land. Under the new conditions, will the hon. Minister confirm that ownership of land is a mandatory criterion for eligibility for a low-cost housing unit? Has the Minister any solution to those who don't have a plot of land?

Mr Roopun: In fact, we are working together with the Ministry of Housing and Lands to consider ways and means whereby beneficiaries under the SRM will be given a percentage of houses within NHDC estates which are in construction. We are trying, instead of building dedicated housing estates consisting essentially of all those registered under SRM, to bring them within the NHDC estates so that there can be some integration with the lower middle income group.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister inform the House when the 48 units which are found at Petite Rivière, Albion Road, will be delivered to the beneficiaries?

Mr Roopun: The pre-selection exercise has been completed, Madam Speaker, and we will be shortly - in a few days - proceeding with the drawing of the lots so that we can identify those who will be given those units.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, the fact that there are 180 - more than 50 percent – applicants, not owning a plot of land, may I request the hon. Minister to, at least, consider the possibility of providing them with that structure with metal and timber like was the case before. Can the hon. Minister consider this possibility?

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, I wish to clarify something. The 180 persons I mentioned are not owners of land, but they have been given permission by the owners to construct; which means that there is a possibility to construct a housing unit for them on the land perhaps of a relative. Here, we are not concerned with those who are landless and for whom we can't construct a social housing.

Mr Rughoobur: Is the hon. Minister confirming that, not owning a plot of land, but merely having permission from relatives, satisfies the criteria for getting a plot? Even if they are not the owner of a plot of land, if they get permission from a relative, does that allow them to satisfy the criteria?

Mr Roopun: No. In fact, this has been the practice before and we are working on specific conditions under which this will be maintained. The policy is still here. For example, if a relative or a parent gives the permission to a child, we are allowing the construction.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. Minister is aware that many of those applications are pending for years and I know that he has taken a good decision to move forward with a better plan. Can the hon. Minister ensure that those plans are communicated to the applicants and that there is a proactive communication with them?

Mr Roopun: In fact, we know that there is a backlog and we will be giving priority to those who have been registered before so that everybody is given a fair chance, but we are also going to consider if there are specific cases, especially, if we have got young children. We have a Project Implementation Committee which is going to work on each and every application.

Mr Bhagwan: I come back to the houses at Petite Rivière. Regarding these houses which were launched when the Deputy Prime Minister was Minister of Social Integration, commonly known as *la caze boîte zalumette* - following the questions that we have asked in Parliament - can the hon. Minister inform the House whether all the amenities such as *l'agrandissement des portes* and others have been completed?

Mr Roopun: Yes, all the remedial works had been completed by December. Now, we are in the process of completing works enabling connection with all the utilities and this is presently ongoing.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question No. B/370 has been withdrawn! Time is over! Hon. Dayal, you had a point of order!

Mr Dayal: Yes, Madam Speaker, you will recall that when I asked a question to the hon. Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management concerning the plantation of coconut trees before 2014 and I specifically mentioned the area of Caudan where coconut trees...

Madam Speaker: No, excuse me! What is your point of order?

Mr Dayal: My point of order is, Madam, that when I was asking this question I knew hundred percent that the Minister was the then Minister...

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Dayal, excuse me, this is not a point of order!

(Interruptions)

This is not a point of order and I cannot accept this!

(Interruptions)

Please, this is not a point of order. Please sit down! I am not prepared to accept it!

(Interruptions)

Mr Dayal: I'll rephrase it, Madam. I heard the word...

Madam Speaker: But I said I am not prepared to take it. This is not a point of order!

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.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

(4.20 p.m.)

MILITARY ROAD, PORT LOUIS – SQUATTERS - RELOCATION

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I propose to make a statement in relation to the matter raised by hon. Mohamed on 26 April 2016 at the National Assembly at adjournment time and pertaining to the squatters who are occupying land at Military Road, Port Louis. The House will recall that during my previous statements and replies to PQs on squatters, I informed that a cut-off date of 01 July 2015 has been adopted so that the issue of squatting can be effectively monitored and addressed.

The squatters at Military Road are within the cut-off date of 01 July 2015. Some of them are occupying State lands on the proposed Ring Road track and some are just outside the track. It was initially proposed to relocate them on a site which was in the immediate vicinity of the land they are illegally occupying. Building site leases were granted to them. However, they made representations in view of the steepness of the proposed relocation site. It was thus decided to move them to another site along Canal Anglais next to the Islamic Centre for Disabled Children. Following consultations with authorities concerned, it was found that the cost of infrastructure would be on the high side and it was thus proposed to relocate these families at Pointe aux Sables.

Representations have been received by the families to the effect that they are being relocated too far from their present living environment.

Being given that social justice should prevail and people should not feel alienated in their new living environment, after due consideration of the case and following discussions with the relevant stakeholders, it has been decided that these families would be relocated at

the site along Canal Anglais itself which is next to the Islamic Centre for Disabled Children. I have had discussions with my colleague Minister of Local Government and PPS Salim Abbas Mamode, who have agreed that the local authority would put up the necessary offsite infrastructure, together with the NDU.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DR. A. G. JEETOO HOSPITAL - MRS S. A. - DEATH

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr A. Gayan): With your permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the case of Mrs S. A. Following the death of late patient S. A. on 25 April 2016 at the age of 61 and following media attention that this case has attracted and is still attracting, I wish to bring certain clarifications and enlighten the House on this issue.

Late patient S. A. was on 28 January 2016 admitted in the Surgical Unit of Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital for swelling of left breast and a biopsy was performed by the surgeon on the next day. The specimen was sent to the Central Health Laboratory at Victoria Hospital for Histopathology examination. The patient was discharged on 29 January 2016 with a review in two weeks' time.

On 11 February 2016, the patient attended the Surgical Outpatient Department, but the histopathological result of the biopsy was not available. The patient was reviewed on 25 February 2016 and the results showed no evidence of malignancy. In view of her state of health, however, the surgeon decided to have an ultrasound guided biopsy carried out on the following day, that is, on 26 February 2016 at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and the specimen was also sent to the Central Health Laboratory.

On 14 March 2016, the patient was seen in the Surgical Outpatient Department, and the result obtained on the same day showed features of infiltrating duct carcinoma grade II. The patient was immediately referred to the Oncologist for further management, especially since from the history given by her, that is, patient Mrs S. A., indicated that she has been suffering from left breast lump since the year 2013.

On 25 March 2016, the patient was advised by the Oncologist to attend the Radiotherapy Outpatient Department at Victoria Hospital for further management.

On 28 March 2016, the patient attended the Radiotherapy and Oncology Department at Victoria Hospital where further investigations such as blood tests, chest x-ray, ultrasound

abdomen and pelvis, cardiac echo and bone scan were done. The ultrasound abdomen and pelvis showed multiple lesions over the liver and the bone scan showed metastatic bone disease. These tests were necessary for planning her treatment. The nature and the poor prognosis of the disease were explained to the patient on the same day.

Patient S. A. received the first cycle of chemotherapy on 06 April 2016 and was kept in ward from 06 to 13 April 2016. On 13 April 2016, the patient was discharged as she was asymptomatic and she had no symptoms. On 25 April 2016, at 11.48 hours, the sister of late patient S. A. phoned SAMU services to transport patient with known cancer from Beau Bassin to Radiotherapy Department, Victoria Hospital. The sister informed that the patient has cancer and is weak, and is suffering from palpitations. Following conversation between the doctor of the SAMU Services and the sister of the late patient, the doctor proposed that, instead of a SAMU reanimation ambulance, a normal ambulance could be needed to bring the patient to hospital in Port Louis. The sister was also informed that arrangements had been made for the conveyance of the patient by a normal ambulance from the Brown Sequard Hospital at Beau Bassin itself, but that transport was not immediately available. The sister then proposed to carry late patient by her own means. The conversation lasted five minutes in all and according to unconfirmed sources, the patient died on the same day at around 12.10 hours at her residence.

PORT LOUIS – HAWKERS

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. A. Husnoo): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I would like to make a statement in regard to the hawkers in the City of Port Louis.

With regard to the problem of hawkers in the City of Port Louis, I would like to inform the House of the latest development.

The presence of hawkers on the streets of Port Louis, which has been going on for about 30 years or more, was creating quite a lot of problems to the public, the pedestrians, the market traders and the shop owners, amongst others. As the House is aware, there is a judgement from the Supreme Court, ordering the Commissioner of Police and the Lord Mayor to prevent the hawkers from operating within a radius of 500m from the market place.

While complying with this judgement, the Government and the Municipal Council of Port Louis have tried to find a humane solution to this problem and to enable the hawkers to continue earning their living.

Madam Speaker, may I inform the House that the vast majority of hawkers have already left the roads and streets and have moved into their temporary premises newly allocated to them. The remaining few others are moving in the coming few days.

Madam Speaker, there has been reluctance, initially, by the hawkers to move into this new location. However, the Lord Mayor and I have been in close and regular contacts with the hawkers and their representatives since the beginning of the relocation process. All along, it has been made clear to them that they are not being deprived of the possibility to earn a living. However, in the light of the Supreme Court judgement, they cannot continue to operate on the streets.

I must say that a large majority of the hawkers have participated in the process and they have been allocated a space to trade in temporarily.

Yesterday, I again met the representatives of the hawkers and they have agreed that they will all definitely move away from the streets of the city to occupy their new location.

There are still a few minor issues that need to be looked at, namely improving the amenities available thereat in relation to hygienic and sanitary conditions of the area, the possibility of providing some shelter to protect hawkers and public from the sun and rain. I have already requested the City Council to look at these issues very closely.

The representatives of the hawkers have informed me that there could be a few hawkers who may have been left out of the process for different reasons and possibly that they have not found it useful to participate in the process. To these people, we are offering another opportunity for them to be registered with the Municipality, and if they meet the qualifying criteria set out by the Municipal Council, they would definitely be allocated a space as well.

The House may wish to note that I have explained to the representatives of the hawkers that their relocation is a temporary one. As announced, the integrated project for traffic alleviation and redevelopment of the city will soon start and, in this project, provisions will be made for the hawkers to be allocated permanently a space to trade for themselves. The project is designed in such a manner as to direct the pedestrian flux through shops, boutiques and trading areas. This will definitely improve and open up new commercial opportunities for the hawkers.

I shall ensure that the Municipal Council monitors the situation closely at the two temporary sites, so that the hawkers may work in acceptable conditions, pending the implementation of the redevelopment of the City Project, which is forthcoming.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

PQ B/306 – PAS GÉOMÉTRIQUES - LEASE

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to make the following personal explanation with regard to the reply I made to PQ B/306 at the sitting of the National Assembly on 26 April 2016.

In the heat of the debate, I stated in my reply that, on 10 February 2011, *Compagnie Culture de Tabac Ltée* applied for an excision in favour of *Société Mohamed Umeir Ibne Showkut* when, I quote -

“I was not Minister at all.”

I also said, I quote –

“On 15th February 2011...I was not Minister.”

It was my intention to convey to the House that I was not Minister of Housing and Lands at the material time. In fact, I did rectify that slightly later, and I quote -

“If I, as a Minister of Housing, have not intervened on that...”

Madam Speaker, I wish to reassure the House that it was never my intention to mislead the House on a matter, which, moreover, is of public domain.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE NATIONAL WOMEN’S COUNCIL BILL

(No. V of 2016)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs A. Perraud): Madam Speaker, I move that the National Women’s Council Bill (No. V of 2016) be read a second time.

Madam Speaker, today is a historical moment for me, as you can understand, this is my first Bill as the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, even more so because of the cause I am supporting today.

Madam Speaker, you, yourself, are a standing testimonial of women empowerment, as you the very first woman Speaker treading this Parliament. This is a historical moment indeed, as this House is called upon today to embark on a wonderful journey, to promote the empowerment of women and girls of Mauritius for a fairer world.

Madam Speaker, it is with a feeling of pride and a proud sense of achievement that I am standing in front of the House today for the Second Reading of the National Women's Council Bill.

The main object of this Bill is to repeal the National Women's Council Act of 1985 to provide for a modern and appropriate legislative framework in order to further promote women's empowerment and gender equality, especially through the active participation of women in the social, economic and political fields.

Madam Speaker, women's empowerment is a pre-condition to poverty alleviation, reduction of inequalities and gender-based violence, among others, identified as key challenges for the 21st century by the United Nations General Assembly, which adopted the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development on 25 September 2015. Moreover, the adoption of a stand-alone goal aiming at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls underlines its critical importance for the realisation of the Post-2015 development Agenda.

Madam Speaker, the essence of sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at global level, is inclusiveness, which is high on the development agenda of this Government, as underlined in its Vision 2030 Economic Statement. There is no doubt that achieving gender equality, which is first and foremost a human right and a matter of dignity, can be a catalyst for growth.

Madam Speaker, the setting up of a full-fledged Ministry of Women's Rights and Family Affairs in 1982 under the able leadership of the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, was a visionary step towards women empowerment. It was written that three decades later, under the same Prime Minister's leadership, the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the Government would be giving a major boost to the gender equality agenda, through the adoption of modern

legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at all levels.

Madam Speaker, allow me to quote here Ms Phumzile, the Executive Director of UN Women, a great lady -

“Empowering women and girls and supporting their full participation can help solve the greatest challenges of the 21st Century.”

This is what we are heading for, today, Madam Speaker.

The National Women’s Council was set up under the National Women’s Council Act 1985 to have in place a structure that would mobilise women at grass root level and assist them in getting organised into Women’s Associations, vehicles through which they could express their needs and concerns.

The development of women’s movement produced different trends worldwide. Their mass mobilization, lobby and advocacy for the realisation of gender equality and women’s empowerment have resulted in remarkable outcomes in terms of influencing the State to bring about meaningful and positive measures to redress discrimination and gender inequalities.

However, while women’s issues have evolved rapidly in the country over the last decades, it is an undeniable fact that the National Women’s Council has remained static and passive, with no change in its structure, membership and functions over the last 30 years. Thus, there is a blatant mismatch between the legislative and institutional arrangements, and the evolving environment within which women operate.

An official report of the Ministry dated 2003 - I repeat, 2003 - states that it was “apparent that the existing structure of the Council is outdated and that it is necessary to have a new structure that will allow it to function as an autonomous body to ensure the full integration of women in the development of modern Mauritius”. More than a decade has elapsed and the National Women’s Council is still at the same point.

In the same vein, the membership of the National Women’s Council has been treated as a matter of concern in some documents. Such concerns relate to the profile of membership; the under-representation of young women and the employed ones; the nature of goals being pursued and the “top-down” approach which have failed to create an enabling environment for the empowerment of the women’s associations.

The rationale for the repeal of the current legislation and the enactment of a more modern piece of legislation is to, accordingly, enable the National Women’s Council to transform itself into a dynamic entity that would be in a better position to respond to the changing needs of the contemporary Mauritian women and contribute more effectively to uphold their status in a challenging world. Madam Speaker, let me quote now Ms Christine Lagarde, another icon of women empowerment, today Managing Director of the IMF. She once said: “When women do better, economies do better.”

The new legislation, Madam Speaker, will also contribute to harmonise the role and functions of the National Women’s Council with those of the Gender Unit of my Ministry, particularly in the context of the change in appellation, and the paradigm shift from the “Women in Development” approach to the “Gender and Development” approach as from 2010. In the same vein, the fifteen Women Centres, operating under the aegis of the Council, will be rebranded as “Women Empowerment Centres”, catering for the needs of the 2016 clientele, again bearing in mind the SDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals.

Madam Speaker, the Bill thus provides for the necessary legal framework to repeal and replace the existing National Women’s Council Act so as to -

- (a) make better provision for the functioning, powers and membership of the National Women’s Council and provide a platform for women to voice out their needs, concerns and aspirations, and
- (b) make better provision for the regulation and registration of Women Associations in the different regions of the Island of Mauritius, and for a more effective management of the Regional Committees responsible for the activities of Women Associations in their region.

Madam Speaker, I will now highlight the main provisions of the Bill -

- (a) to ensure that the Council is provided with the appropriate mechanism and structure for it to operate according to current good governance practices, it will be administered by a Board, as provided under Section 8 of the legislation with a reduced membership of 11 instead of 15, and an independent Chairperson nominated by the Minister;
- (b) there would be better representation of Women Associations island-wide with the setting up of a Regional Committee in each district managed by an Executive Committee of nine persons.

At present, the island is divided into only four regions, namely –

- (i) Port Louis/Plaines Wilhems/Black River;
- (ii) Pamplemousses/Rivière du Rempart;
- (iii) Grand Port/Savanne, and
- (iv) Moka/Flacq.

Using a rotation system each year, three Regional Committees will be represented on the Board;

- (c) the Board will be able to co-opt not more than three other persons with relevant expertise not already available on the Board to serve as members;
- (d) the setting up of Committees constituted either wholly by members or partly by members and other persons, as determined by the Board to look into matters of a technical nature and assist it in the performance of its functions and the exercise of its powers;
- (e) provision for the appointment of a Manager by the Board to act as Secretary and to be responsible, *inter alia*, for the control and management of the day-to-day business of the Council;
- (f) providing the National Women's Council with the means to implement Government policies relating to women's empowerment and gender equality, and
- (g) gender neutral terms have been used throughout the Bill in line with my Ministry's policy to promote the use of gender neutral language.

A special note regarding Rodrigues, which should come up with its own Bill so as to respond to the specificities of Rodriguan women.

Madam Speaker, I wish to underline that my Ministry which has been celebrating the International Women's Day on 08 March 2016 and will celebrate the International Day of Families on 15 May 2016 will sustain its efforts all year round to ensure that gender equality becomes a reality for the harmonious socio-economic development of Mauritian families.

The National Women's Council, which will be revamped following the enactment of the proposed legislation, is one of the vehicles which will contribute to attain such objectives. The new legal framework will contribute to strengthen women's empowerment and thus

achieve gender equality in all sectors of development, through the active participation of women in the social, economic and political fields. The Council will thus act as a catalyst with regard to measures that are required to be introduced in order to improve the welfare of women and will pave the way for a gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

While expecting the legislation, my Ministry has come up with a small revolution regarding the services offered in the women centres, which certainly responded to the needs and aspirations of women of the 80s, but today are somehow obsolete. We have already introduced empowerment programmes which are being carried out on a regular basis in numerous fields including leadership, adult literacy, climate change and increased participation in politics, amongst others.

Strategies to improve women's status, strengthen gender equality policies, eliminate gender disparities and reduce female unemployment will all contribute to improve the status of the Mauritian women economically, socially and politically.

In the same breath, a clearer definition of roles has been devised through a Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed a few weeks back, between the Gender Unit of my Ministry and the National Women's Council. Confusion of roles would only slow down our actions and we are not prepared to sacrifice our mission, Madam Speaker! The world cannot achieve sustainable development without full and equal rights for half of the world's population, in law and in practice.

Madam Speaker, this Bill will go a long way towards strengthening the existing measures being taken by my Ministry for the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality in the spheres already mentioned. Let me conclude by quoting once again Mrs Phumzile, I quote -

“To achieve gender equality, we need to mobilize not just parliaments but populations, not only civil society but all of society!”

With these words, Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

I thank you.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo rose and seconded.

(4.51 p.m.)

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Madam Speaker, let me at the outset make it clear that we, on this side of the House, support the objectives of the Bill.

(Interruptions)

And let me take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Minister for bringing the first Bill since she has been Minister.

Madam Speaker, 'gender' means men and women. Your comment that there is no *femme* this side is unwarranted.

Madam Speaker: Address yourself to the Chair, please!

Mr Baloomoody: You better...

(Interruptions)

Or if you don't want to listen, go and join the Chief Whip!

Madam Speaker, we believe that empowering women and girls and achieving gender equality is crucial to creating inclusive, open and prosperous society. This is why, Madam Speaker, when the first Bill was introduced in Parliament in 1985, the then Leader of the Opposition, hon. Paul Bérenger, said it loud and clear that we were always for the empowerment of women and gender equality. This is why we support the first National Women's Council Bill which was presented to the House in 1985.

However, since the passing of the law in 1985, there have been two subsequent amendments to the original Act, namely in 1989, only four years after the original Act was passed, there was an amendment. It is good that I mention why this amendment passed because probably I will ask the hon. Minister to inform us why somebody who was in the Council is no more in the Council in the new Bill. The main objective was to enlarge the membership of the National Women's Council. At that time, Madam Speaker, the membership included mostly associating, grouping of some villages and their objective was the promotion of social, cultural, and, in some cases, even religious activities.

The amendment in 1989 was mainly to include such organisations as the Mauritius Family Planning Association, the Mauritius Alliance of Women, the Business and Professional Women's Association, *la fédération des femmes chefs d'entreprises*, the

Physically Handicapped Welfare Association. These associations were allowed to join the Council without being affiliated to a Regional Committee and we will see that in this Bill, you have to be associated with a Regional Committee and this is one question probably which the hon. Minister, I hope, will answer; why she has put that restriction that you have to be associated with a Regional Committee even if you are a professional organisation to be a member of the Council?

Subsequently, in 1991 another amendment was brought to the original 1985 Act with three main objectives namely to have a rotation of the members of the Regional Committee every two years so that more people can participate in the Regional Committee. And, most importantly, to have one representative of the Ministry of Human Rights and a representative of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to sit on the National Committee. In 1991, the Government of the day was an MMM/MSM Government. We thought that it was important to have somebody from the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to be on that Committee, but this has been deleted. Probably, we will have to ask the hon. Minister to tell us why, she is in Government now. I think it is important not to include these representatives on the Committee.

Now, after all these years, as mentioned by the hon. Minister, with these amendments, it is true to say that the working of the Women's Council has failed in its objective and we will have to see the reason why. Up to now, most of the associations of the groups of women are more or less from the same village. They are mostly women's wing of either social, cultural or religious activities. So, they are people who are already members of other organisations, but they are in the women's wing of that organisation, be it social or cultural and because they get an allowance, they form an association - we will see when it comes to the association - and they become member of that Council. Very often, for 10 or 15 years, the same person will sit on that Committee. This is why the hon. Minister just said there is no young person because there is a sort of monopole by these left wing associations, especially, in social and cultural associations. They hold office and they will not allow youngsters to join in so that they sit on the Committee. They are invited in all the fiestas organised by each Government, be it on Women's Day or even in other cases. We will come to that.

When we look at the members of the Council or members of the women's association registered with the Registry of Associations –

“(...) for an association to exist legally, it must comply with the rules and regulations of the Registry of Associations.”

According to my information, nearly 90% of these associations are not abiding by the rules and regulations of the association. They are not holding Annual General Meeting on a regular basis. They are not submitting their annual audited statement of accounts and expenditure as approved by a General Assembly. God knows whether they have General Assembly! They have not been able to comply with the object of association as these committees are not properly registered with the Registry of Associations.

There is that strong perception and I will go even further by saying that the National Women's Council has acted as the political arms of the Ministry responsible for women affairs under many Governments. The Council has been recruiting political agents. Most of them are recruited as Family Support Officers with an allowance on a month-to-month basis even they don't have any qualifications whatsoever. At best, most of them will indulge in *excursion*, in activities organised by the Government, especially on Women's Day and in some cases, they are pressurised to come to the meeting of 1st May. So, they have been used, very often, as a political institution instead of being an independent institution. This has been the main failure of this Council.

Another challenge of that Women's Council is that professional associations were not given that facility to join in and most of them turned their back when they recognised the way Women's Council is. They don't want to associate themselves with such organisations, being professional associations. The other challenge from the Council is the question of finance. They have not been able to do what the law allows them to do because of lack of finance. I am informed that more than 95% of their allowance goes in budget, paying for that month-to-month salary which they give to those women and there is not much for innovation, education and empowerment. However, I note that the new Bill provides under Section 6 that the Council shall have the power to receive grants for its finance and donations. But then, again, I would like to ask the hon. Minister to tell us what control we will have on the Council? From whom are they allowed to raise funds, for which type of projects and how is that fund controlled?

Now, the hon. Minister said that there was a report in 2003 which said that the Council is not functioning well and that we have to revamp the Council and review the whole process. It is a fact! But, it is a fact also that in 2003, when Mrs Arianne Navarre-Marie was

Minister, she did set up a Committee to review. That committee was known as the Women's Forum with professional women and other professionals. There was a committee to see how we can review and revamp the National Women's Council. The first forum was chaired by Mrs Claret Ah Hung who was then the CEO of the Financial Commission. There was a work done and I understand that there have been meetings and consultations, but then, unfortunately, the election came in 2005 and we could not pass another law to better the functioning of the National Women's Council.

Madam Speaker, we believe that the National Women's Council should, amongst others, act as an independent genuine women's forum. I stress on the word 'independent'. It should encourage professional women's associations to join the Council so that they could come forward and propose legislations or amendments to existing legislations so as to ensure that they do not discriminate women, to advance women's rights and the equality objective. In order to fulfil these objectives, the Council should be independent with no political interference. This is where we have failed. I will prove that, again, we are having too much political interference in that new Council. I will come to that later. In order to fulfil these objectives, they should be independent. The Council should have the financial means and professional human resources to organise educational events and awareness campaign so as to encourage new membership. We don't have the same people on the Council for 10, 15, 20 years and Community-Based Programme. As we all know, the main issues regarding women, today, are –

- Unemployment.
We know how high the rate of unemployment is amongst women and young girls.
- Poverty.
If there is one person who bears the burden of poverty more is the woman.
- Violence against women.
I am sure that the hon. Minister will not disagree with me. I read in one of the interviews she gave at the beginning of this year, that violence against women, the statistics we have today do not reflect the reality. This is another issue which concerns women, and
- the fourth one, which I have been informed by professional associations, is reproductive health.

This is why I would like the hon. Minister to tell us why a representative from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life on the Council has been revoked in the new Bill.

Madam Speaker, stark gender disparity remains in the economic and political realms. While there has been some progress over the decades, on average women in the labour market still earn 24% less than men. The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training will agree with me that even in many of our Remuneration Orders, in the tea factory, in the salt factory, women are earning less than men for doing the same job.

As of August 2015, only 22 per cent of all national Parliaments were female, a slow rise from 11.3 per cent in 1995, that is, according to the UN figures. Meanwhile, violence against women is a pandemic affecting most countries, especially those with low economic means. And, we must say, even in Mauritius due to several factors, social and economic, domestic violence is on the increase. People especially, I know it from my constituency where I witness this and I am sure that many of us in our constituencies in the low family where there is poverty and unemployment, domestic violence is on the increase although many people do not report it and so it does not appear on the statistics. So, now let me comment on the draft Bill and make some remarks and I will be here to listen to the hon. Minister when she replies. My comments on the Bill are as follows -

First, the organisational structure of the Council remains the same except the Secretary of the Council will become the Manager. A change in the appellation does not bring any change in the day-to-day management of the organisation. And that Secretary, that Manager will be appointed by the Minister! There is actually and there has been a strong perception that the National Women's Council is the political arm of the Ministry. The proposed Bill reinforces this perception in that the previous Act, the word 'Minister' appeared seven times while, in this one, it is mentioned 15 times! So, 15 times we have the interference of the Minister; by appointment, by giving instructions, we will come to the section dealing with 'Powers of Minister'.

One of the main changes is that the National Committee which, with the new Bill, will become the Board will be chaired by a person nominated by the Minister whereas previously it was the Supervising Officer of the Ministry who was the Chairperson.

The Board itself will comprise of more nominated members of the Minister than those democratically elected. I use the words 'democratically elected' because when we see that every two years they have to change, there will be only three members from nine districts on

the Board, one wonders whether it is democratic, three members representing more than 1000 associations!

There will be four members nominated as compared to three in the previous Act. Only three members elected by Regional Committees will form part of the Board out of ten members including the Chairperson the more so that 1000 associations will be represented by only three members on the Board. What is more of concern is the power of the Minister with regard to that Council.

Section 17, I will read it –

“The Minister may give such written directions of a general character to the Board, not inconsistent with this Act, as may be necessary in the public interest, and the Board shall comply with these directions.”

This is a direct imposition, political interference by the Executive on what we were supposed to have an independent Women’s Council! So, it is clear, already we have the perception that it is too politically biased. Now, we have in the law, when we look at the number of people nominated, the way they will be appointed and the power of the Minister, there is that true risk, the real risk that it will be another political tool for the Minister and probably for the Government. So, I hope that the hon. Minister will enlighten us on why those who were represented on the Board do not appear again, why she needs those powers, why only three representatives from the associations instead of, as it was before, there were more representations.

So, to conclude, Madam Speaker, let me say that women have a critical role to play in the development of our country. Women have a right to equality in all areas. It must be embedded across the legal system, upheld in both law and legal practices including proactive measures. Since all areas of life relate to gender equality, efforts must be made to cut the roots of gender discrimination wherever it appears.

I have done, Madam Speaker.

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

At 5.10 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.47 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mrs R. Jadoo-Jaunbocus (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit,

on 25 September of last year, the world leaders there adopted, as indeed the hon. Minister has pointed out, the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and those included 17 sustainable development goals to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice amongst other things.

We note that the fifth goal is Gender Equality. Why does the UNDP focus on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment? Because this is not only Human Rights, but also it is a pathway to achieving millennium development goals and sustainable development.

The UNDP coordinates global and national efforts to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery and environment and sustainable development.

It ensures that women have a real voice in all Government institutions, starting from the Judiciary to the Civil Service, as well as the private sector and civil society, so that, in that way, they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision-making and influence the decisions that will determine the future of their families and countries. That is the United Nations.

Now, I cannot but turn to what the South African Development Community (SADC) says, because we are a Member State of the SADC and because I am a Member of the SADC. It deals specifically with economic empowerment and requires the Member States, in order to achieve economic empowerment, to take the following commitments –

- (i) adopt policies and enact laws which ensure equal access, benefits and opportunities for women and men in trade and entrepreneurship, taking into account the contribution of women in the formal and informal sectors;
- (ii) review the national trade and entrepreneurship policies to make them gender responsive, and
- (iii) introduce measures to ensure that women benefit equally from economic opportunities (as an affirmative action provision).

When we look at all these international bodies and what they are trying to achieve in the field of women's rights, gender equality, we cannot but commend the hon. Minister for having come with this Bill, the National Women's Council Bill, before the Parliament today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

It is a very responsive piece of legislation. It responds to the needs of the modern society. We have had the National Women's Council Act passed in 1985, which was at that

time relevant and at that time respondent to the needs of the society then. But society evolves, especially in the field of women's rights and women equality. We started with women's equality and we now talk of gender equality, of gender rights. All this has evolved. This piece of legislation very much succinctly takes that into account, takes that into its stride and shows that the Ministry has moved with time. And that is very important.

Indeed, when I commend the hon. Minister, I also have to say what else are we going to have with a Prime Minister such as our Rt. hon. Prime Minister, who has always been there to support the right cause of women, to support laws and policies which promulgate gender rights to be respected. This Government has been the epitome in showing how much respect is shown to women, how much value is shown to women, indeed, by, first of all, having a Speaker who is the first in the history of Mauritius who is a woman, nothing less but a woman. We have a President who is again a woman, and having so many women in the Government and in such positions, so as to influence policy and decision, this is important. We cannot just say that we value women and give token appointment to women. When Government, when this Rt. hon. Prime Minister says he values women and the contribution of women, he puts effectively women in position where they can involve, where they can influence and have positive impact upon decision-making. That is a Government which shows that it values its women, it respects its women and it listens to the opinion and the voices of its women.

Before I look at the Bill, I just wish to quote Cecilia who says –

“I am a person in my own right (...)”

talking about women

“(...) and I would like to be as independent as possible.”

Now, we turn to look at the Bill and what does it say? The first part that I would like to look at is clause 4 of the Bill, that is, the Objects of the Council. When we look at the actual one - the 1985 one - and we turn to section 4, the Objects of the Council, this shows, indeed how much the laws and the needs have evolved. Now, we talk about promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. One of the objects of the Council at clause 4(a), (b) and (c) talks about providing a platform for women to voice their needs, concerns and aspirations. Most importantly, at clause 4(b), we talk about ensuring and promoting the active participation of women in the social, economic and political fields in order to further their overall empowerment. Now, we no longer talk about women's rights to education, because

that is a reality. We no longer talk the women's rights to have children. We no longer talk about the rights of women at work. These are a reality. What we talk about now is more evolving needs, and clause 4, in its objects, responds to those needs.

Clause 6 of this Bill gives wide powers to the Council and, yes, there can be certain - as has been expressed - reserves about the powers but, indeed, for the Council to be effective, it must have such powers as may be necessary in order to attain its objects and discharge its functions most effectively. It must be unhindered in the way it puts into action the policy of the Government, the policy of the Council and, indeed, puts into reality the aims and objectives, the objects of that Council and that is why in Clause 5, Functions of the Council, we see that the Council shall have such functions as may be necessary to attain its objects most effectively, in order to implement Government policies regarding women's empowerment and gender equality, amongst others.

One of the functions, which is very important - and I wanted to highlight it - is that it will advise the Minister on ways of addressing factors responsible for impeding women's empowerment and gender equality. That is new and very important because we have the positive flowing action, but we also need to look at things which impact negatively and which pull us behind, and in so providing in Clause 5 (b), this is actively dealt with and it again shows how responsive this piece of legislation is. It is also said that the Council shall identify and recommend to the Board projects which will promote the participation of women in all sectors of the economy. Once again, we see, as has been enlightened by the SADC, as has been agreed by all leaders of the countries in the United Nations forum, that it is important for poverty alleviation that women are empowered and pulled in the political circle and economic decision-making.

Clause 8 talks about the composition of the Board. Once again, we see that the model adopted is that under that Board there will be Committees which shall sit as required. This model is one which is favoured by some, that is, a Board followed by Board Committees which renders the Board to work more effectively, more flexibly. It is less taxing on the Board because not all Board members will be taken up in all matters; it will have delegated committees under the Board decision which will take up matters, work out matters and enable more input, otherwise the Board would have been too cumbersome to examine the number of issues that will arise in the field of gender.

I also congratulate the hon. Minister for having, with the amendment, increased the Regional Committees from four - which was what was formerly provided by the law - to nine, plus one, and including Rodrigues as was the case before. This is very important; Clause 20 of the Bill which deals with the Regional Committees says that we shall have nine districts of the Island of Mauritius. So, in effect, it gives a wider platform to women to come and express their views and participate in decision-making, participate in policy through, of course, the Committees and Representatives through the Board. And now, cleverly and very intelligently, the problem of how all these Committees are represented on the Board is dealt with because, formerly, we had four and they were all represented on the Committee. Now, there will be a rotation, as provided in Clause 8 (6). There will be a drawing of lots, on a rotation basis of all the Regional Committees to be represented in turn. So, it lends the voice to all throughout the country so that different Regional Committees can lend their voice and participate to certain decisions being taken and certain policies being commented upon.

In all, as I have said, this Bill moves with time and addresses the real needs of women, the real needs of society because for society to move on, women have to move along and bring society to where it needs to reach its target.

I shall, therefore, stop right here as I am being told that my time is almost up. Therefore, I shall not carry on because when one talks about the cause of women, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one can go on and on because it is so moving and so powerful. I shall, therefore, give my full support to this Bill because this Bill is the very essence of what *l'Alliance Lepep* is about. I say thank you to the hon. Minister and thank you to the Government for bringing such a Bill to the House.

Thank you.

(6.01 p.m.)

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre D'Or): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you for this opportunity to say a few words on this Bill. I would like, first of all, to congratulate the hon. Minister and the entire team involved in the preparation of this Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people who have adequate experience in management and understand the challenges associated with the corporate world will tell you that you do not have a thousand formulae to optimise on the resources you have on board. The most important among the two formulae is to get your priorities right.

I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister, once again, because this country requires that we optimise on the potential that women represent for our country. As a priority, the hon. Minister and her team have chosen to put in place a well organised structure that will enable wide participation of women through the nine Regional Committees, of course, with Rodrigues as well.

The objective of the structure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I understand from the Bill, is the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality, trigger better participation of women in the socio-economic and political affairs of the country and provide an appropriate forum for them to voice out their aspirations and concerns.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill talks about the aspirations of women. Not very far from here, the African Union, through Agenda 2063, has defined a list of seven aspirations for the continent and one among those important aspirations talks about the role of women in furthering progress at all levels in an economy. Gender parity, women empowerment and participation, violence and discrimination against women are issues that are very high on the agenda of the African Union and we need to get prepared in order to ensure that, as member of the African Union, we are fully in tune with its strategy and orientation in the coming years.

On the other hand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the United Nations has a new global 2030 roadmap and seventeen sustainable development goals were approved by the UN Member States in September 2015. As mentioned by the hon. Minister in her speech, the role of women and girls are crucial in meeting those goals and, once again, through UN women, no effort is being spared to ensure that the list of goals, starting from poverty alleviation, zero hunger, quality education, clean water and sanitation, industry, innovation and infrastructure, decent work and economic growth to gender equality are met with the full participation of women.

In the domestic front, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot be that pessimist as well and I have to admit that Mauritius has witnessed satisfactory progress in terms of gender parity, even if there is still a long way to go. I need not mention the different positions where women presently excel, except the fact that there is little doubt or not at all on their capacity to deliver as effectively as men and even better in many situations. What the present Bill aims at is to provide them access, space and opportunity to contribute much more than what they are presently contributing.

The structure is one which is very important in this whole process of restructuring. However, we need then to ensure that there are adequate resources to make the structure work effectively and, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have got a few proposals –

1. The participation of the private sector.

The participation of the private sector is not very clear in the structure that is being proposed. I am sure that the private sector will have a prominent role to play in accompanying the Women's Council both at regional and national levels. The Board of Investment has the responsibility to approve CSR projects by the private sector in the property sector and these investments, which are mandatory in many cases, bring both opportunities in terms of funds and expertise in the field of empowerment. This is one among many opportunities that should be captured by the proposed Women's Council in view of meeting the objectives for which it has been set.

2. The collaboration with Local Authorities.

Following the last reform of our Local Government, there has been a drastic increase in the number of women as Councillors and this particular situation represents an excellent opportunity for the Regional Committees in all nine districts as well as Rodrigues to empower and encourage women participation in politics. I propose that there is a sort of MoU signed between the proposed National Women's Council and the Ministry of Local Government or the Local Authorities, which MoU will elaborate on the exchanges, type of collaboration and resources that can be put at the disposal of the Council to promote its function and objectives. The Local Authorities have a series of infrastructure which can be put at the disposal of these women associations and the Regional Committees to promote their activities. The sports infrastructure, Council halls, libraries are a few examples.

3. Funds from abroad.

Contrary to the former Bill on disaster risk reduction and management where I proposed the setting up of a special fund to manage all sums of money that is available from international organisations and where, unfortunately, my proposal was not considered, I am pleased to note that provision has been made in this Bill to create a general fund. I am sure that the Women's Council

will take full advantage of the donations that are available abroad and that an appropriate process will be put in place to identify potential sources of finance and their effective management thereafter.

4. Human Resources.

I am sure that the hon. Minister is very much aware that without an appropriate executive team, any structure put in place will never give the desired results. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has been saying on numerous occasions that transparency should prevail in the recruitment process at all levels. I am sure that the hon. Minister will see to it that the Manager and his or her collaborators appointed at the National Women's Council will have the stature to exceed the expectations raised by the setting up of the Council. The Government will ensure that the Board is properly constituted and delivers on the specific mandate it has to be entrusted with.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, finally, there are new women issues cropping up with new challenges and amongst them I would rapidly mention, at least, three that the setting up of the proposed Council will have to address -

1. Gender related violence;
2. Education, and
3. Economic quality.

In the case of gender related violence, the statistics have, unfortunately, not been very encouraging in spite of the genuine efforts and initiatives of the parent Ministry. I would like to mention a few extracts of the last report of Amnesty International on Women's Rights in Mauritius, and I quote –

“Despite laws, in discrimination occurred, particularly against women. The law prohibits rape, but there is no provision criminalising spousal rape. Police and does judicial system did not effectively enforce the law. Rape is widespread, but most victims chose not to report or file charges against the attackers due to cultural pressures, fear of retaliation and lengthy court processes. The law criminalises domestic violence, but remains a major problem.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, education of women and girls is another challenge and a new issue that will have to be addressed by the National Women's Council. Every year, there are

reports of the excellent performance of girls at secondary level and the increasing stock of women graduates leaving universities and joining the labour market. What we fail to mention is the lack of career guidance and mismatch between what our education system is producing and the requirements of our job market. We should investigate on the reasons for which very few women are appointed on tech jobs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on economic quality, I would like to quote Mrs Sandra Fluke, women's rights activist, who states in a report on New Women Issues and Challenges, and I quote –

“(...) many poverty issues also impact women. Raising the minimum wage is actually a "women's issue" because 64% of minimum wage workers are women.

Women are increasingly becoming the sole or primary earners in their household, so economic issues that hold women back have huge impact on our entire economy. Let's help women financially support their families as we create more good-paying jobs in our communities.”

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand that the setting up of the National Women's Council is a major challenge for the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. There is no doubt that we are, once again, addressing an issue which is above party politics and I am sure that there will ultimately be consensus in the House as to need for such a structure to promote gender equality, parity and gender-based sustained development.

With these few words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you all for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Monty!

(6.11 p.m.)

Mrs M. C. Monty (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):
Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you for allowing me to intervene on this present Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill, long overdue, is now being amended after three long decades, and comes at a time when women's associations are so many in number that they cover the whole country and it is high time to give a new impetus to the National Women's Council and to create new avenues of co-operation with all stakeholders.

It is to be stressed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the roles, needs and involvement of women in public life have known a considerable and constant change over the last years. Consequently, the National Women's Council Bill of 1985 could no longer fit the present context and, in line with new trends, it was more than necessary to come forward with new structures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill brings a long-awaited change and new avenues of cooperation and help to all registered associations of our country. By reaffirming its commitment to work towards more involvement and empowerment of women at all levels be they social, economic and political, with this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, confirms its decision to strengthen its partnership with all women's associations through the National Women's Council.

This Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will stop women walking on new roads with old shoes and the time is ripe to move towards more participation of women from all regions of the country. The new structures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will ensure that every three years, in a spirit of fairness, by drawing lots, three Regional Committees will be represented on the Board of the National Women's Council and this on a rotational basis, each for a period of one year, thus favouring the effective participation of women in a more democratic way.

Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the use of gender neutral terms all throughout the Bill has to be highlighted thereby reflecting the policy of the Ministry to promote the use of gender neutral language.

M. le président, en sus de favoriser plus de représentativité régionale, un aspect important au niveau même du comité est ici rehaussé; celui du profil de la personne devant assurer la présidence qui devra faire preuve d'engagement et des intérêts au niveau du développement et de la participation des femmes et aussi de l'égalité du genre.

Somme toute, M. le président, ce projet de loi, en venant consolider les acquis, ouvre un espace plus large vers une interaction et une coopération plus élargie. Ce qui aidera, certainement, le conseil national des femmes, au niveau de ses différentes fonctions, nommément, celle d'étudier et d'analyser tous les facteurs entravant le développement, l'épanouissement des femmes au niveau du pays, et d'y remédier, en soumettant des recommandations aux ministères concernés, de présenter des projets qui favoriseront une meilleure participation des femmes dans différents secteurs de l'économie mauricienne, aussi

et surtout, de promouvoir les droits des femmes, en tant que partenaires à part entière du développement social, économique, politique et humain dans son ensemble.

M. le président, la révision d'un projet de loi, arrivant après 30 ans, ne peut qu'apporter un nouveau souffle, un nouvel élan, un meilleur espace de dialogue, de coopération et d'espoir, à toutes les femmes dont les voix sont restées trop longtemps étouffées, faute de plateforme pour se faire entendre.

M. le président, les nouvelles structures veulent permettre aux associations de se rajeunir, de se renouveler, de se redynamiser et d'évoluer vers une fructueuse coopération, pour que les femmes soient encore plus partie prenante du développement à tous les niveaux de la société mauricienne.

Pour conclure, M. le président, je voudrais présenter mes vives félicitations à la ministre de tutelle pour cette louable initiative, pour le nouveau souffle apporté à ce projet de loi et pour avoir remodelé et ravivé les structures devenues jusqu'ici archaïques, trop restrictives et trop étouffantes. Pour cette bouffée d'air frais, M. le président, que la ministre soit remerciée au nom de toutes les femmes, de toutes les associations existantes et à venir, qui en bénéficieront. Sur ce, M. le président, je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo!

(6.17 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is indeed a great pleasure and honour for me to be addressing this House today on this prominent Bill. It was, indeed, high time that a more modern legislative framework be adopted for the smooth and effective running and functioning of our National Women's Council. The present Act has served its purpose. However, we need to move forward for women's empowerment and gender equality.

We cannot afford to stay behind in an era where we have a duty to enhance women's rights. This Bill will be repealing the National Women's Council Act which established the National Women's Council back in 1985. If I may say, during the last decades, there have been endeavours to promote women empowerment and gender equality. This Bill is being introduced to the House today to complement this constructive *démarche*.

At this stage, it is important to highlight the principal difference between the National Women's Council Act 1985 and this Bill 2016. The 1985 Act, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, focused on the very creation of the Council whereas this present Bill engages itself in the design and setting up of a comprehensive structure for the effective operation of the Council. What we want to see today, in the wake of the passing of this Bill, is a full-fledged National Women's Council.

Clause 3 of the Bill re-establishes the Council and clause 31 of the Bill provides the usual transitional provisions and savings. I fully concur with the detailed transitional provisions which will ensure that the actual activities, membership and employment arrangements of the current National Women's Council are not interrupted.

The Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has abolished the office of the National Committee. It has instead set up a more modern management structure for the Council. I fully agree with the creation of a 'Board' in lieu of the use of the National Committee for the administration of the Council. Under the National Women's Council Act 1985, the Council was being managed and administered by the National Committee. It consisted of 11 members, namely representatives from various Ministries with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare as the president of the Committee.

However, clause 8 of the Bill creates the 'Board' that will govern the National Women's Council. It now provides for a totally different composition. I wish to applaud the initiative of having first of all a Chairperson at the head of the Council. The qualifications specified for the post of the Chairperson have been rightly chosen. Unlike the 1985 Act, the Council will now be led by a person who is committed to the cause of women's empowerment and gender equality. I believe that a Chairperson devoted to the objectives of the Council will be appointed; someone who will be endowed with the resources and time required to fulfil efficiently the responsibility involved in the said post.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, your phone has already disturbed. Please!

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Further, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I particularly admire the idea of including in the Board, four members, with experience relating to social, economic or political empowerment of women. Indeed, the presence of these learned members will contribute, to a large extent, in the achievement of the goals of the Council.

It is also noteworthy that emphasis has been laid in the Bill on the special characteristics of the members. I understand these characteristics have been stressed with a view to ensuring good governance. The Bill particularly highlights that no member should be actively engaged in politics nor should be engaged in any activity which could undermine the integrity of the Council. In an attempt to guarantee fairness in the proceedings, the Bill has even gone to the extent of specifying the requirement of disclosure of interest under its clause 11. I concur with this endeavour. We cannot just assume the ethic-conscience of the members. This provision will undoubtedly promote good governance and the long-term success of the Council.

We can see from clause 12 of the Bill that the Council will now be equipped with a 'Manager' who will be appointed by the Board. This position has rightly been designed to ensure the timely execution of the policy of the Board. I am sure with an effective coordination, I cannot see any reason why the Council will not attain its goals successfully in the near future.

I also wish to say that the 1985 Act only made provisions for the creation of five Regional Committees including Rodrigues. With the surging percentage of women in Mauritius and Rodrigues, it was quite obvious that five Regional Committees would not sustain the needs and requirements of the women of these regions. The 2016 Bill has addressed this problem through the creation of nine Regional Committees to cater for the needs of women of the nine districts of Mauritius. Rodrigues will still have its separate Regional Committee.

In general, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in addition to the passing of this Bill, in my humble opinion, there is an equally pressing need for us to attract even more active participation of women in the various spheres of society, be it, social, economic or political. It is true that the new National Women's Council will be more efficient. However, in the same line, we should also increase our campaigns for the sensitisation of women's organisations and women themselves of the benefits associated with being affiliated with the Council. I am sure that this will propel the National Women's Council as a dynamic platform where women would feel at ease to voice out their needs, dreams, visions, motivations and endeavours amongst others.

I also wish to highlight an important practical aspect. In future we should also contemplate to promote an interactive online platform for the members of the National

Women’s Council. We should be prepared to welcome the recent technological advancement and use them to achieve the objectives of this Bill in the most forceful and innovative manner.

I fully support this Bill, I commend and thank the hon. Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare for bringing forward this Bill to further empower women and for the effective promotion of gender equality. With this Bill, there will be active participation of women of all walks of life in the various fields of society. The increasing force of women will have the potential of opening up doors of opportunities by redefining cultural, social and political norms and by closing the gender gap. I am looking forward to the passing of this Bill and to the implementation of the provision in a very near future.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Toussaint!

(6.26 p.m.)

Mr J. C. Toussaint (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to say a few words on this Bill.

Avant de commencer, je voudrais d’abord féliciter la ministre d’avoir proposé à cette Chambre le *National Women’s Council Bill*. Comme les autres membres ont dit avant moi, ça fait très longtemps que ce projet de loi était attendu. Je voudrais aussi, avec votre permission, M. le président, saluer à l’occasion de la journée Internationale de la Presse aujourd’hui, les journalistes et plus particulièrement les dames qui font un travail pas évident des fois. Je vous salue bien bas.

Quand nous regardons l’histoire de l’humanité pour comprendre d’où vient la femme, ou est-ce que la femme est en train de partir, dans quelle direction, il y a beaucoup de choses qui se sont passées. Il y a eu beaucoup de dénigrement vis-à-vis de la femme. Il y a eu pas mal de violences vis-à-vis de la femme et il y a des choses qui peuvent paraître banales parfois mais qui sont très fortes. En faisant un peu de recherche je suis tombé sur quelque chose que je souhaiterais lire. C’est par rapport à la femme comédienne à l’époque de Shakespeare. *And I will quote –*

“Globe Theatre Female Roles - Women were forbidden (...)”

Pas juste par la société tout simplement, *but -*

“Women were forbidden, by law, to perform in the Elizabethan theatre (...)”

À l'époque de Shakespeare, c'était des jeunes gens qui jouaient le rôle de femme et donc la belle Juliette n'était autre qu'un jeune homme de 15,17 ou 18 ans ! Et je redis c'était la loi, la femme n'avait pas le droit de jouer au théâtre.

Heureusement, qu'avec le temps, ce n'est plus le cas et, aujourd'hui, dans le monde moderne, que ce soit à Maurice ou ailleurs dans le monde, la femme est partout et c'est très bien comme ça. La femme est mère de famille, d'abord et avant tout, parce que nous avons tous ici une maman, nous avons ou nous avions.

La femme est dans le secteur manuel et c'est agréable de voir quand vous conduisez votre petite voiture, vous les hommes, et que vous regardez en haut par exemple, vous voyez une dame au volant d'une grosse machine, d'un gros camion. Donc vous regardez tout droit devant vous. La femme est dans le bureau, la femme est dans la politique, la femme est dans les services essentiels, la femme est partout...

(Interruptions)

Et même à l'Assemblée ici bien sûr.

(Interruptions)

Alors, merci à Madame la ministre, pour le travail qu'elle fait. Merci à notre Premier ministre qui a toujours été et qui est toujours un défenseur de la cause féminine.

En lisant le *National Women's Council Bill*, il y a, par exemple, *in part (b)* –

“The Bill accordingly improves the regulation of women associations.”

Les associations féminines ont un rôle très important dans l'épanouissement de la femme Mauricienne et c'est important que nous ayons aujourd'hui un projet de loi qui va encourager cela et qui va donner plus d'ouverture aux associations féminines afin qu'elles puissent remplir leur rôle.

Quelque chose qui m'a aussi frappé est par rapport au fonctionnement du conseil...

La partie (f) –

“Promote the recognition of women's rights as human rights.”

Très important. Et, bien sûr, pour promouvoir tout cela, nous avons tout un arsenal de moyens de nos jours avec les médias, la technologie, l'Internet et Facebook.

Je ne serai pas très long et je cherchais pour terminer un modèle parce que nous parlons aujourd'hui de la femme qui, à travers ce projet de loi, aura toute sa valeur et pourra évoluer. Donc, je cherchais un modèle et, comme il y a tout plein, que ce soit à Maurice ou à l'extérieur, je me suis dit que je vais rapidement raconter l'histoire d'une femme Mauricienne qui a toujours fait preuve de courage et qui s'est toujours occupé de sa famille. Cette femme naquit dans les années 45 à peu près...

(Interruptions)

Oui, moi de même. A la mort de sa mère, son père l'abandonna et elle fut élevée par sa grand-mère maternelle.

À l'âge de 14 ou 15 ans, elle dut arrêter l'école faute de moyens car, à l'époque, l'école était encore payante. Mais tout ceci pour vous dire qu'elle avait une connaissance générale de pas mal de choses. Après son mariage, elle mit au monde trois enfants et elle s'occupait de ses trois enfants à la sueur de son front. Son époux était un peintre de bâtiments et dans les années 70, nous le savons, il n'y avait pas beaucoup de potentiel à cette époque. Cette femme se levait très tôt le matin, s'occupait de sa maison et de ses enfants et bien souvent elle passait une journée avec un simple petit morceau de pain comme nourriture. Elle gardait le reste pour ses enfants. Quand ses enfants revenaient de l'école, elle était là, à côté d'eux, à les aider à faire leurs devoirs parce qu'elle croyait dans l'éducation. Et aujourd'hui, nous ne cessons de le répéter, en tant qu'anciens enseignants et anciennes enseignantes, nous connaissons la valeur de l'éducation et cette femme l'avait compris bien des années de cela.

Bien plus tard elle prit un job comme bonne à tout faire pour essayer comme on dit, *ajoute ène ti peu, zoine deux boutes*. J'abrège. Le 08 mars 2009 le jour de la Journée Internationale de la Femme cette femme fut conduite à sa dernière demeure à l'âge de 62 ans au cimetière de Bigara à Curepipe. Donc, elle est un modèle de courage et de détermination. Aujourd'hui, je prends le temps de la Chambre pour lui rendre hommage, cette femme s'appelait Gilberte Toussaint et c'était ma mère!

(Interruptions)

Merci pour tout ce que vous faites pour les femmes. Merci à notre Premier ministre, et moi je vous souhaite bonne chance. Ce que nous disons c'est que l'appel que nous lançons aujourd'hui, à travers ce projet de loi, va déclencher quelque chose dans la tête de nos mauriciennes et elles pourront prendre leur vie, leur destin en main.

Merci beaucoup, M. le président.

(6.35 p.m.)

Mrs D. Boygah (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to congratulate our colleague, hon. Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare for her historical day, for her first Bill initially, and for her and her team's laudable initiative to repeal the National Women's Council Act of 1985.

As a representative of Mauritius in the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians' Africa, it is an honour to participate in this Bill, as it meets the objectives of the CWP.

One of the main objectives of this Bill is to provide women with the necessary tools and means, so that this important section of the population be fully empowered to actively participate in social, economic, political advancement of our Republic.

May I recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that, as far as 1910, women organisations were founded with a primary focus on social, religious, socio-cultural activities and mostly literacy for women and girls.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during the 1960s, Women Associations embarked themselves into training women into several activities, enabling them to earn a living. Women were provided with free training in embroidery and basket making.

The mid-1970s came, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where we have witnessed the emergence of a real fight for the enhancement of women's rights, equality of sex in the law, abolition of sex discrimination, and a more active participation of women in various fields. Notable contributions were made in terms of the development of the transformative feminist consciousness and activism.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, in the mid-1970s, those Women Associations regrouped themselves, gathered in strength, and started voicing out women's grievances and the safeguard of women's rights. Some eminent female personalities like France Boyer de la Giroday actively participated in forums and speeches throughout the island, in colleges and clubs, to sensitise the young, mainly female, towards women's rights.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Women's Council was set up in 1985 to provide a platform, to establish a dialogue with the associations by the Government under the prime ministership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth. The Council and the Women Associations worked hand-in-hand towards the advancement of women in many fields.

You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, that, with the advent of the EPZ in the mid-1980s, under the prime ministership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, women entered the world of employment. They become economically self-reliant. Women's place ceased to be at home. This triggered a more active participation of women in many, many new fields. Women's organisations emerged, thus shaping the way of thinking of women. The then Women's Council's Act of 1985 regulated the whole network of women's associations. The Council, through its members, embarked into a centred approach to address issues related to the development of women.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 30 years have elapsed since. I repeat, as the hon. Minister said, 30 years have elapsed since. Women have further emancipated. The aspirations of women are no more the same. Women are more present in nearly all fields and much more. Gender equality is no more taboo. Equal pay for equal work is the norm, except some backwards few.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the goals set up by the Council of 1985 till date has not yet been attained for multiple reasons and for very far not to match the women's needs and the challenges of the 21st century.

The need for a new Council to address the new challenges facing women and to be in line with the challenging world is being felt. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the 21st century women have risen to great positions in various key sectors, making a significant contribution to the global economy. More and more women are looking at new opportunities to exhibit their abilities. However, in spite of evident progress of women, there is lot to be done for the uplift and emancipation of women. Women who do play a vital role in the society need to get their own identity because identity is the key for all human beings. It is imperative that a woman knows her strength as well as her weaknesses, so that she may be at her best in the team, as a team member working cooperatively with all around her, whether at home or away.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, woman has always and will always be working woman. Women nurture is on the home front, as they have done throughout times, but now women are stepping out of their home to contribute in the cooperative, educational, social service, medical, financial and a varying and endless list of career paths. Women have played important roles in our society. So many women have impacted today's society for the better. There is an endless list where many women in various parts of the nation have changed lives

and shaped destinies, giving new direction to so many in the country. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, woman has always had a challenging task to be at the forefront in a number of male dominated sectors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hence, to empower women after three decades, the National Women's Council needs to be reviewed to cater for the new challenges facing women and the society at large. With the advent of information technology, resulting in a nation's national and international exposure, a new piece of legislation has become a must. Various shortcomings have surfaced, and this new Bill will address these, so that women's new aspirations are positively entertained.

This new Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has, as main objectives, to provide a platform for women to voice their needs, concerns and aspirations; to improve the regulation of women's associations and manage more effectively the Regional Committees responsible for activities of Women Associations; to promote women empowerment and gender equality, and to empower women towards a more active participation in social, economic and political field, without forgetting Rodrigues, where there will be a new Bill, but that will be customised according to the needs of the Rodriguan women.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the advent of technology has changed the world. Women need to be initiated to new technologies for their enhancement and safety. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government of India has some days back passed a law where all mobile phones will be bound to be equipped with a panic button.

This will enable women and girls and vulnerable ones to press this button ahead of any sort of danger. Police will come in no time. The existence of such phone is unknown to most of us. The Council can promote this type of phone among its members and can ask Government for a similar legislation in Mauritius. This is a clear example of technology at the service of all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with this new Bill, the National Women's Council will engage its members in addressing goals of equity, autonomy, empowerment and social transformation. The Council comprising of women irrespective of their class, educational background, and ethnicity will be an autonomous nonpartisan body to enable it to reach its goals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we, women, are striving for a 30% candidature for the Legislative Assembly while women represent 51% of the population and with this new

legislation of National Women's Council, the hopes and aspirations of women will be revamped. A long way still ahead for those to realise that women are the backbone of our society. No nation will progress without the recognition of women as a decisive driving force.

To end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will emphasise that it is not a coincidence that this legislation comes with Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister of our Republic. The latter has at heart the emancipation of women. Our Prime Minister recognises the force of women. Hopefully, this Bill which will gather unanimity - as confirmed by hon. Baloomoody representing the Opposition - will benefit the whole society. As women, we are the shapers of the modern society.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(6.46 p.m.)

Mr J. F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Members, especially hon. ladies, I stand up as a man to speak on this National Women's Council Bill of 2016, as in our world today, gender is an issue that needs to be embraced as much by men as by women, to bring about changes and make a difference in our society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will agree with me that men are also key actors in furthering women's empowerment. In that regard, I treasure equally the role of women -

- (a) in our nation-building,
- (b) for their contribution in the smooth running and transition of our society, and
- (c) as key social and economic agent for change.

I congratulate the hon. Minister for the introduction of this Bill, which I will debate on broadly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as we stride forward, I feel that there is a new route and a renaissance of our attitude towards gender issues.

The promotion of gender equality implies an explicit attention to women's empowerment, and hon. Minister Mrs Perraud is absolutely right in that endeavour through the provision of this Bill.

We are bound to achieve the vision of a Progressive Transform Republican Society. Our women need to be fully engaged and empowered to do so without any unfair barriers in that regard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my political party, OPR, strongly supports the empowerment of women, gender equality, where both women and men are key actors in the economic,

social, political development of our Republic and I will also add the legal and environmental development in our Republic.

It is a commendable Bill for more actions for and by women, without any limitation in our Republic. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill will allow our Republic to deepen our commitment towards the target of Sustainable Development Goal. Gender Equality: Achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in our society. Women - and I agree with that - are powerful catalysts for sustainable development and that is what exactly I believe hon. Minister Mrs Perraud is aiming at with this Bill, as pointed out also by other hon. Members.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, had marked a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. It sets the strategic objectives and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality in 12 critical areas of concern, amongst which -

- (i) Women and poverty;
- (ii) Women and the economy;
- (iii) Women and health;
- (iv) Education and training;
- (v) Girls;
- (vi) Human rights of women;
- (vii) Violence against women
- (viii) Women and the media, as rightly pointed out by hon. Toussaint
- (ix) Women and the environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my concerns in relation thereof, is how far our Republic has made progress with regard to this Beijing Declaration? Are we on the right-track?

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the context of Africa, I am glad to note that, in the First African Gender Equality Index 2015, the ranking identifies the Republic of Mauritius amongst the top five African countries (with South Africa, Rwanda, Namibia and Malawi) and that we are doing best on gender equality and, over time, the best improvers. Congratulations to our Republic!

Our Republic also ranked first in the top 10 country performance for Women and Human Development, followed by Tunisia, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Libya, Algeria, Cape Verde, Swaziland, Egypt and Arab Republic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Gender Equality Index Report, I believe, gives credit to our Republic and shall act as a good catalyst to better all our endeavours in that direction.

And, with regard to the actual situation, a few fundamental questions still need to be asked for us to make further progress, to be exemplary in terms of leadership on all fronts and to reach an excellent global ranking.

One question is: Are we satisfied with the representation proportion of seats held by women in our national Parliament itself, in Ministerial-level positions, in number of justices in our Court of Law, in various fields of responsibilities such as Political Party Leaders, Chief Police Commanders, pilot and so on?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having said so, I have a dream that will revolutionise our political system and political perceptions, that is, to see a woman as Prime Minister of our Republic one day. Will that be possible? Is our society ready for it or not? Will that be possible, when our Republic is engaged to a fully gender-neutral language throughout its functionality as is the case in Namibia's Constitution?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the context of this Bill, I believe empowerment means simply women gaining more power and control over their own lives. I hope it will increase exponentially the economic empowerment of women, especially for those who are most excluded in our society today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no women shall be economically isolated or end up insecure in our Republic. They must be linked to the economic assets, formal trade, access to modern technology and entrepreneurial competencies, as well as financial services to pursue economic opportunities.

This National Women's Council Bill must guarantee this security in partnership with all stakeholders, be it by Government or private sectors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming to Climate Change, in December last at COP21, the Paris Agreement acknowledged that climate change is a common concern of humankind. It stipulates that, I quote -

“Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect,

promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, (...)"

And more importantly -

"(...) the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity"

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, two weeks ago, the Disaster Risk and Reduction Management Bill presented by hon. Wong Yen Cheong was passed in our august Assembly, with consideration given to include 'gender' as amended.

I think we are on the right track to integrating gender into disaster risk management in our Republic and this is supported, as outlined by the Japan Hyogo Framework for Action1, which specifies, and I quote –

"A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training".

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is essential to provide a platform for women to voice and support women's participation in national and local decision-making in promoting women leadership.

The Bill provides voices for women, but, in as far as, family, spouse violence is concerned, we need to work together and improve our responses considerably if we are going to bring about changes in our society. Gender-based violence is a major obstacle to the achievement of equality and development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, rightly so, women and girls continue to be seriously affected by gender-specific violations of their human, sexual, and reproductive rights. Women and girls in our society today are still being continued to be victims of rape.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, domestic violence, which is rampant, is a source of disempowerment for women and I believe that the role - and this is very important - of "men for gender", will have to help to change this brutal environment.

I seize this opportunity to raise this issue, which I have failed to witness considerably in our Republic, the issue of men for gender equality which shall mobilise men from all walks of life to transform masculinities for gender equality. Men for gender equality!

I seriously think that it is high time to consider same, to set up ‘Men for Gender’, which I believe in this transitional period will revolutionise our way of looking at gender equality.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to Rodrigues, the Bill makes provisions as per section 5(d) –

“collaborate closely with such body having objects similar to those of the Council as may be set up by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.”

As per section 8(e) –

“(...) the Board which shall consist of –

a representative of such body having objects similar to those of the Council as may be set up by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly; ”

And as per Section 20 (1) (b) –

“Rodrigues shall form a separate region.”

These provisions must allow the proper functioning of Rodrigues Autonomy, where Rodrigues and the Regional Assembly must set up its specific structures from which the Chairperson shall then represent Rodrigues on the National Council and Committee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before going further, allow me to seize this opportunity to congratulate those five Women Police Constables in our Police Force, who for the first time in the history of Rodrigues, were promoted to the grade of Women Police Sergeant. This is empowerment for women and we are thankful.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in Rodrigues, the Deputy Chief Commissioner, Mrs Gaspard Pierre-Louis, responsible for Gender Equality, is putting in place many programmes to support the empowerment of women that provide them with skills, mentoring, access to networks and markets, and financial resources. There is no doubt that this kind of programme is having a meaningful impact on the lives of our Rodriguan women.

M. le président, Rodrigues valorise pleinement les rôles de la femme dans notre société. Des ONG, comme le Centre Carrefour, s’engagent à regrouper les femmes à travers la formation continue sous le slogan ‘*Pran Conscience Valer Fam*’, comme base de ce qu’elles font pour la femme Rodriguaise.

Elles ont lutté ensemble dans la solidarité pour défendre les droits des femmes Rodriguaises, par exemple, pour remédier la souffrance des femmes enceintes, concernant le problème de non-régularité des gynécologues à Rodrigues. D'ailleurs, l'honorable Premier ministre et l'honorable ministre de la santé ont contribué à régler ce problème.

M. le président, pour rassurer la Chambre et l'honorable ministre concernant Rodrigues, je suis heureux d'annoncer que Rodrigues propose de mettre en place des règlements en faveur des femmes et des filles rodriguaises qui visera à -

- (i) mettre en place une structure représentative des femmes dans tous les secteurs de vie à Rodrigues;
- (ii) favoriser l'épanouissement économique des femmes à travers le travail égal qui est égal à salaire égal, chance égale sur le marché de l'emploi, démocratiser l'accès à tous types de travail;
- (iii) garantir son accès aux services bancaires sans avoir à être sous la tutelle de son conjoint;
- (iv) l'épanouissement social et politique pour plus de représentativité dans les instances décisionnelles et dans les élections;
- (v) la promotion de la santé des femmes, sa santé reproductive et autre, et
- (vi) corriger la disparité dans le domaine de l'emploi.

A Rodrigues, plus de filles réussissent académiquement, mais moins des filles et des femmes embauchées car, la plupart des travaux sont réservés qu'aux hommes, par exemple, pompier et autres.

Rodrigues travaille pour permettre des programmes dans un esprit de discrimination positive pour rattraper son retard car trop souvent les filles étaient sacrifiées par rapport à son frère dans son éducation sociale et académique. En disant ceci, M. le président, je suis très ému parce que moi-même dans ma famille, je l'ai vécu, où ma grande sœur a dû sacrifier toute sa vie pour permettre à mes frères, mes sœurs et moi-même d'aller à l'école ou participer dans la vie sociale et communautaire. Elle s'occupait des animaux, allait chercher du bois et l'eau, et faisait le ménage pendant que ma mère et mon père s'occupaient de notre plantation agricole et je lui en suis très reconnaissant!

M. le président, la mutation de notre société doit aussi passer par un changement de regard sur la femme. C'est connu dans notre société aujourd'hui, un mari adultère titré

comme un vagabond est considéré comme un grand galant mais une femme dans la même situation est victime à jamais comme une..., je ne termine pas la phrase, M. le président, à chacun son interprétation.

M. le président, il est bon de souligner qu'à ce jour à Rodrigues, il y a plus d'une soixantaine d'associations de femmes dans les différents villages qui sont organisées autour des formations diverses dans les centres avec des programmes qui favorisent le renforcement des capacités entrepreneuriales; l'encadrement des enfants; l'épanouissement de la famille et cette culture du respect de l'environnement dans le cadre d'une île Rodrigues durable.

M. le président, dans le secteur de l'*Economic Empowerment* de nos femmes, les femmes de Rodrigues sont bien ancrées dans ce nouveau concept de l'économie communautaire et solidaire, à l'exemple, des groupes de femmes qui gèrent des *business* dans le domaine de la restauration ou transformations agro-alimentaire.

M. le président, dans le contexte de protection de l'Environnement et le phénomène du changement climatique, nos femmes à Rodrigues s'engagent et rentrent dans l'innovation ici pour des projets de recyclage, surtout après la décision de bannir l'utilisation des sacs en plastique.

M. le président, je vais m'arrêter ici. Ce projet de loi s'étale dans l'axe du progrès et de la modernité pour l'émancipation et l'*empowerment* de la femme.

Je dis oui à ce projet de loi et je vous remercie pour votre attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, Madam Speaker will now take the Chair.

At this stage, Madam Speaker took the Chair.

(7.06 p.m.)

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madame la présidente, c'est un privilège certain et un honneur pour moi, ce soir, de m'exprimer devant cette auguste assemblée sur le *National Women's Council Bill*, présenté par ma collègue, l'honorable Perraud, ministre de l'Égalité des genres, du développement de l'enfant et du bien-être de la Famille.

Ce projet de loi vient remplacer la législation existante de 1985, régissant le fonctionnement du *National Women's Council*.

Madame la présidente, avec toutes les interventions avant moi, je ne compte pas élaborer sur les détails techniques et légaux du projet de loi, mais je parlerais en générale. Madame la présidente, avec l'évolution de la société au fil des années, il est devenu important de revoir le fonctionnement du *National Women's Council*.

Si dans le passé il opérait surtout avec le but de meubler le temps libre des femmes au foyer, leur donner des opportunités de loisirs, leur donner des moyens d'apprendre à coudre, à faire de l'artisanat, aujourd'hui, la réalité est tout autre. La femme mauricienne a de multiples rôles. On parle même du *multitasking*. Outre son rôle, au sein de la famille en tant que mère, épouse, ses responsabilités ont bien évolué. Elles ont aujourd'hui une vie professionnelle active. Et, c'est pour répondre à cette évolution qu'aujourd'hui, ma collègue, l'honorable ministre de l'Égalité des genres, du développement de l'enfant et du bien-être de la famille, a présenté ce nouveau projet de loi à l'Assemblée Nationale. Je la félicite pour cette démarche.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais attirer l'attention de la Chambre sur le fait que Sir Anerood Jugnauth, notre Premier ministre, a toujours été un fervent défenseur de la cause féminine. Dès son premier mandat, il créa le premier *full-fledged Ministry for Women's Rights*, et durant ce même mandat, une série de mesures ont été prises et des amendements apportés aux législations en faveur de l'émancipation de la femme mauricienne. Aujourd'hui, Sir Anerood est de nouveau à la tête du gouvernement et ce nouveau projet de loi vient, encore une fois, mettre l'accent qu'il faut sur l'encadrement nécessaire pour l'épanouissement de la femme et je voudrais lui remercier pour cela.

Madame la présidente, ce projet de loi se veut nécessaire car il pose les jalons et dessine des contours du développement futur et de l'avancement de la femme mauricienne dans les sphères de la vie, que ce soit au niveau social, économique ou politique. Parmi les objectifs cités dans le texte de loi à la section 4: promouvoir l'autonomisation des femmes et l'égalité des genres, assurer et promouvoir la participation active des femmes dans le social, l'économie et la politique, cela en vue qu'elles aient un statut plus important. Et troisièmement, fournir aux femmes une plateforme commune pour qu'elles puissent faire entendre leur voix.

La femme représente aujourd'hui plus de 50% de la population. On ne veut guère se permettre de gaspiller le potentiel de la moitié de la population. On parle là de 50% du *brain power* de notre République. Etant donné les défis auxquels nous sommes aujourd'hui

confrontés, que ce soit au niveau - comme l'a si bien dit mon collègue intervenant avant moi - du changement climatique ou encore les pressions croissantes pesant sur les modèles économiques, en passant par le chômage, la pauvreté, la nécessité se fait ressentir pour les personnes avec les têtes sur les épaules, les personnes épanouies. Je ne parle certainement pas seulement des femmes. Je parle ici de tous les membres de notre population. Mais, je dois certainement faire ressortir que la contribution des femmes ne peut être négligée. Il va sans dire que je parle ici de la nécessité de *take on board* les femmes. On ne peut les mettre à l'écart, car leur contribution devient cruciale. C'est sûr que les femmes apporteront leurs idées, leurs points de vue, des nouvelles perspectives aux projets du pays. La diversité, Madame la présidente, cela est prouvé, ne peut qu'être bénéfique à la prise des décisions.

Nous le savons, Madame la présidente, que les discussions sont déjà entamées sur la Réforme Electorale, qu'il y a un Comité interministériel qui en discute. Je suis, pour ma part, convaincu que le moment est propice pour que la femme mauricienne fasse entendre sa voix sur ses aspirations politiques, surtout pour une meilleure représentativité dans ce domaine.

J'accueille la démarche de la ministre d'inclure dans les objectifs du *National Women's Council* à la clause 4(b) -

“ensure and promote the active participation of women in the social, economic and political fields in order to further their overall empowerment;”

Nous le savons tous que parmi les pays de la SADC, à titre d'exemple, nous ne sommes pas au avant-poste en termes de la représentativité de la femme au niveau politique. Nous devons songer sérieusement à commencer, avec au moins 33% des femmes sur la liste des candidats, en espérant que le pourcentage augmentera au fil des années.

Madame la présidente, la langue anglaise nous gratifie d'une image qui n'est guère insolite, mais certainement imprégnée de portée extraordinaire. On parle du *glass ceiling*, qu'il nous faut à tout prix faire voler en éclats et aussi du *sticky floor* duquel il nous faut absolument se libérer.

Madame la présidente, c'est bien d'être conscient de ces contraintes, mais cela ne suffit guère, car pour arriver à ce plafond, à ce *ceiling*, avant de l'éclater, il nous faut encore avoir une échelle. Cependant, si cette échelle est une *glass ladder*, croyez-moi la bataille est loin d'être gagnée ! Alors les *glass ladders* devront être remplacées par les *iron ladders*. Donc, cela suppose que toute barrière doit être enlevée et non simplement levée, car la femme mauricienne mérite ce droit de jouir des chances égales.

En tant que ministre de l'Éducation et de ressources humaines, je ne saurais trahir la cause féminine, puisque rien que la performance académique des filles prenant du primaire jusqu'à l'enseignement supérieur, parle d'elle-même. Si la femme peut être brillante dans ses études, pourquoi ne peut-elle pas réussir dans toutes les sphères de la vie, que ce soit économique, sociale ou politique. Nous avons la preuve incontournable et irréfutable que la femme mauricienne d'aujourd'hui est disposée à prendre de nouvelles responsabilités à tous les niveaux.

Nous avons, aujourd'hui, comme la Présidente de la République, une femme en la personne de Madame Ameenah Gurib-Fakim et au poste du *Speaker*, Madame la présidente, nous avons vous-même. Non plus devrait-on omettre le nombre important de femmes occupant des postes clés à la tête des différents ministères et des institutions gouvernementales tout comme au Judiciaire.

Madame la présidente, tel n'est cependant pas la tendance générale. Bien malgré moi, je note que le secteur privé n'octroie pas à la femme des opportunités à la mesure de ses capacités et de ses talents. Ça vient, mais vraiment beaucoup trop lentement. Et donc, l'importance capitale de ce *National Women's Council Bill* qui viendra justement développer des stratégies afin de corriger certaines anomalies et vient doter le pays d'un cadre légal plus moderne et approprié pour mieux accomplir la mission du *National Women's Council* qui consiste, comme je l'ai déjà mentionné avant, à promouvoir l'autonomisation des femmes et assurer l'égalité des genres et une plus grande participation de la femme dans les différentes sphères de la société.

Les pays qui investissent dans la promotion du statut social et économique de la femme ont généralement des taux de pauvreté les plus bas. La citation qui suit en dit long et je cite la version anglaise –

“If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family and a nation.”

La participation des femmes demeure donc fondamentale pour la démocratie et elle est surtout essentielle car axée sur la réalisation du développement durable, de la paix qui sont, comme je vous ai dit, Madame, les choses les plus importantes et vitales pour la survie humaine. La contribution de la femme, que ce soit dans le plan familial, social, économique ou politique est non négligeable. Et le rôle de la femme continue à accroître partout dans le

monde. Il est impératif que les législations soient adaptées aux réalités du jour. C'est justement ce qu'on fait aujourd'hui, Madame la présidente.

Je voudrais aussi m'appesantir sur cette réalité qui dure dans le quotidien de pas mal de femmes Mauriciennes malgré certaines avancées. Elles continuent, Madame, à être victimes de violences, d'abus, de maltraitance et d'inégalité. Le nouveau mandat du *National Women's Council* consistera à travailler directement avec les femmes, les informer de leurs droits et des nouvelles opportunités pour qu'elles puissent mieux prendre leur destin en main.

Le *National Women's Council* aura aussi à mettre sur pied un réseau d'associations féminines afin que ces dames puissent échanger leurs points de vue et échanger leurs connaissances et expériences. Le *National Women's Council* devra aussi être en mesure de faciliter le dialogue avec l'État pour la formulation des politiques tenant en compte les besoins stratégiques des femmes et aussi mettre en œuvre, suivre, évaluer, remédier et permettre un examen constant des politiques qui seraient en adéquation avec les besoins pratiques et stratégiques des femmes.

Le *National Women's Council* permettra aux femmes de faire entendre leur voix. Un autre élément crucial, le *National Women's Council* pourra préserver son autonomie afin d'être pleinement non partisan, inclusif et représentatif de femmes de n'importe quelle origine.

À l'image des réformes enclenchées dans divers secteurs dont l'éducation, ce projet de loi vient enclencher, selon moi, de profonds changements dans la manière dont œuvrent les femmes dans la politique, le social et le monde économique. Le partage des connaissances et d'expérience permettra certainement aux femmes de pouvoir se lancer d'une façon plus adéquate.

Aucun au monde ne peut se permettre de prendre en considération cette moitié de population importante que forment les femmes. La démocratie oblige que femmes et hommes se rendent compte de cette nécessité de la notion d'égalité et de réaliser cette égalité dans les sphères de la vie. Je n'ai pas de doute que le *National Women's Council* permettra à la femme Mauricienne d'aspirer à un avenir plus serein que ce soit pour elle, pour sa famille, ses proches ou pour la société ou le pays.

The National Women's Council has a mandate of promoting the interest of women and protecting them ensuring that they get equal opportunities. The strategies of the Council will have to include the economic empowerment of women through building up skills which

will ensure their gainful employment, political empowerment through development of awareness, training and mobilization for equitable representations in all spheres of life.

Madam Speaker, others have mentioned it before me, today the Mauritian woman has got a role to play in all spheres of life and they have taken a step forward. They are in the judiciary, they are in the financial services and they are in any other economic field you might think of. We need to empower them and we need to provide them with the scaffolds to rise and the National Women's Council should be providing these scaffolds. I am sure with the new legislation the support they provide to women will be more adequate.

Madam Speaker, even in today's modern world, there is, unfortunately, an urgent need for the prevention of violence and discrimination against women and this is inside and even outside the home. The Council will have to ensure, through legal reform and sensitive enforcement, that this situation be remedied. We must not forget, Madam Speaker, that the Council will be the platform that will bring about amelioration of conditions of socially challenged women as well. This includes drug addicts, those women dependent on alcohol, sex workers and those living in precarious conditions.

Madam Speaker, we must not also forget the subtle ways in which women are often ill-treated namely through indecent representations in the media, on TV, in advertisements. The Council would be the most appropriate body to raise awareness against such cases and organise both legal and social sanctions.

Madame la présidente, une fois la nouvelle législation promulguée, j'inviterais la femme Mauricienne à profiter de ces plateformes mises en place par le *National Women's Council*. Cela l'aiderait à accomplir ses ambitions et aider à construire une île Maurice encore plus moderne et démocratique.

Madam Speaker, I once again would like to thank the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, hon. Mrs Aurore Perraud for having brought this Bill to the House and I thank you all for your kind attention.

(7.20 p.m.)

Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Madam Speaker, when we go back in history and we look at the various steps that have been taken by successive Governments, I think the House will agree with me that we should be proud, as a nation, that has always taken positive steps when it comes to the promotion of women's rights.

I won't go into the various decisions that have been taken, the various institutions that have been set up, the various legislations that have been brought before this House except to refer to one event. It was when the Government of Mauritius back in 1976 took the decision to set up a Government machinery for the promotion of women's rights. This was the first Ministry for Women's Affairs back in 1976. It was in the wake of the International Women's Year in 1975.

In that same spirit, in 1985 the existing National Women's Council was set up and that was following the accession of Mauritius to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). As per Article 3 of that Treaty, and I'll read that Article –

Mauritius was required to take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men. And, it was in that respect that the National Women's Council back in 1985 was set up with the objective to provide for a platform for a dialogue between the State and the various women's associations in the country.

I do agree that there have been a lot of criticisms concerning the working of the National Women's Council. Although I have to say that Mauritius has made remarkable progress when it comes to women's empowerment and gender equality yet I agree that we have a long way to go when it comes to the participation of women and I have to highlight here, especially when it comes to the economic activity of the country.

I will refer to a few statistics, Madam Speaker. The latest statistics in Mauritius indicate that women are still very much less economically active than men. In 2014, 45.4 per cent of women aged 16 and above were actively participating in the economy against 75.2 per cent among men of the same age group.

According to the Global Gender Index, which seeks to measure one important aspect of gender equality, the relative gaps between women and men across a large set of countries and across four key factors, including economic participation and opportunity, education attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment, Mauritius holds the 106th position overall out of 142 countries, regressing - that was in 2014 - from the 98th position, which was held back in 2013. So, as I have said, although we have done some progress, there is still a long way to go.

Therefore, to the extent that this Bill reinforces our commitment to empower women and promote gender equality, then the Bill is most welcome. I have looked at the various provisions of the Bill. There are, I have to admit, positive steps in the new Bill compared to the existing Act. For example, provision is now being made for the appointment of a Chairperson instead of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry heading the National Committee. There are also the Regional Committees, under this new Bill, that have been extended to allow for better representation from various regions. Under the Act, as it is, we have about four Regional Committees, excluding Rodrigues, and now it is being proposed that, for each district - there are nine districts - there shall be a Regional Committee to manage and administer the Women Associations in those regions. These are some of the positive steps.

I have a few interrogations and some qualms concerning some of the provisions of the Act. Hon. Baloomoody has made reference to a few provisions. Firstly, it is with regard to the representation on the Council. Now, in the existing Act, provision is made for the representatives of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to be present on the Board. Now, there was a reason for these resource persons to be present on the Board. They were on the Board with the specific mission to assist the Council on matters concerning their respective sectors, which were considered important for the empowerment of women. That was why they were sitting on the Board. Now, this has been removed. It is being proposed in the new Bill that these representatives be removed and, in my opinion, that would be a step backward.

Secondly, there is section 8(6), which provides for the representation of the nine Regional Committees on the Board. According to the Bill, the representation shall be on a rotation basis. When I read the Bill, only three Regional Committees shall be represented for a period of one year. This would lead to six out of nine Regional Committees being left out of the Board for a period of one year. I am of the opinion that this would definitely be a hurdle in securing a permanent platform at all times between the Ministry and the associations in all the regions in the country.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, section 10 provides for the setting up of committees in different fields. I am making here reference specifically to section 10(2) (b), where it is provided that –

“a committee may be constituted –

(b) partly by members and partly by other persons.”

Now, who are the other persons? Nowhere is it defined who are the other persons, what are their qualifications and what would be the experience required. Nothing is being provided. We are being left in the dark as regards that particular provision, namely who would be the members of those sub-committees. Worse is that they are going to be paid allowance to be decided by the Board. There is another provision, clause 18(2) (a), and it concerns the membership of a Women Association. It is being provided there that –

“An application by a Women Association to become a member of the Council shall be made in the prescribed manner (...).”

Now, we would have expected, since we are debating the Bill, that provisions be made in the Act as to the criteria that need to be satisfied for a Woman Association to be eligible to become a member of the Council, but this has not been provided for.

Lastly, it concerns the appointment of the members of the Executive Committee, provided under clause 20(4) (a), that is, the Executive Committee of the Regional Committees. It has not been provided who would appoint the members of those Regional Committees. What is the mode of selection? Is there going to be an election? What would be the duration of the term in office of the Executive members? So, this is not very clear. Not only we are not told how the Regional Committees are going to be constituted, but we are also not told how these Regional Committees are going to elect their representatives who would eventually sit on the Board.

I am highlighting these issues because - I am not criticising - we all want the Council to work. We want to have an institution that would work, and I hope that the hon. Minister will enlighten us on these issues.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(7.34 p.m.)

Mrs Perraud: Madam Speaker, I thank all the hon. Members who have taken part in the debate on this Bill, and I am pleased to note that there is unanimity in this House on gender equality and women’s empowerment agenda through the modernisation of the legislative framework.

Madam Speaker, I wish at the very outset to acknowledge the multiple issues raised by hon. Baloomoody whilst at the same time express my appreciation for enlightening me on issues that he is knowledgeable about. I am informed that hon. Baloomoody was a member of the Task Force which was set up to review laws that were discriminatory against women. Madam Speaker, Members of this House will also appreciate that when I took office as Minister in December 2014, I inherited a structure with all its weaknesses, problems and shortcomings and it is precisely because of this that we are here today, to repeal the National Women's Council Act of 1985 and come up with a new Bill. I have tried to lump the various issues raised and proposals made under six core headings -

- (i) Membership;
- (ii) Organisational structure;
- (iii) Autonomy;
- (iv) Financial resources;
- (v) Discourses, activities, and
- (vi) Powers of the Minister.

Madam Speaker, it is true that we are faced with the 'Founder Syndrome' regarding membership of the Council whereby some presidents/members *se sont agrippés à leur statut de presidents/membres de leurs associations respectives*. This has, undoubtedly, resulted in the monotony and limited activities. Another challenge is the membership of the Council and, very often, the members are totally not updated on challenges facing women. They are not innovative in their approach and their discourses have remained stereotypical.

Madam Speaker, let me clarify the 90% of the members who are supposedly not compliant with the rules and regulations of the Registrar of Associations. Let me reassure the House that all Associations registered with the National Women's Council are *de facto* registered with the Registrar of Associations.

Madam Speaker, let me also clarify the membership of the Board. But before doing that, let me, once again, reiterate that the new structure and membership of the Board is more democratic as we are moving from four Regional Committees to nine Regional Committees. This measure, in itself, demonstrates that we are enlarging our scope of intervention to have a wider representativeness of women's voices to be heard on the Board. Moreover, we will have a rotation of three members of the Regional Committees on the Board, we shall concurrently put in place a mechanism where all the nine Regional Committees will be

provided a platform to discuss about women's issues. These aspects are of operational nature and these will be looked into once the Bill is approved.

It is true that membership is reduced, but we have made provisions for the setting up of technical committees to look into emerging issues whilst co-opting experts to discuss these emerging issues as provided in Section 10 of the Bill: such as reproductive health, gender-based violence, poverty alleviation and unemployment.

Madam Speaker, I will invite the hon. Member to refer to Section 8(2) (a) where provision is made for the Board to co-opt up to three persons with expertise not already available to the Board. Madam Speaker, it is not correct to say that I will appoint the Manager as it is clearly spelt out at Section 12(1) that this will be done by the Board. Madam Speaker, I wish to clarify that as clearly spelt out in Section 17, as Minister, I may give such written directions of a general character to the Board, as may be necessary in the public interest and, as Minister, I need to ensure that the policies and interventions of the Council pertaining to women's empowerment and gender equality are well aligned to those of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. Our policies and strategic directions should not be *décousus et allant vers des directions opposées*.

Madam Speaker, on another note let me reassure the House and hon. Members that any instruction that the Minister may give, shall be written and not inconsistent with the Act in public interest, thereby, demonstrating the Minister's commitment and willingness not to interfere with the affairs of the Board.

In regard to the Human Resource aspect of the National Women's Council, I wish to inform the House that since December last, the Council has recruited a full-fledged Secretary Programme Coordinator and Programme Officer who shall be responsible to manage the day-to-day businesses of the Council as well as to come forward with projects and innovative activities for the empowerment of women and gender equality.

In parallel, I have deemed it strategic to have the officers of the National Women's Council working at the Ministry be returned to the Council in a phase-wise manner in order to enable the organisation to review and consolidate its Information, Education and Communication campaigns.

Madam Speaker, let me point out that the concern of Members of the House regarding the financial resources and judicious management of funds have been well noted. However, allow me to point out that in line with the Financial Reporting Act, the National Women's

Council has the responsibility to have its financial accounts examined by the National Audit Office. This practice definitely ensures the good practice and governance of the institution. In addition to that, this new Act makes provision for the Council to receive grants, donations, amongst others.

Madam Speaker, let me reassure the House that there shall be sound management of the funds received and any expenditure to be incurred by the National Women's Council shall be scrutinised by the Finance Committee and then by the Board for approval.

Madam Speaker, with reference to the issues raised by hon. Ramful, I wish to point out that in light with Section 20(3) and (4)(a) since each Regional Committee shall be registered with the Registrar of Associations, it is understood and clear that there be an election for each Regional Committee to elect their Executive Members under the supervision of the Registrar of Associations.

On another note, I need to highlight that no employee of the Council shall stand as a candidate for election as members of the Executive of the Regional Committee.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all hon. Members of this House for their contribution and a special thank for my team who has worked on this piece of legislation.

Et aussi, Madame la présidente, on voit que tout ce qui concerne l'autonomisation de la femme, tout ce qui concerne la protection de la femme c'est aussi l'affaire de tout un chacun et je crois qu'aujourd'hui tous les membres de cette Chambre sortiront ici avec une note d'espérance, du moins pour moi, parce que j'ai toujours dit, depuis que je suis arrivée à la tête de ce ministère, que tous les Mauriciens doivent se sentir concernés par la condition féminine et doivent travailler pour donner plus d'autonomisation à la femme. Nous avons vu aujourd'hui, que ce soit les députés, les secrétaires parlementaires privés, les ministres et aussi les membres de l'Opposition, tous ont voulu apporter leur contribution et je leur dis merci.

Merci beaucoup, au nom de toutes ces femmes, de toutes les femmes de la République de Maurice. Nous avons entendu des discours bien travaillés. On a fait beaucoup de recherche. Les discours étaient passionnés, passionnants et aussi empreints d'émotions. Nous avons aussi entendu des éloges à la femme qui est forte, la femme courage, la femme dans toute sa beauté, et en tant que femme je tiens, messieurs, mesdames, à vous dire merci. Merci d'être des ambassadeurs pour la cause de la femme et j'aimerais qu'on se quitte ce soir avec cette belle citation, d'une des plus célèbres femmes écrivains au monde, Edith Wharton.

J'aimerais qu'on parte, chacun d'entre nous, avec cette citation ce soir. Elle dit ceci – "Il y a deux façons de répandre la lumière: en étant une bougie, ou le miroir qui reflète cette bougie."

Messieurs, Mesdames, choisissez comment vous voulez répandre cette lumière dans la société.

Merci beaucoup.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The National Women's Council Bill (No. V of 2016) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the National Women's Council Bill (No. V of 2016) was read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 17 May 2016, at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 7.50 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 17 May 2016 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ELECTORAL LAWS & REGULATIONS – AMENDMENT

(No. B/344) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance

and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the electoral laws and regulations, he will state if consideration will be given for proposed amendments to be introduced thereto with a view to implementing a code of conduct with legal provisions to govern the political parties and the candidates, including the review of the present use of 'bases' during electoral campaigns.

Reply: As the House is aware, since the By-Election held in the Constituency of Quartier Militaire and Moka in March 2009, the Electoral Supervisory Commission has been formulating a Code of Conduct for every election with the aim of complementing the existing legal provisions regarding the holding and conduct of elections in Mauritius, most specially those provisions relating to bribery, treating, undue influence and illegal practice.

The objective of the Code is to ensure the integrity and credibility of the electoral process. The Code has been conceived as a set of principles to be adhered to by all stakeholders and to be upheld in both spirit and letter.

With regard to implementing a Code of Conduct having force of law, I am informed that opinions are divided on this issue. In India, for example, there was an attempt in the mid-eighties to bring its Code of Conduct in the statute book.

However, the Election Commission of India has since changed its mind on the question of giving statutory backing to the Code. Based on its experience of conducting several general elections, the Election Commission of India is now firmly of the view that bringing the Code on the statute book would be a self-defeating measure, because in their view any violation of the Code must have a quick reaction and remedial measure, which may not be possible if the matter is taken to the Courts and becomes the subject of examination in a regular judicial process. The Election Commission of India feels that any judicial pronouncement after the election is already over would have little relevance, and has accordingly withdrawn its earlier recommendation to give the Code a statutory backing.

Moreover, many jurisdictions believe that a Code of Conduct should have no statutory backing as it is felt that public opinion is the moral sanction for any breach of the Code. Armed with such moral sanction, the Election Commission can ensure its observance by political parties and candidates.

Laws and regulations dealing with a whole gamut of election offences set out in the Representation of the People Act and the Code of Conduct are complementary instruments which may therefore co-exist.

In regard to the review of the use of so called “*baz*”, during electoral campaigns, I must say that I am myself very much against this practice which I consider has no place in a modern democracy. Besides, the Code of Conduct issued by the Electoral Supervisory Commission calls upon all participants in an election to refrain from the setting up of such “*baz*”.

Moreover, section 65(3) of the Representation of People Act also prohibits the opening up of any rooms or buildings within 200 metres of the polling station for the purpose of any activity directed towards promoting or procuring the election of a candidate at an election.

As the House is aware, the Government is already embarked on the reform of our electoral system as enunciated in the Government Programme 2015-2019. The issues raised by the hon. Member may be addressed in this same context.

**SBM – FORMER MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT – LOAN**

(No. B/345) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the loan recently contracted by the former Minister of Finance and Economic Development at the State Bank of Mauritius, he will state when was he made aware thereof and by whom.

Reply: As the hon. Member is aware, an enquiry into the matter has been instituted by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

By virtue of sections 81(2) and 81(3) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, no information can be disclosed on any case under investigation by the ICAC.

The hon. Member will also appreciate that it would not be appropriate, at this stage to provide details which may cause prejudice to the ongoing investigation.

RACECOURSE (NEW) – SETTING UP

(No. B/346) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the proposed relocation of the Racecourse at Champs de Mars on the west coast, he

will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to where matters stand thereof and by whom.

Reply: A proposal from a private promoter has been received at the Gambling Regulatory Authority through the Board of Investment for the setting up of a new racecourse in the West. This proposal is being studied.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION – CONSTITUENCIES – DELIMITATION

(No. B/347) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the constituencies of the Republic of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Electoral Boundaries Commission, information as to if consideration will be given for a review of the delimitation thereof, in view of the disparity in terms of inhabitants in certain constituencies, which are not equal to the population quota.

Reply: As the House is aware, section 39(2) of the Constitution provides that the “The Electoral Boundaries Commission shall review the boundaries of the constituencies at such times as will enable them to present a report to the Assembly 10 years, as near as may be, after 12 August 1966 and, thereafter, 10 years after presentation of their last report”.

The House will appreciate that in the light of the provisions of the Constitution with regard to the function of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, it is clear that the Commission is not answerable to my Office in respect of the delimitations of constituencies and their boundaries.

As I explained in my reply to PQ B/371 of 01 September 2015, the last Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission on a review of the boundaries was tabled in the National Assembly on 10 November 2009. However, the National Assembly was dissolved on 31 March 2010 and there was no resolution brought in the Assembly before its dissolution to approve or reject the recommendations of the Report of 2009.

I am informed that the Electoral Boundaries Commission proposes to embark on a fresh exercise for a review of the boundaries of the constituencies and present a new report, which is due in 2018.

TAX POLICY

(No. B/348) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the tax system, he will state –

- (a) If Government will consider a new trend whereby leading economic thinkers are suggesting a progressive wealth tax to replace income tax as a more effective measure to fight poverty and inequality, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the setting up of a technical committee of economists to study if the replacement of the income, estate and gift taxes with a progressive wealth tax would be more appropriate to reduce the inequalities than any other tax and, if so, indicate if it will be advisable to wait for the submission of the report thereof prior to the launching of the Marshall Plan for Poverty Alleviation.

Reply: It would not be appropriate at this stage to make any statement on our future tax policy orientation as we are fully engaged in the preparation of the 2016/2017 Budget, which will be presented shortly.

As announced in the Government Programme 2015-2019, Government will implement an equitable tax policy based on the philosophy of *'fiscalité légère'*. To this end, Government is considering various policy options.

It may be noted that at the international level, there is no conventional wisdom on wealth tax. Indeed, while countries such as France, Spain, Switzerland and Italy have a wealth tax, others including Austria, Denmark, Germany, Finland and Sweden have abolished their wealth tax, the latest one being India last year.

ABERCROMBIE POLICE STATION – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/349) 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 of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Divisional Headquarters at Abercrombie, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) if the abandoned/seized vehicles parked thereat will be removed to increase the parking capacity thereat;

- (b) if the Police Quarters thereat have now been vacated and, if not, why not, and
- (c) if the implementation of the project for the construction of a modern one has started and if not, why not, indicating –
 - (i) where the offices thereof will be relocated during the construction period, and
 - (ii) the use that will be made of the offices presently housing same, the Abercrombie Police Station and the Operations Room on completion of the project.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the seized vehicles parked at the Divisional Headquarters at Abercrombie have all been removed.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are 14 Police Quarters at Abercrombie, out of which two are presently being occupied by serving Police Officers as residence, ten are being used as offices and the remaining two are unoccupied.

I wish to refer to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question B/67 at the sitting of 24 February 2015, where I indicated that the two officers concerned have, on 13 December 2013, been served with a notice to vacate their respective quarters, with the option to be housed in other quarters in another region.

However, both officers did not vacate the quarters and in February 2014, they informed the Commissioner of Police that the construction of their houses was in progress and they would vacate the quarters as soon as the construction works would be completed. In this respect, they asked for a delay of around six months. As the delay has expired and it seems that they are reluctant to vacate the quarters, the Attorney-General's Office has been requested to initiate legal action for their eviction.

In regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the preliminary design for the construction of a new modern building at Abercrombie, incorporating all the requirements for a state-of-the-art Police Divisional Headquarters, has been completed. The building is designed to be sustainable, energy efficient and providing for universal access. The cost of the project has now been estimated at Rs80 m. and the approval of the Project Plan Committee will accordingly be sought. The preparation of the detailed drawings, specifications and bidding documents for launching of tenders will be completed in about five months' time.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in the circumstances explained, works could not start in March 2016 as initially planned. The construction works, including the pulling down of the Police Quarters, have now been planned to start in March 2017 and are expected to be completed by May 2018.

In regard to part (c) (i) of the question, the offices presently located in the existing Police Quarters will be relocated at the ex-Police Quarters at Roche Bois during the construction period and the existing buildings at Abercrombie will be pulled down. The building at Roche Bois is presently being used by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life as a Drop-In-Centre for the Harm Reduction Programme. A request has already been made to that Ministry for putting the unutilised part of the building at the disposal of the Police Department. Should the Ministry not be in position to release the required office space, the Police Department will rent appropriate space to accommodate these offices.

In regard to part (c) (ii) of the question, the quarters presently housing the offices will be pulled down, whereas the existing building accommodating the Abercrombie Police Station and the Divisional Operations Room will continue to operate from their current location as they do not form part of the new project.

VALLEE DES PRETRES – POLICE STATION

(No. B/350) Mr G. Oree (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Abercrombie Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the regions and size of population it covers, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the setting up of another Police Station within the region, particularly in Vallée des Prêtres, in view of the fast expansion of the regions and, if so, indicate when and, if not, why not.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the purpose of policing, Abercrombie Police Station covers an area of 22 square km with a total of 75,000 inhabitants as follows –

Vallée des Prêtres	-	20,000 inhabitants
Cité La Cure	-	18,000 inhabitants
Ste Croix	-	22,000 inhabitants

Batterie Cassée - 15,000 inhabitants

As regards part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the time being it is not envisaged to set up a new Police Station in the region of Vallée des Prêtres as the area is adequately policed by Abercrombie Police Station and other units of the force such as the Emergency Response Service, Bike Patrol, Divisional Support Unit, Divisional Traffic Patrol, Field Intelligence Officers, CID and ADSU.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS – SELF-SUFFICIENCY

(No. B/368) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to food security, he will state the measures that are being taken for Mauritius to become self-sufficient in terms of agricultural products.

Reply: Mauritius by virtue of its size and population does not have the means and capacity to reach self-sufficiency for all agricultural products. In fact, Mauritius has always been a net food importing country and most of the foods that we consume namely rice, wheat, edible oil, fresh fruits, pulses, meat, milk and milk products are imported. Imports represent 77% of our food requirements and for 2014 the value of foodstuffs imported amounted to around MUR 38 billion.

However, Mauritius is self-sufficient in fresh vegetables and tropical fruits with a production of around 113,000 tons annually on 4300 ha of land. We are also almost self-sufficient in the production of chicken meat, eggs and venison and 50% in pig meat. Milk production averages 4.5 million litres annually.

With the phenomenon of climatic changes and natural calamities such as flash floods and droughts which are expected to be recurrent and more damaging in the coming years, our local food production potential may be seriously threatened. In fact, Mauritius as a Small Island Developing State is extremely vulnerable as far as food security is concerned.

My Ministry has come up with a new Strategic Plan 2016-2020 for the Food Crop, Livestock and Forestry Sectors to give a new boost to the agricultural sector. The main objective of the plan is to increase production of priority products such as vegetables and fruits for both local consumption and export and to encourage agro-processing activities for production of processed agricultural products to reduce dependency on imports. As the House is aware, a large array of processed food is being imported at huge cost and if we can produce these products ourselves, the country will benefit in terms of foreign exchange savings. In that context, the young and women will be encouraged to engage in agriculture and agri-business.

My Ministry has taken a series of measures to increase our level of self-sufficiency in agricultural products and these, *inter alia*, include -

- (a) the implementation of some 19 Schemes to boost the production of strategic crops such as onion, potato and garlic and other food crops. A number of these schemes will be reviewed in the next budget to make them more farmer-friendly. New Schemes will also be introduced;
- (b) encouraging research to develop new high yielding varieties of crops which are more tolerant to the attack of pests and diseases;
- (c) training of farmers in new technologies in the agricultural sector to improve and upgrade their farming practices so that their production system becomes more efficient and competitive;
- (d) the release of some 425 ha of sugar cane lands for agricultural diversification projects mainly to boost food crop production, and
- (e) promotion of a Value Chain approach to improve efficiency along the crop filière from seed production, field production efficiency, pre and post-harvest practices to minimise losses, improve quality and value addition to their produce through minimal processing/agro-processing.

The Agricultural Marketing Board is also implementing a number of projects aimed at increasing storage facilities for onions and garlic. Two dryers at the AMB will be converted into cold rooms for the storage of an additional 500-600 Tons of onions. A Seeds Garlic Warehouse will also be constructed at Moka for the storage of garlic seeds in a more hygienic and ventilated conditions. These will be operational as from the crop season 2017. In addition, the AMB will also purchase a weighing, packing and labeling machine with an estimated capacity of around 30 packs per minute to increase its output capacity at its points of sales.

My Ministry is also initiating measures for the construction of a National Wholesale Market and a new Slaughter House which would ensure that quality products are offered to consumers.

To boost the production of meat and milk, dedicated livestock zones with all infrastructural facilities will be set up.

As we are celebrating the International Year of Pulses this year, a calendar of activities has been finalised. The main objective of this event is to encourage farmers to grow pulses on a larger scale to meet part of the local demand. The seeds of pulses which were

previously cultivated are being currently multiplied at the Barkly Experiment Station and will be distributed free of charge to farmers for large scale and backyard production. In the long run, this will enable Government to reduce its imports and save on foreign currency and achieve significant savings in the food import bill. Moreover, talks on the nutritional value of pulses will also be organised at the level of Schools Island wide.

To valorise and increase local fruit production such as litchis, longanes, mangoes, pitaya, citrus fruits, custard apple, pomegranate and jamblon, among others, the production of planting materials is being increased substantially by my Ministry for distribution to the farming community for the setting up of fruit orchards and also for backyard plantations. These planting materials will be sold at highly subsidised prices.

With the implementation of the “*Programme Régional de la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle*” by the Indian Ocean Commission with the technical assistance of the Food and Agricultural Organisation and to which Mauritius is a party, Madagascar will be transformed into a food granary for the Indian Ocean. With this initiative, food security will be reinforced in Mauritius as we will be able to import agricultural products at more affordable prices therefrom.

Cross border initiatives through Intra-COMESA/SADC Trade of agricultural products will also be encouraged to increase our food security level.

Food Security also encompasses Food Safety. Whilst we are taking a series of measures to increase our production of agricultural products, we are also taking measures to address the Food Safety issue.

Farmers are being encouraged to shift from conventional agricultural practices to bio/organic agricultural practices. In fact, fiscal and financial incentives are being given through the Bio Farming Promotion Scheme to farmers engaged in bio farming/organic activities subject to them complying with specific criteria. Exclusive bio/organic farming zones will also be established shortly and an Agricultural Certification Body will be set up under the aegis of my Ministry for the certification of agricultural products adhering to bio/organic norms.

PANAMA PAPERS – FIU INQUIRY

(No. B/369) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, following the recent Panama Papers leak, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Intelligence Unit, information as to if an investigation has

been carried out to ascertain whether any Mauritian entity and/or individual is/are involved therein and have committed any offence and, if so, indicate where matters stand as to the inquiries carried out thereinto, including the names of the said entities/individuals suspected of being involved therein and incidentally the offences having been committed.

Reply: The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) is looking into the cases mentioned in the Panama papers. I am informed by the FIU that its enquiry has not yet been completed and by virtue of section 30(2) of the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002, the FIU is unable to divulge information publicly. If a potential offence is detected, the FIU will disseminate its report with all relevant information to the relevant investigatory or supervisory authorities such as ICAC, Police, MRA, BoM and others.

INTEGRITY REPORTING AGENCY - DIRECTOR

(No. B/370) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Integrity Reporting Agency, he will state if the Director thereof has been appointed and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) name of the incumbent thereof;
- (b) qualifications thereof, and
- (c) terms and conditions of appointment thereof.

(Withdrawn)

STC – PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - CONTRACT

(No. B/371) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the contract for the supply and transportation of petroleum products for the year 2016 and beyond, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to if bids have been launched therefor and if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am advised by the State Trading Corporation (STC) that no bids have been launched for the supply of petroleum products for 2016 and beyond. Prior to 2006, STC was launching annual international tenders for the procurement of petroleum products. However, since 2006, following discussions between the Government of India and the Government of Mauritius, STC has been purchasing these products directly from Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL) as the latter can produce and deliver the seven types of products required for the specific needs of Mauritius.

The STC, thus, entered into a first contract with MRPL in July 2006 for the supply of petroleum products for a period of one year. This contract was renewed in July 2007 for a period of three years and again in 2010 and 2013 for successive periods of three years each. The current contract will thus expire at the end of July 2016.

Generally, the same terms and conditions were being reconducted in the contract on each renewal, including the financial element, i.e. the premium. However, for the next contract covering period 2016-2019, I had instructed the STC to discuss with MRPL the possibility of a reduction in the premium.

The STC has engaged such discussions with MRPL. I also personally met with hon. Shri Pradhan, the Indian Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas last January and evoked that subject matter with him. There was consensus on that issue. The discussions between STC and MRPL have not yet been concluded. The objective is to achieve a better deal from which the country at large will benefit.

It would, therefore, be premature at this stage for me to give any additional information on this matter. However, once the discussions are concluded, I shall apprise Cabinet of the outcome and inform Members of the House also.

Regarding the transportation element, the current contract also expires in July 2016. There is provision in the contract to extend it for a period of one year. Once the supply contract has been finalised, appropriate action will be taken by the STC for the transportation contract.

ECONOMIC & TRADE ADVISORS – SALARIES & FRINGE BENEFITS

(No. B/372) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Economic and Trade Advisors in post since July 2005 to December 2014, he will give a list thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) posting thereof;
- (b) duties and responsibilities thereof, and
- (c) breakdown of salaries, foreign service allowances and/or other allowances drawn and fringe benefits to which they were entitled.

(Withdrawn)

LE BOUCHON PUBLIC BEACH - UPGRADING

(No. B/373) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to Le Bouchon Public Beach, he will state if consideration will be given for the rehabilitation/upgrading/uplifting thereof, including the provision thereof of –

- (a) adequate parking facilities;
- (b) installation of kiosks and benches, and
- (c) installation of lighting system.

(Withdrawn)

PORT LOUIS – NEF PROJECTS

(No. B/374) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the National Empowerment Foundation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of projects it has implemented in Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, since January 2015 to date, indicating the number of beneficiaries thereof in each case.

Reply: In addition to projects implemented by other Ministries, the National Empowerment Foundation implements its projects district-wise.

The list of projects implemented in the district of Port Louis by the Foundation since January 2015 to date and the number of beneficiaries in each case, are as follows -

List of projects implemented by NEF in the district of Port Louis as from January 2015

Year	Project implemented	Number of beneficiaries	REGION
2015	Construction of CCIS housing units	16	Marjolin, Roche Bois, Vallée Pitot, Canal Dayot, Pointe aux Sables and GRNW
	Distribution of school materials to needy children	3636	District of Port Louis

	Organisation of a recreational activity at Calodyne Sur Mer Hotel	42	District of Port Louis
	Construction of an access road	25	Marjolin, Cité La Cure
	Upgrading of a Day Care Centre at Cité La Cure	18	Robert Scott, Cité La Cure
	Upgrading of a housing unit	1	Tranquebar
	Sensitisation on Substance Abuse	42	Tranquebar
2016	Distribution of school materials to needy children	2615	Port Louis
	Construction of a Children's Playground	20	Balisage, Roche Bois
	Construction of a CIS Housing unit for a fire victim	1	Pointe aux Sables
	Setting up of a Rehabilitation Centre and a Half Way house for homeless vulnerable people	16	Roche Bois

DOT MU DOMAIN NAME- REGISTRATION

(No. B/375) Mr M. Gobin (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the registration of the top level domain name "mu" in the name of the State of Mauritius, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: In a reply to PQ B/35 made on 10 February 2015 on the same issue by my predecessor, this August Assembly was informed of the ownership of the Dot Mu (.mu) domain name and the negotiations around the sale of the gov.mu second level domain name

to the Government. Hon. Members will recall that at one point in time, that is, in October 2014, the owner of Internet Direct Limited, namely Mr Yann Kwok, claimed Rs864,217,926 for the gov.mu domain name, which was never materialised.

Following Government decision in February 2015 to consider the acquisition of the “.mu” domain name, my Ministry has had several meetings with Mr Yann Kwok, Director of Internet Direct Ltd, with a view to re-delegating the domain name to a Multi-Stakeholder Forum to be set up.

Mr Yann Kwok has each time submitted claims for arrears due on the gov.mu domain name without committing himself on the way forward as regards the “.mu” domain name. However, this proposal was not acceptable by my Ministry as acquisition of the gov.mu second level domain name in isolation was risky due to the fact that in October 2014, the “.mu” administrator had switched off that domain name and all its 203 third level domains.

Hence, during a meeting held on 17 September 2015 at my Ministry along with representatives of the ICT Authority (ICTA) and the National Computer Board (NCB) with Mr Y. Kwok and his lawyer, the latter was requested to submit a new proposal which would include the settling of arrears due on the GOV.MU administration as well as the delegation of DOT MU to an independent multi stakeholder forum that would be representative of the DOT MU community on the Internet.

Despite reminders sent on 05 October 2015 and 14 October 2015 and a proposal for a meeting on 28 October 2015, the latter did not respond.

Concurrently, a Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Internet Governance comprising representatives of the local Internet community has been set up in June 2015 upon recommendations of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which is the international body responsible for internet domain names, with a view to looking into policy aspects of taking over the management of the ‘.mu’ from Internet Direct Ltd.

Though discussions have already started with the local internet community, no consensus has been found so far among the members as regards the model of the entity to eventually manage the ‘.mu’ domain. It is to be noted that, in the absence of an alternative entity to be set up to replace Internet Direct Ltd, which, nonetheless, offers a secure, reliable and stable service in the cyberspace, ICANN would not consider the re-delegation of the ‘.mu’ domain name.

Since the re-delegation process is a long haul one as it requires the participation of the Internet community at large, and the Forum has to be ready in terms of technology and

resources to be able to actually take over in case re-delegation is approved by ICANN, my Ministry proposes -

- i. to re-establish contact with Mr Y. Kwok so as to give a last chance to the negotiation process;
- ii. alternatively to file for a 'forced delegation' procedure with ICANN in view of the fact that Mr Y. Kwok has consistently shown his bad faith despite several attempts made for a mutually and amicable re-delegation process since the first attempt made in May 1999.

UNEMPLOYMENT

(No. B/376) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the unemployed, he will state the present number thereof, indicating the

—

- (a) number thereof found in the age group of 16 to 28 years, and
- (b) actions being taken to address the present unemployment issue.

(Withdrawn)

HERITAGE CITY PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/377) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Heritage City Project, he will state the date on which the Government of Mauritius has signed an Agreement with a foreign State for the implementation thereof, indicating -

- (a) the terms and conditions of the Agreement, and
- (b) who signed the Agreement on behalf of the Government of Mauritius.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/354)

SAUDI ARABIA - DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIP

(No. B/378) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Non Aligned Movement, he will state the impact of our

membership thereto, if any, following the development of our diplomatic and bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia.

(Withdrawn)

QUATRE BORNES - DECONGESTION PROGRAMME

(No. B/379) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the implementation of the Decongestion Programme in the centre of Quatre Bornes and in the vicinity thereof, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: In my reply to PQ B/736 at the sitting of the National Assembly held on 20 October 2015, I informed the House of the elaboration of a Decongestion Programme in Quatre Bornes and its vicinity.

I am now informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry that one (1) additional lane along St Jean Road in the direction of La Louise during afternoon peak hours between 15 00 hrs and 19 00 hrs from Monday to Friday has been implemented and is presently in operation. In addition, parking space has been provided at the back of Quatre Bornes market.

In my reply to PQ B/736, I also informed the House that I will look into the synchronisation of the traffic lights at St Jean Road from La Louise to St Jean roundabout.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has advised that synchronisation of the traffic lights along that road will have limited impact because of side frictions such as entering and exiting from parking slots and frequent stopping of vehicles for various purposes.

I am further informed that in order to improve mobility and fluidity of traffic in that region a set of Traffic Signal Equipment will be installed at the junction of Osman Avenue and St Jean Road by the end of June 2016 following which the following measures will be implemented -

- The conversion of Buswell Avenue from its junction with Belle Rose Avenue up to Paul Henri Avenue into a one-way road with traffic flowing in the direction of St. Jean Road [A8].
- The conversion of the one-way set up along D'Epinay Avenue from its junction with C. Hall Avenue up to St. Jean Road [A8] at the signalised cross junction

[D'Epinay Avenue/St. Jean Road (A8)/Avenue des Capucines] and the conversion of D'Epinay Avenue from its junction with C. Hall Avenue up to Belle Rose Avenue into a one-way road with traffic flowing in the direction of Belle Rose Avenue.

- The conversion of the one-way set up along Osman Avenue from its junction with Tagore Avenue up to St. Jean Road [A8] with traffic flowing in the direction of St. Jean Road [A8].
- The conversion of Avenue des Rosiers from its junction with St. Jean Road [A8] to its junction with Ylang Ylang Avenue into a one-way road with traffic flowing in the direction of Ylang Ylang Avenue.
- The conversion of the cross junction [Osman Avenue/St. Jean Rd (A8)/Avenue des Rosiers] into a signalised junction with the provision of two pedestrian phases along St. Jean Road [A8].
- The conversion of zebra crossings into pelican crossings along Candos-Vacoas Road [B3] and along Palma Road (B2) near taxi stand.

The hon. Member had in relation to the PQ proposed the relocation of the taxi stand. He will understand that this is a sensible issue. My Ministry will study all implications in consultation with all stakeholders before coming up with alternative options.

We need some time to make a complete assessment of the traffic impact of the above mentioned measures to come up with any additional measures to mitigate the traffic congestion in the centre of Quatre Bornes and its vicinity.

LAGOONS - FISHING PROHIBITION

(No. B/380) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the project for the prohibition of fishing in the lagoons, he will state if consideration will be given for a review of the regulations made in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

BEL OMBRE – SOCIAL PROJECTS - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/381) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to Bel Ombre, he will state where matters stand as regards the projects for the implementation thereof of a -

- (a) Youth Training Centre;
- (b) health track;
- (c) beach volley ground;
- (d) beach soccer ground;
- (e) cycling track;
- (f) jogging track, and
- (e) nautical activities.

Reply: I have to inform the House that in the context of social projects to be implemented in the region of Bel Ombre, a plot of land to the extent of 5A22P has been vested in my Ministry in 2010. In January 2010, a proposal was received from Bel Ombre Foundation for Empowerment for implementation of a project comprising the following -

- *Parcours de Santé*
- Beach Volleyball Ground
- Beach Soccer Ground
- Cycling Track
- Jogging Track
- Nautical Activities

In August 2010, the Ministry informed the Foundation that it was agreeable to the implementation of the project which was to be financed by the latter. In 2012, the site was cleared and works were supposed to start. Meanwhile, there was a change in the management of Bel Ombre Foundation for Empowerment and subsequently, the Foundation did not proceed with the project.

As there was no further development, the Ministry decided to come up with an alternative project of putting up a Youth Recreational and Camping Centre comprising a properly fenced open air camping area for outdoor activities with minimum infrastructures in accordance with requirements of the Ministry of Environment. However, the project was deferred due to budgetary constraints.

When I took office as Minister, I effected a site visit and it has been decided to revive the project. Procedures for fencing works to be undertaken have already been initiated and the remaining infrastructural works would be carried out in the next financial year.

SPEED CAMERAS - OPERATIONAL

(No. B/383) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the speed cameras, he will state if -

- (a) they are all fully operational and, if not, why not, and
- (b) a study has been carried out to ascertain if the use thereof has generated the expected outcome of reducing the number of road accidents.

Reply: I would like to inform the House that there are 54 fixed speed cameras placed throughout the island, out of which 51 are fully operational with the exception of three (3) which have been temporarily switched off -

- (i) at Pellegrin- St Jean along motorway M1, due to theft of electric cables. Necessary action has been taken to have an overhead cable crossing the southbound motorway for the supply of electricity to the Speed camera, and
- (ii) at Upper Valton, and Lower Valton where the speed cameras have been switched off due to the road structure failure of the Terre Rouge/Verdun motorway M3 at that level of the bypass and the installation of a temporary road hump which has been constructed to divert traffic off the affected area.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the accident rate within 500 metres radius of the speed camera sites for the year 2013-2015 have been drastically reduced overall. Fatal and serious injury crashes have, in fact, been reduced by more than 50% as compared to the previous three years.

However, the sites have to be monitored over a longer continuous period of at least 5 years to be able to measure the real impact.

It is expected that with education and sensitization campaigns, the fatal and serious injury crashes will be reduced further.

We have observed that in the region where speed cameras have been installed, drivers tend to reduce speed before and to accelerate after. My Ministry is accordingly proposing to carry out an audit of the present system as regards to location and efficacy. In the light of the study, we will consider coming up with a new system, the speed zone system which will discourage drivers to speed up outside zones where cameras are installed.

In the meantime, the Police will make extensive use of the hand held mobile cameras.

I also wish to inform the House that up to now, the driving licence of four (4) persons have already been suspended under the new Penalty System and more than 100 persons are in the red zone.

BAGATELLE DAM - OPERATIONAL

(No. B/384) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Bagatelle Dam, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority and the Central Water Resources Unit, information as to the status of the works carried out thereat as at to date, indicating -

- (a) when it will become operational, and
- (b) the total expenditure incurred in relation thereto.

Reply: The contract for the construction of the Bagatelle dam was awarded in July 2011. Works started in December 2011 and the expected completion date was December 2014.

During the implementation of the works, there were two major design changes, namely -

- (i) In September 2012, change of the spillway from Ogee type to Morning Glory;
- (ii) In January 2013, suspension of grouting (a procedure by means of which a mixture of cement and sand and other materials such as epoxy are injected into voids and cavities in soil or rock formations to reduce permeability and increase strength) and design and construction of a Cut Off Wall of 80 cm thickness and average depth of 30 metres along the entire dam foundation as dam foundation treatment. This was the result of the advice of an independent expert, Mr Lutz Schewe, on the potential presence of dispersive material in the foundation.

Consequently, the completion date was extended to December 2016 for impoundment of the dam and July 2017 for other ancillary works.

82% of the project has been completed and a total of Rs4.9 billion has been spent for the works contract and the consultancy services.

CEB - ELECTRICITY TARIFFS

(No. B/385) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board, following the windfall gains it has realised as a result of the fall in the price of petroleum products on the world market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to -

- (a) the quantum of the profits thereof as at end of March 2016;
- (b) the projected quantum of the profits thereof as at end of December 2016, and
- (c) if consideration will be given for a review of the electricity tariffs charged by the Board from the small and medium enterprises and the small commercial operators.

Reply: With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that estimated profits for the period January to March 2016 is Rs723 m. and for the period ending December 2016 it is Rs2,815 m.

As regard part (c) of the question, the hon. Member may wish to refer to my reply to the PNQ on 03 December 2015, where I stated that a general tariff reduction is not envisaged. At my request, the CEB has extended the social tariff 110 A to consumers with an average consumption up to 85 kWh. Priority has been given to households on the social register.

I also informed the House that the CEB has refunded Government loans up to Rs2 billion and plan investments of about Rs7.8 billion in the next two years for new generation plants and strengthening of the grid.

I therefore consider that the proposal of the hon. Member may not be considered, except in the context of an overall tariff review once the Utility Regulations Authority becomes operational.

PORT LOUIS – HAWKERS - RELOCATION

(No. B/386) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the hawkers, he will state –

- (a) if he is aware that the latter presently operating in Port Louis are proposing the holding of discussions with the authorities regarding the place and modalities

of the relocation thereof and regarding the apprehensions thereof concerning the proposed extent of the space to be allocated to each one of them and, if so, indicate if he will accede thereto and review the extent of the proposed space to be allocated;

- (b) the exact size of each stall currently proposed at Decaen, the number of toilets facilities and the state thereof and the number of hawkers to be transferred thereto, and
- (c) costs of the -
 - (i) Hawkers Palace built in 2000, and
 - (ii) current hawker's market at Decaen.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the House may wish to note that the City Council of Port Louis has, since last year, started the process for the relocation of the hawkers to the two temporary sites identified and those concerned were fully aware that they should move thereat, as there is a Supreme Court judgement that they should not operate within a radius of 500m from the central market.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that –

- (i) the exact size of each stall at Decaen is of length 1.5m and breadth 1.5m, i.e, 1.5m x 1.5m;
- (ii) there are 5 toilets for females, 4 toilets for males, and one urinal which are all in good working conditions with availability of water supply;
- (iii) the number of hawkers at Decaen that can be housed is 634 as follows

–

Non-foodstuffs	-	514
Foodstuffs	-	60
Vegetables	-	60

I would like to inform the House that the marking for the stalls is the same that was agreed by the hawkers, when those sites were proposed by the previous Government and previous Municipal Council.

With regard to part (c), I am informed that, insofar as the Hawkers' Palace is concerned, the project was implemented by the DBM Properties Development Ltd. and the Letter of Award for its construction was for an amount of Rs476.5 m. excluding VAT.

As regards the sites at Decaen and Immigration Square, the City Council has spent Rs20.2 m. for their refurbishment for use as temporary hawkers' sites.

PORT LOUIS - HAWKERS

(No. B/387) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)

asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the hawkers, he will –

- (a) give a list of the streets proposed from 2000 to date by Government and the Municipal Council of Port Louis, respectively, to be pedestrianized for the holding of the activities thereof;
- (b) state if consideration will be given for the setting up of a single authority for the issue of licences and for the regulation of the activities thereof in the towns, villages and on the beaches and to ensure the maintenance of a centralised database thereof and, if so, indicate when and, if not, why not, and
- (c) state if Government is in presence of a total and outright rejection by the hawkers operating in Port Louis of any form of relocation to a central hawkers' centre.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I would like to inform the House that this Government has planned for the relocation of hawkers, both in the short term and in the long term and I have just made a statement in this House regarding latest development in the matter.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Municipal Councils and District Councils have been and are the authorities for the issue of licences and the regulation of activities in their respective jurisdictions. The setting up of a centralised database for economic operators will go in a direction opposite to the decentralised process in Local Government.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that a large number of hawkers have signed, with the Municipal Council of Port Louis, the necessary documents for the occupation of slots at Decaen and Immigration Square. As at 30 April, 50% of the registered hawkers have moved into the new premises. Following the meeting I have had with their representatives yesterday (02 May 2016), I understand that the remaining hawkers are moving to the two sites in the days to come.

NINE-YEAR BASIC SCHOOLING PROGRAMME - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/388) 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 introduction of the Nine-Year Basic Schooling Programme, she will state the projected impact thereof on the private colleges and on the staff working thereat.

Reply: The Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform aims at bringing forward a new educational paradigm establishing a strong foundation for the present and future learning success of all students. We believe that it will have positive impacts on all stakeholders. It may in fact turn out to be a perfect model for a win-win scenario for all parties concerned. I must emphasise that this reform project has been commended by our international partners.

The NYCBE is a comprehensive and a systemic one which takes on board all State and private colleges, both aided and non-aided. I wish to highlight that these are privileged partners of the Ministry and they have generally expressed their support for its implementation.

Of course, the Managers of Private Secondary Schools have raised issues pertaining to intake of students and the future of their schools.

Referring to the intake of students, it is worth noting that all students after completing the six years of Primary Schooling will transit to Grade 7 and will be allocated a regional secondary school (state/private) based on the same criteria currently applicable for admission to Form I in Regional Schools. We shall thus be achieving a 100 per cent transition rate from Primary to Secondary.

It is also to be noted that a dozen of the existing National Colleges will be converted into Academies and there will be no intake at Grade 7 in these institutions as from January 2018. It stands to logic therefore that these students will be directed to Regional Secondary Schools, further increasing the scope for enrolment in Private Secondary Schools.

Academies will be admitting students at Grade 10 as from 2021. This, in fact, opens the door wider for private colleges to increase their student intake at Grades 7, 8 and 9 progressively.

May I remind the House that the students will retain the right to follow their post basic education in the same Regional School where they would have been admitted at Grade 7.

May I also add that another interesting element of the reform is the provision of special class with a reduced size in every Regional Secondary School where students in the extended 4-year cycle will follow the same core curriculum as those in the regular three-year cycle. This represents yet another opportunity for private colleges in terms of additional intake.

In fact, private colleges would not lose but stand to gain.

True it is that the current demographic trend may have an impact on student population but this prevails independently of the NYCBE reforms. I repeat, this decline in school population is no way an offshoot of the NYCBE reforms as some would have it.

My Ministry is alive to this fact and is taking necessary measures to ensure that Private Secondary Schools are not affected by this phenomenon.

Currently, school population has been officially capped at a maximum of 1,400 per secondary school. Hence, on grounds of equity, the reform calls for a capping on the total student population in any secondary school operating with a population beyond the ceiling set. Schools concerned have already been instructed to reduce their intake so as to be in conformity with this policy. This ceiling is called upon to be further lowered in time.

Further, my Ministry is coming with a policy for the gradual reduction of class size thereby lowering the pupil-teacher ratio to a reasonable level (say a ratio of 25:1), and hence providing better learning conditions and facilitating learners, especially those requiring remedial support.

As for the impact on staff, I wish to draw attention to the fact that one cornerstone of the NYCBE reform project concerns 'Teacher Education Reform' which will ensure the development of a highly skilled teaching force. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) will also help in their career progression.

In addition, the setting up of the Teachers' Council will further the professionalization in this domain. I would like to stress that all Educators will benefit from these measures irrespective of them being from the public or private sector.

Further, I wish to stress that in my reply to PQ B/923, I had informed the House that the NYCBE reform provides for the elimination of the Prevocational Education both in public and private secondary schools.

I wish therefore to again reassure the House on this score: all teachers (whether involved in the prevocational classes or otherwise) would be taken on board in the new reform programme and their services would be needed in schools for teaching and remediation programmes. The MIE is working on tailor-made training programme for these educators.

GRNW BRIDGE - REHABILITATION

(No. B/389) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the old

Grand River North West Bridge, he will state if consideration will be given for the reopening thereof and, if so, indicate when.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ B/859 at the sitting of the National Assembly on 10 November 2015, wherein I stated that my Ministry is undertaking a major Road Decongestion Programme which includes the A1-M1 road which will link Coromandel to Sorèze. The impact of this road will help in deciding on the reopening of the Grand River North West Bridge.

However, in the meantime, the RDA has already undertaken a preliminary study regarding the rehabilitation of the bridge.

In the light of the findings of the study, my Ministry has decided to include the rehabilitation of the old GRNW Bridge in the approved list of proposed projects for budgetary provision for financial year 2016/2017.

CAMP DE MASQUE - COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/390) Mr K. Tarolah (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a Community Health Centre at Camp de Masque, he will state if a new site has been earmarked therefor and, if so, indicate the location thereof and, if not, indicate the actions taken, if any, to remedy the chaotic situation prevailing thereat.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that land to an extent of 1,055 m² (25 Perches) for the construction of a new Community Health Centre at L'Unité, Camp de Masque has been vested in my Ministry since 2012. The exact location is about 200 metres from the main road and is at the rear side of the SILWF Unité Housing Estate.

This project was approved by the Project Plan Committee in January 2014.

My Ministry is awaiting the revised preliminary design, based on an existing type design model, prior to finalising the detailed drawings and bidding document.

The construction itself will take about 8 - 10 months after the award of the contract. The CHC is expected to be operational as from December 2017, provided all the necessary permits and approvals are obtained. This construction will go a long way to remedy the current situation related to this service centre.

EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE - TUNA FISHING

(No. B/391) 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 tuna fishing in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), he will state –

- (a) the number of licensees who are presently operating, indicating the number of local vessels carrying out the said activity thereat;
- (b) the average annual catch, and
- (c) if he is aware of any action undertaken by Green Peace to stop overfishing of tuna in our EEZ.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 105 fishing licences were issued to foreign fishing vessels to fish for tuna in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as at date.

The number of licences issued to local fishing vessels is 10.

With regard to part (b), the average annual catch of tuna caught in our EEZ for the last five years stood at 5345.48 tonnes.

Regarding part (c), I am informed that presently Greenpeace is conducting a campaign in the Indian Ocean to collect information with respect to tuna fishing and to track down any use of unauthorised fishing gears. It has reported having found one such fishing gear that has been used for fishing.

PLAINE LAUZUN - COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

(No. B/392) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the closure of the Plaine Lauzun dispensary, he will state if consideration will be given for the advisability of building a new one in the vicinity thereof or around the old Moka Road in Plaine Lauzun.

Reply: The Answer is no.

There are two Primary Health Care Centres, namely, Dr. Bouloux Area Health Centre at Cassis and Pailles West Community Health Centre which are within 2 km from Plaine Lauzun. Since the closure of Plaine Lauzun Community Health Centre in April 2010, the population from its catchment area is being catered for by Dr. Bouloux Area Health Centre and the Pailles West Community Health Centre, which started operating on 20 November 2012.

POINTE AUX SABLES - HOUSING UNITS - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/393) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Empowerment Programme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of housing units provided thereunder in Pointe aux Sables, if any, over the past two years, indicating –

- (a) the eligibility criteria prescribed therefor, and
- (b) if he will table a list of the beneficiaries thereof.

Reply: The Empowerment Programme falls under the purview of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.

It is, in this context, that the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, under the Empowerment Programme, has constructed 82 housing units on a plot of State land of an extent of six *arpents* at Pointe aux Sables. These housing units have been constructed specifically for the relocation of the squatters found over land acquired for the Ring Road project at Tranquebar. It is imperative for these families to move from their present location to enable the implementation of Phase 2 of the Ring Road Project.

The housing units are made up of concrete with corrugated iron sheet roofs over individual lots.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the eligibility criteria are –

- (i) the beneficiary should not be a landowner nor a State Land Lessee, whether in Mauritius or in Rodrigues, at the time of the offer of the lease, and
- (ii) the cut-off date of 01 July 2015 adopted by my Ministry.

With reference to part (b) of the question, I am hereby tabling the list of the families who are being relocated from Tranquebar to Pointe aux Sables.

Over the past two years, the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment has undertaken other projects at Pointe aux Sables and the Honourable Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West may wish to put a substantive question to my colleague, the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.

GRNW & PORT LOUIS WEST – WATER PIPES - REPLACEMENT

(No. A/6) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the project for the replacement of the old water pipes under the Build Mauritius Fund, he will, for the

benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, a list of the regions identified therefor in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, indicating the time frame set out for the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the regions of Grand River North West and Port Louis West are supplied from the Pierrefonds Tunnel system through the New Bosquet Reservoir.

The following pipe replacement projects are being implemented under the Build Mauritius Fund to improve water distribution from the Pierrefonds tunnel system -

- (i) the replacement of 5 km of pipeline downstream New Bosquet reservoir to Coromandel/Richelieu. Works have started in April 2016 and expected to be completed in July 2017;
- (ii) replacement of 12 km of pipeline from Pierrefonds tunnel to New Bosquet reservoir. Works are expected to start in October 2016 and expected to be completed in January 2018.

GRNW BRIDGE - REHABILITATION

(No. A/7) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the old Grand River North West Bridge, he will state if consideration will be given for the –

- (a) reopening thereof, and
- (b) embellishment and rehabilitation thereof, including replanting on the riverside in the vicinity thereof.

Reply: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ B/859 at the sitting of the National Assembly on 10 November 2015, wherein I stated that my Ministry is undertaking a major Road Decongestion Programme, which includes the A1-M1 road which will link Coromandel to Sorèze. The impact of this road will help in deciding on the re-opening of the Grand River North West Bridge.

However, in the meantime, the RDA has already undertaken a preliminary study regarding the rehabilitation of the bridge.

In the light of the findings of the study, my Ministry has decided to include the Rehabilitation of the Old GRNW Bridge in the approved list of proposed projects for budgetary provision for Financial Year 2016/2017.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, Disaster and Beach Management will be approached to carry out the embellishment works.

GRNW & PORT LOUIS WEST – MULTI-SPORTS COMPLEX

(No. A/8) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state if there is any project for the construction of a multi-sports complex thereat and, if so, indicate the expected start and completion dates thereof and, if not, if consideration will be given for the implementation of a project therefor.

Reply: My Ministry does not have any project for the construction of a multi-sports complex in the Constituency No. 1 as at present.

There are already two Dojos in GRNW. The bigger Dojo which is of international norms and standards is used by the Mauritius Judo Federation. National, regional and international competitions in Judo are held at the Dojo. The smaller Dojo is used for training purposes and is utilised by inhabitants of the region to practise Karaté, Aerobics, Jiu-Jitsu and Aikido, among others.

ROBERT EDWARD HART BOTANICAL GARDEN - UPGRADING

(No. A/9) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Robert Edward Hart Botanical Garden, he will state if he is aware of the derelict state thereof and, if so, indicate if the renovation thereof is being envisaged.

Reply: I am aware of the bad state of the Robert Edward Hart Botanical Garden especially the road which is in a pitiful state as well as lack of lighting facilities thereat.

As you would recall, the Robert Edward Hart Botanical Garden would have formed an integral part of the Neotown Project (which has now been shelved).

I am, however, informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that the upgrading of the garden which consists, among others, of the resurfacing of the road infrastructure and the improvement of the lighting network will cost around Rs25 m. The works will be carried out once funds are identified therefor.

CITÉ BONDIE, RIAMBEL – SQUATTERS – AMENITIES

(No. A/10) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the squatters relocated in Cité Bondié, Riambel, in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, he will state the reasons why they are not provided with water and electricity, indicating if remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto as a matter of urgency and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: Seventy Squatters who were since 2012, occupying a plot of State land at Riambel, place commonly known as Cité Bon Bondié were regularised *in situ* on humanitarian grounds in November 2015 as they were living in a deplorable conditions. Letters of Intent were issued to 62 beneficiaries on 05 November 2015. Letters of Intent could not be issued to the remaining 8 Squatters as they have either not submitted the requested documents, there are disputes on ownership of the building or they have left the sites.

Generally, when a Letter of Intent or a lease agreement is drawn in favour of a beneficiary, it rest upon the latter to apply for water and electricity connections to the relevant authorities.

The beneficiaries may with their Letter of Intent, apply to the Central Water Authority and Central Electricity Board in the region for the supply of these two amenities.

The Letter of Intent is a prerequisite document that will allow them to apply for water supply and electricity connections. It rests upon of these beneficiaries to do the needful *vis-à-vis* the service providers (CWA and CEB).

YVES CANTIN AREA HEALTH CENTRE, BLACK RIVER – SERVICES

(No. A/11) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Yves Cantin Area Health Centre in Black River, in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, he will –

- (a) state the
 - (i) services provided thereat, and
 - (ii) number of ambulances attached thereto, and
- (b) give a list of the medical staff posted thereat, indicating the
 - (i) respective working hours thereof, and
 - (ii) opening hours thereof.

Reply: The information sought for is as follows –

(a) (i) **Services provided at Dr. Yves Cantin Community Hospital -**

• **Primary Health Care Services**

- (i) General consultation (24-hr basis)
- (ii) Treatment of minor injuries
- (iii) Family Planning
- (iv) Maternal and Child Health
- (v) NCD Clinics/Diabetic Clinic
- (vi) Dental Clinics (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday)
- (vii) Diet Clinic
- (viii) Vaccination session for babies
- (ix) Well baby clinic
- (x) Screening for NCDs and cervical cancer
- (xi) Vaccination (Vaxigrip) for vulnerable population since 12 April 2016
- (xii) HIV/AIDS Clinic (as from 29 April 2016)

• **Specialist Clinics**

- (i) Obstetric : Tuesdays – 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- (ii) Psychiatric : Every 3rd Thursday – 9.00 a.m. to Noon
- (iii) Paediatric : Every 1st and 3rd Wednesday – 1.00p.m. to 4.00 p.m.
- (iv) Dermatology : Every 3rd Friday – 9.00 a.m. to Noon
- (v) ENT : Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday – 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.
- (vi) Eye :Every 3rd Wednesday – 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.
- (vii) Diabetology :Every 1st Monday – 9.00 a.m. to Noon

• **Other Services**

- (i) Laboratory : Monday to Friday – 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
Saturday – 9.00 a.m. to Noon
- (ii) Pharmacy : on a 24-hour basis
- (iii) X-Ray : Monday to Friday – 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.
Saturday – 9.00 a.m. to Noon
(closed on Public Holidays and Sundays)

- (iv) Physiotherapy : Wednesday – 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
- (v) Medical Social Worker: Thursdays from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 pm.
- (vi) EPI Session : Every 2nd Tuesday from 9.00 a.m. to Noon
- (vii) Blood collection : Tuesdays and Thursdays – 6.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.
- (viii) Methadone distribution : Every day from 6.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.
- (ix) Consultation for Methadone Therapy : Saturdays from 9.00 a.m.
to Noon
- (x) Community based Rehabilitation : Mondays from 9.00 a.m. to
4.00 p.m.

(a) (ii) **Number of ambulances attached to Dr. Yves Cantin Community Health Centre.**

One

(b) **List of Medical Staff posted at Dr. Yves Cantin Community Health Centre**

Four Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers are posted at the Dr. Yves Cantin Community Health Centre on a rotation basis –

- (i) Dr. Dhanilall Beekharry
- (ii) Dr. Valtan Bunwaree
- (iii) Dr. Arvind Sing Ramchurn
- (iv) Dr. Leckraj Gya

They also cover Community Health Centres in the catchment area, namely– Beau Songes, Flic-en-Flac, Tamarin, Case Noyale, La Gaulette, Chamarel.

(b) (i) **Working hours at Dr Yves Cantin Community Health Centre**

The working hours at Dr Yves Cantin Community Health Centre are from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. A Medical and Health Officer is on call every day from 4.00 p.m. to 9.00 a.m. the following day.

(b) (ii) **Opening hours of Dr. Yves Cantin Community Health Centre**

The Dr. Yves Cantin Community Health Centre operates on a 24-hour/seven day basis.

SAVANNE & BLACK RIVER – BUS SERVICE

(No. A/12) **Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the public transport system in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, namely along the route

No. 5, Baie du Cap to Quatre Bornes, he will state if he is aware of the difficulties met daily by the inhabitants of the region along the said route, such as inadequate number of buses and time table not being respected and, if so, indicate if urgent remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

Reply: According to information from the National Transport Authority Bus Route No. 5 (Quatre Bornes Traffic Centre to Baie du Cap) extends over a distance of 46 kms via Palma, Bambous, Cascavelle, Tamarin, Riviere Noire, Case Noyale, La Gaulette and Le Morne. The route is served by 20 buses owned by individual operators who are grouped into the Quatre Bornes Bus Owners Cooperative Society Ltd.

In addition, passengers commuting along Route No. 5 also benefit from the services available along the Routes 119, 120, 243 and 243 A.

In line with the authorised timetable, five (5) buses operate between 05h00 to 18h30 at intervals varying from 15 minutes to 20 minutes. 48 trips are undertaken during weekends, while 42 trips are effected on Sundays and Public Holidays in each direction.

Representations were made by the commuters for non-observance of time table. Thus, regular meetings are held with the operators with a view to sensitising them regarding strict compliance of the time table.

Regular monitoring and checks have been carried out on Route No.5 and contraventions have been established for 2015 and 2016 as follows -

Description of Contravention	2015	2016 (as at 29 April)
Failing to observe time table (running time)	20	6
Failing to observe timetable (time of departure)	3	2
Waiting unnecessarily at a bus stop	7	4
Others	10	4
Total	40	16

A meeting was held with the Quatre Bornes Bus Owners Cooperative Society on 26 April 2016. It has been agreed that Traffic Officers would be posted at Palma and Rivière Noire so as to ensure that the running time for the leg from Palma to Rivière Noire is observed. In case an operator defaults, he would be sanctioned by a suspension of four hours the following day.

In addition on 30 April 2016, the Police had a meeting with the Quatre Bornes Bus Owners Cooperative Society and its members for joint operations to ensure observance of time table and avoid unnecessary delays at Bus Stops at Quatre Bornes and Palma. Their attention was drawn on the need to provide a satisfactory service to the users. During the meeting, it was agreed that -

- (i) regular checks would be made and contraventions would be established, accordingly;
- (ii) waybills of the bus should be properly kept and the members of the Cooperative Society would be held responsible for bus crews actions, and
- (iii) a joint check on illegal operators would be held on Friday 06 May 2016.

In case of breakdown of any bus on Route No. 5, the timetable is disrupted and passengers at times encounter transport problems. The Cooperative Society has been instructed to supplement the service by redirecting a bus from another route to route No. 5 in such situation.