



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 09 AUGUST 2016

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

Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, GCSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Youth and Sports
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Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
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Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
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Hon. Ravi Yerrigadoo	Attorney General
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Santaram Baboo	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Mrs Marie-Aurore Marie-Joyce Perraud	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
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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. 23 of 2016

Sitting of 09 August 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)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

RODRIGUES - FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE - OUTBREAK

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the current outbreak of the Foot and Mouth disease, he will state –

- (a) the date of the first detected case of the disease in Rodrigues, indicating the number of cases thereof detected as at to date thereat and in mainland Mauritius respectively;
- (b) the containment measures taken as at to date;
- (c) if the causes thereof have been identified;
- (d) the expected impact thereof on our –
 - (i) imports from Rodrigues, and
 - (ii) exports to the European Union and elsewhere, and
- (e) if compensation to the cattle breeders and a “*Plan de Relance*” for cattle breeding will be forthcoming.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, let me at the very outset thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for raising this issue, which is of national importance.

Madam Speaker, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is a severe, highly contagious viral disease of livestock with significant economic impact. The disease affects cattle and swine as well as sheep, goats, and other cloven-hoofed ruminants. All species of deer are susceptible to FMD.

In a susceptible population, morbidity approaches 100%. Intensively reared animals are more susceptible to the disease than traditional breeds. The disease is rarely fatal in adult animals but there is often high mortality in young animals due to myocarditis or by lack of milk when the dam is infected by the disease.

FMD is characterised by fever and blister-like sores on the tongue and lips, in the mouth, on the teats and between the hooves. The disease causes severe production losses and while the majority of affected animals recover, the disease often leaves them weakened and debilitated.

The organism which causes FMD is an aphthovirus. There are seven strains, each one requiring a specific vaccine strain to provide immunity to a vaccinated animal.

The FMD virus may spread through any or all of the following -

- new animals carrying the virus may introduce the disease to a herd;
- contaminated pens, buildings or vehicles used to house and move susceptible animals;
- contaminated materials such as hay, feed, water, milk or biologics;
- people wearing contaminated clothes or footwear, or using contaminated equipment;
- meat or other products, raw or improperly cooked food infected with the virus and fed to susceptible animals, and
- aerosol spread of virus from an infected property via air currents.

Contingency planning for potential outbreaks includes the following -

- humane destruction of all infected, recovered and FMD-susceptible contact animals;
- appropriate disposal of carcasses and all animal products;
- surveillance and tracing of potentially infected or exposed livestock;
- strict quarantine and controls on movement of livestock, equipment, vehicles, and
- thorough disinfection of premises and all infected materials (including cars and clothes)

Measures that are recommended at the farm level include -

- control over access to livestock by people and equipment;
- control the introduction of new animals to existing stock;
- maintain sanitation of livestock pens, buildings, vehicles and equipment;
- monitor and report illnesses, and
- appropriate disposal of manure and dead carcasses.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the Division of Veterinary Services of my Ministry was first informed of the suspected cases of the disease by the Veterinary Officers of Rodrigues on 19 July 2016. According to that report, a first suspected

case was detected on 07 July which was treated as an isolated case, followed by 18 cases on 17 July, rising to 32 cases on 19 July. As at date, 500 cases have been reported in Rodrigues.

With regard to Mauritius, 6 cases of FMD have been detected in the consignment imported from Rodrigues on 01 August and kept at the Richelieu Quarantine Station. 6 other cases have been detected on one farm at Vallée des Prêtres from a consignment imported on 15 July 2016.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, my Ministry has initiated the following containment measures to control the spread of the diseases in Mauritius -

- (i) a complete ban is being imposed on the importation of live animals and meat from Rodrigues;
- (ii) all animals imported from Rodrigues in the last consignment of 01 August have been culled at Richelieu Quarantine Station;
- (iii) 82 animals on a private farm at Vallée des Prêtres, including animals imported from Rodrigues on 15 July have been culled;
- (iv) strict control is being exercised at the airport for the seizure of any raw meat carried by passengers coming from Rodrigues;
- (v) a vaccination of all animals found in a radius of 3 kms of the localities where imported animals from Rodrigues are being kept will be effected and 10,000 doses of vaccines are being imported from Botswana Vaccine Institute for that purpose. These doses of vaccines will also be utilised in Rodrigues;
- (vi) a recommendation has been made to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly not to cull all animals and to resort to the vaccination of uninfected animals;
- (vii) the different farms on which suspected animals are kept are being closely monitored to prevent the movement of animals to other places on the island;
- (viii) breeders have been advised to report all suspected cases to the DVS for appropriate follow-up action.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (c) of the question, the exact cause of transmission of the disease in Rodrigues is not known at this stage. It is suspected that the disease might have occurred through the introduction of infected meat on the island by passengers traveling on

yachts. The results of the molecular diagnosis for phylogenetic analysis expected from France and South Africa will enlighten us on the source of the infectious agent of the disease.

Madam Speaker, FMD is the first disease for which the *Office Internationale d'Epizooties (OIE)* has established an official list of free countries and zones. Mauritius will take all the measures to be declared a FMD free country by the *OIE*. As such, import of live animals and meat from Rodrigues will have to be prohibited to prevent this source of virus to continue entering the country.

As regards part (d)(i), a total of 7,470 animals was imported from Rodrigues in 2015 and 3,460 for the period January to July in 2016. With the proposed ban on importation, farmers in Rodrigues will definitely suffer economic losses.

As regards part (d)(ii), Mauritius does not export live animals or meat for consumption to Europe but does re-export around 100 horses annually to the European Market after going a quarantine period of three months in Mauritius. There is a risk that such exports may be banned, but the economic loss may not be very significant.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (e) of the question, a compensation will, in principle, be paid to importers/breeders whose animals have been culled. This is a current practice recommended by the *OIE* in the event that the Foot and Mouth disease has occurred in a country. The modalities for the payment are being worked out and the approval of Government obtained before payment could be effected.

As regards the “*Plan de Relance*”, a number of measures have been announced in the 2016/2017 Budget to boost up the livestock sector. Furthermore, if a successful vaccination campaign is carried out both in Mauritius and Rodrigues, lesser animals will be culled and the present vaccinated animals will be preserved.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, in his statement yesterday, which I read carefully and the hon. Minister repeated that today, can I quote –

“On 19 July 2016, the Division of the Veterinary Services of my Ministry was notified by the Veterinary Officer of Rodrigues of an increasing number of sick cattle in the regions of (...).”

And today, we are being provided with the additional information that the first detected case was on 07 July. It is only 12 days later that the alarm was raised by the Veterinary Officer of Rodrigues and I understand that here also, in Mauritius, when the first case was detected, it

was treated as an isolated case. So, can I ask the hon. Minister, is he satisfied that we have not wasted time, especially in Rodrigues between, as I said, 07 July and 19 July 2016, still later on that measures were taken? Is the hon. Minister satisfied that no time was unduly wasted both in Rodrigues and in Mauritius?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my reply, it is only on 19 July that the Veterinary Officers of my Ministry were informed of the cases of sick cattle in Rodrigues and straightaway blood samples were taken and tests were carried out on 21, 22 and 23 July to see the source of the problem. I must say from the results obtained to the tests carried out on the three days, the tests were negative for the Foot and Mouth Disease. Following the spread of the diseases in other regions of Rodrigues, two Veterinary Officers from Mauritius were sent to Rodrigues and other *prélèvements* were taken to carry out further tests. The tests that were carried on 29 July showed that the disease was really the one that we suspected and then we sent another sample to South Africa to confirm whether the Foot and Mouth Disease did exist in Rodrigues. But from clinical – what was being shown on the farm in terms of the spread being all over the places and also the fact that not only cattle, but also pigs and sheep were being affected, the Veterinary Officers confirmed that this disease was really the Foot and Mouth Disease, but the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, the case that was first notified dates to 07 July, but, at that time, no one in Rodrigues suspected that it could have been the Foot and Mouth Disease and that's why they did not inform the Veterinary Officers in my Ministry.

Mr Bérenger: The question was more direct. The Minister has just repeated a number of facts. My question was whether he and his advisers here, his officers, are satisfied that no time was wasted in Rodrigues or in Mauritius. But let us move on to what is really disturbing, more disturbing still, is in his reply what followed later on and how those infected cattle came to Mauritius. In his Statement yesterday, I see that the hon. Minister – and I think this is very serious – I quote at page 2 –

“In the meantime, on 29 July 2016, the DVS – the Veterinary Services here, the officer concerned - informed the Commission of Agriculture in Rodrigues that, in view of the continuous increase in the number of infected cattle, a restriction should be imposed on the exportation of cattle to Mauritius and the embarkation of the consignment of cattle aboard the vessel MV ANNA expected to depart for Mauritius on 30 July 2016 should not be authorised. The Commission replied that the request

for the ban on the export of the animals would be considered by the authorities in Rodrigues.”

Next paragraph –

“On 01 August 2016, despite the request made by the DVS – Veterinary Officers here - not to ship any consignment of animals in Mauritius, the MV ANNA berthed in Port Louis with 13 containers of animals comprising 91 heads of cattle, 69 sheep and 75 goats.”

Can I ask the hon. Minister – this is very, very serious – has an enquiry been carried out to find out how this could happen, threatening mainland Mauritius after the trouble had got that far in Rodrigues?

Mr Seeruttun: Again, Madam Speaker, as I said, at the moment that we were aware of that problem, we have acted promptly and we have made a request to the Rodriguan authorities not to embark any cattle from Rodrigues to be sent over to Mauritius. Despite that, there was a consignment that arrived in Mauritius on 01 August; in fact, that was already here. So, we took the decision to straightaway quarantine the animals.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Will the Minister please answer the question which has been asked!

Mr Seeruttun: We have been asking the authorities in Rodrigues: ‘why did they allow the consignment to go ahead?’ But, so far, we have not had any reply from them as to who took the decision to allow the embarkation of those cattle to Mauritius?

Mr Bérenger: Can I know the names of the officers here, whether it is the Minister himself – because this is the most serious matter – or his officers, which officer that directed Rodrigues to apply that ban and who replied on behalf of the Rodrigues Commission that it will be considered?

Mr Seeruttun: The Chief Veterinary of my Ministry is the one who sent that instruction to the Commissioner, Mr Félicité in Rodrigues.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Who signed that correspondence from their side, the Rodrigues’ side?

Mr Seeruttun: That same Mr Félicité.

Mr Bérenger: Because this is a very serious matter! Can the exchange of correspondence from your officer to Rodrigues and from Rodrigues be tabled?

Mr Seeruttun: I will do that, Madam Speaker.

Mr Bérenger: But, nevertheless, *à la décharge de Rodrigues Commission*, if I can say so, are you satisfied, hon. Minister, that the staffing in Rodrigues was and is adequate, because I understand that there is only one Veterinary Officer? Has there been a request in the recent past from the Rodrigues' side for an increase in staff?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am not aware whether there has been a request from Rodrigues' side in the past, but I know that there are two qualified Veterinary Officers in Rodrigues, a couple, Mr and Mrs Samoisi. As soon as I have been made aware of that problem, I have asked that we send our team from here to support and give them a helping hand to, at least, address the problem as promptly as possible.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, I don't want to pass judgment before we have all the facts, but I am sure the Rt. hon. Prime Minister himself must be aware - the Minister is - how serious what has happened is. So, will consideration be given to enquiring fully into that? With due respect to the Rodrigues Assembly, to autonomy and so on, but this has been a very serious breach of security as far as cattle is concerned. Therefore, a full-fledged, either Fact-Finding Committee by somebody or people credible or even a Select Committee of the House to look into this whole matter and establish, as I said earlier on, whether we have wasted time dangerously in Rodrigues and in Mauritius, whether what happened in the case of that ban that was simply ignored and whether there have been requests for extra staffing in Rodrigues recently.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am as much concerned as the Leader of the Opposition with regard to this problem and we will do everything to look into the matter what happened and who were those responsible for that particular consignment that was sent to Mauritius.

Mr Bérenger: If I can move on, Madam Speaker, to the containment measures, especially *abattage*, killing of these animals. Can we know in Rodrigues, what is the total number of cattle that can be expected at this stage, unfortunately, to be culled?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, as it is today, the whole island is infected with this problem of Foot and Mouth Disease. If we want to go through the culling of the animals, we'll have to cull all the animals, but the culling exercise is done when you can contain it,

when it is localised, when it is in a specific area. But the fact that it is now island-wide, so the best option, according to the experts, those who are in that field, they are proposing that we only go and cull those who are really infected ones and the others be vaccinated so that we don't have to go for a mass killing and the vaccination will have to be carried out over a period of time, up to three years, and then we will be able to assess whether we have done away with that particular disease.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Minister has read - we are still talking about culling, *abattage* - carefully the shocking conditions apparently, according to Press reports, that this culling, this *abattage* is taking place in Rodrigues specifically. Shocking! Has the Minister had time to look into that and has he discussed that with the Rodrigues Authorities?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, again, I too was very shocked by what I have read in the Press with regard to the way they are supposedly carrying out the culling exercise. I have talked to my colleague, the PPS from Rodrigues and I am also trying to get in touch with the Authorities in Rodrigues. We have not had any confirmation yet as to whether this is really being carried out in that particular way.

Mr Bérenger: Shocking! Madam Speaker, we know that there is a lot of *abattage illégal* in Mauritius, I suppose, in Rodrigues I hope not but, I think, there is. How is that interfering with our problem now in Rodrigues especially, but even in Mauritius? This *abattage illégal* that has been going on for quite a while, how does it make our job here and in Rodrigues even more difficult?

Mr Seeruttun: With regard to the *abattage illégal*, Madam Speaker, for some months now we have, at the level of the Mauritius Meat Authority, set up a squad to go and check whether this kind of exercise is being done by some people in a very inhumane way. So, we have already in place a squad that goes and ensures that this kind of practice be stopped the more so now that we have this problem in hand. In all the localities where we have a number of animals that have come from Rodrigues where there could be the possibility of that disease, we have asked for the Police to assist us to make sure that these breeders do not go and cull the animals on their own.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, if I can move on to vaccination. Only this morning I read the statement from the Minister saying that we have not yet identified the specific cases that we have. Apparently, Madam Speaker, I tried to find out, the virus is genetically highly variable, that is, you have all sorts of varieties, if I can call that, which limits the effectiveness

of vaccination. This means that foot-and-mouth disease vaccines must be highly specific to the strain involved. Vaccination only provides temporary immunity. So, can I know from the Minister how does that tally? Apparently, we have placed orders for vaccines and yet this morning the Minister says we have not yet identified the strain involved.

Mr Seeruttun: In fact, Madam Speaker, there are seven strains with regard to that particular virus and, according to the information that I have been given, there is not one vaccine that can address all the different strains that are available. So, from the test carried out in South Africa and the vaccine that we have in Africa, it can address only three types of viruses SAT-1, SAT-2 and SAT-3. That is why we have also been sending samples to France to make sure that we know specifically which strain is the one which is affecting our cattle here so that the vaccine that we are going to inject is going to be effective. But, from the advice that I received from the Vet officers, we still need those vaccines, the ones that we have ordered, some 10,000 doses to, at least, do some preliminary precautionary measures.

Mr Bérenger: I understand from what I heard, Madam Speaker, that we have not yet identified the causes of why this outbreak has taken place and reference has been made to the possibility that it is travellers that went through Rodrigues. Have we identified the countries in the region where foot-and-mouth disease prevails at present and, therefore, to find out whether there have been visitors from overseas, from those countries?

Mr Seeruttun: Usually, Madam Speaker, our zone, the Indian Ocean Zone, is free from foot-and-mouth disease. The only country which is close and is affected by the disease is South Africa and it is in certain regions of South Africa where we have this disease. As I mentioned earlier in my reply, the way that this disease could be introduced is either through direct contact or airborne or even through meat and meat products that are not well cooked. And we have a very strict system of control here that prevents any introduction of live or meat and meat products from places where we have this type of disease.

Now, we know that in Rodrigues we have direct flights from Reunion Island; we have also yachts visiting Rodrigues. These are the other ways and means how this could be introduced. That is why we are trying to locate and identify the source of the disease and one way to determine that is through that strain that we are going to detect of the disease so as to know from which part of the world this disease comes from and probably through the visitors also. We will have an idea of knowing the source of that disease.

Mr Bérenger: The last part of my question relates to compensation and a “*Plan de Relance*”. I congratulate the Rodrigues Regional Assembly because, from what I understand, they have already decided to compensate, as much as they can with their limited means, the breeders. Will the Minister take on board that this is not just Rodrigues problem, it is a national problem. From what I understand, the whole breeding community is going to be devastated in Rodrigues.

Apart from what the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has rightly decided to do in terms of compensation, will the Minister agree with me that there must be a special exceptional financial help from Mauritius, as a Republic, from the State budget? Therefore, has he discussed with the Rt. hon. Prime Minister already what special effort, what gesture Mauritius, through the budget, will make to add to whatever compensation the Rodrigues Regional Assembly decides upon; that Mauritius, as a Republic, makes a special effort in that case?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, as I said, we are working on the modalities and we have to look at the *ampleur* of the problem. Definitely, I will be going to Cabinet on Friday to seek the approval of the Government with regard to the form of compensation that could be provided to all those affected by that problem.

Mr Bérenger: I think, Madam Speaker, I heard the Minister say that not all cattle - goats and so on - is going to be culled in Rodrigues as apparently it was considered or even decided at one point in time. Nevertheless, can I ask: has there been an assessment by us in Mauritius, by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly on what impact all this is likely to have on this sector, on cattle breeding in Rodrigues, whether it will be completely devastated or not that badly damaged? Has there been that assessment, and also in Mauritius? I think in Mauritius it will be very much more limited, but, especially in Rodrigues, whether that assessment because whatever “*Plan de Relance*” we talk about is in the light of the damage done.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, definitely there is going to be a financial impact on the breeders of Rodrigues because, as I said in my reply, last year itself there were some 7,470 animals that were exported to Mauritius. So, definitely the fact that we are going to put a ban on the importation of animals from Rodrigues, that is going to affect their revenue.

Now, with regard to the *cheptel* itself, the fact that we are not proposing to go for the mass culling of the animals, from the information that we have, those animals that are

infected, especially the ones that are old enough do not die from that disease. It is only the young ones that are affected. Even those that are affected get recovered over time, after the incubation period. So, that is why we are saying that even if the whole island is now infected, it is not wise to go for mass culling and vaccination is the best option. That is where we feel also that it is going to limit the number of cases where we will have to go for culling. So, therefore, the number of animals that we have to put down will be less than what we thought at the beginning.

Mr Leopold: Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, viruses are one of the most dangerous micro-organisms which exist on earth. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition has earlier said, viruses mutate as well and that makes treatment difficult. I would like to ask the hon. Minister what his Ministry is doing for the ethical killing of the affected animals. In Rodrigues, after everything is under control, from that time, when is he going to lift the ban of exportation on Rodrigues? I would like to say as well that with viruses, it may take 21 days to know from the time the animals get affected to the time they show the signs and symptoms, that is why it makes it difficult as well to manage.

Mr Seeruttun: According to work carried out it says that it takes about three years to have this infected zone free from that particular disease. So, we will have to go through that vaccination exercise first. It has to be carried out on a scheduled period and from there on, we will carry out analysis to see whether this disease is gone or not and it is then that we can only lift the ban.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Well, Madam Speaker, I would like to, through the Minister, put it across to the Government and to our Rodriguan friend that cattle breeding in Rodrigues is widely practised and it has a vital importance in the social life of Rodrigues. Can Government keep that in mind urgently because there is a lot of religious, social and educational activities that will be impacted and, here, in Mauritius, we know that we have imported live cattle for religious occasions like for the forthcoming Qurbani festivity? Therefore, can I appeal to Government to take into consideration the importance of cattle breeding for Rodriguan society in general and to see to it that it does not impact negatively on our religious activities, here, in Mauritius?

Mr Seeruttun: With regard to whether there is going to be a shortage or not of cattle for the forthcoming festivities, I don't think so because from the stock that we have already in

place here, I have got confirmation that we have sufficient to make sure that there won't be any shortage for the forthcoming Eid al-Adha festival.

With regard to the social problems that could arise in Rodrigues, we are well aware of the specificity of Rodrigues and we will do our utmost to provide all the support necessary to the Rodriguans and especially to the breeders in Rodrigues for them to be back again in business, in their daily activities of breeding and selling their cattle.

Madam Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been advised the PQ B/825 will now be replied by hon. Minister of Local Government. Hon. Ganoo!

REFERENDUM - LEGISLATION

(No. B/826) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to matters of utmost importance relating to public interests and to critical amendments pertaining to the sovereignty or to the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius, he will state if consideration will be given for the introduction of proposed legislation to allow for the organisation of referendums in relation thereto with a view to further consolidating the democratic process in Mauritius and to allow the increased participation of the population in the decision making process therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the concept of referendum is already established in our Constitution. As a matter of fact, section 47(3) of the Constitution provides that a Bill seeking to alter the provisions of section 1 or 57(2) of the Constitution shall not be passed by the Assembly unless -

- (a) the proposed Bill has, before its introduction in the Assembly, been submitted, by referendum, to the electorate of Mauritius and has been approved by the votes of not less than three quarters of the electorate, and
- (b) it is supported at the final voting in the Assembly by the votes of all the Members of the Assembly.

Moreover, the concept of referendum in our law has been recognised by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as reflected in the case of the State v/s A. R. Khoyratty 2004 PRV 59.

Madam Speaker, we do not dispute the merit of referenda as a complement to the system of representative democracy. Besides, mention has been made of referendum in the Government Programme 2015-2019.

However, we believe that referenda should be used very selectively and resorted to only for major and highly controversial issues of national importance.

Mauritius being a Parliamentary democracy, elected officials have the duty and legitimacy of making decisions for and on behalf of the people. It would not, therefore, be appropriate to impose undue limitations on the elected legislature. Elected representatives should be able to decide on behalf of the people as it would be impractical to consult citizens on a regular basis. Besides, this is what representative democracy is all about. Some political theorists, like Edmund Burke believe that part of the duty of an elected representative is not simply to communicate the views of the electorate, but also to use his own judgment in the exercise of the powers, even if his views are not reflective of those of the majority of voters.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius is a representative democracy and this is a model of Government which allows for efficient ruling by elected representatives who are accountable to the people for their decisions. Moreover, we do have in Mauritius all the preconditions for representative democracy to function effectively, that is, free and fair elections, protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, including the protection of freedom of expression, and a free and vibrant Press.

We do, however, agree that there is a lot of merit in adopting a consultative approach on public policy making as we believe it is crucial in meeting the varied ideas and aspirations of our diverse nation. This is the reason why my Government has pledged to adopt a genuinely decentralised and participative approach in decision making and in matters directly relating to the Constitution of the country and in all cases where the interest of the public at large is at stake.

As a matter of fact, my Government has been undertaking wide consultations with all relevant stakeholders on all major policy proposals implemented so far and, as far as possible, their views have been taken on board.

In the circumstances, it is not proposed to introduce, at this stage, legislation for the organisation of referenda.

However, as mentioned in the Government Programme 2015-2019, should the circumstances described therein arise, the need for introducing legislation accordingly would be considered.

Mr Ganoo: In fact, the purpose of this question, Madam Speaker, was precisely, as has been mentioned by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, that paragraph 257 of the Government Programme does mention that nationwide referendums will be held on matters of utmost importance and relating to public interest. So, my question was, whether Government has taken the decision to set out the legal framework for referendums to be held, in line with this proposal in the Government Programme?

The Prime Minister: As I said in the answer, not at this stage.

ICTA - LAW PRACTITIONERS – FEES

(No. B/827) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the law practitioners whose services had been retained by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) in the Supreme Court case of Emtel Limited v. the Information and Telecommunication Technologies Authority, Mauritius Telecom Limited and others, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the ICTA, information as to the –

- (a) names thereof;
- (b) fees –
 - (i) agreed to be paid out thereto;
 - (ii) claimed, and
 - (iii) paid out thereto as at to date, and
- (c) mode of selection thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Executive Director of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority that the Supreme Court case of Emtel Limited v/s the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, Mauritius Telecom Limited and Others started back in 1996 with a '*Mise en Demeure*' which was served on the then Telecommunication Authority and the other three parties, namely

Mauritius Telecom Limited, Cellplus and the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation. The case was subsequently lodged in 2000.

However, in February 2016, the State Law Office which had represented the Authority and the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation in the case for the past 16 years, informed the Authority that it would not be appropriate for it to appear on behalf of both the Authority and the Ministry in their case as the stand taken by each of these two parties might not necessarily be the same.

In the circumstances, on 19 April 2016, with the ICT Board's approval, the services of two law practitioners, namely, Mr Satyawan Trilochun and Mr Roshan Rajroop were retained by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority for this case against the payment of a legal fee of Rs19,198,436...

(Interruptions)

...and Rs461,150 to Mr S. Trilochun and Mr R. Rajroop, respectively.

Subsequently, both practitioners claimed the agreed sums and payment was approved by the Information and Communication Technologies Board. The fees paid as at date to Mr Trilochun and Mr Rajroop, after tax deduction at source, are Rs18,697,608 and Rs449,120 respectively.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: I am shocked! Answering to a written PQ on the 05 April, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister stated that the same gentleman, Mr Trilochun had received Rs3 m. from ICTA. He is also legal adviser to RDA. He is also Chairperson of the FIU appointed by hon. Bhadain. So, may I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister ...

(Interruptions)

...why is it that this person, Mr Trilochun, has suddenly become the blue-eyed boy of this Government?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I must say, Madam Speaker, that when I got the figures, I was shocked myself. But I asked for explanation and I was given to understand that Mr Trilochun worked with a team of Barristers and the payment included fees for all of them.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, Mr Trilochun was, according to the Roll, called to the Bar...

(Interruptions)

...on 02 October 2002. He is not even eligible to be appointed as a senior Counsel and he is charging so many millions. So, may I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether before the Board of ICTA approved those fees, since there are representatives from his Ministry on the Board, has this matter been taken up by officers of his Ministry to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Well, I can't say. I am not aware of this, but this figure only was disclosed to me when we asked for information when the question was put.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Is the Rt. hon. Prime Minister aware that in big cases, in the past, there have been also other Chambers and one particular Chamber also which has claimed the Government to the tune of millions....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

No interruptions!

(Interruptions)

No interruptions, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, please allow him to ask his question! And allow the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to reply! Finish your question!

Mr Rutnah: Is the Rt. hon. Prime Minister aware that in the past one particular Chamber as well was claiming fees to the tune of million where cases were litigated at the Supreme Court of Mauritius?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Well, there could have been, but I am not aware of the cases. So, I can't answer in the positive.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, the decisions...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

No interruptions, please! Hon. Members, hon. Baloomoody, please no interruptions! The Rt. hon. Prime Minister is giving his reply. Please, allow him to give his reply!

(Interruptions)

Please, Rt. hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the decision to retain the services of Mr Trilochun and Mr Rajroop was the prerogative of the ICTA Board and it is not my role to interfere in their internal matters, and I understand that Mr Trilochun was already the legal adviser of ICTA at that time and was conversant with this complex case.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister enquire and he will find it surprising himself, normally when you have a Chamber, you have an office and all sorts of amenities, but the Chamber of that legal adviser is at his house?

(Interruptions)

Official address!

(Interruptions)

Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister enquire? And that information is known by the ICTA Board and this Board should be sacked!

The Prime Minister: Well, if Chambers are to be found at his residence...

(Interruptions)

...he must be having a very big house with plenty of space to have an excellent Chamber.

Mr Baloomoody: The Rt. hon. Prime Minister said that this gentleman is supposed to have a Chamber with several lawyers in his Chambers and he has claimed fees for all his lawyers. May he table the list, the amount paid by him for each and everyone in his Chambers which amounted to a total sum of Rs19 m.?

The Prime Minister: Well, we will try to get the information.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since we are all very shocked so much as the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, could he just confirm to the House that this was an invoice that was sent out, but does the ICTA intend to pay for it or will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister intervene and ensure that we are not further shocked by this being debited from the account of the ICTA to pay for this Bill?

The Prime Minister: Almost most of the fees have already been paid.

(Interruptions)

There is only a little balance that is there!

(Interruptions)

Well, I get a note, 'already paid'!

Madam Speaker: Last question on this issue, hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, no interruptions!

Mr Jhugroo: After having heard the amount paid for legal services today and also what happened in the past, would the Rt. hon. Prime Minister consider, as from now, to put a limit on all legal services in each and every Ministry and all parastatal bodies?

The Prime Minister: Well, I wonder whether this can be done!

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

POLICE OFFICERS – OVERSEAS MISSIONS - EXPENDITURE

(No. B/828) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Rt. hon Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Police Officers from the grade of Superintendent of Police to that of Commissioner of Police, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police –

- (a) a list thereof, indicating in each case the posting thereof, and
- (b) information as to the number of overseas missions undertaken by each one of them since January 2015 to date, indicating the –
 - (i) countries visited and duration thereof;
 - (ii) purposes thereof, and
 - (iii) total costs thereof in terms of air tickets, *per diem* and any other allowances.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

Dr. Sorefan: From the information that I have, some officers go for certain missions that are not relevant to their post. Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister see to it or follow up with the Commissioner of Police that the right person goes to the specific mission that is advantageous to the Police Force and to the Mauritians in general?

The Prime Minister: This is the prerogative of the Commissioner of Police and I do not indulge myself in these matters.

CAMP CAROL, PEREYBERE & FOND DU SAC – DRAINS – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/829) **Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the construction of drains in the regions of Camp Carol, Pereybère and Fond du Sac, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit, information as to if contracts have been awarded in respect thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, further to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question B/6 on 29 March 2016 in respect of Camp Carol and Pereybere, I am informed by the NDU that in respect of drain works at Camp Carol, Grand Bay, bids for the project were invited on 02 May 2016 and same were received on 31 May 2016. Evaluation of bids has

already been undertaken and moreover, in line with provisions of the Public Procurement Act, a Letter of Notification was issued on 29 July 2016 to all bidders. Provided there is no challenge, the Letter of Award will be issued to the successful bidder this week.

In respect of Pereybere, given that there were various consultations with the Central Procurement Board for finalising the bid documents, I am informed that bids were invited on 07 July 2016. The closing date for receipt of bids has been fixed for 18 August 2016.

The award of contract will be effected only after evaluation is carried out at the level of the Central Procurement Board and appropriate procedures followed. The earliest that the award can be effected is early October 2016, provided there is no challenge.

As regards Fond du Sac, further to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question B/207 of 19 April 2016, I am informed that the evaluation exercise has been completed. Moreover, the Bid Evaluation Report has already been submitted to the Department Bid Committee, which has subsequently sought advice from the Procurement Policy Office in respect of a particular issue raised by the recommended bidder.

On the basis of advice to be tendered, the NDU will take necessary action for the award of the contract shortly.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, let me thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the NDU for the speed at which the contract has been awarded or will be awarded for the three regions. Only in the case of Fond du Sac, works are not expected to be started in January. May I request the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to please advise the Disaster Management and Risk Reduction Committee to make a follow-up before the heavy rainy season, which will be in January, to ensure that all precautions are taken in case there is any flood, just to prevent casualties?

The Prime Minister: Well, as I have already answered, all the precautions are being taken. I don't know what else can be done!

DRUGS (SYNTHETIC) – ARRESTS & DEATHS

(No. B/830) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to synthetic drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to, over the past two years, the number of –

- (a) arrests effected in connection therewith, and
- (b) deaths registered as a result of consumption thereof, indicating in each case the age group thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since 01 July 2014 to 04 August 2016, 306 persons were arrested in 314 alleged cases of synthetic drugs by Police.

Out of the 314 cases –

- (i) in 22 cases, the accused have been fined;
- (ii) one case is awaiting court decision, and
- (iii) 291 cases are still under enquiry.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life that no death has been recorded to have been caused specifically as a result of consumption of synthetic drugs, over the past two years. According to information available, 36 deaths occurred during the past two years as a result of drug abuse.

However, there is no forensic evidence to the effect that the deaths have been caused by abuse of synthetic drugs.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, we are all utterly concerned and horrified by the alarming situation of synthetic drugs in Mauritius. Therefore, can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister if he may consider the request of placing the National Drug Observatory under the Prime Minister's Office for more efficiency and control?

The Prime Minister: The Prime Minister's Office has already too much to do.

Mr Mahomed: At its last sitting, Cabinet took note of the dangerous drug situation - the words used in the Cabinet decision - as per the first report of the National Drug Observatory, which was set up in November 2015. Now, this is being on the one hand. On the other hand, the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life keeps on maintaining that...

Madam Speaker: Ask your question!

Mr Mahomed: Is there any incoherence there? Because the Minister of Health and Quality of Life keeps on saying that the drug situation is not alarming and that he has gone throughout his constituency and he has not found any single drug dealer in his constituency.

The Prime Minister: Well, what he has done or seen, I can't answer for it.

Dr. Joomaye: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister if he could inquire from the Commissioner of Police if the Forensic Science Laboratory is properly equipped to identify new synthetic drugs in samples that they would come across.

The Prime Minister: That, I will have to find out, but I must say that none of the doctors who have been examining all these people who die as a result of consumption of drug has been able to come to a conclusion that there was, in any of these cases, death due to synthetic drug. So, the Commissioner of Police can't say. To the question that was put just now, I have been given a note. The answer is yes.

Mr Ameer Meea: Cabinet has taken note of the first report of the National Drug Observatory recently. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister if this report can be made public?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have no objection; we can table it.

Madam Speaker: It is not a question for the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. It is a question for the Minister of Health and Quality of Life. Last question on this, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the main problems with this synthetic drug is that a lot of the components are not illegal. Therefore, it is not within the Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Act. So, may I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether consideration will be given, after working with experts from the forensic laboratories, to amending the Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Act so that these synthetic drugs do not fall through the net?

The Prime Minister: Well, I understand this has already been done.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

(Interruptions)

PRISONS - CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION CAMERAS

(No. B/831) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Closed Circuit Television Cameras installed in each of the prisons, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to the number thereof which

are not operational or which are defective, indicating when remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that there is a total of 1,158 Closed Circuit Television Cameras installed in the eight prisons. Out of these, 85 are not operational as follows -

- | | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|---|---------------|
| (i) | Beau Bassin Prison | - | 5 out of 95 |
| (ii) | New Wing Prison | - | 1 out of 45 |
| (iii) | Pirate Wing at Beau Bassin Prison | - | 10 out of 67 |
| (iv) | Eastern High Security Prison | - | 69 out of 544 |

Madam Speaker, with regard to the second part of the question, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that repair works have already started in respect of the defective CCTV cameras at the Pirate Wing at the Beau Bassin Prison. The works are expected to be completed within one week.

As regards the defective cameras at Beau Bassin Prison, New Wing Prison and Eastern High Security Prison, I am informed that funds are being provided in the Budget for financial year 2016/2017 for the repair thereof. Action will be initiated for the repair of the CCTV cameras as soon as the 2016-2017 Budget is approved.

Mr Ameer Meea: Concerning the faulty cameras, now we are being informed that they will be repaired soon. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether these cameras were on warranty and, if not, how much will be the cost for the repairs of the cameras?

The Prime Minister: How can I answer this? I have no idea.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Is the Rt. hon. Prime Minister aware that in Beau Bassin Prison, there are 95 cameras out of which probably 5 are not working? But there is no qualified person in the Camera Room to watch what is happening in these 95 cameras! There is no qualified person in this room. In fact, last Thursday a drone was discovered in the yard of Beau Bassin Prison and nobody was aware of it, those who were watching the cameras! It is one Prisons Officer who was walking around who saw the drone on the ground of Beau Bassin Prison.

The Prime Minister: Well, if there is no qualified person over there, I will have to look into this.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

BARRACUDA VESSEL – OPERATION

(No. B/832) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Barracuda vessel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the date of coming into operation thereof, indicating the –
 - (i) distances covered as at to date, and
 - (ii) activities in which it has been involved, and
- (b) if it is presently under repairs and, if so, indicate –
 - (i) since when, and
 - (ii) the estimated cost of repairs thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in regard to parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Coast Guard Ship Barracuda was commissioned on 12 March 2015 and came into operation on the same date. Since its coming into operation up to 04 August 2016, the vessel has covered a total distance of 18,487.52 nautical miles, that is, about 34,238.8 kilometres, in 39 sea sorties. During these sorties, the vessel was involved in the following activities -

- (i) patrolling our coastal region and Exclusive Economic Zone;
- (ii) Search and Rescue Operations;
- (iii) supporting Outer Islands;
- (iv) joint operations with the Police Helicopter Squadron;
- (v) joint exercises with friendly foreign navies, and
- (vi) participation in the International Fleet Review held at Vishakhapatnam, India in February 2016.

Madam Speaker, as for part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Coast Guard Ship Barracuda is fully operational, and not under repair.

However, I am informed that on 09 July 2016, whilst Coast Guard Ship Barracuda was on surveillance mission in the vicinity of Rodrigues, its deck plate bulged due to excessive water pressure in one of the ballast tanks and water had to be pumped in the ship in order to maintain its balance. After a minor repair in Rodrigues, the vessel returned to Port Louis Harbour on 11 July 2016.

On 12 July 2016, a specialist team from Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited, the builder of the ship, came to Mauritius for an inspection. The ship had to be dry-docked for this purpose at Taylor Smith Ltd. Assessment of structural integrity was carried out and essential underwater repairs were undertaken.

The entire cost of dry-docking and repairs amounting to 22,700 USD, was borne by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Baloomoody!

POLICE OFFICERS – INTERDICTION

(No. B/833) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Police Officers who are suspended from duty, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, indicating –

- (a) in each case the –
 - (i) date of suspension, and
 - (ii) rank thereof, and
- (b) the actions taken, if any, to ensure that their cases are dealt with within the least delay.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are 183 Police Officers who are under interdiction from exercise of their duties as at 05 August 2016.

In regard to parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question, I am tabling the requested information.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that on 02 July 2015, the Commissioner of Police issued a circular to all Divisional Commanders reiterating the requirement for early completion of enquiries involving Police Officers. For the purpose of monitoring the progress of these enquiries, the Police have set up a control mechanism whereby Divisional Commanders have to submit a monthly return on the status of the cases.

In addition, on 30 July 2015, the Master and Registrar had informed that all cases involving Police Officers and which had been lodged before the various Courts would be closely monitored and appropriate directives had already been conveyed to District Magistrates.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, there are two types of cases where Police are suspended, one is where they are involved in criminal cases and another where they are involved in administrative faults. The Human Rights Commission has stipulated that there should be an independent Commission presided by a Senior Magistrate, especially to look into those cases where Police Officers have committed administrative faults.

Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he will look into the matter seriously, because there are officers who have been suspended for years? I know of one Officer who has been suspended for more than eight years just because he did not hang the key - he was in the Transport Department - on the keyboard and he left it in his pocket, and he has been suspended for nine years.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, put your question!

Mr Baloomoody: Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister consider that, in administrative cases, to have a proper Commission chaired by a Magistrate permanently to look into these matters administratively?

The Prime Minister: Well, before this question was put, I, myself, was really shocked when I heard the number of Police Officers; before that, I had asked the Commissioner of Police because, in general in the service, there are so many people interdicted, getting full pay, not working for this country or at least for the service and they are getting their full pay, and I personally know myself that there are many cases where these people are working outside. So, they are far better off and their cases have been dragging on for years. I can't see any justification in that. It's outrageous! And this is why I had already talked to the Commissioner of Police that this should stop.

Well, there is now, I understand, an Independent Police Complaints Commission, which we have voted recently, will be set up, and I understand, will look into all these issues.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, we are going to do everything so that we do not have this sort of cases dragging on for years like this.

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! The Table has been advised that PQ B/837 in regard to the setting up of an Executive Chauffeur Driven Taxi Car Service addressed to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport.

PQ B/857, in regard to the proposed setting up of a high level committee to look into the payment of universal old age pension, addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Social Solidarity, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions.

Hon. Mahomed!

RDA - MANAGING DIRECTOR - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/834) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Road Development Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information, as to if a Managing Director thereof has been appointed and, if so, when, indicating the –

- (a) qualifications of the incumbent thereof, indicating the date on which he was registered with the Council of Registered Professional Engineers of Mauritius, and
- (b) total yearly package proposed thereto, indicating the difference in percentage thereof as compared to the former Managing Director thereof.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that the post of General Manager is vacant since 14 August 2015. Two recruitment exercises were conducted by the RDA in August and December 2015 to fill the vacancy, but no suitable candidate could be identified.

Madam Speaker, the RDA has been sustaining Rs3 billion of overrun over the last years. As we are aware, two major projects implemented by the RDA, namely: the Ring Road and Terre Rouge/Verdun Road have been subject to severe technical faults causing substantial overruns and inconveniences to the road users.

Madam Speaker, in view of the vision of the Government to modernise the road network and the numerous challenges ahead for the implementation of the important Road Decongestion Programme, the National Transport Network and a Mass Transit System, the RDA can no more afford to operate without the guidance of a very competent and experienced person who can lead the institution to achieve the goals and objectives that have been set by the organisation. It is imperative that all projects undertaken by the RDA are of high quality, completed within the budgetary allocations and provided within deadlines.

In fact, the Board of the RDA, at its meeting of 29 June 2016 decided that Dr. Das Mootanah, a highly qualified Mauritian Professional Engineer with proven track record in Project Management, be offered appointment on contract basis as Officer-in-Charge of the RDA. Dr. Mootanah is a highly qualified Mauritian citizen who has settled in the United Kingdom and has over 25 years of experience into Project Management, Strategic Management, Risk Management in complex infrastructural programmes. He has been particularly involved in high profile transport and construction projects, including railways, highways and bridges.

Dr. Das Mootanah is currently the Head of Risk for the £50 billion High Speed Rail Infrastructure Programme in UK. He has expressed his interest to come back to Mauritius to put his experience at the service of the country and fulfil the requirements for eligibility under the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme.

I am informed that Dr. Mootanah has accepted the offer of appointment made to him on 07 July 2016 and will join the RDA in mid-October 2016 in view of his current professional commitments.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that Dr. Mootanah, holds a BTech (Hons.) in Civil Engineering, MSc in Civil Engineering and Project Management, PhD in Project Management (Risk & Value) and he became a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers (F.I.C.E) in the UK. He registered with the Council of Professional Engineers in Mauritius on 01 June 2016.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that considering his qualifications and extensive international experience and exposure, the RDA has, after consultation with the PRB, offered Dr. Mootanah a monthly salary package of Rs275,000 comprising a basic salary of Rs110,000 and a top-up allowance of Rs175,000 as an incentive to induce him to accept the post.

In fact, the total yearly package proposed to Dr. Mootanah will amount to Rs3.4 m. and is 139% higher than the yearly package as per PRB Report 2016 drawn by the last General Manager.

Mr Osman Mahomed: In Mauritius, an engineering graduate is not an engineer so long he is not registered with the Council of Registered Professional Engineers and we hear that he only has two months as from 01 June post registration. Will he be able to shoulder the responsibility that is being entrusted to him because he is fresh?

Mr Bodha: The problem, Madam Speaker, is that according to the Scheme of Duty for a General Manager, we require ten years of post-registration experience in Civil Engineering in Mauritius. So, it means that anybody who is brilliant and is working outside in the UK, or in the US, or in Canada, or in Australia will never be able to become a General Manager because he will have to come here. So, this is a lacuna in our system. I think that if we really want to have Mauritian professionals or experts or consultants abroad who want to come to Mauritius, we should be able to see to it that they are registered where they work. This gentleman now is at the British Rail and we asked him to come over. The British Rail did not want to give him the permission to leave. They asked for even six months. So, if we really want to have somebody to be able to guide the projects that we are going to launch in the coming months, there is no other way than to bring expert people. I have always said there are three things that we have to do: quality, deadline and budget. There should be no overrun. I am convinced that this gentleman will save us a lot of money.

Mr Oaman Mahomed: As per the reply from the hon. Minister, the gentleman in question seems to be very experienced in light rail.

Mr Bodha: No, he has got other project experience, project management.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Project management, whereas the core business of the RDA is road. Is he convinced that we are getting a fair deal with this gentleman because from the experience that he has enlisted, it is more on the railway project?

Mr Bodha: This gentleman was the Olympic Transport Risk and Assurance Lead Manager for the Olympic Games of London in 2012. He has worked in Australia. He has been in the construction industry. Well, I can forward the extensive degree ...

(Interruptions)

He has made publications in 25 international magazines and conference papers.

Mr Bhagwan: *Le ministre vient nous dire qu'il a eu un oiseau rare.* Let us wait and see! During the past, we have seen and we have witnessed - even in the House, we have been given replies where there have been conflicts between Chairpersons, *qui se croient être des potentats* and the professionals who are the MD of either State-owned company or Government or parastatal bodies. Can the Minister give the guarantee to the House that the Chairperson he is having actually at the RDA will not be a *barrière* for that gentleman when he is appointed to start his work?

Mr Bodha: I can give the assurance, Madam Speaker. In fact, what we are going to do, we have the top level management and we are going also to recruit some middle management people as regards to procurement because this is very important. We are going to launch ourselves in projects which are going to cost us hundreds of millions. As regards to supervision of work and compliance to what we require so that our projects are delivered on time with quality and respecting the budgets which have been allocated.

Mr Rutnah: Is the Minister aware that in the Budget Speech of 2015/2016, the then Chancellor of Exchequer made provision for the Mauritian Diaspora to return to Mauritius and to work here with tax incentives ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, interruptions, please!

Mr Rutnah: ... and whether the decision to recruit this gentleman who holds a PhD is not in line with the Budget Speech of 2015/2016 and also whether he has been given those tax incentives so that others could follow to come and serve the country?

Mr Bodha: This is the right incentive, Madam Speaker. This gentleman in getting today Rs500,000 a month. We have explained to him that we really need his expertise and I think for family reasons also, he would like to come over and to offer his services to his country.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Well, I have nothing against the gentleman. I am sure he must be very competent, but the hon. Minister, himself, has said that the scheme of service calls for ten years post registration and now we have recruited someone who has got two months post registration. Had we relaxed this provision/criterion more, and local engineers, although I have no doubt about his willingness to serve the country, he would have qualified for a post?

Mr Bodha: He cannot be nominated as General Manager because of this lacuna. As no other person who is working outside Mauritius can be nominated as General Manager of the RDA. That is why we have nominated him as Officer-in-Charge for the time being.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, after having listened to my friend, hon. Mahomed, who is looking for very experienced engineers - how do the hon. Minister explain with experienced engineers at the head of RDA, you have got the problem at Terre Rouge-Verdun Road and the cracks of Ring Road? How do the hon. Minister explain...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: The only thing I am saying is that the RDA should be able to play the role it has to play in the coming years because we are going to spend billions of rupees in our road infrastructure, with the Metro-Express and with the number of other infrastructural projects.

Madam Speaker: Yes, last question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The hon. Minister has just explained that, because of what the scheme of service is and the limitation imposed because of the scheme of service, they have had no other choice but to appoint him as Officer-in-Charge as a subterfuge in order to go around the legal problems. Now, has he had this verified by the legal adviser of the RDA, Mr Trilochun and for that particular verification, did he charge millions as well?

Mr Bodha: May I say that, so far, no legal commitment has been given to Mr Trilochun! I can assure the House.

(Interruptions)

And I am going to continue; none will be given! I can re-assure the House on this.

(Interruptions)

It is not a subterfuge, Madam Speaker. It is that we have a scheme of duties. We have gone to the PRB. We requested the advice of the PRB whether this can be done and the advice that we had is that he could not be a General Manager, but he can be an Officer-in-Charge at the head of the Road Development Authority.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn; PQ Nos. B/864, B/869, B/870, and B/871. I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.

At 1.02 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.37 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

BUS SHELTERS – RENOVATION

(No. B/835) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the bus shelters, he will state if there is any project for the renovation thereof and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) number thereof concerned therewith;
- (b) estimated costs thereof, and
- (c) how same will be funded.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that there are around 900 bus shelters islandwide. Many of these shelters are in a quite deplorable state.

With a view to providing a safer, reliable and more comfortable service to the travelling public, my Ministry has come up with a policy to improve public transport as a whole. This includes the modernisation of the bus shelters along with the fleet of buses in operation servicing the travelling public. Smart bus routes have already been introduced, and bus shelters are being renovated all over the island to improve the transport landscape. In the new bus shelters, necessary facilities and additional amenities are being provided such as a passenger information system which will enable commuters to better plan their journey. Commuters will thus have access to the bus service time schedules through special applications via their mobile phone.

In line with the new policy, a protocol on the modernisation of bus shelters has been worked out which sets the guidelines on the manner to deal with requests for new bus shelters, the process for their construction and the specifications thereof.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, any bus shelter which is found to be anaesthetic, too small or no longer responding to the needs of the public will be renovated and replaced in accordance with the established Protocol.

Since May 2016, applications are invited from interested parties by way of a press communiqué to enlist themselves as promoters/sponsors for the construction of modern bus shelters.

The promoters who express their interest for constructing and renovating the bus shelters have to obtain the approval of the NTA prior to effecting the works as per the specifications set out in the Protocol.

As regards part (a) of the question, 70 bus shelters have already been renovated, 8 more have been earmarked on the motorway M1 for construction and 15 in other regions.

In accordance with the Protocol, an agreement is signed between the NTA and the promoter to construct, renovate and maintain bus shelters at no cost to Government against the right of commercial exploitation thereof.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I am tabling the list of new bus shelters to be constructed and the list of bus shelters already renovated.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Regarding the advertising part of it - because they will have the right to display advertising panels - may we have an idea as to how much they recoup from there? Because Government is foregoing something in return. Had we invested in the renovation of bus shelters, we would have had the right for the advertising purposes. In the long run, does it not make more sense for Government to do it itself?

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't think so. One of the new bus shelters is costing Rs500,000.

(Interruptions)

Rs500,000! So, if we were to renovate 900, that would be millions and then you will have to manage it, you will have to find the sponsors. I think the best way is the Protocol that we have set. We have the bus shelters free of charge against advertising by sponsors.

Mr Osman Mahomed: If I get it correctly, following that process of Expression of Interest, was that promoter appointed to renovate those 70 shelters? Is that correct and what is the name of the promoter?

Mr Bodha: Well, the communiqué was issued on 11 May. A request has been received by AV Express to cater for 42 bus shelters over the island and you have a number of other companies. They have to go by the protocol. The protocol means that you have the guidelines by the TMRSU, the RDA, the NTA and also as regards road safety, the security and visibility. They also have to have a contract with the CEB and with the owner of the land. It should be a lease or it should be acquisition of land. It is not only setting up a bus shelter; in fact, all has to be done according to the protocol.

Mr Bhagwan: The new bus stop which has been constructed, I think, by a specific promoter, *c'était esthétique*. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has set himself a target to achieve the whole island with regard to the new bus stands?

Mr Bodha: The idea is to have about a hundred per year, at least. Now, the other possibilities are to see whether with the new urban bus terminals, we can also make better provisions for the travellers.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, a last supplementary!

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, if I may ask the hon. Minister, since year 2010, people living at Plein Bois are still waiting for the construction of two bus stops, may I request the hon. Minister to do the needful so that these bus stops can be constructed in the coming months?

Mr Bodha: I will look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

SCHOOLS – DRUG CONSUMPTION

(No. B/836) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the school population, she will state if her Ministry has recently assessed the percentage thereof who –

(a) consume –

(i) cannabis, and

- (ii) synthetic drugs
- (b) carry weapons;
- (c) engage in sexual activities, and
- (d) had attempted suicide and, if so, give an overview of the present situation thereof in each case and, if not, indicate if consideration will be given for the carrying out of such an assessment.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are 35 students from 21 secondary schools who have been reported to have been involved in cases related to cannabis over a two-year period starting from July 2014 to date.

Over the same period of time, according to the Police, three students were involved in cases related to synthetic drugs. However, two of the three cases are still under investigation.

In respect of part (b) of the question, no student has been reported carrying weapons as such by zonal directorates. The Police has also informed that no such case has been reported at its level.

As regards part (c) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no means of assessing whether students are engaged in sexual activities or not. However, 6 cases have been reported to the Ministry and these pertain mainly to inappropriate behaviour, *des comportements à caractère sexuel inapproprié* in three primary schools. In secondary schools, three cases of alleged sexual abuse have been reported.

As for part (d) of the question, as per our records, there are six students who have attempted to commit suicide over the period July 2014 to date.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to highlight that the above figures are those reported to us by schools or by competent authorities including the Police. At school level, emphasis is laid on preventive measures through awareness and sensitisation campaigns with the help of relevant stakeholders and partners. Schools are also required to ensure close follow-up of students involved in such behavioural problems. They are provided with pastoral care, counselling and psychological support through the services of the National Education Counselling Service.

The Ministry has a structured mechanism with regard to monitoring and reporting of behavioural problems in schools. A close working partnership has been established with the Police authorities, namely the ADSU, *Brigade pour la protection des mineurs*, the Harm

Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of life, the Ministry of Gender Equality, the Probation and Aftercare Services, the CDU as well as NGOs for the on the ground competence and with the view to sharing information and evolving strategies towards addressing such problems in a proactive manner. The situation is being closely monitored and followed.

A zero tolerance policy as well as strict control measures at all levels have been put in place. Rectors have been instructed to arrange for continuous sensitisation of students in collaboration with the Police and other stakeholders including PTA.

Regular inspections of the school premises, leaving no room for any abnormal activity, close supervision in the vicinity of schools, strict control and access to laboratory facilities at school and greater involvement of parental community in the fight against this phenomenon.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the need to provide an educational response to the impact of societal and technological changes on the behaviour of school children and the challenges inherent to adolescents have been felt. The new NCF has accordingly made provision for better preparing and equipping our students through the inclusion of life skills, sexuality education and value-based education in the curriculum.

In regard to cases of attempted suicides and students showing suicidal tendencies, the National Education Counselling Service ensures close follow-up in collaboration with Live Plus of the Ministry of Social Security. Moreover, Live Plus helps in carrying out suicide prevention workshops in schools and training of school staff at the level of the Student Care and Counselling Desk which have been set up in schools.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry is closely monitoring the situation and is taking all necessary measures to ensure safe school environment for teaching and learning to take place in a most conducive manner.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I thank the hon. Minister for her reply. I came up with this question with all the items in there following a press report on the radio on 17 July this year whereby mention was made of a Youth Determinants Report conducted by the United Nations Office. So, I called up the office and they said they were not aware and to find out from the Ministry whether such report exists. So, my question is: is the Ministry – I believe it is not because it would have been mentioned in the report, the figures in that report are much higher – in possession of a report called Youth Determinants in Mauritius, 2015 version?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that we do have cases, alleged cases of drug addiction or use of drug, but these alleged cases have to be confirmed by the Police. Very often, students are found with substances which are suspected to be drugs or the most recent synthetic drugs, but these have to be confirmed. We normally have a protocol, as soon as any student is detected in a 'strange' state; we, first of all, send the student to the hospital, get the ADSU, send the substance found for forensic investigation and all, but we do not have exact figures and even the figures reported to us by the zonal directorates have to be sent to the Police for confirmation.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister is answering the question!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The report from the United Nations! I am not aware of that particular report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: With regard to the campaign for awareness, can I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a protocol between the ADSU and the secondary schools both in the public and private sector because I have been informed by certain officers of the ADSU that they don't have access to certain secondary schools when they want to sensitise the young, especially with regard to synthetic drugs?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we do have a very close collaboration with the ADSU and other units in the Police Force. We have a Health and Anti-Drug Unit at the level of the Ministry. We work in collaboration with them and the NGOs. However, we have to be very careful in seeing who are the people we allow in our schools. We have had cases of people coming to talk to students and explaining to them how to prepare certain drugs. So, we have to be careful. ADSU officers are allowed in the colleges.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Minister whether she is satisfied with the number of school psychologists who are at present at her Ministry and who conduct regular meetings with students in schools and colleges to precisely sensitise these people and conduct investigation after they have fallen into drug addiction or violent behaviour?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we always feel that there is a need for some extra manpower, but we do have the psychologists. We do make requests for additional staff to be taken on board, but we also have the educational social workers who link up between the schools and the families and report to the Ministry, work in collaboration with the psychologists and we have sufficient personnel at the Ministry at this moment. We are also coming up with the special unit at the level of the PSSA with the amendments that are being brought to the PSSA Act where we will have psychologists attached to the PSSA to cater for the Private Secondary Schools as well.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister consider the possibility of having yoga taught in our secondary institutions in view of the fact that this ancient mental, physical and spiritual practice is now universal? The United Nations has decreed an International Yoga Day. Can this form part of the extra-curricular activities in all the secondary schools for the well-being of our adolescents?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Curriculum Framework is being worked upon and we are introducing life skills and other movement education and other subjects of the type to ensure that we have a holistic development of our children.

The Deputy Speaker: Last supplementary, hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister confirm that insofar as behavioural problem is concerned relating to drugs, synthetic drugs and sexual activities that all these are representations of only a fraction of children in schools and colleges and that there is no need to demonise all children who are frequenting our schools and colleges and the majority are...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No interruptions, please!

Mr Rutnah: ... good citizens who are learning to shape the future of this country...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Come with your question please, hon. Rutnah!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, even if we have a single case of a child showing behavioural problems...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, listen to the answer you have asked!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is a concern to us. So, obviously, we will try our utmost to ensure that the school environment remains proper for our children. But, as the hon. Member has stated, we have a societal problem and it will be reflected in our schools to a certain extent.

HOTELS - EXECUTIVE TAXI CHAUFFEUR-DRIVEN CAR SERVICE

(No. B/837) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the hotels, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to if the setting up of an Executive Chauffeur Driven Taxi Car Service is being envisaged for implementation thereat and, if so, indicate if consultations have been held with all the stakeholders concerned therewith, including the *Association des Hoteliers et Restaurateurs de l'Ile Maurice* and the hotel taxi operators and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Public infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Following representations from hotel based taxis to the effect that they are deprived of work opportunities due to fierce competition from outside based taxis, contract cars and contract buses, an Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up under the Chair of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications to look into the matter and come up with appropriate recommendations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Committee had several meetings with the representatives of hotel based taxis, *l'Association des Hoteliers et Restaurateurs de l'Ile Maurice*, Association of Inbound Operators of Mauritius. After lengthy discussions with all the stakeholders the Committee made a number of recommendations which were approved by Government. One of these pertains to contract cars with an engine capacity of 1950 cc for petrol engines and 2500 cc for diesel engines to be Executive Taxi Car Chauffeur Driven.

This measure aims at restricting access of contract cars and taxi operators from other bases of operation to these hotels in conveying tourists or delegates of the MICE market who

are in need of taxi services to go on tour or to conferences and transfers from hotels to the airport and back.

However, this exceptional measure was made to contract car with an engine capacity of 1950 cc for petrol engines and 2500 cc for diesel engines in order to cater for a niche market segment and to provide a luxury or premium chauffeur-driven car service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are presently working on the specific guidelines for the implementation of this measure.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Since this is a Government decision, can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has received further representations from either the hotel operators or the taxi union?

Mr Bodha: Well, there have been many representations. But we have not implemented this measure because we are still waiting for the first measures which include the taxis which are based at the hotels for example, a desk. We are implementing all the measures, first of all, in favour of the taxis which are based at the hotels and then gradually we will consider the other measures.

Mr Bhagwan: Since I know there is a deadline for this taxi desk unit, can the Minister inform the House whether certain hotels have started implementing this Government decision and whether there have been representations? How many taxi desks are operational?

Mr Bodha: Well, I don't have the answer as regards the hotels, but some have implemented it in hotels, some are considering the implementation. In some cases, the owners of the hotels are not agreeable to this measure and there have been some representations. What we have said is that the Tourism Authority and the NTA will do everything to help and to see that we have a desk office in each and every hotel with above 50 rooms.

Mr Ramful: Can the hon. Minister also confirm that there have been representations from taxi owners based at Blue Lagoon Hotel at Blue Bay and whether he will take necessary measures?

Mr Bodha: In fact, I was mentioning Blue Lagoon because the demonstration took place at Blue Lagoon in Blue Bay. I will take care of that.

**REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANISATION OF SOUTHERN
AFRICA- MAURITIUS MEMBERSHIP**

(No. B/838) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa, he will state since when Mauritius is a member thereof, indicating if Mauritius has decided to withdraw its membership therefrom and, if so, when, indicating the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA) is a regional body set up in 1998 under the SADC Protocol on development of tourism to foster and coordinate tourism development and marketing within Southern Africa.

Mauritius joined as a member of RETOSA since its creation in September 1998. As such, Mauritius has always been up-to-date with its membership contribution amounting to approximately Rs3.9 m. annually as opposed to more than 60 per cent of other RETOSA members who have not paid their contributions and this has been impacting negatively on the implementation of the marketing programmes of RETOSA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is also pertinent to highlight that there have not been any joint marketing activities between the MTPA and RETOSA since its inception. Moreover, in the past five years MTPA participated in only two meetings organised by RETOSA that was in the year 2013.

Hence, the costs involved have by large outweighed the benefits of joining the organisation. Accordingly, a policy decision was taken in December 2015 for Mauritius to withdraw its membership from RETOSA as no tangible benefits were being derived.

I understand that there may be attempts to reorganise, restructure and reinvent RETOSA. If that were indeed to take place, Mauritius could reconsider its position in the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether that decision - he has said that a policy decision was taken on a given date - was a Cabinet decision taken by the Cabinet of Mauritius, if not, who took the decision?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Definitely, the Ministry of Tourism and External Communications took the decision, whether it was taken to Cabinet I don't know. But it is in the Budget.

Mr Bérenger: Well, I am sure the hon. Deputy Prime Minister realises the impact on SADC generally. They are very touchy and rightly so. When we are in SADC, we are meant to be supportive, critical, but we can't withdraw like that. It has, according to my information, impacted very negatively on SADC perception of Mauritius.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, that may be so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but 60% of the members are not even paying their fees to RETOSA. RETOSA has 15 members, of which nine of them are not paying, but Mauritius is paying and has been paying for the last 18 years or so. We got nothing back. It is also taxpayers' money, and I hope that this will be taken as a signal by SADC that they ought to see and get the organisation working properly. That would be the right message to give to SADC, because there had been attempts in the recent past to close down RETOSA and it was saved *in extremis*. There is now some attempt - whether serious or not, I cannot say - to restructure it. Let us wait and see. If it does restructure, we will join again.

STC - LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS - PRICE

(No. B/839) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the fall in the prices of Liquefied Petroleum Gas on the world market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the total savings made on account thereof, over the period 01 January 2015 to 29 July 2016.

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the period January 2015 to December 2015, the STC did not make any savings on Liquefied Petroleum Gas, that is, LPG.

On the contrary, LPG was subsidised to the tune of Rs90 m. by the Corporation. The price of LPG on the world market is very volatile and it fluctuates every month. For the period January to July 2016, the CIF price of LPG has been in the range of USD416 to USD496 per metric ton. Prior to the last revision in the retail price of LPG on 31 July 2016, the price was fixed at Rs330 per cylinder of 12 kg since March 2012.

In order to breakeven at this price, the CIF price should have been USD451 per metric ton. For the months of January, April, May and June 2016, the price was fixed at Rs330 per cylinder of 12 kg since March 2012. For the months of January, April, May and June 2016,

the CIF price was higher than USD451 per metric ton, and this was reflected in the calculated cost price, which was above Rs330 per cylinder of 12 kg. As for the remaining months, February, March and July 2016, the CIF price was below the breakeven point of USD451 per metric ton and the cost price was lower than Rs330 per cylinder of 12 kg.

Taking into account the evolution of the CIF price on the world market, STC made savings to the tune of Rs48 m. for the period January to June 2016, and it is expected that for the month of July, savings of Rs13 m. will be realised.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister let us know if the Saudi contract price of January 2015 and today has been compared?

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Saudi contract price is not the reference price that we use in the price structure to calculate the price of LPG. In fact, the Saudi contract price just like we have the Brent price for petroleum products; it is for LPG. From the Saudi contract price, the FOB is calculated, and added to that, the premium, which gives the CIF price.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister circulate the figures of the Saudi contract price? What were the figures in January 2015 and now?

Mr Gungah: As I have said, in the price structure, we do not use the Saudi contract price. It is the FOB price, that is, the FOB price is calculated from the Saudi contract price. In the price structure, it is the FOB price that is taken into consideration.

Mr Mahomed: The hon. Minister, in his reply, mentioned both profitability and subsidy. Will the current revision to Rs270 per *bonbonne*, is it subsidy or profitability, and if so, how much?

Mr Gungah: As I said, for the period January to June 2016, there have been savings to the tune of Rs48 m. We are expecting that in July the savings will be Rs13 m., and that is the reason why we reduced the price of LPG from Rs330 to Rs270 for the cylinder of 12 kg.

JOHN KENNEDY COLLEGE - GYMNASIUM - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/840) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the new gymnasium of the John Kennedy College, in Beau Bassin, she will state –

- (a) the start and completion dates of the construction thereof, indicating when same was handed over to her Ministry;
- (b) the cost thereof;
- (c) the name of the contractor thereof;
- (d) if immediate actions will be taken for the upgrading and the embellishment of the yard found in the vicinity thereof and, if so, when, and
- (e) if the clubs of the region will be allowed to make use thereof after school hours and, if so, indicate the conditions attached thereto.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with a view to encouraging the practice of sports and leisure activities for the overall development of students, the Ministry has embarked on the construction of gymnasiums, multi-purpose halls in secondary schools for the provision of quality infrastructure in a phased manner.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the start and completion dates of the multi-purpose hall at John Kennedy College were 04 September 2012 and January 2015 respectively. The practical handing over of the multi-purpose hall was done on 10 January 2015.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the cost of works related to the new gymnasium amounts to Rs37,843,309.

As regards part (c) of the question, the contract was awarded to Etude Dessin Calcul Conseil Co. Ltd. I am informed that the cleaning and maintenance of the yard are done on a regular basis and that the last cleaning exercise was carried out in July 2016.

However, I am informed that the contractor has failed to clean the whole area of the school premises, particularly behind the new gymnasium up to the boundary wall. The Zonal Directorate has already initiated action with a view to cleaning the remaining part and action as appropriate will be taken against the contractor. In the future, cleaning of this particular part of the premises will be entrusted to the Zone Directorate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (e) of the question, I am informed that there is already a set of conditions and standard operating procedures for the use of the gymnasium after school hours. The management of these sports infrastructure facilities is effected at the level of Zone Directorates of my Ministry. Any club of the region wishing to avail itself of

the facilities should contact the Zone Directorate. I am tabling a copy of the conditions for renting of sport infrastructure in primary and secondary schools to the members of the public.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House whether, apart from cleaning, there is any project for the total upgrading of the yard and not leave it as it is? Because in summer especially, we may clean today and then in one week, it becomes the same. So, is there any professional type of upgrading of the yard being contemplated?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the yard is really vast, and we are planning to get it upgraded, and maybe we can think of an embellishment project for the area.

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir si le gymnase est opérationnel en ce moment?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: For the time being, it is being used by the school students only.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramano, next question!

SCHOOLS - STAFF – AGGRESSIONS AGAINST

(No. B/841) **Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the aggressions perpetrated within the school premises against academic and non-academic staff, she will state the number of reported cases thereof over the past two years, indicating the –

- (a) schools concerned therewith, and
- (b) measures that will be taken to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the outset, I need to say that my Ministry is committed towards creating a safe school environment conducive to proper teaching and learning. The security of our school personnel, both teaching and non-teaching, has been at the centre of our concern.

However, some cases of aggressions in schools have been deplored. I am informed that the cases reported fall in two categories, namely -

- (i) verbal abuse against members of the staff, and
- (ii) aggression against members of the staff by parents, students or other staff members or outsiders.

According to a survey conducted across the Zonal Directorates, there have been, from January 2014 to date, nine reported cases of verbal abuse against school staff on the school premises, and they concerned five primary and four secondary schools.

With regard to physical aggression against staff, 15 cases have been reported. I am tabling the list of schools where such aggressions have taken place.

Out of the above cases reported by the Zonal Directorate, five cases of aggression have been reported to the Police over the same period of time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, a host of measures has been taken by my Ministry for enhanced security of the school personnel and this, after discussions and consultations with the stakeholders concerned, particularly the unions.

With regard to cases of aggressions against members of staff perpetrated by external parties, CCTV cameras have been installed in most secondary schools; daytime security guards are also posted in 67 schools as at now and the list of schools is updated regularly in consultation with schools and unions. In addition, instructions have been given for the school gate to remain closed once school starts and as such there is stricter control regarding access to the school.

The Ministry has, moreover, arranged with the Police Force for regular patrolling to enhance surveillance and vigilance in the vicinity of the schools. Insofar as measures taken at internal level are concerned, the National Educational Counselling Service operating under the aegis of my Ministry and which comprises a team of educational psychologists, educational social workers assist schools in the promotion of the psychological and social well-being of primary and secondary school children and their families through a wide range of integrated services, including psychological support, home visits and counselling.

The Ministry has recently come up with a Student Behaviour Policy to guide Heads of schools and students on the need to foster an atmosphere that is conducive to learning in the schools.

Moreover, the emotional and social well-being programme has been piloted in eight primary schools to empower students to better cope with their emotions. This project will be pursued. The National Curriculum Framework has on its part provided for inclusion of value-based education and life skills in the curriculum.

In secondary schools, members of the Students Council and Counselling Desks are being provided with adequate training in listening and counselling skills so as to better support the students facing emotional, family, stress-related and other psychological problems. In private secondary schools, specifically section leaders or deans are appointed with their primary focus being on indiscipline issues among students.

The structure of the PSSA is being reviewed and reinforced so as to cater for the posts of educational psychologist, educational social worker under the establishment of the PSSA so as to serve more effectively students of the private sector.

To enable better sharing of information and monitoring of the situation, the Ministry has established an effective network in system with major stakeholders, namely, *Brigade des Mineurs*, the Child Development Unit, and the Probation and After-Care Services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must, however, add that it is equally essential to highlight the role and responsibility of parents in the schooling of their children. Their contribution together with that of the PTA, Students Councils and school personnel have to be enlisted to sensitise students and parents and avoid occurrence of such incidence in the school environment.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: M. le président, est-ce que je peux savoir de l'honorable ministre - certaines PTAs ou encore certaines écoles privées ont fait appel à des compagnies privées pour assurer la sécurité à l'intérieur des écoles - si un cahier des charges a été établi au niveau de son ministère pour savoir quelles sont les responsabilités de ces compagnies de sécurité et est-ce qu'elle a un contrôle sur le personnel qui a été employé par ces compagnies de sécurité pour savoir s'ils sont aptes à travailler avec les enfants éventuellement?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: En principe, M. le président, nous avons au niveau du système, des employés dans les collèges privés payés par la PSSA. Et là, récemment, dans le dernier exercice qui a été effectué au niveau du ministère pour le *Comprehensive Grant Formula*, on a décidé de permettre aux écoles d'embaucher un officier additionnel pour la supervision des *schools' premises*. Mais nous n'avons pas de contrôle sur les *Security Officers* qui sont embauchés directement par les collèges privés.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramano, next question!

STATE LAND – ALLOCATION – POLICE INVESTIGATION

(No. B/842) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the allocation of State land, he will state the number of cases thereof which have been referred to the Police for investigation as at to date, indicating the outcome thereof in each case.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since I took Office in December 2014, 17 cases have been referred to the Police for investigation through the Land Fraud Squad.

I am informed that out of these 17 cases -

- (a) 10 are still under investigation by the Police;
- (b) the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has advised 'No further action' regarding 5 cases, and
- (c) enquiries have been completed for the remaining 2 cases and have been referred to the DPP for advice.

Mr Ramano: Est-ce que l'honorable ministre est d'accord pour mettre à la disposition de la Chambre la liste de tous les cas avec les noms spécifiques pour les cas où il n'y a pas eu de poursuite?

Mr Soodhun: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with pleasure I will circulate the list.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aliphon, next question!

HOSPITALS - PARKING FACILITIES

(No. B/843) Mr A. Aliphon (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the hospital premises, he will state if he is aware of the difficulties faced by the patients and the relatives and visitors thereof when attending thereto regarding the circulation and parking facilities thereat and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the advisability of reviewing the policy regarding parking facilities and introducing paid parking thereat.

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this issue has been flagged to me since some time now. I would like to inform the House that my Ministry is considering the possibility of introducing paid parkings to alleviate the problem of parking within hospital premises. The

project will, in the first instance, be implemented at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and, as from the end of this month, there will be 30 paid parking slots that would become operational.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aliphon! Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you. I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he does not feel that the health sector being completely free in Mauritius and it is part of our Welfare State, making the access to free service payable would amount to starting to dismantle the Welfare State?

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it must be made clear that the medical service is free, parking is not free. And I must also say that in the designing of the parking areas, attention is being paid to somebody coming to drop a patient and that person will not have anything to pay.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: With the increasing number of vehicles in the country year by year, will the hon. Minister consider to construct a multi-storey building for parking similarly with the introduction of paying parking?

Mr Gayan: Well, it is my intention as Minister of Health and Quality of Life to ensure that the number of people attending hospitals decreases, but I know this is a problem that we can accommodate in some hospitals, not in all hospitals. But I think this idea of hon. Chief Whip is being considered for SSRN hospital.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: May we know from the hon. Minister the rationale behind starting to charge parking in public hospitals? I leave it for the hon. Minister to say what is the rationale behind.

Mr Gayan: Well, the reason is basically that the parking slots in the hospitals are designed for the staff working in the hospitals, for the ambulances and for other para-medical staff, but, unfortunately, the reality is that many people who have a car use the parking in the hospitals as their private property; they go to work in the morning and then come and collect the car in the evening. So, there has to be some control over whether the parking slots in the hospitals are being used exclusively for the purposes of the hospitals and not for other purposes.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Oree, next question!

NTA – DECENTRALISATION

(No. B/844) Mr G. Oree (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the National Transport Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if consideration will be given for the advisability of decentralising the services offered by the Authority and relocating the headquarters thereof with a view to alleviating the difficulties faced by people attending thereto in respect of parking facilities and circulation in the free space adjoining the Headquarters thereof, at Cassis.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has a workforce of 215 Officers at the Head Office at Cassis. It operates the largest counter service in Government with a total of 30 counters running daily between 09h00 and 15h00. It provides the following main services from its Headquarters -

- Collection of road tax and renewal of motor vehicle licences;
- Registration and transfer of ownership of vehicles;
- Applications for and issue of licences for vehicle operations;
- Issue of conductors licences, and
- Hearing of applications and disciplinary cases by the Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that during peak days, the Authority receives between 2,500 to 3,000 customers calling for renewal of licences and registration of vehicles transactions, while the average customer turn out is about 800 to 1,000 during off-peak days.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with a view to rendering its services, particularly the payment of road tax and renewal of motor vehicle licences, more user friendly and accessible to the population, the NTA has entered since 15 July 2005 into an agreement with the Mauritius Post Ltd which is presently providing facilities for payment of road tax on a six-day basis through the 98 post offices around the island.

Moreover, the NTA is having recourse to enhanced information technology to further reduce the need of the public to call physically at the Headquarters. In this connection, the following measures are being envisaged –

- A one-stop-shop project which concerns the registration of sales of vehicles, thus taking over that responsibility from the Registrar General's Department.

- The aim of this project is to reduce time and inconvenience caused to members of the public wishing to undertake such transactions.
- With the introduction of the one-stop-shop, the public will not have to do agency hopping from the NTA to the Registrar General's Department as all the services will be provided at the NTA. This will also bring a reduction in parking needs of vehicle owners.
- The upgrading and modernisation of its IT infrastructure with a view to further decentralise its services. In this respect, a contract for consultancy services has been awarded to Deloitte Consultant to explore such possibilities and to make appropriate recommendations relating to registration and transfer of vehicles to either authorised agents or to sub-offices in order to facilitate such transactions.
- We are also introducing e-payment services.

We are contemplating the decentralisation of some services. This is being envisaged on a regional basis and the relocation of some services is being envisaged at the new urban terminal at Victoria with the renovation of the former stone building which housed the former RTLA.

Another study by the PricewaterhouseCoopers funded by the *Agence Française de Développement* is being carried out for a restructure of the NTA to be more public friendly.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the location of the NTA building, will the hon. Minister inform the House whether this building is being rented, who is the owner of this building and what amount is being paid for the area occupied by NTA?

The Deputy Speaker: One question at a time!

Mr Jhugroo: What area has been occupied and when the last tender has been carried out?

Mr Bodha: Well, the National Transport Authority has rented the building at Cassis from the Mauritius Secondary Industries since January 2000. The monthly rental is Rs756,051, exclusive of VAT. The building has a total floor space of 2,930 square metres spread over two floors. In fact, the problem is the problem of access and the problem of parking. So, we are decentralising some of the services and relocating the NTA, most probably at the urban terminal...

(Interruptions)

Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Don't ask questions from a sitting position! Hon. Dr. Joomaye, next question!

DRUGS (SYNTHETIC) – SENSITISATION CAMPAIGN

(No. B/845) Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the synthetic drugs, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to –

- (a) curb the consumption thereof, and
- (b) create awareness regarding the potential threats to the health of the users thereof.

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the House may wish to note that my Ministry is sparing no effort to curb the problem of synthetic drugs. In fact, a multi-pronged approach focussing on prevention, training, strengthening of legislations and surveillance has been adopted to address the problem. These include –

- (a) an extensive drug prevention campaign launched at national level targeting young students of secondary schools, as prevention remains the pillar in the fight against drugs use.

I am informed that since April 2016, my Ministry has covered 101 private and public secondary schools and around 13,000 students have already been sensitised on the dangers of synthetic drugs, their health, the social and economic consequences of abuse of synthetic drugs. This campaign will be scaled up in the near future to cover all the students of this age group in the island.

- (b) The organisation of a march on 26 June 2016 to raise awareness among the public in general about the dangers of illicit drugs including synthetic drugs. Some 1,000 persons, including youngsters, civil societies and religious bodies participated in the march.
- (c) The carrying out of sensitisation campaign targeting the community at large in Social Welfare Centres.

- (d) The initiation of a sensitisation campaign, targeting the out of school youth as well as the world of world of work. The campaign will be again scaled up to reach maximum coverage.

The above campaigns are complemented by ongoing programmes being conducted on the radio and televisions such as "*Priorité Santé*", "*Hamari Sehat Hamari Zimmey*", "3 minute Radio Programme", etc. to reach the population at large.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a teenage workshop has also been organised recently in the context of the World Population Day. One of the objectives of the workshop was to sensitise the teenagers on the harm caused by illicit drugs including synthetic drugs.

As regards treatment and rehabilitation services, apart from those being provided already, an Addictology Unit is being set up in each health region and at Brown Sequad Mental Health Care Centre.

The House may wish to note that necessary Training is being provided to medical and paramedical staff posted in all regional hospitals and at Brown Sequad Mental Health Care Centre to enable them to better manage synthetic drug users calling for treatment. They are being imparted with the necessary skills to provide such patients with secondary prevention with a view to prevent them from relapsing. A new module on synthetic drugs will also be introduced shortly in the curriculum of all nursing and medical staff.

My Ministry also arranged for the UNODC to provide training to the medical/paramedical staff as well as NGOs on substance abuse. The training was conducted two weeks ago.

Regarding the legal framework, regulations – and I'll be happy if hon. Uteem were to listen to this – have been made in September 2015 to include no new psychoactive substances (synthetic drugs) as well as the chemical diversities and derivatives under appropriate schedules under the Dangerous Drugs Act. In the previous regulation, the diversities and derivatives were not covered; in the new schedule they have been covered.

In terms of surveillance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House is aware, a National Drug Observatory was set up in November 2015. The role of the Observatory is to closely monitor the drug situation in the country and provide reliable data to enable the various authorities concerned to respond more proactively, efficiently and in a timely manner to this problem. I would be making a statement on the Drug Observatory later on.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I note with interest what the hon. Minister has said that according to him a lot was accomplished in light of the answer which he has given, following his remark which he is reported to have made on 29 June, at the Commission of Enquiry whereby synthetic drugs, *il n'y a rien d'alarmant* about it.

Now, in spite of that, what I would like to understand from him is the following: all the measures that he has taken, up to now, how many people have died from synthetic drug abuse or *consommation* since not a day goes by that in spite of what he has said before the Commission of Enquiry on drugs...

The Deputy Speaker: Come to the question!

Mr Mohamed: That it was not *alarmant*, every single day that goes by or two other days, we find a young person has died because they have consumed *drogue synthétique*. So, how many? Does he have figures that he could give to us?

Mr Gayan: Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, the hon. Member was not in the House when the Rt. hon. Prime Minister answered a question on this. In fact, there is a lot of exaggeration regarding synthetic drugs. In fact, to answer precisely to the question, we have no reported case based on scientific evidence directly attributable to synthetic drugs.

(Interruptions)

No, no!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Mr Gayan: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence, please!

Mr Gayan: ...I will be tabling the report to the National Drug Observatory.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed! Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Gayan: And this is what the report is going to show. So, that's why...

(Interruptions)

Well, we...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed, I can't hear the answer of the hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, you as well! Please, hon. Minister continue!

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to work on the basis of evidence and the evidence that we work on is scientific evidence. On the basis of scientific evidence, we have no death directly attributable to synthetic drugs.

Dr. Joomaye: When we talk about synthetic drugs the most used synthetic drug is synthetic cannabis. I would like to know if the Central Laboratory of the hospital is equipped appropriately in reagents to be able to diagnose intoxication by synthetic cannabis.

Mr Gayan: I think the hon. Member must address a substantive question on that one.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister aware of the fact that the Superintendent of Brown Sequard Hospital, Dr. Valentina Sheik Hassan when she deponed before the Commission of Enquiry deponed to the following effect, that it was –

«à partir de 2015 qu'il y a eu une véritable explosion du nombre de patients admis à l'hôpital psychiatrique Brown Sequard après avoir pris de la drogue synthétique. »

This is on record. This is the essence of the testimony of the Superintendent of Brown Sequard Hospital before the Commission of Enquiry. How is this compatible with what the Minister has just said?

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will be tabling the report of the National Drug Observatory and all these figures which are based on official data will be in the report. If I refer to the hon. Member talking of explosion, of course, if from zero you have two, that is an explosion in terms of data. So, it is all a question of interpretation.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Yes, I would like to refer to my colleague, hon. Mohamed's question, as at last Friday - Cabinet is supreme - Cabinet took note of the Drug Observatory Report to

assess the dangerous drug situation in the country. This is the word in Cabinet decision, but my question to the hon. Minister is as follows: who has the responsibility to implement all the recommendations in this report that seeks to monitor and eradicate the dangerous drug situation in this country?

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the drug situation has been festering under the old regime and...

(Interruptions)

this is why a Commission of Enquiry...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence, hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan:... has been set up by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed! Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: This is why....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Silence!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: This is why in our electoral manifesto...

(Interruptions)

...in our electoral manifesto we did say...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: Well, if you want to listen to the answer...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: They allowed the drug situation to become so bad that we said in our election campaign that we need to set up a Commission of Enquiry on drugs...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: ...and the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has done that!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed! Please sit down, hon. Minister.

Mr Gayan: I am sorry!

The Deputy Speaker: I know this is a passionate debate, you have asked the question and your hon. colleague has asked a question; have some respect, listen to the answer and if there needs to be a supplementary question, I will give you a supplementary question, but, I want some silence, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Gayan!

Mr Gayan: With regard to the Drug Observatory, I will be tabling the report and maybe hon. Mohamed can hold his fire until the report is presented.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, very serious and reliable ONGs, those who are on the field caring for these drug problems and taking care of the drug addicts every day, have described the situation very alarming. Can the Minister, at least, inform the House when, at last, he will recognise the good job which has been done by the ONGs, especially in this very delicate and important field of combating drugs?

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the report which I will be tabling later has been prepared with the participation of the NGOs and they have all signed on the report. So, please wait for the report and then you will have a full picture.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: Les patients concernés par les drogues synthétiques, qui sont admis au *Brown Sequard Hospital*, sont admis ensemble avec les patients qui souffrent des troubles mentaux. Ma question est celle-ci: est-ce qu'il n'y a pas lieu d'un point de vue médical de séparer ces deux types de patients?

Mr Gayan: Well, as far as I know, I do not think that that is the case. I think the two categories of patients are in different wards.

(Interruptions)

Well, if that is the case, I will find out.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, last supplementary!

Mr Mohamed: I apologise and yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you are right. This does raise passion because I have come across, like everyone here, in the Press where you find names of youngsters between the age of 18 to 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 dying and their parents coming to say that they died because of the synthetic drugs, it pains me. Now, does the hon. Minister consider it important to, at least, meet those parents and to explain to them that he is the one who believes that they are wrong in spite of having lived with their children, known what happened with their children about their *consummation* but the real reason is that it was something else having to do with pulmonary oedema and lungs issues as reasons for their death? Does he consider, maybe that will be good to face the music and meet those parents?

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: I face the music every day, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only in this House but outside also. So, I am not afraid of meeting anyone.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye, next question, please!

SENIOR COUNSEL & SENIOR ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW – APPOINTMENT

(No. B/846) Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the future recommendations for the appointment of Senior Counsel and Senior Attorneys-at-law, he will state if consideration will be given for proposed amendments to be introduced to the Law Practitioners Act to review the procedures applicable therefor.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah, stop interrupting. The hon. Attorney-General is answering his question!

Mr Yerrigadoo: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The President of the Republic under recommendation of the hon. Chief Justice makes the appointment of Senior Counsels and Senior Attorneys. This is provided by section 9A of the Law Practitioners Act which provides as follows –

- “(1) The President of the Republic may, subject to subsection (2) and on the recommendation of the Chief Justice, by Letters Patent, appoint -
- (a) a barrister to be Senior Counsel for the Republic of Mauritius (SC), and
 - (b) an attorney to be Senior Attorney for the Republic of Mauritius (SA).
- (2) No barrister or attorney shall be appointed pursuant to subsection (1) unless he is, and has been, a barrister or an attorney of not less than 15 years’ standing.”

Since the law does not set out the process of appointment of Senior Counsel and Senior Attorney in detail, my office requested the inputs of the Judiciary in relation to this Parliamentary Question on 04 August. I have been informed by the Acting Deputy Master and Registrar by way of letter dated 05 August 2016 that, and I quote –

“(1) Section 9A of the Law Practitioners Act provides for the appointment by the President of the Republic of a barrister to be Senior Counsel and an attorney to be Senior Attorney. The appointment is made on recommendation of the Chief Justice and the barrister or attorney must be of not less than 15 years standing.

(2) the practice has been for the hon....”

(Interruptions)

If the hon. Leader of the Opposition would allow me...

(Interruptions)

I am...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am giving to this House the input of the Judiciary; let's have some respect for the Judiciary!

(Interruptions)

And call the Leader of the Opposition to order!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order in the House!

(Interruptions)

Mr Yerrigadoo: Will I be able to answer?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Attorney General, please answer the question in a candid fashion, thank you!

Mr Yerrigadoo: I am giving answer and the input of the Judiciary! So, I will go again –

- “(2) the practice has been for the hon. Chief Justice to consult relevant stakeholders including hon. Judges, Senior Counsels, Senior Attorneys before making his recommendations to the President of the Republic;
- (3) the recommendations are those of the hon. Chief Justice;
- (4) the introduction of any proposed amendments is within the province of the National Assembly in which the Judiciary has no say.”

Government is mindful of and respects the independence of the Judiciary. Since this matter is one which pertains of a legal profession, any amendment to be made to the process of appointment of Senior Counsel and Senior Attorney will be made after consulting the relevant stakeholders which are the hon. Chief Justice, the Mauritius Bar Association and the Law Society.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The power to appoint Senior Counsel and Senior Attorney is through an Act of Parliament so it is Parliament who has to determine not the Judiciary. So, in other countries whether it is in Singapore or in England, law has evolved. It is no longer one person, one judge who decides who appoints under what criteria. May I ask the hon. Attorney-General, since this nomination of Senior Counsels and Senior Attorneys has raised passion within the legal profession, whether his Ministry is considering independently of what the Chief Justice may say or the judges may say - as a policy matter, this Government intends to come forward with amendments so that there is transparency and objectivity in the criteria used to appoint Senior Counsels and Senior Attorneys in this country.

Mr Yerrigadoo: I will take on board the suggestions of the hon. Member.

Dr. Joomaye: I would like to know if, prior to the proceeding for such an exercise, the entire legal profession is made aware that there will be an exercise of nomination of Senior Counsel and Senior Attorneys.

Mr Yerrigadoo: I have not been provided with the information, but I suppose that they don't know.

Mr Bhagwan: I don't know if the Attorney General's attention has been drawn. Recently, in some press communiqué, there are lots of cases where Barristers of long outstanding practice are not being considered for the appointment of Senior Counsel.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Unfortunately, I have no say in the matter. I have just detailed the process as it is.

Dr. Joomaye: Would the Attorney General confirm that as at now the criteria of seniority, experience and good conduct is not mandatory to be nominated Senior Counsel or Senior Attorney?

Mr Yerrigadoo: I have stated in my reply with the inputs that have been provided to me, but unfortunately, I cannot say whether these are criteria or not since it is the recommendation of the Chief Justice as the law currently stands.

Mr Rutnah: Can the hon. Attorney General, at least, consider, as a matter of fairness and all reasonableness, to devise a system whereby an advertisement is placed so that all Counsel who have got at least 15 years standing and Attorneys can apply with credential in an application form to be considered, if that could be taken on board?

Mr Yerrigadoo: I will consider same.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, a last supplementary!

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Attorney General aware that there is no female Senior Counsel at the moment; although he said he has no control over the nomination, but can he take good note of that?

Mr Yerrigadoo: I am.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur, next question, please!

ISLETS - DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

(No. B/847) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the islets, he will state the policy of Government concerning the use thereof, indicating if his Ministry is in presence of any application for the implementation of hotel development projects thereat and, if so, give details thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank my hon. friend for asking this pertinent question.

I am informed that there are 35 islets which fall under the purview of my Ministry, including Ile aux Aigrettes which has been leased to the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation.

Furthermore, two islets namely, *île de la Passe*, is managed by the Ministry of Arts and Culture and Ilot Matapan is managed by the Beach Authority respectively.

The policies surrounding the use of the above islets are embodied in policy EC4 – Conservation of islets and islands of the Outline Planning Scheme, Policy ENV4 of the National Development Strategy, the State Lands Act and the *Pas Géométriques* Act.

Since the introduction of the new policy framework on allocation of State lands in November 2015, there have been no applications received at my Ministry regarding hotel development on any islet.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sesungrur, next question!

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND COMPETITIVENESS PROGRAMME - FUNDS DISBURSED

(No. B/848) Mr D. Sesungrur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Economic Restructuring and Competitiveness Programme, he will state -

- (a) the amount of funds disbursed thereunder as at to date;
- (b) if a report has been presented on the efficacy thereof, and
- (c) the state of affairs thereof as at to date.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Economic Restructuring and Competitiveness Programme (ERCP) was set up in 2010 to support enterprises that were facing difficulties due to the Euro crisis. The aim was to provide enterprises with transitional support based on a burden sharing principle which would enable them to bounce back from the financial decline.

The ERCP was renamed as the Restructuring Working Group (RWG) under the Finance and Audit (National Resilience Fund) Regulations 2012.

The RWG developed financial instruments in consultation with the private sector mainly commercial banks, leasing companies and other non-banking institutions.

The support was being provided on the basis of the recommendations of an Independent Financial Analyst appointed by the RWG for each case.

The instruments which were being used to support enterprises consisted of -

- Equity injection;
- Import loans;
- Corporate guarantees;
- Debentures, and
- Sale and leaseback of industrial properties.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that since the setting up of the RWG, 42 companies employing nearly 22,000 workers have been assisted through these instruments for a total amount of Rs2.72 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that a report is submitted by the Independent Financial Analyst in each case after making a diagnosis of the financial difficulties being faced by the company, negotiating with banks and relevant parties and making appropriate recommendations for a turnaround situation.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please switch off your mobile phone!

Mr Jugnauth: Once a support has been extended to a company, the Independent Financial Analyst would submit a report on a quarterly basis for monitoring purposes and appropriate corrective measures were taken where necessary.

There is no overall report on the efficacy of the programme. However, I am informed that the status of the 42 companies assisted by the RWG is as follows –

- 15 companies have successfully restructured and settled all their dues to the SIC;
- There have been four takeovers;
- 13 remaining live cases;
- 5 companies are currently under administration receivership, and
- 5 companies have closed down.

The programme has so far been effective in saving a significant number of jobs and prevented quite a number of closures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that with effect from December 2014, the RWG only meets on an *ad hoc* basis as and when it is approached by a company in difficulty. The RWG only acts as a facilitator between the parties concerned to enable them to reach a consensus.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Sesungkur!

EX-TEA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY – EMPLOYEES – LAND LEASE

(No. B/849) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Lease of Agricultural Land Scheme implemented following the closure of the ex-Tea Development Authority, he will state –

- (a) the extent of land involved thereunder;
- (b) the number of former employees of the defunct Authority who have obtained leases thereunder, indicating in each case, the -
 - (i) period of the lease, and
 - (ii) monthly rental per acre;
- (c) if consideration will be given for the sale of the plots of land involved thereunder to the leaseholders thereof, and
- (d) where matters stand in relation thereto.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following the closure of the Tea Development Authority on 30 June 1993, the area of land in the ex-tea belt of an extent of 6,530 *arpents* was vested in the Ministry of Agriculture for eventual lease to interested planters.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Land Use Division of the Ministry was called upon, at that time, to draw lease agreements in favour of 2,950 lessees. Unfortunately, no record is available at the Land Use Division to indicate who among those lessees were former employees of the ex-TDA.

The lease agreement is normally for an initial period of 7 years, with an option for renewal for further periods of 7 years and the present rental fee is Rs1,000 per *arpent* annually.

Regarding part (c) of the question, the State Lands Act makes no provision for the sale of State agricultural land to lessees thereof.

In view of the large extent of State land involved, that is, 6,530 *arpents*, which are being exclusively used for food crop cultivation, it might not be advisable to sell those land to the actual beneficiaries as they may use the land for different purposes.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur, next question!

FOOD SECURITY FUND – FUNDS DISBURSED

(No. B/850) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Food Security Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) total amount of funds disbursed therefrom for the purchase of equipment since January 2013 to date, and
- (b) number of beneficiaries thereof, indicating the sectors of activity in which it is engaged.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Food Security Fund was set up in 2009 in the wake of the world food crisis in order to boost local production of food crops, meat and milk to enhance the level of food security in the country.

In that context, numerous schemes were introduced to give the necessary facilities and incentives to the farmers and breeders. One of the schemes pertains to the purchase of equipment to modernise the production process for efficiency and productivity gains.

Regarding part (a) of the question, the total sum disbursed for the purchase of equipment for the period January 2013 to date is around Rs17.6 m.

As regards part (b), the number of beneficiaries is as follows -

- (i) 5 in the poultry sector;
- (ii) 1 in the fishing sector;
- (iii) 87 in the food crop sector, and

(iv) 20 in the livestock sector

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether this Food Security Fund is still in existence or has it been wrapped up, as all other special funds have been wrapped up, and if it is still in existence, what amount of money is still available under that fund?

Mr Seeruttun: It is no more now as a special fund. It forms part of the budget of the Ministry with regard to the scheme that used to be under that Food Security Fund.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Gobin, next question!

AIDS – INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/851) **Mr M. Gobin (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the international assistance for response to AIDS, he will state if Government proposes to avail itself of the United States “President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief” and, if so, indicate the actions he proposes to take in relation thereto.

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Mauritius does not qualify for funding under the ‘President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief’ because -

- (i) Mauritius is not an under developed country, and
- (ii) it does not have epidemic levels of HIV/AIDS.

As the House is aware, we have a low prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country.

The second part of the question, therefore, does not arise.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Gobin, next question!

L’ESCALIER MARKET – SAVANNE DISTRICT COUNCIL

(No. B/852) **Mr M. Gobin (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the l’Escalier Market, he will state if he has received representations to introduce proposed amendments to the existing legislation to clarify the question as to if same is vested in the District Council of Grand Port or in that of Savanne and, if so, indicate the actions he proposes to take in relation thereto.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has not received any representation to bring amendments to the Local Government Act to clarify the question as to

whether the l'Escalier Market is vested in the District Council of Grand Port or in that of Savanne recently.

However, in July 2014 the District Council of Savanne sought confirmation from my Ministry as to whether l'Escalier Market falls under its jurisdiction.

Following consultations held with the Electoral Commissioner's Office and the Ministry of Housing and Lands on the matter, it is confirmed that the l'Escalier Market is situated in the Village Council area of l'Escalier and secondly, the Village of l'Escalier is situated in the District Council of Savanne.

I, therefore, do not propose to bring any amendment to the existing legislation on this matter.

Mr Gobin: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether this ministerial confirmation has been transmitted to the relevant District Council? Because I am informed that, as at now, there is a lingering doubt, especially with the inspectors of both District Councils, Grand Port and Savanne, as to the question of jurisdiction over the l'Escalier Market.

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, we have just received the confirmation from the Electoral Commissioner and the Ministry of Housing and Lands recently. So, I am going to make sure that we inform both Grand Port and Savanne about the latest.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur, next question!

COROMANDEL – FOOTBALL PITCH - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/853) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a football pitch, in Coromandel, he will state where matters stand, including the expected start and completion dates thereof.

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperative (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will be replying to this question, with your permission.

I wish to inform the House that the Ministry of Youth and Sports does not have any project for the construction of a football pitch at Coromandel. However, I am informed that the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill is embarking on such a project in the region following request received from the inhabitants of the locality. The Municipal Council though the Ministry of Local Government had even identified a plot of land of an extent of 12,000 m² for the implementation of the project.

The plot of land initially identified could not be vested in the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill as the site forms part of land already vested in the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security for the implementation of the Field Operations, Regrouping and Irrigations Project by the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority.

I am further informed that the Ministry of Local Government has been advised to identify an alternative site for the project and as at date there has been no development on the matter.

Mr Lepoigneur: Can I know from the hon. Minister which alternative is he talking about?

Mr Bholah: It is the Ministry of Local Government which has been advised to identify an alternative site.

CIVIL SERVICE BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/854) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of a Civil Service Bill, he will state –

- (a) when same will be introduced in the House, indicating the reasons for the delay in the introduction thereof, and
- (b) if consultations have been held with all the stakeholders concerned therewith as at to date.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong : Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the introduction of a Public Service Bill aligns with the vision of this Government and the Prime Minister, in particular, to, *inter alia*, enhance and sustain public trust in public institutions through an apolitical performance oriented and accountable Public Service.

Thus, in view of the high importance being given to this unprecedented reform initiative and its implications in ensuring the delivery of quality public services, much care is being taken in the drafting of the Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following Government's decision to introduce a Public Service Bill, I wish to inform the House that a Task Force comprising senior Government officials was set up to work out a draft Bill. The Task Force has had various working sessions and consulted relevant law existing worldwide in the framing of the Bill and this was

a time consuming exercise. The draft Bill is now being examined by the State Law Office. On receipt of the duly vetted version of the Bill, consultations will be held with the stakeholders concerned. Subsequently, the draft Bill will be introduced in the National Assembly with adjustment, if any.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it shouldn't have been more proper and wiser to have consultations with the stakeholders first before referring the Bill to the State Law Office?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: I believe this is the way it has always been done. The task force has been set up already and they are working on it now. Maybe in the future we can think about it.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister also whether a code of conduct for Ministers will be attached to this Public Service Bill and if this is the case, will the hon. Minister introduce this Bill to the House or will it be the Rt. hon. Prime Minister?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Section 14 (3) of the Bill provides that the Prime Minister may, by way of regulation, amend the Schedule, code of conduct for Ministers and code of conduct for public officers and advisers.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SYNTHETIC DRUGS – SENSITISATION PROGRAMMES

(No. B/855) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to synthetic drugs, he will state –

- (a) the number of youngsters under 25 years old who have reportedly sought treatment of the side effects following consumption thereof, and
- (b) if he will consider the advisability of liaising with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research to -
 - (i) carry out sensitization programmes and offer counselling in relation thereto to the students of secondary institutions, and
 - (ii) allow the Non-Governmental Organisations having proven track records in the field of drugs and harm reduction to carry out sensitization programmes and offer counselling in relation thereto to the students of secondary institutions.

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that from January 2015 to date, a total of 195 persons have sought treatment in public health institutions following the consumption of synthetic drugs.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that there already exists a close collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research and my Ministry, regarding sensitisation programmes on substance abuse.

As I have already indicated in my reply to PQ B/845, my Ministry has launched an extensive drug prevention campaign at national level targeting young students of secondary schools in April 2016. With that programme about 13,000 students have already been touched and this programme is going to be escalated so that we can reach as many students as possible.

The question at part (b) (ii) does not concern my Ministry and should be addressed to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, and to a previous PQ the hon. Minister has replied to that question as well.

Mr Ganoo: The last part of the question relates also to the fact that when the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development presented his Budget Speech, *avait fait une fleur vis-à-vis* the NGOs, applauded the good work they are doing. So, this is why my question was whether the Ministry shouldn't have recourse to the organisations with proven track record, of course, to help. Because we are all repeating that this war against drugs is a national war; everybody has to give a helping hand. So, the NGOs could have been roped in to help the Ministry to sensitise our youth against this scourge of sythentic drugs.

Mr Gayan: I think this question should be addressed to the hon. Minister of Education, my colleague. What I can say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that there are lots of NGOs involved in this, and they should be more geared towards providing psychosocial support to all those who are already in that particular 'infernal' situation.

SAVANNE & BLACK RIVER – HOUSING UNITS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/856) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the National Housing Development Company Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of house seekers presently registered therewith, district-wise, indicating the –

- (a) monthly earnings thereof in each case, and
- (b) number of housing units proposed to be built in the Savanne and Black River District, indicating the proposed location thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there is presently 30,323 house seekers registered at the National Housing Development Co. Ltd. Out of the 30,323 applicants –

- 16,804 earn a monthly family income between Rs6,200 to Rs10,000;
- the monthly family income of 8,789 other applicants ranges from Rs10,001 to Rs15,000, and
- the remaining 4,730 applicants earn a monthly family income between Rs15,001 to Rs20,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling herewith a list indicating on a district-wise basis the total number of house seekers presently registered at the level of the National Housing Development Co Ltd together with the range of their monthly earnings.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the National Housing Development Co Ltd proposes to construct during the next three years some 1,200 housing units in the districts of Savanne and Black River as follows –

Locality	No. of Proposed Housing Units
1. Souillac	247
2. Rivière des Anguilles	380
3. Chemin Grenier	180
4. Britannia	64
5. Surinam	185
6. Gros Cailloux	86
7. Cascavelle	58

Mr Ganoo: Did I hear the hon. Vice-Prime Minister saying that the figure was 30,000 house seekers or 13,000?

Mr Soodhun: It is 30,000.

Mr Mahomed: Paragraph 313 of the Budget Speech makes provision to enlarge the income ceiling to Rs20,000 instead of Rs10,000 previously. Does the hon. Vice-Prime Minister expect this figure of 30,000 demands for a housing unit to rise, and what is the strategy that is being envisaged at the level of NHDC to cater for these people?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, when there are 30,000 applications, it does not mean that all applications are in line with the criteria of the Ministry of Housing and Lands. So, there were lots of people who have applied because we have raised the threshold. Then, we have to study case by case. There are some people who apply and who are owner of a land or of a house. They are not eligible for that.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether any consideration will be given to reviewing the amount of deposit which a household must give to the NHDC to be eligible to get a house? I know that there is a revision for the threshold, the monthly income, but for the actual deposit, is there any revision of the criteria?

Mr Soodhun: I thank my hon. friend. That is a very pertinent question. We are looking into it because there is demand that people cannot afford to pay.

Mr Barbier: With regard to the subsidy on each housing unit, now that the Government has raised up the limit for those who can have a maximum subsidy from Rs10,000 to Rs20,000, will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House what is now going to be the subsidy in each different category and whether the figure has already been worked out? Will he inform the House accordingly?

Mr Soodhun: Yes. We have already worked out the subsidy. For people earning under Rs10,000, it is Rs800,000, but it is not going to be the same for people earning from Rs10,000 to Rs20,000. Definitely, it will be less than the people who are earning Rs10,000. I am going to submit it to my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, last supplementary!

Mr Ganoo: Last question, Mr Deputy Speaker! Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to see to it that the principle of first come, first served is respected, so that those who have registered earlier should be entitled to the units and not only on the criteria of those who can afford a higher deposit?

Mr Soodhun: The hon. Member can rest assured that it will be first come, first served. This is always applied.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem, next question!

OLD AGE PENSION - HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE – SETTING UP

(No. B/857) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a high level committee to look into the payment of universal old age pension, he will state the proposed –

- (a) composition thereof, and
- (b) terms of reference thereof.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions (Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, with your permission, I shall answer this Parliamentary Question.

The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development enunciated in his Budget Speech that, in view of an ageing population, significant pressure is being exerted on the pension system. This is a challenge which we cannot afford to ignore as. With time, the implication will be more complex and severe. The ratio of working population to the number of pension beneficiaries will be decreasing significantly from six employees to support a pensioner to only three employees by 2030. In the face of such a situation, it has been decided that a High Level Committee be set up to –

- (i) examine in-depth the existing pension system and understand how they will behave or be impacted upon in the medium to long term;
- (ii) look into ways and means to improve the contributory retirement pension of private sector employees, and
- (iii) advising on how best to ensure sustainability of our pension system.

Taking into the complexity of the issue at stake, the High Level Committee will be composed in such a manner that it will be fairly representative of the stakeholders who are knowledgeable in the matter and who can surely contribute meaningfully in properly assessing the situation and formulating workable pension reform options.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this High Level Committee has already been announced in the Budget. Up to now, not only this High Level Committee has not been constituted, but we don't even know what will be the composition of that High Level

Committee. We don't even know what will be the precise terms of reference, and we don't even know as at today what will be the time line for them to submit their report.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: I have started consultation with officers at the level of my Ministry. Now, I will have to take it with the Minister of Finance and Economic Development. Shortly, the High Level Committee will be set up.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister, since she has just given to the House the terms of reference of the Committee, whether the question of *ciblage* will be also on the agenda of this Committee?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, we will have to look at all aspects of the pension system. I am sure the High level Committee will come up with appropriate deliberations.

APOLLO BRAMWELL HOSPITAL – SALE

(No. B/858) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the sale of the hospital business of Apollo Bramwell to Omega Ark, he will –

- (a) table copy of the agreement signed in relation thereto, and
- (b) state –
 - (i) the price thereof, and
 - (ii) how the proceeds thereof will be used.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker Sir, an Asset Purchase Agreement in respect of the Apollo Bramwell Hospital was signed on 20 July 2016 between NIC Healthcare Ltd, the Special Administrator appointed for the British American Hospitals Enterprise Ltd and Omega Ark Healthcare Investments Ltd. The Asset Purchase Agreement provides for the transfer of the hospital's business, excluding the building and leasehold land, to Omega Ark Healthcare Investments Ltd, subject to certain conditions being met.

The main condition relates to the offer of new contracts of employment to existing employees of the Apollo Bramwell Hospital.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that, as per the confidentiality clause contained in the Asset Purchase Agreement, a copy of the Agreement cannot be disclosed.

As for part (b)(i), the price for the hospital's business, including movable assets is USD 18 million payable as follows –

- USD 11 million on signature date of deed witnessing sale of assets;
- three instalments of USD 1 million at the end of each successive year following signature date, and
- two instalments of USD 2 million at the end of the fourth and fifth years.

Regarding part (b)(ii), the proceeds will be used to pay amounts due in respect of outstanding pension contributions of employees; bank loans taken by NIC Healthcare Ltd; other commitments secured on the hospital's assets which must be repaid under the terms of the APA; and suppliers of the company.

The top management team of Omega Ark is presently in Mauritius with a view to expediting the signature of the deed witnessing the transfer of assets.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development what is the total amount payable? He has listed out the amount owed in pension contributions, bank loans and other commitments, so can we have the total figure of the amount that is owed by Apollo Bramwell Hospital, because the proceeds will be used to repay first the amounts that he has just mentioned?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, the amount that is owed by Apollo Bramwell Hospital, I think there was a Parliamentary Question that was asked by the hon. Member earlier on. I don't have the figure, but I remember I answered and I stated the exact amount that was owed and that would be recouped from this amount that is being paid by Omega Ark.

Mr Bérenger: Can I put the following question to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development? On 03 May, in the context of the Private Notice Question, which I put on BAI in general, the Minister for Financial Affairs said - I asked whether a due diligence has been carried out to know who is behind that offer by Omega Ark - that the question should be put to the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, and he added –

“As to who is behind Omega Ark, I, personally, have not conducted any due diligence neither has my Ministry. The question could be put to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development. I believe they are people from England.”

So, first occasion we put the question to the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, this time on 12 July, where my colleague, hon. Uteem, again asked whether a due diligence has been carried out on Omega Ark. And, the reply, which I am sure the hon. Minister has looked into, is quite remarkable. The reply from the Minister of Finance and Economic Development was –

“Well, I definitely presume that a due diligence has been carried out by the team negotiating with the company.”

Can I know whether he presumes the same or whether he has had time to look into that exercise because, to me, a so-called due diligence exercise was carried out by the one and only BDO and, according to me, it was not a due diligence exercise at all. So, can we know whether the hon. Minister has had the opportunity to check on that and whether a real due diligence exercise will be carried out?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, I am informed that, in fact, BDO had carried out a due diligence and I am also informed that BOI also had carried out certain enquiries to ascertain those directors of the company and the incorporation of the company. I understand it was incorporated in England. I am also informed that they have certain checks with regard to Interpol.

Mr Bérenger: Is the hon. Minister aware that, in fact, they were incorporated in England last year? They pretend to be a worldwide company with long experience and so on. Is he aware of it? It's a very fishy transaction and it was registered in UK only last year!

Mr Jugnauth: I don't know about the date and year of incorporation, but this is what I was informed, that it was incorporated in England. But, of course, I will ask other information with regard to the background of the incorporation and when was it incorporated and so on.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Minister with regard to the staff of Apollo Bramwell, will they continue to benefit the same terms and conditions of the actual contract and will their time of service be recognised by the new management company?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, I am informed that the terms and conditions that are being negotiated right now are not less favourable to what they were before. This is what I am being told. I know that a number of employees have already signed the new contract, but I

also know that there are negotiations that are ongoing between the unions representing some employees and the management. I also know that the Ministry of Labour also is lending support to advise on the issue of the employment law. With regard to the years of service, I cannot say; I don't know. But I can find out about that.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: In the interest of transparency and to ensure that there is or has been a level playing field, could the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, following the reports earlier this morning in the Press, that there have, indeed, been offers made for the purchase of Apollo Bramwell Hospital that were higher than the one offered by Omega Ark, could he now, at least, commit to this House that he will carry out an investigation to find out what were the higher offers and bidders made and also explained to the House - and that is the final part - have all *soumissionnaires*, all those who have bid, been given the possibility of making an offer for the management of this establishment or has this only been geared or directed towards only one of the *soumissionnaires* selected, i.e. Omega Ark?

And why is it, therefore, that not all other bidders were put on a level playing field and given the opportunity of bidding for that particular purpose, that of managing?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, I can reassure the hon. Member that, in fact, the transaction adviser had considered all the proposals that were made and they had retained three proposals, amongst others, Omega Ark, CIEL in association with Fortis and a South African company called Lenmed. And, according to the information that I have, Omega Ark was by far the best offer that they had. So, I take it they have done their comparative studies to find out and to recommend to the committee about Omega Ark. Well, this is what I have.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know the name of the transaction adviser?

Mr Jugnauth: Yes, it is BDO.

Mr Bérenger: Do you find it normal that BDO is supposed to have carried out a due diligence exercise and then that same BDO – *on a eu BDO à toutes les sauces* - that is supposed to have carried out a due diligence exercise is appointed transaction adviser and has all sorts of transactions?

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: Well, they were the transaction adviser, so I relied on the committee that was set up and that dealt with them at the level of the Ministry. Again, let me say from what information I have gathered, that the difference in terms of the offer was really huge between the next best one.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, last supplementary!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this whole transaction is very fishy because the three companies who had bid, had bid on an expression of interest of the sale of the whole clinic with equipment, with staff and with everything and after that the rules of the game have been changed. This is why this company has got the contract because at the first instance this was not the criteria. So, will the hon. Minister consider the fact that now that all this has become very fishy, would he set up an enquiry on the whole transaction?

Mr Jugnauth: No, I think the hon. Member is partly wrong and where you are wrong is that the expression of interest contains six options and that all those who had made proposals were requested to make proposals with respect to all the options. Now, one of the options was, of course, for the sale of the whole of the business, but there are other options with regard to –

- equity participation, management and outright acquisition;
- equity participation and outright acquisition of land and building;
- management contract and rental of land and building, and
- equity participation and management contract, and rental of land and building and so on.

So, in the light of all these proposals that were received, I am told that a comparative study was done in order to make recommendations to the Committee.

Mr Uteem: On 03 May, the hon. Minister Bhadain stated that the contract would be signed in May for USD60 m. Two months later, we are told that the first instalment is going to be only USD11 m. and the total value of the sale would be USD18 m. So, does that mean that the hospital land and building is valued more than USD42 m. and the business is only USD18 m.? In the light of all that we said in this House, would the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development consider to have an independent inquiry to see whether we should not have re-launched a new tender to get the best offer because, at the end of the day, it is taxpayers who are going to pay if there is a shortfall in the amount to be paid in connection with BAI?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have said that the expression of interest contained numerous options. That is one.

Secondly, it was true that initially it was the intention of Government to sell the whole of the business, including the land and the building. But then, at a certain stage, we decided to go for the sale of the business, excluding the land and the building. Now, that is why we looked at the other options with regard to all the other proposals that were made and, therefore, the comparison was done and we went for the best.

Now, I must also say that initially when it was the intention to sell the whole of the business, there was only one company that made a formal proposal and that was Omega Ark.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem, next question!

**STATE LAW OFFICERS & STATE ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW – PRIVATE
PRACTICE**

(No. B/859) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the State Law Officers and State Attorneys-at-Law entitled to practise as barristers and attorneys-at-law respectively on behalf of any private party, he will state the names thereof, indicating the –

- (a) private parties for whom they are entitled to practise, and
- (b) date on which they received the written authorisation of the President of the Republic therefor.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member who is also my learned friend for the opportunity he has afforded me to set the record straight in relation to this matter.

The issue of Law Officers and State Attorneys being entitled to private practice is not a new one. In fact, that issue seems to arise every now and then and replies from myself and my predecessors had been consistent on the matter. For the record, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will refer to the following answers to the following questions.

In reply to PQ B/828 of 12 December 1978, the then hon. Attorney-General and Minister of Justice highlighted that, and I quote –

“I am aware, however, that some senior officers who are substantive holders of office in the Ministry of Justice have since 1972 been authorised by the Governor General

under the Law Officers' Ordinance to undertake the legal advisory work of some parastatal organisations in their capacity as lawyers and not in their official capacity. The reason for the authorisation was to prevent sensitive information from being disclosed outside the public service."

With regard to the fees obtained by the law officers, the reply of the then Attorney-General was, and I quote –

"I am not authorised by professional ethics to enquire from lawyers the quantum of fees they receive from those organisations which give them fees."

In reply to PQ A/24, the then Attorney-General and Minister of Justice on 31 October 2000 stated, and I quote –

"As regards part (a) of the question, some parastatal bodies entrust their advisory work to officers of the Attorney-General's Office through a Cabinet decision. His Excellency, the then Governor General has under section 17 of the Law Officers' Act on 15 December 1982 authorised Law Officers and Crown Attorneys to undertake such work. This was further confirmed on 30 January 1995 by the then President of the Republic following the advice of the Prime Minister."

I have to clarify who are the parties for whom Law Officers and State Attorneys have been authorised to provide legal services in a private capacity under the Law Officers' Act. Such parties, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are restricted to parastatal and statutory bodies, such institutions or companies where Government has an interest and who, the Law Officers at the request of such entities or their parent Ministries agree to provide their services. I am tabling a list of all these entities. I will table a few lists in a minute.

The above illustrates beyond doubt that this practice dates back to many decades and it is above board and has been approved at the highest level of the State. For the record, I also have to state that on 06 March 2003, the then hon. Prime Minister, who is also the present Prime Minister, sought from the President specific authorisation for the Solicitor General and other Law Officers and Attorneys in addition to their existing general authorisation to do so to represent the then newly created Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), the following terms, and I quote –

"In pursuance of the Law Officers' Act, the Solicitor General, Law Officers and State Attorneys have already been authorised to tender legal advice and to appear before Courts and other quasi-judicial bodies for parastatal bodies and in companies in which

Government has an interest. I now advise that you may be pleased to authorise State Attorneys, Law Officers to also represent the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Financial Intelligence Unit in Court as and when requested by these two institutions.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the above, I believe, will put to rest those inaccuracies by certain persons, but have been refugees in certain quarters in certain newspapers, with regard to the propriety of the Solicitor General, previously acting as legal adviser and getting paid personally for his advisory work for the FIU.

In that regard, no Law Officer or State Attorney can be faulted or queried for being remunerated personally for legal advisory and litigation work done by him as a lawyer by virtue of the appropriate authority held under the Law Officers Act be stand as long ago as in 1978, and I fully subscribe to the views of my predecessor.

For the record, in 1995, the then Prime Minister and Attorney-General, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, QC, sought and obtained the authorisation of the President again as regards the names and in 1995, it was for reiterating the policy and special permission for TEAFAC, Sugar Investment Trust and any other companies that the State has an interest again to undertake such work.

As regards the names of the Law Officers and State Attorneys who tender such legal advice and who appear in such cases, they are Law Officers generally in the grade of Solicitor General to Senior State Counsel or State Attorneys who have between 10 years to 34 years of experience, who are considered to be adequately knowledgeable and experienced to meet requirements of the statutory bodies and Government entities for legal advisory and litigation work. Again, I am tabling a list of the names of all these officers.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following unwarranted and scurrilous attacks on my office, with regard to the integrity of the Solicitor General, Law Officers, including other officers tasked with periodically reproducing new editions of Revised Laws of Mauritius, my Office, under my instructions, issued a communiqué which is of utmost relevance to the PQ, and I am tabling a copy of this communiqué. So, three things are being tabled: the list of the parastatal bodies and statutory bodies, the list of the Law Officers and a communiqué.

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow only one supplementary question on this. Time is running out!

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I need only one. In two Press interviews, the Rs19 m. Counsel, Mr Trilochurn, made very vile attacks against officers from the Law Revision Unit of the Attorney General's Office, even threatening to go to ICAC. So, I would like to know, apart from issuing a communiqué, what does the Attorney General propose to do against this Rs19 m. Counsel, who is throwing dirt at officers from his Ministry and the State Law Office.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Well, it suffices, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to read the last part of the communiqué and I'll read it –

“Furthermore, the Attorney General's Office and the Law Officers reserve their right to initiate such action as they deem warranted during the allegations.”

(Interruptions)

And I can...

(Interruptions)

If you may, please! And I can most solemnly say to this House that I will not allow, as Attorney General, any mud or dirt whatsoever to be spread on my Office and that my office and my officers are strongly considering such action as may deem appropriate; in due course, the hon. Member shall see.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: PQ B/864, B/869, B/870 and B/871. Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

NATIONAL DRUG OBSERVATORY – REPORT

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr A. Gayan): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to inform the House that following a decision of Cabinet in September last, a National Drug Observatory was set up under the aegis of my Ministry in November 2015.

The main objective of the National Drug Observatory is to monitor and assess the drug situation in the country to enable the collection, dissemination, analysis and data pertaining to the prevalence of drug and to devise appropriate strategies to deal effectively with the problem of drug abuse in a pro-active, efficient and timely manner.

The National Drug Observatory is chaired by the Director General, Health Services of my Ministry and comprises various stakeholders including Ministries, the Police and Prison Departments, the Forensic Science Laboratory, the Pharmaceutical Association of Mauritius, the Attorney General's Office and representatives of the civil societies.

Since November 2015, the National Drug Observatory has had several meetings. It has now produced its first report which has been validated by all the stakeholders concerned including Dr. Reshad Abdool, Independent Consultant at United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). I am now tabling a copy of the report for the information I have.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour!

At 4.31 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.08 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2016-2017) BILL 2016 (No. XVII of 2016)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2016-2017) Bill 2016 (No. XVII of 2016).

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Soodhun!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun):

Madam Speaker, first and foremost, allow me to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, for the visionary Budget he has presented in this House and for the bold measures he has proposed therein, having the socio-economic development of Mauritius at heart. This Budget has as theme “A New Era for Development”. This is a clear indication that the Government of the day is putting in enormous efforts to ensure a sustainable economic growth for the social well-being of the citizens of Mauritius, thus further positioning Mauritius as a real Welfare State.

Madam Speaker, many countries are witnessing economic recession - as we read every day in the newspapers - resulting in sluggish economic growth, mass unemployment, loss of jobs, stagnation of various key sectors, reduction in salaries – I understand even in Comoros Islands, last time when the President came here, he was telling me that since six months the public officers have not been able to receive their salaries. Do you imagine, six months - reduction in public expenditure and impoverishment of the population!

It is against this acute economic downturn that hon. Pravind Jugnauth has been able to come up with a promising Budget which would uplift and enhance the quality of life of our population through various social measures taken to eradicate absolute poverty.

Madam Speaker, for us - it is not a secret, I am not going to blame my young hon. brothers of the Labour Party - it is a fact that we have inherited a chaotic situation with the calamities left by the previous Government such as the Ring Road, the Terre Rouge/Verdun Road, the casino saga – billions of debt, the MBC saga with its significant indebtedness, the Bagatelle Dam – billions and billions of money are still being spent, we don't know what will be the result and without forgetting *le “fameux Festival des Terres”* which has benefitted only the close friends of the previous regime. “*C’était, Madame, l’abus et l’usure du pouvoir*”.

It is only now, with this Budget that we will be able to “*remettre le pays sur les rails*”. *C’est maintenant !*

(Interruptions)

We are a bit late. We agree with that. But thanks to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development that there is now a new drive for development, Madam Speaker.

I thank God Almighty for once again giving me the opportunity to address this Assembly. I will not waste the time of my colleagues by repeating what others have already said or by delivering a speech which would suit the electoral Campaign. We will do it in two years' time. I would rather concentrate on how my Ministry would be involved in the implementation of the budgetary measures announced by my colleague and how best we can put our efforts together to implement these measures. It is now that all my colleagues and myself have got the opportunity, we have got the tools. I am sure my colleagues will come forward in their Budget interventions of how we are going to implement it. Now, the country is waiting for my colleagues and myself to work hard in order to implement what has been proposed in this Budget, *sinon li pou vine ene éléphant blanc*. So, it is our duty as Ministers and PPS to come forward and see what has been offered to our Ministries.

In the first instance, Madam Speaker, allow me to come to the measures advocated for my Ministry and let me start with the measures enunciated for the low-cost Housing Units.

- Shelter is a basic human need. A need we all share and one which is essential to a healthy and happy life. In Hindi we say it "*roti, kapra aur makaan*" This is what we have said in our last campaign. I remind hon. Rutnah, he was the one who was everywhere. I am in charge of '*makaan*'. So, it is my duty to say what we are going to do in the future and what we are going to start immediately. This is what we have to do. As is mentioned, Madam Speaker, the housing policy will not only focus on the provisions of a decent housing unit, but also of a decent living environment.

I remember having explained to the former Minister of Finance and Economic Development and the hon. Prime Minister - when I went to see the Housing Units - that what they were doing is a crime to society.

(Interruptions)

They would leave it for us if we did not correct them in time!

(Interruptions)

No, they are my young brothers; they are not to be blamed for that! But how come an NHDC house can be built of a size of 39 square metres with only one bedroom for the whole family?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Soodhun: And then, you will say there are sexual problems. I have witnessed it. Let me tell you! One bedroom...

(Interruptions)

No!

Madam Speaker: No interruptions, please!

Mr Soodhun: I can tell you it is not my way of doing things. I have seen it. If you want, I can show you the photos. There is only one bedroom and in the middle, they put *un rideau*. On one side, the children are reading, they are doing their biology and chemistry homework, on the other side, it's practising!

(Interruptions)

This is what is happening! This is the exact situation that I have witnessed. Who is to be blamed? Are the parents to be blamed? I explained this to hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth and he said: "You know as from now, you stop it immediately!"

(Interruptions)

Listen!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No interruptions, please!

Mr Soodhun: Listen! It is very interesting; I am not telling a joke. You know it very well. There is a time for cracking jokes, but it is a reality. In fact, we correct it. In spite of the fact that they have decided to build a housing unit of 39 square metres, I personally, with the collaboration of the hon. Prime Minister and the then Minister of Finance, we have increased it. What we are doing now to correct it? Housing units of moderate size of 50 square metres will be constructed to accommodate at least 2 bedrooms and provisions for a third bedroom – this is what we are doing – and provisions of necessary social and recreational amenities so as to better integrate the residents within these Housing Estates. *C'est un projet intégré avec des jardins d'enfants et une salle polyvalente*. So, this is what we are doing. Instead of doing 210, we are doing only 200 units.

(Interruptions)

Decent houses! This is what we are doing. I will give the figures and you can check it.

- Construction of 655 housing units and provision also for 184 serviced lots across the island have been completed and works are in progress now – at the time I am talking - for the construction of 645 housing units and provision of 216 serviced lots which are expected to be completed early 2017.

The construction works of 1225 housing units of 50 square metres under the Batch III Programme have already started. The Contract for works on three sites namely, at Goodlands (Madame Azor I and II) and Cottage for the construction of 190 housing units have already been awarded. The whole project is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

My Ministry is also embarking on the construction of 1,000 housing units and on the provision of 100 serviced lots over 12 sites across the island. The contract for consultancy services for the construction of 700 housing units over five sites will be floated by the end of August 2016. To this end, funds to the tune of approximately Rs1 billion have been provided in the budget of my Ministry. This is what I said, we have to start. There is a bottleneck, there is bureaucracy in all Ministries, but it depends on the Minister! If the Minister sits down in front of TV, what will happen? He has to work as a supervisor, a foreman; then works will be done. And this is what I do.

Furthermore, the income eligibility criteria...

(Interruptions)

Li docter li sans certificat! Sinon li ène traitère !

(Interruptions)

Furthermore, the income eligibility criteria for an NHDC housing unit has been raised, as you are aware, from 10,000 to 20,000 rupees – this is what this Government is doing – it is fixed Rs6,200 and Rs8,500 because we also have people who are earning Rs20,000 and they are in a difficult situation. *Ils ont besoin d'un toit.* So, to enable additional families in need, as I mentioned, to own a housing unit.

A fundamental responsibility of any Government is to protect its vulnerable citizens from the state of being homeless. We all know cases where families have fallen behind in their monthly payments on housing loans contracted either with the NHDC or MHC and

where it has become difficult for the families to catch up with their payments. Many such cases have been referred for Sale by Levy, my colleague, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister knows how many times he talks to me about these people, resulting in the loss of the housing unit.

I have personally looked into it because really it is a trauma. I met many of these families and I wish to show my appreciation to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development who, I can say, *est quelqu'un qui a à cœur les pauvres* and who has announced a waiver of all arrears of interest on loans contracted from the NHDC and the MHC by individuals whose monthly income does not exceed Rs15,000 provided that the capital amount outstanding is duly repaid.

(Interruptions)

This measure, Madam Speaker, will enable the families who have purchased their house from the NHDC to preserve their properties. Let me tell you how many people. The number of families which would benefit from this waiver is 3,388 – not one family - and the amount to be waived totals approximately to Rs47 m. Definitely, we are just helping the people who do not have arrears. It is arrears only on interest. This is what we are helping these people with. If not, we are not going to help these people and at the end of the day, this will go to Sale by Levy. So, we are helping all these people because this is not from yesterday. It is from 10 years before.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, a large proportion of our population has the ability to fend for its own needs with just a little support. There are those who are able to build their own houses, improving them as time goes by in accordance with their needs and financial capacities.

Madam Speaker, let me inform the House that to this effect, some 1900 families have benefitted from the Roof Slab Grant Scheme to complete the construction of their houses for which an amount of some Rs110 m. has been disbursed. This is an on-going project and funds to the tune of Rs110 m. have been earmarked for the forthcoming financial year to help these people. These people who are making special efforts as we used to say they have reached the roof, so we give them this subsidy for the slab so that they can complete and we congratulate such people. We encourage such people by giving this subsidy, as we can see, the result.

Also, to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of NHDC housing estates and extend durably the lifespan of the buildings, Government is maintaining its rehabilitation programme in these housing estates. We have witnessed the existing NHDC in such conditions that you can see the iron bars.

(Interruptions)

Yes, there is a problem of the sewage disposal. You can have the first floor having leaks of sewage and all the other floors are affected. So, what do we do in such circumstances? It is not our doing. So, do we say it is not our problem; it is the problem of the former Government? No! We are a responsible Government. We are responsible people. And today works are in progress in some 50 housing estates which involve rehabilitation of sewerage disposal systems and water reticulation networks, roof waterproofing works, drainage works, structural remedial works and other associated works. An amount of Rs59 m. has been spent and a further amount of Rs155 m. has been provided for financial year 2016/17.

Madam Speaker, under the access of land ownership programme, Government is encouraging ex-CHA - people since 1960 are waiting - house owners to purchase the plot of State Land on which stand their houses. In this context, 345 families have, during the last financial year, purchased their land. In one year! Government has also provided financial assistance in terms of legal and other charges to those families who do not have the means to purchase the land. An amount of Rs224,000 has been disbursed to some 115 families and a provision of Rs1 million has been made in the current Budget also to help these people. They are old people and they don't have the money to buy and to pay the notary. I am just talking to my friend hon. Ramano so that he could do some voluntary works.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ramano is going to help us in this context.

There are 41 NHDC housing estates where a Syndic is operational. Syndic was out and as if the Government was just throwing the money. Nothing was done! Nothing! There was no control. There was not any improvement. So we have disbursed Rs16 m. rupees last year to reorganise the Syndic.

Furthermore, we are now coming with the sensitisation campaigns which are being regularly carried out by the NHDC to encourage the residents to take full responsibility of

their assets as well as to the need for them to contribute to the Syndic fund. Provision of Rs16 m. has been made in the Budget 2016/17 to this end.

Let me tell you something, many people are owners of these houses. So, they still wait if there is any leakage they wait for the NHDC to come and repair it. If there is any problem, for example of painting, we are not going to tolerate now. If you are the owner you are the same as the other people.

So, you have to take the sole responsibility for any repair, anything that happens. You are the owner; this belongs to you 100%. We cannot continue spending money. This is why we are going to repair completely and then finish. We are taking precaution for the new houses. Now, when we are going to build new houses, we have to put it in the contract - my friend will help me. There are some people who are paying completely now - Rs1.2 m. - and there are some who are paying 50%. When they are the owner of the house, they have to take the responsibility. I do not think that the Government of today or tomorrow will come and do it, because you are the owner. We are now coming with this policy, and we are going to put it on the contract.

(Interruptions)

Yes, it is not normal.

I, once again, seize this opportunity to thank my hon. friend, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, for proposing fiscal incentives on the construction and purchase of new apartments, houses or purchase of land for residential purposes, thus ensuring affordability of residential property.

Madam Speaker, I now come to the second component of my Ministry. Too often, there has been a perception that the Ministry of Housing and Lands is only concerned with the housing sector and with the provision of the low-cost housing units to the vulnerable community. Allow me, please, to dispel this perception.

My Ministry has played and continues to play a crucial role as a major stakeholder in land management. Land is and will remain central to the development of our country and we must use all modern and available technologies for effective and efficient land information and administration.

In line with the objective set by the Minister of Finance for increased efficiency in service delivery, my Ministry will put more focus on the two following systems -

- (a) an efficient land planning system for effective management, use and release of land for development, and
- (b) to modernise the digital land information, cartographic services and surveying in a transparent and equitable manner for operational excellence.

Madam Speaker, to this end, my Ministry is reviewing the National Land Development Strategy, which includes the drafting of the Planning legislation. In fact, Rs28.5 m. have been earmarked for the review of the National Development Strategy in 2016/2017.

The update of the National Development Strategy will consist of a review of the policies and land management practices of the different stakeholders. The review is expected to start early next year. Madam Speaker, the revised National Development Strategy will identify key infrastructure projects and will translate the Government's commitment to achieve the full potential of selected strategic sites in the country up to 2040. We are not working for only five years. We are working for more.

So, the National Development Strategy will also formulate - because we are sure we are going to stay until 2040/2050 - spatial policies for economic development, agricultural land protection and social facilities as well as conservation with a view to be sustainable and resilient. Madam Speaker, the main objectives of the National Development Strategy are to reconcile the land use and transport strategies to curb on urban expansion, optimise existing and projected infrastructure facilities and reduce air pollution by the transport sector.

The report will identify the institutional framework for implementation purposes. It will provide an Action Plan/Programme, which will set up key indicators for implementation and identify major public and private stakeholders, that is, relevant ministries, service providers, major landowners and the local authorities.

The other component of the review which is being addressed in a separate consultancy, is the review of the existing planning legislation. This is very important. It started last year and is due to be completed early next year.

The main objectives are to consolidate under one main legislation, the existing Town and Country Planning Act 1954, Planning and Development Act 2004, the *Morcellement* Act 1990, as amended, and scattered legislations related to planning. So,

these are facilities, tools, *garde-fous* that we are putting in this Ministry. This is a new type of institution that we can create, so that people can utilise it.

The legislation will strengthen certain provisions where weaknesses in enforcement have been noted and will include, amongst others, the review of the permitting procedures, which have been referred to forcefully in this Budget Speech. The legislation provides for a National Planning Commission which would replace the Town and Country Planning Board and which will be more effective.

The Commission will coordinate and promote an integrated land use and transport planning together with other infrastructural works in a sustainable manner. It will be the main advisor of the Government in land use matters whilst providing guidance to both public and local authorities.

The Commission will also have a very active role in plan preparation at all spatial scales and in the apportionment of costs related to development contributions for master plans referred to in the Annex to the Budget 2016/2017.

Madam Speaker, this brings me to another important provision in the new legislation. Several strategic areas cannot be opened up for development in view of lack of infrastructure as several projects compete for limited funds. Opportunities for cost-sharing with the appropriate mechanisms for design, costing, acquisition, and implementation and funding are proposed in line with measures announced in the Annex to the Budget and will be managed by the Commission and its relevant statutory committees, thereby ensuring transparency, which is very important in use of funds, equity and good governance.

Madam Speaker, once the National Land Development Strategy and Planning legislation assignments are completed, my Ministry will embark on the review of the existing planning schemes to provide an updated spatial framework for development purposes, in line with the policies and strategies of the new National Development Strategy.

Madam Speaker, I fully commend the Budget measures proposed by the Minister of Finance to streamline the procedures for the grant of permits - which we all know business people are complaining and even simple citizens are complaining - thus avoiding unwarranted delays in the implementation of projects. We all know that the track record of our country is very good when compared to the African continent. Indeed, we occupy the first position from one year - not ten years back - as regards the Ease of Doing Business.

However, when it comes to the issue of construction permits, we are number two being overtaken by Mozambique, which promotes the filing of applications online.

It is new to the Ministry and, today, people should not come to the office, make the queue or go and see the messengers, giving them a tip to get same. This is something of the past.

(Interruptions)

I am sure it will help us not only to score a better ranking at the next survey but it will become a popular user-friendly measure.

Madam Speaker, I also welcome the introduction of the Regulatory Sandbox License which is a novel concept and which is applied in only a few countries so far. This will allow companies and promoters to invest in innovative projects which will encourage further investments in the economy.

Madam Speaker, a number of measures has been introduced in the Budget to boost the construction, the real estate industry as well as infrastructural works.

The Property Development Scheme (PDS) has been amended, so there is now no restriction on the maximum of land that can be put to development. All the residential units within a PDS can now be sold to non-citizens.

My Ministry will contribute to the introduction of an affordable new mass transit system which is a most laudable initiative. I am referring to the Metro Express which will take off the roads, automobile dependent transport, reduce traffic congestion and accompanying carbon emissions, and facilitate the movement of goods. At the same time, it will reduce traffic hazards and accidents.

My Ministry will also participate planning-wise in the reconstruction of the Victoria Bus Terminal and other Bus Terminals with provision of a number of people-centered, uses and activities which will greatly enhance the economic vitality of the city, and hence generate employment activities.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the third component of my Ministry. As I stated earlier, land is central to the development process. My Ministry is mandated to ensure that there is proper management of land, including State land which falls directly under my control.

My Ministry has come up with a new Policy Framework for the first time for the allocation of State lands with well-defined processes and procedures, so that State land is being allocated for viable projects having financial capabilities for implementation.

You may wish to note that the list of leases of State lands being allocated by my Ministry are being published on the website of my Ministry since December 2015 in a spirit of transparency, as specified in the Budget.

My Ministry has also worked out the modalities for the setting up of a State Land Assessment Coordinating and Monitoring Committee. This will ensure that all applications for State lands are being processed in a timely and diligent manner and that these lands are being developed within the time frame imposed in the Lease Agreement. I have witnessed many cases since 2008. People have already received the reservation, but nothing has been done. Nothing! It still remains idle! Now, it has become a jungle.

The terms and conditions in the Letter of Reservation as well as in the Letter of Intent issued to potential lessees have been reviewed and we are now in the process of reviewing the Lease Agreement to be signed between the Lessee and my Ministry.

A billion rupees has been invested over the last few years to set up a Land Administration, Valuation and Management Information System (LAVIMS). It is a part of an ongoing Land Administration and Management Reform with three major initial outcomes, namely property valuation of all residential and commercial sites, digital cadastre and a parcel-based Deeds Registration System. The functionality of the system provides an efficient and secure land transaction process.

LAVIMS Project is jointly shared by the Ministry of Housing and Lands and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development through the Registrar General's Department and the Valuation Department.

An amount of approximately Rs12.5 m. has been earmarked for the financial year 2016-2017 to come up with a valuation roll regarding information on properties within Local Authorities.

LAVIMS, through the issue of Parcel Identification Number, generates a revenue of around Rs70 m. yearly. Rs70 m.! And this is increasing each year. This indicates a vibrant land market where additional revenue through land registration and other fees are being generated.

A further development akin to that of LAVIMS concerns specifically the setting up of a State Land Digital Register. I am setting up the State Land Digital Register to better inform the population on State lands leased and those uncommitted to be able to manage them efficiently as advocated by Government.

A pilot project for State Land data collection has been carried out for the Savanne District and another one for the Pamplemousses District is underway. These two pilot projects will give an indication of the weaknesses and strengths of the database and provide valuable information on the scoping exercise to be effected by the Central Informatics Bureau, prior to designing the system and procuring the necessary hardware and software.

Madam Speaker, with LAVIMS as the foundation data sets, other spatial data sets can be assembled and an enormous amount of information pertaining to different sectors can be viewed, processed and maintained.

We aim in the very near future to set up the National Spatial Data Infrastructure. This infrastructure will be an important step towards achieving e-land management as it will allow better sharing and integration of land information across Government, business, and the community through a simple online single source access.

This project fits into the Information Highway enunciated in the Budget and will spatially enable Government and the business community to real time access to information and to improve decision making. A fund of Rs2 m. has been earmarked for the current budget to kick start this project.

Madam Speaker, land survey has now evolved into a very sophisticated discipline and encompasses several allied disciplines. Today, the survey of land requires modern technologies.

My Ministry has already densified its geodetic network made up of fixed points called geodetic network. These points are now being established with the use of modern GPS systems. For Mauritius, we have already established a core network of 81 such accurate points on the ground all over the island. Many people are not aware of it.

The maintenance of such points is very costly as they are very often destroyed and vandalised. In this context, the assistance of the Regional Centre for Management of Resources for Development which is based in Nairobi has been sought to establish a Continuously Operating Reference Station which will allow surveying in a more accurate and less costly manner.

Madam Speaker, this Government's ambition to tap the ocean resources will only become a reality when, besides diversifying initiatives in the marine sector, we also look after the marine sector, not only State lands. I am following the path of my good friend, hon. Alain Wong Yen Cheong.

So, we are also improving our marine information base. With an extent of 3.2 million square kilometres – sometimes we do not realise that we have 3.2 million square kilometres of sea territory; we have to further explore its potentials.

- Most of our sea territory is still unexplored and the Hydrography Section of my Ministry, in collaboration with the Republic of India, has already carried out hydrographic surveys at Grand' Baie, Mahebourg and Black River.
- The Navigational charts produced would be extremely useful for agencies having stakes in coastal areas and will be a valuable aid to enhance navigational safety in our waters. It will avoid all the sea accidents, because they don't have the chart.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No conversation, hon. Gayan!

Mr Soodhun: Sometimes they get problems.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't interrupt the hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

Mr Soodhun:

- This exercise will continue as Government aims at becoming a major Port and Bunkering Hub in the Indian Ocean.

My friend, the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection is coming with the project and this will help definitely.

- A sum of Rs110 m. has been earmarked for the rehabilitation works to address beach erosion - we are also concerned with the beach erosion and this is a very important issue; we have to tackle this problem for my colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications - and coastal degradation. My Ministry's expertise in maintenance of topographic maps and other geographic information and survey will contribute a lot to this exercise.
- The Hydrography Unit has effectively completed the delineation of the High Water Mark over a total of 325 kilometres of coastline around Mauritius, allowing for the proper monitoring of the coastline.

- The data have contributed to the implementation of Early Warning System for Storm Surge and Tsunami Modelling for the Mauritius Research Council for Wave Energy projects.

Madam Speaker, over and above the optimum utilisation of land, my Ministry also aims at addressing the problem of squatting. I think it is a problem of decades that squatters exist in Mauritius. We are addressing it in an effective and efficient manner.

Madam Speaker, I will give an example. When we talk about squatters, my good friend, the Deputy Prime Minister visited Baie du Tombeau...

(Interruptions)

Cité Longère. Today, people are living in tents. Let me inform the House, I don't know for how many years the former Prime Minister has been in Constituency No. 5. It is in Constituency No. 5! Hundreds of families are living in such conditions. Thanks to my colleague...

(Interruptions)

Yes, thanks to my brother, he has visited; we had a meeting, myself, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No conversation, hon. Soodhun!

Mr Soodhun: We are having their collaboration, which is very important; the issue is very important. So, today, let me tell you, these people are living since maybe more than 20 years. It's a pity! More than 20 years! They don't have drinking water.

(Interruptions)

Exactly! So, it is a pity. So, thanks to my colleague of Constituency No. 5 and the MPs, they sit down - and let me inform the good news that my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has made a provision for Rs140 m.; we are going to start work very soon. I am going to put our consultant to work on this. So, we are going to...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Soodhun: We are going to solve this problem. If the former Prime Minister has not done it, we are going to do it!

(Interruptions)

Yes, we are going to do this. So, this is important.

- Accordingly, a survey was carried out – it is good to know - all over the island and 1,174 cases of squatting on State lands were registered as at July 2015. Till to date, 238 cases have been regularised *in situ* and 203 cases have been relocated. My Ministry is already working towards regularising the remaining cases.

And I hope, as we use to say Insha Allah, this year, we are going to solve all the problems of squatting in this country. I am sure this year we are going to do it.

- By implementing the various schemes in the housing sector, I am confident that the measures announced in the Budget will reduce drastically the number of homeless and every citizen will find a shelter and a decent dwelling as stated in the Budget 2016/2017.

Madam Speaker, we have some Rs490 m. that were due to my Ministry as at 30 June 2016 in terms of arrears of rent payment for the leases of State land granted. Rs490m! People, since 2008, have stopped paying their rent. Stopped completely! There are hotels and *campement* sites. So, we have set up a committee. In one year, Rs114 m. have been collected and necessary arrangements have been made to recoup these arrears. If we are not going to take the necessary action, these people are not going to pay.

So, my Ministry has already worked out the appropriate modalities to ease...

(Interruptions)

No write off! Who said so! This one no!

(Interruptions)

And allow for the settling of these arrears through instalments after consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Madam Speaker, I'll now come to the conclusion. I truly believe and this Government indeed believes that all the measures in this Budget, like its title rightly mentions, will bring a new era of development.

Of course, not everyone will agree to this. I recently read in a weekly magazine the interview of one of my former colleagues who said: “*Il faut semer dans le nouveau budget*”. This is exactly what this Government did. Many of you will recall how, when the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, announced the Ébène Cybercity Project, it was labelled an an “*éléphant blanc*”. Today, there are thousands of offices and employments.

Madam Speaker, this Government is working towards building a robust future for Mauritius amidst global uncertainties and the measures enunciated in the Budget Speech is a testimony to this endeavour. We have made the choices that will strengthen our economy while ensuring long-term sustainability and fostering inclusive growth. We are planning ahead while being creative as we do not believe in sitting idly and hoping things will improve by themselves.

Before I end, I would like to mention about the Mauritian embassy in Saudi Arabia. On 24 February 2015, in his speech following the President’s Address, my colleague Adil Ameer Meea made a remark that, and I quote: “*On attend cela avec impatience*”. Well, my brother, I am pleased to inform him that...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Soodhun: ... he may put an end to his...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, please! You are interrupting the Vice-Prime Minister!

Mr Soodhun: ... impatience as the Embassy will soon be a reality. The same applies for the General Consulate in Jeddah. This Government has always shown generosity when it comes to poverty alleviation and social housing policy. I believe that it is high time that we shall stand together and give a helping hand for those who are in need and to refrain to be demagogue with the issue of poverty.

A lot of measures have been announced and it is for us to ensure that they are implemented. But we cannot do this without the collaboration of one and all, the whole public sector, the whole private sector, the NGOs, the whole population and why not the

Opposition? We have to strengthen our society and change our mindset to face future challenges and to build the Mauritius of tomorrow.

If we, as a whole population, do not use the tools, the means and the funds put in place in the Budget, the Minister of Finance cannot be taken to task but rather us, policy leaders and public servants, would have failed in our duty.

We can make a better Mauritius and we will make it happen. Together! All of us!

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

(5.57 p.m.)

Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Madame la présidente, avant d'entrer dans le vif du sujet, je souhaiterais simplement dire mon étonnement d'entendre l'honorable Soodhun venir affirmer que ce n'est que maintenant que le Premier ministre adjoint, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, a rendu visite à certaines cités défavorisées de Baie du Tombeau et qu'il a été choqué du constat fait sur place. Donc, dois-je rappeler à la Chambre que notre ami l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval a été ministre de l'Intégration Sociale et aussi ministre des Finances dans un passé récent.

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente,...

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, il va sans dire que l'honorable ministre des Finances a été habile et astucieux dans la présentation du budget 2016-2017.

En effet, certaines mesures annoncées par le ministre des Finances en faveur des plus démunis de la société sont considérées comme des décisions qui vont dans la bonne direction.

Mais, Madame la présidente, nous ne sommes qu'au stade des propositions. Les bonnes intentions seules, ne suffisent pas. Sans aucun doute la population doit attendre l'implémentation de ces mesures pour savoir si elles ne sont que de la poudre aux yeux ou une réelle volonté d'éradiquer l'extrême pauvreté.

Ce gouvernement avait été élu en 2014 sur la base de toute une série de promesses faites à la population notamment la lutte contre l'extrême pauvreté et la création d'emplois.

Deux ans après, nous sommes toujours au stade des promesses. Dans son discours, l'honorable ministre des Finances a indiqué que les mesures pour éradiquer l'extrême pauvreté vont toucher 6400 familles mais vous en conviendrez que la réalité du terrain est tout autre car les chiffres sont clairement plus conséquents. Ce n'est pas moi qui le dis mais toutes les ONGs engagées dans la lutte contre la pauvreté. D'ailleurs, le 17 mai de cette année en réponse à une question de l'honorable Rughoobur, le ministre de l'Intégration Sociale avait lui-même affirmé qu'il y a à Maurice 13,174 familles vivant en dessous du seuil de pauvreté de R6,200.

Aussi lors de la PNQ du *leader* de l'Opposition de vendredi dernier sur l'extrême pauvreté, le ministre Roopun a expliqué que le mécanisme a changé et qu'une nouvelle enquête va bientôt démarrer pour déterminer le nombre exact de familles vivant sous le seuil de pauvreté et qui vont bénéficier de la nouvelle formule de *subsistence allowance*.

Dans cette même foulée, Madame la présidente, je propose que le ministre de l'Intégration Sociale mette en place des mesures d'accompagnement afin d'aider ces familles à sortir de la pauvreté et ainsi assumer aussi vite que possible leur autonomie.

Madame la présidente, l'extrême pauvreté à Maurice apporte son lot de désarrois au quotidien. Nous avons tous pris connaissance ces derniers temps d'un nombre important de familles vivant dans cette situation qui ont tout perdu parce que leurs 'bicoques' en bois ont pris feu par la faute d'une bougie laissée allumée à défaut d'être alimenté en électricité. Certains ont même trouvé la mort, comme l'ancienne championne de judo, Stéphanie Botteveau, qui est morte carbonisée en juillet dernier dans l'indifférence totale.

Tout en étant d'accord avec les propositions faites par le ministre des Finances pour combattre l'extrême pauvreté, il serait aussi souhaitable, Madame la présidente, que dans la pratique ces mesures, une fois entrées en application, ne soient pas déviées de leurs objectifs initiaux pour des raisons politiques.

Madame la présidente, ce que la population, dans son ensemble, veut savoir c'est si ce budget, dans son application, va améliorer son quotidien ou pas.

Le ministre des Finances a fait preuve de subtilité dans la présentation de son budget en mettant en avant les mesures prises pour lutter contre l'extrême pauvreté. Mais qu'en sera-t-il des personnes pauvres qui ne vont pas bénéficier d'un *income support* ? Ces familles vont éprouver toutes les peines du monde à joindre les deux bouts malgré tous leurs efforts. Ce

n'est certainement pas la baisse des prix du gaz ménager et des céréales qui les feront retrouver le sourire.

Le coût de la vie a tellement augmenté que maintenant les consommateurs n'achètent que quand y a une promotion. D'où la déception de la population qui constate, une fois encore, que les denrées de base et autres articles de consommation courante n'ont connu aucune baisse.

Le ministre des Finances, Madame la présidente, a, il est vrai, annoncé l'exemption des frais de douane sur plus de 350 produits. Toutefois, les consommateurs n'ont pas tardé à réagir et ont exprimé leur désapprobation après avoir pris connaissance de la liste des produits qui sont exemptés des frais de douanes.

En effet, l'incompréhension de la population est tout à fait légitime puisque sur cette liste on retrouve des items tels que des blousons de ski, des ânes et des mules entres autres.

Il est clair que la population aurait préféré voir sur cette liste des produits de consommation courante et de première nécessité qui auraient sans aucun doute, allégé le budget des familles.

Face à cette décision d'exempter un certain nombre de produits des frais de douanes, Madame la présidente, je me pose certaines questions. Et ma première question est : est-ce que cela va automatiquement entraîner une baisse du prix de vente consommateurs de ces items sur le marché? Deuxième question ; le fait d'enlever les frais de douanes sur des produits tels que les T-shirts, robes, survêtements et autres produits textiles, cela ne va-t-il pas affecter les ventes des petites et moyennes entreprises locales et par ricochet sur la sécurité d'emploi dans ce secteur? Et finalement, je voudrais savoir: est-ce que ce ne sont pas uniquement les importateurs et distributeurs qui vont tirer profit de ces exemptions?

D'ailleurs, Madame la présidente, l'Association des Consommateurs de l'île Maurice a, du reste, attiré l'attention sur ce point où dans le passé des baisses de frais de douanes furent annoncées sur des centaines de produits mais les consommateurs n'en ont jamais bénéficié.

Madame la présidente, nous savons tous que notre république fait face à une situation préoccupante au niveau de la drogue. Il est vrai que, dans sa présentation du budget, le ministre des Finances a consacré quelques lignes au combat contre la drogue.

C'est un fait aujourd'hui que ce gouvernement éprouve d'énormes difficultés à trouver les moyens pour lutter contre la prolifération de drogues à Maurice. Tous les indicateurs sont au rouge et jour après jour tous ceux, engagés dans ce combat, n'arrêtent pas de tirer la sonnette d'alarme.

La situation des drogues à Maurice est arrivée à un tel niveau que la question à poser est de savoir si nous ne sommes pas déjà en échec devant les barons de la drogue. La commission d'enquête présidée par l'ex-juge Paul Lam Shang Leen viendra sans aucun doute apporter des réponses à cette question.

Mais doit-on vraiment, Madame la présidente, attendre les conclusions de ce rapport pour se faire une idée de la gravité de la situation? Je ne le pense pas. Il n'y a que ceux qui ne veulent pas voir la vérité en face qui peuvent venir dire que la situation de la drogue à Maurice n'est pas alarmante.

Il suffit de parcourir certaines régions spécifiques de Maurice pour se rendre compte que le business de la drogue se fait au vu et au su de tout le monde. L'échec est total et en tant que député d'une circonscription qui est touchée de plein fouet par ce fléau, je ne peux cacher mon incompréhension devant certains propos tenus par le ministre de la Santé sur la situation de la drogue à Maurice.

Madame la présidente, depuis qu'il occupe les fonctions de ministre de la Santé, l'honorable Anil Gayan n'a pas cessé d'antagoniser les travailleurs sociaux engagés dans le combat contre la drogue tout en stigmatisant les usagers de drogues. Dois-je rappeler à la Chambre que jamais auparavant à Maurice n'avons-nous vu un travailleur social défiant un ministre, allant jusqu'à réclamer sa démission.

Pour commencer, Madame la présidente, le ministre, une fois en place, a remis en question la thérapie de maintenance à la méthadone et le programme d'échange de seringues, mesures décidées sous le gouvernement MSM/MMM de 2000/2005 et qui a provoqué l'indignation de la société civile.

A ce propos, Madame la présidente, je me permets de citer, Ruth Dreifuss, présidente du *Global Commission on Drug Policy*, qui était tout récemment en visite à Maurice, et qui en faisant référence aux usagers de drogues a dit ceci, je l'a cite –

« Si on les perd parce qu'on ne met pas à leur disposition la méthadone et les seringues, on court le risque d'avoir une nouvelle flambée au niveau du VIH et de

l'hépatite C. Le risque ne se limitera alors plus à cette seule communauté. Il s'étendra à toute la population. C'est cela le danger principal. »

Après avoir été un exemple pendant plusieurs années, aujourd'hui la sonnette d'alarme est tirée avec pour conséquence que la contamination au VIH/SIDA chez les usagers de drogues est en progression depuis 2015.

Malgré le fait que les indications soient claires et que les risques que Maurice encourt, l'honorable ministre persiste et signe et place notre République dans une situation qui inquiète désormais les experts internationaux.

L'honorable ministre ne s'est pas arrêté en si bon chemin, serait-on tenté de dire, quand il a décidé d'un trait de plume de fermer la NATReSA, organisme responsable dans le traitement et la réhabilitation des usagers de drogues. À mon avis, il aurait été plus judicieux de réformer cette agence, quid à revoir ses objectifs au lieu de procéder à sa fermeture pure et simple sans proposer une alternative crédible.

Madame la présidente, les chiffres donnent froid dans le dos. Il y aurait 8,000 toxicomanes actifs et sans traitement selon les ONG engagées dans ce combat. Faut-il qu'il y ait plus de morts pour que le gouvernement se rende compte de l'ampleur de la situation?

Madame la présidente, notre pays fait désormais face à un nouveau type de drogue qui semaine après semaine fait des ravages dans les familles mauriciennes c'est-à-dire les drogues synthétiques. Un fléau qui touche principalement les adolescents des régions urbaines et rurales confondues. Je déplore à nouveau la légèreté dont fait preuve le ministre de la Santé lorsqu'il évoque cette question.

On n'arrête pas de compter les morts et le personnel de l'hôpital Brown Séquard est dépassé par les événements. Déjà je m'interroge, Madame la présidente, si c'est une bonne décision que de traiter les jeunes affectés par la consommation de la drogue synthétique dans cet hôpital psychiatrique? Je pense que le gouvernement devrait dès à présent envisager à mettre en place une unité spéciale dans un ou dans les autres hôpitaux afin de ne pas *add insult to injury*.

Il ne faut pas oublier, Madame la présidente, que c'est avant tout des drames humains et les interner à Brown Séquard ne ferait qu'empirer leur cas. Ce qui me révolte davantage dans cette affaire, c'est que les victimes de la drogue synthétique sont de plus en plus jeunes.

Madame la présidente, ce n'est certainement pas la première fois que je fais ressortir dans cette Chambre qu'il y a un rajeunissement chez les consommateurs de drogues. Quand l'honorable ministre de la Santé affirme que la situation de la drogue synthétique à Maurice n'est pas alarmante, c'est faire preuve de désinvolture face à un problème où la réalité du terrain est toute autre.

En effet, Madame la présidente, l'honorable ministre de la Santé, Anil Gayan, est aussi un député de la circonscription numéro 20. Mais qu'a-t-il fait face aux cris d'alarme, voire les appels de détresse des ONG, des travailleurs sociaux et des habitants de cette circonscription? Les marchands de drogues fonctionnent librement et le ministre de la Santé, à lui, choisi de pratiquer la politique de l'autruche.

Pour vous citer un exemple, de juin à décembre 2015, un regroupement des ONG et des travailleurs sociaux de la région de Barkly, connu sous le nom de la Coalition des Acteurs Sociaux, avait organisé toute une série d'activités autour de la lutte contre la prolifération des drogues.

Je tiens d'ailleurs à rendre hommage à l'engagement et le dévouement de ces travailleurs sociaux. Lors de cette campagne de prévention et de conscientisation, ils avaient pu réunir pour un travail commun, la police, la paroisse du Sacré Cœur, la Municipalité de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, des députés de la circonscription et des volontaires. Mais encore une fois, le ministre de la Santé avait brillé par son absence durant toute cette campagne. Pourtant, Madame la présidente, tous les acteurs de la région étaient mobilisés face à ce fléau et le ministre de la Santé n'avait pas jugé utile d'apporter son soutien à ce mouvement. Il est clair que s'il avait été présent, ne serait-ce qu'une fois, il aurait constaté la détresse et le désarroi des familles victimes des méfaits de la drogue.

Je ne peux que regretter aussi, Madame la présidente, la démobilisation de la force policière tout juste après ces activités. Pourtant, cette même force policière était fortement présente sur le terrain le temps de cette campagne de la Coalition des Acteurs Sociaux de Barkly? Du coup, le soulagement qu'avaient ressenti les habitants de cette région s'est vite dissipé et la situation s'est à nouveau détériorée.

Donc, l'attitude négative du ministre de la Santé sur des sujets aussi importants que la drogue et le VIH/SIDA, suscite l'incompréhension de tout un chacun. À tel point, Madame la présidente, et je dois bien le dire, qu'on l'exclut volontairement des débats sur ce sujet. Pour preuve, l'honorable Gayan n'a pas été invité à la dernière conférence des ONG sur le thème

'*Drugs policies: Impact on health and society*', une conférence tenue le 26 juillet dernier au centre Rajiv Gandhi.

A ce propos, Michel Chiffonne du centre CARES et un des coordonnateurs de cette conférence a déclaré, et je le cite –

« Nous n'avons pas invité Anil Gayan car nous savons quelle est sa position. Il ne connaît pas la réalité du terrain. »

Nous avons, Madame la présidente, sans doute touché le fond.

Je vais maintenant aborder un autre sujet, c'est-à-dire, le sport. Madame la présidente, avant d'évoquer les propositions faites pour le mouvement sportif dans ce présent budget, permettez-moi d'exprimer tout mon encouragement aux athlètes mauriciens qui participent actuellement aux Jeux Olympiques de Rio. Un encouragement particulier au boxeur Kennedy St-Pierre qui tôt ce matin a remporté son premier combat et qui représente notre meilleure chance de médaille.

Dans son intervention, le ministre des Finances a, entre autres annoncé la construction d'un complexe multisport et une piscine à St. Pierre dans le cadre de l'organisation des Jeux des îles à Maurice en 2019.

Madame la présidente, je dois faire ressortir que ce projet avait déjà été annoncé en 2010 par ce même ministre des Finances. Dois-je rappeler que la région de St. Pierre se trouve dans la circonscription de l'honorable ministre des Finances et aussi celui des Sports? Et il est clair que l'honorable ministre des Finances favorise sa circonscription au détriment des autres.

(Interruptions)

Un fait que même l'honorable Madame Sewocksingh du PMSD est membre de la majorité, a récemment dénoncé son intervention sur le budget et elle a jugé plus appropriée que la construction d'une piscine se fasse à Curepipe.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin: *Mo coze pour tous pays mwa ! Mo gagne droit cozé! Mo pas prend l'ordre ar twa pou cozé!*

Madam Speaker: No conversation, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin : Dois-je encore une fois rappeler, Madame la présidente, que l'honorable ministre des finances a aussi indiqué que les stades Anjalay, George V, Germain Comarmonder Quartier Militaire seront rénovés. Et encore une fois, je rappelle que ces stades sont aujourd'hui dans un état déplorable parce que le ministère des sports n'a jamais pris les devants pour entamer les travaux de rénovation et cela malgré le fait que, budget après budget, des sommes avaient été allouées dans ce sens.

Autre annonce faite par l'honorable ministre des Finances est la mise en place d'un plan pour soutenir le développement professionnel de nos meilleurs athlètes en leur offrant un contrat d'embauche en tant qu'entraîneurs pour les jeunes sportifs et sportives.

D'abord, je dois relever, Madame la présidente, une contradiction entre ce qu'a dit le ministre des Finances sur ce projet et l'intervention du ministre des Sports jeudi dernier.

Les propos de l'honorable ministre des finances étaient comme suit -

"I am pleased to announce the setting-up of a scheme to support the professional development of our best athletes. We will provide them with a contract of employment as coach to young sportsmen and sports women."

Alors que le ministre des Sports a lui affirmé dans son intervention que le plan en question concerne l'après carrière de nos meilleurs sportifs, et tel n'est pas le cas en analysant les propos du ministre des Finances que je viens de citer.

N'empêche, Madame la présidente, même si en effet, le ministre des Finances voulait dire que cette mesure vise l'après carrière des sportifs de haut niveau, cela me paraît très limité en termes d'opportunités de carrière professionnelle que l'État offre à nos meilleurs sportifs.

L'après carrière de nos sportifs est un sujet de grande préoccupation et depuis 2010, ici même dans cette Chambre, Madame la présidente, j'ai, à plusieurs reprises, attirer l'attention sur le calvaire que vivent bon nombre de nos sportifs qui ont fait honneur au pays.

Le 19 avril dernier, par le biais d'une question parlementaire, j'avais fait état du cas du boxeur, Bruno Julie, notre seul médaillé olympique, à ce jour, et qui vit aujourd'hui dans une situation précaire.

À ce jour, Madame la présidente, le cas de Bruno Julie n'est toujours pas réglé et pas plus tard que dimanche dernier dans une déclaration de presse, il a exprimé sa frustration concernant les promesses non tenues à son égard par le ministre des Sports et je le cite.

« Je ne suis pas là pour juger ses compétences. Tout ce que je sais c'est que je suis allé le voir à plusieurs reprises. Il m'a demandé à chaque fois d'attendre. Au Parlement, il a affirmé qu'il attendait mon dossier pour me confier un poste d'entraîneur. Mais cela fait belle lurette qu'il a mon dossier entre les mains, je ne sais à quoi il joue. Il faut juste assumer ses responsabilités quand on en a, sinon, *lev paké*. »

Propos tenus par Bruno Julie! De ce fait, Madame la présidente, doit-on prendre au sérieux ce qu'a dit le ministre des Sports dans son intervention la semaine dernière quand il a affirmé et je le cite aussi -

« Du jour au lendemain, ces athlètes qui ont fait la fierté du quadricolore se retrouvent abandonnés. J'ai décidé que cette situation avait assez duré. »

De ce fait, je souhaite bonne chance à Bruno Julie!

Autre mesure annoncée par le ministre des Finances est l'allocation de R 26 millions au football professionnel à travers un '*New Lotto Fund*'.

Madame la présidente, il est un fait que le football professionnel, tout comme le football amateur a besoin du soutien de l'État. Cependant, je déplore l'absence totale de transparence autour de l'assistance financière accordée par le gouvernement, de surcroît à une compagnie privée, qu'est la *Mauritius Professional Football Limited (MPFL)*.

Depuis deux ans, l'État investit de l'argent dans cette compagnie et, à ce jour, aucun bilan financier n'a été déposé dans cette assemblée. Je ne suis pas contre le fait d'aider le football professionnel, mais cela doit se faire dans la transparence et nous devons savoir comment est dépensé l'argent des contribuables.

La contribution du gouvernement passera de R 16 million à R 26 million pour cette année financière. Sur quoi l'État s'est basé pour augmenter sa contribution à la ligue professionnelle de football par plus de 60% ? Et la *Mauritius Football Association (MFA)* dans tout cela? Cette fédération, Madame la présidente, a pourtant vu son soutien financier de la FIFA bondir d'un million de dollars à 4 millions de dollars sur quatre ans. On parle ici,

Madame la présidente, d'un *grant* annuel de R 36 millions. Mais quelle est donc la contribution de la MFA dans le football professionnel ?

Quant aux R 17 millions prévus pour la rénovation des centres à Pointe Jérôme et Anse La Raie, il est bon de rappeler que, tout comme les stades, ces deux centres résidentiels pour les jeunes sont dans un piteux état depuis des années. Pourtant, budget après budget, des sommes sont accordées pour la rénovation de ces centres, mais sans que cela ne se concrétise. Ce qui me pousse à déplorer l'absence d'entretien régulier des infrastructures pour la jeunesse et les sportifs.

Quant à la proposition que le ministère des sports procédera à la rénovation des infrastructures sportives dans les écoles et collèges, je note qu'il n'y a aucune dotation prévue dans les *Estimates* 2016-2017! D'ailleurs je me pose la question si c'est bien la responsabilité du ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports d'aller rénover les infrastructures tombant sous le ministère de l'Education.

Pour en résumer, Madame la présidente, ce sont des propositions qu'on peut qualifier de 'réchauffé'. Il est clair que ce gouvernement n'a pas de politique définie pour le sport. Voilà ce que je disais dans mon intervention l'année dernière après la présentation d'un supposé budget de 'miracle économique'.

Madame la présidente, une année après, pas de grand changement. Ah si! Une chose a changé: le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports fonctionne désormais dans de luxueux bureaux au Citadelle Mall.

Comme il fallait s'y attendre, le ministre a mis en avant dans son intervention, sur le budget récemment, les médailles que les athlètes mauriciens ont ramenées des compétitions internationales, dont les Jeux des Iles à la Réunion et les Jeux d'Afrique au Congo-Brazzaville.

Madame la présidente, sans remettre en question le succès de nos athlètes, le ministre a omis de préciser que pour les derniers Jeux des Iles à la Réunion, il y avait un plus grand nombre de disciplines au programme dont plus de médailles en jeu.

Comparons ce qui est comparable et venir dire que « Maurice a réalisé sa meilleure performance depuis les premiers Jeux de 1979 », est un pas que je ne franchirai pas. Toutefois on ne peut se contenter de ces médailles pour dire que le sport mauricien est en bonne voie et que tout va pour le mieux. C'est, à mon avis, faire preuve d'un manque de vision.

Où en sommes-nous au niveau de l'encadrement et la formation des athlètes, aussi bien que des entraîneurs? Deux secteurs qui sont quasiment les parents pauvres du sport mauricien. Dans presque toutes les disciplines, la formation passe au second plan et dans bien des cas, c'est à cause d'un manque de financement. Pourtant, Madame la présidente, le ministère des Sports avait annoncé en grande pompe la réouverture de toutes les écoles de football. De même que le centre technique national à Réduit.

Grande a été notre surprise, ici même, dans cette assemblée et cela à travers une réponse de l'honorable ministre, que quelques mois, après leur réouverture, ces mêmes écoles ont dû cesser leurs opérations, faute de moyens financiers.

Dans cette même lignée, Madame la présidente, on peut ajouter le flou qui existe autour du projet de mettre une Académie de Football, comme l'avait dit l'honorable ministre des Sports lui-même, avec le soutien d'un '*famous club*' européen, présenté comme un projet prioritaire de ce gouvernement.

Que n'a-t-on pas entendu dans cette même Assemblée sur ce projet ?

Madame la présidente, le Premier ministre lui-même avait affirmé dans une fonction sportive, le *National Sports Award* de l'année dernière, que ce gouvernement irait de l'avant avec ce projet. Mais le ministre des Sports a été incapable de dire à ce jour si ce projet national se concrétisera. Si ce n'est pas du bluff, cela y ressemble étrangement.

Tous les spécialistes du sport, Madame la présidente, peuvent confirmer que la formation est l'épine dorsale de tout projet de haut niveau. Mais à Maurice, le ministère des Sports veut faire de la formation avec un budget annuel de R 300,000 pour une discipline collective.

Si ce n'est pas de la formation '*low cost*', je me demande bien ce que c'est ! C'est dire que le mouvement sportif local est bien souvent désorienté face aux problèmes récurrents et qui demeurent un obstacle au progrès.

Il n'y a qu'à écouter, d'ailleurs, les réponses du ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports aux questions qui lui sont posées dans cette Assemblée pour mieux comprendre. Très souvent, il évoque l'autonomie des fédérations et la confidentialité de certains dossiers pour ne pas avoir à donner des explications.

D'ailleurs, le ministre des Sports, dans son intervention sur le budget, a parlé de sa « nouvelle méthode de travail axée sur le bien-être des athlètes » depuis son arrivée dans ce ministère.

Comment alors ne pas s'étonner devant de tels propos, quand on note les difficultés auxquelles font face quotidiennement les athlètes de haut niveau, ne serait-ce que pour s'entraîner dans des conditions adéquates !

Je peux citer des exemples, tels que la disponibilité irrégulière d'un moyen de transport pour les athlètes après les entraînements, le manque de financement pour les déplacements à l'étranger et le mauvais état de certaines infrastructures sportives, dont le gymnase de Phoenix, où le parquet devient impraticable en période de pluie, ou encore les haltérophiles de Curepipe qui s'entraînent pied dans l'eau dans une salle située au stade Georges V.

Comment peut-on parler de bien-être des athlètes, Madame la présidente, quand ces derniers sont livrés à eux-mêmes après avoir subi de graves blessures ?

Je vais vous citer quelques cas qui ont été portés à ma connaissance.

Le premier concerne l'haltérophile Cédric Coret, triple médaillé d'or aux derniers Jeux des Iles à La Réunion, qui a été gravement blessé au genou à l'entraînement. Par faute de traitements appropriés, son état inspire de vives inquiétudes. Sa frustration est telle que récemment il a déclaré dans un hebdomadaire, et je le cite –

« Je suis perdu. J'estime, en tant qu'athlète de haut niveau, avoir défendu avec brio les couleurs de mon pays. J'ai le droit de bénéficier de soutien adéquat après cette grave blessure. Ce n'est toutefois pas le cas. »

Le second cas, Madame la présidente, est celui du footballeur professionnel Kursley Louie, blessé lui aussi au genou, qui a été abandonné à son sort. Son cas a provoqué la colère de ses proches. Sa mère est même allée sur les ondes d'une radio privée pour attirer l'attention des autorités sur la situation de son fils. Et elle a déclaré –

« Tant que mon fils pouvait jouer, cela allait bien pour lui. Aujourd'hui, personne ne bouge le petit doigt pour lui, qu'il s'agisse de son club, de la ligue professionnelle, de la MFA, ou encore le ministère des Sports. Mon fils gagnait sa vie en jouant au football, et après sa blessure, il a été licencié par son club. » avait déclaré cette mère révoltée.

Il y a aussi le cas du coureur de demi-fond, Paramasiven Samynaden, lui aussi médaillé d'or aux derniers Jeux des Iles, blessé dans un accident de moto, et qui a dû lancer un appel sur internet pour solliciter une aide financière afin de pouvoir se soigner.

Madame la présidente, l'incohérence dans la répartition des dotations budgétaires se situe surtout au niveau des disciplines collectives.

Alors que le football bénéficie des largesses de l'Etat, les autres disciplines, telles que handball, le volleyball et le basketball n'obtiennent que des miettes. Les résultats obtenus aux derniers Jeux des Iles à La Réunion sont là pour le prouver.

Le ministre avait pourtant reconnu que Maurice, et je le cite -

“has not performed to expectation in team sports during the Indian Ocean Games 2015.”

Mais, depuis, qu'à fait de concret son ministère pour relancer la machine ? Surtout que ce n'est un secret pour personne que Maurice accueille dans trois ans les 10^{ème} Jeux des Iles.

Madame la présidente, c'est ce qu'on appelle le revers de la médaille.

Il ne faut pas oublier que le sport mauricien a quand même vécu des moments pénibles durant l'année financière écoulée.

Certains sportifs ont été traités comme des athlètes de second grade par le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports.

Qui ne se rappelle pas de la polémique qui a été lancée, ici-même, dans cette même Assemblée, où le ministre avait clairement fait comprendre que les sportifs pratiquant une discipline non olympique ne pouvaient bénéficier des mêmes avantages que ceux pratiquant une discipline olympique ! Allant même jusqu'à les comparer à l'opposition parlementaire ! Les réactions d'indignation n'avaient pas tardé, venant principalement de Fabrice Bauluck, champion du monde de kick-boxing.

N'oublions pas, qu'à ce jour, ce sont les sportifs des disciplines non olympiques qui ont gagné des titres mondiaux au nom de la République de Maurice.

Madame la présidente, que n'a-t-on pas fait subir à Noémie Alphonse ? Une athlète handicapée qui voulait du respect et des réponses à ses interrogations légitimes. Et comme réponse, elle fut suspendue par sa fédération, et cela, avec la bienveillance du ministre des Sports.

Madame la présidente, le financement du sport mauricien reste jusqu'à présent un sujet hautement sensible dont souffre beaucoup de fédérations, et qui a une incidence directe sur les performances des sportifs.

Beaucoup sont privés de compétitions ou de stages à l'étranger en raison d'un manque de financement.

Je voudrais encore une fois plaider pour qu'une partie des fonds alloués au *CSR* aillent au sport. Nous ne pouvons pas continuer à voir nos sportifs mendier pour aller représenter le pays.

Malgré le fait que les *guidelines* ont été réintroduits, je constate que le sport ne figure toujours pas parmi les bénéficiaires.

En 2014 pourtant, une décision avait été prise et annoncée dans une réponse parlementaire par l'ex-ministre des Sports, suite à une de mes questions, que le sport allait dorénavant bénéficier de 10% de la contribution des entreprises au *CSR Fund*.

Toutefois, Madame la présidente, dans ce présent budget, le sport a été ignoré de la liste des secteurs qui vont bénéficier de ces mêmes fonds.

Dois-je rappeler à la Chambre que nombreux sont les clubs et associations sportives qui se trouvent dans les régions défavorisées et prioritaires, identifiées par le ministère de l'Intégration sociale.

De surcroît, ces clubs et associations sont aussi engagés dans le social, qui d'ailleurs va de pair avec le sport. Et guider les jeunes vers le sport, en particulier dans les régions pauvres, est un excellent moyen de participer à la lutte contre la pauvreté.

Madame la présidente, il est à mon avis primordial que les clubs sportifs puissent, eux aussi, bénéficier d'une partie des fonds du *CSR*, car le sponsoring de nos jours n'est pratiquement plus d'actualité.

Dans un autre ordre d'idée, Madame la présidente, je voudrais aussi dire ma déception devant la décision qu'a prise dernièrement le *Mauritius Sports Council* afin d'augmenter considérablement les frais d'utilisation des infrastructures sportives.

Dorénavant, les frais de location des sites de compétition est un budget qui pèse lourd dans les comptes des fédérations.

Ce problème ne touche pas uniquement les fédérations, mais tout aussi bien ceux qui pratiquent le sport loisir. Pour une heure de natation dans une piscine ou jouer au badminton dans un gymnase, ces sportifs doivent déboursier une somme conséquente pour avoir accès à ces infrastructures.

C'est tout simplement inconcevable, Madame la présidente. Drôle de façon à mon avis d'inciter la population à la pratique du sport.

Pour conclure sur le chapitre du sport, je voudrais dire que la décision du Conseil International des Jeux (CIJ) de permettre à Maurice d'accueillir les 10^{ème} Jeux des Iles en 2019 est une aubaine pour les sportifs de haut niveau, mais aussi pour le sport en général.

Le Comité D'Organisation des Jeux a été mis en place et notre devoir à tous c'est de laisser au COJI Maurice de travailler en toute sérénité et dans le respect des règles.

Toutefois, Madame la présidente, le choix des personnes à des postes aussi importants est déterminant. Nous espérons que ceux en qui l'État a placé sa confiance seront à la hauteur de la situation. Mais il semblerait que le départ est mal entamé avec des choix de disciplines qui font déjà polémiques. Dans le cas de la voile, le ministre des Sports a récemment laissé comprendre que cette discipline ne sera pas au programme des Jeux. Il serait, à mon avis, impensable que la voile et le handball ne soient pas de la fête. Il est à souhaiter que le gouvernement profite de l'organisation de ces prochains jeux pour doter le sport mauricien de nouvelles infrastructures sportives. D'ailleurs les dernières qui ont été construites datent de 2003 lorsque Maurice avait organisé les 6^{ème} jeux des îles. L'usure du temps et l'évolution technique font que certaines de ces infrastructures ne répondent plus aux conditions imposées.

Madame la présidente, quelques mots maintenant concernant la jeunesse. Face à ce nouveau fléau qu'est la drogue synthétique, face à la violence dans les institutions scolaires, face à un chômage grandissant et à un manque de loisir et de repères, la jeunesse mauricienne est désorientée.

Les commentaires de l'ex-juge Paul Lam Shang Leen, président de la Commission d'Enquête sur la Drogue concernant une étude faite par le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports sur le comportement des jeunes dans la société, démontre combien ce ministère est resté sans réaction devant des indications qui pourtant nécessitaient des actions urgentes.

Madame la présidente, cette étude financée par les fonds des Nations Unies pour la population fait état des causes de la violence chez les jeunes. Notamment les problèmes

familiaux, la colère, la frustration, le manque de considération à leur égard, leur impulsion à défier les autorités et aussi la consommation des substances illicites entre autres.

Le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports a été d'ailleurs sévèrement blâmé par l'ex-juge Paul Lam Shang Leen pour n'avoir pas su utiliser les conclusions de ce rapport à bon escient. Parmi les remontrances faites par le président de la Commission d'Enquête, figure la non-utilisation des centres de jeunesse comme un espace permettant aux jeunes d'évoluer sainement et loin des fléaux. Pourtant, Madame la présidente, le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports est en possession de ce rapport depuis janvier 2015.

Le comportement des jeunes, en particulier dans le milieu scolaire, est aussi un sujet de grande préoccupation. Rapport après rapport, le constat d'échec est une évidence. Les bagarres, les agressions et les intimidations sont monnaies courantes dans bon nombre d'institutions scolaires. Le plus grave dans cette affaire, Madame la présidente, est que cette violence s'affiche sur les réseaux sociaux.

Je propose, donc, à la ministre de l'Education d'aller sur Internet pour constater à quel point cette violence s'affiche gratuitement. Et il n'y a pas plus grand danger pour les jeunes quand la violence devient gratuite. Pour l'heure, il est triste de dire que les mesures prises par le ministère de l'Education pour essayer de régler ce problème ont été nettement inefficaces, d'autant plus que les pédagogues ne cessent de critiquer la *Student Behaviour Policy* mise en place pour instaurer la discipline dans les collèges.

« Face à cette montée de violence, les recteurs et les enseignants n'y peuvent rien, n'ayant aucun pouvoir. Dans la plupart des cas, nous nous contentons de suivre les procédures, ce qui nous limite à nos actions à rapporter les cas à la police. »

Propos tenus par le Docteur Hasam Sakibe, pédagogue et directeur du *Mauritius Institute* dans un récent article de presse sur la violence à l'école.

Madame la présidente, si les pédagogues eux-mêmes commencent à baisser les bras, c'est tout dire sur la gravité de la situation, d'autant que de nouveaux phénomènes sont venus se greffer à cette violence existante. Par exemple, le '*bullying*', une action qui consiste à humilier profondément un étudiant, affecte sérieusement les établissements scolaires de notre pays.

« Les jeunes sont de plus en plus agressifs et violents. Le niveau de violence qui règne dans certains établissements scolaires est choquant. »

Ces propos sont ceux de Jacques Malié, pédagogue de carrière et ex-Recteur du Collège du Saint Esprit, tenu en juin dernier. Je pense qu'il sait de quoi il parle. Jacques Malié explique aussi comment les mesures annoncées par le ministère de l'Education sont difficiles à mettre en exécution, sans compter les tracasseries administratives qui accompagnent ces mesures. Du coup, Madame la présidente, c'est toute la théorie –

« *Government is government, government decides* » qui est mise à mal.

Il est reproché au ministère de l'Education de travailler en solo et de ne pas consulter ceux qui font face quotidiennement à ces problèmes.

Madame la présidente, je lance, de ce fait, un pressant appel à la ministre de l'Education afin de tout mettre en œuvre pour que les institutions scolaires de Maurice soient avant tout des lieux sûrs et sécurisants pour notre jeunesse. Au cas contraire, ce sont des délinquants de demain qu'elles produiront.

Contrairement à ce qu'avait annoncé récemment la ministre de l'Education, les drogues sont bien présentes dans les établissements scolaires, comme l'a d'ailleurs soutenu un des cadres de son ministère devant la Commission d'Enquête.

Madame la présidente, je propose, face à cette situation, si besoin est, que les règlements soient modifiés afin que l'inspectorat du ministère de l'Education puisse avoir la possibilité de faire des visites surprises dans les établissements où on soupçonnerait la présence des drogues; y compris de procéder à des fouilles en présence du responsable de l'établissement et des membres du PTA.

Madame la présidente, par rapport aux administrations régionales nous voyons que, depuis juin 2015, il y a une gestion frisant d'amateurisme au sein des conseils municipaux. Les critiques ne cessent de s'amplifier...

(Interruptions)

Causer, causer!

Nombreux sont les citoyens qui regrettent amèrement d'avoir confié les clés de leur ville à des néophytes, incapables d'améliorer les conditions de vie de leur quartier.

(Interruptions)

Mo coze Plaza enn ti moment-là!

Ajoutez à cela, en parcourant les *Estimates 2016-2017*, je note qu'aucune somme n'est prévue pour la rénovation du Théâtre de Port Louis, de même que pour le Plaza à Rose Hill et le *Town Hall* à Curepipe. Cela, contrairement à ce qu'avait annoncé l'honorable ministre Dr. Husnoo dans son intervention.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Toussaint, did we ask for your comment?

Mr Quirin: Les *Estimates 2016-2017* laissent comprendre que pour assurer le financement des futurs travaux, les fonds seront puisés du *National Lottery Fund*. Vu le nombre de projets qui ont besoin de financement, je me pose la question, Madame la présidente, pour savoir combien d'argent dispose ce fonds?

A ce sujet, je dois faire ressortir que tout ce qui concerne la rénovation de la salle des fêtes et le bloc administratif du Plaza (Phase II), qui est actuellement en cours, ce projet fut lancé depuis septembre 2013, sous le précédent conseil municipal dirigé par un Maire MMM...

(Interruptions)

... allant du recrutement d'un consultant jusqu'au lancement des appels d'offres et le choix du contracteur pour les travaux. Madame la présidente, le MMM a pleinement assumé ses responsabilités vis-à-vis des citoyens de cette ville.

Concernant ma circonscription de Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière, Madame la présidente, je voudrais tout d'abord exprimer mon inquiétude, encore une fois, pour les habitants d'une région en particulier, notamment les résidents du Morcellement Hermitage à Coromandel, qui vivent dans une situation d'insécurité permanente. C'est un vieux problème qui s'est empiré depuis août 2012 avec l'effondrement d'un mur qui a causé un mouvement de terrain et la chute de grosses pierres.

Quatre ans après, Madame la présidente, les travaux de réhabilitation promis sont au point mort et le danger est toujours bel et bien présent dans cette région. Pourtant en avril dernier, le ministre des Infrastructures Publiques, l'honorable Bodha, avait indiqué, en réponse à une de mes questions sur le sujet, que différentes mesures seraient prises pour que les habitants se sentent en sécurité. Il avait promis, entre autres, la construction de murs de protection ainsi que l'aménagement de drains adéquats. Depuis, les habitants du Morcellement Hermitage ne voient toujours rien venir malgré leurs nombreuses sollicitations.

Madame la présidente, la crainte des habitants de cette région s'accroît chaque année à l'approche de la période des grosses pluies d'été. Je demande de ce fait au ministre des Infrastructures Publiques d'accorder un certificat d'urgence à ce dossier. J'espère aussi que les promesses faites par l'honorable Boissézon, PPS de la circonscription, dans son intervention jeudi dernier, seront respectées.

Je déplore aussi le peu de considération qui a été donnée au projet de construction d'un terrain de football à Canot. Pourtant, une portion de terrain a déjà été mise à la disposition du gouvernement par la sucrerie de Médine. En février 2015, le ministre des Administrations Régionales avait soutenu que le conseil de district de Rivière Noire n'avait pas les fonds nécessaires pour réaliser ce projet.

Je trouve vraiment désolant, Madame la présidente, qu'un gouvernement qui se dit 'caring' n'arrive toujours pas à trouver les moyens financiers pour permettre aux jeunes de cette localité de bénéficier d'un terrain de foot. La pratique du football est sans aucun doute le passe-temps ...

(Interruptions)

Mo pena leçon pou prend ar zotte moi.

Madam Speaker: I have said that interruptions are disorderly!

Mr Quirin: ... numéro un des jeunes. Doit-on s'étonner, Madame la présidente, qu'après qu'ils s'adonnent à des activités nuisibles à la société ?

Concernant toujours cette partie rurale de ma circonscription, je me pose encore la question : qu'est-ce qui motive ce gouvernement à installer une raffinerie pétrolière à Albion? Les habitants de la région ont encore en mémoire la triste épisode de *CT Power* et voilà qu'aujourd'hui un nouveau projet nuisible à l'environnement, avec les risques que cela comporte sur la santé publique, a été annoncé par le ministre des Finances. J'aimerais savoir, Madame la présidente, est-ce que la région d'Albion est-elle condamnée à accueillir que les projets non écologiques? Pourquoi pas un complexe multisport et une piscine? Pourquoi ne pas déplacer la raffinerie vers St. Pierre.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Quirin: Albion, Albion, à chaque fois c'est Albion!

Ceci dit, Madame la présidente, je dois aussi préciser que la Municipalité de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill a besoin de mieux coordonner, voire une meilleure concertation avec la NDU et les autres institutions gouvernementales pour plus d'efficacité afin d'améliorer le quotidien des citoyens. Ce ne sont pas les urgences qui manquent dans la circonscription de Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière.

Rapidement, il y a, entre autres, la réfection générale des trottoirs, en particulier, dans le centre-ville de Beau Bassin. L'aménagement des drains dans diverses régions, en particulier à la Rue Pope Hennessy où la situation est encore plus urgente. D'ailleurs, j'avais soulevé ce problème il y a quelques semaines de cela lors de l'ajournement des travaux parlementaires. Et aussi, à Mont Roches, il est urgent que les routes soient remises en état après que des travaux de tout-à-l'égout aient été effectués.

Pour conclure, Madame la présidente, j'ose espérer que les mesures annoncées dans ce présent budget seront implémentées dans leur intégralité. C'est à ce moment que nous saurons si le ministre des Finances est bien ce '*fantastic guy*' comme le décrit le gouverneur de la Banque de Maurice.

Je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

(6.51 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr A. Gayan): Madam Speaker, let me start by, first of all, congratulating the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for this very interesting Budget.

In fact, before I stood up to address the House, I was thinking how should I qualify this budget. Is it an interesting budget? Interesting to whom? And why? Because when one looks at the newspapers, Madam Speaker, one will see that the Secretary General of the MMM, had instructed all the Members in this House to be honest about the Budget.

(Interruptions)

Yes!

And their Leader had said: 'It is an interesting Budget.'

(Interruptions)

Very Interesting! How interesting is this interesting Budget?

But listening to the orators on the other side of the House - on this side of the House, it is a different story - I must say that they find nothing good in this budget. Their Leader said it was interesting, but they find nothing good. Hon. Quirin had just spoken. I will come to the issue of drugs later and I will challenge him to certain things about Methadone in our Constituency. I will challenge him. I will come to hon. Dr. Joomaye as well.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, no!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody! Hon. Bhagwan! Please! It is your right to challenge him. When you intervene, then you can challenge him.

Mr Gayan: I am not saying anything about hon. Bhagwan because I know that he knows the problem of Mont Roches about Methadone.

(Interruptions)

Yes, wait, I will come to that.

Let me say some words about this Budget before I come to the issues concerning my Ministry and also something that has been said by the hon. Members on the other side.

This budget, Madam Speaker, is, in fact, a people's budget. It could not be otherwise because it is a budget of *L'Alliance Lepep*. It is a budget of pragmatism, of realism and a determination that doing nothing bold about the economy is no longer an option. This is not a budget filled with ideology. It is not a budget about very confusing phraseology used by Economists. It is a budget which puts people first. For the first time, unlike others who said that they were putting people first, this Budget puts people first. Not only does it put people first, but for the first time, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development is looking at the people *les yeux dans les yeux*.

This budget will be fully implemented and it will be implemented so that the economy is democratised, really democratised.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Now, if you continue to interrupt the orator, we will never finish. I have said that interruptions are disorderly and can only create difficulties for the orator as well.

(Interruptions)

You continue despite what I have said!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, this budget has been said to be daring and bold. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister said it is excellent, but it is a budget that also bears the footprint of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. It bears the footprint of everybody on this side of the House because it is a budget that is required in order to have this new era of development being realised.

Madam Speaker, let me say that apart from the ten key strategies which have been outlined in the budget, which are very important to kick start the economy and to bring hope to those who are living in absolute poverty, there are three elements which, I think, I need to highlight in this House. The three initiatives which have been identified in the budget and which I am going to mention in the House are -

1. the return of the Chagos Archipelago to the Sovereignty of Mauritius;
2. the fight against poverty, and
3. preparing the youth of our country to rise to the challenges of the modern world.

On the first issue, the Chagos Archipelago, I think, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister was absolutely right in taking the battle to 10 Downing Street and placing the United Kingdom before its responsibilities. For too long, Mauritius has been asking in all international fora for the return of the Chagos Archipelago to the sovereignty of Mauritius. The United Kingdom has always maintained that it is going to return the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius when it no longer requires the Chagos Archipelago for the defence of the West.

In order to understand the problem we have to travel back in time. In 1965, when the Chagos Archipelago was excised from Mauritius against international law, the world was totally different from what it is today. The world had two superpowers. The world was divided into two. We had the Berlin Wall. We had the Apartheid in South Africa and the two superpowers had satellite States all over the world. Warfare then, is not the warfare of today. The Soviet Union no longer exists. The Berlin Wall has disappeared. South Africa is free. Defence of the West is no longer an element that is relevant. In fact, in those days, Madam

Speaker, we used to speak of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. Who speaks today of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace?

In those days, India was not the power that it is today. China had not become the economic power and military power that it is. So, the whole world has changed. And it is for this reason that the rationale, if at all it was a rationale in 1965 to excise the Chagos Archipelago from the sovereignty of Mauritius, that rationale no longer exists. This is why, I think, it is high time that we, all as a nation, get together to support the fight of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to win back our territory...

(Interruptions)

...and to complete the process of independence for our country. We may not be a military power; we may not be able to fight militarily the United Kingdom or the United States, but we must enlist the support of all our friends in the international community to be by our side in our quest for justice and the restoration of all parts of our territory. In fact, on this issue, what I want to say is that what Palestine is for the Palestinians, the Chagos Archipelago is for the Mauritians.

Let me say a few words about the fight against poverty. The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has spoken about 'leaving no one behind and no one having to go to bed hungry'. I think this is only natural for a caring Government. It is also natural that we, as a Government, ensure that no Mauritian, in a country which is a middle income country, should have any of its son or daughter going to bed hungry. No one should consider that there is one Mauritius for a few and another Mauritius for the rest. There must be one Mauritius. We are all united in the fight for justice, in the fight for equality and the fight for getting what we consider to be right for all Mauritians. This is why the Marshall Plan, Madam Speaker, is so important.

The Marshall Plan is aptly named. It is called the Marshall Plan because the Marshall Plan was first adopted and implemented in Europe after the Second World War. It was the then Secretary of State of the United States of America who initiated this Marshall Plan and he designed it so that Europe could be rescued and Europe could start its economy going again after the Second World War. So, it is highly symbolical that we have used the term Marshall Plan for lifting all those who are living in absolute poverty out of poverty. It is important that we give the opportunities to all Mauritians who are in that condition to

understand that there is something that can be done and that they can do it, and they can do it with the support of the Government and of all Mauritians. We must make poverty history.

This is why, I say, Madam Speaker, that there should be no underprivileged in this country and we should also remember that those who have come up in society, many of us here in this House, did not start off being comfortable in life. Many of us started in very poor conditions, but thanks to education and thanks to responsibility of our parents, we were able to get educated and we are where we are. But what we did everybody can do. There is no obstacle for anybody not to be able to do what we have achieved and this is the message of optimism that this budget has. It is this optimism that will see us through and that will get this country to become really a high income country, and we will realise the second economic miracle.

Madam Speaker, let me say that there is a tendency of selfishness among, not only Mauritians, but generally in the world. When we want to reach the top, we climb the ladder and we pull the ladder with us. We should not pull the ladder. We should leave the ladder there for others also to come up to climb the ladder. This is also very important in this quest for justice, justice for all and the alleviation of poverty.

Let me come to the third point which I have identified. It is giving hope to our young people. In the Budget, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has spoken about innovation, intellectual property, and has provided all sorts of opportunities for the young people to be able to make it in this world where IT is so important. Let me give an example of a young boy of 14 in India. In India, there are problems of transport. So, this young kid had to go to school. Then, there was a strike and there were all sorts of problems. So, he started thinking: how am I going to get to school? He started talking to his friends and to all the taxi drivers, the *rickshaw-walas* and everybody. He was able to organise his school time table in such a way that somebody was going to pick him up and then drop him back from school at his place. He started for himself and very soon people were coming to him. He designed a programme and, at 14, that programme was so effective that he was able to sell it to Uber. I am sure all the hon. Members know about Uber. He was able to sell it for 40 million dollars. A young kid of 14! So, anything is possible. We are giving the opportunities for the young kids to be able to do wonderful things. We have the talent. They have imagination and they have the creativity. They can do wonders and we may have in our population people like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and others and we must make Mauritius shine. Those who will allow Mauritius to shine are the young people of today. This is why it is

important that we bear all this in mind when we need to inspire our youth. Of course, for all this to happen we need education; we need housing; we need food.

We need to empower everybody in our country to be able to come out of poverty. Anyone can succeed. We have to be upwardly mobile and social mobility is not an impossibility for a country like Mauritius. We can all do it, but we need to instill in the minds of all our kids, in the poor areas, in all the schools and everywhere, that they have a future in this country. We must believe in this country and I am sure that they can all participate in the construction of a wonderful Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, having said all this about the Budget, about the three points, I think it is important that I come to some aspects of my Ministry because after all I am the Minister of Health and I need to inform the House about what my Ministry is doing with regard to health. I must say that I did not intend to address the issue of drugs because in the course of the PQS and the statement I made today about the National Drug Observatory, I was thinking that I had said enough and not to have to say anything more in my speech on the Budget. But after having listened to hon. Quirin, I feel that I am duty bound to say a few things about the drugs.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Didn't I say that there should be no interruptions!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, making provocative remarks can only create difficulties in the House! Please, refrain from making provocative remarks!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, before I come to the drugs, hon. Quirin happens to be a Member of the same constituency with me, hon. Bhagwan, hon. Lepoigneur and hon. Aliphon, we are all in the same constituency.

(Interruptions)

Yes, we have five!

Hon. Quirin was talking about Hermitage. Of course, we know about the problem of Hermitage. But when the 60-0 syndrome was on, Madam Speaker, in 2014, hon. Quirin, hon. Bhagwan and Anil Bachoo went to Hermitage. They went to Hermitage to look at the problem. And that was the 60-0 era.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Hon. Quirin, you had the opportunity to talk, now allow the hon. Minister to make his speech.

Mr Gayan: The then hon. Anil Bachoo promised that he was going to set it right before the elections of December 2014. What happened? It is all very well to come in this House to pretend that one is concerned about one's constituency as though my friends, hon. Lepoigneur and hon. Aliphon are not concerned. Ask hon. Lepoigneur how many times we have been there, with hon. Dayal when he was the Minister of Environment!

(Interruptions)

And the project is on! So, let us not try to...

(Interruptions)

They think they are the *grand casseur paquet!*

Hon. Quirin also mentioned about the oil refinery that will be put up in Albion. It is in their interest, Madam Speaker, that this Government does not embark on any project. This is what they want! Because then, they will say: "But you said you were going to do all this, to create employment and then you don't do anything." That is the true story. But I want to reassure hon. Quirin and all the inhabitants of Constituency No. 20 that we will never, as a Government, be party to a project that is going to destroy the environment.

(Interruptions)

We are going to make sure that whatever project, whether it is the oil refinery or any other project, we will take into account everything having to do with the environment because the environment is vital to the Ministry which I have, the Ministry of Health. If the environment gets sick, everybody will get sick. So, it is in our interest to ensure, as a Government and as a Minister of Health, that we have taken all necessary precautions to avoid any damage to the environment. So, I can reassure hon. Quirin on this one and this Government is committed to the protection of the environment and making sure that nothing happens that can damage the environment.

Let me come to the issue of drugs. This afternoon, I tabled the report of the National Drugs Observatory. That is a report that covers the whole gamut of drugs, not only synthetic drugs and I will invite all Members of this House and the public and the media to read that report carefully. It is a report which is based on evidence and it is not a report which is based on speculations. My friend, hon. Rughoobur, raised an issue recently in this House about someone in his Constituency who had died of synthetic drugs. I asked him to give me his name and he did and I checked. When I checked, it was death by hanging! Nothing to do with synthetic drugs! So, we have to be careful, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Gossip!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, do not make any provocative remarks! It is very indecorous for the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: No, it was not a question! He had raised an issue at Adjournment Time, I asked him to give me the necessary information for me to check and he gave me another name as well. I checked about the other name. That name does not appear anywhere in the records of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life or with the Police.

Madam Speaker, hon. Quirin mentioned - I think it is good that he listens - this Chairperson of the Global Commission on Drug, Mrs Ruth Dreifuss. She came to Mauritius. She wanted to see me. Even before she came, she had asked for an appointment. I had said yes. When she came to see me, we discussed a lot about all sorts of things, drugs and whatever and then I asked her a simple question. I said: "*Mme Dreifuss, vous venez de la Suisse, vous venez à Maurice et vous faites une campagne, vous faites des causeries pour la dépenalisation du gandia et du cannabis. Pourquoi est-ce que vous ne l'avez pas fait dans votre pays qui est la Suisse ?* » I asked her that question in the presence of the members of the press whom I had invited to talk to her. Did any member of the media report this in the press? No! So, it is all very well for people to come from all over the world to say: "Yes, you have to do this!" But charity, Madam Speaker, has always started at home.

(Interruptions)

Let us not be too complacent about the drugs, I have said and I will say it again in this House for it to be Hansardised. *Il ne faut pas banaliser, il ne faut pas glorifier, il ne faut pas glamouriser non plus la drogue.* We should be careful because I asked also the question who this Mrs Dreifuss?

I asked him: “In your country Mrs Dreifuss is there one parent who will be happy...

(Interruptions)

Yes, Mrs Dreifuss.

(Interruptions)

Madam,

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Allow him to continue!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: I said is there...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: What if it is Mr or Mrs? Allow him to continue!

(Interruptions)

You may proceed, hon. Minister.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: I asked her again this question: “Is there any parent in Switzerland who will be happy to know that their kid is living in a country where cannabis is easily available? Is free?”

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah! I have just asked them not to interrupt the orator. Now you are interrupting?

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: Let me come to another issue about methadone. There was a time, Madam Speaker, when methadone was given to anyone on demand. Anybody who wanted to be on the programme, just had to ask for it and he/she was put on the methadone programme.

When we were campaigning for the last elections, hon. Quirin must know, hon. Bhagwan knows, we were in Mont Roches and wherever we went people were saying please get rid of this distribution centre at the Brown Sequard Hospital. Everybody! Because it had become a problem, a serious social problem! There were about 800 to 900 people every day at Brown Sequard Hospital. People could not walk on the streets. Girls were afraid to take that road. Then, we said, if we are elected because then it was 60-0, Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

It was 60-0! Then we said if we are elected we are going to make sure that this region becomes normal again.

This is why when hon. Dr. Joomaye in a press interview said that we were wrong with the process of decentralisation of the methadone by locating the centre in the compound of Police Stations, I called him. I talked to him and said: "Are you serious about what you are saying? Do you want us to go back to the old system?" He said: "Yes, I am a doctor. They should go back to where they were in the hospitals." I said: "Oh, have you checked with hon. Bhagwan?" He is there he is listening to me! I asked him: "Have you checked with hon. Bhagwan whether what you are saying is agreeable to him?" And I also said: "Check with hon. Quirin because he knows, we lived it." Then I said: "If hon. Bhagwan were to say yes, then you call me." He said yes he was going to call me. He never called! And that is why I am raising it here.

Before we decentralised, Madam Speaker, and I have said it on so many occasions in this House and in the public but let me say for the last time - I hope it is for the last time so that people understand - we went to look for alternative sites than the sites where the methadone was being distributed, we went all over Mauritius and we even went to Barkly because in Barkly, Madam Speaker, there is a building which belongs to the Ministry of Health. I said since it is in the Ministry of Health's jurisdiction it is easy for us to relocate. People in Barkly revolted against that particular presence.

I said to them: "But, these are people from Barkly, people whom you know, maybe your children. They said: "No way!" And hon. Quirin knows, hon. Bhagwan knows about this! Now, I say to hon. Dr. Joomaye: "You are a doctor. Since you are also concerned" - I knew he has started a direct hair implantation at Clinic DHI...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: I can see, Madam Speaker, this hair clinic is generating a lot of interest in the House!

(Interruptions)

Then I said to hon. Dr. Joomaye: “If he is so concerned, I have instructed my officers to look for a site near that clinic for the distribution of methadone”.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I think I have said enough about the drug situation. Let me come to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

Madam Speaker, I am very grateful to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for having increased the budget of my Ministry by 12.4 per cent for the next financial year. In fact, the budget has increased by Rs1.2 billion and I can give the assurance to the House that we are going to make sure that this money is spent wisely, there will be no wastage and next time the Parliamentary Committee goes to visit these central stores they will find a major improvement from what they saw last time.

Madam Speaker, there are major projects in the pipeline for the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. We have –

- the New Cancer Centre;
- major expansion works at the SSRN Hospital;
- an expansion of the Cardiac Centre at Victoria Hospital.

And we also have made provision in the Budget for a –

- new Flacq Hospital;
- new Eye Hospital, and
- new Laboratory Services.

Madam Speaker, as the House is aware and again this is a matter which has been raised repeatedly in the House, cancer is a major public concern not only in Mauritius, but also internationally. Let me give some figures.

The number of new cases of cancer registered in 2014 was 2,387 as compared to 2,107 in 2013. That was an increase of 270. The present cancer services are inadequate to cope with the increasing number of cancer cases we are having and this is why we consider that having the New Cancer Centre is of an utmost importance and I hope that my colleague the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure will help in getting his staff to expedite the first phase of that project.

Palliative care is also something that we are providing for in the Budget. Today we have cancer patients, but we do not have any palliative care which is for the end of life kind of patients. We need to accompany those cancer patients towards the end of life in the best conditions possible. The second phase, Madam Speaker, is for the construction of a New Radiotherapy Block including two Bunkers which will have the Linear Accelerators.

Terminally, ill patients have multiple needs and I hope that when we get the New Cancer Centre we will be able to provide and to cater for all the needs both medical, physical, spiritual and emotional needs of the cancer patients. And we are also hoping that we will have teams for palliative care who will visit cancer patients who are terminally ill in their homes and provide comfort and solace.

We are also, Madam Speaker, in order to prevent cancer – prevention of cervical cancer – we are procuring the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which will be given to all girls in Std V in primary schools, both in Mauritius and in Rodrigues. Infection with HPV is linked to cancer. We are procuring 19,000 doses of this vaccine at a cost of more than Rs13 m., and this will be a routine programme for the Ministry of Health in the future.

We are also providing for a new regional hospital at Flacq. Flacq is going to become a major city with all the developments that are being planned in that region. Today, the hospital at Flacq consists of several old buildings, and they are not integrated as one hospital. So, we need to have one new hospital. We are actively looking for land in the Flacq region to be able to accommodate that hospital. Funds have been earmarked in this Budget for the procurement of that particular land. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, one land had been identified, but it would appear that it is between two rivers and the water table is too low, and it might not be able to accommodate the Flacq Hospital. So, we are looking for an alternative site for that purpose.

We are also constructing a new ENT Hospital. The ENT Hospital is presently accommodated in an old colonial wooden building, which is subject to all sorts of problems,

termites, water leakages/seepages. We are going to construct this new state-of-the-art hospital. There will be two major operation theatres: one Minor Operation Theatre, a six-bedded Intensive Care Unit, Outpatient Facilities, an X-Ray Department, Laboratory Services, a Pharmacy, a Speech Therapy and Audiology Department, two Female and a Paediatric Ward of 30 beds, and one Male Ward of 30 beds. The total cost of this project is Rs571,148,276, including VAT. Work is expected to start on the new hospital by the beginning of next year.

We are also, Madam Speaker, constructing an Eye Hospital at Moka. One of the first decisions I took as Minister was to decentralise ophthalmology services and to provide new services at Souillac Hospital. This is working pretty well, except that we have a waiting time at Moka Hospital of 14.2 weeks for surgeries, whereas at Souillac it is only 3.8 weeks. We are encouraging people to attend Souillac Hospital for their surgeries, but Mauritians are used to going to Moka for any eye problem. So, we need to break that cultural habit, and this is going to take some time, but we are working on it.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Joomaye is not an eye doctor!

Even at the Moka Hospital, we know - and I get letters almost daily - the conditions in which patients are being treated. The buildings are old. They are not integrated. We have been able to obtain land of about 10 acres near Apollo Bramwell Hospital, at Réduit, and we are in the process of acquiring that land for the purpose of building the Moka Hospital.

Madam Speaker, let me say a few words about the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). We keep saying that Mauritius is a country with an ageing population and with a population that is prone to diabetes. From the last survey that we have carried out, it would appear that almost 25% of our population is diabetic and another almost 25% is pre-diabetic, and this is a matter which causes a heavy burden on the budget of the Ministry. When we add to this, Madam Speaker, that people get married, genetically a diabetic prone man marrying a diabetic prone woman, that compounds the issue. But we have to be very vigilant about how to prevent diabetes and what we can do to improve the quality of life of all the diabetics.

Madam Speaker, it is important for us to know that we have about 500 amputations a year in Mauritius. 300 are directly attributable to diabetes and the others are as a result of accidents and all this. So, what we are saying, Madam Speaker, is that we must get Mauritians to be concerned about their health because their health is their responsibility, and

they will not be able to contract out the responsibility for their health to anybody. It is important that everybody assumes responsibility for their own health.

Madam Speaker, we are encouraging people to carry out physical activity. We are encouraging people to do any kind of physical activity, whether it is dancing, jogging, walking, cycling, swimming or whatever, but they must be active; otherwise, they run the risk of becoming diabetics and having all sorts of complications.

Let me say, we heard last year, Madam Speaker, so many things about the Cardiac Centre. Let me give the results of the achievements of the Cardiac Centre. The Cardiac Centre in 2013 had attendances of 24,000. The admissions were 3,259. The surgeries for 2013 were 1,292. In 2014, the surgeries went up to 1,480; in 2015, it went up to 1,583, and so far, in 2016, it is 756. For Angiography/Angioplasty also, the numbers have gone up because of diabetes, hypertension and all those complications. We have to ensure that Mauritians get the treatment they need at the time that they need it. We are providing for a branch of the Cardiac Centre to be moved to Victoria Hospital, so that we have two centres for cardiac problems. At present, the waiting time for surgery at the Cardiac Centre is just one week. What an achievement!

We are also considering, Madam Speaker, to have a neurosurgery, which is already a responsibility of the Cardiac Centre. There will be one operating theatre dedicated only to neurosurgery, because it is very important that we have not only the facilities for neurosurgery, but we also need to have the personnel. Right now, I must confess that we do not have qualified personnel for neurosurgery to carry out very complex operations. I will come to overseas treatment later and I will say what is being done.

In terms of projects, Madam Speaker, we are going to have a Bel Air MediClinic, a Coromandel MediClinic. An amount of Rs10 m. has been allocated for in the Budget for the construction of a MediClinic at Coromandel. Hon. Quirin, Petite Rivière, we have ...

(Interruptions)

No! No!

We are going to have an Area Health Centre at Petite Rivière. The estimated cost is Rs45 m. and the final drawings are being awaited from MPI. There will be one at New Tombeau Bay CHC. The land is available, the documents are under preparation at the MPI, and an amount has already been allocated in the Budget. We have a new Phoenix CHC, Pointe-aux-Sables, Baie du Cap.

So, what we are doing, Madam Speaker, with regard to the Area Health Centres and the Community Health Centres, we are upgrading them. Where they can't be upgraded, we are demolishing and putting up new structures because, I think, our people deserve to be provided the medical care in the best of conditions.

Let me say a few things, Madam Speaker, about the sugar tax. I am very happy that the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has imposed a sugar tax. I think it is very important that we are careful about what we drink and what we eat. And, of course, this tax will be reflected in the sugar sweetened drinks such as juices and milk-based drinks, but this is most welcome because of the burden of disease.

Let me say a few words about the shift system which we are going to implement in the public hospitals. The shift system was implemented on a pilot basis and now we are going to extend it to all the Regional Hospitals where the main objectives of the shift system, Madam Speaker, are the following -

- improve health services so that doctors can provide service round the clock;
- reduce workload of medical officers;
- enhance the safety of patients , and
- further reduce waiting time

With regard to Overseas Treatment Scheme, Madam Speaker, we have changed the process that existed in the past. Instead of sending patients overseas, we are getting specialists to come from overseas to operate on our patients in Mauritius. This has lots of benefits and we have started it already and the number of patients going overseas has gone down drastically. We are also in the process of ensuring that we have all the equipment, facilities and personnel. In some areas, we will have to train our doctors, our surgeons and we need also to train the para-medical staff, the nurses and all the things that go with an operating theatre. We are doing all this because I know that if people travel to Chennai, for example, they are given food in Chennai which they are not used to and that creates all sorts of complications. So, we are going to avoid all these complications by having people coming from overseas to deal with our patients here.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to say a few things about organ transplant. I know this is something which is highly sensitive. We have the Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Act 2006. It is in the legislation, but it has not yet been implemented. There are

all sorts of religious and ethnic concerns, but we are conscious of the fact that we need to move in the direction of organ transplant. We have, at present, about 1,223 patients undergoing dialysis treatment in the public hospitals and we have 323 in the private clinics. So, that makes just over 1,500 persons on dialysis.

Now, somebody on dialysis is a person whose quality of life is greatly impaired because of the hours that are spent on the machine and the three times a week that one has to go for dialysis. So, we consider that something has to be tried. At least try! Let us see if we can improve the quality of life of the dialysis patients! The only way we can do that is by having organ transplant. So, the organ transplant can be between live donors and recipients or we can also have cadaveric organ transplant. I know that this is going to be a highly sensitive debate in the House when we come with the amendment to this, but we have to, at least, have an open and honest debate about this issue of organ transplant, because we are dealing with a highly sensitive issue. I have organised workshops on this last year, but I was not happy with what came out of the workshops. So, I am going to organise one more workshop and I am going to invite professionals from overseas, from UK, India and elsewhere so that they come and share their experiences with us on this very sensitive issue.

I hope that when we come to this debate people will be open and not be dogmatic or ideological. It has to be something that we need to do in the interest of all the patients whose quality of life is seriously damaged.

Madam Speaker, let me say a few words about e-health. We have started the e-health on a pilot basis at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital. The objective of this project is to facilitate the processing of patients' files to minimize duplication of entries and enable easy access and timely retrieval of patients' data. It is a pilot project. I know that there have been initiatives in the past to import a wholesale e-health programme in Mauritius, but this is not something that we have considered advisable because every country has its own specificities. In fact, in England they just had a brand new e-health system for the NHS and then they had to scrap it at the cost of 10 billion pounds. Then, they started small and it grew up and this is what we are trying to do. I hope it is going to be successful on the pilot project and then we are going to extend it to all the hospitals. We need to do that, Madam Speaker, to avoid wastage.

Today, unfortunately, we have a culture in Mauritius where somebody goes to, let's say, an Area health Centre, he sees a doctor, he is not happy, so he goes to

the hospital. He gets the same medication, he is still not happy. So, there is a lot of health clinic shopping, health institution shopping. We need to stop that with e-health. Once we type the name of the person with his identification number, we have all the history of that patient and this is going to be very helpful both from a treatment and wastage perspective.

Madam Speaker, let me say something which, I think, hon. Members of the House have been reading a lot about in the papers. It is about Continuing Professional Development and Exams for Doctors. We have enacted legislation to make it mandatory as from 01 August for all doctors, specialists, dental surgeons and dental specialists to follow courses, so that they earn 12 credit points before being eligible to be listed on the register of practising doctors or dentists. So, there is need for everyone to follow this programme of continuous professional development. I think this is something which is very important, so that they keep abreast of development in their field. And we have also asked all the visiting professors and specialists who come, to devote at least half a day to the training of our people.

Madam Speaker, after the Medical Council had looked into the matter, we have decided to introduce an entry and exit exam for preregistration trainees for doctors. At present, newly graduated medical students are provisionally registered by the Medical Council and once they are enlisted as pre-registration house officers, they follow training in six disciplines and are assessed at the completion of each discipline by the Mauritius Institute of Health. However, we have noted repeated failures in assessments and multiple complaints have been received, both from the medical profession and even threats have been received from some pre-registration house officers who do not pass their assessments. So, in view of the various institutions where our house officers get educated, we have thought that it is necessary to standardise the level of competence both in theory and in practice of all students who join our health services.

I must say, Madam Speaker, that when we were looking into that, we didn't know that India was also looking at this problem. And yesterday, the President of India, signed into law legislation to insist on all Indian students having to pass a national test for doctors and dental officers. In the past, every State in India had its own exams.

Now, there will be a national examination that is conducted so that they standardise the level of training and the qualifications of doctors. So, I was happy when I read about it. We are not alone; everybody is concerned about the quality, skills, knowledge and competence of doctors and dentists and this is going to benefit all our patients. So, there will

be, Madam Speaker, this entry and exit examination. I know the papers are talking a lot about the change in the system, but whenever you change something in Mauritius, there is havoc as though the end of the world is coming, but we, as a Government, we are responsible and we need to take decisions which are important for the health of our citizens.

Let me say one word about the closed list of medical institutions. This also is very much in the newspapers and we have acted on the advice of the Medical Council which is concerned about the quality of health care which is provided in Mauritius. So, again, it is important to standardise the competence and skills of doctors. Currently, the Medical Council of Mauritius recognises medical degrees both undergraduate and postgraduate from 482 medical institutions from 61 countries, including Mauritius. Now, they have applied a different standard and they have come up with a list of 184 recognised medical institutions from 31 countries.

The criteria they used to establish the list were based on what is called the Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings for Medicine for the year 2016 and this is an internationally recognised list.

With regard to legislation, Madam Speaker, we enacted the Pharmacy Council Act last year. A new Pharmacy Bill will be coming to the House shortly. We also have the Allied Health Professionals Bill which will be coming to the House. There will be amendments to the Medical, Dental and Nursing Council's Acts and the private health institutions. We will be coming with these Bills to the House because we consider that we need to modernise the legal framework for health in the country and this is why I believe that we are going to do it very fast. I hope this year we'll be able to bring all the legislations.

Madam Speaker, I know I have used up the time allotted to me. Let me say, once again, that it is a matter of great pride and satisfaction that we have a budget that responds to the needs of the country. It is a budget that has met with the consensus from everybody and it is the first time in the history of Mauritius that a budget like this has been accepted by one and all and even the Leader of the Opposition finds it interesting. So, this is why I believe that this is a great opportunity for Mauritius to move forward. Let us move forward with a sense of patriotism so that we do something great for our country!

I thank you for your attention, Madam Speaker.

Mr Ramano: Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Dr. Sorefan rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I move for the adjournment of the House to Wednesday 10 August, 2016 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

(7.50 p.m.)

AVENUE ROLAND MAUREL, PAILLES – CANAL - CLEANING

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Madam Speaker, my intervention tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of Local Government.

Madam Speaker, at the end of Avenue Roland Maurel at Pailles, the way towards Domaine Les Pailles, there is a pedestrian bridge which links Cité St. Louis to Morcellement Raffray. Unfortunately, for the last year, the Municipal Council of Port Louis has not maintained that canal over which the bridge is built and it has become a dumping ground. But the worse thing is that when it rains heavily, the bridge is overflowed because there is no flow of water and it is a danger especially for children and old people who use that bridge to go from one side to the other.

So, I am appealing to the hon. Minister if he can intervene vis-à-vis the Municipality of Port Louis to look into the matter so that the canal can be cleaned and to take action to ensure that people do not throw rubbish after it has been cleaned.

Thank you.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. A. Husnoo): Madam Speaker, I will look into it and inform the municipality accordingly.

CATTLE BREEDERS - FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE -- COMPENSATION

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Madam Speaker, in fact, I am raising the problem of the Foot and Mouth Disease that we had the PNQ this morning on, but due to time constraints, I could not intervene in the morning.

During his intervention, the hon. Minister stated to the House that there is a plan for compensation to the breeders in Rodrigues being worked out. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister to ensure that the breeders who have imported cattle from Rodrigues and whose cattle were being quarantined at the Port and then moved on to Richelieu and also those which were found at Vallée des Prêtres be also included on the list for compensation.

Along the same line, we must bear in mind that there is a large number of cattle in the farms around Mauritius because of the festival which is coming. There are about 5,000 cattle. Can the hon. Minister ensure that special measures be taken on those farms which are not affected in order to prevent this disease from spreading out to this area because if this happens, it would be a disaster.

Thank you.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Madam Speaker, I did mention this morning that we are going to look at the modalities before coming up with some kind of compensation, not only to breeders in Rodrigues, but also to those who suffered losses in Mauritius.

With regard to the measures being taken to contain this disease, in other farms that are not affected yet, we are working on it and we have a full team permanently on these farms to ensure that the spread of that disease does not go far beyond the areas affected as at now.

LE BOUCHON PUBLIC BEACH - GANESH CHATURTHI FESTIVAL

Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Madam Speaker, I have an issue concerning the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport as Chairperson of the Task Force that has been set up to overlook the organisation of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival on 06 September.

Every year, there are thousands of pilgrims from my constituency and those living in the south who would normally proceed to the public beach of Le Bouchon.

Due to the recent incident concerning ship MV Benita, cleaning works are being carried out due to oil spillage, but it would appear that this will take a few days or even a month.

May I request the hon. Minister to look into the matter so that needful can be done so that those pilgrims can have that public beach for the immersion ceremony?

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): We have a meeting of the Task Force on Thursday, Madam Speaker, we'll raise the matter, but it all depends on the gravity of the situation at Le Bouchon.

At 7.58 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 10 August 2016 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

CANAL BALKISSOON, VALLÉE PITOT – BOULDERS

(No. B/825) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the ruisseau/open channel commonly known as Canal Balkissoon, in Vallée Pitot, Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit, information as to if it is aware that same is obstructed by boulders, at its junction with Sauzier Street, in the aftermath of the previous successive heavy downpours and, if so, indicate if urgent remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto and, if so, when.

Reply (Minister of Local Government): I am informed that Canal Balkissoon in Vallée Pitot is regularly cleaned on a weekly basis by the Municipal Council of Port Louis to remove litter/wastes thereat. However, following the successive heavy downpours, some boulders have been carried down the canal, but which does not obstruct the free flow of the water course.

Given that the boulders are quite heavy, I understand that mechanical equipment such as backhoe and JCB is needed to remove same. Unfortunately, these works cannot be undertaken due to the absence of a vehicular access to the site. In the given circumstance, I intend to explore other possible avenues for example the SMF to carry out these works.

**MOTORWAYS M1, M2 & M3 – ROUNDABOUTS -
EMBELLISHMENT & MAINTENANCE**

(No. B/860) 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 the roundabouts found on the M1, M2 and M3 Motorways, he will give a list thereof which are presently embellished and maintained by private companies, indicating in each case the –

- (a) private companies concerned therewith, and
- (b) period thereof.

Reply: There is a total of 37 roundabouts on the M1, M2 and M3 Motorways.

There are 27 roundabouts on M1 and M2 which are embellished and maintained by private firms, the Road Development Authority and the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management. A list is being tabled for information of the House.

The ten roundabouts located on M3 are permanently maintained and embellished by the Road Development Authority.

With regard to part (b), the period of sponsorship for the maintenance and embellishment of all roundabouts is three years. The renewal of the sponsorship is an ongoing exercise. The contract for sponsorship is renewed automatically subject to the Road Development Authority being satisfied with the maintenance of the roundabout by the sponsor.

NTC - SEMI LOW FLOOR BUSES - ACQUISITION

(No. B/861) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the acquisition of 100 semi low floor buses from ABC Coach Works Ltd. by the National Transport Corporation (NTC), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the NTC, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof delivered on a monthly basis, indicating if they are as per specifications ;
- (b) how far the specifications thereof differ from the 20 buses obtained from the Chinese Government in donation;

(c) if an engineer of the NTC was sent to the Chinese manufacturer in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor, and

(d) if any employee of the NTC has been suspended in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the National Transport Corporation (NTC) that the contract for the procurement of 100 semi low floor buses was awarded to ABC Coach Works on 20 October 2015 by the Public Procurement Office after a tender exercise. The delivery schedule was set at 6 months as from the issue of the letter of award.

The 100 buses were delivered in April 2016 on a staggered basis. All the buses were delivered according to the tender specifications.

As regards part (b) of the question, the 20 buses donated by the Chinese Government have enhanced features and thus differ from the 100 buses procured in as much as the make, the model, the engine capacity, the air-conditioning system and the emission control is concerned. The seating capacity is 44 compared to 50 and the 100 buses are not air-conditioned. For the 20 buses, the engine is Euro IV, whereas for the 100 buses, it is Euro II. In addition, the 100 procured buses are equipped with WIFI, GPS, security cameras, 2 LCD screen and reverse monitor.

Another major difference between the two types of buses relate to the retarder system. The 100 buses were ordered with an automatic retarder system unlike the 20 donated buses which were fitted with the dual mode, that is, both automatic and manual.

The reason for opting for the automatic system for the 100 buses was mainly due to past experience. In 2014, two Yutong buses fitted with the dual mode had their retarder system burnt, due to misuse by the drivers, who were operating the buses solely on the manual mode and this caused overheating of the retarder coils.

Concerning part (c) of the question, in accordance with the provisions of the Bidding Document, a pre-construction meeting as well as a pre-delivery inspection mission had to be held at the manufacturer's plant, prior to the construction and delivery of the buses, respectively. Both missions had to be attended by a representative of the supplier and two representatives of the NTC to discuss and agree on the specifications, before the buses are manufactured and after completion to ascertain compliance thereto.

The delegation comprised Mr Gaya, acting Chief engineer at the NTC, Mr Chunnoo, Director of the Mechanical Engineering Division of my Ministry and Mr Ramdhany, Analyst at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and Board member of the NTC. They proceeded to China from 29 November to 08 December 2015 for a preconstruction meeting to discuss and freeze the specifications proposed. There was a second visit headed by the then General Manager, Mr Hootesh Ramburn.

As regards part (d) of the question, a driver of the NTC has been suspended as from 01 July 2016, for false and malicious statement made in relation to the braking system, especially the retarder of the new fleet of semi low floor bus. In an interview given to the daily newspaper “*Le Defi Quotidien*” which reads as follows -

“Cri d’alarme des chauffeurs de la CNT”

“Un dispositif de freinage désactive sur les nouveaux bus CNT?”

<<Les freins des autobus de la flotte actuelle de la CNT pourraient bientôt ne pas fonctionner>>, clame....”

The driver not only breached the internal rules and regulations of the NTC but also caused tremendous prejudice to the Corporation, as the information conveyed to members of the public was totally erroneous. He also made public statements which were similar in public meetings where Counsel Mr Rama Valayden made an address.

As explained earlier, the 100 buses were fitted with an automatic retarder system to increase the security of the passengers and to enhance the lifetime of the brake system. The information conveyed by the driver to the effect that the system was deactivated was therefore inaccurate.

He was convened on 22 July 2016 to appear before a Disciplinary Committee, but upon request of his Defence Counsel, Mr Rama Valayden in relation to his state of health, the said Committee has been postponed to a date to be mutually agreed.

**BEAU BASSIN - MORCELLEMENT LA CONFIANCE - FOOTBALL
GROUND**

(No. B/862) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Riviere) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the football ground situated at

Morcellement La Confiance, in Beau Bassin, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill, information as to –

- (a) if it is vested therein and, if so, indicate since when, and
- (b) the reasons as to why it is not operational.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill that a plot of land of the extent of 3 arpents at Morcellement La Confiance in Beau Bassin was acquired by the then Government and vested on 15 October 2004 in the National Development Unit for the construction of a football ground. The final handing over of the football ground was effected by the National Development Unit on 31 July 2015 to the Council for maintenance and management.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the football ground could not be made operational at that time in view of the fact that construction works were being carried out by the National Housing Development Company Ltd on a site adjacent to the football ground and it was not deemed appropriate to put same to use due to dust nuisance caused thereat. The NHDC Ltd which has been contacted by the Council has informed that the construction of the Housing Units at Morcellement La Confiance was nearing completion and construction of an access (a footpath) from its site to the football ground was in progress.

In the given circumstance, the Council will now proceed with the cleaning and re-turfing of the football ground prior to same being put to public use.

QUARTIER MILITAIRE STADIUM - RENOVATION

(No. B/863) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau-Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Quartier Militaire Stadium, he will state –

- (a) when renovation works were last carried out thereat, giving details thereof, and
- (b) if same is being used for regional and national football competitions and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed that renovation works at Quartier Militaire Stadium were last carried out in the years 2013-2014. The works consisted mainly of the replacement of the damaged fencing by new chain link fencing with provision for 5 gates. The works which started on 06 November 2013 were completed on 28 March 2014 with a contract value of Rs1,375,033.40.

It is worth pointing out that the Mauritius Sports Council continuously carried out maintenance and minor upgrading works at the stadium.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am further informed that the stadium is used by the Mauritius Football Association for its regional league. The stadium is also used by the District Council and Village Council of the locality for competitions and friendly matches. Football clubs in the region of Quartier Militaire make use of the stadium both for training and competition purposes.

CITÉ ATLEE – ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION - EXPENDITURE

(No. B/864) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the recent event held to celebrate the anniversary of Cité Atlee, in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to the total expenditure incurred in relation thereto (a) giving a breakdown of the sum paid to each contractor thereof and/or each participant thereto and (b) indicating when approval to incur same was obtained.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS MARITIME TRAINING ACADEMY - BASIC SAFETY COURSES

(No. B/865) Mrs M. C. Monty (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Basic Safety Courses run by the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the said Academy, information as to the –

- (a) various components thereof;
- (b) number of trainers thereof, indicating in each case, the qualifications held, and
- (c) number of students having benefitted therefrom since the opening of the Academy to date.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the various components of the Basic Safety Courses are -

- (i) Personal Safety and Social Responsibilities.
- (ii) Elementary First Aid.
- (iii) Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting.
- (iv) Personal Survival Techniques.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that there are 16 trainers that are affiliated with the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy out of which 13 are employed on a part time basis whilst the remaining three work at the MMTA on a full time basis.

I am tabling the qualifications of the 16 trainers for the benefit of the House.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that there are 2894 students who have been trained at the MMTA since the opening of the MMTA in 2007 to date.

HOSPITALS - CAESARIAN SECTIONS

(No. B/866) Mrs M. C. Monty (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to Caesarian Sections, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof carried out in public hospitals, since October 2015 to date, indicating the number thereof which are related to *primipara* cases, and
- (b) if a comparative study has been carried out to ascertain whether the number thereof is increasing or decreasing.

Reply: I am informed that 3,415 Caesarian Sections have been carried out in public hospitals from October 2015 to July 2016, out of which 1,167 women had Caesarian Sections for the first time.

With regard to part (b) of the question, according to the registers of deliveries available in all hospitals, the percentage of *primipara* cases delivered by Caesarian Sections was 39.9% in October 2015 and 38.2% in July 2016, with a monthly average of 34.2%. It is to be noted that the figures for Caesarian Sections in the private health sector for the same period is around 58%.

In addition, with a view to further improving the situation, a Technical Committee has been set up in February 2016 under the Chairpersonship of a Regional Health Director, who is a Gynaecologist.

The Committee is closely monitoring the number of Caesarian Sections performed and the indications thereof by each Specialist in different hospitals. Any deviation from the current trend would be dealt with by alerting the relevant Consultant in Charge for remedial action.

NATIONAL DRUG OBSERVATORY- REPORT

(No. B/867) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the National Drug Observatory, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to where matters stand as to the works thereof, indicating if it has produced any report on the drugs situation in the country and, if so, give details thereof.

Reply: The National Drug Observatory (NDO) has submitted its report on Monday 08 August 2016.

The report has been validated by all stakeholders concerned including Dr Rey Chad Abdool, Independent Consultant of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime.

I am tabling a copy of the report.

HOSPITALS – SURGICAL INTERVENTIONS

(No. B/868) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the patients whose names appear on the waiting list to undergo surgical interventions, he will state the number thereof, indicating the expected dates for the carrying out of the said surgical interventions.

Reply: I am tabling the required information regarding surgical operations.

RIVIÈRE DU REMPART - WET LANDS - SURVEY REPORT

(No. B/869) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the wet lands found in the district of Rivière du Rempart, he will state if an updated survey report on the location thereof is available and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

AGENDA 2063 TREATY – MAURITIUS RATIFICATION

(No. B/870) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Agenda 2063 Treaty, he will state where matters stand as to the ratification thereof by the Republic of Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

CULTURE OF INNOVATION - PROMOTION

(No. B/871) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the promotion of a culture of innovation in Mauritius and Rodrigues, he will state the five major initiatives undertaken in respect thereof since 30 June 2015 to date.

(Withdrawn)

RWANDA - AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT – MAURITIAN DELEGATION

(No. B/872) 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 African Union Summit held from 10 to 16 July 2016, in Rwanda, he will state if Mauritius was represented thereat and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the composition of the delegation thereto, and
- (b) if the issue of a unique African passport for African countries was raised and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: The 27th Assembly of the Heads of States and Government of the African Union was held in Kigali, Rwanda from 17 to 18 July 2016.

The Mauritian delegation to the Summit was led by President Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim and comprised Ambassador D. Busgeet, an official from our Embassy in Addis Ababa and the Secretary to the President and two Security Officers.

With regard to part (b), I am informed that the African passport was launched by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, in the presence of Heads of States and Government at the opening ceremony of the 27th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union on Sunday 17 July 2016.

At the launching ceremony, the passport was offered to Her Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Mr Idriss Devy Itno, President of the Republic of Chad and current Chairperson of the African Union, and His Excellency Mr Paul Kagame, President of the Rwanda in his capacity as host of the African Union Summit.

A decision was adopted at the Summit calling on other countries and regions of the world to recognise the African passport issued by the Commission and the AU Member States.

The modalities for the African Union Commission to provide technical support to Member States to enable them to produce and issue the African passport to their citizens are yet to be worked out and finalised.

Also at the 28th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union, which was held in January 2016 in Addis Ababa, a decision was adopted commending the lessons from countries such as Rwanda, Seychelles, The Gambia and including Mauritius on the free movement of people. Mauritius has a liberal visa policy; very few African countries require visa prior to travel to Mauritius.

CEB - SUGAR INDUSTRY INDEPENDENT POWER PRODUCERS - CONTRACT

(No. B/874) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the sugar industry Independent Power Producers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to if their IPP's contract will be renegotiated or renewed, indicating where matters stand as regards the negotiation of FUEL new P/S (Alteo Group).

(Withdrawn)

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/875) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the recent recruitment exercise of Management Support Officers by the Waste Water Management Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the number thereof recruited, constituency-wise.

(Withdrawn)

RIVIÈRE DES ANGUILLES & SOUILLAC - INTERNET - FIBER-TO-HOUSE CONNECTION

(No. B/876) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the Fiber-to-House connection for high speed internet, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Telecom, information as to if there is any plan for the

implementation thereof in the Southern part of Mauritius, especially in Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

LE BOUCHON LAGOON - MV BENITA WRECKAGE - SURVEY

(No. B/877) 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 the Le Bouchon Lagoon and public beach, he will state if any survey has been carried out to assess the damages caused thereat following the wreckage of the MV Benita vessel and, if so, indicate the remedial measures that will be taken in connection therewith.

Reply: Following the wreckage of MV Benita on 17 June 2016 at Ilot Brocus, Le Bouchon, and three oil spills detected on 18 June 2016, 21 July and 23 July 2016, surveys/assessments have been carried out as follows -

- Lagoon Water Sampling from 20 to 27 June 2016;
- Ecological Survey from 11 to 15 July 2016;
- Lagoon Water and Sediment Sampling on 22 July 2016;
- Ecological Assessments from 11 to 19 July and from 29 July to 03 August 2016;
- Survey of Biodiversity on Ilot Brocus on 13 July 2016; and
- Shoreline Assessment Surveys on 21 July 2016 and 25 July 2016.

The above surveys were carried out, *inter alia*, by my Ministry, the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands, the Mauritius Oceanographic Institute, the Beach Authority and the National Parks and Conservation Service.

I am informed that the ecological assessment carried out from 11 to 19 July revealed that the ecosystem in Le Bouchon Lagoon was not affected. However, the presence of Heavy Fuel Oil was detected on the shore of Le Bouchon and on Ilot Brocus. The results of the ecological survey carried out from 29 July to 03 August 2016 are awaited.

The immediate remedial measure comprised mobilisation of manpower from the Special Mobile Force, the National Coast Guard, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services, the

District Council of Grand Port, and my Ministry to start clean-up operations. A private cleaning company, the Swire Emergency Response also helped in the clean-up in collaboration with the 11 registered fishermen of Le Bouchon.

A shoreline Assessment is being undertaken on a weekly basis until the clean-up exercise is completed.

After the completion of all clean-up operations, a survey of mangroves and an Ecological Survey would be undertaken.

I wish to reassure the House that all remedial measures would be undertaken in order to eliminate the adverse environmental effects of the spill and restore, as far as practicable, the lagoon water quality and the environment to its previous state.

LE BOUCHON – FISHERMEN - COMPENSATION

(No. B/878) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the fishermen operating at Le Bouchon and in the vicinity thereof who were financially affected following the wreckage of the MV Benita vessel, he will state if the quantum of the compensation payable thereto has now been determined, indicating if consideration will be given for the benefit thereof to be extended to the non-registered fishermen and, if not, why not.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that following the grounding of MV Benita at Le Bouchon on 17 June 2016, my Ministry has received several representations from registered fishers at Le Bouchon and from fishers of the surrounding regions to the effect that the resulting oil spill has caused considerable pollution at Le Bouchon and in the surrounding area, such that they are not able to go out fishing and collect algae for small-cage fishing.

Furthermore, for the salvage operations of the cargo ship, the National Coast Guard established a restricted perimeter which was preventing fishers from carrying out fishing activities.

As regards the quantum of compensation, I wish to inform the House that the same formula which was used for the payment of compensation to fishers following the wreck of MV Angel 1 near the coast of Poudre D'Or in 2011, would apply, that is, on the basis of the rate of bad weather allowance payable during days when fishers are unable to fish.

The exact number of days will be determined as soon as the cleaning process would be completed at Le Bouchon after which fishers would be authorised to undertake fishing activities.

All claims for compensation will have to be submitted to the insurance company of MV Benita, namely P & I Club, for payment.

Regarding the extension of the payment of compensation to non-registered fishermen at Le Bouchon, as at date, no such representation has been received at my Ministry.

In case my Ministry receives claims from non-registered fishers, the matter would be referred to the insurance company of MV Benita for consideration at their level.

CIVIL SERVANTS - INTERDICTION

(No. B/879) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the civil servants who are suspended from duty, he will state the number thereof, indicating in each case, the present post occupied.

Reply: As at 30 June 2016, there were 287 officers who were interdicted from the exercise of the powers and functions of their respective posts for various reasons.

I am submitting a list of the interdicted officers, indicating the respective posts occupied by them, to be tabled in the National Assembly.

TERRE ROUGE POLICE STATION – MOTORCYCLE – THEFT - INQUIRY

(No. A/36) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the reported case of loss of a motorcycle at the Terre Rouge Police Station on 04 June 2016, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to why the said motorcycle which is now secured in Police custody has not been returned to the owner thereof?

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 06 June 2016 at 12.43 hours, one Mr J. D. P, 43 years, residing at Pointe aux Sables, made a declaration at Terre Rouge Police Station to the effect that his motorcycle has been stolen between 22.30 hours on 04 June 2016 and 05.00 hours on 05 June 2016 from the compound of Klasic Hall situated at Riche Terre.

I am further informed that the motorcycle has not yet been found and the enquiry is still in progress

GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS - CLEANERS

(No. A/37) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the complaints made by the workers of the Professional Cleaners & Mauriclean Ltd working as cleaners in the Government Primary Schools, he will state, if they are being paid according to the rates provided for in the Remuneration Orders, indicating the measures being taken to ensure that the company complies therewith.

Reply: I am informed by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research that Mauriclean Ltd has been awarded a 3 year contract with effect from 21 September 2015 to provide cleaning services to 233 institutions, comprising 161 Government Primary Schools and 64 State Secondary Schools and 8 other institutions.

As regards Professional Cleaners Group Ltd, contract has been awarded to the company to provide cleaning services to 9 institutions which include 7 secondary schools. No contract has been awarded to the company for the cleaning of primary schools.

Following representations received in January 2016 regarding underpayment of wages, enquiries were carried out in the first instance, with Management of Mauriclean Ltd and Professional Cleaners Group Ltd on 21 January 2016.

Management of Mauriclean Ltd stated that cleaners worked only three hours a day, and they were being paid wages as prescribed in the Cleaning Enterprises Remuneration Regulations (GN 191 of 2013).

On the other hand, Management of Professional Cleaners Group Ltd stated that cleaners worked between three to four hours per day, and they were also being paid wages as prescribed.

Inspections were thereafter carried out at the different sites of work in March, April, May and July 2016. Cleaners employed by Mauriclean Ltd stated that their wages range from Rs1,500 to Rs3,000 a month and that they were being underpaid.

However, cleaners employed by Professional Cleaners Group Ltd, stated that their daily hours of work vary from 5 to 6 hours and they were being paid wages ranging from Rs3,000 to Rs7,000 a month. They also complained that they were being underpaid.

It is to be noted that according to the Cleaning Enterprises Remuneration Regulations (GN 191 of 2013), the monthly prescribed basic rate for a full time cleaner is Rs8,085 and the basic hourly rate for a part time worker is Rs40.81 for the first year in employment.

In view of the foregoing, it is observed that some workers in both companies are being paid wages below the prescribed rate. Enquiry is now being finalised for eventual Court action as appropriate.

I have also been informed that another company namely New Cleaning Services Ltd has been awarded a contract for the cleaning of 54 Government Primary Schools.

Although no complaint has been registered against the company, my Ministry is, however, carrying out inspection visits to ensure compliance with the relevant Remuneration Regulations. Appropriate action will be taken as required.