



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 11 APRIL 2017

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 03 of 2017

Sitting of 11 April 2017

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. **Office of the President**

The Annual Report of the National Human Rights Commission Mauritius for the year 2016. (In Original)

B. **Prime Minister's Office**

(a) The Sugar Insurance Fund (Reduced General Insurance Premium) Regulations 2017.

(Government Notice No. 51 of 2017)

(b) The Income Tax (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2017.

(Government Notice No. 52 of 2017)

C. **Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation**

The National Identity Card (Extension of Validity Period) (Amendment) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No. 53 of 2017)

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

The Annual Report of the Open University of Mauritius for the period 12 July 2012 to 31 December 2013.

E. **Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security**

The Annual Report of the Sugar Investment Trust for the year ended 30 June 2016.

F. **Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training**

The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Trade Union Trust Fund (TUTF) for period 2007 to 2014. (In Original)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

POVERTY ERADICATION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the hon. Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the eradication of poverty in mainland Mauritius, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the -
 - (i) National Corporate Social Responsibility Foundation, information as to the amount of Corporate Social Responsibility money expected to be collected for the year 2017;
 - (ii) National Empowerment Foundation, information as to the number and type of houses constructed since 01 January 2016 to date;
- (b) state whether the Marshall Plan for Poverty Alleviation is being applied;
- (c) state the number of families -
 - (i) on monthly subsistence allowance;
 - (ii) who have failed the Social Register of Mauritius test, and
- (d) state why has the distribution of school materials been abandoned.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, the eradication of poverty remains one of the top priorities of this Government.

It is relevant for me to refer the hon. Leader of the Opposition to the reply to the Private Notice Question made by the then Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment to the then hon. Leader of the Opposition on 05 August 2016.

Allow me to quote from this pertinent reply which lay the foundation for the definition of poverty in the Mauritian context, and I quote –

“The monthly household threshold of Rs6,200 which was determined in 2012, is no longer adequate and has already served its purpose. In our bid to find a fairer and more equitable threshold, we have reviewed it taking into consideration international prevailing methodologies for the determination of an appropriate poverty threshold for Mauritius including Rodrigues. As per international poverty line of USD 1.25 a day per person, it would have been lesser than what we are providing. At that level, the proportion of households as per Statistics Mauritius (SM), in absolute poverty, is less than 1000.

However, we have calculated the new poverty threshold taking into consideration all incomes derived by the poor households which stands at Rs2,720 per adult per month. This is 40 % higher than the World Bank threshold of US Dollar 3.10 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) equivalent to Rs1,938 per person per month for developing countries. For obvious reasons, children under the age of 16 have been considered half of that amount.”

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The question is nothing at all like what the hon. Minister is answering. Has he got the wrong question?

Madam Speaker: Yes, I agree on that point. I will give the hon. Minister some leeway, some few minutes to make an introduction before he replies to the main question. But, hon. Minister, you should not be lengthy in the introduction to your reply.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have finished anyway. The hon. Leader of the Opposition who was himself from 2010 to 2011 Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment must inevitably be aware of the difficulties and obstacles faced by our fellow citizens who are living in the throes of poverty and who deserve our due care and attention especially from a non-stop caring Government.

I also trust that the hon. Leader of the Opposition who had been an active Member of this Government is fully aware of the efforts made at various levels to eradicate poverty in the Republic of Mauritius. I also trust that he is satisfied with his own contributions as the then Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment to eradicate if not to alleviate poverty.

In regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I wish to inform the House that in the Budget Speech 2016-2017, it was announced that a National CSR Foundation would be set up and would be managed jointly by the public and private sector.

Businesses would be required to contribute at least 50% of their CSR funds to that Foundation in 2017 and at least 75% in 2018.

The remaining balance would be used by the businesses to implement their CSR programme in accordance with their existing framework.

NGOs would thus continue to benefit from contributions from the private sector.

Any unspent balance from the 50% would be channelled to the Foundation.

The National CSR Foundation was set up and registered as a Foundation with the Registrar of Foundations under the Foundations Act 2012 on 30 December 2016. The Foundation is governed by a Charter which was finalised on 29 December 2016.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. We are 10 minutes into the question and the hon. Minister has not yet answered anything.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, allow me just to tell you that he is given leeway to make introduction to his reply. Now, he has already mentioned that he is on (a)(i). So, I will give him some leeway, if I find that he exceeds the time which should be allocated, automatically I will give you additional time for questions. I will try to see how it goes on.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, the House would recall that in the Budget Speech 2016-2017, it was stated that the six priority areas of intervention would be as follows

–

- Poverty Alleviation - targeting families in the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM);
- Educational Support - targeting families in the SRM;
- Social Housing – targeting families in the SRM;
- Supporting persons with severed disabilities;

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Minister! Can I ask you whether you are on (a) (i), because you just mentioned (a) (i)? Are you on (a) (i)? Which part of the question?

(Interruptions)

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: I am still on (a)(i), Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Thank you.

- Dealing with health problems resulting from substance abuse and poor sanitation, and
- Family protection, that is, protection to victims of domestic violence.

Following representations received from various quarters, it has been decided, after consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, that the priority areas of intervention should be enlarged to include the following –

- Leisure and sports;
- Environment and sustainable development;
- Peace and nation-building, and
- Road Safety and Security.

These proposed areas of intervention have been included in the Charter.

The National CSR Foundation will provide support in all ten priority areas to eligible families under the Social Register of Mauritius, as well as individuals and families considered or recognised as vulnerable groups.

One of the priorities of the Foundation has been the preparation of the new detailed guidelines so as to enable the Foundation to provide support to NGOs ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, please!

(Interruptions)

I am sorry! I think you are going too much into the details. Could you please restrict yourself to coming to the contents of the question, please!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: No disbursements have been made from the CSR Foundation so far being given that the new detailed guidelines were not yet ready.

However, the guidelines have now been finalised and the Foundation would issue a Communiqué to invite NGOs to call for proposals.

The National CSR Foundation expects to disburse funds to eligible NGOs within the approved priority areas of intervention before the end of the current financial year.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that as at February 2017 the amount collected by the MRA for the period January to February 2017 stood at Rs13,399,674 and has been transferred to the account of the National CSR Foundation by the Accountant General on 13 March 2017.

The expected amount to be transferred to the National CSR Foundation for the year 2017 is around Rs407 m.

In regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that since 2015 a policy decision has been taken to phase out the construction of Concrete Cum Corrugated Iron Sheet (CCIS) Housing Scheme and to entrust the NHDC to allocate 10% of the number of concrete houses constructed by the NHDC for those under the SRM.

I am informed that NHDC is now constructing a total of 1,200 houses, which means that 120 of these concrete houses would be allocated to the beneficiaries under the SRM.

Furthermore, a new policy for the construction of fully concrete housing unit was initiated in March 2016.

Accordingly, a survey had to be carried out in all districts to convert CCIS applications into Fully Concrete Housing unit.

A tender exercise was launched in May 2016 for conventional housing unit, but the price quoted was well above the budgeted provision.

A second tender exercise was carried out in October 2016 for the construction of 118 pre-cast housing units. No bid was received.

A third tender exercise was launched in October 2016. Eleven bids were received. Letters of award are being issued to the successful bidders for six districts for a total of 61 housing units. Bids for the three other districts could not be accepted for non-compliance.

Another tender exercise will be launched for the three remaining districts before the end of this month.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the Marshall Plan Against Poverty contains a series of actionable programmes to be implemented over the short, medium and long-term by several Ministries including, amongst others, Education, Housing, Labour, Environment, Social Security, Gender, Youth and Sports, Health.

As the House is aware, 15 of these programmes have already been initiated in the Budget 2016/2017 for those eligible under the SRM. Other measures of the Marshall Plan are being considered for implementation during the course of the next Budget.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (c) (i) of the question, as the House is aware a new Poverty threshold was introduced in the Budget Speech 2016/2017. The eligibility per adult per month is Rs2,720 while, depending on the family size, the maximum threshold for a household is Rs9,520 per month.

Currently, 8,214 eligible families under the Social Register Mauritius benefit from the monthly subsistence allowance. For the month of April 2017, a total amount of Rs15,270,077 has been disbursed.

In regard to part (c) (ii) of the question, I am informed that following the registration exercise carried out last year during the months of August to September 2016, 14,462 families were found not eligible under the Social Register Mauritius. The main reasons being the assessed income which is based on the living conditions of the families were higher than the new poverty threshold and also the total declared income and the verified income, which includes any social benefits paid to the applicant, exceed the poverty threshold.

Madam Speaker, I believe that the greatest care and caution need to be exercised so that the middle class is not itself impoverished, as the middle class caters for the expenses of its own, while social aid uplifts and empowers the poor. We so need to learn from the examples of other countries wherein social aid has created social imbalances and increased instead of decreasing poverty.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (d) of the question, I wish to reassure the House that the scheme has not been abandoned and has been modified into a Cash Grant Scheme in order to empower the families concerned and give them flexibility in their choice and trust in their sense of responsibilities.

Thus, a cash grant for the purchase of school materials has been provided to eligible households under the new Social Register of Mauritius whose children are attending pre-primary, primary, pre-vocational and secondary schools for the academic year 2017. Beneficiaries have been provided with a cash grant of Rs1,500 for children in pre-primary and primary schools, and Rs2,000 for those in pre-vocational and secondary schools.

Following a request made by my Ministry in December last, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development agreed that the cash grant be also extended to beneficiaries who were eligible under the previous Social Register, but are no longer eligible under the new Social Register for a transitional period of one year, that is, for academic year 2017.

I am informed that a total of 26,335 children of pre-primary, primary, pre-vocational and secondary schools have benefitted from the cash grant in Mauritius and Rodrigues. A total amount of Rs44,992,500 has been disbursed so far.

The cash grant is being credited to the bank account of the eligible households and those who do not have a bank account are being paid through the Mauritius Post.

I am also informed that, for academic year 2016, a cash grant in lieu of school materials was paid to eligible beneficiaries in Rodrigues. In the light of the successful implementation of the scheme in Rodrigues, it was decided that the same arrangement be made in Mauritius for academic year 2017.

Madam Speaker, representations have been received to the effect that the decision for the payment of a cash grant should be reviewed and that the previous arrangement for the distribution of school materials should be resorted to. The whole question of distribution of school materials for academic year 2018 is being reviewed in the light of feedback being obtained from field officers of the National Empowerment Foundation. I will inform the House once a decision is taken on this matter.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, there are, as mentioned in the Marshall Plan, 123,000 people living in poverty in Mauritius. This is a very important matter, for all of us here, in this House. I would like to start with housing. Can the hon. Minister tell us how many people are there on the waiting list of the National Empowerment Foundation, at the moment, waiting for a house?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I have been informed that all those who have been waiting are being taken care of. As per investigation, there are 118 that are waiting.

Mr X. L. Duval: Only 118 people! Madam, this is Alice in Wonderland. Only 118 people waiting for a house at the NEF at the moment. The poor will take note of that. Madam Speaker, this is absolutely untrue. There are thousands of people waiting. Have I understood correctly that not one single house has been built by the NEF since 01 January 2016? Did I get it right?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: As I said in my reply to the question, decision has been taken that it would be the Ministry of Housing which would construct the houses. But ten per cent of all the houses being built by the Ministry of Housing would be allocated to the NEF. That's the reason why, so as not to have duplication in different Ministries and we don't build on both sides.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, maybe the hon. Minister has not read what the then hon. Minister of Finance said in his last Budget, which is that a decent shelter is the next most important step to lift families out of poverty and he was providing for billions of rupees, including 800 housing units in the Marshall Plan for the next three years. What has happened

to the 800 units? Are there any houses at all under construction or planned to be constructed by the NEF?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: As far as I have been informed, we are in the process. By the end of this month, we are getting all the bids and we should be starting construction.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, is the Minister aware that the National Empowerment Foundation has just accepted a tender for 141 houses in rural constituencies? He is not aware?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, not from a sitting position!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: If the hon. Leader of the Opposition is in presence of some answers, he knows it better than me. Then, he is confirming that we received the bid...

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Minister, please address the Chair! Don't address the Leader of the Opposition directly. You have to address the Chair.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: 800 units over the next three years, Madam, and around 150 housing units are to be constructed at Longere Tole, Tombeau Bay, under the Decent Shelter Programme. Tenders for 140 fully concrete housing units have been received.

Mr X. L. Duval: The tender for 141 houses has already been approved by the NEF. I am going to table a copy of the Board Minutes, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to ask the hon. Minister whether he knows what is the price of these houses and where they will be constructed. Has he cared to find out where these houses will be constructed? Because none of these houses is going to be constructed in any pockets of poverty, as we know them, from Constituency No.1, his own Constituency, up to Constituency No. 6, and from Constituency No. 15 up to 20, where there is the majority of the poor. This is a scandal in itself, Madam Speaker.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I have just answered that it is Longere Tole in Baie du Tombeau, where the hon. Leader of the Opposition himself went several times. We are already in front of all the plans of the houses that are to be constructed. We are in the process of building all these. In Constituency No. 1, in December, as far as I know, there were about 81 persons who benefited from houses that have been constructed. Still, I personally went, Madam Speaker, two weeks ago, to make an assessment, and we are looking

with different Ministries about the way forward, so that we can accommodate all these people with houses.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: All that has been done so far is delivering houses that were contracted by the previous Government, and that is a shame, Madam Speaker. I wanted to come to the price of the houses. Eventually, when I was Minister of Social Integration, we were building a house of 31 square metres for Rs465,000, Madam Speaker. Today, this house, a little bit bigger, 40 or 50 square metres, is costing more than Rs800,000. I will have to show, Madam Speaker, that the houses were being sold at Rs500 per month and now they are being sold at Rs240,000. Is that correct for the poor?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has figures, but he must consider that price has gone up. And secondly, all these houses are not in CCIS now. They are fully concrete. If we compare 30 metres to nearly 60 metres, this is double. The price has risen from Rs350,000 to Rs700,000. But, sometimes, this price, which is up to Rs900,000, includes the infrastructures around, because we do cater for infrastructures. I, myself, asked for these infrastructures to be built around the houses.

Mr X. L. Duval: The result is that no house is being constructed. I will table this Board paper, where you will see that they are not 60 metres, but 40 square metres or 50 square metres. So, the hon. Minister, here, is misleading the House, Madam Speaker. Now, if I may, I will move on to the Marshall Plan.

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Leader of the Opposition, you just said that the hon. Minister has misled the House. Are you saying that he has misled the House? Otherwise, you take your responsibility and you will have to table papers to show that he has misled the House.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am tabling the paper. Here it is! This is the brief for tender construction. Number of housing units concerned: 141. 136 houses of 50 square metres and five of 40 square metres. This is going to be tabled, Madam Speaker. You have to come and be accurate in the House, especially when you are dealing with the poor who are suffering. It's very well to take Mr Alvaro to visit Royal Park, but this is also important, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order, please!

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please ask your questions, but don't bring in unwarranted remarks and comments.

Mr X. L. Duval: Do I take it that Mr Alvaro is unparliamentary now? No! Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, I did not get what you said. I did not get what you said. I said that you should not bring in the contents of your questions, remarks or unwarranted things.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the truth, no doubt, hurts. Madam Speaker, I am going now to come to the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan was delivered to Government...

(Interruptions)

We can laugh! It's not a laughing matter. The Marshall Plan was delivered to the Government on 04 December 2015, nearly 18 months ago. I am going to ask now, why the Marshall Plan has not been published, and when it will be published. Simple question!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I know that the Marshall Plan is on the way to be finalised with all the guidelines. We will consider to table it as soon as possible. I wish to come back to the answer that I gave about the 60 square metres. What I tried to say is that 30 metres to 50 metres is closer to more than half of what it was. In fact, it is true; it is 50 metres. But, sometimes, when contractors build houses, it is not exactly that. We have been measuring the houses and most of the time they are over 50 square metres.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Do you have anything else to say, hon. Minister?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: As I said, concerning the Marshall Plan, I shall take up the matter with the Prime Minister so that the Marshall Plan must be made public.

Mr X. L. Duval: At least, we have got that. But I am going to table the Marshall Plan. So, the hon. Minister does not have to bother. Why has Government made 123,000 people - and all the NGOs and all the companies interested in combating poverty - wait for one and a half years for this PNQ to say that they will be aware now of what there is in the Marshall Plan and that is going to be public? What is the reason for having held on to it?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, there is one thing which I want to take one minute to explain. There is a very thin layer between assisting poverty and *l'assistanat*. That is the reason why the Government has to be very careful in all the decisions that are being taken. In the last part of my reply earlier also I said that we must take the example of other countries which have backpedalled when it comes to providing assistance to people in poverty. That is why we take time for this, but we make sure that we do the right thing.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I want to come to this. The Marshall Plan does not only deal with absolute poverty, I am sure the Minister knows. It deals with poverty in general - 123,000 people. I would like to ask the hon. Minister what has happened to, for instance, the Housing Rental Subsidy Programme? What has happened to the Public Works Programme which is aimed at providing employment to the very poor? What has happened to the Enterprise Incubator, to the decentralised offices of the NEF? For the last one and a half years, this has been on the table, in a drawer probably because people have been perhaps busy doing other things. What has happened to the Social Contract Scheme? What has happened to all these?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, ask him one question at a time!

(Interruptions)

One question at a time!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I have been trying to catch up all the different questions in one and all these measures are being taken care of and they are underway. I can assure the House that the NEF is working on all these items and we are doing what is needed to be done.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the truth is, I am sure everybody and people watching at home will know that there are no houses being constructed and hardly anything

from the Marshall Plan has been put in practice. I want to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the Marshall Plan recommends the abolition of the Social Aid Scheme on which there are at the moment 18,000 families. Is the Minister aware of that and does the Minister subscribe to that part of the Marshall Plan?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: In the Marshall Plan, it is true that there are new venues that are to be explored and it is true that we found out, like I have said, there are many families who come because there are grants to be obtained from Government, so they all come. There are many families who do not find themselves in the Social Register, to be poor, in fact. We have found so many cases. Even people who receive...

(Interruptions)

Of course, I have to get the answers!

(Interruptions)

All this will be phased out gradually. That is what I have to say, Madam Speaker.

Mr X. L. Duval: Is he saying that the social aid will be phased out? Is that what the hon. Minister is saying?

(Interruptions)

Be ki line dire alors?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker,...

Madam Speaker: Yes, please explain!

(Interruptions)

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Let me explain again.

(Interruptions)

There is a number of families who are waiting as the Leader of the Opposition is saying. But the Marshall Plan itself is not taking out the poor people from the social plan. It is not! I don't know where it is written. What we are doing is that we are streamlining to know who are poor people and who are not poor people.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, page 10 of the Marshall Plan: ‘progressingly phasing out social aid’. So, the hon. Minister should read it! For three months, you have had to read it. The Minister mentioned *assistanat* - it is a genuine advice - he should take some time and read it.

Now, Madam Speaker, so far as *assistanat* and empowerment are concerned, we mean two different things. Empowerment is people to become self-sufficient and *assistanat* is the other way. We have 8,000 people on this new social monthly subsistence. Is the Minister aware that in the last Budget - I will get the page if he wants - it mentions 13,260 people who have already been included on the SRM with a threshold per family of Rs6,400 only. How is it that you increase the threshold to Rs9,520 and you get less people than there was in the 2016/2017 Budget? I will get the page for him.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, all these families are just getting additional allowance to what they have already after the enquiry has been carried out. Coming back again to the phasing out of the social aid, it is normal because this is what we are aiming at so that we empower people. So, when people are empowered why should they be on social aid? The aim is to phase out completely. This is normal!

Mr X. L. Duval: So, you are going to phase out 18,000 people because 8,000 people are on. Thank you, Minister! He has made it very clear, thank you very much!

Now, talking about page 257 of the Budget, “registration of 13,267 households with a monthly income of less than Rs6,200 under the Social Register of Mauritius”, this is what the previous Minister had as his main achievements in 2015-2016. My question is simple: what happened to the 5,000 families who had disappeared from that same Social Register?

(Interruptions)

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, 13,267 eligible households under the previous SRM were with poverty threshold of Rs6,200 only.

(Interruptions)

The new SRM database...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Roopun, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: The new SRM database of eligible households takes also into account the social benefits derived from those applicants which was not the case before. Registration of applicants under the SRM is ongoing.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, at least that is an answer, thank you. The first answer I got today! Now, I am going to ask about *assistanat* and empowerment. We know that everybody who is getting the monthly amount is signing a social contract. What does that social contract entail? What empowerment programme is he doing at the moment? My information is that there is not a single programme that is being given to these 8,000 people to empower them and to get them to be self-sufficient, not a single one at this present moment!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, as rightly known, all the beneficiaries have to sign a social contract and the case management personnel are all on the field and they are doing the job to try to empower these people. I can not understand where it is said that we are not doing the job. We are receiving every day and the case management personnel are on the field every day.

Mr X. L. Duval: Maybe I should explain, Madam Speaker. I am sorry. There is education, there is training for people who are not trained...

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: But this is done!

Mr X. L. Duval: No, it is not. No, it is not true. Give me one single programme, even your little paper! Madam Speaker, there are people who cannot read or write, there are people who do not have houses, we know that; people who do not have water. This is all in the social contract, Madam Speaker, to enable them to be empowered. And, at the moment, we are just paying people for the last five months, but not a single - I am maybe exaggerating - but no empowerment programme has been put in place!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, empowerment programme is being undertaken by line Ministries of different agencies. The task of the NEF is to refer the beneficiaries to the different agencies.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I will allow you your last question because time would soon be over!

Mr X. L. Duval: I don't know whether my colleagues want a chance. Madam Speaker, I wanted to take two cases because it is all about people at the end of the day. One

case here is about Mrs Verlog, a very sad case. I want to give the Minister a chance here. She was sent a letter by the National Empowerment Foundation to come and pick up Rs25,000. She lives in *Dilo Pouri*, Le Morne...

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

Mr X. L. Duval: I won't be long!

Madam Speaker: Please, don't make a long statement, ask your question because in one minute time will be over!

Mr X. L. Duval: But this is what it is all about, Madam Speaker. People, this is what it is all about! She came to Port Louis and she got nothing; she was told to go back home because she would not get the money. Another one, living in his own Constituency, Mrs Rose was given a letter to pick up Rs3,000...

Madam Speaker: No...

Mr X. L. Duval: I am finishing, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon Leader of the Opposition, let me tell you that I don't think the hon. Minister will have information on a case-to-case basis. So, he will not be able to reply to you on each case. If you could put your question generally on that issue, he may be able to reply, so as not to lose time because we are already ahead of time.

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to ask the Minister to look personally into these cases which are real hardships and to say that this is not symptomatic of the disaster that there is now at the National Empowerment Foundation. That was the question.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, if it is the opinion of the Leader of the Opposition, I cannot stop opinion, but the fact is there is a reality, that there are so many people.

(Interruptions)

We are all politicians in this House. Everywhere we go, we know people ask for a house, for grants and all that, but there is a way of doing it. The Leader of the Opposition knows how to do it because an inquiry must be carried out. The last time I was in Baie du Tombeau, there was a house that took fire, Madam Speaker, and I was asked to go and do the necessary. Madam Speaker, allow me! We found out that in one of these families, when we

calculate the amount of money, it's more than hundred thousand rupees that they receive. Madam Speaker, I am given to understand...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order please! Order! Order! He is not taking a case-to-case basis. As I said, generally speaking, the Leader of the Opposition puts his question on a general nature and he is replying on a general nature. Please finish up because time...

Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I am given to understand that only 58 houses were constructed during 2011 when the Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Social Integration as compared...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please sit down!

Mr X. L. Duval: On a point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Yes, what is the point of order?

Mr X. L. Duval: The Minister is misleading the House! We have built 1,400 houses in that year. Go and check!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: As I said, Leader of Opposition, if you are saying that he is misleading the House, this is very serious and you will have to put evidence in front of the House that he has, in fact, misled the House. Time is over!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/198 in regard to work permits granted to foreign professionals, PQ B/203 in regard to improvement of the drainage network at La Flora and PQ B/209 in regard to the Commissioner of the Competition Commission will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time-permitting.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ameer Meea!

PORT MASTER PLAN - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/162) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External

Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Port Master Plan, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to if it has now been finalized and, if so, indicate the projects identified for implementation thereat, including where matters stand as to the future use of the lands earmarked for the implementation of the Neotown at Les Salines Mauritius Project.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Mauritius Ports Authority is required under section 5 of the Ports Act 1998 to prepare and periodically update a Port Master Plan which shall formulate its policy for Port development and land use.

I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that, following a tender exercise, the services of Messrs Royal Haskoning DHV were retained to undertake a new master plan study for Port Louis and Port Mathurin taking into consideration Government's objectives to develop the Port as a hub for container transshipment, petroleum products and also as a destination for home porting of cruise vessels. The Master Plan is to cover the period 2016 to 2040.

The Consultants have submitted to the Mauritius Ports Authority their report for Port Louis in October 2016 and that for Port Mathurin in December 2016. On 10 January 2017, the Reports were presented to the new Ministerial Committee on Petroleum Hub and Port Development set up by Government on 23 December 2016 and which is chaired by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands.

During the presentation, the consultants highlighted that, based on the traffic forecast for petroleum products, the limited space available at Port Louis harbour will not be adequate to contain future tankage facilities. Moreover, for the petroleum business segment to grow more rapidly, there would be the need for the development of a petroleum Port including a dedicated jetty at Albion.

The consultants were apprised, by the Ministerial Committee, of Government's vision to fast track the development of the petroleum hub with a dedicated jetty at Albion as part of the Port projects which the Government of India has agreed to fund through a grant negotiated during my mission in September 2016.

Madam Speaker, the consultants are now in the process of preparing a land use plan for the Albion area and a concept design for the proposed petroleum jetty. To ensure the implementation of the proposed projects in a holistic manner, the land use recommendation

for the Fort William area, which was initially zoned to also accommodate tankage facilities for petroleum products is being reviewed.

Madam Speaker, we will be in a position to give details of the projects and land use plan for the Port Area, including Les Salines, once the reports are finalised and approved by the Board of the Mauritius Ports Authority.

Madam Speaker: Hon Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the promoters of Neotown are suing the Government of Mauritius for termination of their lease? Are there any legal claims in relation to their termination of the lease of Neotown project?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am aware that they have sent a legal document to Government and that there is a request also. I understand one of the clauses of the contract was for arbitration and I believe that they have requested for arbitration. So, there is a claim and I also understand that, on Government side, we have made an assessment with regard to their claim and the matter is being looked into.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, since there is a claim, may we know what is the amount of the claim that they have made? And also in relation to the termination of the lease, answering to a past PQ, the hon. Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Housing stated to the House that there has been a *mise en demeure* in relation to this project and that they should vacate, quit and leave the site. Also according to Article 14 of the Lease Agreement, the company is eligible for compensation for improvement made on the land upon termination of the lease. May I know whether any compensation has been paid to the company, if not, how much compensation are we talking about?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, from memory, I believe that they have assessed their claim to a figure which, I understand, Government is looking into. So far, no money has been paid. In fact, there is a negotiation which is ongoing right now for compensation, which is being led by the Ministry of Housing and Lands. The company is eligible for compensation, but I am told that no compensation has been paid so far. I am also told that they have already vacated the premises. So, the matter is still being discussed and ultimately, I hope, that there will be consensus on the figure.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: How much did they claim? I don't have the figure. But I can, of course, communicate to the House how much they have claimed.

Mr Armance: Madam Speaker, I just want to confirm with the hon. Prime Minister whether I have understood correctly as to if the Government is going ahead with the Petroleum Hub Project at Albion, and if yes, whether he is giving the guarantee to the House today that the Government is going to respect all the EIA assessment.

The Prime Minister: Yes, on both counts.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

BUILD MAURITIUS FUND - FUNDS

(No. B/163) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Build Mauritius Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the amount of funds available therein as at to date, indicating the amount contributed thereto from the price of diesel and petrol by the State Trading Corporation since June 2016 to date and disbursed therefrom, giving the list of projects –

- (a) undertaken, and
- (b) earmarked for implementation thereunder.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Build Mauritius Fund was set up by way of the Finance and Audit (Build Mauritius Fund) Regulations 2013. The objects of the fund are to contribute to the financing of -

- (a) the Mauritius Light Rail Transit (MLRT) Project;
- (b) other Infrastructure projects or development schemes aiming at more fluid traffic flows and improving the quality of the land transport system and service;
- (c) consultancy, preparatory or advisory services in relation to Mauritius Light Rail Transit and land transport projects, and
- (d) such other infrastructure project or development scheme related to the Build Mauritius Plan.

Madam Speaker, the Build Mauritius Plan focusses on –

- (a) regular supply of water and electricity at competitive prices;
- (b) efficient and safe public transport;
- (c) more fluid traffic flows, and
- (d) infrastructure for greater connectivity with the rest of the world.

Initially the Fund was set up with Government funds to the tune of Rs4.7 billion comprising Rs4.3 billion as a loan and Rs0.4 billion as grant. In June 2016, part of the loan, that is, an amount of Rs2 billion, was converted into a grant to the Fund. As at 07 April 2017, the balance of the Fund stood at Rs5.3 billion.

Since June 2016 to date, the total amount received from the State Trading Corporation on the levy imposed on the price of diesel and petrol amounts to Rs1.56 billion. Out of the total amount collected, Rs1.17 billion is for financing water projects and Rs0.39 billion for the replacement of buses under the Bus Modernisation Scheme.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that over the same period, some Rs1 billion has been disbursed from the Build Mauritius Fund in respect of the following projects and schemes -

(i)	Water Sector Projects	Rs291 m.
(ii)	Water Tank Scheme	Rs19 m.
(iii)	Land Drainage Projects	Rs191 m.
(iv)	Road and Land Transport Projects	Rs317 m.
(v)	Bus Modernisation Scheme	Rs182 m.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that the amounts available in the Fund will be used to meet obligations under ongoing projects and those earmarked for implementation as follows -

Water Projects

- (i) Construction of the Cut-off Wall for the Bagatelle Dam;
- (ii) Feasibility study and detailed design for the Rivière des Anguilles Dam;
- (iii) Replacement of old and defective pipes in 20 different regions across the island including Beau-Bassin, Rose Belle, Rivière du Rempart, Lallmatie, Roche Bois, Plaine Verte and Surinam, and

- (iv) Construction of 5 service reservoirs at Cluny, Riche en Eau, Balisson, Rivière Dragon, and Alma.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to inform the House that since June 2016 to date, 3,842 low income households have benefitted from the Water Tank Scheme.

Land Drainage Projects

The Build Mauritius Fund has also financed the construction of drains around the island by the National Development Unit.

Road and Land Transport Projects

The road and land transport projects that have been funded under the Build Mauritius Fund are as follows -

- (i) Reparation of the embankment failure on the Terre Rouge - Verdun Link Road;
- (ii) Landslide stabilisation works on the Terre Rouge - Verdun Link Road;
- (iii) Remedial works on the Ring Road Phase 1;
- (iv) Re-construction of the Jumbo – Phoenix Roundabout;
- (v) Construction of the A1 – M1 Bridge between Coromandel and Sorèze, and
- (vi) Consultancy Services for the preparation of the Metro Express Project.

For the period June 2016 to date, the renewal of 182 buses has been partly financed from the grant offered under the Bus Modernisation Scheme.

Mr Ameer Meea: One of the aims of this Build Mauritius Fund was the replacement of water pipes. Answering to a PNQ on 07 June 2016 by the then hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Prime Minister then Minister of Finance, stated to the House that contracts for replacement of 83.5 kms of pipes will be awarded by November 2016 at an estimated value of Rs763 m. and also contracts for replacement of 133 kms are expected to be awarded by December 2016, contract to the tune of Rs1.2 billion. May I know where matters stand in relation to these two projects?

The Prime Minister: Well, I can give a list of the projects with regard to the financing from the Build Mauritius Fund, but let me say also that true it is that we have identified a number of projects to be financed, but there is a process and I am told that the

process for implementing the water projects, in fact, involved lengthy tasks such as investigation works, survey works, obtaining of way leave and the procurement of pipes. So, probably these projects are not completed within the time that we forecast, but I can assure the hon. Member that everything is being done so that at the same time we abide by the process in a transparent way and according to the rules also, and at the end of the day we see to it that the projects do materialise.

Mr Ameer Meea: The House would recall that in June 2015, this special tax has been increased from Rs1 to Rs4 per litre and we have been made aware by the hon. Prime Minister that there is an amount of Rs5.3 billion available in the balance of this fund. My question is: with all that is happening worldwide, if ever there is an increase in fuel prices worldwide, would the hon. Prime Minister consider reducing this levy of Rs4 rather than passing any eventual increase in Mogas prices on the consumer?

The Prime Minister: Well, the House will, I am sure, understand that we will need a budget to be able to finance a number of projects. There is nothing new, Madam Speaker, because, for example, the contribution to the Road Development Authority, I still remember when we were in Government, the MSM/MMM - in fact, it is a tax - *ce prélèvement a été fait dans le but de financer certains projets*. Likewise, we will need, as I say, to be able to finance a number of infrastructural projects, which we believe are priority projects and, therefore, this is one way of doing it. But, of course, we will review with time and see if there is a need to reduce, we will do so.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister previously had stated when he was in the Opposition that he was against the idea of having special funds because they fall outside the purview of the National Audit and outside the Budget Estimates.

May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he would consider scrapping away this Fund so that all the money now goes back to the Consolidated Fund and from the Fund, like we do for all the items of expenditure every year in the Budget, we will allocate whatever money is required for development purposes.

The Prime Minister: Yes, in fact, I did say so because it was a recommendation that there should be transparency where we can show to the people that so much is, in fact, being earmarked for spending on a number of projects. I am working on that and we will, of course, be in consultation with my colleague, the Minister concerned, responsible for STC, and we will see to it how we can move towards that end.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: We may increase this levy from Re 1 to Rs4 and the amount revealed by the hon. Prime Minister to the tune of Rs5.3 billion in the Fund. Can the hon. Minister make a projection as to how much of this amount will be used for the Metro Express Project in the years to come?

The Prime Minister: For the Metro Express Project, so far nothing has been earmarked as such. We will see if there is a need to finance part of the project from that Fund. I mean it is an option, but I can assure the hon. Member that no decision has been taken as at to date.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem, next question!

MPs – MOTOR VEHICLES – PURCHASE

(No. B/164) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the purchase of motor vehicles for use by hon. Ministers, he will state, in each case and for each of the years 2015, 2016 and 2017, the –

- (a) value thereof ;
- (b) make and model thereof ;
- (c) engine capacity thereof, and
- (d) procurement method used therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that during the years 2015 and 2016, 20 cars were purchased to replace the official cars of hon. Ministers at their due renewal date. For the year 2017, no car has been purchased as at to date. The information requested by the hon. Member is being tabled.

Madam Speaker, I would like to emphasise the fact that these cars have been purchased in line with the existing policy for the acquisition of official cars for Ministers in terms of such requirements as renewal period engine capacity and ceiling value.

Moreover, given that a Minister, like any other eligible official is allowed to choose a car of his preference, within the applicable ceiling and such cars are available from sole suppliers, direct procurement method is adopted for their acquisition.

The House will note that the official car of the former Prime Minister which is now attached to me was acquired in November 2016 at a price of Rs19, 419,086.00. The car was purchased to replace one that was more than six years old.

On the other hand, the official car acquired in December 2013 for the then Prime Minister, which was of the same make and model as the one presently attached to me was purchased at a price of Rs23,541,673.00

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I am glad I am receiving his answer, I asked this question in December last and did not get the answer. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, what is the total amount of exemption from duty excises and VAT in connection with the acquisition of these cars?

The Prime Minister: Well, exemption of duty also has always been the practice that when Government buys for Ministers, from any Government, they have been exempted from duty. Of course, I don't have the figure with me concerning the total exemption, but I can have it to be calculated and circulated.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, thank you. The price of a car depends also on the options available.

(Interruptions)

In respect to the car acquired by the hon. Prime Minister, there is some information that has been disclosed in the Press. I just wanted to check whether he can confirm that this car is equipped with a fridge, special massage seats and DVD players?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I only heard the fridge. Can the hon. Member repeat his question?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem, can you repeat the question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: The question was about a list of gadgets that is supposed to be in that BMW 760li: DVD player, television, fridge bar, special massage chairs. I want to know whether this is included.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Does the hon. Member mean the car that is assigned to me?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

The Prime Minister: I can confirm as far as massage is concerned, there is none.

(Interruptions)

I must probably look into it because I have not seen the fridge as yet. I don't know about the other amenities. But we will look into that.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: In relation to the cars of the Vice-Prime Minister, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether a request was made that these cars be equipped with *sirènes* and *gyrophares*?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I will know whether they have a siren...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gobin!

Mr Gobin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For the benefit of the House, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to the cars purchased by the then hon. Prime Minister during the period 2010-2014, whether he has the details as to the year of purchase and their respective value?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, normally, for the Prime Minister, the eligibility period is that the cars are being replaced after every four years, but for the then Prime Minister, there was a car, a BMW 660i, that was purchased on 30 June 2010 for the sum of Rs19,775,241.00 and then on 12 April 2011, a Mercedes S600 was bought for Rs20,993,100.00

(Interruptions)

And then on 20 December 2013, a BMW 660 injection was bought for Rs23,541,673.00.

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, with regard to the cars driven by Ministers, we have seen a lot of cars of six series in the parking there. We all know that the six series do not exceed the ceiling. It is a known fact. My question is: are we making sure that there are proper procedures and control in place to ensure that the dealers, car dealership, are not recouping that money to servicing and repairs that are quoted excessively because we all know that this is happening.

(Interruptions)

They reduce the sale price, but then they recoup it through servicing and repairs.

The Prime Minister: Well, then there must be a specific question with regard to servicing and repairs and then I can look into how much has been paid with regard to that. Let me assure the hon. Member that the whole purpose of having the renewal period of four years is, in fact, for Government to incur less expenses with regard to those repairs and those expenses.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Prime Minister state, for the benefit of the House, whether under the same procurement policy that he outlined earlier on, the Leader of the Opposition, former and current, Chairman of PAC, former and current, and the Opposition Chief Whip, former and current, are and were also beneficiaries of motor vehicles?

The Prime Minister: As I said, Madam Speaker, the same...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: As I said, Madam Speaker, the same procedures, the same guidelines, the same criteria apply to all the Members that the hon. Member has mentioned.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, next question!

ROSE BELLE BUSINESS PARK PROJECT - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/165) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the

Rose Belle Business Park Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Landscape Mauritius Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) surface area of the building thereat;
- (b) names of the contractors and of the consultants thereof, indicating the -
 - (i) procurement procedures followed therefor, and
 - (ii) total amount of money paid thereto;
- (c) extent of spaces that will be available thereat, and
- (d) expected date of coming into operation thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Rose Belle Business Park Project is being developed on 56 *arpents* of land.

The site is serviced with modern infrastructural utilities and services.

As regards part (a) of the question, the high-tech building has been built by ex-BPML, now merged into Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd., on about two acres of land along the motorway. It consists of ground plus five floors and covers a total area of 6,800 square metres.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that, following a bid exercise, the Consultancy Services for the design, tendering and construction supervision was awarded on 07 August 2013 to a joint venture of Messrs P. Desai/Kothari and Associates for an amount of Rs11,327,500, inclusive of VAT.

After a tender exercise, the contract for the project construction was awarded in August 2014 by ex-BPML to Hyvec Partners for Rs328.9 m., inclusive of VAT. I am further informed that the total amount paid as at date is Rs248.7 m., VAT inclusive, in particular Rs238.5 m. to Hyvec partners and Rs10.2 m. to Messrs P. Desai/Kothari and Associates.

As regards part (c) of the question, the rentable space in the building is 5,070 square metres.

In relation to part (d) of the question, I am informed that the construction of the building has been completed. The contractor is, in fact, currently attending to the snag list and the building is expected to be handed over to Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd by 31 May 2017.

Madam Speaker, two floors of the building were earmarked to host the Spot Trading Platform of the proposed 'Mauritius International Derivatives and Commodities Exchange' (MINDEX). To this end, I am informed that the Financial Services Promotion Agency has launched international call for proposals on 06 January 2017 to appoint a consultancy firm or consultant to advise on the feasibility of such a platform as well as the modalities of the implementation of the project. The contract for consultancy services will be awarded shortly. I am further informed that Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd has started marketing the remaining four floors to private operators.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! I am sorry, I allow a supplementary question on this one. If you don't have, then time is over!

(Interruptions)

I am sorry! I made an allowance in spite of the time limit to allow you supplementary questions on this one.

Time is over! The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/181 has been withdrawn. Hon. Rughoobur!

EDUCATION SECTOR – TRAINING PLAN

(No. B/178) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the proposed training to be given to teachers in the wake of the implementation of the Nine Year Basic Schooling Programme, she will state where matters stand.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, in the context of the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education Programme, my Ministry has in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Education, the Mauritius Examination Syndicate, elaborated a training plan for the benefit of teaching and non-teaching staff of the education sector. Thus, over the period 2015 to date, a number of workshops and training programmes have been held for the staff of the primary sector, and these were attended by school Inspectors, Headmasters, Deputy Headmasters, educators as well as ICT Support Officers. The main areas of training were –

- (i) salient aspects of NYCBE reform;
- (ii) the National Curriculum Framework;

- (iii) the assessment and evaluation with respect of the PSAC, the Primary School Achievement Certificate, including school-based assessment for non-core subjects, ICT skills and communication skills;
- (iv) Primary School Readiness Programme, and
- (v) the Early Support Programme on which school inspectors, supervisors, headmasters and Grade I educators were trained.

Overall, some 3,150 primary school educators, together with 143 ICT Support Officers, have been trained on the various components of the NYCBE.

Madam Speaker, while not neglecting the cognitive development of learners, the NYCBE lays much emphasis on holistic development of the child with focus on their socioemotional, physical, creative and intuitive as well as aesthetic potentials. Remediation and holistic education are thus two important aspects of the reform in the primary sector. All support teachers are following a Teacher Certificate Course at the MIE.

Moreover, 340 educators, who have been recently recruited, are currently following a Teachers' Diploma Programme at the MIE. These educators will be responsible for the teaching of non-core subjects, that is, Health and Physical Education, the Arts, Civic Education and Road Safety.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that training programmes have also been conducted in Rodrigues, and in addition, school inspectors are now undertaking cascading training to educators in their respective zones on the new curriculum, and teaching and learning materials, with a view to reaching out to a larger number of educators and schools. Training is ongoing and a number of programmes have been scheduled during the Easter holidays this year.

With regard to the secondary sector, the new National Curriculum Framework for the lower secondary, Grades 7 to 9, was launched in February 2017 and a training programme covering areas such as the new Curriculum Framework Assessment and Evaluation and Remedial Education has accordingly been elaborated for the secondary school educators, rectors and deputy rectors. Training is expected to start in July 2017 for educators of both State and private aided secondary schools who have been identified to teach Grade 7 in 2018.

Madam Speaker, Continuous Professional Development Programme is one of the pillars of the reform and, as such, every effort will be made to ensure that teaching and non-teaching staff have the opportunity to avail from training in the relevant areas.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister has been elaborating on the list of courses where there has been training. May I request the hon. Minister to enlighten the House, apart from curriculum assessment on which training is being imparted, about what the Ministry is doing through the MIE or any other institution to train the teachers on the modern methods of teaching?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, the MIE is, in fact, allowing teachers to get to know about new pedagogical methods being used elsewhere in the world. I am tabling a copy of all the training programmes being elaborated for the teachers.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Will the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to the methods of training and which institution is responsible? Is it through workshops or is it the MIE that is undertaking training on the procedures for assessment? Because we know that this assessment leading to Grade 9 is extremely important in the process.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The training for assessment is carried out by the Mauritius Examination Syndicate in collaboration with the MIE and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to training of teachers for the implementation of the nine-year schooling, we note that we are going to have what is called 'remedial teachers and support teachers'. May I know what will then happen to the actual prevocational teachers who are actually in post?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, the prevocational teachers are, in fact, for the secondary sector. When we are talking about remedial and support teachers right now, we are referring to the primary sector. But as far as the prevocational teachers are concerned, I have, on a number of times, reassured them that they will be involved in the process, in the teaching of the extended stream in the secondary sector, they will be trained for further remediation programmes.

Ms Sewocksingh: Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister how have the teachers been trained when there are inadequate or inexistence of infrastructure regarding the Nine-Year Schooling Project which makes provision for the major changes like, for example, tablets have been given to children of grade one, have they already been trained? Do they have specific programmes for that?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, let me inform the hon. Member that all training of teachers and educators is done at the level of the MIE. We are presently coming up with a new system known as the ‘Teacher’s Academy’ that will be attached to my Ministry, but, nevertheless, all teachers are receiving their training through the MIE. Tablets have not yet been distributed to students of the primary school, they will come later on. Teachers are already been trained for that particular purpose.

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

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, dans le *holistic program* du *Nine-Year Schooling* qui inclut l’art, le théâtre et aussi le *road safety*, est-ce que je peux savoir de l’honorable ministre, le nombre d’enseignants attachés, à ce jour, dans les différentes écoles primaires?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Nous avons déjà recruté, Madame la présidente, 340 éducateurs à travers la PSC et ces éducateurs sont, à présent, en train de suivre des cours à la MIE.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

HOSPITALS – ALLEGED MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE

(No. B/179) **Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’ Baie & Poudre d’Or)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to alleged cases of medical negligence, he will state the number of reported cases thereof since July 2016 to date, indicating in each case the measures taken in relation thereto.

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that 10 cases of alleged medical negligence have been reported to this Ministry since July 2016 to date. Details are being compiled and will be laid on the Table of the National Assembly as soon as it will be ready.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, I will have only one supplementary because I know that the hon. Minister is not the substantive Minister. If the hon. Minister has the information, will he confirm that there have been cases of medical negligence, recommendations from the Medical Council submitted to the PSC since 2014 and until now the recommendations have not been processed?

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, the question is from 2016, but I can inform the hon. Member that the procedure is that after enquiry is made by the Ministry, it is sent to the Medical Council and under section 46 of the PSC Regulations, the Medical Council goes for an in-depth enquiry, but sometimes it takes much longer to process and to get the enquiry on.

Mr Jhuboo: Maybe the substantive Minister could table the document. What is the total amount claimed by the aggrieved families in terms of legal *dédommagement*?

Mr Sawmynaden: Unfortunately, I don't have this information with me, but I will pass on the message to the substantive Minister.

Mrs Selvon: Could the hon. Minister tell the House how many cases of alleged medical negligence by specialists were reported and how many cases by newly registered doctors were reported?

Mr Sawmynaden: The question by the hon. Member is too large. My information is from 2016 to date and, as I mentioned, it is 10 cases of alleged medical negligence, but we don't have the detailed ones regarding the specialists or the GPs.

Dr. Sorefan: Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether the Medical Council is coping with those cases promptly, if not, whether he will amend the law so that a British type Coroner will be put in place to take care of these cases and future cases?

Mr Sawmynaden: I think I will pass on the message to the substantive Minister and he will be the best one to answer to this question.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, in these cases, 10 cases of alleged medical negligence, whether he could give a breakdown of those that have happened in the public hospitals and those that have happened in the private sector.

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, we have the list of only those that happened in the public hospitals, but those for the private clinics, it goes directly to the Medical Council.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur, next question!

FREE TRANSPORT SCHEME – STUDENTS

(No. B/180) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the provision of free transport to the students under the Free Transport Scheme, he will state the measures that are being taken to monitor the optimum utilisation of public funds in relation thereto.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, in 2016, the amount disbursed for the Free Travel Scheme is computed at Rs1.2 billion. It was Rs571 m. in 2006.

I wish to refer the hon. Member also, Madam Speaker, to the reply made to PQ B/134 last week, wherein I highlighted that the present system is fraught with flaws.

Indeed, the control mechanism put in place since 2005 discloses a lack of transparency in the allocation of funds to operators and a lack of accountability from operators on the services due from them. The weakness of this mechanism lies in the fact that operators are aware that whatever be the circumstances and quality of services, the payment due to them will have to be effected.

Madam Speaker, there is no denial that we need a more transparent, efficient and cost effective management of the free transport payment mechanism. This is, in fact, what prompted my Ministry to commission a study by Pricewaterhouse Coopers Private Limited (India) (PWC) in August last year on the re-engineering of the Public Transport Industry in Mauritius with a view, amongst others, to help Government rationalise and optimise the use of public funds in relation to the Free Travel Scheme and other support to the bus industry.

Madam Speaker, so far, the Consultants have submitted an Interim report. In relation to the Free Travel Scheme, the Consultants have, *inter alia*, observed that the budgetary allocation has increased over the years whilst the overall public transport ridership has decreased.

The Consultants have observed that the current formula used in computing disbursements under the Free Travel Scheme has encouraged and has led to overcapacity and inefficient operations in the bus transport industry.

They have further observed that the existing scheme administration mechanism is linked to the number of licences held by individual and private company operators rather than

to the overall service provided to the customers and to the number of people actually travelling.

The Consultants are working on the new parameters for computing the free travel subsidy in a more scientific and transparent manner to ensure that there is no inefficient use of public funds. The final report of the Pricewaterhouse Coopers is expected in the coming weeks.

And I would like to inform the House that we will lay a copy of the findings of the Pricewaterhouse Coopers Report for debate.

Mr Rughoobur: Based on the reply of the Minister and the Report from Pricewaterhouse Coopers, will the hon. Minister agree that there is definitely a need for better monitoring and control? Will he, first of all, agree that there is an acute shortage of transport Inspectors for the monitoring of this whole system of free transport to students? And what is he contemplating to do in the weeks to come?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, we are, in fact, allocating a number of buses for 150,000 students, and lastly, some time back, we came to the House to say to reduce the number of students travelling on buses further to an accident and then there was a PNQ by the former Leader of the Opposition. I totally agree also that the system has to be re-engineered completely. As regards the inspectorate, we have about 60. Now, they do inspection in various areas and we have about 20 to 25 who are allocated the task of inspecting the buses. In fact, with the new recommendations of the report, we'll have to tighten all the system that we have today so that we have a better service.

Mr Rughoobur: Is the Minister confirming that the formula for payment will be reviewed in the months to come?

Mr Bodha: Today, what is happening is that we pay a quantum to the bus owner for the service whatever be the number of old age people who, in fact, board the bus or the number of students who, in fact, travel by the system. Pricewaterhouse Coopers is proposing that we have a smart card system. I am totally for this. We will have to see later how we can be able to have a smart card system which will provide the free travel to the elderly, to the students and to the others, but that card should also be able to be used on the public system, on the bus and, most probably, on the Metro.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, avec l'avènement du Métro Express, est-ce que je peux savoir de l'honorable ministre si une étude a été faite pour connaître la répartition qui sera faite éventuellement en ce qui concerne le *free transport*?

Mr Bodha: I mentioned this in the House last time when there was the PNQ from the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I said that today the bus industry, in fact, has a subsidy of Rs2 billion and Rs1.2 billion are, in fact, allocated to the free travel to students and the elderly. I said we will re-engineer the Rs2 billion and it is natural that the students and the elderly will be able to travel free on the Metro. So, we will have, first of all, to see how to better use the Rs2 billion and then see what can be done for the Metro.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister will remember at the beginning of 2015 there was this whole issue about buses deliberately not stopping at bus stops and the hon. Minister came with the system of inspectors at bus stops. He has just said that there were only 60 so it is physically impossible to control. Has the Minister in that time, from the complaints till now, implemented any measures to facilitate complaints from students perhaps a hotline or any other way to draw the attention of the Ministry that buses are frequently doing that practice?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: Strangely, Madam Speaker, the number of complaints was 79 in 2015 and only 19 in 2016. So, the question is whether the service is getting better or whether the inspectors are not doing their job properly! But, I will have to look into the matter. What we have tried to do is to have a better control at the main stations and we have also a number of officers who are working in the fitness centres, now that this has been privatized, we have brought them back in the inspectorate. So, we are trying to see whether we can have some more...

(Interruptions)

a hotline, that's a very good idea from the hon. Member! And we can also see whether we can have some new posts in the new Budget.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the last part of his answer, the hon. Minister mentioned PricewaterhouseCoopers study as consultant on this issue. Can the hon.

Minister tell us what is the outcome and, if I heard him rightly in the past, that he was not too happy with this report, can he give us the reasons as to why he was not happy?

Mr Bodha: Well, I was not very happy for a very simple reason that the impression I had in the Executive Summary is that the Executive Summary just said what we already knew about the industry that there was this issue of disbursement of funds without accountability, without transparency. It was too general in terms. So, I said that we need a focused report to be able to answer the right questions to be able to have an action plan.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea! *Non?* Hon. Baloomoody, you had a question? No, okay. So, I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.

At 1.05 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.43 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair

RENAL TRANSPLANT - PATIENTS

(No. B/181) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to renal transplant, he will state the number of patients having undergone same, if any, over the past five years, in Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

(No. B/182) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will give a list of the plots of land which have been or will be compulsorily acquired therefor, indicating in each case the –

- (a) extent thereof, and
- (b) location thereof.

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, in the context of the Metro Express Project, 94 plots of land have been compulsorily acquired while another 6 plots of land are being compulsorily acquired, totalling 100 plots.

I am tabling a list of the 100 plots with all the relevant details.

Mr Ameer Meea: Recently, in the press there was a notice regarding land acquisition for the Metro Express Project. In this notice, mention was being made as to the date the owners concerned have to vacate the respective houses and land. The date at that time was only one month notice. So, therefore, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister if he is aware of all the problems that this short notice is causing? There are lots of family problems and social problems for all these people. They have to vacate their houses. Where would they go and how much compensation they would need to buy another shelter? So, what has been the reaction of the Government concerning this issue?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, as I just mentioned there are 100 plots and I can give my good friend a detail. 67 are bare plots of land where there is nobody; 32 are residential and in one plot there is a warehouse. There are also 14 cases where we have already made the interim payment. My colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure has set up a committee under the Chairperson of the Permanent Secretary and we are looking about the 32 cases. Most of the cases have been referred to the Board of Assessment and they are waiting for the payment. As a whole, we have already acquired 100 plots of land. I have already vested to the MPI for the project.

Madam Speaker: Can I just ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he is replying to PQ B/208 at the same time.

Mr Soodhun: I don't mind because it is the same.

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whilst the committee is working out the modalities, whether those people who have received their eviction orders, at the moment are in abeyance and nobody needs to move until whatever time the committee has to decide?

Mr Soodhun: We are doing it in a very proper manner so that we are not going to embarrass any people. So, we are taking into consideration all the aspects. This is why we have put a committee composed of both ...

(Interruptions)

Well, we are going to see all the possibilities.

Mr Barbier: Madam Speaker, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform us whether when Government shifts from the Light Rail System to the Metro Express whether new plots of land need to be compulsorily acquired? If so, how many and whether they are private or

Government-owned land and whether we can have, at least, these details as these people are newly concerned?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, I have just given all the details. We have 100 plots of land and I have given all the details that we have on that. It concerns the Metro Express Project and not the Light Rail System.

Mr Barbier: I'm sorry. I have to put this question, Madam Speaker, because those who were concerned with the Light Rail System Project have already received notice that their lands are going to be compulsorily acquired, but not for those who have been informed recently. What I want to know is that for those who are now concerned with this new Metro Express Project, when have they been informed and what is the timeframe Government is setting for these people to be able to comply with the conditions of this compulsory acquisition?

Mr Soodhun: Anyway, Madam Speaker, as I have just mentioned, we have taken into consideration all humanitarian grounds and we have put a committee to look into it.

Mr Lepoigneur: Je voudrais savoir du ministre, étant donné que le complexe sportif de la Résidence Barkly se trouve sur le tracé, si avant de démolir le complexe, cela va être remplacé ailleurs, et si oui, où?

Mr Soodhun: It's a very good question from my good friend. I think we have to see to that. Wherever we are going to move any sports complex or whatever, we are going to see to it that we get a better one.

Mr Baloomoody: With regard to those whose cases are being dealt with by the committee, may we know what is the time lag - especially in La Butte - because they have been served with a notice to quit, leave and vacate within one month? They have not been informed that officially they don't have to consider this letter, that this has been put in abeyance. They want to know what is the time lag because they have to plan not only for alternative accommodation, alternative school for their children and probably for their work or alternative means of transport. So, may we know what is the time lag and will they be informed officially that this letter which has been sent recently should be ignored?

Mr Soodhun: I understand the point of my hon. friend. But as I have mentioned, before we acquire the land, we have to inform the people that we are going to acquire their property. Most of the cases are referred to the Board of Assessment and there are some

problems that occurred. This is why we have set up a committee to look into all these before we are going to start the project.

Mr Bhagwan: With regard to the displacement of the utilities, market fair, sports complex and so on, will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform us whether the committee has started finding alternatives and whether the MPs of the Constituency - because this is a national project, it concerns everybody - will be informed where land have been identified so that, at least, we will be aware?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, I know that the committee has consultations with all the Municipalities concerned. I think that it is a good suggestion that the MPs should be made aware.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The Metro Express has necessitated the lowering of the railway track on the road whereby additional space will be required because the platform is different. Will that require additional acquisition of land, this is on the one hand and the new project also has required some modifications along the stations, does that affect the land acquisition extent and number of plots?

Mr Soodhun: I'm not sure that we are going to have more lands for this purpose. The land alignment has already been done and everything is being properly done by the MPI.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister will surely agree that the compulsory acquisition of land and housing is creating so much distress to many families, and as mentioned by hon. Baloomoody, one of the other issues is that some people have a loan to the bank on these houses which are being compulsory acquired. So, my question to the hon. Vice Prime Minister is - he stated that a report will be ready soon - may I know when this report will be ready and also I will insist that since a notice was made public, another notice could be made public so that they know where they stand?

Mr Soodhun: Yes, we have gone through all these problems because this dates a long time back since 2012. Today, the committee is sitting, we are going to look after it and we are asking a very urgent report because we are going to start. I am sure that all these suggestions made by my hon. colleagues will be taken on board.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

ROADS - UPGRADING/EXCAVATION WORKS

(No. B/183) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the classified roads, he will state if he has been informed of the acute traffic congestions caused when upgrading/excavation works are carried out thereat during daytime and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for the carrying out thereof at night and, if not, why not.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will answer this question. I am fully aware of the acute traffic congestions caused when upgrading/excavation and other works are carried out during the day. I am informed that most of such works undertaken by service providers for utilities are carried out during daytime. The RDA and the TMRSU also do carry some works. However, to ensure that traffic congestion is minimised, wayleave is given subject to the following conditions –

- Partial road closure strictly commences after the morning peak hours;
- Police assistance is provided during the whole period of the works;
- Extensive police assistance is provided during peak timings, and
- No equipment or materials are left along the roadway after the prescribed daily hours of work and after which free flow of traffic is restored in both directions after the temporary reinstatement.

Madam Speaker, I am advised that these works cannot normally be performed during the night because of the following constraints -

- (i) the noise created from such works at night-time is detrimental to the peace, health and welfare of our citizens in residential areas. This is a very sensitive issue and in public interest, works involving heavy machinery are not allowed during night-time at these locations, and
- (ii) factors such as poor driver behaviour, higher speeds, fatigue, difficulty in assessing distances and limited vision are amplified during hours of darkness and may be hazards to road safety.

Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the above constraints, the Road Development Authority (RDA), on its part, is already carrying out resurfacing and road marking works, wherever possible and practicable, at night-time with a view to mitigating traffic congestion.

These works are undertaken after due consultation with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) and the Police Traffic Branch.

Madam Speaker, to further mitigate the congestion problem, I have instructed the RDA to arrange for upgrading/excavation works to be carried out during night time as far as possible and also to ensure that the same principle is applied by other service providers while granting way leaves.

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister said that, in the near future, we are going to have a lot of projects, a *chantier* all over the island. This is the purpose of my question to start catering for future because all those major projects, I am sure, will require 24 hours....

(Interruptions)

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

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: When you on your side, you talk for half an hour before asking a question....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

(Interruptions)

I am sorry! Hon. Dr. Sorefan, when you make such a statement, you are attacking the Chair! It is for me to decide when I have to ask you to make a long statement or whether you have to shorten your statement.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: Will the hon. Minister inform the House how is he going to make the public aware, from right now and onwards, how this Government is going with all these projects because the Minister said at night it creates problems, but I am sure all the major projects will be at night also?

Mr Bodha: In fact, this is going to be one of the most important challenges in the months to come with the major projects being implemented and we have asked the Singapore consultants to explain to us how - in Singapore which is a more densely populated city and where major works have been carried out - this has been done. I understand the issues which

have been raised by the hon. Member. We have to address these issues, how to coordinate these projects and address the whole issue of noise pollution, dust and congestion. This is going to be massive. For example, at Caudan, we are going to have four projects at the same time. So, we will have to handle this, and this is going to be very chaotic. But what we have to do is to see to it that we inform people and maybe we will have to change some behaviour patterns. We may have to encourage people to do what we call *covoiturage*, that is, instead of coming alone in a car, but to come with others. We will have to re-engineer our life cycle for the next four or five years because we are spending Rs10 billion in road and other infrastructure for the next five years.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

FLIC-EN-FLAC – ACCESS ROAD - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/184) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a new access road to Flic-en-Flac, he will state the reasons why the implementation thereof has been stopped after the call for consultancy services therefor has been effected.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Road Development Authority (RDA) that a call for consultancy services for the construction of a new access road to Flic-en-Flac was advertised on 06 January 2017.

However, it was subsequently brought to the attention of the RDA that the Board of Investment had, on 16 December 2016, that is, a few days before, issued a Letter of Intent to the Médine Smart City Company Ltd. for the development of, *inter alia*, a university campus, schools, student housing facilities, business parks, a regional hospital, a bus terminal, a shopping mall, residential units and infrastructure inclusive of cycling and pedestrian tracks, roads, drains and water canals over freehold land of an extent of 773A at Flic-en-Flac under the Smart City Scheme.

One of the conditions listed in the Letter of Intent from the BOI is that the Medine Smart City Company Limited is required to carry out the detailed design of the proposed alignment for the Flic-en-Flac bypass, subject to approval from relevant authorities, at its own cost. The design from the Smart City Company is to be completed by November 2017.

Consequently, given that the Medine Smart City Company is already undertaking to carry out the detailed design of the New Access Road to Flic-en-Flac, it is warranted for the

RDA to cancel the call for Consultancy Services for the above project to avoid the duplication.

However, I have instructed the RDA to closely follow up and monitor the matter with the Medine Smart City Company because it has to be integrated in the network which exists today and which will be implemented tomorrow.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: The hon. Minister has mentioned about smart cities from Medine Company. Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether any recommendation has gone from RDA to Medine and whether the old access to Flic-en-Flac is going to make it a dual carriageway?

Mr Bodha: In fact, we are already working on the issue of access to Flic-en-Flac which is a very complex problem. We will have to consider the access to Flic-en-Flac from the South. In fact, we are doing La Vigie - La Marie, La Marie -Beau Songes and bypass of Beau Songes coming to Flic-en-Flac in the region of Casela and doing a roundabout. Today, you have to enter by the same road and come back by the same road. We are thinking of having a roundabout, that is, an access further near Casela going round the shoreline and then coming back at Cascavelle. So, all this will be integrated together with the project of the Smart City.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: I can understand, Madam Speaker, the logic behind the answer of the hon. Minister in view of the mega project of Médine Smart City and the other developments being ushered by this company. But the hon. Minister must know that this secondary access, this bypass has been cleaned by the inhabitants of...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, is that your question?

Mr Ganoo: Yes. I am just introducing...

Madam Speaker: Put your question! We have a long list of questions.

Mr Ganoo: Since the hon. Minister must be aware of this *revendication des habitants de Flic-en-Flac* for such a long time, how will the Médine bypass, the Médine Smart City access integrate and apprehend this need of the inhabitants? Because what Médine is building is near Cascavelle, but the inhabitants are in Wolmar and Flic-en-Flac is inhabited by thousands and thousands of families. So, this is the question.

Mr Bodha: In fact, what Médine is going to design will be as regards the smart city, but we have to complement this. With regard to the design, as regards the road coming from Beaux Songes with a bypass, we want to do a bypass to the village of Beaux Songes so that the traffic does not go to Beaux Songes, but it goes to Cascavelle and then comes out near Casela and goes round along the string of hotels and comes back to Cascavelle. So, this bit is going to be designed by us.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam speaker, is that new road being funded by Médine Sugar Estate or is it going to be funded by the Government of Mauritius?

Mr Bodha: As regards funding, what we have from the Letter of Intent of the BOI, the design is to be funded by the smart city. So, we will have to see as regards the costs because we have, in fact, budgeted the bypass from Beaux Songes to Flic-en-Flac to go round. As regards this part of this network, we will have to see who is going to finance it.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister must be aware that there was at one time another project of building through Flic-en-Flac up to Tamarin. Can he tell us whether there is any progress with this project?

Mr Bodha: Well, I can't reply right away. I will have to see the RDA first.

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

QUATRE BORNES – MARKET FAIR – CONTRACT

(No. B/185) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the construction/renovation of the market fair at Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to the –

- (a) contract value thereof and table copy of the contract therefor;
- (b) scope of works thereof, and
- (c) expected date of handing over thereof.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. Member to have put this question.

Madam Speaker, the construction/renovation of the market fair at Quatre Bornes is a long overdue, and that, because of *fausses promesses* of the previous Government between 2005 and 2014.

In fact, in his Budget Speech of 2014, the then Minister of Finance and Economic Development had earmarked Rs150 m. for the construction of a modern market fair for the region of Quatre Bornes.

However, no specific site was identified.

Under this Government and the prime ministership of the hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the renovation of the market fair at Quatre Bornes is going ahead.

In this context, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that, following a procurement exercise, the contract for covering of the existing market fair at Quatre Bornes was awarded on 04 October 2016 to J. Dookun & Sons Ltd. for a contract price of Rs13,104,250, excluding VAT.

I am making necessary arrangements to place a copy of the contract agreement and scope of works for the project in the Library of the National Assembly.

I wish to assure the hon. Member that all the works are being executed as per the set scope of works.

Moreover, on request from the stallholders, additional works to the tune of Rs1,205,419, excluding VAT, would be undertaken such as –

- (i) construction of drains;
- (ii) levelling works;
- (iii) supply and fixing of kerbs;
- (iv) rendering of an existing wall;
- (v) electrical installation, and
- (vi) supply and fixing of whirlybirds.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the contractor has been given ten months to complete the project following mobilisation on site, which was 14 January 2017.

The works are being implemented in two phases. The first phase is expected to be completed by mid-May of this year and the remaining works by end of October 2017.

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you for your answer, hon. Minister. In Quatre Bornes, we see that the works are advancing at a very good pace. Will the hon. Minister inform the House

how come that all the stalls frame are still there? As per my information, those stalls should have been scrapped off. It is not within the scope of works. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what is the purpose of keeping those stalls?

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, I want to assure the House and also to inform the hon. Member that, as mentioned earlier in my answer, all works are being executed as per scope of works and according to the contract signed between the two parties.

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

PLEASURE CRAFTS – LICENCES

(No. B/186) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the pleasure crafts and to the non-fishing speed boats, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Beach Authority, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, since January 2016 to date –
 - (i) in respect of which licences have not been renewed, and
 - (ii) allegedly involved in drug trafficking, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the mandatory provision thereof with a vessel monitoring tracking system?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the Tourism Authority and not to the Beach Authority. The Tourism Authority is the licensing body for this.

With regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Tourism Authority that 115 licences have not been renewed by the pleasure craft operators since January 2016 to date, comprising 51 commercial pleasure craft licences and 64 private pleasure craft licences.

In such cases, Madam Speaker, the Monitoring Unit of the Tourism Authority ensures regular check-ups as to their activities from their respective embarkation points. The National Coast Guard also assists in the exercise. Their licence normally is for a period of one year and remains valid for 30 days after expiry, and if it is not renewed within the 30-day period, it lapses. But I am informed that a policy decision was taken by the Tourism Authority in July 2012 to extend the period of 20 days to one year.

Regarding part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that two commercial pleasure crafts, allegedly involved in a drug trafficking case, have been seized and are presently in Police custody. The case is still under enquiry. In the meantime, the Tourism Authority has suspended the licences.

I also wish to inform the House the section 84(4) of the Tourism Authority Act provides that the Authority may refuse to grant or renew a skipper's licence on ground of character, conduct or record of convictions of the applicant. However, this provision has not been applied by the Tourism Authority. Henceforth, the Tourism Authority is going to adhere strictly to the provisions of the law and insist on the submission of a certificate of character on application or for a renewal of a skipper's licence.

Moreover, the Tourism Authority Act will be amended to provide for the renewal of skippers' licence every year and for a submission of a certificate of character for renewal, which is timely.

As for part (b) of the question, in 2014, the Tourism Authority (Automatic Identification System) Regulations were prepared with a view to making it mandatory for the following pleasure crafts to be equipped with Class B Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponder –

- (a) pleasure crafts of length of 10 metres and above;
- (b) pleasure crafts of length of less than 10 metres sailing beyond 12 nautical miles from the Mauritian shores, and
- (c) pleasure crafts plying to Rodrigues and the Outer Islands as well as ports beyond Mauritius.

However, Madam Speaker, the draft regulations have been kept in abeyance following advice from the Solicitor General's Office, pending confirmation from the Information and Communication Technologies Authority to the effect that it has the necessary capabilities to carry out the annual testing and maintenance of the AIS equipment.

Madam Speaker, I am also given to understand that the AIS Committee set up at the level of the Shipping Division of the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping to oversee implementation of the AIS system has also requested other authorities concerned to put these regulations on hold.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: I am grateful, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister, in relation to part (a) (ii) of the question, state for the benefit of the House, if you have the information, the two speedboats involved in drug trafficking, when did they obtain the licence, in which year, and who was Minister of Tourism in that particular year?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Gayan: I am trying to see if I have the information. I am afraid I don't have the information, but what I do have, Madam Speaker, is that the ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Talking across the floor from a sitting position is not parliamentary!

Mr Gayan: The two pleasure crafts that were seized by the Police are Maggie May and speed boat IL10. They were involved in a drug trafficking case in 2016, but I don't have the other information as to when they were licensed.

Mr Rutnah: Can the Minister at a later stage provide this information to the House?

Mr Gayan: I will certainly do that.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhuboo.

BELLE MARE WATERPARK – MR M. R. – TERMINATION OF CONTRACT

(No. B/187) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to Mr R. R., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Sugar Investment Trust, information as to if he has been the subject of any disciplinary action while in employment at the Belle Mare Water Park and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Sugar Investment Trust that there was no Mr R. R., but one Mr M. R. who worked at the SIT Leisure Ltd.

In fact, Mr M. R. joined the SIT Leisure Ltd. as Head of Operations on 15 March 2006 under a contract of employment of determinate duration for a period of two years. His contract of employment was renewed for a period of two years as from 17 March 2008.

At the Board meeting of SIT Leisure Ltd. held on 21 August 2009, the then CEO informed the Board that he was in receipt of a letter wherein it was mentioned that the Head Of Operations was operating as illegal bookmaker on the premises of the Waterpark and Leisure Village. The Board directed Management to suspend Mr M. R. from his duties with immediate effect and to initiate action for the setting up of a Disciplinary Committee. A suspension letter was issued to Mr M. R. on the same day.

On 31 August 2009, the SIT wrote a letter to Mr M. R. informing him that serious allegations had been received against him regarding the operation of betting activities on horse racing within the premises of Le Waterpark and Leisure Village, whilst he was on duty as Head of Operations and that he was using company premises as same. He was requested to answer to this charge within five days.

On 01 September 2009, Mr M. R. replied that the allegations were not true and have been made in bad faith.

A Disciplinary Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Ms Valma Moti and having as Assessor Ms Renouka Brizmohane. SIT Leisure Ltd. was represented by Mr Ritesh Ramful, while Mr Yusuf Mohamed, S.C., appeared for Mr M. R.

Mr M. R. was called before the Disciplinary Committee on 15 September 2009 to reply to the charge which I have just mentioned above.

At the meeting of the Disciplinary Committee held on 25 November 2009, the Counsel of Mr M. R. stated that there has been a breach of contract by SIT for non-payment of salary to his client and the latter did not propose to submit further to that Disciplinary Committee as he was no longer in the employment of SIT. He further stated that his client would sue SIT for breach of contract before the competent Court.

On 30 November 2009, Mr M. R. was informed by SIT that his contract of employment had been terminated.

On 08 March 2010, Mr M. R. lodged a case against SIT Leisure Ltd. at the Supreme Court claiming for an amount of Rs1,009,000 for breach of contract. In his Statement of Claim, he averred that on 10 August 2009, he wrote a letter to a "*préposé*" of SIT Leisure Ltd., one Mr A. F., to inform him of his repeated sickness and absences which were disrupting the smooth running of the Maintenance Department and requesting him to ensure that pending works be completed urgently.

He also averred that on 15 August 2009, the said “*préposé*” wrote back to him, with copy of the letter addressed to the CEO of SIT alleging, among others, that he, Mr M. R., was using office equipment and vehicles for his personal use to operate an illegal betting operation.

He further averred that it was on the basis of that letter that Management, whilst seeking his explanation, wrote to him suspending him from duty.

During the Court case, SIT Leisure Ltd. was represented by Mr G. Ramdewor, Attorney-at-Law, and Mrs Oormila Boolell, Counsel.

The case was subsequently referred to the Mediation Division of the Supreme Court and an agreement was reached between both parties to pay a compensation to Mr M. R.

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, so, I guess that Mr M. R. not Mr R. R. is actually the CEO of Mauritius Duty Free Paradise. So, my question to the hon. Minister is: when one applies for a job, he needs to seek a referral, *une référence* from his former employee. Now, has the SIT disclosed the information concerning Mr M. R. to Mauritius Duty Free Paradise?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, the question relates to Mr M. R., as a former employee of SIT. I am not aware about what his current position is to be able to reply to that question.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhuboo.

URBAN PLANNING – STRATEGIC PLAN

(No. B/188) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to urban planning in Mauritius, he will state if a Strategic Plan has been developed therefor, indicating if the latest report of the World Bank in relation thereto has been considered in the elaboration thereof.

Mr Soodhun: First of all, I would like to thank my hon. friend for this pertinent question.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that Mauritius has put in place various planning instruments both at national and regional levels to fulfil its objectives in achieving sustainable development.

The Planning instruments have already elaborated extensively on sustainability principles and mitigation measures such as -

- the need to integrate land use planning and transport strategy to prevent traffic congestion;
- the need for a public transport policy, and
- the need to promote sustainable development to protect agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas.

Madam Speaker, there exists a Strategic Plan on urban planning for Mauritius namely, the National Development Strategy (NDS). It was prepared in 2002-2003 and given legal force in June 2005. The NDS sets out the vision for territorial planning, which includes urban planning, of Mauritius over a twenty-year horizon up to 2020. It has provided the basis for the revision of all the district and municipal outline schemes which serve as the main reference for control and location of development.

Madam Speaker, another Planning instrument is the Planning Policy Guidance which is an integral component of the National Development Strategy. They have been designed to translate national policies to local level sites and situations. Moreover, they provide, *inter alia*, guidance on site development, parking requirements, landscaping and design guidelines for all types of major projects, that is, residential, high rise buildings, commercial, hotels, industrial, coastal development and other mixed use developments.

Madam Speaker, the national and strategic policies of the NDS have been translated into more specific policies to control and manage development at the local level in the Outline Schemes.

The NDS, the PPGs and the Outline Schemes have been provided to the local authorities and are also available to members of the public for consultation purposes. All the IRS, RES, PDS and Smart City Schemes should comply with the directives of the NDS and the Outline Schemes and the guidelines of the PPG.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry has initiated procedures for the review of the existing NDS so that an updated strategic plan is available for future guidance in the coming years. All proposals and guidelines from institutions such as the World Bank will be taken into consideration.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There is a report from the World Bank to the effect that, *je vous le lis en français* –

«Le faible taux d'urbanisme à Maurice comparé aux pays développés»

C'est ce qu'estime la Banque Mondiale dans un de ses derniers rapports. Now, on one hand, we will have the project financed by the private sector and also by Government like Highlands and Landscape which will be of good planning principles and on the other hand, we will have the District Council and the Municipality with poor planning guidelines. Will the Vice-Prime Minister agree with me that we need one coherent policy for the whole island in order for the island to develop in a coherent manner?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, Madam Speaker, since I have taken this Ministry - in the past, we didn't have any guidelines either for the Municipality or for the District Council where we had lots of problems about wetland where people were building their houses and also there is development on the wetland. So, today we can say that we have a well-defined outlined scheme for the Municipality and for the District Council. It is not too late to take all into consideration together. As I mentioned, we are working on the report of the World Bank and I am sure we are going to take it on board to them.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In his reply, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister has mentioned of several aspects agriculture, traffic so on and so forth. But I did not hear the social aspect meaning bringing development to the poor regions in the country whereby integrated development takes place so that we don't have, on the one hand, highly developed areas and, on the other hand, ghettos and no man's land. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister enlighten the House on whether this is a priority of his?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, this Government has taken the decision that we are not going to have any development at the detriment of our population.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

**COMITÉ D'ORGANISATION DES JEUX DES ILES (COJI) 2019 - FORMER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER - RESIGNATION**

(No. B/189) **Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to Mr G. C., former Chief

Executive Officer of the *Comité d'Organisation des Jeux des Iles (COJI) 2019*, he will state the reasons for the resignation thereof, indicating if he has been replaced and, if so, by whom.

Mr Toussaint: Madam Speaker, I have to inform the House that a few days after I took office as Minister, I had a meeting with Mr G. C. at his request. During the meeting, he expressed the wish to be relieved from the responsibilities entrusted to him as CEO of the *Comité d'Organisation des Jeux des Iles (COJI) 2019* in view of his numerous professional commitments.

After having listened to his arguments, I acceded to his request.

I wish to point out that Mr G. C. was shouldering this responsibility on a voluntary basis.

Action has been initiated for his replacement. A new CEO will be appointed shortly.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre en l'absence d'un *Chief Executive* qui est-ce qui prend les décisions au niveau du COJI?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, le COJI est un *board* avec comme moi-même comme Président; le Secrétaire Permanent, Mr Boodhun comme Vice-Président; Mr How Tim Voon deuxième Vice-Président et ainsi de suite.

Mr Quirin: Est-ce que cela veut dire, Madame la présidente, que c'est l'honorable ministre qui prend les décisions ou bien c'est tout le *board* ; c'est le secrétaire général ?

Mr Toussaint: Le *board*, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Quand monsieur G. C. était toujours en fonction il avait soumis plusieurs projets concernant les Jeux des Iles 2019 parmi le village des jeux qui allait être flottant à un moment donné, ensuite ils ont abandonné car celui-ci allait coûter R3.4 milliards ; ensuite sur un paquebot. Je voudrais savoir maintenant j'entends dire que cela va être dans un hôtel à BalACLAVA. Est-ce que c'est toujours le cas? L'honorable ministre est lui-même sur le comité, est ce que les 2000 athlètes et dirigeants vont être logés dans des hôtels et à quel prix s'il vous plaît ?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, this is not precisely the question. For that question, you have to come up with a specific question on this matter. Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: J'aimerais savoir de l'honorable ministre - en ce qui concerne le Secrétaire Général, peut-on connaître ses responsabilités exactes ? Que fait le Secrétaire Général du COJI ?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, la personne qui a la responsabilité comme Secrétaire Général fait le travail d'un secrétaire; qui prend les notes pendant les réunions, qui fait les comptes rendus. Je pense que c'est évident.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

INDIAN OCEAN GAMES 2019 – SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE - UPGRADING

(No. B/190) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the sports infrastructures, he will state if a survey thereof has been carried to ascertain if renovation works thereof are required prior to the holding of the 10th Indian Ocean Games in Mauritius in 2019 and, if so, give details thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) scope of the works thereof, and
- (b) expected start and completion dates thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Madam Speaker, I have to inform the House that, during the months of March and April 2016, a survey was carried out by officials of my Ministry accompanied by technical officers of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport and representatives of the respective federations on the upgrading and renovation works that have to be carried out at the sports infrastructures that may be utilised for training and competition purposes for the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2019.

Madam Speaker, I am circulating the list giving details of the works that have to be carried out.

I have also to inform the House that an Association for Upgrading of IOIG Infrastructure (AUGI) has been set up with a view to ensuring that the projects for upgrading and renovation works at the different sports infrastructures are implemented on time.

As at date, AUGI has launched an Expression of Interest for the enlistment of a consultancy firm which would be responsible for the design, tender documentation, project management, supervision and commissioning of the project relating to upgrading of existing infrastructures. Five firms have been retained and would be invited to submit their proposals.

The Request for Proposals is being prepared by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, le ministère des Sports avait émis un communiqué à l'issue de la dernière réunion du CIJ (Comité International des Jeux), indiquant la liste de tous les sites de compétitions. J'ai constaté que le futur complexe multisports de Saint Pierre n'y figure pas. Doit-on comprendre que ce site n'est plus une priorité pour les Jeux de 2019?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, ce site tombe sous la responsabilité de *Landscape*.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin !

Mr Quirin : Et ce qui veut dire ?

(Interruptions)

Je parle du complexe multisports de Saint Pierre annoncé en grande pompe ici même comme étant un des sites de compétitions phares où il y aura l'inauguration, l'ouverture des jeux. Doit-on comprendre que ce site est toujours une priorité en ce qui concerne les Jeux des Iles? C'est cela ma question.

Mr Toussaint: Oui, Madame la présidente.

Mr Quirin : Mais comment se fait-il, Madame la présidente, qu'en ce qui concerne le communiqué émis par le CIJ à l'issue de sa dernière réunion ce site ne figure pas? Peut-on savoir pourquoi?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, ce site n'existe pas pour le moment. On va le construire.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Madame la présidente, cette fois ci la question parle d'infrastructure et le Village des Jeux forme partie des infrastructures. Donc, je reviens avec ma question, est-ce que les réservations ont déjà été faites au niveau des hôtels pour les 2000 athlètes et dirigeants, si oui, quel va être le coût?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, la question est par rapport aux *sports infrastructures* not Village des Jeux.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lepoigneur: Madame la présidente, le village d'hébergement fait partie de l'organisation.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, the question relates to sports infrastructure, but to ascertain if renovation works required prior to the holding, is your question related to renovation works or otherwise?

Mr Lepoigneur: Madame la présidente, merci. Donc, je vois que les sites ont été publiés dans le Quotidien concernant où il y aura les différentes disciplines mentionnées. Maintenant, les rénovations vont être faites quand et où les athlètes ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon Lepoigneur, can you look at me when you talk because I can't get what you are saying, please?

Mr Lepoigneur: Donc ma question est: tous ces sites vont être rénovés dans un certain temps. Où les présélectionnés vont s'entraîner entre temps ? Est-ce qu'il y aura des disponibilités aux athlètes concernant les entraînements etc.? On se sert des anciennes infrastructures.

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, je viens de répondre à la question et je viens de circuler la liste des rénovations et où ça va se faire.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Pendant la rénovation, que vont faire les athlètes? Que vont faire les athlètes au niveau des entraînements et de la préparation?

Mr Toussaint: Je peux rassurer mon honorable ami que toutes les dispositions seront prises et que je pense que déjà il le sait très bien que j'ai à coeur tous nos sportifs.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon Quirin!

MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL – SWIMMING POOLS –RENTAL FEES

(No. B/191) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the swimming discipline, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to the quantum of the rental paid for swimming pools, indicating the –

- (a) clubs concerned therewith, and
- (b) terms and conditions of use thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Madame Speaker, I am circulating information received from the Mauritius Sports Council regarding the rental fees paid by swimming clubs as well as terms and conditions for the use of the swimming pools.

Mr Quirin: Madame la Présidente, l’honorable Ministre est-il au courant que de nombreuses personnes fréquentant la piscine du Pavillon, à Quatre Bornes ont protesté ces derniers temps énergiquement auprès du MSC par rapport à tous les désordres qui règnent dans cette piscine? Le Ministre est-il au courant, a-t-il reçu des représentations de son côté?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la Présidente, je peux vous assurer qu’il n’y a pas de désordre comme veut faire croire l’honorable Membre. Mais bien sûr, s’il y a des choses à améliorer, il n’y a pas de problème.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, le Ministre peut-il nous dire dans ce cas, pourquoi son Permanent Secretary a tenu une réunion récemment avec tous les responsables des clubs qui utilisent cette piscine, je veux dire la piscine du Pavillon ? Pourquoi son PS a tenu une réunion et quel était l’agenda de cette réunion ?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, mon nouveau PS a tenu à faire des réunions sectorielles et c’est ce qu’il a déjà commencé à faire. C’est son travail. Il a besoin de voir dans chaque secteur, dans chaque département, ce qu’il y a à améliorer.

Madam Speaker: La dernière question.

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente. Je voudrais informer le ministre que d’après les informations que j’ai reçues, il y a un surnombre de nageurs dans les couloirs de la piscine du Pavillon. Et ceci avec tous les risques que cela comporte et aussi avec des entraîneurs non-qualifiés qui s’occupent des entraînements. Peut-on savoir justement si le ministre a reçu au moins des informations en ce qui concerne cet état de chose ? Ce sont des

choses graves qui se passent et si le ministre n'est pas au courant, là je considère que c'est grave.

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, donc s'il y a un surnombre ou pas, je vais m'enquérir et comme je dis, s'il y a des choses à corriger je vais le faire parce que je n'ai pas les renseignements si les *coaches* sont qualifiés ou pas. Je dois prendre les CVs et voir.

Madam Speaker: But I would remind hon. Members that questions cannot be asked on the basis of rumours. If it's information for sure that you have.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Quirin, if you address me, then you stand up and you say what you have to say.

Mr Quirin: Oui, Madame la présidente, je disais donc, si le ministre n'est pas au courant, cela ne veut pas dire que ce sont des rumeurs. Ce sont des informations qui circulent. C'est au ministre de s'assurer de recevoir les bonnes informations.

Madam Speaker: Now, hon. Quirin, from what you were answering and you started your reply by saying that it seems.

(Interruptions)

Right! So, that is why I drew attention to everybody that questions should not be asked on the basis of rumours. If you have got information, then you provide it to the Minister.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Quirin, I have given my ruling on this issue! Next question, hon Ameer Meea!

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - ROADMAP

(No. B/192) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will state -

- (a) the amount of funds spent in relation thereto as at to date, and
- (b) if the roadmap thereof has been finalised and, if so, table copy thereof.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with your permission I will reply to this question.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bodha: As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that as to date, a total of Rs597,239,337.40 has been spent in relation to the Metro Express Project.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, there is a Request for Proposal which has been launched on 24 January 2017 and the closing date is 16 May 2017. I have been advised that since the project is in the RFP stage and the design will be finalised finally by the firm that will be awarded the contract for the construction of the Metro Express Project, the final roadmap will be provided by the contractor.

On award of the contract, all information will be made public as I have already said so in my reply to Private Notice Question of 28 March 2017.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: In relation to the reply that the hon. Minister just gave to the House that more than half a billion rupees has already been spent with regard to the Metro Express Project, can he circulate a breakdown of this figure?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that Rs572 m. out of the total of the Rs597 m. was spent on the MLRT. So far, we have spent only 1 million Singapore dollars, 25 million. I will circulate a copy of the breakdown.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: Does this figure also include compulsory acquisition of land and housing?

Mr Bodha: From the information which has been given to me, up to 6 April 2017, Rs279,378,731.17 have been paid as compensation by the Ministry of Housing and Lands in respect of 14 plots of land. And Rs21,935,964.94 as interim payment of compensation in respect of 4 plots, most probably it's an interim payment pending a revaluation.

(Interruptions)

No, this is being paid by the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry.

Mr Henry: Madame la présidente, est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer le montant de 7 million pour le lancement du Metro Express?

Mr Bodha: Ce n'est pas 7 million. Je crois que c'est à peu près 5 million. Et j'avais dit que c'est un plaisir si on compare un peu le lancement d'autres grands projets.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval.

Mr A. Duval: With regard to the Rs19 billion forecasted cost of the project, does that include the cost of relocation of all the *foires* and all the infrastructures in the town, especially in Curepipe, Quatre Bornes, etc? Are these included in the Rs19 billion or not?

Mr Bodha: Well, Rs19 billion is what has been said. Some figures have been said, around. The urban terminals are going to be financed by the private sector. And what we, the Government, is going to do is when we had all the land available for the 6 urban terminals of Immigration Square Victoria, Rose Hill, Vacoas, Quatre Bornes and Curepipe, we have about 50 acres of land. Which is prime land in the city, which is worth about 100 million per acre. So, we are giving this land on a lease for 60 years. The urban terminal which will comprise a number of things, that is, passenger terminal for bus, for train, food court, for the shops, offices and hawkers, this is going to be private finance.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, right from day one, the hon. Minister has been refusing to communicate information about the consultancy report and now the roadmap on the basis that it may affect the bidding process. Wouldn't the hon. Minister agree that it is the consultant who has been paid to finalise the roadmap and, we, people of Mauritius need to know exactly what would be the roadmap, the *tracé* so that if there is any objection, it is now, instead of being put before a *fait accompli* once the contract is awarded?

Mr Bodha: Madame la présidente, il n'y a pas de fait accompli. Le MMM et le Parti Travalliste, ils sont partis avec un programme de R 25 milliards pour le métro léger en décembre 2014. Le tracé est le même.

(Interruptions)

Le tracé est le vôtre!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem, next question!

WATER SECTOR REFORM - WORLD BANK REPORT

(No. B/193) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Water Sector Reform, he will –

- (a) table copy of the report of the World Bank in relation thereto, and

- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if procedures have been initiated for the selection and appointment of an experienced operator for the operation and maintenance of the potable water distribution system thereof and, if so, indicate the terms and conditions of appointment attached thereto.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a), the report of the World Bank is still being considered at the level of my Ministry which is still exchanging its views with the World Bank on certain issues. As I have mentioned, on 28 March 2017, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/42, I intend to make a statement at the appropriate time to provide all the information on the water reform. It is, therefore, not opportune for the moment that the report be made public.

With regard to part (b), the hon. Member may wish to refer to my reply on 28 March 2017. In that reply, I informed the House that Government has decided that the International Financial Corporation (IFC) would act as Transaction Adviser to prepare the procurement documents for the recruitment of a private operator. This is subject to confirmation of funding by the IFC and the World Bank to meet the cost of the services to be provided by them.

The process for the recruitment of a private operator will start after a due diligence has been carried out by IFC. At this stage, the IFC has not yet started its services.

Mr Uteem: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister keep an undertaking to the House that once this report of the World Bank - which we are talking about the public sector and which concern all of us - has been finalised, he would table a copy of same before the National Assembly?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Let me just say what is the roadmap. As soon as at the level of the Ministry, we have finalised all the issues, there are only three or four issues which are left, so we are talking of perhaps two or three weeks, then we would need to confirm the funding for the Transaction Adviser. Let me say outright, if there is no funding, there is no reform. So, I hope, we are going to get the money. Then, of course, I will need to make the appropriate presentation to Cabinet, convince my colleagues of what I am saying and then make the report public. I do undertake that the report as well as the views of Government will be made public, perhaps in the form of a White Paper or perhaps in the form of an amendment to the CWA Act in order to open up the debate because we need to have an

avenue to open up the debate in Parliament. It is not sufficient that we have debate on the radios etc. We need to have a Parliamentary debate. So, we will see perhaps an amendment to the Act, but I do undertake to make it public.

Mr Uteem: On 03 February 2017, there was a communiqué issued by the Cabinet where it was stated that CWA will continue to own the water distribution and supply and then there will be a private operator to operate and maintain the potable water distribution system. May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, now that we are getting an expert IFC to come up with the request for proposal, whether what is envisaged is an outright delegation of the maintenance for the supply and distribution of water or are we considering a joint venture between a subsidiary of CWA and a foreigner just like we did for Mauritius Telecom?

The Deputy Prime Minister: No, it is not the Mauritius Telecom model which is being envisaged. A private operator will be appointed. His job will be to operate and maintain the water distribution system of the CWA. That will be on a contract of 15 years. After 15 years, we shall see - not me, I suppose I won't be here, but somebody else - what to do with this contract. Now, it will be an arrangement and the private operator would be responsible for operation and maintenance because that is the problem of the CWA, O&M. O&M is a big problem. We have no problem on projects as there will be another question later and projects are ongoing. There is no problem. Operations and maintenance, this is why we have curtailed the entry of a strategic operator to that particular sector where we have difficulties. Of course, the operator would be called upon to invest in technology and modern equipment because we can't go on like we are doing now with JCBs and all that digging up everywhere around Mauritius. These are the broad lines of what I have said, but this is all subject to what we could fork out in the course of our final discussions.

Mr Osman Mahomed: On 28 March 2017, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has referred to the PQ just now. I had mentioned that some countries have had to backpedal on the decision of allocating contracts to private promoters. I wonder whether the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has had a chance to look at that aspect because I have in front me an article and am going to read it –

« Depuis les années 90, un mouvement de remise en cause de l'hégémonie des grandes entreprises françaises de l'eau (Suez, Veolia) se fait jour, qui a culminé avec la remunicipalisation du service de l'eau et de l'assainissement dans quelques grandes villes, au premier rang desquelles Grenoble et Paris. »

So, can I table this for the attention of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and that when he comes to Parliament with his statement later on that aspect also is taken into consideration. Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Member. I am not aware of Grenoble and the other town. But what I know of is what had happened in France was a complete take-over of the whole system including the assets. This is what we are precisely going to avoid. The assets will remain in the CWA. CWA will remain a parastatal body unlike France, like we have in Mauritius Telecom to come to the question of hon. Uteem. So, we want to avoid this. We just want to have knowledge and technology on that particular aspect where we are very, very weak, that is, operations and maintenance.

Mr X. L. Duval: Are we still going for a *contrat d'affermage*?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, we are still going for the *affermage*.

Mr X. L. Duval: In that case, will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister agree that the capital works will still be done by CWA, all the works including the technology and that the operator will just run it?

The Deputy Prime Minister: That is exactly what an *affermage* contract is all about. We want the investment to be done by us so that the private operator cannot claim any ownership in the assets at the end of the 15-year contract. We want to retain property. CWA is asset rich. We want to retain the property so that all investments will be done by us and will remain the property of ultimately the people of Mauritius.

Mr X. L. Duval: Surely, all the employees involved in the distribution will be redundant or transferred to the new operator. Is that the case?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, the term redundancy see is a panic striking term. That is not a fact. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition would recall, on 24 March, I said that there is likely to be a need for an additional 400 employees to achieve the service delivery improvements.

(Interruptions)

Please! If the Leader of the Opposition would allow me, I will do it and then I will gladly listen to the next question. But, of course, he promised it was going to be the lost one. But never mind!

I said that the employees will be offered the opportunity to join the private sector operator with additional incentives. There will be no compulsory termination of employment or redundancy.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan and then...

(Interruptions)

I'll give you the floor. Hon. Bhagwan first, and then I'll give you the floor.

Mr Ganoo: I have been raising my hand before the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, I'll give you the floor. I'll allow you your question. I have made an order of priority and so hon. Bhagwan is first. I'll give you the floor.

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has given us a way forward through Parliament that he will be coming to discuss in Parliament, and even to the nation, his plan concerning the water sector and the future CWA. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether he has met the trade unions, the employees of the CEB, at least to give them adequate information for them not to worry, especially the trade unions. There are so many workers who are worried about the future at the CWA.

The Deputy Prime Minister: The supplementary question gives me the occasion to clarify one point. I have not met the trade unions on this matter for the moment. I want to be sure that I can answer all questions when I meet the trade unions. However, I am authorised to state now that the World Bank representatives did meet the trade unions to explain but, of course, the World Bank is not binding on me. So, I have not, myself.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: I noted that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister used the word 'recruitment' of a private service operator and not 'selection' of a private operator. So, will the Ministry have any say in the choice of this operator or will it be the unilateral decision of the private sector operator? Can the Minister also inform the House whether the Ministry has paid the IFC as Transaction Manager?

The Deputy Prime Minister: On the last part, precisely, we want to make sure that we get funding for the payment of that service or else everything stops. It's so costly, I cannot lead Government into that sort of adventure if I don't get the funding. The first part of the question is recruitment as opposed to selection. I don't know what word we want to use, but

one thing I can be certain, I am not going to be the one to choose the operator. The Transaction Advisor will set down all procedures which will follow for the selection or recruitment of that operator and we will strictly follow what our Transaction Advisor advises.

I am traumatised by what happened in 1999, when there was the *Lyonnaise des Eaux* affair, and we don't want this to be repeated. This is why we are going to follow scrupulously - and this will be made public - what the Transaction Advisor proposes.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem, next question!

FSC - INVESTMENT BANKING LICENCE - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/194) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Investment Banking Licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to the number –

- (a) of applications received for the issue thereof as at to date, and
- (b) thereof issued, indicating in each case the name of the -
 - (i) promoters, and
 - (ii) beneficial owners thereof.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I am going to answer PQ B/194 and PQ B/213 at the same time, as they refer to the same subject matter.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Financial Services Commission that four applications for an Investment Banking Licence under section 79A of the Financial Services Act have been received as at date. Out of the four applicants, two have already received their licences. They are namely Alvaro Sobrinho Africa Ltd on 25 November 2016 and deVere Investment Advisory (Mauritius) Ltd on 30 December 2016. The two remaining applications are still in process. Both licensees are domestic companies and, therefore, details about the owners, shareholders and directors are publicly available at the Registrar of Companies.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, under the Financial Services Act, section 79A, it is clear that anyone who wants to apply for an Investment Banking Licence has to comply with the FSC rules.

The hon. Minister has just informed us that, with regard to Alvaro Sobrinho, he obtained his licence on 25 November 2016, whereas, in fact, the FSC rules were actually

made on 09 December 2016 and only published on 24 December 2016. So, has the hon. Minister enquired as to why is it that Alvaro Sobrinho has obtained an Investment Banking Licence, in breach of the Financial Services Act?

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the FSC that the rules were ready, but they were gazetted slightly later. But this did not preclude them to consider application.

Mr Uteem: The rule is dated 09 December 2016. So, whoever is giving the hon. Minister this information is misleading him. 09 December is after November. According to the rules now, the person who is going to perform Investment Banking must have at least five natural persons as directors and must have a capitalisation of, at least, Rs50 m.

Now, from publicly available information at the Registrar of Companies, this company has only three Directors, one of whom has just been interdicted, he is is very familiar to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, I am talking about Mr Pinto. So, there are only two Directors and there are only 100 shares, not Rs50 m. So, why is it that, even now, this company is not respecting the FSC rules?

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, simply because these companies have been authorised not to operate by the FSC.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: Can I ask the hon. Minister, in view of the various allegations that have been made concerning emails being exchanged between the former Vice- President, the State House and the Director of ASA...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramful, please, we are not allowed, in this House, to drag in the debate either the President or the Vice-President or the State House.

Mr Ramful: I am not bringing the President. I am not questioning the conduct of the President, Madam Speaker. I wish to seek clarification from you whether, in the rules, it is mentioned that I cannot ask questions on the State House.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, when you are asking questions on the State House, you are indirectly saying that the President is involved. So, be careful as to the way you are putting your question. You can ask the same question, but in a different way.

Mr Ramful: Has there been any enquiry that has been initiated at the level of your Ministry to find out whether the contents of those emails are true, and if they are true, what does the Minister propose to do?

Mr Sesungkur: Well, Madam Speaker, as the hon. Member, I also took note of those mails and I have asked the FSC to look into that matter and report back.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, with regard to deVere, namely Mr Nigel Green, may we know when they applied for the licence and when they obtained the licence, and secondly, if we can know, given that his reputation...

Madam Speaker: Ask one question at a time!

Mr A. Duval: If you may give me the second question after.

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr Sesungkur: Yes, with respect to deVere, the application was made on 14 December 2016 and the licence was granted on 30 December 2016.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Regarding deVere, is the hon. Minister aware, and he verifies it just going by Internet and clicking the name 'deVere and Nigel Green', he will know that this deVere and Nigel Green have had problems with the regulators in South Africa, in Hong Kong and in Japan. So, may I know why is it that this Government keeps giving investment banking licence to unscrupulous people who are putting the reputation of Mauritius at stake?

Mr Sesungkur: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am aware of all these Press articles which appeared. I am advised by the FSC that they have checked all the information and this information is not true. They do not relate to the same company. The hon. Member should go and check the name again. The names sound the same, but they are not the same companies.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: I have a simple question to the hon. Minister. In view of what has cropped up in the Press, is the Minister personally satisfied that all the procedures have been followed in the case of Alvaro Sobrinho Africa?

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, this case has been *surmediatisé*. By looking at the file and obtaining the relevant information, I must say that many, many articles which were published, be it on Mr Pinto, be it on the other aspects of the application procedures; they are unfounded. So, what we are trying to do by this, we are attacking the reputation of our

country and this is what we are doing and this is what is actually affecting our reputation. Most of the information which appears in articles is unfounded, and I hope that there is retention at that level so that we become a serious jurisdiction where we are doing business seriously.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: In both cases where these promoters have been granted the investment banking licence, the hon. Minister answered that they were domestic companies. Doesn't the hon. Minister agree that in the case of domestic companies, since they are not GBL companies, there is less oversight, less control and supervision and no needy management companies, and is it good for our financial sector to allow domestic companies to be granted such type of licence?

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, the investment banking activities are under the supervision of the FSC. So, any company which is conducting these kinds of activities will fall under the supervision of the FSC. So, I can't see that there will be less control, less supervision. They will always be subjected to scrutiny, to monitoring by the FSC as long as they are engaged in these kinds of activities.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: It is in answer to what the hon. Minister has given. The hon. Minister has said that information communicated to him by the FSC is to the effect that deVere and this Nigel Green are not the same people who have been interdicted. Is the hon. Minister aware that the same Mr Nigel Green wrote to the FSC on 08 March to try to explain and justify what has been written about him and, in particular, trying to say that he is collaborating fully with the South African authorities where there has been a mega Ponzi scheme involving his company and Belvédère.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, I will stick to what I have been advised by the FSC that these two companies, although bearing more or less the same name, are not the same companies, and they are not part of the same group.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

SME DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/195) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives whether, in regard to

the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Scheme Certificate, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, since April 2016 to date, information as to the –

- (a) number of –
 - (i) applications received for the issue thereof, and
 - (ii) certificates issued as to date, and
- (b) amount of financing provided to the holders thereof as at to date.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that since April 2016 to date, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority has

- (i) received a number of 286 applications for the SME Development Scheme Certificates, and
- (ii) issued a number of 42 SME Development Scheme Certificates.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Member may wish to know that an SME Development Scheme Certificate is granted to an applicant only if he or she has given proof that the required funding in respect of the approved project has been secured. In the first instance, once a project is approved, a Letter of Intent for an SME Development Scheme Certificate is issued to the applicant by SMEDA. The Letter of Intent is valid for a period of 6 months and may be extended for a further period of 6 months to give ample time to the applicant to complete all the process, as the case may be, to secure the necessary funding. To date, 204 Letters of Intent have been issued.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that MauBank has disbursed an amount of Rs71.25 m., out of a total amount of Rs193.31 m. of loans approved in respect of 140 applications, under the SME Financing Scheme.

I am further informed that an amount of Rs118.23 m. is in the process of disbursement.

Madam Speaker: Hon Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the first budget of this Government, in 2015, the then hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development stated that the Government is pledging Rs10 billion over the next five years with Rs2 billion every year to help the SME. Today, in this House, we hear that only Rs71.2 m., after 2½ years, instead of

Rs4.5 billion, have been disbursed. Doesn't the hon. Minister consider that this Government policy in terms of financing of the SME has been a complete and utter failure?

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, the figures that I have forwarded, concern only priority areas in which the applicant may apply for loan with MauBank at an annual interest rate of 3% only. However, I must inform that there are other schemes that have come into effect during this financial year, namely Leasing Equipment Modernisation Schemes (LEMS) and factoring as well. Over and above that, commercial banks are also helping SMEs, and I can state that from 2011 to February 2017, other commercial banks are lending in various forms; loans overdraft, finance lease and others, and for this six-year period, an amount of Rs7.3 billion has been advanced.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, in October of last year, the hon. Minister is reported to have stated -

« La SMEDA est tombée dans une léthargie inacceptable. Je ne suis pas du tout satisfait de cet organisme. »

That was in October 2016. May I know from the hon. Minister whether, today, he is still not satisfied with SMEDA and what has he done to improve the situation?

Mr Bholah: Well, SMEDA is making much effort and there is still room for improvement, Madam Speaker.

Ms Sewocksing: May I know from the hon. Minister if there is a scheme for clustering small and medium enterprises and, if so, where does matter stand? Clustering small and medium enterprises...

(Interruptions)

Yes. If there is a scheme to cluster, to put all the small and medium enterprises, especially the manufacturing sector, so that they are not where we have residential places, but in a place where they can do their business separately so that they do not disturb residents?

Mr Bholah: Well, we are coming up with industrial parks and this will help to alleviate the problem that the hon. Member is mentioning.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/196) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the hon. Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Fire and Rescue Service, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the representations made by the staff and by the Union thereof regarding –

- (a) lack of protective equipment;
- (b) non-implementation of certain recommendations of the last Pay Research Bureau Report;
- (c) lack of lorries and pumps;
- (d) modernisation of the unit with additional and up to date equipment, and
- (e) new stations to be commissioned and the implementations schedule hereof and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me thank my hon. friend to have put this question to enable me to shed some light on the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I have been informed by the Chief Fire Officer that all the firefighters have been provided with all the necessary protective equipment for the performance of their duties. Presently, additional personal protective equipment are being procured and their expected delivery is by the end of next month.

With reference to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the relevant Pay Research Bureau Report recommendations for the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service have been implemented, including allowance for Lead Firefighter, for which there was a delay, as a mechanism had to be put in place and consultation was required with the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms and the Pay Research Bureau. Also, as from January 2018, the Performance Bonus would become effective.

I would also like to inform the hon. Member that a meeting is being held on Thursday 13 April 2017 with both Unions representing the firefighters in view to thrash out any difficulty being encountered by our fellow firefighters.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that there is a lack of lorries because eight lorries have been bordered and their replacement have not yet been made. In the present budget, funds to the tune of Rs13.5 m. was made available for the procurement of

one water tender only. Bids were invited on 09 December 2016 with closing date being 24 January 2017. Three bids were received and, after evaluation of the bids, no bid was found to be responsive. I have instructed the Chief Fire Officer, during a meeting held on 03 April 2017 that henceforth, he should personally monitor the procurement process to ensure that funds appropriated by the Parliament are spent and we get value for money.

I am also informed that presently, three water tenders are being upgraded and refurbished. By doing so, it is expected that they would remain operational for 10 more years.

For pumps, one high volume water pump estimated at Rs15 m. is being procured. Bids were invited on 21 January 2017. Only one bid has been received and is presently being evaluated. Moreover, I am informed that presently 30 water pumps are being repaired, 15 Godiva pumps fitted on board firefighting vehicles and 15 portable Fox pumps.

Madam Speaker, with regard to (d) of the question, that is, modernisation of the Special Rescue Unit and Operations Division with additional and up-to-date equipment, which I presume the hon. Member is referring to, I would like to inform the House that bids were invited on 27 December 2016 for the acquisition of 60 sets of swift water rescue equipment for an estimated cost of Rs4.8 m. The contract for the supply of the equipment was awarded on 27 January 2017 and the delivery will be completed by 28 April 2017.

Moreover, upgrading works would be undertaken at the Coromandel and Flacq fire stations.

With regard to part (e) of the question, I am informed that bids have been invited, through e-procurement, a first for the service, for the construction of a new Fire Station at Rose Belle. The closing date for submission of bids, initially scheduled for 03 April 2017, has been extended to 19 April 2017. Once the contract is successfully awarded, the selected bidder will have 540 days, after mobilisation on site, to complete the project. Therefore, it is expected that the Rose Belle Fire Station would become operational as from early 2019.

It is being planned to invite bids for the next financial year, for the Goodlands Fire Station and the design being proposed would be adapted from the Rose Belle project. It is expected that the construction of the Goodlands Fire Station would start during the year 2018. The project is estimated to cost Rs60 m. and a provision of Rs10 m. would be applied for the next budget to kick start the project. It is also being envisaged to construct a new fire station at Montagne Blanche thereafter.

Mr Bhagwan: I am sure the Minister must be aware that the officers of the fire and rescue services had to go into the streets because their problems were not solved. Now that the Minister has informed us that there will be a meeting with the union, has the Minister had time to discuss with the Chief Fire Officer a mechanism to look into the daily or even weekly problems of the fire rescuers?

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House, since I took office, I had several meetings with the Chief Fire Officer and even this week I met him. I told him to monitor all the projects with regard to the budget voted in the National Assembly. I informed him that he should give us the later decisions taken by him. I also told him that we were not satisfied with the decisions taken in the past with regard to purchase of lorries.

Mr Bhagwan: There was a reply to Parliamentary Question B/136 of March 2015. The Minister, then as Chief Whip, queried the Minister of Local Government about the purchase of five lorries through a supplementary question. I quote -

“Can the hon. Minister confirm whether in year 2011, five lorries have been bought by Fire and Rescue Services, model mane, which could not be used during the flash flood of 30 March 2013 due to its wrong design and oversize?”

Can the Minister inform us whether he has been able to look into the file, whether there have been corrupt practices in that particular case? Does he intend to discuss with the Chief Fire Officer about the whole process of procurement for the purchase of these lorries?

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, it was an issue that had been raised in my first meeting and I asked the Chief Fire Officer whether there has been any Police enquiry or if this matter had been referred ICAC. I have been informed by the Chief Fire Officer, and I wish to inform the House, that the Independent Commission against Corruption had on two occasions requested information regarding the vehicles acquired or repaired by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service.

The first time it was on 16 September 2015 regarding the acquisition of five new water tenders in year 2011, as just mentioned by the hon. Member.

The second time was on 21 November 2016 for investigation on repairs of vehicles and equipment of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service.

Moreover, the ICAC is enquiring on the possibility of conflict of interest in connection with repairs effected on appliance 82RM06.

Madam Speaker, given that the enquiries are being undertaken, I have no additional comments to make on this issue in order not to cause any prejudice to the ongoing enquiries.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: There have been also cases of corruption for the purchase of rotating ladders, high-rise ladders for ten-storeyed buildings. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has had the opportunity to look into that file, the file of high-rise ladders? In that reply also the then Minister said that he was going to discuss with the Chief Fire Officer concerning the whole procurement exercise for the purchase of the ladders. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether these rotating ladders, high-rise ladders are operational these days?

Mr Jhugroo: In fact, even ICAC is enquiring on all the purchase of old lorries and I have been informed by the Chief Fire Officer that it is in good condition.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Fowdar!

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME - PLACEMENT

(No. B/197) Mr S. Fowdar (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the Youth Employment Programme, he will state the number of youth presently employed thereunder, category-wise, indicating the number thereof who are –

- (a) degree holders;
- (b) diploma holders, and
- (c) Higher School Certificate holders.

Mr Callichurn: Madam Speaker, the Youth Employment Programme is a placement and training programme that aims at facilitating the transition of youth from education to employment and to provide them with the core skills required by different sectors of the economy in order to increase their chances to secure permanent employment at the organisation where they have been placed.

During the last 12 months, 3343 youths have been placed under the Youth Employment Programme, 1069 in the public sector including Rodrigues and 2274 in the private sector. Out of the 3343 trainees placed, 1117 hold a degree, 273 a diploma, 1060 a

Higher School Certificate and 893 a School Certificate or below. I am tabling the details category wise, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Madam Speaker, I have two supplementary questions here. Can I ask the hon. Minister...

Madam Speaker: One by one, please!

Mr Fowdar: ... whether the applicants are being fitted according to their skills to the jobs?

Mr Callichurn: Well, Madam Speaker, there are two regimes. Actually, in the private sector we receive applications from employers and they have to submit requests regarding the profile they are looking for and the trainee should also be under the supervision during the placement period whereas in the public sector whenever requests are made by different Ministries or parastatal bodies, the requests come together with the qualification and profile being sought for. Based on that request, a list is sent to the relevant Ministry or organisation and it is for the organisation to select the YEP trainee and inform my Ministry thereafter. But, I need to be frank; placement does not necessarily match the field of study of the trainees in the Ministries.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My second question is, has the Ministry reached its quota or is it still recruiting?

Mr Callichurn: In the private sector, there is no quota as such, but in the public sector it depends on the budget which is provided for by the Ministry of Finance. For the financial year 2016-2017, the quota has already been exhausted.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Has the hon. Minister been made aware that some YEP candidates are facing hardship in their placement? I have one case with me at the NIC for the identity card where officers are being forcibly requested to do overtime hours and also they are receiving their salaries late sometimes about 2 to 3 weeks. I have a letter, I am going to table it for the attention of the hon. Minister if he can kindly look into this.

Mr Callichurn: Actually, we have received complaints and I must tell the House that since February 2015, we have received 100 complaints. It is good that the House knows about it. The nature of the complaints is mostly related to non-payment of monthly stipend to trainees, payment of stipend to trainees on instalment basis, late payment and trainees being given contract of employment on condition that they enter into a bond with the employer. We are processing those complaints. A monitoring committee has been set up by my Ministry and we are looking in all those complaints.

ARABIC SPEAKING UNION – SETTING UP

(No. B/201) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of an Arabic Speaking Union, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CWA - REPLACEMENT OF PIPES PROJECT

(No. B/202) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Replacement of Pipes Project for the improvement of the water network, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –

- (a) names of the contractors thereof, and
- (b) contract values thereof.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions B/211, B/201, B/202 and B/215 have been withdrawn!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

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

At 4.28 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.06 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE LAND DRAINAGE AUTHORITY BILL

(No. I of 2017)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Land Drainage Authority Bill (No. I of 2017)

Question again proposed.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Benydin!

Mr T. Benydin (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): The introduction of the Land Drainage Authority Bill (No. I of 2017) in this august Assembly constitutes indeed a major breakthrough and a landmark as it translates Government's action and programme to further improve the living conditions, welfare and security of our citizens in the wake of the uncertainties and vagaries of weather conditions and national catastrophe.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, water covers two third of the earth surface and is found both in the ground as rivers, canals, streams and seas among others as well as in clouds and sky and falls down as rain and in certain countries as snow. Water is a must for every living organism for survival and also needed in the agricultural as well as in the industrial sectors.

Water, as we can say, is a good master, but at times, it can be a bad servant if it is not well monitored. That's why we think that it has been a very wise decision for Government to come forward with the Land Drainage Authority. Water is also even a source of renewal energy like waves and water currents used to produce energy for domestic use as electricity or for hydro energetic requirements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, flood water, if not controlled, is one of the main causes of natural catastrophe on our planet Earth and can wreak havoc and cause death to the inhabitants. Floodwater is as well a cause for the damage of planet Earth that can cost millions of rupees of damages and eventually involves other millions to remediate damages caused. I have here in mind the phenomenon of climatic change with flash floods becoming now regularly torrential rains, overflowing of rivers, tsunamis and other water related

problems which, how many times, we have witnessed carried away vehicles, buildings and so on like mere toys. The sad event of several deaths caused by the March 2013 flash flood is still fresh in our minds and my deepest sympathies still go to the parents and close relatives of the victims.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I consider it relevant today in my intervention to elaborate on the relevance of the introduction of the Land Drainage Authority Bill (No. I of 2017) in this House and it is for this reason that this Bill should be welcome by all parties in the House. I am very surprised of the stand and approach, - I think two weeks ago - when hon. Armanee raised the issue of duplication. He should on the contrary appreciate the actions that are being undertaken to ensure better coordination and synergy among like-minded organisations like the NDU, the RDA and the Local Authorities as underpinned in the speech of the hon. Prime Minister in the determination and struggle to upgrade drains and prevent adverse effects of torrential rains and floods.

I think that we should understand why we want a Land Drainage Authority. It is not a duplication. On the contrary, it should be referred to more as an organisation that will specialise itself on drain issues like it exists in various countries. Even in some countries, we have the Ministry for Land Drainage itself to take care of land drainage. Therefore, I can't understand why when we are going ahead with a Land Drainage Authority, some feel that it is a duplication. I think it was referred to by my friend as a barking dog without teeth, but with this Government, they can bite if they want, we have the necessary machinery. The Land Drainage Authority will come forward with the necessary machines to prevent all types of flood and I think, if required, we will dig very deep and they can bite if they want.

It is also not correct to say that only Rs40 m. have been spent. In his exposé, the hon. Prime Minister made it clear that Government has invested massively in the construction and upgrading of drains in the island and, in fact, already Rs520 m. have been disbursed and an additional fund of Rs1.2 billion has been earmarked for financial year ending 30 June 2017.

I am also disturbed when hon. Armanee stated that the Authority has no power. How come, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when it is clearly spelt out in section 5 (e) of the Bill that the Authority shall, and I quote –

“(e) cause any works related to land drainage to be carried out by the local authorities, the NDU, the RDA and any other relevant stakeholder;”

Section 5(f) also speaks for itself. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, water can have consequential adverse effects like acid rain that can destroy lives all around due to high industrial pollution as well as domestic waste in terms of sewer wastewater and kitchen waste like detergents, javel and other chemicals that can be harmful to our soil and plantations essential for our living.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is witnessing severe water accumulation problems and flooding caused by flash floods, torrential and heavy rainfalls or any other different kinds of run-offs. Coupled with this, another element which cannot be ignored is sewer wastewater and domestic waste.

Rainwater, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does not in itself require treatment, but can be canalised into any water bodies like rivers and seas. However, domestic waste, sewer water and other industrial waste can be very toxic and cannot be allowed free course to water bodies. This type of waste requires treatment to preserve our ecosystem, soil, and water lives.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is still witnessing the situation as anywhere else in the world and this Bill is, therefore, presented at the right time. The Land Drainage Authority will enable us to improve further our network, and to this effect, it is relevant and recomforting that a Master Plan, in fact, a National Land Drainage Plan will be worked out, and I have no doubt that it will cover a proper networking from the root cause and source of the problem to the final outlet.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as rightly said by Benjamin Franklin, I quote -

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.”

Let us, therefore, come forward with a Master Plan on land drainage issues under the umbrella of the proposed Land Drainage Authority. This Authority will not work in isolation. Other relevant stakeholders like core bodies, NDU, RDA, local authorities and also with the Central Water Authority, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre, the Water Resources Unit, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, and the Wastewater Management Authority will have to work together, and I think that the Land Drainage Authority will be like an apex body, and can coordinate and control better the work that will be done by the other organisations that I have mentioned.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is also very relevant to speak of drainage system from two different perspectives. One that can capture storm water like flash floods, torrential and heavy rainfalls. Such type of drain is commonly known as open drain as it requires no treatment

before such water is carried down to any water body like rivers and seas. Such drain is meant to remove all excess water from low-lying areas, in residential and commercial areas.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, sewer, domestic and industrial wastes are as harmful and need not to be neglected. They have to be considered in a similar importance because, in a sense, they are more dreadful and damaging than rainwater. The necessity to canalise such water to a treatment plant is essential for the safeguarding of our eco-system, as they contain much toxic elements. Such drains are commonly known as closed drains. It has a more complex form of underground or covered drains, as it contains various diseases carrying pathogens and, therefore, cannot be left open. One example is the manhole sewer system that goes first to a treatment plant.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we talk about drainage system, we have to take on board both types of drains in order that we meet the real objectives of our mission to come forward with a Land Drainage Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 'prevention is better than cure' goes the adage. In the creation of the world, nature has itself provided for natural drain that can capture excess runoff and water flows. Mankind has, however, defied nature's rules and has constructed luxuries on wetlands in opposition to the Ramsar Convention that restricted any alteration to wetlands. Besides, people have for their own benefits redirected the watercourse of many rivers, canals and natural drains to construct their own houses, thus disregarding the cause and effect of their actions.

On the other hand, tarring of roads, construction of concrete houses and brick wall all around, turning jungles into concrete jungles, like removing sugarcane fields and plantations to erect skyscrapers type buildings, have also worsened the situation of water flow and water related problems and makes water a serious inconvenience for our well-being.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot nonetheless look at the situation as passive observers. We have to react to the situation and contain the problem, not only to preserve the environment, save lives, but also to protect the economy of the country while taking care of the social benefits as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, effective drain system must go along with road re-profiling and the prevention of households' surface water to run into the main roads. Each household must have its own absorption drain mentioned in its building permit and enforced by legislation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, maintenance and de-silting are the key factors for an effective drainage system. Unfortunately, this side of the coin has been too often overlooked and their obstruction can be devastating, as we have, unfortunately, witnessed on so many occasions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another phenomenon which is paving the way in the Mauritian culture is to seize the opportunity to throw debris and detritus in overflowing rivers during torrential and heavy rainfalls such as mattresses, iron sheets, even fridges and other solid wastes, which are definitely detrimental to our environment.

The provisions regarding offences mentioned at sections 22(1) and (2) of the Bill should act as a deterrent to defaulters. This is the relevance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to have the involvement of all other Ministries, Departments and Authorities to contribute to the education and enforcement of any legislation relevant to protect a proper drainage system. And for all the reasons that I have elaborated, we feel that the Land Drainage Authority has come at the right time because this is not a political issue. This is an issue which concerns all the citizens of our Republic and, therefore, we should contribute and have such an Authority which is long overdue.

I would like to congratulate and thank the hon. Prime Minister to come forward with this Bill at the beginning of this session and we know that this will help the citizens of this country to live in a more secure environment.

On this note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the House for the attention paid to me.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(5.22 p.m.)

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Mr Deputy Speaker, on the side of the House, we consider that this Bill which appears to be a seemingly trivial piece of legislation, but, in fact, our far-reaching consequences on the protection of lives, properties and on two of our major resources, namely water availability and quality and on the health of our lagoons and reefs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just a fortnight ago, the relatives of the 11 victims of the dramatic flash flood of 30 March 2013 were present at the Caudan for a ceremony and they

all reminded us of the terrible tragedy they are still enduring. Time is certainly a great healer and memory fades, but not the suffering of the relatives. On this side of the House, we concur that business as usual scenario is no more an option and we have to act now.

For decades, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Public infrastructure as well as local authorities have been constructing and maintaining roadside and storm drains in a rather haphazard manner focussed mainly on finding for specific problem areas.

As from year 2000, the need for a more holistic approach was felt and the then Government requested a study of flood prone areas throughout the island and committed itself to implement the recommendations in a phased manner. Hon. Ganoo, who was then Minister of Public Utilities, was responsible for the implementation of the project and then Gibbs & Partners was commissioned to prepare a report and more than 200 flood prone areas were detected and works started. Unfortunately, after 2005, there was a priority shift and the implementation of the report was delayed.

As the House will recall, the issue of land drainage came forcefully on the national agenda since the dramatic event of March 2008. The flooding after cyclone Lola claimed four victims, one of whom was a young schoolgirl. Subsequently, a Fact-Finding Committee was set up and highlighted the urgent need for Mauritius to reconsider its overall strategy of addressing the problem of floods at the current stage of its development, especially with regard to its policy and sustainable development, especially with regard to its policy of sustainable development.

The Committee made 34 recommendations and, amongst others, the following –

- (i) the setting up of a full-fledged National Disaster Management Centre;
- (ii) measures in favour of enhanced public interest and public safety, training in disaster response, a dedicated and user-friendly website for meteorological services, a focal role for the meteorological services for weather events and a review of the powers of the *Morcellement* Board.

A few days later, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the even more dramatic flash floods of 2013, which took the lives of 11 of our citizens, reminded us, again, that there was no more room for complacency and urgent works had to be carried out, but the country still lacked the much required holistic approach to land drainage and a sustained investment for the proper setting up of the required infrastructure.

However, since 2012, a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Framework and Action Plan has been prepared and the report has revealed significant exposure to flash hazard of different intensity on Mauritius Island and as well as Rodrigues.

In Mauritius, we can say the critically exposed areas are: Port Louis area, Rivière du Poste, Flacq and Rivière Sèche basins, the basin from Rivière du Rempart West to Grand River North West, Citron Basin, some spots on Rivière Tabac, Rivière La Chaux, Rivière des Créoles, Grand River South East and Rivière du Poste South basins and some lowland locations in Mauritius where water can accumulate during heavy precipitation. On Rodrigues Island, most of flooded areas, affected areas near rivers' mouths, the exposed areas near roads and high risks of floods correspond to about 20 kilometres of all scenarios.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, needless to mention, substantial investments are needed to safeguard areas prone to very high and high risk to flood, coastal inundation and landslide hazards. The current vulnerabilities are, to some extent, results of unsound development practices. Spatial planning and land management play an important role in risk prevention by limiting the development in flood prone areas and by encouraging flood risk sensitive land use and management practices, since high proportion of areas identified for future development are placed in areas prone to very high and high risk.

According to the DRR Report, the land drainage full study will cost around Rs2.5 billion, whereas the implementation of the DRR Report will require investment above Rs5 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to my mind, it is abundantly clear that we have to develop and implement a land drainage master plan, as provided in the piece of legislation. The sooner the better, as we shall be saving lives of our citizens, properties and shall be ensuring that our development prospects are not threatened by these risk factors. However, what remains unclear to my mind is the way Government has decided to proceed with this urgent and vital project.

First, once again, the same all-in-one one ready to use solution, setting up of another authority. It seems that the setting up of quangos has become a real panacea for Government. Government itself is advocating privatisation in certain sectors because so many of these quangos are not performing and are managed *au petit bonheur* due mainly because wrong people find themselves at the wrong place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have so many times witnessed it. Freshly set up authorities often means new job opportunities for *petits copains*. Job for the blue-eyed boys and once in post, they become the real *potentats intouchables* in spite of their low performance. Furthermore, these quangos often do not fall under the purview of the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Procurement Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are all aware that the existing drain network has been poorly managed by local authorities, mainly because of lack of manpower and resources. Setting up of an authority to ensure that there is routine and periodic upgrading and maintenance of the drainage infrastructure, without providing the means to these Road Authority, local authorities, who will do the job nothing but a farce.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can we develop and implement a land drainage master plan if we do not even have representatives of Municipal and District Councils sitting on the Board?

There are also no representatives from the Forestry Services of the Ministry of Agriculture who are statutorily responsible for the management of streams and rivers, no representatives of the Ministry of Fisheries, responsible for the monitoring of water quality of lagoons and the healthy state of the coral reefs, no representative even of the Beach Authority. So, can I appeal to the Prime Minister to have a fresh look on the composition of the Board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me come to the objects of the proposed authority. I think it would have been relevant to mention that the main function of the proposed authority is to develop, update, and implement a national land drainage master plan according to international best practices. This is a crucial component of any land drainage programme because we have to consider as well the issue of climate change and the scarcity of water. I will certainly elaborate on this aspect later, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir.

We all know, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it does not suffice to have a land drainage master plan. We need resources to effectively and efficiently implement the master plan. We need financial resources; we need technical advice especially in-house. We have seen often the Local Authorities; even the Road Development Authorities have recourse to consultants to assess the reports of former consultants. This is where we have seen cases of millions of overspending.

We need to enhance Government technical capacity in many fields. Everything is so inter-connected now in the building up of public infrastructure. Government need to breed a new state-of-the-art technical cadre. Ministries requiring technical capacity enhancement should be able to provide direct scholarships within the State of Mauritius Scholarship scheme.

Having said that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot ignore the fact that sometimes there is some sort of cultural inferiority complex vis-à-vis foreign experts, while more and more Government technical officials find it so comfortable to avoid shouldering their technical responsibility by shifting it on consultants and be shielded from critics, if something goes wrong, and argue in the subsequent blame game, *pas moi consultants sa!*

We cannot also ignore the fact that sometimes there is undue political interference, we have seen in the past, as a result of which, the dice are loaded and the technical evaluation is just *pure mise en scène*. In these circumstances, the technical staff feels demotivated and has a tendency to abdicate.

Third, we need a transparent procurement exercise for contract allocation. Needless to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, corruption is a cancer that can destroy almost everything. From the inception of the project itself, the whole bidding exercise, the award, the supervision of the works up to the final payments, there is a need for transparency. Bridges collapse, dams leak, and roads subside because of corrupt practices. Low quality of materials at the various stages of the project are being used. Sound governance requires that not only government does things right but also the right things.

Fourth, we need quality assurance. Government cannot accept blindly that contracts allocated to grade A contractors are sometimes subcontracted - as it is done these days - to lower grades contractors without the proper equipment. The end result is often poor workmanship, undue delays and unsightly, unprofessional services.

There is also a fifth one, Mr Deputy Speaker, enforcement and maintenance.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, as I said earlier, what are the current vulnerabilities? We have seen the result of unsound practices. Spatial planning and land management play an important role in risk prevention, by limiting the development in flood prone areas, and by encouraging flood risk-sensitive land use and management practices since high proportion of areas identified for future development are placed in areas prone to very high and high risk. Enforcement is therefore extremely crucial. The NDU cannot continue to invest millions of

rupees in construction of drains while for each kilometre constructed two kilometres are being obstructed by derocking works, poor design and subdivisions of land, unauthorised structures and illegal dumping of waste, which is the case today.

Illegal littering and the absence of regular maintenance cause severe obstructions and a whole network of drains can become ineffective and can cause still more damages than the absence of drains. Every time there is intense rainfall, one can see the huge amount of plastic bottles and all types of wastes which are being carried out by the water flow and find their way to our rivers and lagoons.

Mr Deputy Speaker, steady investment, in-house technical expertise, transparent procurement exercise for contract allocation, quality assurance, enforcement and maintenance it is the end of a story for land drainage management; unfortunately not for two main reasons.

That is why I was referring to international best practices earlier. First, a crucial component of any land drainage programme is the inclusion of adaptation measures with regard to the issue of climate change. Extreme weather events, unprecedented downpour of rain, flash floods and more severe cyclones render it necessary to go back to the drawing board, rethink conventional design and anticipate worst scenarios. We have to constantly adapt to this changing environment if we want to protect lives and property and enhance the resilience of public infrastructure.

Secondly, because of constantly increasing demand and the adverse impact of climate change, water is bound to become a scarce commodity. Instead of considering heavy rainfall as a threat, we need a paradigm shift and see it more as a challenge and an additional opportunity to increase storage of this precious commodity.

With the new mind-set, more emphasis is laid on integrated flood management which combines land resource management and water resource management so as to maximise benefits from these two resources while reducing at the same time disaster risks.

A land drainage programme based exclusively on a fast evacuation of surface water run-offs to the sea via rivers, canals and drains is now completely outdated. Rather than a land drainage authority, we could have considered a Water Preservation Authority, which operates on the principle of restoration and preservation of this valuable asset.

Rainwater can thus be collected and channelled through a network of drains and preserved in river basins, artificial pools and lakes instead of being evacuated quickly to the

ocean while still loaded with sediments impacting on the lagoonal water quality and the health of the coral reefs.

Water is a fragile resource that is vulnerable to pollution from a wide variety of human activities. Water quality has become one of the more important environmental issues facing the World, even Mauritius, Deputy Speaker, Sir.

In many areas of our tiny island, wetlands, lakes and streams are increasingly vulnerable to human impacts. Some of our waters become unsuitable for swimming and fishing because of sediments and other pollutants. Moreover, there is an increasing concern about the quality of groundwater, which supplies drinking water for our population.

So far, we have been concentrating our efforts on controlling pollution from point sources. There is a need to accelerate the construction of a countrywide sewerage network in order to preserve the integrity of our aquifers, which need massive investment, I know.

Nevertheless, our lakes, streams, ground waters and lagoons continue to be degraded by pollutants that are carried in runoff. These forms of pollution are called nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution will become a serious problem affecting many of our water sources during the days, months and years to come. Some people may believe that runoff from urban areas is clean or natural and that it does not harm water quality. This perception is understandable since many people do not realise that the volume and pollutants loading of run-off has been changed over time. In addition, the amount of pollution from one spot can be so small that it would be insignificant were it the only source. However, when all these small amounts are combined, they can cause serious water quality problems.

There are two main reasons, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why urbanisation increases pollutant loads. First, the volume of run-off is typically increased as an area is developed, providing a larger capacity of transport pollutants. The second reason is that some materials are typically more easily picked up in run-off as the vegetation is reduced and the impervious surfaces increase. There is need to control the volume and quality of storm water discharges from developed sites both of which are crucial requirements for protecting human life and property, maintaining overall water quality.

A basic goal for all developments is to maintain pre-development peak flows, run-off volumes and water quality. In other words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, development should maintain the velocity and quantity of run-off and the amount of pollutants leaving the site. The first step in water quality management is to maintain and reduce the amount of run-off

generated within its watershed by maintaining watershed hydrology and cover. Treatment is then applied to the remaining run-off to remove some of the pollutants load.

The basic goal, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of stormwater management is to align water quality and water quality management techniques in such a way as to prevent further deterioration of our watersheds. The three basic techniques for addressing this goal include maintaining existing conditions, decreasing peak flows and reducing pollutants.

A single BMP may not suffice to meet the stormwater management and design objectives for a development. The preferred approach for water quality improvement is a combination of series of stormwater best management practices called a treatment train.

This set of biological and physical treatments successively removes pollutants from stormwater flows. For example, with regard to open spaces we need to preserve and restore native vegetation, to establish vegetated open space and to disconnect impervious surfaces with native vegetation. For source control of stormwater, various techniques such as infiltration trenches, filter strips, pervious paving, rain gardens, a small depression planted with native wetland and prairie vegetation rather than a turf grass lawn with run-off collects and infiltrates, spill prevention, street and storm maintenance.

Before concluding, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must add that we should not be waiting for the setting up of the proposed authority and the final Master Plan to act. There is no Money Drainage Authority as far as I know, but we have seen with the recent Audit Report how much public fund is being generously wasted because of lack of adequate planning and monitoring. So, there is no need to sit on the fence and wait. Already, many pieces of legislation provide for the construction, maintenance of drains and the preservation of the network. The Road Authority and the Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities to this regard. Planning departments at all levels should ensure that no obstruction whatsoever is caused to the existing drain network and that the appropriate infrastructure is set up in cases of subdivisions and *morcellements*. Water accumulation may not always cause material damage but in tropical countries like ours, this may contribute to the proliferation of mosquitoes and outbreak of diseases.

To conclude, again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all agree that the country definitely requires a Land Drainage Master Plan but we also need a paradigm shift in favour of water preservation and restoration along the lines of international best practices rather than a fast evacuation of this precious resource to the ocean. As we certainly don't want another

inefficient parastatal body that will drain our limited resources with fat pay packets and other facilities, we shall be here around in the National Assembly, once the Bill is approved, once the Authority is set up, and have a constant monitoring here in Parliament and see whether the billions of money which would be invested in this Authority go in the public interest.

This is what I had to say, I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissezon!

(5.47 p.m.)

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr E. Boissézon): M. le président, je vous remercie de me permettre d'intervenir au cours des débats sur le projet de loi *Land Drainage Authority Bill*. D'abord, je féliciterai le Premier ministre pour la présentation de son premier projet de loi en sa capacité de Premier ministre. C'est tout à l'honneur du Premier ministre d'introduire un projet de loi qui a pour but principal d'atténuer les craintes et souffrances de la population et l'évacuation des eaux pluviales.

Ce projet de loi est attendu depuis fort longtemps. À chaque saison de grandes pluies, nous entendons parler d'un plan national pour l'évacuation rapide des eaux. Ce projet de loi vient combler ce manquement. M. le président, avec le réchauffement climatique, les conditions atmosphériques ont changé, les catastrophes naturelles qui étaient des exceptions du siècle deviennent des effets météorologiques récurrents.

À Maurice, comme il a été dit précédemment, nous avons en mémoire la disparition de nos sœurs et frères le 26 mars 2008 à Mon Goût, le 30 mars 2013 à Port Louis pour ne parler que de cela et le constat flagrant que les recommandations de l'ex-juge Domah ne furent prises pour des lettres mortes et placées dans des tiroirs avec pour résultat 11 morts, des familles traumatisées et aujourd'hui encore, comme l'a dit précédemment un des orateurs, en peine.

Nous ne pouvons pas passer sous silence le mal des eaux en furie, maisons endommagées, cultures agricoles dévastées, sans compter sur les risques d'épidémies et en cas de débordement, des risques de contamination de la nappe phréatique. M. le président, quand nous parlons d'inondations, d'accumulation d'eau, nous avons tendance à parler de précipitation rapide, de pluviométries excessives régionalisées ou généralisées. Mais est-ce là la seule raison des inondations ? Non, M. le président. La surface d'imperméabilité du pays a

beaucoup augmenté rendant l'absorption plus lente. Des milliers de champs de canne ont laissé la place à des morcellements avec des maisons couvrant 80 % de la surface du terrain sans puits d'absorption domestique.

Notre réseau routier ne cesse de s'agrandir avec une surface goudronnée imperméable. La topologie du pays a changé. Des constructions sur les rampes des montagnes et collines sont plus nombreuses. Sur les régions côtières les constructions des bâtiments et des centres commerciaux, des réseaux routiers et des aires de stationnement relatifs causent des obstacles à l'écoulement des eaux. Les belles haies de bambous qui avaient la possibilité d'absorber l'eau de la pluie et de laisser passer le surplus causé par les précipitations au débit élevé, ont été brûlées pour être remplacées par des murs en béton. Le relief naturel des champs de cannes avec leurs crevasses çà et là, les rigoles et autres ruisselets naturels sont devenus d'immenses terrains plats à faire baver les propriétaires de terrain de foot. Les drains ont été obstrués, comblés et déviés au su et à la barbe des autorités.

Cet état de fait nécessaire pour le développement économique et social du pays dans certains cas, a-t-il été planifié et fait de façon organisée? A-t-on eu recours à une approche holistique, une politique coordonnée nationale pour la récupération et l'évacuation des eaux de pluie. Plusieurs raisons furent données pour expliquer ce manquement.

Premièrement, la phrase sibylline pour dérouter tout interlocuteur: le manque de fonds.

Deuxièmement, le manque de coordination entre les différentes institutions responsables de la gestion, de la récupération et de l'évacuation de l'eau.

Troisièmement, le manque de main d'œuvre et de spécialisation professionnelle dans le domaine.

Quatrièmement, le manque d'informations et de base de données de la topographie et de l'hydrographie du pays.

Cinquièmement, le manque de moyens logistiques et de personnel de champs pour cerner les contrevenants.

M. le président, pour pallier au manque de fonds, précédemment l'honorable Toolsyraj Benyadin, nous a parlé de sommes budgétisées ; 520 millions déboursés pendant la période de janvier 2015 à juin 2016, la somme de 1.2 billions a été budgétisée pour la période 2016-2017 sachant que la sécurité et le bien-être de la population est la priorité de ce

gouvernement, je sais que l'évacuation de l'eau sera une des priorités du Premier ministre lors de l'élaboration du budget. Mais le financement, en lui-même, n'est pas une fin en soi. Il faut que cet argent soit canalisé vers le financement d'un plan directeur national.

Ce présent projet de loi amène des réponses à nos autres interrogations. La Section 5(b) parle 'to undertake a survey based on a hydrometeorological and hydrographic survey and produce and keep under review a flood risk map and a national land drainage'.

Aujourd'hui, les drains sont construits dépendant des moyens financiers et des besoins présents. La RDA est responsable pour l'évacuation de l'eau des artères classifiées. Les collectivités locales et la NDU sont responsables du drainage des localités et des rues publiques. Des collectivités locales sont responsables de l'espace qui tombe sous leur juridiction. Aucune concertation, ou presque, avec d'autres organismes.

La NDU travaille d'après les frontières du découpage électoral. Chaque circonscription travaille plutôt en isolation. S'il y a une collaboration entre la NDU et les autres organismes, il n'existe pas de plan national, d'où le besoin d'aller vers la fonction 5(c) Conduct and Coordinate Research and Development on Land Drainage and Water Save Management; and share all available information with all relevant shareholders. C'est un besoin, M. le président, aujourd'hui, chacun travaille de son côté mais nous avons un besoin que les organismes comme la NDU, comme les collectivités locales et la RDA travaillent de concert. Je peux vous dire que les organismes qui se trouvent en amont dont l'objectif prioritaire est l'évacuation des eaux et la création de la parade contre les inondations sur leurs territoires, ne se soucient guère des régions en aval.

Ayant été conseiller à la municipalité de Vacoas-Phoenix, je me souviens encore des débordements causés par les décharges d'eaux de canalisation de Curepipe dans les rivières traversant Mesnil et Allée Brillant. Il arrive souvent qu'avec les grandes pluies régionales, voire des débordements et s'il y a une grosse pluie à Curepipe, lorsque l'eau a été évacuée et transférée dans les rivières, Mesnil déborde. C'est pour cette raison que nous avons besoin d'un organisme capable de coordonner tout cela.

M. le président, le recrutement de cadres, d'ingénieurs et d'autres professionnels ont lieu en ce moment par les organismes concernés. Les ingénieurs de la NDU - je parle peut être avec nostalgie - sont maintenant aguerris au *Framework Agreement* pour l'allocation et le suivi des contrats. Le *Land Drainage Authority* sera le catalyseur capable de préparer et de concrétiser un plan national de drainage pour Maurice.

Quant à la cinquième interrogation, M. le président, avec le manque de main d'œuvre aujourd'hui, je note avec plaisir que la section 16 parle d'*assistance for enforcement*. Le précédent orateur parlait du manque de main- d'œuvre et, aujourd'hui, je note avec plaisir que *notwithstanding any other enactment, every police officer and every other officer under the Building Control Act, the Environment Protection Act, the Local Government Act, the Rivers and Canal Act and the Road Development Authority Act shall have the power and the duty to assist in enforcing the provisions of this Act*. C'est aujourd'hui, nous ne pouvons plus parler de manque de main d'œuvre, de cadres pour s'assurer que les provisions de ce projet de loi ne soient pas suivies.

Pour terminer, M. le président, j'aurais peut-être un petit mot pour le précédent orateur qui a parlé d'un *efficient parastatal body*, d'un autre éléphant blanc, je lui dirai que ce projet de loi fait provision pour le contrôle des dépenses et à la section 18, *Annual Report* 18(2), 'the Minister shall, at the earliest available opportunity, lay a copy of the Annual Report and audited account of the authority before the Assembly'. Et la section 3: 'The auditor to be appointed under Section 5(1) of the Statutory Bodies Accounts and Audit Act shall be the Director of Audit'. Et faisant confiance au Directeur de l'Audit, nous pourrons nous assurer que les finances de cette autorité seront bien gérées.

Je terminerai en disant que loin d'être un *barking dog*, comme l'a dit l'honorable Armance, je suis certain que cette autorité aura de son importance et sera d'un apport aux personnes habitant dans les *flooded prone areas*. Certes, il y aura des aboiements mais la caravane du progrès avancera. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur.

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for this opportunity to address the House on this Bill.

We have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in front of this House, today, a very important Bill. We have witnessed in the recent past, in my constituency - only last year, I think it is January -, victims of floods. I think it was high time for the Government to put in place a regulator that would look into this whole system of drain network that we have in the country.

Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I take the case of my constituency, where there was a severe problem only last year, the Government has taken the decision to construct drains, and investment worth of more than Rs450 m. has been earmarked. More than Rs450 m. has been earmarked! Pereybere, almost Rs60 m. for the construction of drains; Grand'Baie,

Camp Carol, almost Rs30 to Rs35 m. These two projects have been awarded and works are to start this year, in a couple of weeks. In Fond du Sac, the plans are already there and now tenders will be floated in a couple of months - a project in two phases of more than Rs300 m. With all these investments, it was quite normal that we had to have a regulator that is going to ensure that, whatever the Government is spending, we have value for money.

Now, I am going to make three observations on this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir –

- (i) scope and its limitation - of course, a few limitations;
- (ii) the composition of the Committee, that is, the Board, and
- (iii) the whole issue of accessibility on private land and land acquisition.

To start on this issue of structure and limitations, today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the regulator would be here to ensure that there is efficiency in the management of these drains, but the Land Drainage Authority is not going to undertake the work itself. So, the limitation is based on how efficient the other institutions that are responsible to implement the works are, whether it is the construction of drains or the management of drains. The efficiency will depend on them.

The authorities which are responsible for the construction and management of drains today are the local authorities. Unfortunately, today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House will agree that when we talk of maintenance of drains by local authorities, there is a serious problem; whether it is Municipalities or District Councils, we do not the manpower or resources. This is a problem that does not last for a couple of years, but for many, many years. Certainly, it is not going to get solved in a couple of months or years from now, but we have to see how we are going to solve this problem.

We have the same issue with the National Development Unit as well. Once these drains are constructed by the local authorities - only last year we have got a series of drains constructed by local authorities - by the NDU, we have a problem of maintenance. This is the limitation. However efficient the Board of this Authority will be, however effective the administrative arm that we are going to put in place would be, subsequently, we will have this issue of institutions that are responsible to implement the project. If they have an issue of resources, the Land Drainage Authority will have this issue of efficiency.

So, my proposal, today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to the hon. Prime Minister is that we have to ensure that, in the coming Budget, we have an amount of funds that is earmarked not

only for the construction of drains, but also adequate funds for the management of these drains. Because today, as far as I know, the Road Development Authority has got grade contractors that are maintaining the drains in classified roads. They have a grade contract and even there you have problems of budgets. In my constituency, request made for maintenance and cleaning of drains can be entertained to a certain extent. So, there is a problem of budget.

In the case of local authorities and the NDU, I don't think that we have got grade contractors who can intervene to maintain these drains. So, I believe that we need to have a budget that will cater for the maintenance of these drains. I am sure that once we have these budgets, whether it is the case of local authorities or the NDU, they can, probably during the next financial year, appoint grade contractors who can eventually ensure that those drains are maintained properly. This is how, with these institutions, whether it is the RDA, the NDU or the local authorities, once they have the resources, they can work in collaboration with the regulator and ensure that there is an effective management of these drain networks in the country. That was the first issue that I wanted to mention.

Now, a second observation that I wanted to make is with regard to the composition of the Board. I have seen that, in the Board, we do not have a representative of the Ramsar Committee. Why am I making this observation? Because if we take the cases of Péreybère and of Camp Carol in Grand' Baie, we have a serious problem of drain simply because most of the properties was constructed on wetlands.

My colleagues and I in Constituency No. 6 have made several representations to the Ministry of Agro-Industry. We have made several representations to the local authorities. We had several sessions. We know that this is not a situation that has arisen lately, but has been the case since very long.

The problem is that, even today, the wetlands are still being filled. Let us say it loud! It is still being filled, whether it is in Pereybere, in Grand' Baie or other regions. There are also projects that have been completed on wetlands in the recent past because there are flaws in our legislation. So, I believe that it is important, and I know that the Ministry will be coming with a Wetland Bill very soon. This is expected. The Minister has confirmed in the House that we are coming with the Wetland Bill.

I believe that it is important that we have a representative of the Ramsar Committee, so that before construction permits or even EIA licences are issued, there are consultations with this Authority to ensure that there is no danger of overflowing and that Government

does not keep on constructing drains just because people have been constructing on wetlands. So, my proposal is that a representative of the Ramsar Committee forms part of the Board of the Land Drainage Authority that we are going to set up in the very near future.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a final observation to make. We have had too many issues with regard to access to the private lands of people. Whenever there is a problem of wetland, there is difficulty for officers of the Ministry to have access to these private lands. And also when there is an urgency, like we had the problem at Fond du Sac and we had to act urgently to construct drains, we get problems for land acquisition.

I believe that there is an urgent need for this Authority to work out a mechanism, to come with amendments to the laws. Be it in the case of having access to private properties to investigate whether construction is being done on wetlands or be it on land acquisition, I think we have to devise a mechanism, we have to have a mechanism in place that can facilitate investigation in order to ensure that there is an appropriate preventive strategy that can be put in place with the help of this Authority.

So, before ending, I would like to thank Government and the hon. Prime Minister because we have been acting very fast in my constituency and other constituencies as well. We are going to have heavy investments in our constituency and I hope with the setting up of this regulatory Body, things will go on improving in the interest of our people, in the interest of our Nation.

Thank you, very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr M. Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we now know how Mauritius is very prone to natural disasters and the more so with each passing year. The country has lost lives in recent years due to *aléas*. Four lives during the ex-Lola flooding in the village of Mon-Goût on 26 March 2008 and 11 lives on 30 March 2013 in Port Louis. In both cases, it can be said that poor drainage had a huge pairing. I am basing myself on the Fact-Finding Committee Report on ex-Lola also known as Rapport Domah which in referring to some photographs at paragraph 11 had the following, and I quote –

“These illustrate again at one glance the secondary cause of flooding, the point to our shared responsibility in keeping our water courses clear up our mess. All in all a lot of mess which occurred on 26 March 2008 was created by ourselves.”

In substantiating the importance of claims, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to further quote from the Report of the Singapore Corporation Enterprise Mission to recall the SCE was approached by the Labour Party led Government in the days following the Flash Floods of March 2013 to help in the review of the flood situation, and I quote –

“The need to make an inventory of the current bottlenecks in the drainage system and its capacity in relation to storm water drainage and intensified urbanisation.”

So, with these two quotations, let me zoom in on section 6(b) of the Bill before us today and that is on the powers of the Authority and it reads as follows –

“Where drainage infrastructure is not upgraded or maintained, direct the relevant stakeholder to upgrade or maintain that infrastructure”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the good keeping of our waterways and drains is mostly done by local authorities which has the responsibility of maintaining our drains, many at times through a small drain unit and they are only staffed by few workers and it has happened before and it may happen again in the future that due to shortage of manpower and because contracting out of, for example, scavenging service takes a toll on the budget of local authorities. The same workers of the drain unit who are supposed to diligently clean our drains, are diverted to refuse collection much to the detriment of drain maintenance.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how would the Land Drainage Authority address this core problem at the level of the local authorities in their day-to-day operational lapses is a question I would like to put to the hon. Prime Minister this afternoon. Should the new Authority be responsible itself for this core activity of upgrading or maintaining our drains or waterways? The last thing we would like to avoid in the wake of mishaps like the one we have had before is passing the buck around which is *pas mo department sa lot la la sa*, the more so there is one section of this Bill which I find most awkward and that is section 13(i) which is about protection from liability.

Now, this is a huge caveat according to me and it reads as follows –

“No liability, civil or criminal, shall be incurred by the Authority. A member or an employee in respect of any act done or omitted in good faith in the performance of its/his function or exercise or its or his powers under the act”.

Now, how about officers who have not acted in bad faith but have been however, negligent or reckless? Does the Government really want to *prend les taureaux par les cornes* in respect of the good functioning of our drain networks, existing and future ones is a question I would like to put again to the hon. Prime Minister this afternoon, when we know that there are issues with our public servants. As, has been articulated by the former Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service, was appointed by this Government itself, Mr Satyaved Seeballuck who in recognizing the *malaise* that when he was interviewed by *l'Express* following the presentation of the economic mission statement, and I quote –

“Nous attendons un changement d’attitude et nous prendrons les taureaux par les cornes. In n’y a pas de la place pour les canards boiteux dans la fonction publique, a-t-il lancé. Et d’ajouter que des mesures ont déjà été prises pour veiller à ce que les 80,000 fonctionnaires soient disciplinés et donnent le meilleur d’eux-mêmes.”

So, does leniency in our laws, the way that this Government has found to achieving meaningful change as advocated in the Government program 2015/2019 when we all know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that paragraph 155 of that same program is about the commitment of the Government to introduce a Public Service Bill to clarify and secure boundaries within the executive, thus reinforcing transparency, accountability and integrity.

I wonder whether these promises will be fulfilled. Accountability, now this is a keyword and I would request the hon. Prime Minister to clarify that the Bill before us is in line with commitment of this Government. On a different note this time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the definition given by the meteorological services for heavy rainfall as contain in the protocol circulated by the Ministry of Civil Service about 3 weeks ago, and I quote –

“Heavy rain is defined as rain equal to or greater than 50 mm of short duration that is likely to cause temporary disruption in socio-economic activities due to water accumulation, abnormal surface water runoff or marked rise in stream flow/water level of rivers.”

Now the word ‘drain’ is not there. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we talk about designing drains, we talk about return period. In layman terms, this is about whether we want our drains to resist extreme flood that comes once in 10 years, once in 25 years or once in 50 years. It all

depends on how safe we want to be and how essentially the country wants to keep the balance between safety and cost. A once in 50-year's flooding design will cost much more than a once in the 10-year's counterpart. In elaborating on this point, I would like to mention that I have gone through the Bill and nowhere have I found the word 'design' or 'supervision'.

Hon. Benydin has mentioned '*bouledogue sans dents*', and I think, hon. Armance has mentioned the barking dog. Hon. Rughoobur has mentioned about a regulator. Now, is that a coincidence or are we creating an institution that is going to serve not at all or very little purpose safe, like hon. Bhagwan has said, more jobs for the boys or for the girls? Given that section 12 of this Bill - Staff of the Authority - makes provision for –

“The Board may, on such terms and conditions as the Minister may approve, appoint such employees and consultants as it considers necessary for the proper discharge of its functions”.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on which institution of Mauritius will the onus for the design, vetting, or supervision of the construction of drain fall? It is a question I would like again to put to the hon. Prime Minister this evening. I see the word 'consultant' in the Bill, but 'consultants' like hon. Bhagwan has rightly said, they come and they go. Why are there not the words 'design, vetting and supervision of drains' as a core function of the authority?

There are so many issues at stake here, and allow me, if you please Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to illustrate why is it important to have a strong apex body to undertake the design and vetting of supervision of drains with a living example from my own constituency - Constituency No.2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central. It is a bookcase of everything that went wrong actually at Lenepveu Street in Port Louis. Now, I am told that the NDU, in collaboration with the Municipal Council of Port Louis, and I am here speaking under the correction of the PPS, hon. Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus, undertook the construction. They have invested massively - I think she is speaking later after me; she will have the opportunity to correct whether what I am saying is correct or not – they have spent millions of rupees in drains and still the people are more dissatisfied than before. They have even initiated and signed a petition which they have addressed to the Lord Mayor and it reads as follows –

“We, the residents of Lenepveu Street are writing to express our dissatisfaction with regard to the recent works being carried out in December 2016, beginning Dioré Street to Lenepveu Street. The slabs covering the new drains are causing a real noise

disturbance whenever vehicles pass by, especially at night, and this disturbs the sleep of many of us.”

I am going to table that petition later which is dated 02 February 2016, and which has been signed by 15 persons, and my request to the hon. Prime Minister, today, is to kindly ask the proposed Land Drainage Authority, once it is set up, to look at this matter as a priority because so far nothing has been done. The problem at Lenepveu street is directly related, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to paragraph 4 (b) of the Bill which is coordinating the construction of drainage infrastructure by the Local Authorities. I see there the NDU, the RDA and any relevant stakeholder are mentioned. Can I suggest to the hon. Prime Minister to kindly consider including the Central Water Authority and the Wastewater Management Authority as mandatory stakeholders on that list and I am going to explain why.

Again, using that bookcase of Lenepveu street, I had to intervene in December 2016 to avoid the inhabitants there a major public health issue. Given that during the construction works of these now very famous drains, workers have damaged CWA and WMA underground water pipes, and through percolation under the ground - hon. Collendavelloo is responsible for the CWA – CWA water had been contaminated because the pipes all have got leaks; one water transferring to the other. When the people called me at the site, I could even smell the foul water running from the CWA source. In that evening, I had called the CWA, and I must here, pay credit to the officer who was responsible at that time, Mr Louis Ramiah, an excellent officer I must say.

(Interruptions)

Line transfere, exactement! Unfortunately he got transferred! He responded immediately, and, in the days that followed, he did diligently construct a washout and that solved that major public health issue at Lenepveu street. Now, subsequently during my site visit there, I have even been told that when it rains water does not go into that drain. So, why have we spent millions and then we have drains that cause disturbance, that have cause threat to lives of people and yet water does not flow in the drains. So, I believe that apex agency - hon. Rughoobur called it a regulator - must have the responsibility to design, supervise, and vet whatever drain is being constructed in this country otherwise we will have repeated cases of Lenepveu street all over the island. So, I hope the hon. Prime Minister will enlighten the House as to how the proposed Land Drainage Authority will improve in this kind of situation.

Now pushing the question of whether the proposed Land Drainage Authority will be responsible to undertake the design, vetting and supervision of drains in Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now like to zoom in onto drain construction in private *morcellement*. Now, how do the authorities ensure that the drain works in *morcellements* are adequate and how do the authorities ensure that they fully cater for water either upstream from within the catchment area and more importantly how do they integrate well within the public drains and canals downstream? My specific question is; how do authorities ensure that the drains are implemented in an integrated manner?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like here to quote recommendation 11 of the Domah report which reads as follows –

“We recommend a paradigm shift in our policy of flood management. Hitherto, our practices have been defensive and reactive. Our new policy in line with our higher policy of *Ile Durable* should be Integrated Flood Management Strategy (IFM). An IFM seeks to integrate land resource management with our water resource management in such a manner as to maximise benefits from both and minimise destruction of life and property.

We recommend that as a logical follow up of the Gibbs Report, Government seriously envisages the carrying out of a study with international expertise if necessary of the totality of our catchment areas comprising our rivers, rivulets, canals and drains with a view to conceptualising and formulating an IFM strategy in line with the novel international concept in land and water resource management and our own declared vision of making Mauritius an *Ile Durable*.”

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that study with international expertise which the Domah Report advocates was diligently done by the Labour Party led Government in collaboration with the UNDP towards the end of 2013 and the title of this masterpiece is, and I quote -

“Development of an Inundation, Flooding and Landslide National Risk Profile, Maps, Strategy Framework and Action Plans for Disaster Risk Management for the Republic of Mauritius”

Now, in my first year in Parliament in 2015, I had questioned hon. Dayal - and I see he is here this afternoon – in my PQ B/279 on the implementation of this Action Plan. In his reply, hon. Dayal said it was to be implemented within a timeframe of two planning cycles.

The first planning cycle being from 2013 to 2018 and the second cycle from 2019 to 2025 as recommended by the consultants themselves.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Osman Mahomed: My plea to the hon. Prime Minister this afternoon is to see that the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development remains abide in the implementation of this Action Plan. Why am I making this plea this afternoon is because the Ministry has had three Ministers since the last general elections of December 2014, hon. Dayal, hon. Wong Yen Cheong and hon. Sinatambou. Three Ministers in two years and that makes a Minister in every eight months, each one having their own priorities, their own styles and their own vision. So, either the Prime Minister giving strong instructions to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable to remain abide or to have the implementation of this Action Plan transferred to that new authority with revised powers and with a budget - hon. Bhagwan mentioned earlier Rs5 billion is the cost of the implementation of this Action Plan – for the sake of a better country, for the sake of us not having mishaps like we have had in Mon Goût in 2008 and in Port Louis in 2013.

Now, dare I say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, therefore, that the proposed Land Drainage Authority will not start off in a vacuum and that it will not have too much of a task given that much work has been done in the past? I have mentioned four reports in my speech this afternoon. It is just a matter of being diligent in their implementation. Basically, it is implementation time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a different note, I would like now to talk about Port Louis where I have been elected. Port Louis starts with the shoreline and ends with the mountain range. Most of the land is now covered with concrete or tarmac, therefore, very intense urbanisation. It is a fact that only drains to the sea are relied up for water evacuation during rainfall, as there is little or very little soil for absorption of water runoff.

So, may I request the hon. Prime Minister, for the proposed Land Drainage Authority, to give some special consideration to Port Louis - if not God forbid - we do not have another 30 March 2013 on our hands? The consideration should not only be monetary. The hon. Prime Minister, in his opening speech, has mentioned Rs520 m., not only for Port Louis, but for the whole of Mauritius, have so far been spent on drains construction, but consideration should also be given in terms of the quality of the work as well.

Now, in that same breath, I would like to raise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Champ de Mars issue - for which I had a question this afternoon, but time has not permitted that it be debated - for which 1,006 people feel that the Champ de Mars Parking Project is not appropriate because the Municipal Council of Port Louis has issued Expression of Interest for 30-year lease for 36,482 square metres of Champ de Mars which is now mostly green, but I believe to be covered with tarmac - but can be discussed later - for people to park their cars there. There are many reasons contained in that petition. Hon. Jhugroo has a copy. I have tabled it in Parliament and I have sent a copy to him as well.

Now, besides environmental traffic, visual, leisure and social impacts, to my view, based on the limited information that we have, there will be a definite impact on surface water run-off given the turf area in the middle of Champ de Mars will be covered with tarmac and will no longer be able to absorb water. Just imagine the amount of water run-off given that much of the turf in the middle of Champ de Mars will likely to be covered with tarmac! Although we can take the water from Champ de Mars, where are we going to send that water? Because the drain along Pope Hennessy street and La Rue La Corderie and all the other streets going towards the sea are undersized, they are very small,. Are we going to review the drain structure all the way or are we going to just let the water go into those drains? Now, this is a technical point of view, it can be discussed.

Three weeks ago, at La Rue La Paix in Port Louis, the same issue of flooding was raised and people have signed a petition, which they have addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

Pétition, oui! People in my constituency, whenever there are things to be said and they are not addressed, they speak, they put it in writing.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, address the Chair!

Mr Osman Mahomed: So, we have to be on the site, we have to be on the field to make the lives of people better.

Now, I see after this petition has been written - I must give credit there - consultations have taken place. Because what would have happened there? There would have just been resurfacing of the road and the drains are the main problems there because houses of people get flooded with even the slightest rainfall that falls into that area.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall end my speech here, but before that, I would like to summarise my main points into five “Is” and they are as follows -

- (i) integrate - drainage projects must be implemented in an integrated manner, not in isolation;
- (ii) innovate - there are new methods of drain construction and I think the Government can inspire itself from there;
- (iii) involve – get the people involved as they know the ins and outs of the regions better than officers;
- (iv) invest – in his opening speech the hon. Prime Minister has mentioned the figure of Rs520 m.. Now, this is a start, but the investment needed is much more and the Action Plan on inundation which I have detailed earlier goes into billions. We need to implement that Action Plan as a matter of priority;
- (v) And the last “I” is ‘implement’. Time is of the essence.

I thank you for your attention

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus!

(6.40 p.m.)

Mrs R. Jadoo-Jaunbocus (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am very grateful to be availed this opportunity to speak on the Land Drainage Authority Bill inasmuch as sitting from this position and being involved in construction of drains, we often have to hear a lot of things and witness a lot of things in Parliament, but not able to put a word in. I am very grateful for this opportunity which I am sure is cherished by all PPSs just like me. So, we seize this opportunity.

Turning to the Land Drainage Authority Bill (LDA Bill), why are we debating this Bill today in this House? Why are we here? My answer to this is very simple: the reason has been given by the hon. Prime Minister in his Second Reading and to summarise it, we are here because we care. He has come in Parliament with this Bill because he cares for this population, he cares *pour le peuple*.

There are a number of reasons and one of them is the practical and economic reason. What happens is when there is no effective land drainage we have loss to property, we have damage to property, we have loss of lives, we have agricultural and commercial losses. All this is occasioned by climate change. We, human beings, are used to climate fluctuations over

times, over seasons, over years. Scientists normally take a lapse of time and it is more precisely some 30-year period to determine...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bodha, please!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus:... average climate from a calculation of a number of conditions, thus creating a baseline for comparing the current weather and climate and its impact.

However, since the beginning of the 20th century, scientists have been observing a change in the climate condition that cannot be attributed solely to natural influences. This change has occurred faster than any other climate change in the Earth's history and we have consequences for future generations. A number of those who have spoken before me have mentioned about it. Hon. Rughoobur has talked about it, hon. Boissézon, in fact, has lengthily talked about it. Long ago, we had Mauritius which was comprised of forests and green fields. Nowadays, the beach, the mountain and all that is in-between have not been spared. We have constructions widely all across our small island.

The scientists of the World Meteorological Organisation are all of the same mind that climate change is human induced that is, anthropogenic. It is principally attributed to the increase in certain heat absorbing greenhouse gases in our atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution. We all talk about the greenhouse effect and the global warming effect. These have directly led to heat being retained in the atmosphere, thus increasing global average surface temperature and we now reap the results thereof. It has also been said by the WMO from studies that small islands are mostly highly exposed in terms of their population and infrastructure to sea level rise and high storm surges, thus leading us to be highly vulnerable.

Now, talking about land drainage law - why a specific Land Drainage Authority Bill? When I have perused the laws across different countries over the world, one sees that land drainage law is a very specific area of water law related to drainage of surface water on real property. It is of great importance in areas where freshwater is scarce, where flooding is common and where water is in high demand for agricultural or commercial purposes. All countries, be it the USA, the UK and other countries, all have land drainage laws and regulations that are typically done on two levels. You have the State level and you have the local level, that is, rural and urban drainage systems. There are boards that are set up which are clearly defined and have set parameters by relevant legislation.

Why I say that is because today we have heard criticisms on the Land Drainage Authority Bill that it is being created for jobs for the girls or for the boys. We don't have that in this Government.

(Interruptions)

At the outset, I had said...

(Interruptions)

At the outset, I had said why we are today...

(Interruptions)

...well, we wonder the number of previous boards that were set up...

(Interruptions)

Cotomili and Maurice Ile Durable, I wonder what is the...

(Interruptions)

...*bilan* of that and how the appointment was made!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus, please resume!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Did you say R1 m. for the boys or did I not hear right the hon. Member?

(Interruptions)

Yes, proper land drainage can go a long way towards reducing flood risk that has been said by Rosemary James. Land drainage is a vital component of water and land management that contributes to reducing flood risks and that has been noted by ADAS, U.K.'s largest independent provider of environmental and consultancy on policy advice.

Recent events have highlighted vulnerability of our country to extreme weather and risk of flooding and, in Mauritius, this is where well-designed and maintained land drainage system has a significant role in reducing floods and flood impact. On the contrary, poorly designed and maintained drainage can increase flood risk so it is important to do things properly. I put a bracket here because I will zoom in a bit later on about Lenepveu street and I will explain about that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

A considerable proportion of our drainage areas predate modern designs standards and poor maintenance of outfalls and changes in sub soiling practice may have contributed to a reduction in the efficiency of secondary drainage on our impermeable soils. So, all these factors have contributed to land flooding. Why have I taken the pain to explain all this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to place into context the present Land Drainage Authority Bill and also to see how the past climate changes and corresponding then Government responses have impacted upon what has happened.

What does the present LDA Bill do? It deals away firstly with all knee-jerk reactions of the past that is, flooding, we have loss of life, damage to property and then we have reaction. What reaction do we have? I will go into it in a minute, but this has been endemic in the past. We started well in 2001. We have had the Appropriation Bill of 2003 when there was the Gibbs Report which was commended and that report talked, *inter alia*, in its preamble, about identification of flood prone areas and study of their causes. It talked at paragraph 1 of the study of the catchment hydrology and water shed management. It talked of the study of existing land drainage system and recommendations regarding remedial measures to alleviate flooding problems. There are other matters that it refers to, but it also recommends the setting up of a Land Drainage Authority and that is what the Gibbs Report says in its summary and in its content. That was in 2003.

Then, with time, we see that there was a loss of interest in land drainage, water drainage. We do not hear anything until what happens in 2008 with this tragic loss of four lives. We have the Fact Finding Committee on Ex-Lola Flooding, most commonly known as the Domah Report. That report again recommends and that is important to note, highlighted by hon. Mahomed, talking about one of the causes of flooding is that they point to our shared responsibility in keeping our watercourses clear of our mess. All in all, a lot of the mess which occurred in March 2008 was created by ourselves, meaning human beings.

Yet, what has happened after the Domah Report? What happened after Domah Report is 2013! This is what happened. 2008 Domah Report, 2003 Gibbs Report and then what we have is 2013 flooding! Everybody talks about March 2013. I can talk about March 2013, and the hon. Prime Minister is witness. Why do I say that? It's because I was caught in the flash floods of 2013. I was caught in my car with my child. It was her birthday. I will never forget that. It is easy to talk about drains. It is easy to say that drains do not flow with water, and I will talk about that in a minute. But, now, we are in 2013; just about to have 11 lives go underwater. Why? Again, I say - be it on the conscience – 2008, Domah! 2013! No clearance

of the mess that was talked about in the Domah report. Nothing has been done. I am in my car, the water gushes as if a dam has been opened. Where does that water come from? Some say it is the Ring Road that has caused the water to be diverted and come along the motorway that is taking away the cars like boats, with lives going into it. The cars twirling around! Is that what it is from? The Ring Road? Is that poor drainage? Let us talk about poor drainage system now. Is it poor drainage that caused the flooding in 2013 and caused the loss of 11 poor lives that we will never, never forget?

Let us talk about drain construction. What happens after that? Again, we forget the GIBB's report. Again, we forget the GIBB's recommendation. Again, we forget Domah recommendation. What do we have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It's very good and well to come here and talk about the Singapore report and this and that, which has never been laid before this House! How are we going to know the contents of the Singapore report if it has not been laid in this House? I have made tedious research at the Library before coming here. All I could find is the GIBB's report. All I could find is the Domah report. What I could find is those three pages not even written by the Commissioner of Police; commissioned to be done by the Commissioner of Police, but written by - no disrespect to him, of course, but in the circumstances, the loss of 11 lives we are talking about - by ASP N. K. Boodram. This is what we see. Two pages! What they have to do in this report is this. They have to establish responsibility, investigate whether it is criminal negligence or accidental negligence of the Caudan Waterfront and underpass. Not about the drainage system! So, we can easily stand here, when the Bill is coming before this House, to talk about proper land drainage system. Then, where were all the recommendations of the Singapore report? Where were they? Kept in a drawer? Never filed before this House for action to be taken? Again, I ask. Hon. Minister Mahen Jhugroo, on 17 May 2016, came with a question about the state of affairs of the Land Drainage Authority. The hon. Prime Minister at that time stated that it is going to be drafted. The reply is, 'The Draft Bill is expected to be introduced in the National Assembly.' Again, hon. Jhugroo, in good faith, asked the same question on 22 November 2016 about the introduction of the Land Drainage Authority Bill and he asked where matters stand. And, again, we have the reply of the then hon. Prime Minister, who informed the House that the NDU had to undertake extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders with a view to finalising the main provisions of the Land Drainage Authority Bill. Following that, we are here before this House. So, what are we talking about? Ineffective drains being constructed!

Now, let's talk about expenses and jobs for the boys and girls, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir. I am zooming back to 15 April 2008, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. A question was asked. Now, we are not going to talk about Rs1 m, about the MID. I even forget...

(Interruptions)

Billions! We are going to talk about what was happening with hon. Bachoo at that time now. On 15 April 2008, there was a question: 'whether, in regard to the National Land Drainage Committee, the hon. Minister will state when it last met and what has happened.' The reply of hon. Bachoo is –

“Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 18 July 2003.”

Now we talk about land drainage, we are irresponsible and we are creating jobs for the boys and girls! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let's look back and let us look in the mirror and then we ask ourselves again that question.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Toussaint!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunboccus: When pressed for more questions and what is being done as a result of flooding and loss of lives, the answer is –

“The hon. Minister of Finance has been very kind towards us and he has increased the sum.”

That is money earmarked for projects.

At the time, there was a question from hon. Dr. Mungur –

“Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to address the ordeal of flood, in the last Budget, a sum of Rs115 m. has been earmarked for 180 projects. Can I know from the hon. Minister how much money has been spent (...)?”

We do not know how much because the answer was not given. But we do know that the sum has been increased. We do know that Grade A contractors are being sought for. What we also do know as a fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the actual Audit Report says that a number of claims and more precisely 362 claims of Rs496 m. were paid for 307 projects; for projects that could not be certified for payment due shortcomings on certain projects, that is, value of work executed had exceeded the original project value without approval and without

instruction for additional works being issued. Jobs for the boys and girls! What jobs? What boys and girls?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunboccus: So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is why, today, I said when I started - not on the other side of the House - that this Government is a caring government. The hon. Prime Minister is a Prime Minister who cares *pour le peuple*, and that is why he has come with this Bill.

(Interruptions)

Without petition! Yes, thank you, hon. Jhugroo!

I will talk about the petitions in a minute. I am bound to reply because I have been asked to reply. I am glad that I can reply, because so far we have not been able to explain what happens within the NDU.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, please!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunboccus: I will not go into much detail, but I will just say a few things. The Land Drainage Bill is an umbrella Bill. It has a holistic approach to flood problem, to flood disorder management and climate change management. Clause 7 - and if I may turn to that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - brings together, as set out there, different Ministries, different bodies, that is, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Housing and Lands, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Ministry of Public Utilities. I am surprised actually. Public Utilities, yet we hear that we should include Public Utilities from the other side of the House. Maybe they should have a good read of clause 7(h). It also talks about NDU, RDA, CP, National Disaster and Risk Reduction Management Centre and about three persons other than public officers or employees of a statutory corporation, having wide experience in the field of land drainage and administrative matters, to be appointed by the Minister. Therefore, this provides for the technical limb, which is so-called missing, as stated by orators on the other side. What I find commendable and surprising - I see that hon. Armanee is not here. Maybe so many people have been responding to his observations that he deemed it fit not to stay.

Clauses 7(3) (a) and (b) and (4) (a) and (b) deal very clearly with that conflict of interest. It doesn't say that someone with civil engineering experience cannot sit on that Board. What it says is that no person who has interest in undertaking or consultancy in civil engineering shall be sitting on that Board. That is written in plain English for anyone to read, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Now, what is appreciated also and what is going to be very helpful and is also a reply to what we have been saying about the Land Drainage Authority Bill being a dog without teeth is the clause 11. It talks about assistance for enforcement. That is where its teeth lie -

“Notwithstanding any other enactment, every police officer and every other officer under the Building Control Act, the Environment Protection Act, the Local Government Act, the Rivers and Canals Act and the Road Development Authority Act shall have the power and the duty to assist in enforcing the provisions of this Act.”

Therefore, this is where the teeth lie. It may be small, in one clause, but it is there and it has the necessary bite. We go further. I have talked of the flash flood of March 2013. Everybody has talked about this flash flood, but what everybody forgets is just before March 2013, again I have lived it. We all have lived it, but I was in Port Louis. It was in February 2013. Yet, the then Government that is so caring about the drains and its people, didn't take any action. We had the floods of February 2013 when half of Port Louis was drowned again. Place D'Armes was drowned. Jardin de la Compagnie was drowned. Ruisseau du Pouce could not carry the flow of water and was overflowing on its bank. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, would you like to know why? It was flooding and overflowing because of improper maintenance of the drains. In 2013, the drains had not been maintained and cleaned for 7 years. 7 years! And that is the fact which can be verified. 7 years the drains across Port Louis were not maintained and cleaned, and that is why the banks were overflowing and overflowing. The water that came from the flash floods...

(Interruptions)

The water that came from the flash floods...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Toussaint!

(Interruptions)

Order please! Allow me to listen to the speech of the hon. Member. Please resume hon. Member!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Hon. Uteem will recall; he was together with us. We were in the ‘Remake’ and he was happily jumping around in the Municipal car, going around, seeing people together. We were then together in alliance. You may forget, but I do not forget!

(Interruptions)

Coming with the councillors’ rounds and saying: “give us an opportunity!”

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Uteem, order please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jadoo-Jaunbocus, please address the Chair!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Yes, at that time why did these drains overflow, and that is very important, falling rocks from the mountain had fallen into Ruisseau du Pouce. People had dumped mattresses, beds, everything within the rivers and at that time there had been no maintenance for the last seven years. That is one of the reasons the water could not find its flow and it overflowed on all the banks, thus drowning people’s houses, people’s yards and people’s properties on the way. And that was poor maintenance. Why do I refer to this? It is because of clause 6 of the Bill and clause 6 talks about the ‘Powers of Authority’, that is –

- “(a) preventing unauthorised activities and developments on drains, canals and other watercourses, or the illegal dumping and discharge of effluents in drains, canals and other watercourses, issue guidelines to relevant stakeholders;
- (b) where drainage infrastructure is not upgraded or maintained, direct the relevant stakeholder to upgrade or maintain that infrastructure”

So, in fact, this Bill brings about the different authorities and with the assistance of enforcement and with what it is aimed to do, it will ensure that an integrated and holistic service is provided to *l’île Maurice*. We have had different flash floods. We have had

different loss of lives, and the hon. Prime Minister had said: “No, enough of that!” As a responsible Government, as a responsible Prime Minister, he has taken action. I really appreciated the intervention of hon. Rajesh Bhagwan because it was something which was about how it should operate ...

(Interruptions)

...and how it should work and he had said: “I will not do politics.”

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: In fact, this is a Bill...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus, please resume!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: In fact, if I may just repeat the last words that I had said, I am very grateful to hon. Rajesh Bhagwan in his speech because...

(Interruptions)

... he stated the things as they are.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: With the experience in environment, he has talked about the law without putting a political flavour. He has talked about it in an unbiased manner and that is why I said those words.

Now, just to go back on a number of issues which have been raised by hon. Mahomed and he has requested me to reply. I will just reply to these three issues before I sit down, if I may, and they are the following.

First of all, there was mention about drains at *l'impasse* Lenepveu. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like the House to note that at *l'impasse* Lenepveu half of the drains were, in fact, implemented in 2012-2013 when I was then Municipal Councillor at a motion made by me as a result of LIF Funds being provided. That was half of the road made because

at that time, again the then caring Government for drains did not deem fit to see that an *impasse* which is being drowned and school children going to school - I have seen it with my eyes - raising their frocks, removing their socks walking to go to school because that *impasse* was deprived of proper drainage. That is why as then Municipal Councillor, half of the road was implemented upon my motion through the Municipal Council.

As a second limb to it, it is called network Lenepveu Phase II was implemented, again through emergency project for land drainage because, bearing in mind, at times of heavy rainfalls, these roads and *impasses* are drowned, and people, attending to prayers, going to school, going around their daily lives, cannot do so without walking in puddles of water. Today, you go there, not a single drop of surface water!

Yes, there have been a couple of problems. Those who have so-called written the petition have come to see me, and, in fact, have stated to me, since the issue has been raised in Parliament, I will have to say, one of the statements to me by them was that they were instigated...

(Interruptions)

They were instigated...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: ... and they came and they were explained...

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise a point of order. With regard to what hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus has just said, I have not instigated a petition. I am at the receiving end...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Osman Mahomed: I am at the receiving end and I have it in my mailbox and I am going to table it later. I have received this petition and as a responsible Member of Parliament to raise it in this House. So, whatever hon. Mrs Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus is saying is not correct!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed, I have taken note of your statement. But I have been listening carefully to hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus. No name has yet been mentioned so far.

(Interruptions)

Please, resume your speech!

(Interruptions)

Order please!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Yes, as have been stated by the inhabitants, they have been instigated, but yet they assured me, they told me that they are aware that the drains were important for their comfort because that will prevent water from getting into their houses, and they are patiently waiting for the road to be resurfaced so that the noise is going to stop.

One of the reasons the slab moves and makes a little bit of noise is because at the time that the construction of the slabs was being effected and they were freshly placed in situ, people had moved away the barriers put to prevent them from driving on these slabs and these have been fragilised. This is one of the reasons. Therefore, in light of that, of course, as a responsible PPS for the constituency, as a responsible Member of Parliament of the constituency, I will ensure that the proper work is done. However, unlike what has been highlighted in the Audit Report, we do not want to just rush around and do the job without going through proper procedures. That is why some patience will have to be allowed and allocated. Now, two more things...

(Interruptions)

Two more things, very quickly. La Paix Street has been mentioned and a petition has been mentioned, but that petition makes me smile because again, it seems to anticipate what is going to be done and hon. Mahomed seems to be on the wrong illusion that the contract was only for resurfacing. The contract is not for resurfacing. Of course, why hon. Mahomed, I believe, may have thought of that because when I spoke at Leclezio street and informed people that there is going to be inconvenience, a few days before the petition mysteriously landed in the Prime Minister's Office and on my desk, it was in the presence of hon. Mahomed and the person who spoke on the mic giving my message, said only resurfacing, but, in fact, at the time that the contract was allocated, it was for resurfacing and drain work.

So, that is on record anyway and the people are aware, and consultation was effected well before the contract was allocated. We worked on the framework agreement, consultation was effected by way of *porte à porte*.

Mr Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this time around hon. Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus has mentioned my name in clear terms. Now, that petition dates back before the announcement she made at whatever Leclézio street she said and I have it with me. It is dated 11 March 2017.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed, I understand you are making a point of personal explanation. You will have the opportunity to refute. Hon. Jadoo-Jaunbocus, please conclude your speech!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Thank you, hon. Deputy Speaker. I will proceed with my speech and conclude in a couple of minutes.

Now, turning to Champs de Mars which is an important issue, and again that has been raised. As I understand it, obviously it is not the NDU which is responsible for the development, but I understand there will be different Ministries and Departments. As it is now Champs de Mars is very much *marécageux* in the middle. Anyone who goes there will see; daily there are about 350 cars being parked as it is now today.

(Interruptions)

350 cars are being parked from a survey that was carried out. It is very much marshy in the middle because there is no proper drain area. There is no proper drainage within Champs de Mars and, therefore...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus, I would now invite you to conclude your speech!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Thank you, hon. Deputy Speaker. Therefore, just to complete that sentence before I complete my submission, hon. Deputy Speaker, there will effective drainage all round Champs de Mars and that will be properly monitored, I am sure by the National Land Drainage Authority as we say, I am sure by them.

Now, to end, I shall say this Bill has a holistic approach, has a caring approach and it ensures that no one works in isolation because what has been happening is that Mauritius was busy. However, everyone who is doing their things in their own little ways if you start with, for instance, classified roads, the RDA will end with the classified road; you will have one

type of drain. Then, when you go to the non-classified roads, you will have a different system of drains; one may not have integrated with the other. You come to Constituency No. 1 and then you go to Constituency No. 2. There are different systems of drains. So, there was a lack of synergy, integration and coordination. Now, this Bill ensures in the best way possible, and in compliance with all international recommendations such as the World Bank, that all this is of the past and today, we go ahead with Mauritius and the Prime Minister who is saying: “Yes, we care!”.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

(7.16 p.m.)

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the need for a structure, a central authority to monitor or coordinate the drainage infrastructure in our country dates back several years ago. The question, Mr Deputy Speaker, has always been what form should the central authority or this structure take. In the past, different Governments have addressed this problem and have come to different conclusions, but there should be a powerful central organisation to enhance, to develop a better drainage system, a better drainage network, I think, is accepted by all of us in this House today. But, as I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the debate is around the exact form, the exact nature of that organisation which perhaps is not agreed upon by everybody.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the course of years, different reports have been submitted on what type of authority, in terms of land drainage, do we need. Unfortunately, drainage institutions and management of drainage networks have remained more or less a black box. Unlike irrigation infrastructures, unlike irrigation network and water infrastructure which provide immediate benefits, drainage is a more different, a more complicated enterprise. In fact, there is no unique solution. There is no unique institution but a wide range of institutional options moving from a single unit, a multi-sectoral committee or an authority as Government is proposing today before this House. This is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, designing, conceptualising, implementing an institution capable of effectively addressing the drainage issue is still being researched and experimented in many countries.

M. le président, we are all aware why such centralised structure is vital in our country, is vital for the development and the setting up of this efficient drainage system.

Pourquoi, M. le président? Beaucoup d'orateurs ont déjà parlé sur le sujet, l'urbanisation rapide et non planifiée de notre pays, avec des drains inadéquats, des drains de mauvaise qualité tant dans la construction que dans le concept ou carrément l'absence totale de drains ; des tuyaux mal installés, la construction des bâtiments dans des endroits inappropriés et les connexions de nouvelles maisons aux drains existants ont été des erreurs grossières et catastrophiques dans le passé sans parler, Monsieur le président, de l'obstruction des drains naturels.

Autre constat régulier et cruel que nous faisons tous, des drains qui ont été construits sans des études préalables sur des espaces et dimensions inadéquates, des habitations plantées sur des flancs ou au pied des collines qui ont évidemment amplifié les risques d'inondation. Un constat triste et cruel, M. le président. C'est ainsi que, comme a été dit avant moi, M. le président, la première tentative de pourvoir notre pays d'un vrai outil de travail et de renverser la vapeur étaient la décision du Gouvernement MSM/MMM en 2003 de commanditer une étude par le consultant 'Gibb'. Le rapport, le *Study of Land Drainage System*, datant d'Avril 2003, fut rendu public. Divisé en dix gros chapitres, entre autres la topographie du pays, l'érosion, des zones sensibles, l'inondation, les coûts d'installation des drains, etc., était commandité, en effet, M. le président, par le *Ministry of Public Utilities*, dont j'étais le ministre à l'époque. Les travaux de cette étude des consultants s'étalèrent sur deux ans et les recommandations du rapport furent d'abord, M. le président, la création, précisément d'un *Land Drainage Authority*, dans le but d'apporter des solutions structurelles au problème d'inondation.

Mais le cri de cœur du rapport Gibb est le suivant, M. le président, et je cite –

'Mauritius did not have a national, acceptable designed criteria or guidelines for the design of flood and drainage-related structures and facilities.'

Ce qui déboucha sur la proposition dans le rapport d'un *draft hydrologic standards, an Integrated Water Resources Management, a Land Drainage Coordinating Committee* qui allait mettre les normes quant aux contrôles des débordements des eaux, M. le président.

Le LDCC allait assister un *Land Drainage Unit* dans le cadre des nouveaux projets enclenchés par les collectivités locales. Le rapport Gibb, à l'époque M. le président, identifiait, en effet, 326 sites de *flood prone areas* et reconnu qu'il y avait déjà 169 sites comme des *flood risk areas* mais identifia à l'époque, je répète, 326 sites de *flood prone*

areas et chiffré à l'époque la somme totale de R 1.5 milliard pour construire un système de drains digne de ce nom.

M. le président, après le rapport Gibb, came the setting up of other measures and implementations. For example, in 2013, came the National Land Drainage Framework Committee to coordinate actions between stakeholders like the Ministry of Environment, the Local Authorities, the Water Resources Unit and other stakeholders. In 2014, the Land Drainage Agency was set up administratively under the aegis of the NDU to oversee, coordinate the constructions, the maintenance, the cleaning of the drainage system and the implementation of structural solutions to flooding problems.

Parallèlement, M. le président, to these decisions taken, we have had other studies, for example, the report of a study on the real cause of flood in flood prone areas by the Ministry of Environment or whose recommendations include a review of the existing legislations like the Building Control Act, the Forest Reserves Act and the introduction of new legislations for the protection of wetland and fresh water bio-diversity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we had also the report of a study on the evaluation of the Land Drainage and Watershed Management Programme effected by the NDU during the years 2010-2014. But the latest relevant report was a World Bank report, Antonaropoulos and Associates and Desai Associates of 2014.

So, the point I am making, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that in the course of the last decades, in fact, we all felt the need, to grapple with this problem of flooding and how, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to provide our country with a decent, an appropriate, an adequate drainage system. Hence, the different measures that were taken and the different studies and reports which were conducted. But what we need, in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, - and I will come to this Bill - is the comprehensive assessment of land drainage catchment. We need frequent maintenance, we need the cleaning of the drains by the authorities and we need better enforced legislations in areas known to be at risk of flooding. We need the maintenance of the drainage infrastructure which is, unfortunately, still in our days insufficient and inadequate.

We all know, Mr Deputy Speaker, surface drainage infrastructure is hardly infested by weed. There are insufficient budget allocations to the Local Authority. And as it is the case in many other countries, the common feature, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the lack of maintenance on the main and the secondary surface drainage infrastructure.

M. le président, deux jours de pluie suffisent à paralyser Port-Louis. Quelques jours de pluie suffisent à paralyse le pays. Il nous faut mettre un frein à cet état des choses. On ne peut pas continuer à chaque fois qu’il pleut, M. le president, à fermer partout. Il faut donc ce *comprehensive approach*, entreprendre cette étude globale pour couvrir le pays, donc ce fameux *Master Plan* qui est mentionné dans le projet de loi.

Il est souhaitable, M. le président, que ce *Land Drainage Authority* initie des études et préconise où il faut construire des drains et de quelle dimension ainsi que les précautions et les mesures à prendre pour que ces infrastructures ne soient pas obstruées. Mais il ne suffit pas seulement de construire des drains, M. le président, mais la question est de déplacer l’eau d’un point pour l’emmener vers un autre point et que l’eau ait la possibilité d’évacuation. On ne veut pas stopper ou bloquer le développement de notre pays, M. le président, mais ce qu’il nous faut, c’est de planifier au préalable et de construire un system adequate de drain, un *design* approprié et comme je viens de le dire tout à l’heure, un *maintenance* régulier.

M. le président, en 2013, le *flash flood* qui terrassa notre pays avec le lourd bilan de 11 morts comme a été dit avant moi. A l’époque, je me souviens très bien, j’étais le *Leader* de l’opposition, mon siège était de l’autre côté de la Chambre. Ce drame, à l’époque, avait interpellé tous les mauriciens. C’est vrai, quelques années avant, il y avait le drame de Mont Goût qui a été, comme nous le savons, le sujet d’une commission d’enquête par le juge M. Domah. Nous avons tous, je crois, pris reconnaissance du rapport Domah. Mais pour revenir, M. le président, au rapport Domah.

We have to remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Domah Report came, in fact, as was alluded to by the previous Speaker in March 2008, that is 4 or 5 years before the flash flood of Port Louis and the findings of the report were clear. This is what I can read from this and if I can refer the House to a few of these findings.

- “(a) This flooding which occurred in various parts of the country was the result of the absence of a proper drainage system in the new residential developments and built up areas.
- (b) this culpable absence is due to a one-time generalised attitude of the Authority, of the citizen and the developer alike who places ferroconcrete in the forefront of our development with little heed to the issue of human and material security.”

The report also mentioned the fact that impermeable ferroconcrete and other developments had necessarily taken the place of permeable soil little compensatory efforts have been made

for soil absorption or drainage of excess water in the development projects. Further on, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir -

“The construction of new drains, as recommended in the GIBBs Report, has been given a start, but a slow one.”

Furthermore, maintenance of existing drains in several localities being in one case altogether absent and in several cases patently poor with the result that tonnes of waste materials were projected on the roads and public places, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And, the fact that the authorities and the bodies such as the Ministry of Environment, the NDU, Ministry of Local Government, Local Authorities, the RDA were addressing the issues on an *ad hoc* or conventional basis, there was a lack of intelligible coherence as regards the role of each one in the subject matter.

I can go on, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

But I think...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: But I think the findings of this report were damning. Then came the flash floods, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Unfortunately, we did not learn any lesson. This is why I remember - when I was putting my PNQ to Government, to the then Prime Minister on that day - reminding him, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about our drainage system in the region of Caudan, Central Port Louis, the design of the drainage system in the newly constructed roads of M1 Motorway at the entrance of Port Louis. I am reading one of the questions I put, the construction of the Ring Road have not been followed by adequately providing for a drainage system. I asked the question, I put it to the hon. Minister in the case of the Ring Road we have chopped rocks mountains, we have tarred the wide roads, but in fact, in regard of what Mr Domah said, that is placing ferroconcrete at the forefront of our development with little heed to the issues of human and material security. So much for the flash floods and the Domah Report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

But, when we look at this Bill today for me the question to be answered, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is, I am agreeable, I must say, to the development of a Land Drainage Master Plan, to the inventory to map out all these natural and man-made drainage infrastructure, to

identify the flood risk areas, the coordination of the different stakeholders, for the maintenance of the drainage infrastructure. All this is very well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are revisiting the whole problem. The GIBBs Report was in 2003, as I just said, years ago. It is good that we have an Authority to revisit all these issues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Things have changed.

New developments have taken place. As the hon. Prime Minister was talking now of climate change and its risk, yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must have a fresh look. We have to revisit all the structures and all the studies that have been done in the past and so on, identify new drainage infrastructure and so on. There is no quarrel about that.

But the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is - when we look at this Bill the question one has to ask oneself is: what will be the power of the Land Drainage Authority? How much clout with this Authority have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Because as hon. Armance rightly pointed out, when we look at the functions, when we look at the Bill as it is drafted, we will see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that in fact this Land Authority is - I refer you to the relevant section as regards the functions of the Authority. "The Authority will carry out inventory, will undertake a study, will conduct research, will identify with the stakeholders flood risk areas, will cause any works to be done by the local authorities, will prepare land drainage schemes, will advise the Minister, will advise an update the Minister and so on and so forth."

But, what happens if these stakeholders do not comply with the wishes, with the *desiderata*, with the injunctions of this Land Development Authority? This is the point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And, this is why I am a bit apprehensive about the law as it has been couched. Will this not be an exercise in futility, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? What will be the power of the Authority to impose upon these stakeholders to go and construct drainage infrastructure in such and such area of the country after this Authority has been genuinely convinced that such type of development in terms of drainage network should be carried out? This is my principal question concerning this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

How powerful will it be? Will it be a bulldog with teeth? The question was rightly asked and this is how the Prime Minister should set himself to see to it that the Land Drainage Authority be enabled to implement the decision it has taken through the stakeholders, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Because, when we look for example at Clause 6 of the Bill which has been referred to by the previous orator again, hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus, Clause 6 of the Bill is an example of what I want to convey.

Let us read clause 6, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir –

“The Authority shall have such powers as may be necessary to discharge its functions most effectively and shall –

- (a) with a view to preventing unauthorised activities and developments on drains, canals and other watercourses, or the illegal dumping and discharge of effluents (...) issue guidelines to relevant stakeholders;”

Issue guidelines to relevant stakeholders! And that is all! And –

- “(b) where drainage infrastructure is not upgraded or maintained, direct the relevant stakeholders to upgrade or maintain that infrastructure.”

Again, 6 (a) “the Authority will issue guidelines to relevant stakeholders”, what does that mean? And, what if the stakeholders turn a deaf ear or define other priorities, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? There is nothing in this law which enables us to conclude that the Authority has power of sanction. Nothing! Again, in (b) also, this is unfortunate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Why do I say that? Because I have consulted the Land Drainage Act in the UK where in similar situation - the intention is good in Clause 6, but it is inadequate. It is a loose provision. The need for an enforcement policy is cruelly lacking here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The legislator, the draftsmen should have provided for this enforcement policy in case of obstruction or in case of illegal dumping because we know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that impeding, blocking watercourses or canals is something which is criminal. It is, in fact, related to public health, to the possibility of causing floods and so on, damage of property of the neighbours.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, this clause 6 could have been a powerful tool in the hands of the Authority. For example, we could have given the Authority the power to serve a notice on the person, on the defaulter who has control of the drains or who has committed the illegal dumping. Notice could have been served upon him, and a criminal section should have been in the law for any person who fails to comply with the order imposed by the Authority to clean the drains, Mr Deputy Speaker. So, unfortunately, to my mind, there is no power to serve a notice by the Authority, no time frame to carry out the works, no sanction, no prosecution in case that person does not comply with the notice or that stakeholder does not issue the guidelines or does not upgrade or maintain the infrastructure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I shall now come to the funds provided for the drainage system. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, besides I agree that there are laudable intentions in this

Bill, to set up the Bill, the Master Plan and so on. I won't come back on what I have just said. But, then, there is this question of the power, in fact, *la compétence* of the Land Drainage Authority. There is this question also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of the funds.

We know that we come here every year, we vote budgets, we vote the Appropriation Bill. How many times do we see funds earmarked and, in the case of the drains, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, millions, billions are earmarked very often, but at the end of the year, we see that all this money has not been fully utilised, when we know, Mr Deputy Speaker, how many problems there are around in the country in terms of drains, in terms of flooding.

In my constituency, Mr Speaker, I have, myself, in this House, very often raised problems concerning a few villages in my constituency like the Bel Ombre village. Hon. Dayal was Minister and even after he was no more the Minister of Environment, I, many times, highlighted the problem of Bel Ombre, which is a village at the foot of a mountain where rainwater from the mountain very often flows directly into the village, and where there is little possibility of absorption, where there have been developments, IRS all around, golf courses all around, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, property development in the area. During heavy rainfall in Bel Ombre, the situation is dramatic, as it is always during heavy rainfall. Other areas in my constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir like Chamouny, Surinam are subject to the same trauma in case of heavy rainfall. Chamarel, Surinam, Chamouny, Rivière Rafia over flooded last time. Fifty houses were completely hit by the floods; a poultry farm where about 10,000 chickens died; 50 families had all their properties, food stuff, furniture destroyed in Chamouny, in Surinam, Rivière Moulin Cassé - the Gyan family -, and it goes on like that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

As everybody in this House, we are being elected by the people to promote the well-being of our electorate. And because of nature, because of climate change, we know what is happening today in the world and in our country, and I would appeal now to the hon. Prime Minister to see to it that, once this Bill is proclaimed, the Land Drainage Authority is proclaimed, all the infrastructures, all the clauses in this Bill help the authorities, the stakeholders to help the poor people in this country to be able to confront the floods next time it rains, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Therefore, we would not have been debating in this House for nothing and this Bill would not have been an exercise in futility.

I thank you. I have done.

The Deputy Speaker: The sitting is suspended for one hour.

At 7.47 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.04 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dayal!

Mr R. Dayal (First Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to start with, I must express my patriotic and professional gratification as the first elected representative of Constituency No. 9 Flacq/Bon Accueil where the risks and vulnerabilities of inland and coastal flooding is the real threat to life, property and the eco-system.

I was the privileged witness of the flooding caused by tropical cyclone Hyacinthe which was the wettest tropical cyclone on record in the world. The eighth name storm of the season, Hyacinthe, formed on 15 January 1980 to the North East of Mauritius in the Southern Indian Ocean, had a rainfall of 612 mm over a period of 10 days which flooded the Northern Plaines. As pilot in command, I had to rescue many persons from house tops in the Northern Plaines, namely at Trou aux Biches, Bay du Tombeau, Arsenal, Grand' Baie and Poste de Flacq without forgetting Cap Malheureux and other places in the region.

Therefore, I must commend hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the timely introduction of the Land Drainage Authority Bill. No doubt, this initiative will empower our motherland for a cleaner, greener, and safer environment and eco-system as we stabilise the landslide problem at La Butte after investing massively in a special drainage mechanism thereat.

The most daunting challenge of the modern world in the context of the state of emergency imposed by climate change and SIDS, in particular, like the Republic of Mauritius because of their inherent risks and vulnerabilities in the trials and tribulations caused by torrential rains, flash floods, landslides, extreme meteorological phenomenon, super storms, seawater rise, tidal waves, tsunamis, coastal flooding and inundations with heavy beach erosion in all flood prone areas, numbering more than 100. Now, with the latest study of GIBBs, it has come to some 326. This has a direct result of the geological morphology of our territory calling for hardening of targets across our landmass and in the outer islands.

I already forecasted a Land Drainage Agency in 1993 when I successfully completed the counter disaster self-training course at the Royal Military College of Science, Faculty of Military Science, Technology and Management at Cranfield, Oxford, UK.

The Land Drainage Authority Bill is a sure ray of comfort to all of us. The flash flood of 30 March 2013, with more than 10 deaths in disturbing and traumatising conditions within some one hour with a crying absence of command, control and communication, *nous a interpellé brutalement*. Hence, the need for proper legislation and enforcement with the right leadership and the right level of response.

The lower flooding at Mon Goût claiming multiple fatalities where I deponed before His Lordship, Judge Bhushan Domah, Select Committee and I campaigned for the creation of a Disaster Management Centre which is a reality now with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC) and they are doing a very good job, I must say.

The Delhi Sustainable Summit from 05 to 07 February 2015 in which I collaborated heralded under Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, Nobel Laureate for Peace and the Chairman of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the need for climate change adaptation and mitigation in order to reorient and redesign strategies for inclusive and sustainable development.

In June with the Yokohama Declaration in Japan during the first United Nations Conference in May 1994, where I represented Mauritius urging for strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disasters, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and build better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The Third World United Nations Conference in Sendai, Japan, where I represented Mauritius as the Minister responsible for Disaster Management, pledged for SIDS and Africa for the transfer of technology and finance for capacity building and to support adaptation and mitigation strategies. This became a reality in COP 21 in Paris, France in December 2015 with the creation of a Global Green Fund and we have been the beneficiary lately and also legislators to shape Government's position on climate action.

I pointed out that a Climate Change Bill for Mauritius, already in the pipeline, will be an important instrument for a paradigm shift towards a climate resilient, low carbon pathway in line with sustainable development highlighted in Cop 21 in Paris.

Steps taken through the Land Drainage Authority Bill translate this Government's political will and is in keeping with the United Nations, First and Third World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Japan in Yokohama and in Sendai in 1994 and in COP 21 in

Paris in 2015, in which I headed the Mauritian delegation. Also, the African Adaptation Programme in June with the Mauritian Declaration in 2016 where we were poised as a model for Africa.

More so, the object of the Bill is for the development and implementation of a Land Drainage Master Plan and identify in collaboration with local authorities, the NDU, the Road Development Authority, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre and any relevant stakeholder flood risk areas among others, the herculean task - and I must lay special emphasis on that - is timely command and control mechanism to trigger active, reactive, preventive and proactive responses in properly tailored and rehearsed constancy plans with a credible fail proof leadership.

In my very first message, in collaboration with *le fond pour le développement mondial qui a grandement contribué au succès de ma campagne de sensibilisation en tant que Ministre de l'Environnement, du Développement, de la Gestion des désastres et des plages* for a cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius where I stated and I quote –

“Nous sommes tous responsables des conséquences de nos choix et des actes, les catastrophes naturelles telles que les inondations sont un rappel cruel de nos actes irresponsables envers l'environnement. L'impact du changement climatique se manifeste sous différentes formes, les unes plus dramatiques que les autres - inondations dues aux pluies diluviennes, torrentielles et à l'élévation du niveau de la mer ; les sécheresses et la désertification, les ouragans et les cyclones intenses, les fortes houles dévastatrices entre autres.”

Hence a need for human factor engineering at all levels and adequate legal framework which this Government is coming with. The Land Drainage Authority Bill has been the subject of evaluation of the land drainage and watershed management program under the National Development Unit assisted by UNDP in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development as far back as 2015 and here we have a copy of the report which came to my table in March 2015.

(Interruptions)

Its recommendations in 10 points namely –

1. To build an in-house hydrological and engineering expertise for proper design, evaluation and monitoring of drain projects through the recruitment and training of additional staff to address the knowledge gap in operational matters

and decision making and to engineering design and dimensioning of mitigative drainage structures;

2. To expand the scope of interventions to upper watershed areas like pointed out by hon. Ganoo in the area of his constituency. To mitigate overland flow at source in a more cost effective manner, this needs an integrated cross-sectorial approach with engagement of relevant upper watershed land use stakeholders and a related institutional coordination platform. Certain expansion of activities will involve interventions beyond the engineering solutions. The land drainage watershed management plan had been involved with and will require the expertise and active involvement of stakeholders with a mandate related enhancement of vegetative cover and sustainable land use with the Ministry of Agro Industry on the sugar industry;
3. To formulate both an annual and a five-year strategic plan with well-defined objectives, outputs and outcomes areas together with targets, indicators and means of verification in order to create a more proactive approach to drainage issues based on strategic and prioritised interventions with flood prone areas and flood risk zones with geographic locations. Coupled with new, high resolution maps which we have now 1 to 5 thousand for ease of reference and supervision;
4. To supervise, guide and coordinate structural and effective maintenance of existing drain network to safeguard sustainability of the investment made and ensure effective flood mitigation;
5. To address the current unease of the procurement flaws and to engage in constructive dialogue with the Audit Office because certain procurement has to be done in exposure like when we had to intervene in the Antarctica. We hired an aircraft of the Australian air force and we had to show goods and services that we procured without any formal accountability because they were thrown at sea to rescue people;
6. To define standard rates for specific drain works, to enhance transparency, competition and cost effectiveness;
7. Produce annual reports with analytical information on progress, challenges and a related monitoring and evaluation;

8. Setting up of a MNE Framework;
9. Start with a digital project file system for secure and sustainable information management of projects, and
10. The Ministry of Housing and Lands to integrate science based information on flood occurrence and flood risks, and special planning and to delineate high flood risk zones as red zones where no residential development or other infrastructure development can be allowed. The delineation of red or orange zones with no development allowed or only limited development will be essential to reduce vulnerability to flood hazards and to reduce unnecessary exposure to catastrophic flood events.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Land Drainage Authority will provide an institutional framework to proactively deal with the impact of climate change in a concerted manner to prevent flooding like that of Fond du Sac, Mare Tabac, Bel Ombre, Rivière des Galets, Argy, Bel Air, Poste de Flacq, Rose-Belle, among others, as a direct result of uncoordinated development of the land mass both through agricultural and parcelling out purposes. I must pause here to say as Minister responsible for disaster management, I made it a point to visit all sites requiring an EIA to make sure that the risks of flooding were attended to proactively in the national interest and conditions imposed on development thereat; improve in rejuvenating canals and rivers for better retention potential of torrential rain and problematic of red and orange flood prone zones with static automated water pumps as operated in Holland, an international benchmark in land drainage and watershed management in the world as well as coastal nation.

This point had been raised by the hon. Members before me, but I think it is very important to say that we have a problem of water in Mauritius. If we go with the rejuvenating of the rivers and canals we have with small lakes definitely we will not have any water problem at all. Engineering water cut-off from existing watercourses and colonial drains with state-of-the-art technology coupled with the Doppler Radar in crisis situations - we have a plan already tailor-made to deal with this type of situation with electronic devices for all throughout canals, rivers and rivulets from its source to where it goes to the sea, where we can intervene in a timely manner or throughout like it is done in River Thames in London. Get arranged the international reference in the management of flooding and I had handsome experience at this unique in the world research and development facility in the Management

of flood water whether it is from the sea and I must hasten to add that we apply sand engineering in Rodrigues and even had a football pitch at sea, at Baie des Lascars.

We applied sand engineering in Rodrigues and even had a football pitch at sea at Baie Lascars to prevent flooding of the cemetery....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Dayal:...and the coastal road at Pointe Venus and Baie aux Huîtres. I have already submitted a draft Climate Bill, and I must say here as well, in my days as Minister responsible for Disaster Management, there has been no serious injury for days on; a feat by international standards with limited resources when compared to the flash floods in Port Louis where in less than an hour some 11 people lost their lives in tragic circumstances in the absence of the appropriate leadership, contingency planning for timely response and institutional framework. And I must say here it happened during the day. We controlled flooding, hon. Mrs Daniel Selvon was with me and hon. Armance as well.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Wong Yen Cheong as well! When we went to the site at Sable Noir in terms of capacity building with these three legislations - I said three legislations because I have already submitted a draft Climate Change Bill to the appropriate body for vetting – namely, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2016, the Land Drainage Authority Bill and the Climate Change Bill, we are adequately armed as depicts un *État de droit* for the challenge posed by climate change provided we are systematic in terms of credible leadership and responses in our capacity building, adapting urban infrastructure, our forested and agricultural land marks as well as vulnerable coastline and outer islands to meet the challenge caused by climate change. It must be highlighted that in relation to the case of the ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Dayal: multipurpose refugee centre at Quatre Sœurs, initially it was *pied dans l'eau*. I shifted the centre from *pied dans l'eau* for obvious security reasons to higher grounds capable of meeting the worst tidal waves, tsunamis and sea rise. *Gouverner c'est prévoir!* I had the vision and did the job. Today, the building stands as a landmark.

Let me state here that our three-pronged legal framework: a Climate Change Bill, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act 2016 and the Land Drainage Authority Bill highlight our commitment in keeping with the Sendai Declaration in 2015 and the Mauritius Declaration of 2016 to address disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience within the context of sustainable development to substantially reduce losses in lives and livelihoods, and ensure protection of health, economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and our motherland.

The coastal committee's physical infrastructure vulnerable to flooding and coastal erosion will be protected by a number of adaptation strategies within the mandate of the Land Drainage Authority Bill. Flooding countermeasures at Canal Dayot and Sable Noir have been undertaken together with appropriate follow-up action by the NDRRMC under my command when I was a Minister with the support of lots of hon. Members present here, just to reassure hon. Armanche that we are here to do the job. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rampertab!

(9.25 p.m.)

Mr R. Rampertab (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for allowing me the floor. May I, first, thank the hon. Prime Minister for coming up with the Land Drainage Authority Bill into this august Assembly, which was long overdue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, the climate change due to global warming is the most daunting challenges which we are facing. We all know what sort of damages flash floods have caused all around the world. Great countries like the USA, United Kingdom, France and many other countries in the West with proper planning have not been spared by this act of God. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is no exception. We have all witnessed what kind of damages flash floods have caused in the last few years in our island. Despite a decline in average annual rainfall in the last 50 years, flash floods have been on the rise in the last 15 years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following floods which occurred in Mauritius in 2002, Gibbs and Associates concluded a study in 2003 for the Water Research Unit with the recommendation of setting up of a Land Drainage Authority, and that was under the last MSM/MMM Government. This was to take care of the coordination and policy developments and the implementation of drain construction related to land drainage and

watershed management. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after a change of Government in 2005, the recommendation stayed untouched somewhere in a drawer by the previous Government and nothing happened. Since then, we have been victims of several flash floods, namely in 2008 in the region of Flacq and Pamplemousses, specifically in Mon Gout, where human lives were lost. A full enquiry was carried out by ex-judge Domah, which resulted in the inception of the Domah report, highlighting the causes of the floods and responsibilities of the various authorities and the initiation of several concerted actions thereof. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the previous Government again, at that time, failed in their duties to take any action.

We all know about the floods in 2013. In February, we had great floods in the northern area which was affected very badly and it did touch hundreds of households in several major villagers like l'Amitié, Gokoola, l'Amaury and Mapou amongst others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, matters got worse when on 30 March - we all know - of the same year, Mauritius encountered the most deadly floods in the region of Port Louis, claiming 11 lives in the city, namely at Place d'Armes, Bell Village and Canal Dayot. Despite all these lives have been lost, there was not a proper enquiry initiated by the previous Government, and up to now we have not had any report on same.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will go back in 2012 when under the World Bank Funding which initiated the Land Drainage and Watershed Management Study came to a conclusion where they submitted the inception report along with the design report for the land drainage system in seven major areas of the country, namely Grand' Baie, including Camp Carol and Péreybère, Pamplemousses including Botanical Garden and Belle Source, Central Flacq including Argy, St Remy, Cottage including Mapou and Clemencia, Sebastopol including Gros Billot.

Here again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, despite all the reports and recommendations by several experts, I do not understand why the previous Government failed to act in order to solve the problem and damages caused by the flash floods.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Mauritius, being an insular State, depends heavily on its human resources to build its economy, we cannot and should not take any risk to put the lives of our citizens at stake. I am very pleased tonight that our Prime Minister has come up with this Bill, which I am sure and certain that this authority will tackle the problem of flooding and put in place an effective water management system.

As at today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to mention that the National Development Unit has been very active in addressing the problem of drains throughout the island. Despite having a limited finance, yet working in isolation cannot bring the change that is warranted. It is very important that all authorities such as the Local Authorities, Road Development Authorities should work together. It is imperative to have a set up of an institution, to have better coordination, to ensure that there is an integrated and concerted effort in the implementation and management of drain project throughout the island.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being the Parliamentary Private Secretary of Constituency Nos. 8, 9 and 10 lately, I am glad to say that the Eastern regions in Flacq, namely Cité Argy, St Remy, Clemencia and Sebastopol, work has already started to tackle this flood problem and once the Land Drainage Authority is established, all the stakeholders, I am sure, will join in to resolve the problem that we are encountering during heavy rainfalls and flashfloods.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(9.33 p.m.)

Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): M. le président, il existe, aujourd'hui, une concordance d'opinion dans la Chambre, quant à l'urgence des mesures pour contrecarrer les conséquences dévastatrices des inondations dans plusieurs régions de l'île. Cette situation qui perdure est d'autant plus aberrante qu'on se retrouve avec des cas d'inondation même pendant des périodes de très courte pluie. Il est un fait, aujourd'hui, que les tristes événements, d'un certain 30 mars 2013, sont encore très vifs dans la mémoire des mauriciens, comme l'a si bien souligné mes autres amis parlementaires.

Les Mauriciens, la société mauricienne dans son ensemble, ont pris conscience de la gravité de la situation, mais en ont assez des mesures ponctuelles, voire palliatives. Cela ressemble beaucoup à une blague aujourd'hui que le gouvernement, les gouvernements successifs annoncent le déboursement de plusieurs millions de roupies après chaque grosse pluie sans qu'il y ait eu un programme d'ensemble dans la durée. Le *Land Drainage Authority Bill* qui est introduit, aujourd'hui, dans la Chambre, présente un premier attrait. Un plan qui est préconisé, à priori, dans la durée, et dans l'*Explanatory Memorandum*, cinq objectifs sont stipulés. Ces cinq objectifs convergent tous dans un certain sens, un inventaire des lieux, la construction, la coordination des drains et une répartition des tâches entre les différentes autorités.

Une première question toutefois surgit à ce stade, M. le président, est-ce que la question de drains, aujourd'hui, peut exister en isolation? Qu'en est-il de la question de captage d'eau pour les consommateurs domestiques et commerciaux. Autre point qui mérite considération, M. le président, est la multiplicité des autorités, que ce soit dans l'aménagement de drains ou encore dans la gestion de notre source en eau.

M. le président, avant d'aborder les différentes provisions du présent *Bill*, le *Land Drainage Authority Bill*, permettez-moi de faire mention ici, du rapport publié en 2003 ayant trait au *Study of Land Drainage System of the Island of Mauritius*. Ce rapport commandité par la *Water Resources Unit* est l'oeuvre de la Compagnie Gibbs en association avec la *Water and Power Consultancy Services India Ltd.* qui a été mentionné avant. Le *terms of reference* du rapport fut bien *Identification of Threat Prone Areas and study of their Causes, Study of the Catchment Hydrology and Watershed Management, Study of Existing Land Drainage System and Recommendations to Prevent Flooding, to Propose Solutions, Structural and Non-structural, Preparation of Conceptual Designs and Cost Estimates for Recommended Remedial Works, Recommendations for Setting up a Land Drainage Authority*. C'est pour vous dire qu'il y a eu plusieurs rapports mais, malheureusement, en ce qui concerne les actions dans le concret, cela tarde toujours et la population est lasse d'attendre.

Ce document détaillé fait une étude de la topographie du terrain à Maurice, la géologie: une étude de la qualité de la terre ou encore des remarques quant au degré d'érosion et de *sediment transport* qu'on doit s'attendre de la terre mauricienne. Ce rapport rappelle le lien étroit qui existe entre la gestion de la terre et les ressources en eau. Il est dit, je cite –

“Watershed Management implies the wise use of soil and water resources. This is achieved both through a physical programme of soil and water conservation and through involvement of people by balancing the objectives related to soil and water conservation with the socio-economic objectives.

This would include also increasing infiltration of rain water in soil, reducing excessive runoff, controlling soil erosion and using the runoff for useful purposes.”

Je me permets ici, M. le président, de faire mention de cet aspect de la gestion en eau, car nous savons tous le pourcentage important d'utilisation de l'eau souterraine dans les usages domestiques. Le *Land Drainage Authority Bill* ne peut exister en isolation de la gestion en eau et de notre politique agricole. Je ne peux m'empêcher ici, de déplorer

l'absence d'intervention des ministres des Utilités publiques, de l'Agriculture, des Terres et du logement ou encore de l'Environnement dans le débat du *Land Drainage Authority Bill*.

M. le président, à part du Premier ministre qui est responsable de la NDU, les seuls ministres qui sont sur la liste des orateurs sont le ministre de la Fonction publique et le ministre de l'Intégration sociale. Et moi, je pense qu'il y a une contradiction flagrante en ce qui concerne la volonté du gouvernement d'avoir une action coordonnée par rapport au fonctionnement même du *Land Drainage Authority*.

Ainsi, permettez-moi de citer la page 2/5 du rapport de Gibbs sur le *Land Drainage System* sous le titre: "*Allowable Flooding of Land due to Drainage Congestion*". Ainsi, plusieurs cas de figure sont mentionnés *for lands under natural forests and land not under any use no standards are necessary* en ce qui concerne le *Land Drainage*.

- (2) For land use or proposed to be used for agriculture, including sugar canes or parks and gardens, land drainage may be so designed that no significant flooding occurs with a recurrence interval of less than two years.
- (3) For land use or proposed to be used for residential, small commercial or industrial development, the drainage facilities are so designed that no significant flooding with a recurrence of less than 10 years;"

Et finalement –

"For land use for high-value commercial area, land industrial area so designed for no significant flooding with a recurrence interval of less than 25 years."

M. le président, autre implication du *land drainage* concerne notre politique d'urbanisation. Il est un fait aujourd'hui qu'on ne peut parler d'une mutation de notre société, que ce soit en termes de subdivision de terrain, de morcellement, de construction en hauteur. Il existe aujourd'hui une réelle tendance dans ce sens, ou encore l'élaboration des *gated morcellements*, ou encore les *smart cities*, et des fois, pour faire bonne impression dans les forums internationaux, on parle de *rain harvesting*, mais il est un fait aujourd'hui qu'il n'existe aucune politique, aucun *guideline* du ministère du Logement et des Terres, encore moins des différentes collectivités locales, quant aux normes à respecter dans le captage d'eau.

Je m'attendais aujourd'hui à une déclaration claire et nette du ministre du Logement et des Terres, mais il ne fait même pas partie des intervenants, comme je l'ai souligné, comme si la *Land Drainage Authority* ne concerne que la construction des drains.

M. le président, la situation est d'autant plus aberrante, car nous savons tous la saga de la route Terre Rouge-Verdun, où la topographie et l'étude géologique du terrain ont été sous-estimées. Et là, je déplore, encore une fois, l'absence du ministre des Infrastructures publiques dans la liste des intervenants aujourd'hui.

Il est un fait indéniable aujourd'hui que bon nombre de cours d'eau naturels ont été obstrués par des morcellements ou lors de l'asphaltage des routes. Ce ne sont surtout pas les députés des circonscriptions numéro 5 - vous-même, M. le président - ou 6 qui me contrediront, car nous savons tous les *morcellement permits* et les *building permits* qui ont été délivrés sur les *marshy land*, par exemple, dans les régions de Pereybere et Grand'Baie ou encore nous savons tous le calvaire des habitants de De Chazal à Flic-en-Flac après chaque grosse pluie. On délivre des permis de morcellements, on permet des subdivisions des terrains *for residential purpose*, s'il vous plaît, mais quand on arrive au stade de construction, le *Ramsar Committee* intervient d'une façon sélective sur demande de ces mêmes *District Councils* qui ont délivré des permis de distraction ou encore siègent dans le *Morcellement Board*. Le *land drainage* est aussi cela, M. le président.

Il faut bien que chaque ministère assume sa part de responsabilité. Il faut bien, qu'une fois pour toutes, chaque ministre concerné apporte leur contribution et les mesures correctives au niveau du fonctionnement de leur ministère en ce qui concerne les *policy guidelines*, en ce qui concerne toute la question des drains, de gestion des drains et aussi de planification en ce qui concerne les différents développements. Et une fois que cela est fait d'une façon constructive et planifiée, cela nous évitera de crier 'au loup' ou de faire des balades en hélicoptère à chaque grosse pluie !

M. le président, une politique d'urbanisation se fait dans le long terme et non pas par du *damage control*. Nous avons eu le *National Physical Development Plan* dans les années 2000 ou encore nous avons le *Town and Country Planning Board* qui est sous le *Ministry of Housing and Lands*. Les différentes collectivités locales sont sous l'obligation de venir de l'avant avec leur *outline planning report*. Les délimitations des zones résidentielles, commerciales, industrielles ou encore des zones de réserves naturelles ou des zones tampons, d'espaces verts, diffèrent d'une région à une autre. Mon point ici, M. le président, est que la

Land Drainage Authority ne peut travailler en isolation avec les différentes autorités qui ont un devoir de nous informer, par exemple, du pourcentage de terrains nécessaire pour la construction des routes dans les années à venir, du pourcentage de terrains pour les infrastructures touristiques, de la politique de la capacité d'urbanisation des villes existantes et des grands villages, la demande en terrains, des PDS *projects* ou encore les *smart cities*.

M. le président, je souhaite ici aborder un aspect qu'est la multitude des autorités qui sont concernées par le *land drainage*. Cette multiplicité d'autorités ne fait qu'alourdir la bureaucratie en ce qui concerne le *land drainage*. Ce que la population souhaite, c'est la réactivité, la célérité dans l'action. Nous avons, en ce qui concerne le *land drainage*, la *Water Resource Unit* de la CWA, les Municipalités, les *District Councils* sous le *Ministry of Local Government*, le ministère de l'Agriculture, le ministère de l'Environnement, la *Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute*, le défunt *Irrigation Authority* ou encore le ministère des Infrastructures publiques.

Ce qui m'intéresse le plus, M. le président, je l'ai dit, c'est la célérité, la réactivité des autorités face aux besoins et doléances de la population. Je souhaite ici partager une expérience en tant qu'ancien maire de la ville de Quatre Bornes. Les habitants se plaignent très souvent de l'odeur nauséabonde ou encore du manque d'entretien des drains bordant les routes principales que sont les *classified roads*. Ces drains tombent sous la responsabilité du ministère des Infrastructures publiques alors qu'il aurait été plus logique de consacrer un budget d'entretien aux municipalités, aux *District Councils* pour un entretien régulier de ces drains. Cela est d'autant plus logique que ces collectivités locales ont un *workforce* à cet effet.

M. le président, bien que j'accueille favorablement l'institution de la *Land Drainage Authority*, nous devons faire attention que cela n'alourdisse encore un peu plus cette lourdeur administrative dont la réputation mauricienne ne fait malheureusement pas bonne figure au niveau national et international. Cette bureaucratie administrative n'arrive pas à répondre aux aspirations de la population.

Je propose au Premier ministre, qui est aussi responsable de la NDU, de s'assurer que le rôle de la *Land Drainage Authority* soit défini à deux niveaux. Premièrement, sur une première phase, de commanditer une étude approfondie, avec un calendrier précis, d'une étude du style rapport GIBBs, mais *updated* bien sûr, sous l'égide de la *Land Drainage Authority*. Mais une fois l'étude terminée, je ne vois vraiment pas l'importance de garder

cette institution, parce qu'une fois pour toutes il faut savoir répartir les tâches entre les différents ministères pour que chacun puisse assumer ses responsabilités, car la *Land Drainage Authority* n'a même pas de *workforce*, n'a même pas de moyens pour mettre en application, sauf des correspondances de courtoisie avec les différents ministères.

Une fois l'étude terminée, il convient alors de répartir les différents aspects aux ministères concernés. Par exemple, tout l'aspect design, construction et entretien seront sous la responsabilité du *Ministry of Local Government* à travers les collectivités locales et, je l'ai rappelé, M. le président, que la NDU n'a même pas de *workforce*.

Deuxième, le *watershed management*. Une fois que l'étude est terminée et que le répertoire est fait au niveau du pays, qu'une fois pour toutes le *watershed management* tombe sous la responsabilité de la *Central Water Authority*. Tout l'aspect de *soil erosion, sediment transport and collection* doit être sous le contrôle du ministère de l'Agriculture.

M. le président, je considère que cette lourdeur administrative est peut-être le plus grand obstacle de toute bonne décision que cette Chambre est appelée à prendre et il faut bien qu'on puisse décentraliser les activités et qu'on puisse répartir comme il se doit les responsabilités à chaque ministère.

Sur ce, M. le président, je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Tarolah!

(9.50 p.m.)

Mr K. Tarolah (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Thank you. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is with deep sense of pride and honour that I rise in this august Assembly to speak on the Land Drainage Authority Bill which the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development has presented to this House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at present, there are different authorities such as the National Development Unit, the Local Authorities and the Road Development Authority which are responsible for the implementation, improvement and maintenance of drains across the island. But the objective of this Bill, as the House will note, is to establish a Land Drainage Authority, which responsibilities as specified for the development and implementation of a Land Drainage Master Plan.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, lots of recommendations have been laid on the Table of different Ministries even authorities for setting up of a Land Drainage Authority to take care of the coordination and policy development and implementation of drain construction related to land drainage and watershed management.

In 2008, flash flood occurring in the regions of Flacq and Pamplemousses specifically in Mon Goût where human lives were lost. An enquiry carried out by ex-Judge Domah resulted in the inception of the Domah report highlighting the causes of the floods and responsibilities of the various authorities, but, unfortunately, it remains in the drawers of the then Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the occurring of major floods in February 2013 in the northern regions affected hundreds of households in several major villages like l'Amitié, Gokoola, l'Amaury and Mapou, amongst others. The occurring of the most deadly floods in the region of Port Louis, causing 11 deaths in the City, namely at Place d'Armes, Bell Village and Canal Dayot.

Following the deadly floods design in the drainage system and report for the land drainage system from the World Bank and other consultants executing the land drainage around the island would now need a better planning with better proposals and plausible solutions in the legislation under the Land Drainage Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the functioning of the Authority, the National Development Unit (NDU) has a very crucial role. The NDU needs to have a very close coordination in the construction of drainage infrastructure, identifying flood risk areas, upgrading and maintenance of the drain infrastructure. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is injecting a lot of money for the development of the drainage system. I will not stop thanking the hon. Prime Minister for his determination and dedication towards every responsibility he undertakes. Here, I am referring to the Budget Speech of year 2016/2017, where he allocated a huge amount of fund to remedy the situation of flooding in various regions throughout the island. History will recall, let us not forget, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, is the one and only Minister of Finance who has earmarked funds for any development and any project. He, himself, makes the assessment and progress same.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is with lots of pride, I can mention that hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth effected a site visit in November 2016 at *Morcellement Sans Souci*, Montagne Blanche were a sum of about Rs20 m. were invested just to spare the inhabitants

from the risk of flooding in that area. As at date, I can say, the work is almost completed. *Et aujourd'hui, les habitants du Morcellement Sans Souci, Montagne Blanche peuvent vivre sans souci même s'il y a de grosses pluies.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the protection of the environment and the path to development are journeys in the same direction. The right to have a cleaner environment has become one of the most important rights for this generation as well as the Government. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, taking into consideration development does not imply excessive use of any kind of materials which can harm the day-to-day living of our population. Proliferation of plastic bags everywhere, littering of bottles and cans, thus hindering the cause of water through the drains as well as rivers and canals.

In a small country like Mauritius, the dangers are on a smaller scale but have a wide-ranging repercussion. The Authorities have become aware of the multiplication of these threats and are increasingly taking positive action like the banning of plastic bags, an initiative of hon. Dayal. And, once more, we need to salute the initiative of our Prime Minister in order to have a cleaner Mauritius, he launched the Clean Up and Embellishment Campaign where himself is effecting cleaning and is setting an example to the whole population to keep our country clean. With the coming up of the Land Drainage Authority, several issues will be tackled for the betterment of the population at large. The prohibition on the obstructions mainly in the flow of an ordinary watercourse, no person shall obstruct the flow of any ordinary water course or otherwise or other any such obstruction that would affect the region and cause floods.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Authority will also have the duty to look into lands that are capable of improvement by drainage works. In some particular cases, the Authority may, in accordance with the provision of the law made by it under subsection (1) apply severely to any person who contravenes it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I conclude, I would like to point out that out of the 22 orators contributing in this Bill, 14 are from the Government side and out of 14 from the Government side, there are 5 PPSs whose responsibility is attached to the NDU. Let me assure the House that this Government is a team where the teamwork prevails in every action. So, make no mistakes!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I will, once more, congratulate hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth for bringing such an important Bill to this House. We are pretty sure that

once the Land Drainage Authority will start operating, we will definitely experience the change brought by the new era of development.

Thank you all for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry!

(9.57 p.m.)

Mr T. Henry (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaines Magnien): Merci, M. le président, pour m'autoriser à intervenir sur le *Land Drainage Authority Bill* qui n'est pas une mauvaise idée étant donné des catastrophes qu'on a eues dans notre pays, mais tel qu'il est présenté, c'est une catastrophe. Pourquoi je vous dis que c'est une catastrophe. Parce que étant donné que j'ai fait sept ans comme PPS, je vais vous dire pourquoi le *Land Drainage Authority* est - je partage l'idée de mon collègue, l'honorable Armance - un bulldog sans dents. Pourquoi ?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order !

Mr Henry: Pourquoi, M. le président ?

(Interruptions)

Il faut comprendre, mais je crois que mes amis de l'autre côté, ils ne veulent pas écouter, mais tant mieux. Pourquoi je dis que c'est un bulldog sans dents, c'est parce que pour moi une autorité pareille devrait avoir plus de pouvoir parce qu'on a eu pas mal de comités comme le *Disaster Committee*. Il y a plein de comités qui viennent vous faire des recommandations, mais l'implémentation ne se fait pas. Il y a zéro action. Il faut que ce *Land Drainage Authority* puisse avoir des pouvoirs de force de loi, pouvoir implémenter des projets par lui-même. Je vais vous donner un exemple. En Nouvelle-Zélande ...

(Interruptions)

Ecoutez!

En Nouvelle-Zélande, le *Land Drainage Act* donne le pouvoir de sévir là où il faut parce que nous savons tous que dans certains endroits, il y a eu des constructions pas aux normes. Il y eu la mécanisation des champs de canne et même dans certains endroits, les *District Councils* ont donné des permis à des gens pour construire des maisons au-dessous du niveau du chemin. On connaît cela très bien dans notre circonscription. Il y a des endroits où les gens

construisent, mais il n'y a pas de solution à travers Maurice. Moi, je donne l'exemple que je connais dans ma circonscription à Carreau Esnouf. On connaît tout le monde.

(Interruptions)

Mais il n'y a pas de solution, mon ami. C'est cela que je suis en train de vous dire. Il faut écouter. Il faut nettoyer les oreilles un peu. Mais pour vous dire, que pour moi, il faut tout un système qui soit mis en place pour pouvoir que ce *Land Drainage Authority* soit un vrai bulldog avec des dents. Pourquoi je vous dis cela parce que tout le monde, toute à l'heure, ont parlé du rapport Domah et que rien n'a été fait. Mais qu'est-ce que ce *Land and Drainage Authority* va pouvoir faire? Va-t-il encore venir faire des recommandations? Va-t-il encore donner à chacun ses responsabilités? Ce n'est pas possible. Il y a certaines recommandations dans le rapport Domah qu'il faut casser certains endroits à Port Louis. Est-ce qu'avec ce *Land and Drainage Authority* là, on aura le droit de casser et refaire? Il faut savoir jusqu'où cette autorité peut aller? Et surtout quand on parle des problèmes de coordination entre les différentes autorités, mes anciens collègues PPS savent très bien que, dans le passé, on a eu beaucoup de problèmes. Quand on veut faire un projet, vous avez la RDA d'un côté, vous avez la *Local Authority* d'un côté et vous avez la NDU de l'autre côté. Quand vous faites des réunions, tout le monde vous dit: 'oui on va le faire' mais après trois mois, quand vous avez une autre réunion pour voir qu'est-ce qui s'est passé. La RDA vous répond: «On n'a pas le budget pour ça». Le *Local Government* vous dit: «On n'a pas le budget pour ça». Donc, le travail est resté en place, rien n'a été fait. C'est pourquoi moi, je dis...

(Interruptions)

Je critique oui mais il faut donner des critiques pour avancer parce que venir créer un *Land Drainage Authority* qui va venir faire des recommandations encore, cela ne vaut pas la peine. Il faut donner plus de pouvoirs. Et je vous donne des exemples.

Regardez chez nous, dans notre circonscription à Trois Boutiques, quel problème n'a-t-on pas eu pour faire la coordination entre les différentes autorités. A Plaine Magnien, Cité Paul Langlois, mon ami l'honorable Hurreeram, PPS, est au courant. Il fait plusieurs *site visits* avec moi. À Mare Tabac, School Lane, Ville Noire - qu'est-ce qu'on n'a pas eu.

(Interruptions)

Héroïquement, il dit on va faire mais il sait très bien qu'à chaque fois on a eu ce problème; une autorité a un budget mais l'autre autorité n'a pas de budget pour faire les travaux. Et là que voit-on en ce moment, en allant vers le sud par l'autoroute? On est en train de faire des

drains trottoirs sur toute autoroute. Je ne comprends pas. Alors qu'à Plein Bois, dans notre circonscription, on est en train de demander un trottoir avec des drains, ils vous disent qu'ils n'ont pas de fonds. La RDA vous dit ils n'ont pas de budgets pour ça alors que sur l'autoroute où les gens ne sont pas supposés marcher. A Plein Bois, on a eu des morts avec des camions qui transportent des cannes, on vient vous dire qu'ils n'ont pas budget pour mettre des drains à Plein Bois. Là, ils ont mis les trottoirs mais ils n'ont pas mis de drains parce qu'ils n'ont pas assez fonds. Mais ce n'est pas possible. On oublie qu'en 2015, le fameux hélicoptère à Bel Ombre, à Chamouny, quels dégâts n'a-t-on pas eu...

(Interruptions)

Mais justement je vais vous dire qu'est-ce que l'hélicoptère a fait ? Le *Disaster Committee* a fait plein des recommandations. Moi-même j'ai été témoin. Moi-même j'ai fait des réunions avec différentes autorités à Bel Ombre. Mais qu'est-ce qui s'est passé? Zéro plombage! Il y a rien qui a été fait parce que, comme je vous dis, le Disaster Committee a fait son travail, il a recommandé ce qu'il fallait faire mais seulement le problème c'est le budget. La RDA était supposée hausser un pont pour permettre à l'eau d'aller plus vite, la RDA vous dit «non, il n'y a pas de budget». Quand il s'agit des collectivités locales, on vous dit la même chose. Ce n'est pas possible. Donc, il faudrait voir quel est le fonctionnement réel de ce Land Drainage Authority pour les permis de construire. Il faudrait bien veiller que les collectivités locales ne donnent pas des permis pour les endroits où c'est impossible de construire. Il faut bien contrôler tout cela. La NDU peut faire beaucoup de travaux mais il faut leur donner les équipements qu'il faut. La majorité des contrats de la RDU - consultants. Cela prend six mois à un an. Là pendant six mois à un an, il n'y a pas de travaux qui se font. Quand l'honorable Hurreeram dit que les travaux se font maintenant c'est parce que cela fait huit mois que les consultants travaillent dessus. C'est maintenant que les projets démarrent parce que il y a trop de temps perdu alors qu'il y a des gens compétents à la NDU. Il faut leur donner le matériel nécessaire pour qu'ils puissent faire le travail.

(Interruptions)

Moi, je demande à cette Chambre, je demande à l'honorable Premier ministre de revoir le *Bill*, de revenir avec un *Bill* où cette autorité aura force de loi et pourra faire des travaux par elle-même, et nul besoin de consultants, nul besoin de rien. Le gouvernement même peut le faire. Moi, je demande à l'honorable Premier ministre de revoir ce *Bill*. Nous, de ce côté de

cette Chambre, nous ne sommes pas d'accord du tout avec la façon avec ce Bill et nous demandons à la revoir.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker : Hon. Dr. Sorefan !

(10.26 p.m.)

Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Listening to so many orators, I ask myself the question; are we talking about a drainage Bill or are we here criticizing what drains we have got, what drains we miss to do, as if we are coming to the Minister of Finance and Economic Development telling this House that we need a drain here, and a drain there.

Hon. Thierry Henry mentioned certain places where we want drains. Please, read the Explanatory Memorandum. It tells you what the authority will do.

(Interruptions)

You can come and say in many places we need drains, but...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Sorefan: ...but do we have a master plan? We can have a drain; later on I will come and tell you where drains we have done in the past without connection. Many places! That's where this Bill is coming.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the drain is not new. It has been long dated from the Roman era and they did a proper design at that time of having water to their cities and draining. In Mauritius, if we do recall what reference do we have if somebody, an historian, tells us: "what drain do we have in Mauritius?" The French people, Mahé de Labourdonnais and others - at that time there were few inhabitants in Port Louis. Just go and see the size of the drains they dug. They did not see just the tip of their nose, but for 200 years, 300 years.

(Interruptions)

Anil Bachoo, I will come later on! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill is a catastrophe!

(Interruptions)

What was he? He was PPS on this side when I was on the other side. He was a catastrophe then! So, let me start with what I planned to talk.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank you for letting me contribute to this debate on the Land Drainage Authority Bill and to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for bringing this Bill to this Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill has been long waited for. This Bill will congregate all authorities like NDU, Local Authorities, RDA, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre and others under the same umbrella. People don't understand. I have heard some orators criticising NDU. This Bill will bring all these entities, authorities under the same umbrella of the Land Drainage Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the same umbrella, with better...

(Interruptions)

Oh, if they don't understand, they have to go back to school!

(Interruptions)

Because they don't know, they have not followed what the previous Government did. I will come on this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the same umbrella, with better coordination for drains construction, hon. Thierry Henry was complaining when the NDU meets the other one, the other one meets the other one, there is no fund. The big problem is fund. The big problem is designing and come with the fund. That is the object of this Bill.

In the past, we have witnessed how the NDU was functioning as a separate entity for construction of drains in different zones with many difficulties in terms of coordination and approval from other authorities. So, did the Local Authorities with the RDA and vice versa. Now, with this Bill, each authority, under the same umbrella of the Land Drainage Authority, will minimise those difficulties.

This Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, caters for the development and implementation of a Drainage Master Plan. I am sure you will recall that there was a so-called Master Plan when the MSM/MMM was in power. If I am not mistaken, it was in 2000-2005. The Master Plan which was hardly executed, started also implementation when the famous Minister of Finance, Mr Sithanen of the Labour Party and PMSD Government 2005 onward, with a

stroke of his pen, abolished the Master Plan. Some Members remember what they did with the Master Plan.

(Interruptions)

That was Mr Sithanen!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, without a Master Plan, the country will never succeed in having an efficient land drainage, but to come with a Master Plan, one should carry out an inventory and mapping of all existing natural and manmade drainage infrastructures which this Bill is taking care of. How an inventory and mapping will be done? Will it be through manpower or shall we, in this computer age, use various IT technologies like infrared reflection technology for land mapping with slope gradient and the use of aerial digital photography for existing drains?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we may have a well-designed Master Plan with the use of all sorts of technologies, but without periodic upgrading and maintenance of drains infrastructure, we are doomed to fail. Maintenance, be it for buildings or drains, has always been non-existent in the vocabulary of various departments. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we design a drain, we must, first of all, ask ourselves: can we maintain the drain easily? If not, the drain will not serve its purpose of draining the land.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to delve into some issues that I have observed in some cases of drain construction. Will you believe me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, right now, there is construction of a drain going on at Duperre Avenue, Quatre Bornes, which is on my way to work. I keep asking myself the question: where are they going to connect the new drain? I keep asking myself the question, looking at it, walking, observing. Believe me, there is no connection to a main drain because there is no main drain that exists. They are just doing it to satisfy the inhabitants. So, some Members like the ex-PS, hon. Thierry Henry, was talking about doing drains. Don't do it just for the sake of satisfying the inhabitants. The Bill will take care of the Master Plan and then you will know how to...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Dr. Sorefan: So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are few other drains in Quatre Bornes that are not connected. They just do drains and they are not connected. I live in Quatre Bornes, I was a Mayor in Quatre Bornes, so was hon. Ramano and we know it very well.

Probably, there are other cities where they do drains and we don't know where they are connected. That's the idea and we have to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for taking all those complaints, all those issues to come with a Land Drainage Authority. We must be thankful to him.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we are planning a Master Plan for drains, some people see for the inhabitants, like I say, they are not connected. But, when we go for a Master Plan, we have to start the main drain from the end and then go to the inhabitants so that we have a proper drainage. This is an advice to the Committee or the Members of the Land Drainage Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I forget, let me say that the Authority that will be set up should not forget that when designing drains, they should include within the floors of drains, spaces with no cement, so that drain water can be absorbed. We should not drain all the water to the main drain or to the rivers. We can't bleed the land of its water. We must allow absorption. As you are well aware, water absorbed feed the underground boreholes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why is a well-planned land drainage system important. Well, Mauritius is slightly above 3,000 square kilometres with a seasonal rainfall which varies yearly and without forgetting flash floods. Out of the 3,000 square kilometres, we have part of the land surface covered with tarmac roads, concrete houses, concrete yards, concrete floors of drains. We must be careful, we say build drains and then we cover the floor with cement preventing absorption. As a result, ...

(Interruptions)

Well, you don't know the technicality, you can laugh!

...engineering on draining and absorption of water recommends that the floor should not be cement floor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a result of the above, when it rains the absorptive area of the land is reduced which results in flooding in habitable areas like towns and villages. This loss of absorptive area of the land will continue with more roads, houses, without forgetting smart cities in the near future to come.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill is to cater for flooding and management of flooding through land drainage infrastructures. Smart cities should have the drainage infrastructure their first priority since we are talking about new cities, to my great surprise, the Highlands

City project. Mention was made yesterday in a journal that Government will inject Rs700 m. for road infrastructure, electricity and supply of water by CWA. What is missing?

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is the drainage infrastructure. As I said earlier, land drainage infrastructure should be the first on the list of any development. By the way, if a properly designed drain is executed, electric cables, telecom cables and water pipes, all can be managed through that draining system. This is what we see in London city, all goes within the drain. They need not to have poles, electric poles for wires and so on. This innovative idea for Mauritius will save a lot of money and future maintenance of this supply will be very easy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about the administrative side of the land drainage board, I have gone through the list of representatives and members. I would suggest that the following should be included in the list –

- (i) A representative of the Ministry of Agriculture to have the say and advice as to the land *morcellement* and forestry.
- (ii) A representative of the Waste Management Authority to advise on ongoing and future plan.
- (iii) A representative from the Information Technology Department to help in digital approach in planning.

I would suggest, Mr Deputy Speaker, as the Bill refers to offences, that those authorities who fail to abide by the guideline and regulations of the Land Drainage Authority should pay a fine.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ideally society would like to be free of risk of flooding, but this is neither practicable nor economically feasible. What constitutes as an acceptable level of flood risk, however, is a difficult question. The immediate risk is borne by the community which must have a significant input in the defining acceptable level. To this end, public consultation and risk communication are very important.

Floods and inevitable events are natural and we cannot always control them. Therefore we must learn how we can live with them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while minimising risk to the public health, loss of life and safety, we all have an important role to play. When we have flooding we have tangible damage that can be measured in monetary or other qualifiable terms. For example, cost in rupees, number of houses or business affected or destroyed. Then, intangible damage which

cannot be evaluated in monetary terms. For example loss of lives, loss of security of home, loss of physical and psychological effects on human health and well-being.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling a copy of page 20 and 44 of Flood Management and Drainage Strategy which describes very nicely the flood management within the context of these overlapping clusters, prevention, response and recovery. And page 44 talks about the glossary of all the aspects of land drainage.

To sum up Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the Land Drainage Authority is set up, it should not start with studies done. We have already many studies and reports that have been completed. I would suggest the authorities to compile all these studies and the reports, namely Design Guideline Drainage by the Ministry of Housing in 2004, Studies Commission by the NDU, namely the Antanoropoulous and associate and others on Land Drainage and Water Management study. Consultancy services for the development of an inundation flooding and land slide national park. Study completed for the Ministry of Environment, study of land drainage system of the island of Mauritius. 326 sites of flood prone areas have been identified already. Assessment of existing drain system in Port-Louis, study of flood prone area in Pamplemousses region, study of flood prone area in Bois Chéri, La Flora and Grand-Bois all this has been done and I am sure there are some more studies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to end I would like to pray that this Government won't have to resort to emergency procurement as did the Minister of Infrastructure of the former Government. I am sure many of us witnessed how he left the Assembly when he got a message that certain areas are having heavy rain. He went to visit the places and within two days, he was awarding contract through emergency procurement. Do you believe it? 59 projects were awarded to four contractors during the fiscal year 2011 with a juicy contract. By 29 February 2011, out of the 59 projects, only 15 were completed. There were delays, the project could not be completed, the then Minister proudly said that the emergency flood project without a tender exercise coming to the tune of more than half billion rupees.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I honestly thank the hon. Prime Minister for his laudable presentation of this Bill and for his determination and focus to have a proper effective Land Drainage Authority with a Director/CEO, which I hope will not be a politically nominated or close to the party, to head the authority. I would advise calling for advertisement for this post, would be most desirable. Representatives from various Ministries and authority as far as possible should be senior expert with engineering background and environmental specialist.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, number one of a civilised community is having a proper land drainage system.

Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Selvon.

Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci M. le président, l'urbanisme sauvage dans les années 70, 80 et 90 a permis l'obstruction totale des drains naturels, parfois souterrains qui avaient été protégés depuis le 18ème siècle à Port-Louis et dans d'autres régions. Dans les années 70, le gouvernement a enterré dans un tiroir un plan d'aménagement de tout le territoire de l'île Maurice ou plan MATIM, cela fut le tout début de cette obstruction qui s'est ensuite aggravée.

M. le président, je voterai pour ce *bill* en raison de sa nécessité et de son urgence afin de tirer les autorités en général d'une certaine torpeur qui a duré deux ans face au risque d'inondations et de perte de vies, comme on en a eu dans un passé pas si lointain. Je crois d'ailleurs que nous sommes très en retard avec un projet de loi pareil, mais heureusement qu'il n'y a pas eu une répétition des pires événements du passé.

Mais tout en soutenant ce projet de loi, j'ai une importante réserve à exprimer et même une suggestion à faire dans l'intérêt de tout le monde, surtout de la population à travers le pays. Mon point est le suivant. Le pays donne naissance régulièrement à des protestations contre des projets qu'ils critiquent, et les autorités ne font rien pour les consulter et gagner leur confiance et même leur participation. Ainsi, à aucun moment dans ce *Bill*, il y a mention de la société civile, la première concernée en matière de participation à la gouvernance entre deux élections.

Alors que la Banque mondiale et les Nations unies multiplient leurs efforts et leurs initiatives contre la dictature des exécutifs à travers le monde pour que le développement se fasse avec la pleine participation de la société civile, à Maurice, nous avons un centralisme bureaucratique qui gêne le gouvernement. M. le président, est-ce qu'on sait que la Banque mondiale consulte, je répète, consulte l'opinion publique à Maurice pour rechercher l'opinion des Mauriciens sur les problèmes mauriciens, notamment sur les solutions à ces problèmes ? La Banque mondiale fait ce sondage d'opinion pour tous les pays qu'elle assiste. Dans le cas de Maurice, je connais deux sondages de l'opinion publique faite par la Banque mondiale à Maurice en 2012 et en 2015, et les résultats sont disponibles sur Internet sous le titre « *Mauritius Country Opinion Survey Report* » effectué par le *World Bank Opinion Survey*.

Je suggère que le gouvernement renforce également ces projets en y ajoutant des enquêtes et des rencontres directement avec l'opinion publique. Cela s'appelle la démocratie participative, et on a cru un instant que le nouveau gouvernement allait le faire et aurait ainsi évité bien des controverses autour de certains projets gouvernementaux avec une participation raisonnable de la société civile. La loi qui est devant nous en est une qui va concerner une très grande partie de la population vulnérable aux inondations et aux catastrophes comme les glissements de terrain.

Beaucoup de personnes auraient pu espérer d'un Premier ministre plus jeune un élargissement de la démocratie et l'introduction de la démocratie participative comme en ce qui concerne le projet de loi qui est devant nous et qui lui en donne l'occasion. On devrait même amender à mon avis la Constitution pour cela. Après avoir consulté la société civile comme en Australie pour de tels projets de loi, le gouvernement peut prendre la décision qu'il veut, mais il pourrait aussi tenir compte du *feedback* obtenu directement du peuple comme en Australie, par exemple.

En matière de *land drainage*, ce qui importe le plus c'est de faire un plan national et de l'exécuter avec, dans les deux cas, des consultations poussées avec la société civile. Ce sont les citoyens ordinaires qui par dizaines de milliers souffrent le plus de toute incompétence des autorités dans le combat contre les inondations et autres catastrophes meurtrières. Mais dans le *Bill* qui est devant nous il n'y a qu'une liste de *boards* et *d'authorities* à participer et pas la société civile qui pourtant peut beaucoup contribuer.

Dans ma circonscription, c'est grâce à la société civile d'abord et avant tout que j'ai pu prendre connaissance de nombreux problèmes très graves causés par un déficit en matière d'infrastructures pour l'évacuation des eaux accumulées, surtout lors d'inondations éclairs ou *flash flood*. Les gens s'organisent souvent, comme à Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest et d'autres régions, pour protester contre la faillite des autorités depuis des lustres en ce qui concerne les mesures préventives contre l'accumulation excessive des eaux de pluie. Je citerai un exemple que j'ai vécu et où le gouvernement a été blâmé avec beaucoup de virulence lors d'un meeting public auquel avaient été invités les élus locaux, y compris le ministre d'alors de l'Environnement. Or, ce n'est qu'après une heure de controverses exprimées avec beaucoup de force que des habitants ont pu obtenir, bien après le départ du ministre, une réponse d'un officiel d'un corps para étatique à une question posée par les habitants sur les raisons pourquoi les autorités avaient changé le trajet d'une canalisation. La colère de la foule était grande. Mais à Canal Dayot, à Pointe aux Sables, à Sable Noir, à Pailles, et dans d'autres

régions de ma circonscription, la colère populaire reste vive face aux promesses non tenues par le gouvernement et la municipalité.

Les autorités municipales et gouvernementales qui se sont succédé les unes aux autres n'ont jamais compris la nécessité de projets de développement urbains et ruraux qui soient au départ rigoureusement respectueux de la science moderne de l'organisation du territoire, tant des villes et des villages, et aussi de la nécessité d'un dialogue avec les habitants. Ensuite, quand l'ancien gouvernement MMM/MSM avait commencé l'exécution d'un *Land Drainage System* national, le gouvernement suivant y a mis fin tout simplement.

Aujourd'hui le nouveau Premier ministre revient à la charge, car un tel plan national est une nécessité en raison des catastrophes causées par le changement climatique qui ont tendance à s'accélérer et à menacer des vies. L'ex-ministre Raj Dayal avait mis en place des mesures draconiennes, surtout de sauvetage de vies humaines par des interventions...

(Interruptions)

... rapides durant sa première année de mandat, et appliquait déjà des mesures de prévention comme le *land drainage*. Le Premier ministre vient avec la bonne intention de consolider la prévention et même une meilleure planification du territoire.

Mais je crois, M. le président, que ma critique est justifiée pour qu'il y ait un renforcement de la nouvelle législation par un mécanisme de consultations officielles entre les autorités, les *boards* et *authorities* et la *Land Drainage Authority* d'une part, et la société civile d'autre part.

Enfin, M. le président, je vais faire un appel au Premier ministre pour que la région portlouisienne ne conserve pas sa réputation d'être un endroit très dangereux pour ses habitants et pour ceux qui viennent y travailler ou pour leurs loisirs. J'ai mentionné particulièrement les régions les plus exposées de ma circonscription. Il y a beaucoup d'endroits où la largeur des rues est insuffisante pour le *drainage* des eaux sur les deux côtés des rues, mais il existe la possibilité de faire des canalisations d'évacuation des eaux au milieu de ces rues, comme cela se passe dans d'autres régions.

Je vous remercie, M. le président, ainsi que les membres de la Chambre pour leur attention.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramkaun!

(10.39 p.m.)

Mr S. Ramkaun (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset I would like to congratulate hon. Pravind Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, and Leader of the House, for bringing this important legislation at the first sitting of this session of the National Assembly.

This shows the seriousness of this Government as regards the mitigating measures from drastic climatic changes occurring all around the globe, and we do not wish the recurrence of conditions of flooding like at Mon Gout, Port Louis, Fond du Sac and other regions in the recent past.

In view of climate change, the island is experiencing unusually high intensity rainfall during the rainy period. The rain downpour tends to exceed 100mm index of rainfall giving rise to severe flooding and with water finding its way in dwellings causing damage to personal effects and property, resulting to a situation of anxiety and trauma among the population, particularly where there is a tragic death of victims. Overflowing of canals and rivers during flooding has disastrous consequences on agriculture, roads and on the economy, in general. We do know that the drain systems constructed previously are not of adequate dimension to contain the present volume of water flow after such heavy rain. More so, with the mechanisation of the sugar cane fields, it has been observed that run off after each rainfall has an ease access of flow towards the low lying regions. Besides, the lack of maintenance of drain systems has contributed to these floods.

With growth and development, there is a tendency for land sub-division and property development with no proper provision of drain reticulation, paving the way for new emerging & residential zones, devoid of drain network.

In the context of monitoring and evaluation exercise, it will be an opportunity to determine the efficiency of drain projects the extent to which they can cope with the present day flooding problems and the necessity for comprehensive integrated approach to address problems of land drainage and flooding, in general.

The Land Drainage Authority Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, provides the setting of a Land Drainage Authority to shoulder such responsibilities of managing and coordinating drain projects inclusive of the development and implementation of Land Drainage Master Plan as has been presented in the National Assembly by the hon. Prime Minister. During

Statement time, the Prime Minister explained the rationale of the Bill which makes the way for the establishment of an appropriate institution to ensure integrated, proactive and concerted efforts in the implementation and management of drain projects throughout the island to address flooding problems which remains a serious problem in the wake of daunting challenges facing Small Islands Developing States owing to climate change.

Mauritius is highly vulnerable to flooding owing to the rise over the past years of high intensity rainfall over a short span of time resulting in flash floods and the country has already witnessed a number of extreme climatic events which with disastrous and pervasive consequences among which the flash flood experienced in Port Louis on 13 March 2013 which caused 11 fatalities and considerable damages to infrastructure and property. When we are talking about the flash flood in Port Louis of March 2013, other Members of this House have rightly said that this is due to non-maintenance of these drains. Maintenance of drains is very essential for the proper evacuation of flood water.

It is a fact that we have to move from the current paradigm of post-disaster response to adopt holistic approaches for flood disaster management. We are aware that, at present, the National Development Unit, the Local Authorities and the Road Development are the existing organisations and are concerned stakeholders that are carrying out measures which are contributing to the extent of flood control and mitigation.

Hence, the essence of Land Drainage Authority is yet another concrete example of the Government non-stop caring and concern for the protection of life and property of our citizens as well as of Government's unflinching determination to ensure preventive measure in a methodological and cohesive manner to minimise to the greatest possible extent the havoc and sufferings caused by acts of nature.

The Land Drainage Authority will have objectives to develop and implement a Land Drainage Master Plan, carry out an inventory and mapping of all the existing natural and man-made drainage infrastructure, identify in collaboration with the Local Authorities, the National Development Unit, the Road Development Authority, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre and other stakeholders, flood risk areas, coordinate the construction of drainage infrastructure by the local authorities, the National Development Unit, the Road Development Authority and other stakeholders as well as to ensure a routine and periodic upgrading and maintenance of the drainage infrastructure.

The Authority will also be responsible to issue guidelines to relevant stakeholders with a view to prevent unauthorised activities on drains, canals and other water courses, or the illegal dumping and discharge of effluents in drains, canals and other water courses. The direct relevant stakeholders to upgrade or maintain the new drainage structure where same is not upgraded or maintained.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, it also provides that any person involved in infringing the law by acting irresponsibly in damaging or changing the course of any drainage infrastructure shall commit an offence and will be liable to a fine of not less than Rs10,000 and not exceeding Rs20,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months. From January 2015 to June 2016, some Rs520 m. have been disbursed in the construction and upgrading of drains across the island as already stated by the previous Members.

An additional amount of Rs1.2 m. has been allocated to meet expenditure on drainage structures for the financial year up to 30 June 2017. Evaluation of the Land Drainage and Watershed Management Programme, effected by the National Development Unit during the period 2010 to 2014, has been presented to the Government. This study was commissioned in December 2014 with a view to, amongst others, analysing the different phases and identifying gaps and weaknesses in the implementation of drain projects, keeping in view special concerns such as environmental issues.

The consultant has highlighted various shortcomings in the report and made several recommendations on the approaches that the National Development Unit should follow. These recommendations are being incorporated in the proposed Land Drainage Authority Bill and the operational manual for the future Land Drainage and Watershed Management Programme.

Further to the recommendations of this study, some 10 locations have already been identified as flood prone areas and this Government has already initiated action on several of these projects, namely Pereybere, Grand' Baie, Fond du Sac, Rivière du Rempart and other regions. Certain regions of Grand' Baie are less than 1 metre above high sea level and during every heavy rainfall, the whole of Camp Carol is flooded due to obstruction through an unplanned development. The contract for the drains has already been awarded and works are scheduled to start in less than 2 weeks' time.

Similarly, contract for the construction of drains in Pereybere region, the contract for the construction has already been awarded and the contract for consultancy services is in the

process of being awarded. Without forgetting the region of Fond du Sac, a preliminary design has already been proposed by the consultants for the construction of a retarding basin of 85,000 m³ capacity.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Ramkaun: So, one kilometre of flood wall followed by a natural swale and some 300 metres of open miscellaneous drains as the first phase of the project.

Having said so, it is noted that mitigating weathers are being taken in isolation. Therefore, comes the necessity of the Land Drainage Authority to coordinate with all organisations which will assure that any mitigation measure in one region shall not affect other the regions lying on the water path. I still remember some of the projects already undertaken by the previous Government where the water has an outlet in certain areas in Mapou, for example. After each heavy rainfall, since the outlet is not at a suitable place, the area of Cottage is flooded each time.

Similarly, in the Amaury region, the drains have been constructed, but after each rain the region of Rivière du Rempart is flooded. So, this is where the Land Drainage Authority comes into place. We know now, after a study had been carried out, that in Mauritius we have 22 catchment basins in an area where rainwater has a final outlet. In the Northern Plaines, everybody will conclude with me that there is no river, so we have to design drains and this has to be done for the benefit of all the residents in the Northern Plaines. This is the action which has to be taken by the Land Drainage Authority to provide a suitable drain to cater for all the rainwater in these regions.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish also to state that the implementation of the provisions of this Bill will surely strengthen the institutional framework for flood management in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Outer Islands and will enhance the protection of our public infrastructure, ecosystems, and the protection of life and properties of our citizens.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas-Mamode!

(10.53 p.m.)

Mr S. Abbas-Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the land drainage is a national concern and, therefore, careful

attention should be given to same. When listening to my friends on the other side of the House, it is as if MSM is a new political party, has never been in power, has never been in the City Council of Port Louis.

When we talk about an issue of national concern, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it merits careful attention. I heard my good friend hon. Mrs Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus talking about the City Council and it is untrue to say that drains have not been maintained for seven years. The hon. Member can check with the City Council. There is a Department concerning national drainage. I will remind the House when the incident of 2013 occurred, hon. Bobby Hurreman was the Chairman of the Works Committee of the City Council of Port Louis.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Abbas-Mamode: I have been Lord Mayor. Yes!

Il y a eu beaucoup de réalisations...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Abbas-Mamode, please resume!

Mr Abbas-Mamode: M. le président, c'est désolant. On est en train de parler de *national drainage* et vous voyez...

(Interruptions)

I'm telling the truth.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas-Mamode, please address the Chair!

Mr Abbas-Mamode: They are talking as if the MSM is a newly born party, has never been in power in the past and nothing has been done. This is not the truth. There is a need to come up with proper solutions.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry, please allow hon. Abbas-Mamode to make his speech!

(Interruptions)

Mr Abbas-Mamode: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There is a need to come up with proper solutions so as we are not at risk if ever we face any type of natural calamity and also in our daily lives. We should by all means create a safe environment and be able to face problems like flash flood, if there is need.

We are creating an authority today. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, time is for action. We are talking about development and implementation of a Land Drainage Master Plan which will be executed by the Local Authority, the NDU, and the RDA, and not by the body we are creating. But I wonder, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, if a study related to the route of Metro Express has been carried out - unfortunately, the Minister responsible for Metro Express is not present in the House. A thorough analysis should be made so that we do not face problems in future.

(Interruptions)

Mwa ki pe cozé là! Rutnah qui pe arrivé! To envi vine professeur!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Abbas-Mamode: This is, in fact, one of the reasons why we should not rush concerning the Metro route. In addition to identifying in collaboration with the Local Authority, the NDU, the RDA and any other relevant stakeholders the threat risk areas, a considerable amount of time and resources should be allocated to measure the reliability of the Metro route when it comes to water retention and drainage. Let's prevent rather than curing. We should not forget the unfortunate incident which took place in Pamplémousses, in Mon Goût and the black Saturday of 2013.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should, at any cost, prevent such thing to hit our island again. We have lost 11 of our compatriots in the flash flood of 30 March 2013, not to mention the damage and pain caused to their family and friends. We surely do not want to face such things again in the future. Hence, the Authority should also involve representatives from the Local Authorities, not Local Government, but Local Authorities. The City Council of Port

Louis and other Councils be it Beau Bassin, Rose Hill, they have manpower. We have local Councillors. We should listen to them first. We have many problems which could not be attended because of lack of funds, lack of money and lack of resources, but works must start immediately.

In the same line, the representative of the Ministry of Education should also be involved in the Authority. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, drainage is a serious matter to be handled on different levels. Representatives from the Ministry of Education should propose ideas on ways we can educate our children at a very young age on how to keep the environment clean as the problem of drainage is to a large extent due to dumping.

We can take the example of Japan where each and every one is involved in cleaning their surrounding and maintaining a sane environment. Time should be dedicated to cleaning and talking about the consequences of our simple action on larger scale at school. We should not only provide solutions when the problem crops up but should try to eliminate the problem.

Furthermore, the Municipal Councils' and the District Councils' participation should not be minimised. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the Municipal Councils and the District Councils that deal with drainage problems on a regular basis, thus involving them is of prime importance. Their experience in handling the issue in the past should be considered. Means should be given to both Municipal and District Councils to organise not only cleaning campaign, but also awareness among the people of different regions.

Secondly, chances are that there is a degree of political interference in the process as it has been mentioned that 'Directors appointed with the approval of the Minister' and even the allowance will be fixed by the Minister. So, we have risks of political interference. Therefore, it is a must that power of the Minister and the Authority shall comply with the smooth running of the authority to come up with good results.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to point out that nowhere it has been mentioned how water will be treated because we have the problem of water Mauritius. Proper disposal of storm or floodwater is of crucial importance for urban infrastructure. It will be good if we can use it for irrigation purposes. In this way, there won't be any wastage and there won't be any other problem related to accumulation of water. The Authority should plan and focus on the use of drain water also.

Furthermore, there should be a degree of urbanism while setting up the authority. A planning officer should be assigned so as there is equality of treatment. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to take the example of the people of Vallée des Prêtres and the problem they face during heavy rain. Such cases should be treated with careful attention and should not be considered as petty issues. *En construisant Vallée des Prêtres, en faisant des morcellements, malheureusement à différentes époques, on a complètement oublié le drain naturel qui existait à Vallée des Prêtres. Le résultat aujourd'hui, c'est quand il y a de grosses pluies il y a beaucoup de maisons qui sont inondées.*

But just right at the moment I am speaking to this august Assembly, in Saint Croix there is a *morcellement* in process. And there in Saint Croix, they have obtained the EIA licence and the natural drain has already started being blocked. *M. le président, ce n'est pas quelques choses qu'on doit prendre à la légère. Cela concerne un issue qui dépasse le cadre politique et malheureusement il y a eu beaucoup de honorables Membres de l'autre côté de la chambre qui ont voulu faire de la politique avec un issue aussi important.*

Interruptions

Ce que je suis en train de faire, M. le président, c'est d'apporter des suggestions, d'élargir le comité ou le Board qu'on va mettre sur place et de voir comment on peut faire ensemble. Je suis un député de l'Assemblée Nationale, j'ai le droit d'apporter des suggestions que cela plaise à mes collègues de l'autre côté de la Chambre ou non.

Mon amie, l'honorable Jadoo-Jaunbocus, je dirai ce n'est pas une question de regarder dans le rétroviseur de l'histoire. We should start to act now and instead of creating authority, we should start immediately where drain problems have been identified to put fund and to start to protect les enfants de l'île Maurice qui seront là après nous.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah.

Mr Rutnah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate on the Land Drainage Authority Bill (No. 1 of 2017).

Mrs M. C. Monty rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 18 April 2017 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Hon. Members, we have about 15 interveners tonight and time is very limited. Hon. Uteem!

MATTERS RAISED

(11.07 p.m.)

TRANQUEBAR – IMPASSE COTILLON - OBSTRUCTION

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to raise an issue and it is addressed to the hon. Minister of Local Government. It concerns *Impasse Cotillon* in *Tranquebar*. It is a small lane in *Tranquebar* and there is one gentleman who keeps obstructing the road. This is something that has been going on for years. In fact, as far back as April 2014, there was a letter written by the officer of the Ministry of Housing and Lands, stating that they had given instruction to the Municipal Council of Port Louis to take action against this gentleman because it is a reserved land.

But last week, things have gone worst, from bad to worst and the gentleman has put stone in front of his house just as pure mischief to prevent people from passing through and there has been a petition written which I am going to table. So, I would ask the hon. Minister if he can take the matter up with the Municipal Council of Port Louis because this is a source of great tension in *Impasse Cotillon, Tranquebar*. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government!

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. After having listened to my hon. friend, I will look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

MORCELLEMENT RAFFRAY, PAILLES – ROADS - REPAIRS

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): My intervention today concerns again the hon. Minister for Local Government. I would like to raise an issue regarding the states of the road at Morcellement Raffray, Pailles. I am sure the hon. Minister is aware, but it seems that the Municipality of Port Louis is not aware that Pailles, now, has been annexed to do the Municipality of Port Louis. There are so many roads there which have not been attended to for the last two years, namely, Avenue Claude de Lettre, Avenue Perche, Avenue Condé, Avenue Dodo, 1,2,3,4,5, Avenue Cardinal 1,2,3,5 Avenue Bengali 1,2 Avenue Collin, Avenue Crecerelle 2 & 3, Avenue Agnish 1,2,3 and Avenue Roland Maurel. These roads have not been touched or tarred for the last two years. They are so impracticable and there are several accidents which have occurred especially regarding motorcycles. So may I ask the hon. Prime Minister to intervene *vis-à-vis* the Municipality of Port Louis so that the needful can be done? I am sure the road where hon. Eddy Boissézon stays as well is impracticable. So, that the Municipality be made aware that this forms part of the Municipality of Port Louis as well now. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government!

Mr Jhugroo: I can reassure my friend that I will look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

BARKLY – HOUSE FIRE - REHOUSING

Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse à l'honorable ministre de l'intégration sociale et concerne les sept familles dont les maisons sont en bois et en tôle et qui ont été ravagées par le feu le 25 février dernier à Barkly.

Donc sur les sept familles affectées, trois sont éligibles à une maison ou un appartement de la NHDC et qui détiennent un compte plan épargne logement. Donc les formalités sont en bonne voie au niveau de la NHDC et très probablement, dans un proche avenir, ils vont être relogés dans un appartement à la NHDC à Quatre Cocos. Mais par contre, en ce qui concerne les quatre autres familles qui attendent toujours une réponse de la NEF et qui souhaitent que leurs maisons soient reconstruites sur le terrain où ils sont actuellement, ils

attendent à ce que les formalités en vue de régulariser leur situation, par rapport au terrain, soient accélérées, de même en ce qui concerne la construction de leurs maisons respectives. Je fais donc un appel pressant à l'honorable ministre et je le rappelle aussi que ces familles vivent toujours dans le centre communautaire de Barkly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment!

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong): M. le président, ce que j'ai à dire est qu'il y a eu beaucoup des difficultés effectivement et le ministre concerné de la circonscription et même les autres députés sont venus me voir. La première chose est que le terrain ne leur appartient pas. Il y a eu quelques difficultés dans ce sens. Mais la décision a été prise par le conseil de ministres de venir construire des maisons en urgence et cela va être fait dans les jours à venir. Donc c'est fait. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

PRIMATES - EXPORTATION

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre D'or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir. Actually, my request is addressed to the Minister of Agro Industry and Food Security. I am coming back to the issue of export primates from Mauritius. We all know that exporters have been generating hundreds of millions of rupees in terms of the turnover during the recent years.

However, there is a lack of transparency regarding the condition under which the primates from Mauritius are being used for pharmaceutical research. There have been a number of international NGOs who have protested against this state of things. I, therefore, request the hon. Minister - I know his commitment - to conduct an independent enquiry based on clips that we can find on the net and on the report of the international NGOs which I have just mentioned and take the appropriate measures. I suggest that, if need be, to review this whole issue of export of primates from Mauritius as it has been done by countries like India and China.

Thank you

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Agro Industry and Food security!

The Minister Agro Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let me just inform the House that with regard to the remarks made by my friend hon. Sudesh Rughoobur, those breeders who are involved in that activity, are subjected to lots of audit. There are certain norms to adhere to in terms of breeding activities. Regularly there are independent audit firms that come from abroad to carry out that audit and to make sure that all the conditions with regard to humane condition in which breeding should be carried out are being complied with.

On that note I can assure the hon. Member that we are fully satisfied that those activities are being carried out under certain conditions which satisfy the international norms.

Whether we should have another independent audit, I think the question does not arise. They are from abroad, but still, we, at the level of the Ministry, have the Department of the Veterinary Services that regularly visit those premises to make sure that those conditions that have been spelt out are being complied with.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

BASSIN - FOOTBALL PITCH - LIGHTING

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): M. le président, je voudrais soulever un problème qui relève du ministère des collectivités locales et aussi de la sécurité sociale. Mon intervention a trait à un terrain de football situé à Bassin, plus précisément près de Cité Bassin. Ce terrain est une plaine de volley-ball ainsi que le centre communautaire qui s'y trouvent sont tous *vested* avec le ministre de la sécurité sociale et sont donc sous le contrôle de ce ministère.

Or, il y a de longues années que les jeunes et les habitants de la région ont fait la demande au Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund pour que ce terrain de foot soit éclairé. Mais la SILWF a refusé de le faire, je suppose par faute de moyens. Comme nous le savons tous, M. le président, les terrains de foot qui sont normalement sous le contrôle des collectivités locales sont aujourd'hui tous éclairés au grand plaisir des jeunes et des sportifs. Donc, la solution serait de *vest* le terrain de foot et de volley-ball en question sous la mairie de Quatre Bornes. C'est pourquoi je demande aux deux ministres de se concerter et de faire le nécessaire pour un *proper vesting* de ce terrain afin de permettre l'éclairage du terrain de foot de Cité Bassin et aussi de rénover le terrain de volley-ball qui est dans un état déplorable.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Social Security.

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I will look at it and inform the House accordingly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Barbier!

GRNW – ROAD CONGESTION

Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will raise an issue concerning road congestion at the level of Grand River North West with a branch road to the coastal road to Pointe aux Sables.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, year in, year out, since I am in this House from successive Governments, I have been raising this issue and I must say that, in the past, there have been several site visits with technicians, with politicians, with former Ministers and we were told that there is going to have a major road development at Grand River North West and soon we are going to have the coastal road developed and we will have a special branch road that will bring us to the city centre.

Unfortunately, till now, the inhabitants of Pointe aux Sables are still waiting for that road development. It takes 30 minutes every morning for the inhabitants of Pointe aux Sables to be able to reach Grand River North West road and it is causing more and more inconvenience to the inhabitants of this region. We have been waiting for years now.

May I press upon the actual Minister *afin qu'on puisse voir la lumière au bout du tunnel enfin. Anne ma sœur Anne, on attend toujours arriver!*

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can we start with a site visit together.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

SOCIAL REGISTER OF MAURITIUS – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for giving me the floor to raise this matter at Adjournment Time. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my request is addressed to the Minister for Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and the issue pertains to the setting up of the Social Register of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the law stands, the concerned Ministry, that is, the Ministry for Social Integration and Economic Empowerment shall set up a register to be known as the Social Register of Mauritius and in which shall be registered the names and other relevant particulars of every person who lives in absolute poverty. Citizens of our country were requested to apply for support and the Ministry carried out a full-fledged survey in order to assess the eligibility of the applicants. As per the legislation, at section 7(4), and if you will allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will quote part of it –

“where an applicant is informed pursuant to section 3 that he is not eligible for support, he may make an appeal to the Minister. An appeal under paragraph (a) shall be made within 21 days of the date on which the applicant is informed of the decision of the Supervising Officer. The Minister shall, for the purpose of an appeal, under the paragraph (a) mentioned above, set up an *ad hoc* committee comprising of representatives of different Ministries.”

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, those who were not found eligible were informed in writing by the Ministry that they have to submit their appeal within that period of 21 days against the decision of the Ministry. They have submitted their appeal, and some at the beginning of this year. I do not know whether that *ad hoc* committee to look into those appeals has been set up or whether, as at to date, some of the persons who have not been found eligible have received replies from the Ministry.

I would appeal to the Minister to urgently look into this matter and keep the persons informed, especially those who are waiting for a reply.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you have made the point. Hon. Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment!

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong) Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, since I have been given some information, I will look into it as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

BELLE ROSE – MARKET – TRANSFER

Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): M. le président, je souhaite aborder ici un problème qui est d'intérêt certain pour la Chambre et qui interpelle plus particulièrement le ministre des Collectivités locales. Je parle ici du marché de Belle Rose situé à l'avenue Ollier. Avec la finalisation du tracé du Métro Express, la mairie de Quatre Bornes a été notifiée par le ministère du Logement et des Terres que le site du marché de Belle Rose doit être évacué sous bref délai, et dans une réunion du conseil municipal, le maire a même avancé un délai très bref.

M. le président, il est inconcevable qu'on puisse demander l'évacuation des lieux sans avoir au préalable identifié et aménagé un site alternatif pour le marché de Belle Rose. Ce marché qui était initialement à la route royale de Belle Rose, vis-à-vis de l'usine Pepsi, a été transféré 30 années de cela pour faire place à un centre municipal. Cela concerne les habitants de Belle Rose et les régions avoisinantes, ainsi que leur gagne-pain et les 600 familles qui y travaillent.

Ma requête, M. le président, c'est avant tout de demander au ministre des Collectivités locales, bien sûr, d'identifier un site alternatif. Le site qui est proposé par les marchands, par les habitants, se trouve être l'emplacement de l'ancienne usine à sac, qui tombe sous la responsabilité de la Mauritius Jute Textile Co. Ltd., et qui est sous responsabilité étatique. Je demanderai à M. le ministre de s'en occuper personnellement et de s'assurer que les habitants ont droit à un espace moderne qui respecte les règles de sanitation et aussi de circulation. Si cela se confirme, M. le président - je sais que vous êtes très réceptif à cette idée de l'emplacement se trouvant à l'ancienne usine à sac - je demanderai de commencer les consultations avec les marchands et aussi avec les forces vives de la région et de s'assurer avant tout que les spécifications soient respectées en ce qui concerne l'aménagement des toilettes ainsi que des parkings adéquats.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government!

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr P. Jhugroo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I wish to inform the House that, since three weeks, I have already met the representatives of these persons working previously at Belle Rose. The necessary has already been done, and I think that a decision has already been taken by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(i) ROCHE BOIS – PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL

(ii) MUNICIPALITY OF PORT LOUIS – PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): My question is addressed to the hon. Minister of Local Government.

The best way to combat poverty is by educating the people.

M. le président, cela concerne l'école maternelle située à Roche Bois. La construction a été stoppée. *Furthermore*, la librairie qui se trouve dans la même enceinte a été laissée à l'abandon.

Mon deuxième point, j'inviterais le ministre de *Local Government* à visiter le département Planning de la mairie de Port Louis. C'est dans un état lamentable. Je me demande comment ces inspecteurs peuvent exiger des installations quand, eux-mêmes, sont situés dans un bureau où on peut même être électrocuté. Donc, j'inviterais au ministre de visiter et en même temps de voir avec la mairie de Port Louis pour ce qui est de l'école maternelle.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government!

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr P. Jhugroo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. After having listened to my hon. friend, we are going to organise a site visit with him and then we are going to take decisions that should be taken, and I will do the needful to remedy the situation.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry!

VILLE NOIRE – SPRING – ACCESS

Mr T. Henry (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Merci, M. le président. Mon point concerne le ministre de *Local Government* et le ministre de *Housing and Lands* à propos d'un problème à Ville Noire. L'honorable membre est député de l'endroit tout comme moi. Les villageois de Ville Noire ont un problème d'accès pour aller à la source - je crois que le ministre a déjà fait un *site visit*. Il y a quelqu'un qui a érigé un mur. Mais les habitants ont fait un *site visit* avec les conseillers du village et ont vu un chemin - pour essayer peut-être de faire le chemin - pour qu'ils aient accès à cette source.

Je demanderais au ministre de bien vouloir voir cela ensemble avec son collègue, parce qu'apparemment c'est un *State land*. Donc, si on pouvait faire le nécessaire pour que les villageois aient accès à cette source.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government!

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr P. Jhugroo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think that this issue has been taken up by me and my hon. friend who is PPS of the constituency six week ago. I think that this issue has been raised on a private radio, and we have informed the guy at the radio that we think it is a private land.

(Interruptions)

No, it is a private land. We have visited.

(Interruptions)

If need be, the hon. Member can come and see me. We are going to see what can be done. We have been there six weeks ago.

(Interruptions)

So, the hon. Member can come and give us...

(Interruptions)

If he has got...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if my hon. friend has got a magical formula, he can come to see me, I will do the needful.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

BAMBOUS – COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le président. Je donne un peu de repos au ministre des Collectivités locales.

Ma requête s'adresse au ministère du Logement et des Terres. Mais comme il n'est pas là, j'espère que quelqu'un d'autre va prendre la responsabilité.

Il y a quelques personnes qui sont venues me voir concernant le *land acquisition de Bambous* qui se trouve près du réservoir de La Ferme. Apparemment, elles ont reçu une demande pour être évacuées. On leur a proposé une somme d'argent. Ils ne sont pas d'accord par rapport à l'évaluation. Ils ont refait l'évaluation par leur propre évaluateur et ils sont disposés de bouger contre peut-être une meilleure compensation ou d'un échange de terrain. Donc, on a fait un dossier pour chaque propriétaire, plus une pétition. C'est juste un dossier en bonne et due forme avec les contrats de terrain et autres, plus l'évaluation de leur évaluateur. Donc, je dépose cela à l'Assemblée pour que le message soit passé au ministre concerné.

Merci.

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of the grief of the hon. Member and I will pass it on to my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance!

LA BUTTE – COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

Mr P. K. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My appeal today is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport regarding the people who have received the notice to leave their premises at La Butte. The letter was dated 06 March 2017 and they had one month delay to leave the premises. So, I will appeal to him to give them more time, at least, until the project is finalised.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport!

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): This question was raised and I have given the assurance and I have said we have a Committee which is going to consider each case on a case to case basis. The first, I think, six families met the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry last week. This week, we are meeting all of them and we will consider each case one by one and then we will consider it on a

humanitarian basis. I understand that it is a disruption of social life and family life. So, we will consider that.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

ST PAUL, PHOENIX – HOUSE FIRE - REHOUSING

Mr A. Duval (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête est au ministre des Terres et du logement et le ministre de l'Intégration sociale.

Il y a eu un incendie le 15 décembre 2015 à St Paul. Trois familles ont perdu, malheureusement, leurs maisons. Le Vice-premier ministre, l'honorable Soodhun et les élus de la circonscription sont allés voir les familles pour les reconforter et de donner tout le soutien.

Le problème maintenant c'est qu'une de ces familles, notamment la famille Thomas, est en projet de construire une nouvelle maison. Ils sont aujourd'hui dans un logement temporaire qui a été donné par le ministère des Terres et du Logement, une maison en tôle de deux chambres. Ils attendent un enfant. Ils veulent construire leur maison. Ils sont allés à la NHDC. On ne va pas les donner de *grant* parce que l'époux a un terrain sur son nom. Ils sont allés à la NEF, on ne veut pas les donner l'*allowance* pour les *corrugated iron sheets* de R 75,000 pour une raison ou une autre alors que le Vice-premier ministre et les deux autres élus de la circonscription ont dit qu'ils allaient les aider. Donc, aujourd'hui, ils sont perdus. Si vous pouvez prendre cela à votre niveau et regarder comment vous pouvez aider ces familles.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment!

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong): If the hon. Member would bring the information to me, I will see what we can do for them.

Thank you.

At 11.33 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 18 April 2017 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
EBENE CYBERCITY – PARKING TOWER PROJECTS

(No. B/166) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the proposed Parking Tower Projects at the Ebene Cybercity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, giving details of the projects, indicating the –

- (a) estimated cost thereof;
- (b) mode of financing thereof;
- (c) number of parking slots that will be available thereat, and
- (d) number of proposals submitted as at to date, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) date of submission thereof, and
 - (ii) names of the promoter/s thereof.

Reply: The proposed parking tower project at the Ebene Cybercity comprises the construction, management and maintenance of a multi-storey car park of around 900 parkings and a commercial outlet.

Following a request for proposal (RFP) exercise launched in January 2013 by the ex-BPML, the following 3 firms submitted their bids as at closing date of 04 April 2013 -

- (i) Laxmanbhai & Co (Mtius) Ltd – IREKO Construction Ltd;
- (ii) Hyvec Partners Ltd.;
- (iii) Island Property Manufacturing Ltd/Bhimajee Govinda Construction Ltd.

The Joint Venture of Laxmanbhai & Co (Mtius) Ltd - IREKO Construction Ltd was the most responsive bidder and on 20 June 2013 was awarded the lease of a plot of 1.4 *arpents* to construct a parking tower at Ebene.

As regards part (a) of the question, the promoter has estimated the project costs to be Rs328 m. for around 900 parking slots.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the promoter had proposed the following financing structure -

- (a) equity financing of Rs157 m.;
- (b) convertible loan from Laxmanbhai & Co (Mtius) Ltd of Rs40 m., and
- (c) commercial loan of Rs131 m.

Regarding the equity financing and convertible loan, the promoter had proposed to inject Rs90 m. and had approached other partners to finance the remaining Rs107 m.

As regards part (d) of the question, I have already provided the information requested earlier relating to the RFP exercise.

I am informed that the Board of ex-BPML now merged into Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd has put the parking projects on hold pending the review of the parking problem at Ebene in a holistic manner as part of its overall urbanisation strategy for the Cyber City. A tender exercise will be launched shortly by the company to recruit a consultant for this exercise.

I am further informed that, in the meantime, Ebene Carpark Ltd., the special purpose company set up by the Joint Venture of Laxmanbhai & Co (Mtius) Ltd – IREKO Construction Ltd to implement the project has made a request before the Judge in Chambers to order the appointment of an arbitrator in accordance with the terms of the lease agreement signed between the joint venture and ex-BPML, and that Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd has agreed to the appointment of Mr B. Domah, former Judge.

NATIONAL INVESTMENT TRUST LTD - INVESTMENTS

(No. B/167) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the National Investment Trust Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) names of the Chairperson and of the Members thereof, indicating in each case, the date and terms and conditions of appointment thereof, and
- (b) investments made as at to date.

Reply: The National Investment Trust Ltd, incorporated under the Companies Act, is a company listed on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius and Government does not hold any share in the company.

As such, it will not be appropriate for Government to provide the information requested by the hon. Member.

FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/168) Mr S. Fowdar (Third Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National

Development Unit and Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the funding of political parties, he will state if consideration will be given for the introduction in the House of a Funding of Political Parties Bill and, if so, when.

Reply: Government is moving ahead with its electoral reform agenda as enunciated in the Government Programme 2015-2019.

In this context, a Ministerial Committee was set up in January 2016 to examine the different aspects of our electoral system and make appropriate recommendations for reform. The issue of financing of political parties is included in the Terms of Reference of the Ministerial Committee.

The Ministerial Committee has already submitted its proposals on the financing of political parties and the Attorney General's Office has been requested to prepare a draft Bill based on the Committee's proposals. The Attorney General's Office has sought further instructions regarding a number of new issues in relation to the financing of political parties that will have to be thrashed out by the Ministerial Committee before the Bill may be finalised.

Government's commitment to introduce the Bill as soon as it is ready, after appropriate consultations, is reiterated.

CIVIL SERVICE – PUBLIC BODIES APPEAL TRIBUNAL – APPEALS

(No. B/169) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit and Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to appointments/promotions of officers in the civil service made by the Public Service Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission, information as to the number thereof in respect of which an appeal has been lodged before the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal and before the Supreme Court respectively, on a yearly basis since January 2015 to date, indicating the cases in which the appointment has been quashed.

Reply: As the House is aware, very often appeals lodged at the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal are not determined within the same year but are carried forward, the reasons thereof are exogenous, and the main ones are -

- (i) the unavailability of counsel, and

(ii) the merits of the case which require in-depth analysis.

In 2015, out of the 52 appeals lodged before the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal against the decision of the Public Service Commission, only 2 decisions had been quashed, the determination of which was given on 01 September 2016 and 23 February 2017, respectively. The case determined on 01 September 2016 was lodged on 08 August 2015, whilst that determined on 23 February 2017 was lodged on 24 December 2015.

As regards the case determined on 01 September 2016, in relation to the appointment, by selection, to the post of Educator (Secondary Prevocational), following the Judicial Review of the determination of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal, the Supreme Court had, in its judgement of 09 January 2017, ruled that this case be reassessed by a different panel of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal. It is to be noted that in this case, the Judicial Review was applied for by the holders of the appointment made by the Public Service Commission.

In relation to the case determined on 23 February 2017, as regards the appointment by selection to the post of Road Transport Commissioner at the National Transport Authority, the Public Service Commission has, under section 9 of Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal Act, applied to the Supreme Court for a Judicial Review of the decision on 09 March 2017. The Supreme Court had granted leave to the Public Service Commission for a Judicial Review on 27 March 2017. The matter is *sub judice* before the Supreme Court. The Public Service Commission has filed its affidavit on 10 April 2017.

On 18 June 2015, one applicant had applied for grant of leave before the Supreme Court for Judicial Review against the determination of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal to quash his appointment as Deputy Registrar of Civil Status, made on 28 April 2014, by the Public Service Commission. It is to be noted that the appeal against this appointment was lodged at the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal on 09 May 2014, and the appeal was determined on 01 June 2015. This case is not finalised yet.

In 2016, out of 79 appeals lodged with the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal, the decision of the Public Service Commission had been quashed only in 2 cases.

In one case, the appeal was lodged with the Tribunal on 20 April 2016 and the determination had been given on 17 November 2016. The holder of the appointment by the Public Service Commission applied for Judicial Review, before the Supreme Court, on 06 December 2016 against the determination of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal to quash his appointment as Assistant Commissioner Social Security made to him on 28 March 2016. The case is still at the level of the Supreme Court.

In the second case, appeals were lodged by 4 different officers, on 3 different dates, as follows: on 07 April 2016, on 12 April 2016 and 13 April 2016. The determination in this case was delivered on 23 February 2017, whereby the appointments of only 2 candidates out of 38 appointees were quashed. It is to be noted, here, that these 38 appointments were made by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, under delegated powers granted by Public Service Commission. The Responsible Officer of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life was, on 06 March 2017, apprised of the determination of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life accepted the decision and has initiated procedures to implement the determination.

For period 01 January to 06 April 2017, no decision has been quashed by the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal with regard to the 20 appeals lodged.

PITON & RIVIÈRE DU REMPART – NDU PROJECTS – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/170) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Constituency No. 7, Piton and Rivière du Rempart, he will give a list of the projects which the National Development Unit has –

- (a) implemented thereat since January to December 2016, and
- (b) earmarked for implementation thereat in 2017, indicating the amount budgeted therefor in each case.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, a status report on projects which were approved for implementation by the National Development Unit during this Financial Year, that is, from July 2016 to June 2017 in Constituency No. 7 is being tabled. These include 61 projects as follows –

- (i) resurfacing of 12 existing roads, the main ones located at Independence Road, Amaury; Third Lane, Gokhoola and road network at Panchvatee;
- (ii) upgrading/construction of 21 new roads, the main ones located at Booluck Road, Ville Bague; Marigold Road (Ex Rampersad Lane), L'Espérance Piton and Mayflower Road also known as Lateral Maurel Road, Rivière du Rempart;

- (iii) upgrading/construction of drains in 21 locations, the main ones at Cite CHA (nr Noce de Cana Church), Rivière du Rempart; Jaipal Road at Plaine des Papayes and Temple Road, near Universal College at Rivière du Rempart, and
- (iv) construction of 7 amenities including a mini soccer pitch at Rivière du Rempart; upgrading of football ground at L'Espérance Trébuchet and construction of a covered pyre for cremation ground at Ferret, Mapou.

Some Rs77 m. have already been earmarked for 50 of these projects and the cost estimates of the remaining 11 projects are being worked out.

In regard to part (b) of the question, a list of projects together with their cost estimates to be implemented during the Financial Year 2017/2018 is being worked out.

HORSE RACING - HORSES – IMPORTATION

(No. B/171) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the recent allegations of the use of illicit funds/black money, being proceeds of drug trafficking for example, in the importation of horses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, including from the Mauritius Turf Club, and by the Mauritius Revenue Authority respectively, information as to the measures that have been put in place, if any, regarding same, in line with the recommendations of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing of March 2015.

Reply: Since 2015, the Gambling Regulatory Authority, the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Financial Intelligence Unit have further strengthened inter-agency co-operation in relation to money laundering, tax evasion and other corrupt activities in the gambling industry, including horse racing and betting, in the wake the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing of March 2015. For this purpose, several actions have been initiated by these three institutions.

Operational and tactical Memoranda of Understanding have been signed for the exchange of intelligence and information and for concerted actions, procedures and processes, as follows -

- (i) the Gambling Regulatory Authority and the Mauritius Revenue Authority,
- (ii) the Gambling Regulatory Authority and the Financial Intelligence Unit, and
- (iii) the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Financial Intelligence Unit.

A case in point is the amendment of the licensing conditions of bookmakers by the Gambling Regulatory Authority to comply with the Guidelines of the Financial Intelligence Unit relating to the prevention of money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism in the gambling business. Another instance of collaboration and coordination between the two institutions is that the Gambling Regulatory Authority has adhered to the National Risk Assessment exercise undertaken by Financial Intelligence Unit. In this exercise, the Mauritius Turf Club has been identified as one of the Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions and will be evaluated by the team.

In addition to the above, two specialised Divisions have been created at the Gambling Regulatory Authority in 2017, namely the Integrity and Compliance Division and the Horse Racing Division to address the issue of laundering illicit funds/black money in the gambling industry.

The Integrity and Compliance Division has been created to ensure integrity and compliance in the gambling industry, including horse racing. Its main functions are related to a reduction of the potential risks of malpractices, money laundering, corruption and fraud in the industry. For this purpose, it will synergise its operations with the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the *Police des Jeux*. This Division will be provided with an intelligence analysis platform (system) where confidential information regarding suspicious transactions will be logged for analysis and support. Professionals in integrity and intelligence are being recruited. Cross functional teams are being built with the *Police des Jeux* for enhanced collaboration and coordination of field work and actions.

The main function of the Horse Racing Division is to strengthen the regulatory environment in respect to horse racing including the importation of horses and including racing in all its forms.

It is understood that the Mauritius Turf Club has implemented the following actions for added control on the importation of horses for the purpose of racing -

- (i) every horse owner must be registered with the Secretariat of the Club and execute such agreement or document with a Trainer and/or the Club, as may be requested;
- (ii) the Administrators may reject an application for registration of an owner;
- (iii) no person under the age of 18 may be registered as an owner or Honorary Member;

- (iv) the names of the different horse owners are submitted to the MRA for clearance before the arrival of these horses in Mauritius. According to the MTC, this process allows the MRA to conduct its own enquiries;
- (v) the MTC works in collaboration with the *Police des Jeux* for information in case they may have doubts of any suspicious transaction;
- (vi) the number of honorary members is being strictly controlled and reduced to a minimum. Only the MTC Board gives final approval for a person to be allowed as Honorary Member, and
- (vii) the MTC has approached the Authority for a joint meeting with the FIU, *Police des Jeux* and MRA in order to help in the Due Diligence Process.

As regards the Mauritius Revenue Authority, it has, since March 2015, set up a system of auditing and scrutinising of all race horse owners in respect of their purchase of horses and their importation. As of date, 58 race horse owners have been audited and income tax assessments to the tune of Rs92,564,915 have been issued in 36 cases. The auditing of race horse owners is an ongoing process.

In addition, officers of the Mauritius Revenue Authority are posted at the race course and off course bookmakers during race days for control purposes.

The Mauritius Revenue Authority has also informed that it had carried out a first audit of all 14 racing stables, in 2014, for VAT purposes and in 2015 for the horse racing organiser. This exercise was an *ad hoc* exercise. The Mauritius Revenue Authority will be requested to carry out this exercise in a more systematic manner and on a yearly frequency for stables and the horse racing organiser alike.

DECLARATION OF ASSETS BILL (NEW) - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/172) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the proposed introduction in the House of a Declaration of Assets Bill, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: Government has, in its 2015-2019 Programme, pledged to introduce a new Declaration of Assets Act.

In his reply to PQ No. B/1028 on 29 November 2016, the former Prime Minister explained that a Ministerial Committee was examining the different aspects of a new regime for the declaration of assets.

The Ministerial Committee is left with only a few issues to be thrashed out before finalising its report.

Reassurance is given to the House that Government will fulfill its commitment and introduce the Bill as soon as it is ready.

MINISTERS – SALARIES & *PER DIEM* ALLOWANCES

(No. B/173) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the salaries and *per diem* allowances of hon. Ministers, he will state if consideration will be given for a reduction thereof, in view of the numerous excesses and failures of adequate controls in public spending by various Ministries and Departments, as highlighted time and again by official reports like that of the Director of Audit.

Reply: I will reply to PQ No. B/173 and PQ No. B/177 together.

It is an undeniable fact that there are numerous instances of inadequate control of public spending at different levels in the public sector and official reports, like that of the Director of Audit, have year in year out, repeatedly drawn our attention to such shortcomings.

As a matter of fact, abuse, misuse, misallocation and wastage of public funds have plagued many Government organizations for several decades.

In spite of remedial measures, taken by successive Governments, the situation has barely improved as highlighted in the recent report of the Director of Audit.

I have set up a team at the level of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) to study the issues raised in the report of the Director of Audit and to come up with concrete recommendations to address wastages in the use of public funds.

Moreover, with a view to ensuring an efficient control on public spending, MOFED is also making greater use of information technology to improve budget allocation, execution and monitoring.

As regards expenses related to missions, trainings, seminars and workshops abroad, the conditions have been reviewed to have a better control on expenditure of these items, including payments of *per diem* to officials. The rules governing payment of *per diem* to

officials proceeding on mission overseas is strictly as per instructions issued by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development with effect from August 2016, *per diem* is payable on a per night basis, for the duration of stay of the official in the country of mission.

As for salaries of Ministers and Members of Parliament, same are approved by the National Assembly. The hon. Member should be aware of that and she is free to reduce her salary if she so intends.

The question of reducing the salaries and *per diem* of Ministers, therefore, does not arise.

MAURITIUS DUTY FREE PARADISE CO. LTD - PROCUREMENT

(No. B/174) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, a list of the suppliers of all the products sold at the duty free shop, indicating, in each case, the date on which agreement was reached for the supply thereof.

Reply: The Chief Executive Officer of the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd, has advised that it would not be appropriate to provide the requested information.

As a matter of fact, the House was informed, in reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/774 on 22 October 2013 by the then Prime Minister, that the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd, is a company governed by the Companies Act, and its Constitution and it has its own internal procurement procedures.

Having regard to the degree of autonomy enjoyed by that company by virtue of its Constitution, and its governing structure with a supervisory Board of Directors and executive management, decisions about day to day management issues such as the nature of contracts with, and identity of, suppliers of goods to the company, are not matters over which the Prime Minister has control.

Besides, such information may be commercially sensitive and its public disclosure could work to the company's commercial disadvantage.

PORT & AIRPORT – MRA & ADSU OFFICERS

(No. B/175) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National

Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the ports and airports of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain –

- (a) from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the number of officers thereof attached thereat, and
- (b) information as to the collaboration, if any, that exists between the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit in relation to the activities thereof thereat.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, information obtained from the Mauritius Revenue Authority indicates that 152 and 118 Customs Officers are posted 24/7 on a shift basis at the port and airport respectively for the enforcement of legislation with regard to import and export of goods and movement of travellers.

In addition, ten officers are posted at the port and airport in Rodrigues. These officers enforce all revenue laws and other enactments relating to import, export and travellers.

Concerning part (b) of the question, MRA Customs is working in close collaboration with Anti-Drug & Smuggling Unit, National Coast Guard and other law enforcement agencies in order to protect the society against the scourge of illicit drugs.

At the border, Customs and ADSU officers carry out profiling and targeting of goods and travellers jointly. Suspected travellers for drug offences are searched and examined jointly by Customs and ADSU officers. In other cases, where Customs detects any illicit drugs, Customs seizes the drugs and hands over same to ADSU for investigation and controlled delivery operations.

Both Customs and Police narcotics dogs perform sniffing operations alternately on an agreed working arrangement. Moreover, Customs uses non-intrusive inspection methods, namely X-ray scanners and drug detector devices in the fight against importation and smuggling of illicit drugs and other prohibited and restricted goods.

Also, high level meetings are held between MRA and Police, including ADSU, as and when required.

I recently met high officials of the MRA and the Police, including ADSU, and directed that they should heighten their vigilance at our borders with a view to preventing the entry into Mauritius of illicit drugs. I also urged them to ensure that there should be more

synergy and close collaboration between them in their common goals to fight against the scourge of drugs.

The MRA and the Police Department will shortly sign a Memorandum of Understanding to further strengthen cooperation between them, *inter alia*, to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency in their efforts to prevent and suppress customs offences, illicit drug trafficking, money laundering and other transnational crimes.

This collaboration is already yielding positive results. The recent seizures of huge quantities of drugs at both the port and airport are concrete examples.

LAFARGE (MAURITIUS) CEMENT LTD - ACTIVITIES

(No. B/176) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if he is aware that the Syrian unit of Lafarge Holcim, the Swiss-French cement company, is allegedly involved in the financing of the terrorist group Islamic State in Syria and, if so, indicate if an inquiry is being carried out or measures being taken with regard to Lafarge (Mauritius) Cement Ltd.

Reply: Information obtained indicates that, on 02 March 2017, a Press article from the *Financial Times* revealed that Lafarge Holcim, the Swiss-French Cement Company, had carried out an internal investigation during which evidence was obtained that Lafarge's Syrian Unit had paid third parties to work out arrangements with armed groups, including "sanctioned parties", in order to maintain operations at the cement factory in 2013 and 2014 and ensure safe passage of employees and supplies to and from the plant.

According to the same Press article, Lafarge Holcim was unable to confirm whether payments had been made by Lafarge's Syrian Unit to ISIS.

As regards Lafarge (Mauritius) Cement Ltd, there is no indication that the company is involved in financing any terrorism-related activities and, as such, no investigation has been carried out.

However, the relevant Authorities in Mauritius are following up on the matter closely and remain vigilant.

DIRECTOR OF AUDIT – REPORT

(No. B/177) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the public funds, he will state the measures that he proposes to take to curb wastage thereof by line ministries, Government departments and statutory bodies in the light of the observations of the latest Report of the Director of Audit.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/173)

PROFESSIONALS (FOREIGN) - WORK PERMITS

(No. B/198) Mr S. Fowdar (Third Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the work permits granted to foreign professionals, he will state if consideration will be given for the eligibility criteria prescribed for the issue thereof to be altered with a view to urging employers to give consideration to local professionals in the first instance and introduce a quota system so that the employment of local professionals becomes a priority.

Reply: (The Prime Minister): I shall reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/198, as the grant of permits to foreign nationals taking up employment as professional in Mauritius is mostly undertaken under the Immigration Act.

Foreign professionals should in accordance with section 9 of the Immigration Act hold an occupation permit, which is a combined work and residence permit specifically designed to attract high calibre foreign talents who can contribute to the economic development of the country.

They should meet the established eligibility criteria under the Investment Promotion Act, that is, they are employed under a contract of employment drawing a minimum monthly salary of Rs60,000, except those employed in the Information and Communications Technology sector should draw a monthly basic salary exceeding Rs30,000.

No quota or ratio system is applied for grant of application for occupational permit to foreign professionals as such applications are considered on their merits. If the application relates to a job which requires an expertise which is abundant in a particular sector, such applications are not entertained.

Furthermore, the high salary to be paid to a foreign professional and the costs involved in their recruitment, in terms of permit fee, air tickets, medical examinations and

other incentive packages, are in themselves deterrent against frivolous applications for occupation permits.

If a foreign professional does not meet the eligibility criteria for an occupation permit, their prospective employer may apply for a work permit with the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training, and with the Passport and Immigration Office for a residence permit for the corresponding period. The employer should demonstrate that the work to be performed by the prospective expatriate requires a special know-how and which cannot be done by a Mauritian. Usually, the vacancy should be advertised in the media inviting local candidates prior to applying to the Ministry for permission in principle to allow him to recruit the foreign professional. The Ministry also consults relevant line Ministries to ascertain that local professionals are not sidelined.

Employers are encouraged to give priority to give consideration to local professionals. Adequate safeguards already exist to prevent abuse of the existing system on the part of employers. In the circumstance, there is no need to alter the existing eligibility criteria for grant of permits to foreign professionals. In fact, Mauritius needs foreign expertise for its continued economic development.

HSC EXAMINATIONS - ELIGIBILITY

(No. B/199) Mr S. Fowdar (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the eligibility criteria of holders of the Cambridge School Certificates to take part in the Cambridge Higher School Certificate Examinations, she will state if consideration will be given for an upgrade thereof to five credits at one and same sitting, including English language, French language and Mathematics.

Reply: I am fully conscious of the necessity for students to obtain the relevant qualifications that would enable them to meet the requirements for employment. In this regard, it is imperative that students not having the standard required qualifications for employment, make every effort to improve same.

This year, students have been promoted to Lower Six with a minimum of 3 Credits, but have been strongly advised to sit again for the SC/GCE 'O' level examinations to obtain a credit in at least a fourth subject.

My Ministry is reviewing the criteria for promotion to Grade 12, with effect from 2018, and in this regard, students will be required to have Credits in 5 subjects. However,

students having passed SC with 4 credits obtained at one and same sitting or its G.C.E. "O" level equivalent, will be allowed to join Grade 12 in 2018, but required to upgrade their qualifications by securing a Credit in at least a fifth subject during the year.

PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS – TEACHERS - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/200) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the teachers of the private secondary schools whose appointment have not yet been confirmed, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary School Authority, information as to if, since January 2016 to date, they have all been paid their respective salaries in time and, if not, indicate the reasons therefor.

Reply: Recruitment of teachers of Private Secondary Schools is carried out by the managers of the respective schools and requires the approval of the Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA). For that purpose, the Authority has to determine the yearly staff entitlement of the school. This exercise depends mainly on the school master time-table.

Managers of Private Secondary Schools usually submit the master time-table only after the release of SC/HSC Examinations results i.e. towards the end of February/beginning of March. Where the recruitment of a newly appointed teacher is justified, the Authority effects payment of salary when a claim, by way of a pay sheet, and the following documents in respect of the teacher, as required in the Education Act, are submitted by the Manager -

- (i) Medical Certificate;
- (ii) X-Ray Certificate, and
- (iii) Character Certificate.

The above procedure is applicable to newly recruited teachers of Private Secondary Schools whose appointment has not yet been confirmed.

I am informed by the PSEA that all teachers employed in grant aided Private Secondary Schools during the academic year 2016 have been paid their salaries.

LA FLORA – DRAIN PROJECTS

(No. B/203) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to La Flora, he will state the remedial measures that have been taken for the improvement of the drainage network thereat as at to date.

Reply: (ThePrime Minister): I would like to inform the House with regard to drain projects undertaken at La Flora, a total of Rs13.6 m. has been spent for -

- (i) two projects where the main scope of works comprised the construction of reinforced concrete covered drains at Madoo Street and Seebaruth Street by the National Development Unit in July 2016, and
- (ii) upgrading of existing drain and construction of new drain along Pandit Jhummun Giri Gossagne Napal Road by the Road Development Authority in May 2016.

The District Council of Savanne is presently constructing two absorption drains at Pamplemousses Street and Tagore Street for a total sum of Rs300,000.

Furthermore, two drain projects for an estimated cost of Rs1.8 m. would be implemented shortly by the National Development Unit as follows -

- (i) construction of drain near Duval Shop, and
- (ii) upgrading of the existing drain at Barathsing Road to mitigate recurrent flooding problem.

Their detailed designs and scope of works are currently being finalised.

It is also envisaged to implement the following drain projects during the Financial Year 2017/2018 -

- (i) construction of covered drain at Ramsaye Road near Taxi Stand and upgrading of bridge at Seedattun Aubeeluck Road by the National Development Unit for an estimated cost of Rs7.4 m. to ease the flow of water and mitigate flooding problems in the nearby area, and
- (ii) upgrading of drain near Royal Store, La Flora and reconstruction of drain at Rousseau La Pipe, Bois Cheri for an estimated cost of Rs5.5 m.

CHAMP DE MARS - CAR PARK

(No. B/204) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed leasing of land for the development and operation of a car park at Champ de Mars, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The Champ de Mars Car Park Project Proposal forms part of a greater objective, in line with the National Road Decongestion Programme. This project proposal is the first key element of the Decongestion Programme that will allow the creation of an Urban

Bus Circle Line connecting the two bus stations of Victoria and Immigration Square. Moreover, it will assist in improving fluidity of traffic along the main roads in the Central Business District of Port Louis. In fact, among the measures proposed, there is the removal of all paid parking bays along some main roads and provision of additional lanes to increase capacity to moving traffic in the City Centre.

The proposed car park is being planned to accommodate 1000 car parking slots, with proper drainage system, security controls with easy exit and ingress and green spaces. Further, the parking zone shall be connected by the Urban Bus Circle line to Victoria and Immigration Square Stations with Park and Ride e-ticket solution. The paperless ticket shall allow both city passengers and car users to hop on and hop off.

In December 2016, Government took note that the Municipal City Council of Port Louis would, in line with the Government decision to alleviate the traffic problems along the main arteries of Port Louis, be inviting Request for Proposal from interested parties for the lease of the land at Champ de Mars on an initial 30-year lease period, for the creation and management of a centralized car park zone thereat.

A Request for Proposal was accordingly launched by the Council on 23 January 2017 and at the closing date on 28 February 2017, no proposals were received.

On 30 March 2017, the City Council has taken the decision to relaunch the Request for Proposal and it is currently working on the matter.

As regards the petition from inhabitants living in the vicinity of the Champ de Mars, which the hon. Member tabled following the Statement he made in the House on 28 March 2017, I wish to reassure the hon. Member that in the preparation of the Request for Proposal document, the City Council has consulted the Ministry of Housing and Lands which has given its planning clearance for the proposed development subject to a number of conditions. These conditions include, for instance, adequate provision would have to be made for storm water run-off on-site and semi-permeable areas would have to be provided between rows of parking and planted with low hedges to tone down the visual effect of the parking. Moreover, mention is also made in the Request for Proposal document that the developer to be selected through the bid process will be required to undertake planning as well as detailed engineering & designing of the proposed project. It is understood that these exercises would have to be carried out in line with the clearance and conditions set out by the relevant authorities, such as the RDA, the TMRSU, the Ministry of Housing and Lands etc. and also to the satisfaction of the City Council.

A copy of the petition has already been forwarded to the City Council on 06 April 2017 and I have requested the Lord Mayor to meet the inhabitants and explain to them the importance of the project and to reassure them that the implementation of this project will not affect adversely their social life or leisure activities.

The House will recall that at paragraph 91 of the Government Programme for 2015-2019, it has been announced that –

“With a view to alleviating traffic congestion along the main arteries of the country, a new Road Decongestion Programme will be put in place.”

This Government is implementing what it has enunciated in its Programme. We shall be going ahead with this Port Louis Road Decongestion Programme in the best interest of the country.

SADC FREE TRADE AREA – MEMBER STATES

(No. B/205) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Southern African Development Community, he will state if trade within Member States thereof is free of tax in respect of all products and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: The SADC Free Trade Area (FTA) was launched on 17 August 2008 pursuant to which SADC Member States eliminated tariffs on 85% of intra-SADC trade. Tariffs on the remaining 15% of intra-SADC trade and which concerned products deemed sensitive, were expected to be eliminated in the year 2012. Most of the SADC Member States did indeed eliminate tariffs on all intra-SADC trade by that deadline.

However, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe which face challenges in implementing their commitments on some products, have since 2012 been seeking yearly extension of the tariff phase down period. The products concerned include sugar, paper and paper board, maize, oil, amongst others.

Mauritius eliminated tariffs on all intra-SADC trade in January 2014. In July 2016 however, Mauritius notified SADC of the introduction of a duty of 15% on ‘margarine’ and ‘spread’ as a safeguard measure in line with Art 20 of the SADC Trade Protocol. The purpose was to provide relief to the local industry given the surge of imports of these products from the SADC region.

I am placing two documents in the Library, namely a more comprehensive brief on the SADC Free Trade Area (FTA) and another brief on the Tripartite FTA involving COMESA, SADC and the East African Community for the benefit of hon. Members.

PAILLES - RING ROAD PROJECT

(No. B/206) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Ring Road Project at Pailles, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

- (a) financial and technical aspects of the repair works being carried out thereat and
- (b) expected completion date of the said repair works.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to the Parliamentary Question No. B/1080 on 29 November 2016, wherein I informed the House that in January 2014, cracks and settlement deficiencies were observed over a stretch of the Ring Road. Subsequently, around end February/March 2014, that stretch of the road collapsed following the sliding movement of the reinforced earth retaining wall. Since the collapsed part of the Ring Road was on “Design and Build” basis and it occurred during the Defects Liability Period, the Contractor, JV Rehm Grinaker-Colas agreed to carry out the repair works as per the condition of the contract.

I am informed by the Road Development Authority that the rehabilitation works, which started in October 2014, are ongoing, and that the overall progress of works is around 90%, the technical aspects which are as follows -

- piling works completed;
- fixing and stressing of 128 anchors completed;
- construction of 827 reinforced Earth panels completed;
- embankment construction completed, and
- top road structure in progress;

In regard to the financial aspects of the project, the repair works as estimated by the RDA Consultant, namely the Arab Consulting Engineers (ACE) is MUR 350 Million.

In reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/162 on 12 April 2016, I informed the House that RDA has not released the performance bond to the tune of MUR 115 million and it also has in its custody an amount of MUR 42 million representing retention money. The RDA is not effecting any payment from its fund for the remedial works and for the consultancy services hired for supervision of the repair works.

In fact, part of the cost for the repairs accrued as at date is being met from the performance bond of the contractor. So far, MUR 33,343,806.99 has been released to the Contractor.

As regards the consultancy fees to ACE, an amount of MUR 20,472,741.60 has been paid from the Retention money of the contractor.

Consequently, the RDA has in its custody, as at date, a balance of MUR 104,586,740.83 comprising performance money of MUR 82,632,880.07 and retention monies of MUR 21,953,860.76. Any amount exceeding the remaining balance for the cost of the repairs will be borne by the Contractor.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the repair works were expected to be completed by end of this month; however, due to the bad weather during the recent weeks, the completion date has been postponed to 16 May 2017.

A1-M1 LINK ROAD - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/207) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fifth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a road linking the trunk road and the Coromandel road, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the construction of the A1-M1 Link Road which will link the Port Louis-St Jean Road (A1) at Chebel to Motorway M1 and the existing Ring Road Phase 1 at Sorèze through a 350 m long bridge spanning over the Grand River North West valley.

The A1-M1 Link Road is one of the major components of the Road Decongestion Programme and it will improve the distribution of traffic within the network of A1 Road and M1 Motorway and will provide an alternative access to the city of Port Louis to traffic originating from Rose Hill, Beau Bassin, Chebel, Chapman Hill, upper Coromandel, etc. The

project will also include a trumpet interchange at Chebel and a grade separated junction at Sorèze.

The contract for the provision of consultancy services for the design, supervision and project management was awarded to the Korean Expressway Corporation on 25 November 2016. I am informed by the Road Development Authority that pre-qualification documents to shortlist contractors for the construction works have been launched on 24 January 2017 with closing date 23 March 2017. Evaluation is presently ongoing at the level of the Central Procurement Board (CPB).

In the meantime, the bidding documents are being finalised and will be sent to the CPB for vetting and approval. Same will then be forwarded to the shortlisted bidders for submission of offer.

The project is scheduled to start in July 2017 and completed in January 2020.

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – COMPULSORY LAND ACQUISITION

(No. B/208) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will give a list of the land which will be compulsorily acquired.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/182)

COMPETITION COMMISSION – Mrs V. B. - COMMISSIONER

(No. B/209 Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Competition Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if Mrs V. B., Commissioner, has been requested to step down on account of her participation in political meetings/discussion/gathering and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply (The Prime Minister): I shall reply to this question.

As a matter of policy, a person appointed as a member of a statutory body is not authorised to participate in any political activity.

An investigation into an allegation that Mrs V. B. participated in such an activity at St. Pierre last year has established that the allegation is unfounded, so that the question of requesting her to step down does not arise.

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - CAPITAL COST

(No. B/210) 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 Metro Express Project, he will give a detailed breakdown of the purported reduction in costs thereof as compared to the Metro Leger Project.

Reply: I am informed that according to the feasibility study undertaken by the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) in October 2013, the estimated capital cost of the project was Rs24.8 billion.

The present Government requested the SCE to come up with alternative proposals as regards the various components of the project so as to reduce the cost thereof and bring down same. The revised estimated cost is Rs17.7 m.

As explained in the reply to the Private Notice Question of 28 March 2017, contractors have been advised to submit a bid within that budget. However, until the Bidding exercise is completed, Members of the House will agree with us, we will not be in a position to know the exact amount of the bid.

LABOUR LEGISLATION – COMMITTEE - SET UP

(No. B/211) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the Committee set up to review the labour legislation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to where matters stand as regards the works thereof, indicating if the trade unions and other stakeholders have been party to any discussions or consultations in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

CEB – COMPANIES - PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES

(No. B/212) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to companies set up by the Central Electricity Board and which are exempted from the

application of the provisions of the Public Procurement Act, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) names thereof, including particulars of their directorship, and
- (b) contracts for the procurement of goods, works, consultancy or other services pursuant to section 10(2) of the Central Electricity Board Act, giving details thereof in each case, including the –
 - (i) contract values thereof, and
 - (ii) procurement procedures followed, indicating the names and giving particulars of the bidders, if any, and of the successful bidder, as at to date.

Reply: On 11 October 2016 and 03 March 2017 respectively, CEB incorporated three companies, namely CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd ; CEB (Green) Co Ltd and CEB (Facilities) Co Ltd.

The Directors of the company are as follows -

Company Name	Directors
CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd	1. Mr Mootoosamy Naidoo, Chairperson of the CEB Board 2. Mr Rajcoomar Bikoo, Director General at Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities Mr Gerard Hebrard, General Manager of CEB 4. Mr Chavan Dabeedin, Manager, Transmission and Distribution, CEB 5. Mr Kesnalall Balgobin, Chief Finance Manager, CEB 6. Mr Amoordalingum Pather
CEB (Green Energy) Co Ltd	1. Mr Mootoosamy Naidoo, Chairperson of the CEB Board 2. Mr Rajcoomar Bikoo, Director General at Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities 3. Mr Gerard Hebrard, General Manager of CEB 4. Mr Kesnalall Balgobin, Chief Finance Manager, CEB 5. Mr M. Shamshir Mukoon, Production Manager, CEB (now Acting General Manager)
	1. Mr Mootoosamy Naidoo, Chairperson of the CEB Board

CEB (Facilities) Co Ltd	2.	Mrs Sadhna Appanah, Lead Analyst, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
	3.	Dr. P.M Kumar Soonarane, Director Technical Services, Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

With regard to part (b) of the question, though being exempt organisations under the Public Procurement Act, the three companies have followed procedures for procurement of goods and services, that is, restricted or open bidding process.

The information regarding the contracts awarded and the unsuccessful bidders is as follows -

CEB (Fibernet) Co Ltd

No	Description	Supplier/Service Provider Name	Amount	Procurement Method
1	Active Equipment's Contract	ECI Telecom Ltd	USD 4,191,399	Bids requested from : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coriant Technologies, • FIBCOM • Wuhan FiberHome International Technologies Co Ltd • Huawei Technologies • ECI Telecom Ltd
2	Telecom Shelter Supply Contract	ECI Telecom Ltd	USD 1,646,695	Bids requested from : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coriant Technologies, • FIBCOM • Wuhan FiberHome International Technologies Co Ltd • Huawei Technologies • ECI Telecom Ltd

CEB (Green Energy) Co Ltd

No	Description	Supplier/Service Provider Name	Amount	Procurement Method
1	2 MW Solar PV farm at Henrietta	Vetting of tender documents / GB Solar (France)	EUR 3,500	Direct
2	2000 x 1 kW Solar PV Kits rooftop	Vetting of tender documents/GB Solar (France)	EUR 1,500.	Direct

CEB (Facilities) Co Ltd

No	Description	Supplier/Service Provider Name	Amount Rs	Quotation Method
1	Fit out and M & E works	INTERTECH CONTRACTING	375,632.49	3 Quotations requested namely from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERTECH CONTRACTING • Gerard Callotte • Mechanical and Electrical Contracting
2	Implementation and Maintenance of R-MAD software	R-MAD LIMITED	3,091,947.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tender was launched in February 2017 and several bids received.
3	Purchase of 2 UPS rated 10KVA each	ANVIR SOLUTIONS LTD	172,000.00	3 Quotations requested namely from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anvir Solutions Ltd • REY & LENFERNA LTD • POWERSURE
4	Purchase of Furniture	RAR CONTRACTING LTD	285,000.00	2 Quotations requested namely from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAR CONTRACTING LTD • Steve Fournier Contracting Services LTD
5	Printing and Fixing of One Way Vision	RENTAL EXPRESS CO.LTD	69,000.00	2 Quotations requested namely from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental Express Co. Ltd

No	Description	Supplier/Service Provider Name	Amount Rs	Quotation Method
				• Emboss Ltd
6	Access Control System	CONTRACTPLUS	116,086.08	3 Quotations requested namely from: • CONTRACTPLUS • FRANKEL DISTRIBUTION LTD • NIVCONTRACTING LTD
7	Lease for the premises of Utility Customer Centre-Ebene Tower	Excel International Co. Ltd	70,000 monthly plus 140,000 as deposit	• Direct
8	CCTV System	CONTRACTPLUS	28,594	• Direct

FSC - INVESTMENT BANKING LICENCE - ISSUE

(No. B/213) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Investment Banking Licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, since 07 September 2016 to date, information as to the number of individuals, entities and/or companies that have applied for and been issued therewith, indicating the name/s, directorship, shareholders and beneficial owners of the companies involved therein.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. B/194)

MAHEBOURG WATERFRONT, POINTE-DES-RÉGATES & RÉMY OLLIER - UPGRADING

(No. B/214) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the coastal regions along the Mahebourg Waterfront, Pointe-des-Régates and Rémy Ollier, he will state if consideration is being given for –

- (a) the upgrading thereof;
- (b) the creation of artificial beaches thereat;
- (c) the setting up of commercial buildings thereat, and
- (d) developing the village of Mahebourg into a smart village and, if so, indicate the expected start and completion dates of works in relation thereto in each case.

Reply: I wish to inform the House, that being an elected Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, I have observed over the years how the village of Mahebourg had been neglected by the former Government and this Government will make it smart under the Prime Ministership of hon. P. K. Jugnauth.

The Mahebourg Waterfront, Pointe des Régates and Rémy Ollier were all neglected despite being a touristic village.

Now, being the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, I would ensure that the Mahebourg area gets back its deserved status.

I personally effected a site visit on 14 March 2017 with officers of my Ministry, the Parliamentary Private Secretary for Constituency No.12, the representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, National Development Unit and the District Council of Grand Port at Rémy Ollier Public Beach, Mahebourg Waterfront and Pointe des Régates.

Moreover, I have called a meeting on 06 April 2017 with the representatives of the State Property Development Co. Ltd., Beach Authority, Tourism Authority, Prime Minister's Office (National Development Unit), District Council of Grand Port, the Parliamentary Private Secretary for Constituency No.12 and Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Environment Division).

It has been proposed that for Pointe des Régates, a mooring zone and jetty be constructed. We would also consider the possibility of creating an artificial beach.

With regard to the Mahebourg Waterfront, there is an old building, formerly used by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, on the part of land belonging to the State Property Development Co. Ltd. Consideration would be given to either renovate the building if it is structurally safe or reconstruct a new building, which might serve as a one-stop shop consisting of an Office for the District Council of Grand Port to provide some basic services, a Citizens Advice Bureau and other stakeholders could consider renting some space, for example, for the setting up of a food court thereat.

As regards the Rémy Ollier Public Beach, it has been proposed that urban amenities be provided thereon for the public and also the tourists. For this purpose, consideration is

being given for the construction of two kiosks, provision of wooden benches, footpaths, lighting points and landscaping works.

These projects would be undertaken once a consensus is reached by all the relevant stakeholders on the various items to be included in the projects, and are subject to all relevant clearances are obtained, including financial clearance.

Presently the projects are still at the consultation stage and as such, there is no specific time frame for their implementation. However, with the determination of this Government, I am sure that at least some of the works would start in financial year 2017/2018 and the remaining in the near future.

With regard to transforming Mahebourg into a smart village, I wish to inform the House that under the project WI-FI Mauritius, which is a laudable initiative of this Government, 350 Hotspots Free Wi-Fi Mahebourg has got four Hotspots, namely at the Post Office, Social Welfare Centre, Telecom Shop and Youth Centre.

These projects are an initiative of this Government and we would ensure that they are implemented in a timely manner.

FOOTBALL - CLUB M - PERFORMANCE

(No. B/215) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to football, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Football Association,

information as to the –

- (a) results obtained by Club M, competition wiz and the list of the respective managers thereof, since January 2015 to date, and
- (b) actions taken following the unsatisfactory results obtained by the Club M against Comoros last month, which resulted in the non-qualification thereof for the preliminary of the CAN 2019.

(Withdrawn)

MISSIONS OVERSEAS – ACTIVITIES & EXPENDITURES

(No. B/216) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Mauritius diplomatic missions abroad, he will state if consideration will be given for the introduction of legislation or for the prescription of rules to make it mandatory for the submission thereby of detailed reports of the activities thereof and of expenditure

incurred in relation thereto and, particularly, of the promotion efforts and successes in obtaining trade and other economic and non-economic results for the country, excluding of course, the activities and expenditure incurred in respect of matters of confidential nature.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that our Missions overseas submit regular reports on the work carried out by them. These reports provide the Ministry with an overall indication of the consular, trade, investment and other activities being by our diplomatic representations.

Since I have taken over the portfolio of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, the focus has been resolutely on Economic diplomacy. As I have had the opportunity to explain to the house in my statement on 17 August 2016, I have taken a number of steps to advance economic diplomacy.

First, I have requested that an international consultant carry out a study with a view to proposing a new organisational structure and a new road map for the Ministry.

Second, the Ministry is currently in the process of recruiting seven Economic Counsellors. They will be posted to various Missions overseas to specifically look at trade and investment opportunities for Mauritius and to support the diplomatic staff advance the economic agenda for Mauritius.

Third, we are developing an e-diplomacy platform for the Ministry to facilitate communication accelerate decisions making with Missions overseas and between Divisions and Directorates.

Fourth, we have reinforced our Africa Strategy since last year through a number of initiatives including the establishment of Joint Commissions and a Joint Working Group to oversee the implementation of actions agreed upon. The Mauritius-Ghana Joint Commission has been held and dates for Joint Commission meetings with the Comoros, Seychelles, Kenya, Madagascar and Zambia are being finalised.

I have just given a brief overview of some of the principal economic initiatives being pursued by my Ministry.

It is, in this context, that when I took over this portfolio, I instructed all Heads of Missions to submit monthly reports to me on their activities. Missions have also been asked to keep Ministry posted on a daily basis of important events in their country of posting or accreditation.

We are conscious that all these activities have a cost. I wish to assure you that all expenditure related to various activities carried out by our Mission overseas is duly sanctioned by my Ministry. Such expenditure, which has to be in accordance with the

Financial Management Manual, is reflected in the monthly accounts of the Missions, which are submitted to the Ministry every month for inclusion in the Government Treasury Accounting System.

NATIONAL BIOMETRIC IDENTITY CARDS - BIOMETRIC INFORMATION

(No. B/217) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the National Biometric Identity Cards, he will state if –

- (a) consideration will be given for the law to provide for the prohibition of the use by public and private institutions of card readers that can extract, obtain and use biometric information therefrom, and
- (b) it has been ascertained whether it contains or not a Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) chip that allows hacking and involuntary reading of information by contactless readers when being in the proximity thereof.

Reply: I would like to inform the House that, in line with the provisions of the National Identity Card Act, my Ministry has taken all necessary measures to ensure that all Mauritian citizens have their new identity cards and Regulations have been made to extend the validity period to 30 April 2017.

I wish also to inform the House that biometric information stored on the card is used solely for the purpose of identity verification by National Identity Card Unit. To this effect, my Ministry has issued a Press Communiqué dated 27 March 2017 to reassure members of the public of the in-built security features in the encryption of the card as well as physical security measures and quality control effected to dispel the alleged apprehensions of a handful of persons concerned with the security features of the ID cards.

With regard to part (a) of the question, with all these security measures unauthorised use and reading of the card is simply impossible. The House may also wish to note that once an ID card is issued, it remains in the custody of the card holder.

Legislation is not being envisaged at present but should legislation be required to regulate the use of the reading of the ID cards by public and private institutions, this would be done in limited and specific circumstances and in compliance with the relevant legislation and in accordance with our Constitution

With regard to part (b) the answer is no.

**METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - RICHELIEU & CAMP CHAPELON -
LAND EARMARKED**

(No. B/218) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will state if the unit to be set up in relation to the plots of land earmarked or proposed for use in relation to the implementation thereof by way of compulsory acquisition will also look into those plots of land situated in the Richelieu and the Camp Chapelon regions or in the vicinity thereof.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that a Committee has been set up to look into the representations received from owners of plots of land which have been acquired for the Metro Express Project and which are still occupied by residents.

The Committee is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry and comprises representatives from the Ministry of Local Government, Finance and Economic Development, Housing and Lands, Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, Valuation Department, Metro Express Ltd and Municipal Councils.

The Committee will look into each case and will propose solutions which could be applied in hardship cases. The Committee is pursuing consultation with residents and will also cover plots of land situated in the Richelieu and Camp Chapelon regions and in the vicinity thereof.

MELROSE PRISON - SEARCH

(No. B/219) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Melrose Prison, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to if all persons entering therein are searched, indicating if same applies to the team known as 24/7 and, if not, why not.

Reply: Section 9(1) of the Reform Institutions Act provides that –

- “(1) Subject to section 28, an officer may –
- (a) examine anything which is within or being brought into or taken out of an institution; and

- (b) where he has reason to suspect that a person or a vehicle is carrying a prohibited article or any stolen Government property in use in an institution, stop and search the vehicle or person found—
- (i) within, or going in or out of, an institution;
 - (ii) close to a detainee, whether inside or outside an institution.”

Section 28 of the Reform Institutions Act provides that no person shall be searched in an institution otherwise than by a person of the same sex.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that, in accordance with these provisions, persons entering a prison, are subjected to a search. These also include staff of prisons, irrespective of their ranks, and the team known as 24/7.

POLYTECHNICS MAURITIUS LTD – SET UP

(No. B/220) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Polytechnics Mauritius Limited, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) name of the officer-in-charge thereof, and
- (b) date of coming into operation thereof.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the Board of the Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd was set up in January 2017 under the chairmanship of Professor Theeshan Bahorun, GOSK. The name of the Chief Executive Officer is not known yet, as the Board is currently proceeding with the recruitment exercise of the CEO as well as the senior management staff.

As regards part (b) of the question, the project is expected to come into operation in the last quarter of 2017.

GRNW - METRO EXPRESS PROJECT– LAND ACQUISITION

(No. B/223) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will state if –

- (a) private land in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West will be compulsorily acquired therefor and, if so, give a list thereof, and
- (b) the football pitch found at Camp Chapelon and the Old Bridge at the Grand River North West will be used therefor.

Reply: As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that 50 plots of private land have been acquired by Government in Constituency No.1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West. The list is being compiled.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the football pitch at Camp Chapelon will not be affected, whereas the Old Bridge at Grand River North West will be refurbished, along the guidelines set by the National Heritage Fund as it is of high heritage value. On completion of the works, the bridge will be opened to traffic.

LA CHAUMIÈRE – HAZARDOUS WASTE - STORAGE FACILITY

(No. B/224) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a centralized hazardous waste facility at La Chaumière, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The contract for the construction of a centralized interim storage facility for hazardous wastes at La Chaumière was awarded on 27 March 2015 to Rehm Grinaker Co. Ltd for a contract value of Rs 220M. Construction works started in April 2015 and was completed in June 2016.

With regard to the operation, management and maintenance of the facility, the contract was awarded on 16 December 2016 to Polyeco S.A. for a period of five years.

Both procurement exercises were conducted by the Central Procurement Board.

The Contractor is presently procuring and installing specialised laboratory equipment, furniture, vehicles and United Nations approved plastic containers and consumables and arranging for training of its local personnel, in accordance with the mobilisation period provided for in the contract.

NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS - HOLDERS

(No. B/226) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the National Identity Cards, he will state the number of citizens who are presently holders of –

- (a) the old laminated one;
- (b) the new biometric one, and
- (c) neither the laminated nor the biometric one.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, according to statistics available at the Electoral Commissioner Office as at 2016, the population of Mauritius stood at 917,310. Since October 2013, not a single paper laminated ID card has been issued.

All citizens who have the new ID cards, have also in their custody their old laminated ID cards as these cards were returned to them. It is, therefore, estimated that unless the old cards have been discarded, there might be 917,310 old laminated ID cards for which the validity expires on 30 April 2017.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the number of card holders of the new ID card stands at 986,966 as at 07 April 2017. Additionally, some 15,413 card holders have not yet collected their ID card as at that date.

With regard to part (c) of the question, citizens who do not have either the old or the new ID card are normally among the following -

- (i) Mauritian citizens presently abroad;
- (ii) Mauritian citizens who are seriously ill, and
- (iii) Mauritian citizens who are unable to apply for the ID cards for other compelling and reasonable grounds.

These persons may still apply for their ID card at the first opportunity after 30 April 2017 supported by documentary evidence justifying their late application such as passport, medical certificate. I am informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that there are presently 131,646 Mauritians abroad, including those who hold dual nationality.

In addition, those citizens attaining the age of 18 have a period of six months to apply for their ID card. The House may wish to note that there are around 15,000 citizens who turn 18 annually.