



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 05 DECEMBER 2017

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Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 28 of 2017

Sitting of Tuesday 05 December 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 Speaker

Declaration of Interest by the Honourable Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac (**Mr B Jahangeer**) in regard to Parliamentary Question B/904. (*In Original*)

B. Prime Minister's Office

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills (*In Original*) –
 - (i) The Data Protection Bill;
 - (ii) The Higher Education Bill; and
 - (iii) The Additional Remuneration and Other Allowances (2018) Bill
- (b) The Annual Report of the Bank of Mauritius for the year ended 30th June 2017.

C. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands

- (a) The Local Government (Application for Building and Land Use Permit) (Collection and Transfer of Fees) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No. 231 of 2017)
- (b) The Vacoas-Phoenix (street naming) Amendment Regulation 2017. (Government Notice No. 232 of 2017)

D. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No.44) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No. 233 of 2017)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No.45) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No. 234 of 2017)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**NEW MANGALORE PORT, INDIA – STC PETROLEUM PRODUCTS -
EMBARGO**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in view of the threat to the national economy and our citizens, following the decision of the High Court of Karnataka to impose an embargo on a vessel carrying State Trading Corporation products, he will state the measures taken by Government to prevent shortages of the said products on the local market.

The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr A. Gungah): Madam Speaker, on 01 December 2017, at mid-day, I was informed by the State Trading Corporation that, on 30 November 2017, the High Court of Karnataka had issued an interim order to refrain the New Mangalore Port from providing any clearance to the vessel 'Pacific Diamond' to leave the port, in the event that the vessel had been loaded with the cargo of the State Trading Corporation.

This order was a consequence of an application made by Betamax Ltd on 22 November 2017, for the High Court of Karnataka in India to issue injunction orders against the State Trading Corporation of Mauritius and the New Mangalore Port Trust to refrain the latter from providing any clearance to the vessel 'Pacific Diamond' to leave the New Mangalore Port, India with 40,000 metric tonnes (MT) of petroleum products including Motor Gasoline, Gas Oil and Jet A1 fuels, destined to the State Trading Corporation of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, I wish to point out that prior to Friday 01 December 2017, neither Betamax Ltd nor the High Court of Karnataka had informed any party in Mauritius of that case, let alone the State Trading Corporation. On 04 December 2017, the case was taken up in the High Court of Karnataka. The Judge of that Court said that the Court was closing and would not sit for the next two to three days and the earliest the case would be heard would be on Monday 11 December 2017. This sequence of events is self-explanatory as to the bad faith of Betamax Ltd. They have tried to provoke a situation tantamount to a shortage of supply of petroleum products, an essential commodity for the people, the industry and the nation as a whole. Madam Speaker, their *modus operandi* is clear. They are trying to bring

the Mauritian economy to a standstill. Betamax Ltd is attempting to hold the public interests of the State of Mauritius to ransom so as to satisfy their mere pecuniary interests only.

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister is using the time allotted to him to answer this question to defame a party that is not even present in this Assembly. He is basically accusing ...

(Interruptions)

I am sorry, this is a very ...

(Interruptions)

Can I continue?

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Mohamed: This is what the hon. Minister is doing.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Mohamed: Can I finish, Madam Speaker?

So, what the hon. Minister is doing here is defaming and making unlawful accusations against the party and imputing motives against a party that is not even here present to defend itself. That goes against Standing Orders! One cannot do that!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I have taken note of your point of order, but allow me to say that the hon. Minister has the right to provide the basic facts of the case without making allegations and without imputing motives. But he has the right to present to this august Assembly for the benefit of the population the basic facts of the case.

Mr Mohamed: So, is the hon. Minister withdrawing what he has just said since, Madam Speaker, you said that he has no right?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Member, if ever the hon. Minister departs from what has been said, then only I will interrupt him.

Mr Gungah: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madame la présidente, en effet, Betamax Ltée a bien mijoté son coup, choisissant le mois de décembre pour faire bloquer le navire affrété par la *STC* et de provoquer une rupture ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gungah, can you, please, state the facts of the case and don't give personal opinions on the matter. If ever in the supplementary questions which would be asked by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, you have certain information to provide as to your personal opinion, you will do so.

Mr Gungah: Madame la présidente, Betamax Ltée a essayé de provoquer une rupture de stock de nos produits pétroliers ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

This is absolutely in order. I have said that if the hon. Minister departs, I will interrupt him, but this is perfectly in order.

Mr Gungah: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Donc, Madame la présidente, comme je disais, Betamax Ltée a essayé de provoquer une rupture de stock de nos produits pétroliers pour paralyser le pays et prendre en otage le pays, malgré que l'affaire soit toujours en Cour Suprême à Maurice. Le 03 octobre dernier, la Cour Suprême avait déjà fixé aux 13, 14 et 15 mars 2018 l'appel interjeté par la *STC* contre l'*award* du *Singapore International Arbitration Centre* et la demande d'une garantie de Betamax Ltée.

Madame la présidente, nous sommes dans un État de droit où le judiciaire est respecté. La logique voudrait que Betamax attende le verdict de la Cour Suprême de Maurice. Mais tel n'a pas été le cas. Je réitère que cette action de Betamax est antipatriotique et irresponsable.

L'intérêt d'une compagnie commerciale ne peut primer sur l'intérêt de la nation.

Madam Speaker, I can reassure the House and the population in general that the current level of petroleum products available in the country is comfortable.

Indeed, as a responsible, diligent and caring Government, we did not await the outcome of the case being heard on Monday 04 December 2017 to work on alternative options and are taking all appropriate measures to ensure continuity of supply of petroleum products to the nation. Such actions have already been taken during the weekend of 02 and 03 December 2017.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I have been informed that the State Trading Corporation (STC) has worked with several international leading trading houses where petroleum products are readily available on the market and associated transport arrangements have also been taken care of.

In view of the strategic nature of petroleum products, Members of the House will concur with me that it would not be appropriate to release any related information, be it on the present stock level, the source of supply, transport arrangements or prices of products.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Gungah: Moreover, I wish to inform the House and the population that the arrangements made will result in the arrival of these ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please, so that we can listen to what the Minister is saying!

Mr Gungah: Moreover, I wish to inform the House and the population that the arrangements made will result in the arrival of these products within the required time frame or even earlier and at comparable, fair and reasonable prices. In addition, the products will comply with the usual specifications of the State Trading Corporation.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I wish, once again, to reassure the House and the citizens of Mauritius as well as all economic operators and stakeholders that the measures that have been taken by Government will ensure continuity of supply of all petroleum products. We should not forget that in January 2015 when Government decided to stop having recourse to the vessel "Red Eagle" of Betamax Ltd., the measures that were taken

were very effective and there had not been any shortage of petroleum products in the Republic of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, as it is an issue of national interest, I would like to put on record that since I was made aware of this order, I immediately informed both the Prime Minister, who was overseas, and the Deputy Prime Minister, who was Ag. Prime Minister, of this matter. We have remained in close and constant communication to ensure that most appropriate actions be taken in the interests of the nation. Their support and advice have been instrumental in addressing the situation.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, first of all, how is it that the first order was issued on Wednesday 29 November and he was only made aware of any problem two days later, that is, on Friday 01 December?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, to be frank with you, we are not aware of any first order that was made on 29th; we were made aware of the order of 30th on 01 December this year.

Mr X. L. Duval: It is clear from the High Court of Karnataka, the daily orders, Madam Speaker. I want to ask the hon. Minister, he has said again in this House, *qu'il n'y a pas de pénurie, la situation est confortable*. Whereas on this Monday, yesterday, in the High Court of Karnataka, this is what the STC said and I will, with your permission, quote and table it as required, that -

“Mauritius has limited petroleum reserves and the same being an essential commodity. In the event the petroleum does not reach Mauritius within the stipulated time - that is, with Pacific Diamond, I think this Saturday - through the said vessel, it shall lead to paucity of petroleum to the entire petroleum industry and cause failure of the economy and the commercial activities in the State of Mauritius will come to a standstill.”

So, is the Government of Mauritius, through the Minister, properly informing this House today or have they actually misinformed the High Court of Karnataka yesterday? Which is which?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to know from you, being given that this case is pending at the Karnataka Court, whether the hon. Leader of the Opposition can raise the issue here, but I can reply to the question.

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Minister, you will have to reply to this question because it is not a question which...

(Interruptions)

Mr Gungah: So, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

In fact, the intention of Betamax was what was written in the affidavit, but, in the meantime, all arrangements have been made in order to prevent any rupture in the supply of petroleum products.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, what we are dealing with is he said himself in the “Weekend”, on 02 December, he took all the measures necessary apparently to ensure stock levels. And on the next day, on Monday, the STC through their Counsel apparently misinforms the High Court of Karnataka to say that the situation is critical and that the economy will come to a standstill if the stocks are not released. Which is which? Have we taken additional steps or are we actually in a situation as the STC says, of paucity, Madam Speaker?

Mr Gungah: Of course, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has well said, there is an “if” in that sentence. If that ship could not have come to Mauritius, we would not have had shortage. That is for sure, but...

(Interruptions)

...it is not coming. I have replied.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Members, at least, allow him to reply!

Mr Gungah: All arrangements have been made and the Leader of the Opposition does not have to worry about anything. All arrangements have been made. He will be able to drive his car or get his cars driven; he does not have to worry about that.

Mr X. L. Duval: If I were the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr X. L. Duval: If I were the hon. Minister, I would not make any personal comments. Okay?

(Interruptions)

I would avoid that if I were you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, ask your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Leave my car out of it!

(Interruptions)

Which is a Government car, anyway!

Now, my information is that the stock levels, Madam Speaker, we have about 9 days for Mogas which is a petroleum, normal for cars, and about 11 days for Gas Oil. Will the Minister tell the truth to the country, is this the situation?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I am a responsible Member of this Government.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, calm down on the other side!

Mr Gungah: And I can tell you that we are a serious Government. We would not come to the Parliament to give hope to the population. We have been working in very close collaboration, the STC, my Ministry, the Prime Minister, and the Deputy Prime Minister. And whatever I said in my reply that we would not have any shortage of petroleum products comes from a serious Government.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: A serious and incompetent Government! Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: The truth always hurts, I understand. I would like to ask the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, calm down!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...at what cost...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval, you are disrupting the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... are these petroleum products coming to Mauritius? Are we buying, I think, somewhere, I saw in the papers maybe Aramco? Are we going through brokers? Are commissions being paid left, right and centre? What are the freight costs that are involved and what are the delays that will happen maybe because of the freight time? The nation, Madam Speaker, is seriously worried and seriously entitled to this information.

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, after having made a Press conference on Saturday, I can tell you that most of the people that I have met, not only Ministrywise, but in my Constituency and other places, have been reassured. Let me tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he is talking about delays; if there is a delay, he means that there will be shortage of supply, but there won't be any delay and the ships will start coming earlier than the ship that has been blocked at Mangalore Port. I mentioned in my reply, Madam Speaker. The price, the quantity of supply, the quality, the transportation, the freight and all are all comparable to what we are paying now.

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to insist on the cost. Now, the cost of the petrol is public figure. It is not hidden anywhere. STC publishes it. The reference price is 525 US dollars per metric tonne for mogas and 61.85 dollars per barrel for gasoil. Is this the same price that the hon. Minister is paying inclusive of everything, and if not, is the public going to expect an increase in the cost of petrol here?

Mr Gungah: I cannot understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition, in fact.

(Interruptions)

He looks to be on the side of Betamax. I understand...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't make comments!

Mr Gungah: I understand.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please sit down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister, please reply factually to the questions which are being asked without making an opinion and giving comments just not to disrupt the smooth working of the Question Time.

Mr Gungah: Anyway...

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has to withdraw what he has said! *Purement et simplement!* You asked me to withdraw last week, I withdrew. This week he withdraws. *Saken so tour!*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, just to have some order in the House, please withdraw what you said because we are losing the time of the House and this is a serious question.

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I withdraw. But the national interest of a country is more important than individual interest. Madam Speaker, prices of petroleum products fluctuate and, I think, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is very well aware about that. Today, the price can be something; in a few hours or tomorrow the price may be different. When the hon. Leader of the Opposition is talking about reference price, he should be aware also that Platts price is international. It is not that one country will sell petroleum products more than what another country would have sold. The price is standard concerning Platts price. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is now relating this problem with an increase in the future of petroleum prices, mogas and gasoil. Again, the hon. Leader of the Opposition should be aware that the price of petroleum products, mogas and diesel is calculated by the PPC, Petroleum Pricing Committee, and it depends on many factors, not only on the price of mogas or gasoil, but on many factors. He knows the structure very well. He has the paper with him with all the elements in that structure. Having been in previous Governments for 10 years, having been in this Government for 2 years, the Leader of the Opposition knows very well how the situation is at STC, especially we are not producers of petroleum products, and we depend on all these countries to be able to have petroleum products.

Mr X. L. Duval: It is quite easy to answer this question; either it is the STC, the taxpayer that will pay an increase or the consumer. There is no need to hide behind any Petroleum Pricing Committee (PPC).

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I want to ask the hon. Minister clearly now; yes or no, are we going to buy this stock of fuel through brokers who will earn commission or are we buying straight from the supplier?

(Interruptions)

Mr Gungah: I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition has not been able, up to now, to understand the seriousness of this Government.

(Interruptions)

We are not *amateurs*.

(Interruptions)

STC has got professionals working. I can assure the House, the whole population that we are dealing with countries where petroleum products are flooded, not with any other brokers or whatever.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah: It is not a question of brokers. We are dealing with Governments...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah: We are dealing with Governments of different countries, not with brokers.

Mr X. L. Duval: I take it there will be no brokers to this.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, as far as the demurrage fees for the ship that is blocked, who is going to pay for that, and also can he tell

the House from the 06 June 2017, when the arbitrage award came, to now, how much interest has accrued? Is the figure of Rs74 m. of accrued interest correct or not?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I think you will agree with me that this question is really not relevant to the PNQ.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: If you don't have the information...

(Interruptions)

Mr Gungah: And I don't have the figures with me!

(Interruptions)

I don't have the figures with me! If the hon. Leader of the Opposition comes with a substantive...

Madam Speaker: If you don't have the information you just say that you don't have that information; it does not arise from the main question.

(Interruptions)

Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: He answered! Okay. Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether now, given that the High Court in India has already blocked one shipment – this is petrol - it can also tomorrow, in another country, other courts block other shipments, that is, rice, for instance. Now, has the Government considered the possibility, therefore, that our rice supply may also be prevented from coming from the Far East to Mauritius, and if so, what is the hon. Minister doing about it?

Mr Gungah: I will reply to this question, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr Gungah: The same question was asked to me by a journalist on Saturday....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, Betamax is free to do whatever legal action they want to do, but if Betamax has a little love for this country, Betamax won't do such actions as to prevent people from having rice in this country.

(Interruptions)

And I hope because I know...

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr Gungah:.. hon. Leader of the Opposition can help talking to Betamax if ever they are going to take such actions...

(Interruptions)

...not to put it on rice or other products that people eat in Mauritius.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I talk to everyone. I thank God for that. Not like them to do vengeance and revenge which is the name of the day for this Government, and this is why we are here today because of vengeance and revenge, Madam Speaker, on certain people including BAI and Betamax.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I just want to draw your attention that there are four more minutes left.

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether, State Trading Corporation (STC) owes now, on paper, Rs4.5 billion plus tons of interests and all that to Betamax according to a Court order. Has STC provided this amount in the accounts which ended on 30 June 2017? Get a piece of paper if the Minister wants! Has it provided for this amount? Has it, in other words, included this liability in the accounts of STC?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, why should STC now keep reserves to pay Betamax when the Court case is coming in March. Let's see the outcome of the case! As a responsible Government, we will respect whatever is the outcome. Moreover, I will tell the Leader of the Opposition that the accounts of STC are very well-audited and have been disclosed on the website.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the Minister does not know that we are talking about the accounts of 30 June 2017, not 2015; 2017! He should know that and, Madam Speaker, it will be up to the National Audit Director to decide whether or not that Rs4.5

billion should be included and it should be included and I tell you if it is included, then STC will be disastrously bankrupt.

Madam Speaker: This is your question!

Mr Gungah: *Les oiseaux de malheur! Les prophètes de malheur!* Madam Speaker, there is a case going on at the Court.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mr Gungah: I think we know how it is. Till we do not have a judgment...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry!

Mr Gungah: Till we do not have a judgment, I do not think that we have to cater for the sum to be paid. Let me tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition concerning the accounts of STC, the accounts for 30 June 2017 are being audited and same will be disclosed as per accounting standards.

Mr X. L. Duval: In the next six months, that is exactly what I am saying. They are not on any website, any stupid website. Well, I am asking the hon. Minister, Madam Speaker, whether, given all these cheap accusations, left, right and centre...

Madam Speaker: Your last question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, last one. All these cheap accusations, whether he will not have a decent Commission of Inquiry, right from the start, from the time that it was years ago started by the Ministry of Commerce, right through to now, then we will see the involvement of every one person and have it, please, with a Judge and two Assessors, then the whole truth will come out. I will gladly tell everything. I have told the Police. I will tell everything again.

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, there has been Police case, ICAC and the case has been to the Arbitration. There is Court case. I do not know how come the Leader of the Opposition, out of the blue, comes out and says that there should be a Commission of Inquiry.

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ No. B/900 in regard to the Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd. will be replied by the hon.

Attorney-General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms. Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Uteem: I have a specific question on the Bank of Mauritius as a regulator and the Bank of Mauritius falls under the aegis of the Prime Minister. I am not asking anything about a Court case where the Attorney-General is involved. I am asking a very specific question: what has the Bank of Mauritius done? So, I will bow to your ruling, of course, Madam Speaker, but I do not understand why is this not being answered by the Minister in charge of the Bank of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, you must be aware that transfer of questions rests with Ministers and with the Executive and that the Chair has no control on transfer of questions. Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

MRA – ASSESSMENT - OBJECTION

(No. B/897) Mr S. Mohamed (First 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 objections/appeals/disputes lodged before the Objection, Appeal, Dispute Resolution Department of the Mauritius Revenue Authority over the period 01 July 2015 to 30 June 2016, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof and the total tax amount claimed, indicating the number thereof wherein the claim has been –

- (a) maintained/reduced, indicating the corresponding tax amount involved in each case;
- (b) settled following informal meetings at the Assessment Review Committee, and
- (c) heard before the Assessment Review Committee and outcome thereof, indicating the time delay within which each case was determined.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, a person who is dissatisfied with an assessment raised by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), may within 28 days and upon payment of 10% of the amount assessed object to the assessment.

The objection is dealt with by the Objection, Appeal, Dispute Resolution Directorate of the MRA which has 4 months to determine the objection. A person who is aggrieved by a

determination of the Directorate may appeal to the Assessment Review Committee (ARC) within 28 days of the date of determination.

The ARC is then required to endeavour to fix the case for hearing within 2 months and give its decision no later than 4 weeks from the end of the hearing. A person who is still aggrieved following a decision of the ARC may appeal to the Supreme Court.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the MRA that over the period 01 July 2015 to 30 June 2016, 1,526 taxpayers objected to assessments raised by the MRA for a total amount of Rs7.3 billion.

As regards part (a) of the question, 956 cases representing Rs6.6 billion of tax assessed, were maintained by the Directorate, out of which 414 taxpayers have accepted the decision of the MRA and 542 taxpayers have appealed to the ARC. The tax assessed in respect of 297 cases was reduced from Rs300 m. to Rs130 m. and 273 cases representing Rs400 m. were yet to be finalised as at 30 June 2016. The amount involved in each case is being compiled by the MRA and will be tabled. However, in view of the secrecy provision in Revenue Laws, it would not be appropriate to provide the names of the taxpayers.

With respect to part (b) of the question, I am informed that during the same period, 197 cases were settled following informal meetings at the ARC for a total revised tax amount of Rs423 m.

Regarding part (c) of the question, I am informed that during the period 01 July 2015 to 30 June 2016, 144 cases relating to MRA were heard and determined by the ARC. The time taken to determine a case depends on its complexity and this information is being compiled by the ARC for each case.

Madam Speaker, Government is fully aware of the need to speed up the current objection and appeal system and also to give aggrieved taxpayers other avenues of dispute resolution.

In this respect, in the last Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, the concept of written statement of case and a witness statement has been introduced with a view to reducing the time taken to hear cases at the level of the ARC.

Furthermore, the ARC has been given additional resources especially in terms of additional members and new offices to enable the Committee to sit in three Panels simultaneously.

Madam Speaker, we have also provided aggrieved taxpayers two new avenues to settle a tax dispute with the MRA. First, a taxpayer may opt to have recourse to the Alternative Tax Dispute Resolution Panel where the amount involved exceeds Rs10 m. 22 cases have been finalised representing a revised total tax amount determined of Rs253 m.

Second, the Expeditious Dispute Resolution of Tax Scheme (EDRTS) has been reintroduced for the current financial year giving the possibility for the MRA to review the assessed amount in cases where the amount in dispute is less than Rs10 m.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: No more questions. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

MBC - “*LE MILLIONAIRE*” PROGRAMME - COST

(No. B/898) 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 “Le Millionaire” programme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to –

- (a) when same was approved by the Board thereof;
- (b) the procurement procedures followed for the purchase of equipment therefor;
- (c) the financial implications thereof, and
- (d) the names and grade of the staff involved therein.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, at the very outset, allow me to inform the House that the “Who wants to be a Millionaire” TV show, to which I assume that the hon. Member is referring as “Le Millionaire” programme, has been produced and aired in 121 countries, in 93 versions, including the re-airing. The show is reputed for boosting audience rating of the channels in which it is aired and of its tremendous market potential.

It is important to highlight that the proposed broadcast of the show is in accordance with the objects of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation as stipulated under section 4 of the MBC Act. In addition, the MBC is complying with section 5(e) of its Act, which stipulates that the Corporation may organise, provide or subsidise concerts, shows and other forms of entertainment for broadcasting.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the MBC Board had on 11 October 2016 and on 08 August 2017 approved the project.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that no additional equipment needs to be added to the existing infrastructure meant to be used exclusively for the show, except for a *décor*, that is, the show platform, which will amount to approximately Rs1 m. In this connection, the MBC has launched a tender exercise on 14 November 2017, through restricted bidding, for the acquisition of the set, in accordance with section 19 of the Public Procurement Act, as well as section 41 of the Public Procurement Regulations.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the estimated cost for this project is around Rs10 m.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (d) of the question, I am informed that the Production and Airing Agreement signed between the MBC and the promoter has forecast the categories of human resources that will be required for the show, with the number of people in each category. However, as the show has not started, the names of the people to service the show are not yet known.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Has the attention of the hon. Prime Minister been drawn by the representative on the Board as to whether the present Deputy Director General had severe doubts on this project, and that this project is a personal initiative of the present Director General who was suspended at one period of time?

The Prime Minister: No, that is not to my knowledge, Madam Speaker. In fact, I just answered to say that there have been discussions at the level of Board meetings. In fact, a number of Board meetings have been held, but I am not aware that there is disagreement over this programme. In fact, what I am told is that there is unanimity and they are going ahead. I am also informed that - I believe on Friday - they are going to sensitise people from the media to give all the details about this programme.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House who chaired the Board when that project was approved?

The Prime Minister: As I mentioned, there were two Board meetings. The first Board meeting was on 11 October and the Chairperson was Mr Baldowa - there are a number of other members - and the Board meeting of 08 August had as Chairperson Mr Ramdenee.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

DECLARATION OF ASSETS BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/899) 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 Ministerial Committee set up to examine the different aspects of the new regime for the declaration of assets, he will state if it has submitted its report and, if so, give details thereof, indicating the expected date of introduction in the Assembly of the new Declaration of Assets Bill.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the House would recall that in my reply to the Private Notice Question on 18 April 2017, I informed that a Ministerial Committee was examining the different aspects of a new regime for the declaration of assets.

I am informed that the Ministerial Committee has completed its task and has submitted its report. Drafting instructions will be conveyed to the Attorney General's Office once Cabinet approval is obtained.

Madam Speaker, let me reassure the House that Government will stand by its commitments and introduce the Bill as soon as it is ready.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, since it is a very important issue, I will have three supplementary questions. Of course, I will ask one by one.

Madam Speaker: If you have got three supplementary questions, please do not make long statements.

Mr Ameer Meea: No, I will be brief.

In the Electoral Manifesto, this was mentioned as « *les 12 priorités des trois premiers mois du gouvernement* ». Now it is almost three years that this Government is in power, and still we have not seen the Bill yet.

My question to the hon. Prime Minister is: will he agree with me that the country is crying for new laws to combat fraud and corruption and that coming with the Bill urgently in the House will send a strong signal to the whole population, and that it cannot take more than three years just to amend the law for the new Declaration of Assets Act?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me say that we have put it in our programme. I do not know what the hon. Member has in mind when he says that it is just an amendment that we have to make so that we come to Parliament.

Maybe we have a different concept of what kind of Declaration of Assets Bill we want to bring before the House. I can say that we have been working on this Bill. It is not yet a Bill; it is a report. The Deputy Prime Minister, together with other Ministers, has been looking at so many issues. Of course, it is not the appropriate moment now to give any information about what it would contain eventually because it has to be debated in Cabinet, but I can say that it is serious work. Let the Bill come before the House, then people will see what changes we want to bring and what kind of declaration of assets we want in order to see to it, obviously, that the objects that we want to attain would, in fact, be attained.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, the meaning of assets nowadays is very wide. Today, it includes financial derivatives...

Madam Speaker: Do not be long in your question, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: It includes promissory notes, bitcoin and even gold. For gold, you just have to ask the previous Minister of Finance, he will tell you.

My question to the hon. Prime Minister today is whether all these assets that I have just mentioned will also be included in the new Declaration of Assets Act plus any assets that are included overseas, that is, not only local ones, but also the overseas assets as well.

The Prime Minister: In fact, that is the very reason why the Bill has not come only after a few months this Government came to power, because we have to look at all the issues to see to it that there are no loopholes, to see to it that people do not go round the legislation in a way. I must say it is complex. I believe that the hon. Member too would appreciate that it is a complex matter. So, three years; well, we still have two years to go...

(Interruptions)

Two years!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, no comments! We lose time!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: The hon. Members are dreaming!

(Interruptions)

I know it is in their dream! Every time they dream about a few months, a few weeks!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, do not interrupt the hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: There is no restriction on dreaming, Madam Speaker. Anyone can dream about when the General Elections will be held.

(Interruptions)

But it will certainly...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, no comments from a sitting position!

(Interruptions)

No comments!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan !

(Interruptions)

Please, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, I was on my feet and you stood up! I do not want any comments from a sitting position because you are disrupting the work of the House.

(Interruptions)

Yes, please!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, *mo pa pu la mais mo déjà la!*

(Interruptions)

But...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: At least, you should have taken the initiative of challenging that. But, anyway, let us not waste time.

(Interruptions)

He made me forget what I was saying now!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: It was about the Bill.

The Prime Minister: Yes, that is why I am saying the committee has already submitted a report. The matter will be discussed in Cabinet and, eventually, we will come with the Bill. So, I cannot now say what is going to be contained in the Bill.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: In spite of the answer the hon. Prime Minister has just given to the effect that he cannot reveal the contents of the Bill, can I ask him whether the Bill will require Chairpersons of parastatal bodies, Chief Executive Officers and Advisers to Ministers also - the Bill will require this category of persons - to declare their assets?

The Prime Minister: That also will be looked into. Maybe I can appeal to any hon. Member who wishes to make any suggestion or any proposal, yes, we will consider before even coming with the Bill to this House.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister wants to convince us that the committee is taking three years...

Madam Speaker: Please, don't make comments!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...but I can't understand why it is taking three years to bring such a Bill. So, my question...

Madam Speaker: Don't make comments! You are making a repetition of what you said, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, will the hon. Prime Minister take it into consideration to include in the Bill that the new declaration be made public because it serves no purpose to keep it in a drawer in ICAC.

Madam Speaker: Okay, you have asked your question, expect a reply from the hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Declaration of Assets Act was enacted, I believe, in 1985 and since then, it has not been reviewed. Now, this Government has taken a commitment with the people that we are going to come up with a new declaration of assets and the hon. Member, I mean, his party has been in Government previously. He is now harping on that it is taking three years! My commitment to the people of Mauritius is that we will respect that commitment and I am sure that we will come before this House before the end of this mandate with a new Declaration of Assets Bill.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

(Interruptions)

No remarks from a sitting position! You are disrupting the work of the House!

SMART CITY SCHEME SOCIAL FUND - CONTRIBUTION

(No. B/901) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) 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 Smart City Scheme Social Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) amount of funds contributed therein by smart city companies as at to date;
- (b) purpose thereof, and
- (c) who is managing same.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Smart City Scheme has been amended by way of regulations to...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

(Interruptions)

Please! No crosstalking!

(Interruptions)

Please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Prime Minister, please! Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please listen to me!

(Interruptions)

Please, listen to me! I am on my feet, you continue to talk! No crosstalking, I have said because I have seen that crosstalking from a sitting position is disrupting the work of the House! I have drawn attention several times that there should be no crosstalking! Please! I ask once again from all Members of this House, be it on the Government side or on the Opposition side to refrain from crosstalking which would definitely disrupt the workings of the House. Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Smart City Scheme has been amended by way of regulations to provide for a contribution of Rs25,000 to a Smart City Scheme Social Fund upon the sale of every residential unit or serviced plot. Appropriate regulations have also been made to that effect on 11 November 2017.

As regard part (a) of the question, I am informed that, as at to date, no sale of residential units or serviced plots has been effected under the Smart City Scheme and, therefore, no contribution has been credited to the Fund.

With respect to part (b) of the question, the objects of the Fund as laid down in the Finance and Audit (Smart City Scheme Social Fund) Regulations 2017 are to contribute to the financing of -

- (a) social amenities, community development and other programmes or facilities for the benefit of local communities in local authorities, taking into account, wherever applicable, the social impact assessment carried out by a Smart City company;
- (b) upgrading of infrastructural works, flood mitigation and other sports and leisure infrastructure in local authorities, and
- (c) such other works or programmes as the Minister of Finance may determine.

Regarding part (c) of the question, the regulations already make provision for the Fund to be administered and managed by a Committee. As I have just mentioned, since there are no funds to be managed therefore the committee has not been set up.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether the Smart City Scheme Social Fund will be made available to civic movement from within the catchment area of the Smart City for implementation of the project towards the inhabitants?

The Prime Minister: Well, at any rate it will have to be in line with the criteria that have been defined in the regulation. So, it will be, therefore, for that committee to look into, first of all, the social impact assessment, if there is any, and then, obviously, to allocate any budget for such objects.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether consideration will be given for civil society to get, at least, a representative on the committee managing the Fund?

The Prime Minister: Well, the committee is well defined. If I can say for the benefit of the hon. Member, it shall consist of a Chairperson to be appointed by the Minister and one representative from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, the Accountant General, the Municipal City Council or Municipal Town Council and/or District Council concerned.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House how can people from around the Smart City send requests in regard to social projects they want to be implemented by the Fund?

The Prime Minister: It will not be operating in that way. There is a Fund. What I could understand from what the hon. Member is saying, it is not a Fund that, let us say, people or organisations in the locality will make a request for funding of their activities. It is with regard to, as I say, social amenities, community development and other programmes or facilities.

Now, the criteria will have to be defined by that committee. I believe it is more in terms of the surrounding that has been in a way either affected or that needs to be upgraded with regard to the amenities there.

Madam Speaker: Last question, Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Prime Minister, at least, explain how the contributions are going to be made by the Smart Cities through the Fund and how many...

Madam Speaker: One question only!

Mr A. Duval: It is the same question, Madam Speaker, with regard to the Smart Cities that have been already approved, when are the contributions going to be made, at what stage, and how are they going to be made, on what basis?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have replied. At what stage is when there is a sale or either there is a residential unit or a service plot. Now, how is it going to be made? Well, I believe it is by the ordinary way of making payment, either by cheque or by bank transfer.

(Interruptions)

Sur quelle base?

Well, once there is a residential unit, they have to contribute. So, that is it. Rs25,000, I have said, for each residential unit or service plot.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL - SETTING UP

(No. B/902) 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 setting up of a National Economic and Social Council, as announced in the 2017-2018 Budget Speech, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as announced at paragraph 23 of my Budget Speech 2017-2018, a National Economic and Social Council will be set up under my chairmanship with a view to addressing key socio-economic issues and strengthening dialogue with the private sector and civil society. I also announced that the Council will meet on a quarterly basis.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that the Council will comprise members of Government, the private sector, representatives of trade union, civil society and academia. In this context, consultations are being carried out by my Office with the relevant stakeholders for designating a representative to sit on the Council.

The Council will be set up as soon as the names of the representatives are made known.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Prime Minister, I am sure, is aware that we had a National Economic and Social Council Act which was passed in 2002 and repealed many years afterwards. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, in the forthcoming legislation, the law will make provision for the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer who will be in a position to look after the affairs of this Council and to make sure that the Council delivers and fulfils its vision?

The Prime Minister: Well, it is good that I can clarify, Madam Speaker. We are not going to come with a Bill to Parliament to set up this Council. I mentioned it is a Council that will be set up administratively and will be comprised of the members I have just mentioned.

Mr Ganoo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister if this will be an administrative body and not a body set up by law, by Statute, who will, therefore, be responsible for the appointment of the members of this Council? Only the Prime Minister or will there be other authorities which will decide on the membership of this Council?

The Prime Minister: Well, let us say, on behalf of Government, obviously, Government will decide on the membership. For the private sector, of course, as I said, I am holding consultations with the private sector. For the civil society, well, it is very difficult to

consult the civil society at large, but we will try to nominate people who, at least, are representatives of a large section of the population and academia as well. We will be consulting members of the trade unions also.

Madam Speaker: Last question!

Mr Ganoo: My last question. In fact, in the law which will be repealed, there were five representatives of workers' organisations. Is the hon. Prime Minister confirming that this will be so in the new Council? The old law provided for five councillors from workers' organisations. I am asking the question whether this will be also the case for the new Council.

The Prime Minister: No, it will be different because if we have representatives of trade unions, it is deemed that they are, of course, speaking on behalf of the workers.

Madam Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/911 and B/922 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Jahangeer!

SHANDRANI HOTEL - ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION - PAYMENT

(No. B/904) 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 Shandrani Hotel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the –

- (a) actual amount due and the amount agreed to be paid for the electricity consumption thereof over the period 01 November 2004 to 01 October 2007, and
- (b) brand name and type of equipment installed by the Board thereat.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that New Mauritius Hotels paid on account of Shandrani Hotel all amounts claimed by CEB for electricity over the period 01 November 2004 to 31 October 2007.

In November 2007, CEB came to the conclusion that the meter of the Shandrani Hotel had been wrongly set and that the meter had registered only half of the energy consumed since commissioning in December 1999 and this up to October 2007.

In December 2007, CEB claimed an amount of Rs33,943,879 from the hotel, being the difference between the amount which, according to CEB, ought to have been paid and the

amount which was actually paid, this claim being over a period of three years to take into account the limitation period. CEB lodged a case before the Supreme Court on 23 May 2008. In a judgment dated 10 August 2017, the Supreme Court dismissed CEB's plaint with cost.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Three Phase Meter was of Make ABB manufactured in USA in 1998. It had been supplied by ASEA Brown Boveri, ABB, in Mauritius. CEB purchased 600 meters from the company during the period 1999 to 2003.

Madam Speaker: Do you have any supplementary?

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good metering is the heart of revenue of any electricity utility. Good meter means good revenue. Now, is the...

Madam Speaker: No! No statement!

Mr Jahangeer: I am coming to my question.

Madam Speaker: No, explain your question! Explain your question!

Mr Jahangeer: The question is the following.

Madam Speaker: Explain your question and then you ...

Mr Jahangeer: Is the Deputy Prime Minister aware that residential and industrial meters, once installed, are never taken back to CEB Lab for recalibration nor are recalibrated *in situ*?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Member - if I may, Madam Speaker - should be made aware that he is treading on dangerous ground. I will not say anymore, but I will ask him to think twice before pursuing on this question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jahangeer: Madam Speaker, my question is very clear. Has the meter - I have never seen anybody taking my meter from my house back to CEB for recalibration.

Madam Speaker: No reply? You have got other supplementary? Yes!

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether there is a policy in the Central Electricity Board to calibrate, or at least on a sample basis, regularly to go and check houses, commercial premises, business premises to see whether the meter that they have installed is...

Madam Speaker: The question relates to Shandrani Hotel!

Mr Uteem: Yes. So, following what has happened in Shandrani Hotel, has the CEB, in light of what happened in Shandrani Hotel, taken the decision henceforth to go and do spot checks and verify if the meter is working elsewhere?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Years back, it has been the policy of the CEB to make spot checks. In that particular case, they discovered this apparent error after there had been a problem with the meter.

Now, with the introduction of smart meter, my understanding is that, this is known automatically because they are logged somewhere and, in any case, there is a unit which goes to test meters from time to time.

With regard to the regularity of such checks, of course, I would need a substantive question to be able to answer.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: There existed a meter laboratory at Plaine Lauzun at a given point in time. Can we know whether this meter lab still exists?

Madam Speaker: Does it relate to Shandrani Hotel? Because the main question relates to Shandrani Hotel.

The Deputy Prime Minister: We are very far from Shandrani Hotel. The problem in Shandrani Hotel, I am told, is a current transformer problem which arose and which led to the discovery of this issue. I see Members are well versed in CEB matters here. If the hon. Member would ask a question, I will be glad to answer.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer, next question!

BAGATELLE TREATMENT PLANT, BELLE ROSE & ROSE HILL - PIPELINES - CONTRACT

(No. B/905) **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 contract awarded to Messrs Best Construct for the laying of pipes from the Bagatelle Dam to Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –

(a) value thereof, and

(b) total amount invoiced by the contractor therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Central Water Authority informs me that, on 17 March 2017, a contract was awarded for the laying down of five kilometres of pipelines from the Bagatelle treatment plant to Belle Rose and Rose Hill for a contract sum of Rs87,856,886.15 excluding VAT. It was not from Bagatelle Dam to Quatre Bornes.

With regard to part (b), an amount of Rs63,517,717.02 excluding VAT has been paid to the contractor and a further payment claim of Rs11,030,125.58 is now being assessed.

Mr Jahangeer: Will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House the name of the consultant who carried out the work?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The design and tender document for the contract was prepared by Consultant GIBB (Mtius) Ltd under a consultancy services contract.

Mr Jahangeer: Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform if there has been any variation order during the completion of the project?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, the matter is being now investigated by a Committee of Inquiry.

Mr Bhagwan: One of the main problems facing the population is the state of the road after the laying of pipes. Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether checks have been made with regard to the terms of the contract for reinstatement of the roads where pipes have been laid and whether the Deputy Prime Minister will check with the CWA or representations have been made by inhabitants of Rose Hill and Quatre Bornes with regard to the state of the roads after the laying of pipes?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, there are numerous such complaints. Normally, what happens is that after reinstatement of the road, the road is not fully reinstated, I understand that there needs to be a time before everything piles down and then the road should be, in normal cases, reinstated along the width of the trench, but, in certain cases, full width, all depending on the contract which has been reached with the contractor. If the hon. Member has individual cases, he can, of course, approach me or ask particular questions.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister just inform the House that there is an inquiry going on in relation to the variation order. May we know what is the amount under dispute?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Amount under dispute! No!

Mr Ameer Meea: The variation.

The Deputy Prime Minister: There is a claim of Rs11,030,125.58. I have just said it.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jahangeer!

FUEL SUBSTATION - PV SOLAR FARM - SETTING UP

(No. B/906) **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 contract awarded to Messrs Voltas Green Ltd. for the setting up of a PV Solar Farm of 12.2 MW at Queen Victoria, Flacq, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member may wish to refer to my reply to Parliamentary Question B/171 of 12 April 2016 when I informed the House that one of the bidders, Aerowatt (Mauritius) Ltd, has filed a challenge before the Independent Review Panel on 26 February 2016. The Independent Review Panel had allowed the challenge on the ground that the CEB ought to have referred the matter to the Central Procurement Board (CPB). Subsequently, the CEB applied for judicial review of this Ruling of the Independent Review Panel. The Supreme Court held that the CEB was rightly not referring the matter to CPB.

I am informed that, on 16 December 2016, the CEB signed an Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement with Voltas Green Ltd for a solar farm of maximum export capacity of 12.24 megawatt to be located next to the Fuel substation. In line with the provision of the Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement, the promoter is required to fulfil all conditions precedent within a period of seven months from the signature of the agreement, that is, by 16 July 2017, where it would achieve financial clause. On 03 July 2017, the promoter requested CEB for an extension and claimed *force majeure* for the delays encountered in obtaining the EIA licence and the Land Convention permit.

Accordingly, the CEB granted an extension up to 30 October 2017 for the promoter to reach financial clause. I am informed that the EIA licence was granted on 05 September 2017 and the promoter is expecting approval of the Land Convention permit. On 17 October 2017, the promoter requested CEB for a further extension of nine months from the scheduled

commercial operation date starting as from financial clause. This request is still under consideration at the level of CEB.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When the energy is produced by the solar panel, it has to be transmitted through 66 KV or 22 KV. Now, is the Deputy Prime Minister aware that there is an agreement between CEB and Voltas Green Ltd to connect to the green through 22 KV lines, which is in contradiction with the tender document where it is specified to be transmitted with 66 KV costing Rs42 m. whereas connecting with 22 KV will cost only one quarter of this price plus a penalty of Rs4 m.?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am now used to questions containing statement of fact which afterwards prove to be erroneous. I shall, therefore, be checking on the statements which have been made by the hon. Member and then afterwards, if I deem that it is serious enough to warrant consideration, I will come with a statement.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In view of the major tender deviation from the tender specs and the long delay of CEB, CEB is entitled to forfeit the development security bond. Will the Deputy Prime Minister see to it that this is done in all transparency?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I will certainly not do that. I do not run CEB. I am the Minister. Let CEB do whatever it wants.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jahangeer!

RING ROAD PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/907) **Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the implementation of the Ring Road Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): With your permission, Madam Speaker, I shall reply to this question.

I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply which my colleague, the substantive Minister, made to Parliamentary Question B/492 on 04 July 2017, where he gave

a detailed account of the stages of development of the Ring Road Project. He explained that the Ring Road project comprises three phases as follows –

- The Ring Road Phase 1 consisting of 5.0 km of dual carriageway from Sorèze to Guibies has now been completed and has been operational since 26 May 2017. It currently provides access to the Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre and the surrounding businesses. The House will wish to know that before it could be used part of the road, over a length of 75 metres collapsed around February/March 2014. Thorough investigations have had to be carried out and a totally new design has been adopted consisting of installation of a piling system and steel anchors. The remedial works have cost an additional Rs310 m.
- Ring Road Phase 2 will link the end of the existing Ring Road Phase 1 at Les Guibies to Volcy Pougnet and Champ de Mars. It will be approximately 3.9 km long consisting of -
 1. approximately 2.3 km of dual carriageway, including a 1.1 km long parallel tunnel across the Quoin Bluff Mountain.
 2. approximately 1.6 km long single carriageway to connect an interchange at Tranquebar to Volcy Pougnet Street at the centre of the capital and Chateau D'Eau Street at Champ de Mars.
- Ring Road Phase 3 will be of an approximate length of 5.3 km long in dual carriageway. It will link the end of the existing Ring Road Phase 2 at Tranquebar, through an approximately 1.1 km long parallel tunnel across Monneron Hill, through two interchanges with Boulevard Victoria at Vallée Pitot and Nicolay road at Plaine Verte to connect to the Motorway M2 in the vicinity of the Mer Rouge Roundabout. The estimated cost of Ring Road Phases 2 and 3 is around Rs8.6 billion.

Madam Speaker, during this financial year and the coming two years, massive investments are being made in the transport infrastructure sector. This includes the Metro Express Project, two components of the Road Decongestion Programme, namely the Jumbo Phoenix Grade Separator and the A1M1 Bridge linking Coromandel to Sorèze. Furthermore, Government is also undertaking other priority projects such as the Deschartes Flyover, a new

flyover at Quay D, the Jin Fei Project and the Urban Terminals at Victoria and Immigration Squares, amongst others.

The implementation of Ring Road Phases 2 and 3 will be considered at a later stage on completion of the above projects.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister inform the House about the time frame we are looking to complete the repair work?

Mr Sinatambou: The repair work actually concerns only Ring Road Phase 1, as I stated earlier. Part of the road over a length of 75 metres, as I said, collapsed around February/March 2014. However, following expenditure incurred of an additional sum of Rs310 m., the road is now operational since 26 May 2017.

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister confirm if tests have been carried out to ascertain no more structural failure as before?

Mr Sinatambou: I cannot say that now, I would need notice of the question, please.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have listened carefully to the answer of the hon. Minister. So, do I take it that until the end of this Government's term, they would not be going ahead with Phases 2 and 3, and if this is not the case, at least, the Government can give an estimate of what would be the cost of Phases 2 and 3 if they decide to go ahead?

Mr Sinatambou: I have just stated in my reply, Madam Speaker, that the estimated cost of Ring Road Phases 2 and 3 will be around Rs8.6 billion. As for the time element, I would seek notice of the question.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For that particular stretch along Boulevard Victoria, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether this will be at grade level or elevated, and if so, in both cases, whether consultations have been held with regard to the environmental, social and economic impact that this will have on the region?

Mr Sinatambou: I, unfortunately, cannot enlighten the Member at this stage. Actually, the substantive Minister will be back next week. So, I will invite all questions for that.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the hon. Minister the following: it seems as though that in spite of the fact that this Phase 1 Ring Road Project, which was a design and build project, whereby it was designed by a specific company and that specific company clearly has made mistakes with regard to the design and thereby leading to problems as far as the building is concerned. What explanation can Government give us as to why is it that, be it for this project and other projects as well, it seems to be the habit of this Government to fork out money to pay for repairs of roads, but not to, in any way, go against those who are responsible such as those who designed it, those who are the contractors who have made mistakes and to claim money back from them? Because it is provided for in the contract that such damages can be sought, and they should be taken to task. Why is it that Government has done nothing to do so?

Mr Sinatambou: Well, first and foremost, I would like to defend this Government because it totally false to say that we are in the habit of just forking out money. If this Government has had to fork out money in relation to road and transport infrastructure, it is because of the negligence of the Government to which he belonged. And I think it should be ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, hon. Minister, let me remind the House that a supplementary question cannot contain an expression of opinion and that no questions contain an expression of opinion.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, Government has not sued the other parties responsible.

Madam Speaker: It is not this; it is with regard to the statement that you made before you asked your question. Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Sinatambou: So, having clearly explained to the House, Madam Speaker, that if money has had to be forked out regarding transport infrastructure, it is because of the negligence, if not say criminal negligence, of some on the other side of the House. However, the House needs to know that the costs of the remedial works which amount to Rs310 m. in the case of Ring Road Phase 1 were borne upon the insistence of Government by the

Contractor, given that the defects were identified during the defect liability period and, therefore, we did take them to task.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: With regard to the Ring Road Phase 1 which the hon. Minister has just referred to, there were problems there. Engineers have been suspended and they were found not to be guilty. Now, bouncing back on the question of hon. Shakeel Mohamed, has the consultant been taken to task on this project?

Mr Sinatambou: I just stated that they were compelled to pay for all the cost of the problem. Now, the other thing I would like to say, it is not true to say that people had to be reinstated because they were not guilty; because the offences were not proven, that is different.

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

At 1.01 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.33 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

BASIC RETIREMENT PENSION - PAYMENT

(No. B/908) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the Basic Retirement Pension, he will state the reasons why payment thereof in respect of the month ending October 2017 was effected to the beneficiaries thereof on 06 November 2017 instead of 03 November 2017, indicating if he is aware of the inconveniences caused to the said beneficiaries.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the payment of the Basic Retirement Pension for the month of October 2017 was credited into the bank account of the beneficiaries on Tuesday 03 October 2017, that is, on the second working day of the month.

Accordingly, the hon. Member is mistaken, as the payment of Basic Retirement Pension effected on Monday 06 November 2017 is for the month of November 2017. Compared to public officers and workers in general who earn their monthly salary at the end of each month, beneficiaries of pensions who have opted to be paid through banks are paid at the beginning of the month.

The House may wish to note that basic pensions are credited into the bank accounts of about 185,000 beneficiaries, whereas another 70,000 beneficiaries are paid by the Mauritius Post, and such payment is effected in alphabetical order between the 5th and 20th of every month.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he maintains his answer with regard to every single beneficiary, and he confirms that every single beneficiary was paid on the 03rd and not the 6th, as is in the question.

Mr Sinatambou: It seems to me that, with all due respect to the hon. Member, he is again mistaken. I am here explaining that, as he is speaking for the month ending October 2017, the payment for October 2017 was effected on Tuesday 03 October 2017. His question relating to 06 November instead of 03 November relates to the month ending November 2017. So, I hope I have now cleared the air in view of the mistaken date.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for clarifying matters since he is very much aware himself and has all the facts and figures pertaining to the payment of pension, and since as being referred to in the question to 06 November in lieu and instead of 03, barring the mistake of October 2017 being mentioned in the question. Could he confirm to the House, if he has the information, whether for the month of November 2017, there was this delay of three days, therefore, payment made on 06 November instead of 03 November, and if he does not have it, does he expect me to come with a substantive question on that date?

Mr Sinatambou: Not at all. I have all the relevant information. But the first thing which I would like to highlight to the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that normally for every single person who earns money, money is earned at the end of the month. Now, exceptionally, in the case of pensioners who receive their pension through their bank accounts, what we do is it is paid at the beginning of the month. So, they are paid in advance. As such, they ought to be paid at the end of the month, but what Government has done is to pay them at the beginning of the month. In fact, whether it was the 3rd, the 5th or the 8th, it does not matter so much. I will give you an example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. For all those people, all those beneficiaries who actually receive their pension by post, they are paid between the 5th and the 20th of the month. Now, until 2009, all people who were earning their pension through bank accounts were getting paid on the 15th. But, in an endeavour to encourage people to actually receive their pension through bank accounts, that is when it was

decided around 2010 to make it payable at the beginning of the month, that is, two clear days after the beginning of the month.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I totally understand the explanations given by the hon. Minister who is excellent at trying to drown the fish.

(Interruptions)

The fact remains he has drowned the fish!

Mr Sinatambou: On a point of order, this is a question. The hon. Member has no right to make an expression of opinion about what I do or impute any motive.

Mr Mohamed: That is not a point of order! Now, may I go on...

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: On a point of order, I move that he withdraws what he has said!

Mr Mohamed: I have not said anything unparliamentary apart 'drowning the fish.' Now, if the hon. Minister thinks it is unparliamentary, he is wrong.

Mr Sinatambou: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please put your question!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

He has already ruled! Can I go on?

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the point of order is related to Standing Order 22(1) (g)...

(Interruptions)

... he has no right to...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow one last question, hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have said, my question is very simple. The hon. Minister has helped by trying to indicate the month when pensioners are supposed to receive for November 2017. He has said it! Ever since 2010, pensioners are supposed to

receive it two or three clear days after the beginning of the month. For November 2017, my question is very simple. There was a delay and they received it three days after the 3rd, that is, in lieu and instead of the 3rd, they received it on the 6th. Three days late! Is the hon. Minister confirming that, and what has he done in order to explain to the House why those pensioners did not receive their money three days after the beginning of the month, as they should have? Who is responsible for the delay?

The Deputy Speaker: You have made your point, hon. Mohamed!

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I first take strong objection to the hon. Member's allegation that I drowned the fish here. In fact, there is a very straightforward, simple and legitimate reply and explanation to this matter.

(Interruptions)

Wednesday 01 November was a public holiday, All Saints Day. Thursday 02 November was a public holiday, which was the Arrival of ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please! Listen to the answer now!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: I do not need the hon. Member! The answer is very good! The hon. Member is the one not understanding! He is the one ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Sinatambou: ... acting stupidly!

(Interruptions)

So, I repeat again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The rule is that payment is made two working days after the beginning of the month. 01 November was a public holiday.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: I repeat it again.

(Interruptions)

There is nothing shameful. It is a clear, legitimate and reasonable reply.

(Interruptions)

The fact that 01 November was a public holiday, 02 November was a public holiday...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Sinatambou: Friday was the first working day; the 4th and the 5th were Saturday and Sunday, which is why the second working day was, therefore, Monday 06 November. That is why they were all paid on the second working day as expected by law. I really hope...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Sinatambou: I really hope that those senseless accusations by the hon. Member should now stop!

Mr Osman Mahomed: With regard to the end of the month deadline and the two clear days that the hon. Minister has referred to in his reply, can I ask him what will happen for the month of December wherein the end of the month will be a Sunday and the two days after will be public holidays, the 1st and the 2nd, thereby the end of the month and the two clear working days will be an issue?

Mr Sinatambou: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has already taken all the relevant steps to prepare payments for next year 2018. So, for all the 12 months of next year, payment of pension through bank accounts will be made on the 1st, 2nd or 3rd of the month. In January, for example, because of the public holidays of Monday 1st and Tuesday 2nd, payment will be made on Wednesday the 3rd. In February as well, the public holiday is the 1st February, which is a Thursday, therefore, the first working day is Friday, the second working day would normally be Monday the 5th. Despite that, steps have been taken for payment to be effected on Friday the 2nd.

NTC - SMART BUSES - WI-FI CONNECTION FACILITIES

(No. B/909) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the National Transport Corporation buses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if any budget has been allocated for the installation of Wi-Fi connection facilities thereon.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will be replying to this question.

I am informed, Sir, that currently all the 100 smart buses of the National Transport Corporation (NTC) are fitted with Wi-Fi connection facilities in line with the Corporation's plan to modernise its fleet and to offer several additional facilities for the comfort of its passengers.

The same applies for the next new fleet of 28 buses which will be operational by January 2018 and the same will also apply to the passengers on three hybrid buses to be acquired by the Corporation by next year.

In addition, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget of Rs150,000 per month has been allotted for the operation and maintenance of the Wi-Fi connection facilities.

May I remind the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Wi-Fi service will be free-of-charge for the passengers.

Ms Sewocksingh: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, though I do understand that the hon. Minister is not the substantive Minister, can he inform the House if the Wi-Fi system in all the 100 buses are functional?

Mr Sinatambou: I must say these are variable events. I was expecting a question of that sort. I have been told that on average the Wi-Fi is working in 98% of the buses.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

POLICE OFFICERS - INTERDICTION

(No. B/910) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Rt hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof presently under interdiction, indicating the number thereof interdicted for suspected involvement in drug-related offences.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that to date there are 127 Police Officers who are under interdiction, out of whom 33 are suspected to be involved in drug-related cases.

Mr Mohamed: This question concerns Police Officers who are interdicted. Can the Rt hon. Minister Mentor indicate to the House the following: there is a Police Officer - hon. Osman Mahomed had referred to that recently in a question - who had made a speech in the presence of hon. Rutnah, whereby he had accused, apart from various accusations he has made, he also said that a particular community cannot and should not become Commissioner of Police in this country. Now, this is a very dangerous comment for any Police Officer or any citizen for that matter to make. Could the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor explain why, in spite of the fact that the Police Officer having made such inflammatory, unacceptable comments against a community - this is a dangerous offence against the nation that he has made - he has not been interdicted, but, on the contrary, is still normally going about his duty as Police Officer?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: This has nothing to do with the question being put.

Ms Sewocksingh: May I ask the Rt hon. Minister Mentor if he could obtain from the Commissioner of Police information as to whether all members of the Police Force has benefitted from refresher courses about Police duties other than the initial six months' training courses upon recruitment by qualified trainers to meet the expectation of our modern society?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I need a specific question for that.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Can the Rt hon. Minister Mentor inform the House of the offences made by Police Officers which may lead them to being suspended?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, this is according to the law, as it exists.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the Rt hon. Minister Mentor, out of the 127 officers he has mentioned who are interdicted, how many of them are currently being prosecuted? Does he have this information?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I do not have the information; I cannot answer.

Mr Baloomoody: I hope the Rt hon. Minister Mentor will have my answer. My learned friend has asked how many have been prosecuted. May I know how many are facing disciplinary action before the Disciplinary Committee?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I do not have the information.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

**MAURITIUS FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - BREATHING APPARATUS -
REFILLING CYLINDERS**

(No. B/911) **Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if the equipment for the refilling of cylinders for Breathing Apparatus for the refilling of cylinders in all the Fire Stations were in good working conditions as at Sunday 12 November 2017 and, if not, indicate –

- (a) since when, and
- (b) how the cylinders were refilled and the additional remedial measures taken.

(Withdrawn)

POLICE FORCE - VACANCIES

(No. B/912) **Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Rt hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the vacancies that presently exist in the grades ranking from Police Constable/Woman Police Constable to Deputy Commissioner of Police, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof in each grade, indicating when same will be filled.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that to date there is a total of 653 funded vacancies in the grades ranking from Police Constable/Woman Police Constable to Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Mauritius Police Force.

I am tabling a list of the vacancies grade-wise which are planned to be filled within the current Financial Year.

Mr Ameer Meea: In relation to the reply of the Rt hon. Minister Mentor whereby he stated that there are 653 vacancies in the Police Force, may I ask him if he is aware that there is a serious lack of Police Constables in various stations around the island, the more so in the Constituency No. 3 where the station is seriously undermanned?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, every year a number of new recruits are being taken in the Police Force.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

AUTOS/MOTOR CYCLES & CARS - NOISE EMISSION

(No. B/913) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to loud noise emissions, he will state –

- (a) the number of contraventions booked in respect of auto/motor cycles and cars therefor since April 2016 to date, division-wise, and
- (b) if new sound level meters with the required specifications will be procured for better control thereof and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the number of contraventions established in respect of excessive noise emitted from modified silencers of auto/motor cycles since April 2016 to date is 1,147.

With regard to part (b) of the question, my colleagues may wish to note that under section 83 subsection (3), paragraphs (a) and (b) of the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 2010, the Police do not necessarily require sound level meters to establish contraventions in case of excessive noise from autos/motor cycles and cars.

Indeed, under that section of the law, if a person modifies or alters the silencer of any auto/motor cycle or car in such a manner as to cause excessive noise, that person commits an offence. There is, therefore, no need for a sound level meter in those circumstances to establish a contravention.

However, under Regulation 18 of the Road Traffic (Control of Vehicle Emissions) Regulations 2002, an authorised officer suspecting that a motor vehicle is emitting noise exceeding the prescribed level, may require the vehicle to be taken to a specified place for a noise emission test to be conducted thereon.

Therefore, the authorised officer may require the vehicle to be taken to an authorised place to ascertain whether the noise level has been exceeded. These specified places, I understand, are the three Vehicle Examination Stations which are currently operating in Mauritius, namely Eastern Stone Crusher Ltd, SGS (Mauritius) Ltd, and AutoCheck Ltd.

I am informed that 99 auto/motor vehicles and five motor cars have been referred to the Private Vehicle Examination Stations as from November 2016 for noise emission tests. Seven out of the 104 vehicles examined failed the noise emission test.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this issue has been long on the cards. Since the previous mandate till now, the hon. Minister will agree with me that this causes a lot of nuisance and discomfort to the whole island, the issue of emitting loud noise.

In the question itself, in part (b), I have asked the hon. Minister if new sound level meters with the required specifications will be procured. I did not hear the hon. Minister say whether these new sound level meters have been procured for better control thereof.

Mr Sinatambou: I would have thought that it was clear from my answer that I would not propose to procure any for my Ministry. The reason is quite clear, once an exhaust has been modified, it is an offence.

(Interruptions)

There is no need to go into the decibel reading. Once an exhaust pipe has been altered which causes any type of excessive noise by the ear itself, an offence is committed and it is good that the House be reminded of what I stated in my reply. 1,147 contraventions have been taken under that particular legislation.

However, what was the problem with the meter readers which had actually been under use at my Ministry is that apparently whenever meter readers are used, they give the readings on unmodified silencers. So, when there have been alterations, the meter readings were not accurate, which is why, therefore, we refer to those regulations as soon as they are altered and cause some sort of unnecessary noise, there is a contravention, and if ever we are speaking of decibel reading, the sound meters of the three authorised places actually have the meters to do the reading. And out of the 104 vehicles which have been referred to them, only seven have proven to be in breach of law, which is quite understandable, because those exhausts have not been altered or modified.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand what the hon. Minister has said, but the problem is it is not reducing. On the contrary, we can see in the region of Port Louis, all these auto/motor cycles, cars, are on the rise, and I can tell you, maybe someday you can come to Port Louis at night on popular roads like Rue Desforges, Route des

Pamplemousses, Rue Saint François, you can see all these auto/motor cycles emitting so much noise day in day out, every night, every day.

So, my question to the hon. Minister is: if you do not use the new sound level meters, how do you verify that it has been altered? Do you verify it by your eyes or by your ears?

Mr Sinatambou: Again, I do not know whether I cannot explain myself properly. I explained that if ever there is an alteration...

(Interruptions)

But any officer...

The Deputy Speaker: Allow the hon. Minister to answer!

Mr Sinatambou: Not only is it verified, 1,147 contraventions have been taken under that particular legislation. Now, if ever again, the hon. Member has a problem with the sound level meters, again, any authorised officer - I just gave the section of the law, the regulations - which includes a Police Officer, has the right to refer that engine, that vehicle driver to go to the authorised place to have the reading.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Sinatambou: So, the situation is totally covered insofar as the legislation and the equipment is concerned. What the hon. Member maybe referring to, is perhaps enforcement. Now, if that is the case, I would suggest, as opposed to my coming to Port Louis at night, he is the Member there, he can simply take the numbers of those auto/motor cycles and hand them over to the Police.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Sinatambou: Of course! As opposed to my doing that job.

(Interruptions)

I have just explained. Again, as opposed to...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please!

Mr Sinatambou: As opposed to hearing those silly comments, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

I think it is worthwhile noting that the legislation amply covers the situation.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. The hon. Minister mentioned that I have made silly comment. This is imputing improper motives. He must withdraw this word.

Mr Sinatambou: I never meant that he has made silly comments. All those uninvited comments which were being made...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Truly enough, this question....

(Interruptions)

The subject of the question has been canvased in Parliament many times. The former Minister, hon. Raj Dayal had mentioned an *opération de coup de...*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: When he was Minister, he had evoked in Parliament an *opération coup de poing* that will entail officers going to garages that do modifications and that this might lead to seizures of motor cycles as well. That made a big bang. Can I ask the hon. Minister how many garages that do modification of exhaust pipes have been served with notice and how many motor cycles have been seized as at to date?

Mr Sinatambou: I do not have this information, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

PORT LOUIS - SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/914) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the National Empowerment Foundation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of inhabitants of Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East who have benefitted thereunder, indicating the nature and value thereof.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as at 30 November 2017, 1,250 households in the district of Port Louis have been found eligible under the SRM and after signing the Marshall Plan Social Contract, are benefitting from the monthly Subsistence Allowance, ranging from Rs500 to Rs6,152, depending on the family composition.

As from December 2016 to date, funds to the tune of Rs24,202,051 have been disbursed for the payment of Subsistence Allowance to eligible households of the district of Port Louis.

In addition to the Subsistence Allowance, these beneficiaries are also given support under other existing empowerment schemes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a copy of the additional support extended to them.

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In his reply, if I am not wrong, the hon. Minister gave a figure of Rs24 m. for Port Louis, but my question is very specific. It is mentioned for Constituency No.3. Does the hon. Minister have the figure for Constituency No. 3?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a matter of fact, we don't do the calculation to constituency but we do it district wise.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister should be aware, I hope, that there are specific officers from the National Empowerment Foundation who are placed in each constituency, thereby giving him the ability and his officers to know from the records that those officers have in the CAB offices of each constituency what the right figure for Constituency No. 3 would be. It is very simple mathematics, hon. Rutnah would agree...

(Interruptions)

Now, maybe that confirms...

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, come to your question hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: So, what I am trying to get at here is maybe he could ask his officers to carry out that specific exercise, which is a very simple mathematical, arithmetical exercise, through the officers in those CAB buildings. Simple!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I explained, we don't have the count of the Constituency at our Ministry to know exactly. We do it district wise.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE - BOARD MANAGEMENT

(No. B/915) **Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to professional football, he will state if a new entity has recently been set up for the organisation thereof in Mauritius and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Football Association (MFA) that, for the pro-season 2017-2018, a Board of Management of the Professional Football League has been set up to implement and manage the League. I am tabling details in regard to the Board composition and subcommittees.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, permettez-moi rapidement tout d'abord de déplorer le fait que la réponse écrite à une de mes questions, B/609 adressée au ministre des Sports le 24 octobre dernier et qui concerne la défunte *Mauritius Football Professional League Ltd*, compagnie qui gérait à l'époque le football professionnel à Maurice et qui paraît-il a fait faillite, n'a toujours pas été déposée à la bibliothèque de l'Assemblée.

Ceci dit, M. le président, après l'expérience amère comme je l'ai dit de la *Mauritius Professional Football League Ltd*, le ministre des Sports peut-il nous dire qu'elle a été la contribution de son ministère dans la mise en place de ce *Board of Management* et justement le fonctionnement de cette nouvelle entité pour le football professionnel et de préciser si cette dernière a une existence légale ?

Mr Toussaint : M. le président, sur le *Board of Management of Professional League*, qui est composé de 15 membres, il y a deux officiers de mon ministère qui vont siéger sur ce *Board*.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, peut-on savoir quelle somme d'argent qui a été prévue pour le football professionnel pour l'année financière en cours?

Mr Toussaint: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the budget earmarked for 2017-2018 for football in general –

- MFA Rs5,495,000;
- Professional League Rs17 m.;
- Football Clubs and Regional Clubs Rs20,400,000.

Donc, ce qui fait un total de R 42,895,000.

Mr Quirin : Donc, M. le président, de cette somme, peut-on s'avoir quel montant qui a été utilisé pour payer les dettes de la *Mauritius Professional Football League Ltd* pour la saison 2016-2017 ?

Mr Toussaint: *Zéro sou!*

Mr Quirin : M. le président, il est clair que la contribution du ministère des Sports ne sera pas suffisante pour faire fonctionner le football professionnel.

De ce fait, le ministre peut-il nous dire quelles sont les autres sources de revenus de cette nouvelle entité qui gère le football professionnel et de nous préciser quel est l'apport financier de la MFA ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, un club de football professionnel est appelé à dépendre de ses sources de financement, et au niveau du ministère, je l'ai dit, pour cette année nous contribuons R 17 millions. C'est vrai que dans le futur ce ne sera pas suffisant, mais à travers diverses réunions avec la MFA, en la présence des clubs professionnels, on leur a fait comprendre qu'il faudra que, dans le futur, ils arrivent tout doucement à être autonomes.

Pour la dernière partie de la question, malheureusement je n'ai pas l'information par rapport à la contribution de la MFA qui est une fédération et qui est totalement indépendante.

Mr Quirin: Dois-je comprendre, M. le président, que le *Board of Management*, cette entité qui gère le football professionnel, n'a aucune autre source de revenus à part la contribution du ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports ?

Mr Toussaint: Pour le moment c'est le cas. Donc, la MFA est en train de travailler avec les clubs professionnels pour éventuellement les aider à trouver des sponsors aussi.

Mr Quirin : Dernière question, M. le président. Permettez-moi d'exprimer de sérieux doutes quant à la capacité de cette nouvelle entité d'assurer la pérennité de cette nouvelle *league* professionnelle de football. Ceci dit, M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il donner la garantie à la Chambre que cette nouvelle saison de football se poursuivra sans aucun problème et qu'il en sera de même dans les années à venir ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, la survie de cette *league* ne dépend pas essentiellement du ministère. Tout ce qui concerne le football, bien sûr, est géré par la MFA. Le ministère est un partenaire. Donc, avec l'aide de tout un chacun, ensemble, je suis sûr que pour cette saison les matchs se joueront, la *league* se tiendra mais je ne peux pas prédire pour ce qui se passera dans les années à venir.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

MAURITIUS JUDO FEDERATION - CARETAKER COMMITTEE

(No. B/916) **Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Judo Federation, he will state if the Temporary Committee set up by his Ministry to complete its investigation thereinto and to chart the way for the election of a new Managing Committee therefor has completed its assignment and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at present, there is no temporary Committee of which I am aware. On 04 August 2017, the International Judo Federation delegated its authority to the Mauritius Olympic Committee and my Ministry for the setting up of a special caretaker committee.

The committee has been set up on 05 September 2017 for a period of six months with a dual mandate of managing the affairs of the Federation and charting the way for the election of a new Managing Committee for the Mauritius Judo Federation.

The International Judo Federation also directed that the assembly should be conducted under the aegis of its designated representative.

In the course of a meeting which I had with the Special Caretaker Committee on 23 November 2017, I have expressly requested the Chairperson to arrange for the election of the new Managing Committee as soon as possible and I have been informed that, subject to a few administrative and legal issues being cleared, they are planning to hold election at the end of February 2018.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire quand le *Caretaker Committee* s'est réuni pour la dernière fois?

Mr Toussaint: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the last meeting which I attended myself, I said it in my reply, was on 23 November 2017.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut donner la garantie une nouvelle fois à la Chambre que les élections vont se tenir bien avant la fin de février 2018 comme l'exige la Fédération internationale de judo, parce que cette situation a pour conséquence que le judo mauricien est en net recul à tous les niveaux, M. le président, d'autant plus que cela pèse sur le moral des athlètes et sur le niveau d'entraînement et bien sûr avec une ossature amoindrie ? Est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut confirmer si les élections auront bien lieu avant la fin de février 2018 ?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, puisque je l'ai moi-même dit dans une réunion, comme je l'ai dit dans ma première partie, j'ai demandé au *Special Caretaker Committee* de veiller à ce que les élections se fassent maximum jusqu'à la fin de février 2018 et je vais veiller à ce que cela se tienne.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

Mr Leopold: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As you may know, Rodrigues is a breeding ground for high-level athletes. So, I just want to ask the hon. Minister whether there will be any Judo Club in Rodrigues which will be eligible to participate in such elections?

Mr Toussaint: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have two clubs from Rodrigues, the Rodrigues Port Mathurin Judo Club and the Rodrigues Songes Judo Club, which are eligible.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre si cette situation dans laquelle se trouve le judo mauricien actuellement a eu une incidence sur la bourse de Christianne Legentil, qui a été réduite ces derniers temps?

Mr Toussaint: M. le président, comme je l'ai répondu dans une dernière question par apport au *high level*, il y a *set of criteria* et le *Board* s'est basé sur tous les critères possibles pour donner les *high level* aux différents sportifs.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

CHEBEL - HOUSING ESTATE - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/917) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Housing Estate presently under construction at Chebel, in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the -

- (a) expected date of completion works thereof,
- (b) number of housing units to be constructed,
- (c) category of income earners targeted therefor, and
- (d) expected date of allocation of the housing units thereof.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the National Housing Development Company Ltd that the housing project being implemented at Chebel which started in April 2017 is expected to be completed in October 2018 and that 92 housing units of duplex type are being constructed on a ground plus one configuration at an estimated project cost of Rs154.1 m.

Each housing unit shall be of an approximate area of 50 square metres comprising a kitchen, living/dining room, two bedrooms, toilet and bathroom, internal staircase, and an open terrace. The housing units will be provided with all utilities. The site will also be provided with infrastructure network.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I am further informed that eligible families drawing a monthly household income between Rs6,200 and Rs20,000 would be allocated a housing unit at Chebel. I wish to inform the House that 10% of the housing units will be earmarked for NEF beneficiaries to be found eligible under the Social Register of Mauritius.

Regarding part (d) of the question, the NHDC Ltd has informed that the housing units are expected to be allocated in November 2018 after the completion of works on site.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir, M. le président, à quel prix seront vendues ces maisons?

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the category of income threshold and number of applications received within the catchment area at Chebel, I will give the amount to be paid.

Monthly Household Income (Rs)	Number of Applications received	Amount to be paid for a housing unit by beneficiary
6,200-10,000	488	33% selling price of Rs1.6 m.
10,001-15,000	302	50% selling price of Rs1.6 m.
15,001-20,000	163	80% selling price of Rs1.6 m.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Merci, M. le président. Peut-on avoir les critères qui vont être établis pour les 10% qui vont être alloués à l'intégration sociale et dans quel *catchment area* on va procéder ?

Mr Jhugroo: I am informed that the construction of 12 housing units out of the 92 housing units have been completed on a fast track basis to cater for the relocation of families found on the corridor for Metro Express Project.

The conditions for allocation –

- the families to be relocated would be allowed to occupy the housing units free of charge for an initial period of six months to allow them to find a permanent accommodation elsewhere.
- The agreement to occupy the housing units can be extended depending on the circumstances of each family.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to know, regarding the 10% end-year beneficiaries, which Ministry is going to be responsible for the allocation. Is it the Ministry of Housing and Lands or the Ministry of Social Integration?

Mr Jhugroo: I do not have this information; I will table it later on.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has discussed with the NHDC about the old process of allocation, although we know that the houses will be completed in 2018? We have seen in the recent past, in our own constituency, where people who did not deserve were given houses, even political agents and Municipal Councillors of the Government side. So, can the hon. Minister give guarantee to the House, being given the situation which has prevailed at the NHDC, that he will see to it that priority would be given to deserving people and to those who meet the criteria and not political agents?

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you for this supplementary question. I would have to state that the legibility criteria for the applicants to be allocated a housing unit are as follows –

- not be owner of a house (including NHDC or CHA house);
- not own a residential plot of land;
- not hold a residential plot of State land by lease;
- not have been granted any Government sponsored loan by MHC Ltd;
- not have benefited from any Government grant for the casting of roof slabs, and
- not have received any financial assistance from Government for the purchase of construction materials.

These are the criteria which are used to allocate these NHDC houses.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. A titre de comparaison, si on prend les maisons qui ont été construites à Barkly il y a quelques temps de cela, et les maisons qui sont en construction à Chebel, on constate que les maisons de Chebel sont deux fois pratiquement plus chères que les maisons qui ont été construites à Barkly. Oui, c'est vrai que ce n'est pas de la même dimension, je comprends, mais si on construit des maisons pour les gens au bas de l'échelle, je pense que ces prix sont vraiment très hauts. Est-ce que, de ce fait, l'honorable ministre considère-t-il la possibilité de revoir à la baisse le prix de ces maisons ?

Mr Jhugroo: I think that they have met the criteria, there have been applications and people have accepted. As I have mentioned earlier, you have got the household income, so,

they pay according to their household income, that is, 33%, 50% and 80%. They are not paying Rs1.6 m. in full.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem, next question!

NHDC - LOW COST HOUSES - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/918) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the construction of low cost houses, he will state and/or, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if his Ministry and/or the National Housing Development Company Ltd., has received proposals therefor from Garware Infra Projects Ltd. and one Mr K. C.1 or any entity related thereto, indicating in each case, the consideration given thereto, if any.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as per records available, my Ministry has not received any proposal for the construction of low cost houses from neither Garware Infra Projects Ltd nor from one Mr K. C. or any entity related thereto.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Housing Development Company Ltd that on 09 November 2015 and 15 April 2016, Garware Infra Projects Ltd submitted proposals for the construction of low-cost houses. However, the NHDC has not given any consideration of the said proposals.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just mentioned that he has not received any proposal. I have a series of correspondences - which I am going to table - which clearly shows that the Ministry of Housing and Lands was copied on correspondence and there were even exchanges of emails between Mr Kedar Chaphekar and one Mr Robin Appaya who is - I am not sure if he is still there - legal advisor of the Ministry of Housing. Is the hon. Minister telling me that he is not aware of all the exchange of correspondences between his Ministry and Mr Chaphekar?

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no email in the file of the Ministry and I am not aware of any email. If the hon. Member has such mails in his possession, I would kindly request him to table the said mails and I will inquire into.

Mr Uteem: I will table that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. On 08 March 2016, I have a copy of the letter written by Garware Infra Projects Ltd to the hon. Prime Minister and copied once again to the Ministry of Housing and Lands, and in this letter, it summarises the exchange. There were two presentations made at the Ministry. My question is: being given

that just now we heard the hon. Minister say that for the Chebel house, it is costing Rs1.6 m., why did the Ministry not give any consideration to a proposal, whereby houses of the same size, 15 square metres, would have been constructed at the cost of Rs1.1 m. as per the proposal of Mr Chaphekar?

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have informed the House earlier that there were two presentations made in October 2015. Representatives of Garware Infra Projects Ltd gave a presentation at the Ministry of Housing and Lands on the construction of affordable homes using innovative technology, in the presence of the officers of the NHDC. During discussion, the attention of the developer was drawn to the fact that the NHDC Ltd is governed by the Public Procurement Act and that any interested developer may participate in the bidding exercise launched by NHDC Ltd for the construction of low-cost houses according to the National Housing Development Company Ltd own design, standards and specifications.

The second was held on 18 November 2015. Another presentation was made, where the representatives of Garware Infra Projects Ltd emphasised on the technical specificities of a new construction method, that is, using tunnel form technology. At the same meeting, the developer was informed that, should there be a Government-to-Government agreement, Garware Infra Projects Ltd will then bid for the construction of social housing units.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the promoter of this company made very serious allegations against the then Vice-Prime Minister and even referred the matter to ICAC as to the fact that he has given Rs500,000 as loan on two occasions, which is a total of Rs1 m. Has the Ministry, based on these reports, carried out an internal inquiry within the Ministry, at the level of NHDC, and even spoke to Mr Appaya to ascertain whether whatever has been said by Mr Chaphekar has any foundation or not?

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware and I have not seen anything in the file whether any inquiry is being conducted or not. If this is the case, he can go to ICAC.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS/SHELTERS FOR CHILDREN - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/919) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

whether, in regard to the Residential Care Institutions/Shelters for Children, she will state the number thereof, indicating –

- (a) the number of
 - (i) children residing thereat, and
 - (ii) employees thereof and
- (b) if her Ministry is in presence of complaints in relation to the living and working conditions prevailing thereat and, if so, indicate the remedial actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunboccus: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at present, minors removed under Court Orders through the Child Protection Act 1994 are accommodated in 19 Residential Care Institutions/Shelters (RCIs). Out of these 19 RCIs, five are owned by the Government and 14 are owned by NGOs. Out of the five Government-owned shelters, two are run and managed by the National Children’s Council (NCC) and three are managed by the NGOs under a Management Contract. I wish to table a list of all shelters and the figures.

As regards the number of employees and number of residents thereat, that is also found in the list that I am about to table.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry has always been receiving various complaints of different nature, be it living conditions, etc. It is noted that in May 2015, a Fact-Finding Committee chaired by Mr Denis Vellien was set up to investigate into complaints received on the management of Residential Care Institutions/Shelters for Children. Its recommendations were made public in November 2015 and a Fact-Finding Committee Report’s Implementation Committee was set up in December 2015. Its implementation plan was elaborated in May 2016 and several recommendations were made, most of which have been successfully implemented.

Now, there has been publication of an article in a daily newspaper in about June 2017 pertaining to ill-treatment of residents in Government-owned Shelter La Dauphinelle, Eau Coulée, which is under a Management Service Contract and, following that, a number of decisions were taken with immediate effect -

- (i) the eight minors found within that RCI were moved to other places of safety;
- (ii) an *ad hoc* supervisory team for RCIs operating under the supervision of my Ministry was set up on the same day to carry out surprise inspections in all

RCIs with a view to assessing whether the minors accommodated thereat are living in an environment conducive to their development;

- (iii) the recommendations made by the said team are being implemented in a phase wise manner and in a prioritised manner, and
- (iv) further, there are two additional internal enquiries being carried out to establish the facts reported in anonymous correspondences received by my Ministry regarding operation of the shelter named La Dauphinelle. The contract with the NGO regarding management of the said shelter has been subsequently terminated.

Moreover, we have received complaints from children. An anonymous letter was also received regarding the circulation and consumption of cigarettes and drugs at shelter L'Oasis. The Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) was called upon to investigate into the matter, but no such substance was found thereat. However, to ensure the safety of the children there and to prevent influencing of witnesses and any sort of other interferences, the person against whom the allegations were made has been moved forthwith and he is restricted from access to all shelters, that is, to children, pending conclusion of the police inquiry.

My ministry has also, I am advised, received complaints from residents of the locality regarding misbehaviour of minors accommodated at Government- owned shelter L'Oiseau du Paradis, Cap Malheureux, operated - I will not say by whom - by an NGO under Management Service Contract, and the following actions have been initiated -

- out of the 11 minors found there, five have been relocated to another RCI, and
- a relocation plan is being worked out for the remaining six minors there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, officers of my Ministry ensure through regular monitoring and inspection visits that living condition of minors accommodated in shelters are conducive. If found otherwise, the attention of the Shelter Manager is drawn for remedial actions as appropriate and, in extreme cases, shelters are requested to cease operation following the relocation of minors, if the situation so warrants.

A Technical Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry has been set up to make recommendations, *inter alia*, for the overall development, monitoring and evaluation of a holistic childcare strategy for children placed in RCIs. It will submit its recommendations soon.

Coming to the working conditions, which is another part of the question, it is to be highlighted that the contract agreement is between the service provider and the employees. Consequently, any shortcomings are, therefore, referred to the Ministry of Labour for proper investigation. However, employees of La Colombe and L'Oasis fall within the NCC Board. I am informed that the Private Sector Employees Union has made representations regarding certain working conditions, which have been addressed.

And last, I wish to highlight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that continuous training is dispensed to caregivers of all Residential Care Institutions by my Ministry for a better service delivery. Yesterday itself, we had 50 caregivers who were given training for different aspects on Child Psychology and Child Care.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: In her original statement, the hon. Minister - I know she is new - has mentioned that an elaboration plan has been successfully implemented. Can I ask the hon. Minister then, how come in the latest Ombudsperson Annual Report for Children, at the paragraph which is dedicated to children in Residential Care Institution, the report makes the following statement -

“Most of the staff stated that they experience considerable difficulties in the performance of their respective duties. (...) They also did not feel equipped and supported enough on how to deal with these issues. Their situation resembled that of the officers of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre (RYC) and the Correctional Youth Centre (CYC).”

Then, how do we reconcile the fact that an elaboration plan has been successfully implemented and then the report that has been published a few weeks ago still mentions the dire situation in which these centres are being operated?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: As I have just said, part of the Vellien Report has been successfully completed. There are certain parts which have yet to be implemented, but they are being implemented on a priority basis. However, there has been an Audit Report and there have been recommendations made - if I may just have one minute to refer to that. Indeed, a list of recommendations has been made and certain actions are being taken. In fact, we are in the process of recruiting staff indeed to address some of the problems raised in that Audit Report.

However, it has to be noted that - as I have said earlier on - out of the 19 RCIs, 14 of them fall under NGO Management. Therefore, it does not fall directly under my Ministry, it falls under the NGOs who are the employers and who are actually responsible for the number of staff and the support that is being given. As I have just said also, taking into consideration that there is a dire need of support and training, recent training has been carried out not later than Monday, that is, yesterday. 50 members of the staff were successfully trained and this process is ongoing within the Ministry.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Denis Vellien Fact-Finding Report was extremely critical of the situation; shelters were overcrowded and manned by underqualified staff. So, I will be very specific. The report drew the attention to overcrowding at La Colombe and other shelters which are run by the Government. So, may I know from the hon. Minister, two years later, what has been done to reduce the number of residency and improve the ratio of carers to residents in those shelters?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Indeed, there is a long list of recommendations made by the Vellien Report which came out in 2015, and a number have been implemented, especially issues as regard overcrowding. We are constantly working on that and one of the aspects that my Ministry is placing great attention is that there is encouragement of reintegration of the minors within their family to help reduce the number in the RCIs. At the same time, the Ministry is aiming on a phase-wise basis to reduce the number of children going to Shelters through different methods. One of the recommendations of the Vellien Report is that we have Residential Care Institutions with smaller numbers as opposed to larger numbers. This is being worked upon.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister does not answer the specific question about La Colombe, because they have not done anything to reduce the number of population there. The other recommendation, and I quote from the Vellien Report -

“Strangely enough, the carers are those who are better paid compared to others, but some - we are talking about La Colombe - are neither committed, trained nor qualified.”

So, my question to the hon. Minister is: two years later, can she tell the House what is the qualification of the Officer-in-Charge of La Colombe?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: In fact, the same applies to all the Shelters in that there is no specific qualification requirement to work. These caregivers - I have noted as well and I have read in the report - do not have specific qualification, there is no such requirement in the law for them to be able to work with these children.

Notwithstanding that in light of the Vellien Report, I understand that some 90 caregivers were given training and this year some more 50 have been given training as regards these kinds of situations dealing with children. What we are also doing is that we are working as has been the recommendations of the Vellien Report. In fact, the Vellien Report had recommended the setting up of a whole institution for training. That, of course, has not been implemented due to the cost implication and various other implications, but that does not mean that training is not happening. It is an ongoing process and we are establishing links with other authorities; we have experts from overseas. Quite recently, we have had an expert coming from Reunion Island who has successfully trained 50 caregivers, as I have just said, and she has also expressed her interest to make this process ongoing. Therefore, we are going to ensure that we will go through all the 19, be it with the NGOs to have the carers trained, if possible.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister did not answer my question. Now, the other very specific recommendation made two years ago is to set up a regulatory body, precisely to ensure that these people who are looking after our children in Shelters are qualified, that these institutions are properly supervised just like residential care homes are supervised under the Residential Care Home Act. So, may I know from the hon. Minister, two years down the road, why do we still not have this regulatory body?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: In fact, I am grateful for this question because it's a matter of serious concern and that's the first thing that I had picked up when looking through the different matters and the way that caregivers are being enrolled and that there is no such regulatory body and no such institution. My Ministry is presently working on the Children's Bill which, in fact, is going to ensure that this process is being done in a proper manner because, indeed, the care of children is quite a serious matter. Mr Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member will appreciate that it has been two or three weeks that I have been in this Ministry and we are working towards it.

Now, as regards the Children's Bill, let me just say that, at this stage...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: ... we have solicited the services of an International Expert to review the Bill so that we can reconcile it and harmonise it with different conventions and present law in Mauritius.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister, with regard to the report of the Ombudsman for Children for this current year, to which she has referred, there is an issue which was commented upon by this report which goes at the root and which is the basis of the possibility of the quality of delivery of services by these RCIs. The report talked about an institutionalised discrimination in terms of disparity in the funding of the different institutions. In fact, it is the funding received by the different institutions which is on a different level that accounts for the delivery of the quality of services of these different institutions. So, what does the hon. Minister propose to do in order to bring about a certain level of uniformity in terms of funding and financial resources of these institutions?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: As regards funding of the institutions, I have a list here of what has actually been given to the different institutions and we have a capitation grant per head that is actually being given. I will have to look into that matter more fully and, of course, whatever action needs to be taken will have to be taken after consideration and full investigation into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to the National Audit Report, 500 children were placed in various shelters, both public and private. Now, the cost per child varies from Rs68,000 up to Rs260,000. Now, could the hon. Minister tell us why is there such a discrepancy in the figure per child?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: I take note of the question because it does not form part of the main question. I will look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY - AUDITED ACCOUNTS

(No. B/920) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the National Insurance Company, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom –

- (a) information as to the present financial situation thereof, and
- (b) table copy of the audited accounts thereof.

Mr Sesungkur: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that as at date, the National Insurance Co. Ltd is meeting all its financial obligations vis-à-vis its policyholders and the number of new policies sold has continued to grow from 18,000, as I pointed out in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/38 on 28 March 2017, to nearly 22,800 as at end of November 2017.

However, I am informed that due to the complexity of the transfer of the long-term insurance business of BAI Co (Mauritius) Ltd to the National Insurance Co. Ltd, the auditing of the financial statements of the company for financial years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 is ongoing.

I am advised that the Financial Services Commission has agreed to a request from the National Insurance Co. Ltd for extending the date limit for submission of the audited accounts to 31 December 2017.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards to part (b) of the question, therefore, the audited accounts of the National Insurance Co. Ltd will be tabled in the National Assembly after the auditing exercise is completed.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister which accounting year is he talking about? Because in March when the question was asked, we were talking about the financial statement for year ended June 2016. Now, the financial statement for June 2017 is almost six months late. So, is the hon. Minister seriously telling us that with respect to the financial year ending June 2016, the auditor has not been able to give a clean audit?

Mr Sesungkur: As I mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the approach of the external auditors is such that they would like to cover the two years at one go.

(Interruptions)

So, we cannot influence what approach an external auditor will take. If they want to finalise both years because it is more efficient for them, because they can form a better opinion, then neither the NIC nor the Ministry can influence the external auditors.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are talking about public funds. We are talking about a company that takes policy from the public. The hon. Minister now is telling us

that it is the auditor who is now going to decide when, if he thinks like, if he feels like he is going to give his audit. Isn't it true that the auditors are prepared with their report, but the NIC does not want to accept it because the auditor's report means that NIC is not a going concern?

Mr Sesungkur: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, maybe the hon. Member has got information, but I must say the information is incorrect because I met with the external auditors and together we discussed the whole issue. It is true that the NIC inherited the liabilities of ex-BAI, all the liabilities stemming from the policies that were there with the BAI. And it was a complex issue. There were transfers of assets. There were a number of implications. That is why there have been debates, there have been discussions going on between the management and the auditors, and there have been different views on that. It took more than expected time to finish the audit. So, it was a complex matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: The Board of NIC took note last year that the loss as at October 2016 was Rs240 m. and he stated that it is expected by June 2017 to reach Rs530 m. So, is, at least, the hon. Minister in a position to tell us as at to date what is the accumulated loss made by this company?

Mr Sesungkur: It is natural for me - I have been an external auditor for so many years - for a company which has inherited such a huge deficit. NTan established the total deficit of BAI to Rs12 billion. So, would you expect NIC to take over those liabilities and convert it into a profit overnight? Who can do that?

(Interruptions)

Nobody can do that! It was a political solution to a social crisis. So, what we did, what we are trying to do is turn around the company and it will not take two days, two months, or two years; it will take more than that.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is trying to justify the figures. What we are asking here, in the Opposition, is just to give the true figures. We are just asking to give the true position where the company is because we are expected to understand...

The Deputy Speaker: You have made your point, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...that the auditor has not signed the account for 30 June 2016. Now, they will give a comfort on the accounts of 30 June 2017. May I ask the hon. Minister what is the name of the audit firm doing the audit of the NIC and - we know who fixes the remuneration - what is the remuneration for the NIC?

Mr Sesungkur: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can say the auditors are Ernst and Young. I do not have the fee, but what I must say, when the hon. Member refers to the true financial position, this can be established after the audit.

(Interruptions)

I can give...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Allow the hon. Minister to answer!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sesungkur: According to standards, the management, the Directors prepare the accounts. They are there to prepare the financial statement. It is the external auditors who come and form a true and fair view on the financial statement. This is what an external auditor does.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhuboo!

CEB - EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

(No. B/921) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if it has adopted an Emergency Response Plan to reinstate electricity supply in the advent of major disasters, natural or otherwise.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that it has the following plans -

- (i) A Cyclone Preparedness Contingency Plan and reinstatement works which is updated in October each year prior to the cyclonic period. I am tabling the document.
- (ii) An Oil Spill Contingency Plan for each of its power stations.

On 13 September 2017, I called and chaired a meeting with the Central Electricity Board, the Central Water Authority and the Wastewater Management Authority. The purpose was to ensure that each institution was well prepared for any emergency situation. I will ask each of them to develop an Emergency Response Plan in addition to the existing Cycle Preparedness Plans. The CEB has prepared a further Emergency Response Plan, which is meant to ensure that the supply of electricity is reinstated within the least possible delay in the event of major disasters, natural or otherwise. This plan includes a communication plan, defines the role and posting of all technical and non-technical staff, the list of contractors, the persons to be contacted for external teams from various independent power producers and the responsible officers at the level of the Special Mobile Force.

Mr Jhuboo: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir. Based on the simple law of probability, we are well overdue for a major cyclonic event. Now, the re-establishment of the electricity supply in 1994, post Hollanda, took, at least, a month with the assistance of the US and the Indian Naval Engineering Course, and the network was substantially smaller. So, my question to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is: within what period of time would the network be restored in the case of a major cyclonic event?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Please, refer to the plan. All the details are given there. The CEB is well prepared to restore electricity within the least possible delay. Of course, this will depend on the nature of the catastrophe. Today, a cyclone of 300 kilometres an hour cannot be said to be totally unexpected and if there is a big catastrophe, unfortunately, the damage could be very hard.

Mr Osman Mahomed: My question pertains to Emergency Response Plan to reinstate electricity not in cases of major disasters, not in natural disasters, but otherwise, the word 'otherwise', for which the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has many times in the House said that there were power supply problems because of bats all over the island. Are we over this problem and, if not, what kind of Emergency Plan there is at the CEB? Because, at times, many inconveniences are caused to the people of the country.

The Deputy Prime Minister: We are not going to go over the bats again. I mean, I am repeating what the experts have told me, I am not an expert myself, you are an expert, bats or other isolated incidents may or may not create havoc in the system as they did recently. The CEB shows me that it is well prepared for those situations and what they have explained to me is that apparently when an isolated incident occurs, they take additional

precautions by switching off the electricity even within areas which may not be affected just because of elementary safety precautions. I had to trust them.

Mr Bhagwan: In the same line, the Deputy Prime Minister informed us some time back about *rétablir le réseau*, going underground. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House what progress has been achieved as far as going underground for the main power supply, not only in urban or even commercial areas?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, among the first areas to benefit from this was Malartic Avenue in front of the hon. Member's house, as the hon. Member knows very well...

(Interruptions)

and along Ambrose Street, the works are ongoing. Of course, it is a long-term planification; we cannot do all this overnight. We will see, but the work has started.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

MINISTRY OF TOURISM - MRS O. T. - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/922) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to Mrs O. T. attached to his Ministry, he will state the –

- (a) post occupied;
- (b) date and terms and conditions of appointment thereof, and
- (c) qualifications held.

(Withdrawn)

EBÈNE - JOGGING AND LEISURE PARK - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/923) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a new jogging and leisure park at Ebène to replace the Promenade Roland Armand in Rose Hill, he will state –

- (a) the location thereof;
- (b) the status and cost of the project therefor;
- (c) if prior consultations have been held with the relevant local authorities and Non-Governmental Organisations in relation thereto, and

(d) the expected start and completion dates thereof.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that land of an extent of 8A52P has been identified next to the Trianon-Vandermeersch Link Road, near Ebene for the proposed construction of a new jogging and leisure park.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the land belongs to Omnicane Ltd and has been earmarked to be acquired by Government. Acquisition procedures are underway.

I am further informed that Mr Daniel Maestracci, an internationally known Landscape Architect, whose services had been enlisted for the rehabilitation plan of the Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam Botanical Garden this year and for the Landscape Master Plan for the Vallée d'Osterlog in 2009, has been approached to submit a proposal for the conception of the park. He has submitted a proposal on 17 November 2017 to a Ministerial Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Public Utilities. The Committee is studying the various options and cost implications of the proposal with a view to making recommendations to Government.

Regarding part (c) of the question, since the project is still at a preliminary stage and is still being studied by the Ministerial Committee, only the local authority concerned, namely the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, has been apprised thereof and no consultations have yet been held with non-Governmental organisations. Consultations will be held with non-Governmental organisations and other stakeholders in due course.

Regarding part (d) of the question, Sir, in view of the fact that the project is still at a preliminary stage, the expected start and completion dates are not yet known. However, the project will be implemented on a fast track basis once finalised.

Mr Bhagwan: The Minister is not the substantive Minister, but can the hon. Minister inform the House whether this project goes in line with the Metro Express Project? Because Vandermeersch Street is in line with the Metro Express *trajet*. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether it is in line with the implementation of the Metro Express Project? Because there is a lot of frustration of the inhabitants of the region concerning the use of which is a most popular jogging track. What would be the alternative? So, can the hon.

Minister, at least, inform the House whether this Ministerial Committee is taking care of the emergency aspect concerning people who go for jogging? It had been said that they would have to go to the Rose Hill Stadium. What about the security aspects? Can the Minister inform the House?

Mr Sinatambou: As a matter of fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can reassure not only the hon. Member, but also the House and the country at large, that everything is being done in order to ensure that there is something great and nice for all those who were using the promenade before. As a matter of fact, the idea is, in fact, to have better amenities than what there were before.

Mr Osman Mahomed: In view of the location of the proposed facility being highly inhabited, has there been a Traffic Impact Assessment that has been conducted or, if not, is it envisaged that it would be conducted?

Mr Sinatambou: Yes, all this is envisaged.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Baloomoody!

MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LANDS - ADVISERS - REMUNERATION

(No. B/924) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the advisers attached to his Ministry, he will state the names thereof, indicating the remuneration and other benefits drawn.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are five advisers attached to my Ministry as follows -

Mr Logendra Appaya is the Senior Adviser employed on a contract basis since 24 February 2016. He earns a monthly remuneration of Rs110,000;

Mr Vinod Seeburn is the Adviser on Land Management. He is employed on a contract basis since 20 January 2016, following his retirement as Chief Technical Officer of the Ministry of Housing and Lands. He earns a monthly remuneration of Rs77,175.

Mrs Khila Kumari Rupa Parboteeah is the Adviser on Policy Matters, employed on a contract basis since 31 March 2017 at the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands. She assumed duty at the Ministry of Housing and Lands on 16 November 2017 and earns a monthly remuneration of Rs64,800.

Mrs Melissa Seebaluck is the Adviser on Information Matters, employed on a contract basis since 31 March 2017 at the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands. She assumed duty at the Ministry of Housing and Lands on 16 November 2017 and earns a monthly remuneration of Rs59,700.

Mrs Umawtee Boojhawon is the Adviser on Public Relation Matters, employed on a contract basis since 31 March 2017 at the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands. She assumed duty at the Ministry of Housing and Lands on 16 November 2017 and earns a monthly remuneration of Rs21,475 plus a monthly allowance of Rs5,545 for working beyond normal hours during weekdays, weekend and public holidays.

All five advisers are employed on contract, which is renewable on a yearly basis.

In addition to their remuneration, the Senior Adviser and the Adviser on Land Management are entitled to sick and annual leaves, car benefits, monthly travelling allowance and passage benefits in accordance with the provisions of the PRB Report 2016 and a gratuity of 2 months' salary on completion of 12 months' satisfactory service.

The other two Advisers, namely the Adviser on Policy Matters and the Adviser on Information Matters are entitled to car benefits, monthly travelling allowance and passage benefits in accordance with the provisions of the PRB Report 2016 and a gratuity of 2 months' salary on completion of 12 months' satisfactory service.

The Adviser on Public Relation Matters ...

(Interruptions)

Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Jhugroo: ... is entitled to monthly refund of bus fares and a gratuity of 2 months' salary on completion of 12 months' satisfactory service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all the five Advisers also benefit from telephone facilities.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether - with regard to that famous meeting that there was in the office of the ex-Vice Prime Minister which led to his resignation for the allocation of houses at Palma - Mr Robin Appaya was present on that meeting as Senior Adviser to the Minister?

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of this information being given that this is not in the file of the Ministry.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: We have seen in the past where Ministers have replied that their Advisers - especially the Prime Minister has given reply - have been taken to task for doing active politics. Can the Minister inform the House that now that he has assumed office at that Ministry, he will give clear instructions to Mr Appaya, at least, not to be directly involved in active politics, especially at the Sun Trust Building, MSM Press conferences, doing night political meetings and so on? Can he give assurance to the House that such instructions will be given as has been the case at the MIE and also in other cases?

Mr Jhugroo: I take note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister - if he does not have the information now, he can table it at a later stage - how many Advisers since successive governments since 2000 have been employed in his Ministry, with their names, the remuneration and other benefits drawn? I mean successive governments since year 2000.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not have this information now. So, I can compile and table it at the Library.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister to enquire with his Chief Executive Officer whether Government vehicles are being used by Mr Appaya during working hours to do active politics? If this is the case, whether he will see to it that such illegal practices be stopped.

Mr Jhugroo: As far as I know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not the case. But anyway, I will see to it if this is the case.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

PAS GÉOMÉTRIQUES - PUBLIC BEACHES - PROCLAMATION

(No. B/925) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State land and *Pas Géométriques*, he will state if consideration will be given for the –

- (a) *Pas Géométriques* to be proclaimed public beaches, and
- (b) introduction of necessary proposed amendments to the existing legislation to deter public authorities to deproclaim public beaches by making it imperative for his Ministry to hold prior public hearings or submit a social impact assessment which should be laid on the Table of the Assembly.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the outset, I wish to point out that the interpretation of State land according to section 2 of the State Lands Act includes *Pas Géométriques* and hence all *Pas Géométriques* are State land.

With regard to part (a) of the question, all *Pas Géométriques* cannot be declared as public beaches as a large extent of *Pas Géométriques* have been leased for different purposes, as provided under the *Pas Géométriques* Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, at this stage, it is not envisaged to bring any amendment to the existing legislation. As per provisions of section 2 of the Beach Authority Act, only the Minister of Housing and Lands is mandated to proclaim public beaches, and as such, also deproclaim public beaches.

I can assure the hon. Member that prior to deproclaiming any part of the public beach, due consideration is given to all aspects pertaining to the said deproclamation.

I firmly believe our citizens should be able to enjoy and have access to more public beaches. As soon as I took office as Minister of Housing and Lands, I have given necessary instructions to officers of my Ministry to identify uncommitted plots of land on *Pas Géométriques* which are suitable to be proclaimed as public beaches.

Mr Ganoo: I understand the point of the hon. Ministry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when he says that since parts of our *Pas Géométriques* have already been leased, have already been committed and, of course, he cannot proclaim those parts of our *Pas Géométriques* as public beaches. But, the point of my question was precisely to ask the Ministry whether his Ministry should not carry out an exercise and see to it, in view of the exiguity of public beaches that are left today for Mauritians to enjoy, whether he should not urgently carry out this exercise to render it possible that parts of the *Pas Géométriques* which are uncommitted yet to be declared as public beaches.

Mr Jhugroo: I mentioned it earlier, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that at this stage it is not envisaged to bring any amendment, but I did ask my officers to see to it that the plots of land

that had been granted which are not being used to be proclaimed as public beaches in the near future.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister, with regard to part (b), in the same spirit of part (a) of the question, in view of the exiguity of public beaches which are left today, whether we should not amend the law to make it impossible now to deproclaim a public beach except in very exceptional circumstances?

Mr Jhugroo: I wish to point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as per provisions of section 2 of the Beach Authority Act, only the Minister of Housing and Lands is mandated to proclaim public beaches, and as such also deproclaim public beaches. There is presently a case at the Supreme Court contesting the legality of the de-proclamation of the Pomponette Public Beach by the Minister of Housing and Lands and accordingly it will be *sub judice* at this stage to argue on the issue of the power of deproclamation.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to whether when hon. Alan Ganoo was Minister, he set up a Ministerial Committee in relation to this matter and the outcome of the Ministerial Committee?

Mr Jhugroo: I am not aware of this information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister also whether we should not today reflect on the possibility of emulating what India and New Zealand have done? They have, in those two countries, granted legal personhood and granted same legal rights to forests, rivers and even to public beaches as human persons so that these locations should be free from pollution, from harassment and enjoy better protection from the part of the State and the population, that is, grant legal rights as a human person to our public beaches.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Question Time ends here! Motion!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Sir Anerood Jugnauth rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.12 p.m.)

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

PQ NO. B/851 - PEERLESS LTD - DIRECTORS

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a statement by way of personal explanation.

Following my reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/851 from the hon. First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière and addressed to the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Member asked certain supplementary questions. To one of these supplementary questions, I stated that Peerless was, I quote –

“(...) controlled by a Mr Doomun (...)”

I added that, and I quote –

“Mr Doomun, we all know him, was in Vernons Pool before and is Peerless today.”

In making that reply, I relied on information provided to me by the Gambling Regulatory Authority and which appeared in the file handed to me. That information indicated that Peerless Ltd was controlled by one Mr Doomun who had been in Vernons Pool for a long number of years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of a public statement made by the hon. Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill to the effect that his searches had revealed no indication that Mr Doomun was involved in Peerless Ltd.

Following that statement, I have asked the GRA to verify the information it had provided to me. It now transpires that Mr Mohammad Ameen Elahee Doomun ceased being a shareholder of Peerless Ltd on 08 July 2017. On that date, all existing shares were transferred to Mr Cassam Dhunny of No. 47/49 Desire Sicard, Camp Chapelon.

On 18 August 2017, Mr Cassam Dhunny became a Director of Peerless. On 15 November 2017, two additional Directors were appointed, namely Mr Beeharry Devendranathsing of 1 Jemmapes Street Port Louis and Mr Lan Hing Choy Kang Foong of the same address. Mr Lan Hing Choy Kang Foong is better known under the name of Ah Fat.

The existing Directors of Peerless Ltd today are, therefore, Mr Cassam Dhunny, Mr Beeharry Devendranathsing and Mr Lan Hing Choy Kang Foong also known as Ah Fat.

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the following Bills were read a first time –

- (i) Data Protection Bill (No. XIX of 2017);*
- (ii) The Higher Education Bill (No. XX of 2017);*
- (iii) The Additional Remuneration and Other Allowances (2018) Bill (No. XXI of 2017).*

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

At 4.16 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.58 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Second Reading

THE MAURITIUS INSTITUTE OF HEALTH (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. XVII of 2017)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Dr. A. Husnoo): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I move that the Mauritius Institute of Health (Amendment) Bill (No. XVII of 2017) be read a second time.

With the enactment of the Mauritius Institute of Health Act No. 36 of 1989 and following discussion with UNFPA, WHO and the Australian International Development Agency, MIH was established as a body corporate under the aegis of my Ministry aiming to contribute to national health development and promote regional cooperation, bringing under one roof, in a concerted and coordinated approach, all training programmes and health systems research.

Madam Speaker, since its inception, MIH has played a prominent role in the training of health personnel. It has been involved in induction training of newly enlisted medical staff,

internship training and assessment of medical graduates prior to registration by the Medical Council. It also provides training courses for medical and paramedical staff.

Since 2013 and 2016, it has mounted, with the School of Nursing, top-up training programmes leading to National Diploma in Nursing and Diploma Pharmacy Technician respectively. It is also the awarding body for the 3-year Diploma in Nursing.

From 1989 to 2004, MIH has successfully conducted several training courses on Reproductive and Family Health for 940 health professionals locally and from nearby African States. Following the visit of UNFPA Country Director in November 2017, it has been agreed that a MoU would be signed with UNFPA to assist MIH to reintroduce Regional Training on Reproductive and Family Health. It has also been providing online/distance training to UNFPA staff for the last 10 years.

Together with IOC, MIH organised, in 2006 and 2011, courses leading to “*Diplôme universitaire*” on HIV/Hepatitis C for 46 participants of the OIC region. Since November 2017 and with “*Centre Hospitalier de Bellepierre, La Réunion*”, MIH is facilitating the “*Diplôme Universitaire en Sidenologie.*”

Various courses leading to “*Diplôme Universitaire en Santé Publique*” and “*Santé Communautaire*” have been organised as well as postgraduate specialist training to Medical staff in Internal Medicine, Cardiology, Forensic Medicine, Paediatrics, Psychiatry and Ophthalmology with the assistance of University of Bordeaux.

Madam Speaker, in 2003, an amendment was made to the MIH Act to empower the Institute to give awards up to Diploma level.

To further enhance the quality of health services, my Ministry jointly with the MIH and University of Bordeaux, is offering since last year, a 3-year specialist programme in Emergency Medicine to enable SAMU and the medical emergencies to be manned by specialists. It is to be noted that Emergency Medicine is a fairly new speciality and for the first time Mauritius will have a cohort of Emergency Specialists.

A first batch of SAMU medical staff started training last year. Since September 2017, the course has been extended to another batch of doctors posted to Accident and Emergency Departments to improve emergency care.

As per the Budget Speech, every effort is being made to promote training in nursing under the National Skills Development Programme. In July 2017, an MoU was signed with

the Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd (PML) to mount a 3-year Diploma Nursing course which was launched in November 2017. This training is meant to meet the growing demand for trained qualified nursing personnel in private health institutions and also to equip young people to explore employment prospects abroad in the field of nursing.

Madam Speaker, amendments are being proposed to the MIH Act so as to enable it to play a more important role in training in the health sector. The MIH (Amendment) Bill provides for amendment to section 4 of the legislation to revamp the role of the Institute.

- (i) Section 4 (1) (a) provides that the Institute shall be the focal point for training in the health sector and be the awarding body in respect of training provided by it.

MIH will now be the focal point for training in different areas of Medicine and will be the awarding body for any training it conducts.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I have circulated an amendment, as vetted by SLO, which will be taken at the Committee stage. This is to delete the subsection 2 of section 4 and replacing it by a new subsection 2 making provision for MIH to award certificates at the degree level.

Regarding that proposed amendment that I am going to move at the Committee Stage, we have to delete the whole Clause 3, despite there being no change in Clause 3 (1), as there is the amendment which is required in section 4 (2) of the MIH Act. If the whole of Clause 3 were not deleted, we would have had two references to Clause 4 in the Bill. That is why we had to change the whole lot to come out because we are changing one word in the Clause 3 (2). We are adding the word 'degree'.

Presently, MIH provides for qualifications up to Diploma level. However, due to its lack of degree awarding powers, MIH is lagging behind new institutions that have embarked on medical and health care training, but which does not have the proper practical training facilities. Granting the Institute degree awarding powers will give it the necessary impetus to focus more on meeting the health human resource needs at national, regional and international level. Furthermore, the Institute will be able to reposition itself strategically and further enhance its standing as a renowned training centre.

MIH has developed strong links with a considerable number of academic institutions and regional bodies, including the University of Bordeaux, the University of La Réunion, UNFPA, IOC and SADC.

Procedures are underway to enter into an agreement with the University of Marseille, France, to conduct, with MIH, specialised training in the area of Nephrology and renal transplant. Discussions have been held recently with the new French Ambassador to accommodate medical staff from Seychelles, Comoros and Madagascar. In this way, it is contemplated to turn our country into a regional health training hub.

- (ii) Section 4 (1) (c) and (e) provides for MIH to run refresher courses for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for, *inter alia*, medical, dental personnel and to coordinate all Continuous Professional Development activities in the health sector

MIH has been engaged in Continuing Medical Education (CME) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for a long time now. Allow me to mention that with the new regulations of the Medical Council of Mauritius and Dental Council of Mauritius Acts rendering CPD compulsory for doctors and dentists for their continued regular registration, the Institute is now organising regular CPD for doctors and dentists whose needs cannot be catered for by other bodies.

To this end, the Ministry, through the MIH, will work out the mechanism to coordinate the CME and CPD.

With the assistance of the “*Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie*”, MIH has successfully piloted and launched online CPD for doctors and healthcare professionals to cater for needs of those who cannot attend the CPD trainings in person. Furthermore, as with several other programmes, this online CPD is being offered not only in English language but also in French Language, further servicing unmet needs.

- (iii) Section 4 (1) (d) makes provision for MIH to coordinate, oversee and evaluate training of pre-registration medical officers and other health professionals and nursing officers.

MIH will play an increasingly important role in coordinating and evaluating training. It will fine-tune training of pre-registration medical graduates, of nursing and other personnel.

- (iv) Section 4 (1) (f) provides for MIH to build capacity for medical and health care research, including clinical trials and clinical audits.

MIH promotes and encourages research in many priority areas and has been involved in several studies such as “outbreak of viral hepatitis”, “Factors associated with low birth weight”, “factors contributing to abortion”, “Prevalence of mental disorders in the population” and “risk factors associated with suicide”, amongst others.

Madam Speaker, Clinical audit is a process that aims to improve the quality of patient care by systematically reviewing care provided against well-defined explicit criteria and effecting the necessary changes to improve health care delivery. Our clinicians need to move ahead, to improve their quality of care, based on best practices. They need to develop, nurture and pursue a research culture. Every effort will be made to sustain the momentum for research. Particular attention will be given for clinical trials and the need to provide for clinical audit in specific areas in consultation with the Clinical Research Regulatory Council of my Ministry.

- (v) Section 4 (1) (g) makes provision for MIH to undertake research on health policies and framework

The MIH has been engaged in research on health policies and framework as part of the Health Systems Research (HSR).

The new amendment will enable the formulation of evidence-based policies as well as the review, evaluation and strengthening of the Ministry's policies.

- (vi) Section 4 (1) (h) and (i) provides for MIH to act as a focal point and the resource centre for the production, exchange and promotion of health learning and health information and to administer a Virtual Health Library.

Since 2013, MIH has embarked on the Virtual Health Library Mauritius project (VHLM). As at date, the VHLM is accessible to all doctors, dentists, pharmacists and other paramedical professionals of my Ministry. It is hoped that, in the near future, the service can be extended to all health professionals in Mauritius, including those in the private sector. Just to give an idea, 2,061 doctors and 675 nursing officers/paramedical officers are registered users of the virtual library up to now. From January 2016 to June 2017, there have been 42.4 % new users and 57.6% returning users.

- (vii) Section 4 (1) (j) makes provision for MIH to prepare, write, compile, archive, publish and disseminate works or reference in medical and health care, including the history of medical and health care in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, we have for decades been successful with our expanded programme of immunisation, diseases like smallpox and malaria have been eradicated. Poliomyelitis, diphtheria are unheard of, among our children, even Measles is seen only occasionally. Tuberculosis in the indigenous population is very low. For the first time, the prevalence of Diabetes in the country is seen to be stabilising.

It would be a shame, Madam Speaker, if such achievements which constitute an integral part of our history, be lost through lack of proper documentation. We will record the gradual and incremental improvements brought about over the years to achieve a modern high quality care.

Madam Speaker, the Bill also provides for –

- (a) a new section 8A for the protection of the Institute and its employees from civil and criminal liability in regard to any act done or omitted in good faith in the execution of the functions or exercise of powers as conferred by the Act,
- (b) there was a rewording of the powers conferred upon the Minister under section 10 of the Act.

Madam Speaker, the world of medicine has been evolving rapidly. We are witnessing further specialisation in different fields of medicine and nursing.

Here, in Mauritius, a new ENT Hospital will be starting soon. We are proceeding with the new Cancer Centre and a new Eye Hospital projects. We will also embark on a new Teaching Hospital Project at Flacq.

Formerly, patients with complicated cases in cardiology, ophthalmology and ENT problems were sent abroad for treatment. With the cooperation of Specialists from abroad, several such interventions are performed locally. Patients from Comoros and Madagascar are coming to Mauritius for treatment. It is for this reason that there is need to lay emphasis on training at all levels to provide health services according to international norms.

MIH has been involved in training and capacity building. The proposed amendments will reinforce the capability of MIH to undertake training and research.

With the amendments which are being brought, we foresee a promising future for MIH. We hope it will become a National Training Centre converting our country into a regional health training Hub.

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

Mr Gayan rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

(5.14 p.m.)

Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Madam Speaker, let me, first of all, express my dissatisfaction regarding the fact that amendments have been circulated just before the start of the debates and to my knowledge, it is not the first time. Anyway!

Madam Speaker, as we are well aware, the Mauritius Institute of Health was established in 1989 for providing training to health care staff and to undertake research in the health sector. At that time, the Mauritius Institute of Health was the main institution providing training for healthcare workers. From 1989 until now, there has been major changes in the landscape of medical education and training in Mauritius and, in particular, new players have emerged offering University undergraduate and postgraduate medical education and training for healthcare workers so much so, Madam Speaker, that there is now a jungle out there and there is an urgent need for a comprehensive review of our legislation to define, harmonise and demarcate clearly the responsibilities of the various institutions falling under the responsibilities of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Ministry of Education in matters of health sector education, training and research.

Madam Speaker, let me give you just one example of a major shortcoming in our medical education and training. We have now been providing undergraduate and postgraduate medical education for some years now and we still do not have a University Hospital. This is a disgrace when we are all the time boasting that we are soon to attain upper income country status. Just name me one upper income country where undergraduate and postgraduate medical education and training is being carried out without University Hospitals and the appropriate Faculties.

Under these circumstances, I, therefore, find these amendments to the Mauritius Institute of Health, very superficial and cannot aspire to improve on the efficiency of an Institute which has, so far, served as a glorified paramedical training centre.

Madam Speaker, the time has come for us to come forward with visionary legislation for the setting up of a University for Medical and Health Sciences attached to a University Hospital or for thoughts to be given for the Mauritius Institute of Health and a regional hospital to be integrated within the University of Mauritius in order to really harmonise, strengthen and modernise healthcare education, training and research, and for the introduction of revalidation in Mauritius.

I would, therefore, request the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life to submit to the House as to the number of full-time professors and assistant professors, if any, currently employed at the Mauritius Institute of Health and as to the faculties presently existing at the institute as the object of this Bill is apparently to revamp the role of an institute.

Madam Speaker, let me nonetheless raise some issues and make some comments about the proposed amendments. Firstly, referring to amendment being proposed to section 1(4)(a) of the Principal Act, so how can the Mauritius Institute of Health be the focal point for training in the healthcare sector when there are already universities delivering undergraduate and postgraduate medical education? I would have thought that the focal point for training in the healthcare sector should be a university with all the appropriate faculties and professors. I would wish the Minister to inform the House as to the role the Mauritius Institute of Health would play as focal point in relation to those universities already delivering undergraduate and postgraduate medical education and training.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, referring to the amendment being proposed to section 4(1)(e) of the Principal Act, here again, I would wish the Minister to inform the House as to how the Institute would coordinate continuous professional development activities being organised by the University for instance.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, referring to amendments being proposed to section 4(1)(i) of the Principal Act, again here, I would like to inform the House, that to my knowledge a virtual library has already been set up and is being administered by the Institute for nearly three years now. This section, I am afraid, a bit misleads the House into thinking that provisions are now being made for the setting up and administration of a virtual library at the Institute. So, I urge the Minister of Health and Quality of Life to respond to these issues that I have raised and to all my comments.

Madam Speaker, I am also, in fact, very surprised that the Minister of Education - I will listen to her later on probably - is agreeable to the amendments which are passed to empower the Mauritius Institute of Health to be the focal institution for training in the health sector in Mauritius, though to my knowledge this Institute has no faculties and no professors and, therefore, no capacity to adequately fulfil this role.

To end, Madam Speaker, the amendments are silent on the role the Mauritius Institute of Health should really be playing in determining the training needs of the health sector over

the next decade for instance. They are also silent, Madam Speaker, about the fundamental role the Institute should consider playing in the process of revalidation of the skills of our healthcare workers if we are to ascertain the delivery of up-to-date and modern healthcare services to our population.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I would say that instead we need an in-depth comprehensive review of all legislation pertaining to the regulation of medical and health sector education, training, revalidation and research in Mauritius if we are to aspire to reaching the highest standards of healthcare in our Republic.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, my attention has been drawn by Members of the Opposition to the fact that an amendment has just been circulated to this Bill. I do not want it to go on record that the hon. Minister is to be blamed for this. In fact, since this morning, I have received the amendment. I have already given instructions since this morning for the amendment to be circulated, and I will carry out an inquiry at the level of my Office and the Secretariat of my Office to see as to why the amendment had not been circulated since this morning and just now. Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

(5.22 p.m)

Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Madam Speaker, thank you to allow me to intervene in this proposed amendment of the Mauritius Institute of Health (Amendment) Bill. The first Bill, Madam Speaker, was brought to this House in 1989 to establish the MIH as a parastatal and under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

Madam Speaker, at that time, the MIH had a vision, I quote -

“The Mauritius Institute of Health shall be a leading centre of excellence in health training and research.”

They had also a mission, I quote -

“MIH mission is to contribute to the promotion of health and quality of life of society through training and health system research.”

They had also many objectives that were as defined in the Act 1989. In 2003, then the Ministry of Health came with an amendment to give power to the MIH to conduct courses,

whole examination and grant certificates, diplomas and awards, acting on its own or jointly with any other educational institution.

Madam Speaker, with this amendment, the MIH was provided with the tools to accomplish its vision, mission and objective. Madam Speaker, since establishment up to now, the MIH, through its core values, namely academic excellence, professionalism, integrity, teamwork, partnership and among others, has succeeded in its vision, mission and objectives. And these figures are evidence.

Madam Speaker, there are diploma postgraduate courses run by MIH in collaboration with University of Bordeaux and other universities. From 1990 to 2007, the Institute had 180 participants and 117 were Mauritians. It was for *cours en santé et santé communautaire*. The MIH had 141 participants, out of which, 110 were Mauritians for *formation en médecine d'urgence* (SAMU). For doctors, MIH had 47 participants, 40 Mauritians from 1996 to February 2013, and many other courses. I will not take too much of the time of the House, Madam Speaker, if I can table a list of all the courses and participants that the MIH has really given to the Mauritians and to neighbouring countries.

Madam Speaker, let me now come on the amendment itself. The hon. Minister is proposing this amendment to improve the structure and form of the MIH and is proposing a new objective and, at the same time, keeping some past objectives that have proven themselves. In the Bill, 1989, Object (1) (a) renumbered (1) (b) in the new amendment; likewise (1) (d) renumbered (1) (k) in the amendment. 1 (c) is a new amendment which reads -

“(c) run refresher courses for continuous professional development for, *inter alia*, medical and dental personnel;”

This section, Madam Speaker, is a good initiative, as presently MIH is engaged in providing CPD but was not covered in the previous Bill. We, doctors and dental surgeons, must be provided with these organised CPD so as to enrich ourselves with new technique development and treatment. CPD program, Madam Speaker, is also designed for other personnel of the health department.

Sections (1) (d) and (e) are new, especially 1 (d). These cater for the training evaluation of pre-registration medical officers and other health professionals and nursing officers.

In the recent past, Madam Speaker, evaluations of pre-registration medical officers were done by consultants of various departments without a legal framework, if I am not mistaken. Now the MIH and the medical staff can coordinate and evaluate the training programme within a legal framework.

Madam Speaker, section (1) (i) reads –

“(i) administer a virtual health library in order to improve access to documentation for public and private health professionals;”

This new subsection, Madam Speaker, I must say, the MIH was proactive. They have gone a long way. Actually, the project took off in November 2013. Online registration of medical staff to compile a database of potential users of the Virtual Library. The MIH upgraded the internet connectivity; now MIH is connected to fibre optic network. It has its own portal. The Virtual Health Library is in good shape and further development is in progress. With these proposed new amendment, section (1) subsection (i), the MIH has no reason to fail in this already proactive project.

Madam Speaker, section 4 subsection (2) of the Bill 1989, amended in 2003 reads -

“(2) For the purposes of subsection(1) (a), the Institute may conduct courses, hold examinations and grant certificates, diplomas and awards, acting on its own or jointly with any other educational institution.”

Madam Speaker, this should be amended to read subsection (1) (b) as already circulated, but (1) (a) to me should be deleted in that was going to be proposed at Committee because (1) (a) shall read -

“(1) The Institute shall –

(a) be the focal point for training in the healthcare sector and be the awarding body in respect of training provided by it;”

That is the important part. Provided by it! Whereas the other section says if you include that 1(a) in the proposed amendment that just got circulated, there it says “with other institutions”. This is specific to award a course that is given by MIH. So, I think it may be confusing. I am just proposing that this 1(a) be deleted.

Madam Speaker, the MIH should, I think, be given a legal framework for the institution to engage in research in future requirement of manpower in the health department. The hon. Minister may consider adding a new subsection to inform the public at large what,

hopefully, will the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life's requirements be. Presently, Madam Speaker, many Mauritians are going for medical studies and after receiving their qualifications, they find themselves unemployed or very difficult to make ends meet in the private sector.

Madam Speaker, in my young days there was career guidance. We went to the career guidance in the Ministry of Education. That is where I was told, "Raffick, why don't you go for dentistry?" I did, and I can say I have been quite successful. Madam Speaker, career guidance for the young generation should be put in place to give them the information how many posts we have in the next 10 years in the health department so that parents can decide or the young ones can decide if they want to go for medicine or something else.

Madam Speaker, to sum up, I congratulate the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life for coming with these amendments for helping the MIH with legal framework, and at the same time we must not forget sustainable development goals No. 3, which reads -

"Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages."

In Mauritius, actually, the hon. Minister is laying the foundation stone for various goals within a goal. Health target for sustainable development goals should be executed and the hon. Minister is contributing today so that in 2030 we can achieve, not all - it is more or less impossible to attend all - but at least some, and we can say thank you, hon. Dr. Husnoo, for having presented this Bill today.

Thank you.

(5.34 p.m.)

Mr J. B. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I thank the hon. Minister for bringing this piece of legislation into this House as it is very important for a high quality delivery of healthcare services.

A lot have been said about training and exams, but I think the Mauritius Institute of Health Act covers a broader area insofar as healthcare services are concerned, as we all know that the modern health care services in the modern world, the 21st century world, we are having new challenges in the healthcare services. That is why I think that the Mauritius Institute of Health is the vital organ of healthy healthcare services.

So, I think that the Mauritius Institute of Health (Amendment) Bill constitutes an important step in the modernisation of healthcare services within the Republic of Mauritius. It

is high time to re-examine the way healthcare services are being delivered in Mauritius to ensure that the services meet the needs of our population at such point in time.

Delivering of a modern care service needs to integrate hospitals, community health and social care, and of course nowadays these need to be done in a sustainable way. Healthcare services delivery need to be innovative, engaging in producing many good ideas which evolve alongside technology and population changes. With the population change, the Republic of Mauritius needs to search for a balanced system of care where people get care at the right time and at the right place whereby focusing on patients' needs at a very early stage.

This new law will allow all services to be delivered as an integral approach where the combination of hospital, community service and social care will bring changes to the delivery of acute care, and therefore, direct patients to appropriate places for treatment effectively. Those will become practically possible whereby the institution will bring changes to provision and accessibility to community service, hospital and social care.

As I had mentioned, healthcare needs to be adapted to the population changes and those changes include our growing ageing population, staff, that is, the reinvention of professionals, new technologies and the re-emergence of infectious diseases among others. The key aim of the results that the new structure will help to bring are: the healthcare services have to be patient-centred; good services and facilities to deliver modern healthcare, and reducing pressure on hospital, primary care and community services. Referring to the amendment made in section 4 of the Mauritius Institute of Health Bill, it is clear that the institution will help setting standards and accreditations, supporting quality practice and setting of safety and quality framework for health and it is not just about training.

With the new challenges in the delivery of health, it is important that health keep on improving and regulated through research and development mechanism so as to meet the needs of the entire population of the Republic of Mauritius. I am, therefore, giving my support to this Bill, as it will bring a good approach to the evaluation of health care needs especially in bringing equity in health service delivery and reducing inequalities. And when I am talking about inequalities, it is about reducing the geographical inequalities in the outcome of healthcare services.

I thank you for your attention, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

(5.40 p.m.)

The Minister Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madam Speaker, allow me at the very outset to congratulate and commend the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life for coming up with this Mauritius Institute of Health (amendment) Bill, which indeed is very timely.

Madam Speaker, the health sector is one where a high level of professionalism is inevitably the order of the day, and where the services provided have to be the top of the grade. We are, indeed, living at a time when public expectation is for institutions to deliver quality services and for the personnel to reflect a high degree of competency in the fulfilment of their responsibilities. I do appreciate this fact, Madam Speaker, as myself, as Minister of Education, I am responsible for the Human Resources Development in the island.

The Mauritius Institute of Health (Amendment) Bill proposes to review the roles and functioning of the Institute, making it the focal point for the training of personnel in the health sector, for ensuring continuous professional development for the health sector professionals as well as for providing and promoting Medical Healthcare Research.

Madam Speaker, this is totally in line with the vision that we have at the Ministry of Education: the vision of moving towards excellence in all the programmes of study that we offer.

Hon. Members would have noted that the amendments proposed have a three-pronged approach, and I propose to talk about these three approaches.

The first one is obviously the building of capacity of the health personnel through continuous professional development; the second prong relates to the dissemination function, and the third to the building of partnerships.

Allow me, Madam Speaker to briefly elaborate on these three aspects. This Bill seeks to promote what should be central to all government policies, capacity building and facilitation for real professionalism.

Madam Speaker, what is capacity building? I do not intend to elaborate on the definition of the term. Suffice it to say that it helps in strengthening abilities of individuals to perform their core functions in a sustainable manner. Obviously, the payback is enormous both for individuals and for the medical institutions in which they operate. For the personnel of the health sector, this means an empowerment, their capacity to develop is promoted, and their capacity to implement activities related to their domain also is promoted in accordance

with changing and emerging needs. It is clear, Madam Speaker, as someone once put it, we cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails. With the enhanced training and resulting improved service provided, medical institutions will gain in repute and credibility, and this would be enormous.

Madam Speaker, it will be possible by virtue of public recognition of the organisational efficiency and effectiveness. As you can see, the MIH function will, through the amendments proposed, widen the functioning of the institution so that it will now be in a position to carry out assessment of needs of the health workforce as well as to identify the constraints faced by the medical personnel.

Madam Speaker, this is the underlined principle behind some of the enunciations in section 3 of the Mauritius Institute of Health (Amendment) Bill. At the same time, I would like to bring to the attention of the House subsection (1) (b) of the same section 3, which relates to the fact that the MIH will -

“organise the training of local health personnel,(...)”

To which is added -

“as well as overseas participants(...)”

Madam Speaker, this is no blight. It is, in fact, very much in line with our vision of positioning Mauritius as a knowledge hub, attracting learners and practitioners to come to us, to upgrade their skills and their competencies. And this is possible because Mauritius has built a reputation of its own in the field of training in the health sector.

I do agree it was initially in the original Act but, today, it gains a new momentum in the present terms. For too long, we have been turning to other countries to learn from their practices, mostly good practices. Over the years, we have rather been underestimating our capacity to be a beacon for others and thus share with others what we are good at.

Madam Speaker, nowadays, whenever we go outside the country, we go to conferences to find people from the region expressing their wish to come and learn from us, expressing their wish to come and find out how do we manage here, in Mauritius, to succeed in various fields.

I am glad to say that even the World Bank, today, acknowledges that whatever we are doing here is very worthy and can be used as models for countries of the region. Only this week, the World Bank has asked the Ministry of Education to come and present the reforms

that we are implementing in the sector to countries of the region. So, officers from my Ministry will be moving and giving a sort of an exposé on how we are proceeding. So, we do have our competencies. I must say that we have been turning to Singapore a number of times, to other countries, but, today, we, ourselves, can provide our expertise and our help to countries requiring it.

Over the last few years, Madam Speaker, we have been reversing the trend, and just as the latest global rankings have been demonstrating, we are not being here widely congratulatory, but let us recognise that there are plenty of domains, and health and education are two of these where we can definitely share our good practices.

The hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life provided and rightly pointed out today that the MIH has been receiving a number of requests for capacity building or/and continuous professional development for health with personnel from countries of the region. We cannot deny the fact that nurses trained by the MIH have always been very well welcome in countries like England, Britain and elsewhere as well. Germany has just made a request to Mauritius to get nurses trained over here to be sent to Germany. So, we do have this capacity.

I must say that I totally agree with the hon. Minister of Health and Quality when he says that the next step that we need to take is to move towards partnership. We already have a number of partnerships as just mentioned by the hon. Minister. I will not go over these again. But the other prong that we were talking about, and which I referred to earlier, was that of partnerships. Sharing our knowhow and how to with countries in the region does not imply adopting a riding the high horse stand. It is not that we are being boastful, quite the contrary. We always have to learn, and international and regional organisations have a lot to offer, including in terms of expertise, both human and technical. Hence, the Bill makes a strong case at subsection (1) for proper alliances to be struck for increased collaboration.

The hon. Minister mentioned the collaboration with Bordeaux. In the field of medical education, we also have collaboration with Imperial College of England, we have collaboration with Genève, and we have collaborations with a number of other institutions. I think this is the way forward. Across the world, the trend is such that we move towards internationalisation of the tertiary sector or the professional sector. This is what we are doing. This is very much in line with the path taken by my Ministry. One does not exclude the other.

The MIH is providing services, is providing training for the health personnel, but we are also collaborating with the MIH at the level of the polytechnics, and there will be other

institutions also operating. I must state here that the Tertiary Education Commission, the MQA are all institutions that are ensuring that the courses or the programmes offered in Mauritius are of the top quality. I would like to stress and underline here, Madam Speaker, that the medical education provided in Mauritius is of the top class. Students leaving SSR Medical College or ANNA Medical College have obtained 100% success at the entrance examination in India as well as in other countries in the western world.

Now, I must also say that the Minister of Health will be able to acknowledge this, that students having completed their MBBS in Mauritius enter the system with no hassles, no problem at all, and perform extremely well at the level of the hospitals. So, we have nothing to say about these institutions. True it is that in the past, we have had a very, let's say, painful experience with DY Patil postgraduate courses, but this Government, the moment we set in, we have tried, with the help of the Imperial College of London to get these students back, *les récupérer, Madame la présidente, afin de leur permettre de poursuivre leur carrière*. This is what we have done, we have mopped out the mess left by the former Government, but we have done it and this, successfully, with the help of foreign institutions, true it is, but we have managed to do it.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about collaboration, when we talk about partnership, partnership also exists between the MIH and public institutions. I will talk a bit later about the partnership we have made between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education through the MIH and Polytechnics Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, let me now quickly consider the third prong. I am here referring to dissemination. Section 3 subsections (h), (i) and (j) make a strong case for the dissemination of health related information, whether for qualification of upgrading, capacity building or public awareness purposes - this will be widely welcome by all -, whether the health personnel or the members of the public, especially at a time when our educated population is increasingly health conscious and driven by the need to understand health-related issues.

As for those operating in the sector, lifelong learning is here to stay. The Ministry of Health had come up, I think last year, with a continuous professional development of health practitioners. Now, the coming up of the MIH and other institutions, namely the Open University and other universities like the UTM, medical practitioners are capable of going for their training for continuous professional development, and this will now be supported by the MIH as well. Beside, such facilities will certainly serve the sector well in not simply

improving the type of services being dispensed, but also in attracting and retaining highly qualified personnel.

Madam Speaker, this correlation, the nexus between education and health is enormous, there is a huge state of interdependency between both, knowledge skills and attitude development, care-say in education, and thus, is incomplete without physical, mental and emotional well-being. So, there is a very close correlation between the two sectors. *Mens sana in corpore sano* is replete with significance in demonstrating that mutual dependence and collaboration is important.

I need to place on record, my sincere appreciation to my colleague the Minister of Health and Quality of Life for translating our collaborative ventures into actual facts. Already the strategic partnership of the MIH with Polytechnic Mauritius has resulted in a National Diploma in Nursing Programme being run in the Polytechnic at Pamplemousses. 80 students are presently being trained. Such collaboration is called upon to reach greater heights, especially in view of the fact that this Government is facing a huge emphasis on the sustenance of a maintenance culture.

The health sector resorts to the services of lab technicians, radiology technicians, biomedical engineers and all of them work with equipment that have to be maintained spick and span and up to the hilt. Polytechnic will certainly be there to help make that a reality. We are going together with the Ministry of Health to provide programmes for the training of these personnel. The needs analysis will be done versus the Ministry of Health, which knows the sector, but on the other hand, we, at the level of the Ministry of Education, we provide the courses, obviously in collaboration with the MIH wherever it is required.

Madam Speaker, the MIH is called upon to be the focal point for training in the health care sector and will be the awarding body with regard to the training it will be providing. It goes without saying that this will mean the Institute will have overall responsibility for the standard and quality of the qualification. I have absolutely no doubt that it will live up to this responsibility as well.

This is where people who think that we are moving in opposite directions are wrong. We are working in collaboration and different institutions will have their role to play. I will also insist upon the fact that the norms of quality assurance will have to be abided by, and the Institute will maintain - and it will - the trust it has earned in the sector by committing itself to the highest standards of quality.

Madam Speaker, it is important for me to mention here, that the Institute will obviously link up with different Boards and institutions, as it legitimately should, and the MQA, the Tertiary Education Commission that operates under the aegis of my Ministry will provide all support necessary to ensure compliance with provisions for registration and accreditation.

Madam Speaker, I would like to go back to what hon. Quirin had mentioned earlier. He was worried about how I would take it, that the MIH would be the focal point for the training of the health personnel. I think the MIH is an institution which has been training the health personnel for years now, and I think it quite normal that, like the various other institutions of the country know and be aware of the needs of the sector. So, apart from the role played by the Human Resources Development Council, there will be collaboration between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education to further ensure that the courses, the programmes that we are providing meet the demands of the sector. This is how we operate here in this Government. There is collaboration and cooperation between Ministries, there is no competition, we are complementary to each other.

Madam Speaker, as an end note, I commend my colleague Minister of Health and Quality of Life for modernising and revamping the existing MIH Act, such that it can better meet the challenges and take advantage of new opportunities that are presenting themselves to the health sector here.

Madam Speaker, I thank you and all Members for their attention.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Husnoo!

(8.00 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Dr. A. Husnoo): Madam Speaker, to start with, I would like to thank all the Members who have taken part in this debate for this amendment I am bringing to the MIH Bill.

I mean, I would like first of all just take one or two points that were raised by the hon. Member from the Opposition. I think that was well canvassed by the Minister of Education. The hon. Member mentioned that the MIH should concentrate with a new organisation with undergraduate and postgraduate. You know, in medicine you can't rush. If you rush in medicine, you are going to get problem. Look at the most good universities overseas, they started slowly, they built up the capacity slowly and eventually they become universities. I

am not rushing, MIH has proved itself for the last so many years, and they have done a good job.

We have to agree. Everybody here will have to agree. They have provided good training in different fields: nursing, paramedical, CPD, with the junior doctors. Good! I mean, I don't think we have to rush and say okay, MIH must start undergraduate medicine tomorrow; MIH must start something else tomorrow. No, let us go slowly! We are already doing it. We are doing it with the help of overseas partners from Bordeaux. We are going to start with Marseille now. That is the way to go. There is no point in pretending we are a big shot ourselves and we can do everything on our own. No! *Nu pu ale cogner plus tard* if we do that. I don't want to go in that direction. We have started well. They have done a good job. Let us go slowly! We are going to get the results because we are doing it with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, and, as I mentioned, with Bordeaux, with Montpellier. The UNFPA came to Mauritius 20 years ago. They have come back this year again to restart the collaboration with them. That is how we started. Do you know what I mean? That is why I am going slowly. Eventually, if we have to provide - as I mentioned, we are providing postgraduate in medicine, surgery, together with Bordeaux, anaesthesia, SAMU. All these are being done at postgraduate level, not on our own, but in collaboration with other universities where we get qualified Professors from these universities coming to Mauritius. I am not going to pretend we have all sorts of Professors in all the disciplines in medicine here in Mauritius to start this. No! I don't want to kid anybody. We start slowly and we will build it up. I am sure of that. That is number one.

Secondly, I would like to mention as well we don't have a university hospital. Point taken, we don't have a university hospital. But, I mentioned in my speech, with the new Flacq Hospital, we are going to develop it into a university hospital. We are going to go slowly. And, even last week, I met the Ambassador from France. I discussed with him about having a *centre hospitalier universitaire à Maurice*. We are working in that direction, but I am not rushing. I am going to work slowly. We build up our capacity and we build up not just in terms of doctors and manpower, but the infrastructure. We must have good hospitals to provide the undergraduate and postgraduate training. We are coming with a new teaching hospital at Flacq. Hopefully, eventually, as I mentioned, I discussed with the French Ambassador for having a *centre hospitalier universitaire à Maurice*. We will build up the infrastructure slowly and then we will proceed. That is what I am doing.

Next, hon. Members mentioned, I think, about how to coordinate the CPD or CME when you have other universities doing it. But, okay, good, a lot of organisations are providing CPD. I know that. We have the Medical Council, the University of Mauritius and the different clinics. But it is good to have one body to coordinate what is being done. Then we know what is being done. Good, continue what you are doing. And, what is not being done, then it is for MIH to say, 'Look, we don't have anything being done in that particular field'. If you don't coordinate, how would you know what is being done and, most importantly, what is not being done? That is why you need the coordination. That is why that is the role of the MIH for that coordination, which we don't have now. That is why I put it in the Bill.

They can run their courses, obviously, but, very importantly, to coordinate these CPD because if we want to improve the health sector in Mauritius, if we want to raise the standard of care of all the staff, be it nurses, doctors and everybody, we have to go on CPD, and if we want to have a good CPD, we have to coordinate it. We can't let anybody just do whatever they want.

Next, hon. Members mentioned about having a body to plan for the future. That is what we have at the Policy Unit. I mentioned it. It is the Policy Unit which is going to look into that because then they can study different aspects like the quality of care provided at the hospitals, the manpower requirement for doctors, nurses, the technical staff and everything. I mentioned it; it is in the Bill. Next is revalidation, and that comes to the CPD again. Do you know what I mean? So, I think I have just answered that.

Now, what I was going to mention is the virtual library. I did not say we are going to create a virtual library now. I did not say that. It was there before. In fact, I gave the example of how so many people were trained. They have joined the library since a long time ago. But my point is that now with the virtual library, you can have people who cannot come, they can get it online. Before it was in English only and now we are going to get it in French. I am going to share something. There are other countries in Africa while they go on our virtual library now, they appreciate it and they want to join the MIH virtual library now, the French speaking countries in Africa.

We are developing - I don't pretend that we have started the virtual library. No, I never said this! But we are going to develop it further, to improve it not just for Mauritius but

even overseas they are using this library. Well, why not! We want to build up capacity and that is the way to build it up. Well, I think these were the main points that were mentioned.

My colleague, hon. Leopold, mentioned about patient-centred care and decentralisation. We have discussed decentralisation. The Ministry is working on decentralisation. It is very important and I completely agree with him. Here, I must say even for Rodrigues; we have not forgotten Rodrigues in MIH because we know that in Rodrigues you have a shortage of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. We are having a course to train specialists in Obstetrics and Gynaecology by the MIH in collaboration with Bordeaux again, get doctors from Mauritius, Rodrigues, Seychelles, Comoros, and believe me, Cape Verde, São Tomé, not in the Indian Ocean, but these people are interested to come to Mauritius to take part in this course. So, we are working on that. And the hon. Member mentioned about patient-centred care. Again, that is very important as well and we are working on patient-centred care. In fact, I have discussed with the WHO and we are working on that.

Well, there we are, Madam Speaker. The MIH has come a long way. It has provided the service for so many years, for 25 years or more. They have trained our manpower. They have done a good job so far. Now, they are trying to go to the next step. Now, they are trying to go to the degree level so that they can give degrees themselves to raise up and gradually, as we say, God willing, eventually, hopefully, they can become, why not, a good medical school one day, giving undergraduate and postgraduate training as well.

Well, Madam Speaker, thank you very much for your attention.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

THE MAURITIUS INSTITUTE OF HEALTH (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. XVII of 2017)

Clauses 1 to 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3 (Section 4 of principal Act amended)

Motion made and question proposed: "that the clause stand part of the Bill"

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Chairperson, I move that clause 3 be deleted and replaced by the following clause –

“3. Section 4 of principal Act amended

Section 4 of the principal Act is amended–

(a) by repealing subsection (1) and replacing it by the following subsection –

(1) The Institute shall –

- (a) be the focal point for training in the healthcare sector and be the awarding body in respect of training provided by it;
- (b) organise the training of local health personnel, as well as overseas participants, in accordance with such programme as the Board may approve;
- (c) run refresher courses for continuous professional development for, inter alia, medical and dental personnel;
- (d) coordinate, oversee and evaluate training of pre-registration medical officers and other health professionals and nursing officers;
- (e) coordinate all continuous professional development activities in the healthcare sector;
- (f) build capacity for medical and healthcare research, including clinical trials and clinical audit;
- (g) undertake research on health policies and framework;
- (h) act as focal point and resource centre for the production, exchange and promotion of health learning and health information in general;

- (i) administer a virtual health library in order to improve access to documentation for public and private health professionals;
 - (j) prepare, write, compile, archive, publish and disseminate works or reference in medical and healthcare, including the history of medical and healthcare in Mauritius;
 - (k) provide advisory services in matters of healthcare;
 - (l) cooperate with other similar institutions and regional and international organisations in order to promote the objects specified in paragraphs (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (i) and (j);
 - (m) discharge such other functions as the Minister may determine.
- (b) by repealing subsection (2) and replacing it by the following subsection –
- (2) For the purpose of subsection (1)(a), (b) and (c), the Institute may conduct courses, hold examinations and grant certificates, diplomas, degrees and awards, acting on its own or jointly with any other educational institution.”

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 4 to 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and the enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Mauritius Institute of Health (Amendment) Bill (No. XVII of 2017) was read a third time and passed.

(6.12 p.m.)

Second Reading

THE BUS INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES WELFARE FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. XVIII of 2017)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I move that the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill (No. XVIII of 2017) be read a second time.

As detailed in the Explanatory Memorandum, the purpose of this Bill is to cater for a revision in the rate of contribution payable to the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund, otherwise known as the BIEWF.

I also move to amend section 25 of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund Act, so that, in future, the Minister responsible for the subject of land transport is empowered to amend the Schedules to the Act by way of Regulations, after a consultation with the Board of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund.

Madam Speaker, this Fund was set up in 2002 with the main objective of furthering the advancement and promotion of the welfare of employees of the bus industry and of that of their families.

Section 14 of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund Act provides for every bus operator and every employee, other than a retired employee, to make a monthly contribution to the Fund in accordance with the rates prescribed in the First Schedule to the Act; being Rs25 for employees and Rs50 for bus operators in respect of each employee.

These contributions, Madam Speaker, represent the major source of income of the Bus Industry Employee Welfare Fund to meet its administrative costs, provide financial assistance and loans to these employees as well as to plan welfare activities, besides the interest accrued on the fixed deposit, which amounts today to Rs25m.

Madam Speaker, loan facilities at exceptionally low interest rates ranging from 3% to 7% as well as other financial assistance are made available by the Fund to the employees of the bus industry and this, in respect of various schemes aiming at easing the economic well-being of those employees.

For the 18 months' period, extending from January 2016 to June 2017, a total loan amount in excess of Rs9m. has been disbursed by the Fund in favour of no less than 554 applicants.

The Fund currently has a fixed deposit, as I said, of Rs25 m. and receives an annual contribution to the tune of Rs5.7 m. from around 6,000 revenue contributors. In fact, average annual contribution from operators aggregates to some Rs3.8 m. whilst the average contribution of employees annually amounts to about Rs1.9 m.

The loan schemes are intended to fill the financial gap of the employees and amortise the financial burden resting on them in their endeavour to enhance their living standard and comfort. Several loan schemes for purchases of items such as motorcycles, domestic appliances and IT equipment have been devised. Amongst the array of packages, the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund also offers loan facilities to employees of the bus industry for house renovation works and weddings, and for payment of examination fees as well as for pursuance of tertiary education for the benefit of their wards.

Additionally, employees are entitled to a grant from the Fund upon retirement. Following the demise of an employee, the Fund also grants an amount of Rs10,000 to the bereaved family.

Madam Speaker, in line with its objective of ensuring the social well-being of the bus industry employees, the Fund also plans welfare activities to cater for the recreational needs of these workers. I am sure that the House will share my belief that a healthy work-life balance is required to maintain the emotional and physical well-being of employees.

With this objective, the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund organises family fun days every year for the benefit of its employees and that of their families.

In addition, a polyvalent complex situated at the seat of the Fund in Helvetia is made available to the employees as well as employers of the bus industry at discounted rental rates for them to plan and host family gatherings.

Madam Speaker, in fact, the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund champions excellence in education. Accordingly, scholarships are awarded to the best students at primary and secondary levels in the form of yearly stipends during the course of their children's study. So far, some 200 children have benefited from the scholarship scheme since its introduction in 2008. The Fund has also recently introduced a scholarship scheme for students attending undergraduate courses at the University of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, since the inception of the Fund some 15 years ago, the rates of contribution have remained unchanged despite the constant review and improvement of loan schemes and the rising administrative costs. In fact, to enable the Fund to effectively deliver on its mandate, it was imperative to bolster its institutional capacity and to equip the organisation with the required human capital. To that end, a Program Welfare Officer has been recruited in July of this year. An Action Plan involving innovative welfare activities with special focus on sports and leisure activities and medical programmes has been formulated. At this stage, there is an upmost necessity, Madam Speaker, for the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund to align its revenue with its expenditure.

In order to allow the Fund to improve and sustain its activities whilst maintaining its financial soundness, a revision of the rate of contribution is, therefore, deemed necessary.

In April of this year, the Board of the Fund, comprising of four representatives from employees and two representatives of employers, agreed to the revision of the prescribed rate of contribution from Rs25 to Rs50 per bus employees and from Rs50 to Rs100 for bus operators in respect of each employee. The proposal was subsequently approved by Government.

With the evolving needs of commuters and the new and modern transport landscape being envisaged by Government, the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund feels the need to train and equip employees with the right knowledge and techniques to professionalise service delivery. With this concept in mind, they took the initiative of training some 100 employees of the bus industry on first-aid last September. With a better financial status, the Fund will be in a position to pursue such investment for the continuous development of employees of the bus transport sector for them to respond adequately to the challenges lying ahead.

Statistical forecasts demonstrate that in a 'do nothing' scenario, the financial sustainability of the Fund could be severely threatened and the introduction of new schemes

and enhanced facilities by the Fund would not be possible without an increase in the rate of contribution payable to the Fund.

Therefore, the proposed new rates are estimated to provide the Fund with the financial stability required for it to diversify and improve its loan offerings and provide value-added services for the benefit of workers at the bus industry.

New schemes to cater for specific segments of the bus industry, including workers employed by individual operators and bus Cooperatives could thus be devised to target and service the specific needs of such groups.

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

Dr. Husnoo rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(6.22 p.m.)

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as rightly pointed out by the hon. Minister, the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund Bill was introduced in this House under the MMM/MSM Government in 2002. And it could not be a surprise when we know at that time, the Leader of the MMM, hon. Paul Bérenger, was Minister of Finance, and we know his association with the struggle for the welfare of the workers of the bus industry. So, in 2002, we introduced the Bill in the House and subsequently when hon. Bérenger became Prime Minister, we came with an amendment, an amendment to increase the number of workers' representatives on the Board. So, we, in the MMM, are very comfortable and we are for the welfare of workers generally, and today we are talking about workers in the bus industry.

At that time, when the Bill was introduced, we were informed by the then Minister that there were around 7,700 workers in the bus industry and 1,700 bus operators in the companies and the private sector. We have 1,700 buses probably on the road. The hon. Minister has come and tell us that we have to increase the contribution. Of course, I will come to that later! But we want to know the status of the bus industry today, how many contributors we have from bus owners and how many workers are being employed in the bus industry. I heard the hon. Minister mention the sum of around 6,000. I do not know whether he was referring to 6,000 workers in that industry or 6,000 contributors.

Our bus industry today is, in fact, our public transport and its contribution to the development of the economy is enormous. At that time, we created the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund. The Government then made a contribution of Rs1 m. for the opening of the Fund, but today, it is being run solely on the contribution from the workers and bus owners. This is why it is important for us to know how many workers we have and how many bus owners we have, the more so that we are coming with the *Metro Leger* and there is a climate of uncertainty in the bus sector today. So, if there is a reduction in the number of bus operators and a reduction in the number of workers in that industry, there will be a great challenge for the welfare of the workers if we rely solely on the contribution of those operating in that sector. When I say we know the importance of its contribution to our national economy, so it is important now that we reflect on that Fund itself and whether time has not come for Government to make an annual contribution to that Fund. The more so, as I have said, it is our public transport and its contribution to the development of our economy is enormous. We know how many workers travel by bus every day to go to their workplace to produce and to bring along economic growth. At that time, like I said when it was introduced, there was only Rs1 m. given by the then Minister of Finance, hon. Bérenger, but then, up to now, that Fund has been run solely on the contribution of workers and bus owners.

We have one example - I am not inventing the wheel -, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. Government do contribute annually, and this year it is Rs5 m., to that Fund for its administration cost. Because if there is one cost which goes on the increase every year, it is administrative cost! When we look at the last Audit Report of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund ended 31 December 2015, the revenue is around Rs8 m. This is on the revenue side. The staff cost is Rs2.8 m. and the administrative expenses are around Rs1.5 m. So, if we round the figures, out of Rs8 m. we are having, Rs4.2 m. goes solely on administrative and staff cost.

Nearly 45% of the revenue! And only 55% is left for the welfare of the workers when we know that one of the objectives of the Welfare Fund is to cater not only for the families, but also to retired employees. I have been informed that when employees retire because of lack of fund, they get only what they have contributed and not what the bus owners have already contributed. This is unfair!

The hon. Minister has listed a list of activities, which we can find in the Audit Report, that they are doing. It is good, but are they financially sustainable? Are we increasing the Fund today because administrative cost has increased or there is less contribution coming in?

If less contribution is coming in, it is important that Government think about helping that Fund because we will always have bus workers with the Metro or without the Metro. Probably, we will have less with the Metro, when the Metro comes operative, but we have to cater for that Welfare Fund. This is why I think it is important that Government today comes with an increase of contribution from the owners of the bus and the workers. But I think Government should seriously consider making an annual contribution towards the administrative cost of the Fund so that at the end of the day, 100% - if we cannot achieve 100% - or at least 80% of the Fund contributed by the workers themselves goes to the welfare and the benefit of the workers.

So, for today, we do not have any objection that that contribution is being increased, but I think Government seriously should start thinking about giving a contribution to that Fund as we do for the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund and I understand with other Funds as well. It is time that we contribute to the administrative cost because, as I have said, it is our public transport, and they contribute enormously to the development of the country.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

(6.31 p.m.)

Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this Bill is a very important Bill, because at the end of the day, after historical struggle made by the bus industry workers eventually in 2002, like my very able and learned friend hon. Baloomoody said, Government then came with a Bill, and eventually became law in relation to the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund. That law was subject to an amendment in 2004 and, during that amendment, no opposition Members intervened during the debate, no opposition Members from the PMSD or from the Labour Party. Today, again, when this Bill is being amended for the welfare of the workers, there are no MPs of the PMSD. They are the main Opposition Party, they are not present and they are not taking part in the debate. Likewise, there is no Labour Party MP present in the House today when we are discussing the welfare of bus industry workers. Historically...

(Interruptions)

That's right! They are not interested with the interest of workers. We can prove it. We have just given a *compensation salariale* of Rs360 to the workers, which has been accepted by the Union and all the stakeholders who are engaged and who were engaged in the resolution of that *compensation salariale*.

Madam Speaker, the struggle of the bus industry workers was accelerated post-independence when the Labour Party, PMSD and the CAM Government decided to close down the railway. At the time of post-independence, we had 182 buses and there were 137 owners, and the plight of the workers at that time were going deaf ear to the Labour/CAM/PMSD Government until 1970 and 1971, when the bus industry workers played an important role, vital role in the struggle for the welfare of not only the bus industry workers, but the workers of this country as a whole. And it was Judge Ramphul then, in October 1971, who delivered a judgment, giving reason to the workers at the time who were engaged in strike and, in particular, workers of the bus industry and, across the board, there was a salary increase recommended to 12%.

So, today, we come after all these struggles and we are now discussing the Welfare Fund. Although the bus industry workers struggled that much, their Welfare Fund came well late in life. There were previously the Sugar Industry Employees Welfare Fund; there was also before them the Tourism Industry Employees Welfare Fund; there was also before them the Small Planters Industry Welfare Fund. But, eventually, in 2002, the Bus Workers Fund was introduced in the House.

Madam Speaker, that Fund, I can say, because I live in Rivière du Rempart and I live in the northern part where many of my constituents are employed in the bus industry and I have had first-hand experience of how people who were working in the bus industry were struggling to send their children to school, to colleges, to universities, but when the Welfare Fund was introduced in 2002, that Welfare Fund really gave the opportunity for bus industry workers to send their children to school, to colleges, to universities and to provide private tuition, because we are in a country where our education system is run through private tuition. When someone used to pass away, that family would be in difficult situation, dire financial situation, and today the Welfare Fund is there to help those families in their situation.

So, this has historical background, Madam Speaker. The Welfare Fund has contributed tremendously for the benefit and welfare of the bus industry workers and provided loans as well at rate which ranges from 3% to 6%.

Madam Speaker, the object of today's Bill is very simple. Since 2002, 15 years after, from Rs50 contribution by the bus operators, we are asking them to contribute Rs100, and from Rs25 from the workers to contribute Rs50. Today, there is Rs25 m. in that Fund and obviously with all that is happening in this country, Rs25 m. represent not that much big amount of money when you start to allocate, give loans to people at low rate. So, there is a need for that increase for the benefit and the welfare of the workers.

Madam Speaker, it is important today for us to realise that Rs50 increase for a bus operator is not lot of money. Rs25 increase is equally not lot of money in today's standard of living. But, when about 8,000 workers contribute towards a Fund, when it is added, it makes lots of money, and in a year it has got a colossal amount of money to be able to look after the welfare of the bus industry workers.

During his speech, my Friend, hon. Baloomoody, enquired from the Minister whether there are 6,000 bus industry workers or 6,000 contributors. But I took some notes when the Minister was making his speech, and he said the following: 'The Fund currently has a fixed deposit of Rs25 m. and receives an annual contribution to the tune of Rs5.7 m. from around 6,000 revenue contributors.' So, it is 6,000 revenue contributors. This means that there are more workers, because these are only contributors. So, today, Madam Speaker, there are about, if I may say, 8,000 because in 2002, 2004, there were about 7,700 workers. So, it is important to increase so that the Fund will have a large amount of money to meet the expenses and the welfare of those who need the money. One of the main costs of the Employees Welfare Fund goes towards administrative cost, and we need to have a scientific way of administrating things now, and it is important for that increase to meet those administrative costs and also to meet other activities that are carried out for the benefit of the workers.

So, having said what I have said, Madam Speaker, I think this is a Bill that is going to encourage workers to feel that they are cared by this Government. This is a caring Government, and we have brought this amendment today to demonstrate how much Government wants workers of this country to feel safe. It is no point today to argue or to say that bus industry workers are not safe because with the coming of Metro Express their

employment may be at peril. It is no point to say that because the Minister of Public Infrastructure has, on various occasions, given assurance to this House that the bus industry workers will be fully looked after.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I thank everybody for having listened to me, and I congratulate the hon. Minister for having presented this Bill.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sinatambou!

(6.42 p.m)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Madam Speaker, allow me first of all to express my regret that the Labour Party and the PMSD are not in the House at a moment when we are discussing the welfare of the employees of the bus industry. I believe that this says a lot about the interests and the affairs of the workers of this country when it comes to discussing about their welfare.

I wish to thank both orators who intervened on this short but nonetheless significant piece of legislation, which aims at providing the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund with the necessary financial resources to fully meet its objectives of providing upmarket welfare activities and financial assistance to the employees of the bus industry.

I noted with much interest the beginning words of hon. Baloomoody when he reminded the House that, in 2002, when this piece of legislation was enacted, the Leader of his Party was the Minister of Finance. I think, therefore, that to complete the record, we should indeed recognise that it was under the Prime Ministership of the now Rt. hon. Minister Mentor.

The hon. Member also acknowledged that the Leader of his Party had contributed to the interests of the workers of the bus industry. I am sure the House will recollect that the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor has been, for years and years, one of the leading lawyers. I think it is good that when we set the record straight, we complete it for the sake of completeness indeed.

The hon. Member wanted to know what is the number of workers in all today. I am informed that the workers today are 6,000 in number. Indeed, when the Fund started, it got Rs1 m. contribution from Government, and I think that hon. Rutnah has replied to the proposal of hon. Baloomoody regarding this added contribution of Government, as he put it.

But, as we say in French, *on ne peut être plus royaliste que le roi*. Four members of the employees and two representatives of the employers have actually sat and decided that the contribution should be doubled, both for employees and for the bus operators contributing to the employees' welfare. If, as we found out in the course of my speech earlier on, Madam Speaker, there is a fixed deposit of Rs25 m. already, I can assure you that the substantive Minister has, indeed, considered the need of contributing to this Fund, but at this stage, the need does not arise. In fact, we should realise that the amendment of Schedules, as provided for in this amendment, would allow the hon. Minister to make any balancing contribution, should the need arise.

I wish to reiterate, Madam Speaker, that the well-being and social welfare of the workers of the public transport industry remain high on the agenda of the Government. I think that we will all agree today that the intricacies of the land transport industry are not easily known. I should, here, highlight that to enable the right planning of the industry, a Land Transport Study was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2016. The consultants organised a workshop involving participants from the bus industry in order to impart the findings and recommendations of their final report. Suggestions and proposals gathered are being considered by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport as well as the National Transport Authority to revamp the transport sector, especially in the wake of the Metro Express.

In fact, Government's vision for a modern and state-of-the-art public transport sector cannot be realised without taking on board the workers of the industry. However, I must reassure the House that the Government is fully committed to bring our transport system at par with other developed countries and the employees of the transport sector are expected to play a central role in that respect.

In fact, I should add that with the advent of the Metro Express, the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund has been enjoined to secure office space at the Urban Terminals and to provide amenities to the workers of the transport industry to attend to their recreational needs during their free time.

I wish to add that when I heard hon. Baloomoody going back to the audited accounts of the Fund, where he explained that the revenue for the year has been Rs8 m. and the staff costs, including administrative expenses, had been Rs4.2 m - Now, of course, I do not have a copy of the audited account with me -, but just by doing simple arithmetic, we are doubling,

in fact, the amount of contribution to be made to the Fund. So, if the revenue in those accounts were Rs8 m., it should normally, therefore, be multiplied by 2 to reach the sum of Rs16 m.

(Interruptions)

They were 6,000 then, I think they are 6,000 now, and I don't think that they will diminish that much, but my point is as follows. At least, for the purposes of present discussions, if they are doubling from Rs8 m. to be Rs16 m., we would be within the 80% contribution margin if we take the Rs4.2 m. for staff costs and administrative expenses. But indeed, if, with a big 'if', the number of workers were to actually diminish, the hon. Minister has the leisure to consider any other alternative like contributions which, however, do not arise at this stage.

I, therefore, in my summing-up, take note of the comments made by the two Members of the House, but I wish to highlight that the Bill which is being proposed to the House is only for the betterment of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund and the employees of the bus industry at large.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill (No. XVIII of 2017) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill (No. XVIII of 2017) was read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 08 December 2017, at 3.00 p.m.

Dr. Husnoo rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Hon. Uteem!

MATTERS RAISED

MOTORWAY - INTERNET CONNECTION

(6.53 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to raise an issue addressed to the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation, who is not here.

This morning, there was a PQ on the availability of Wi-Fi on public transport. The problem, Madam Speaker, is very often passengers are unable to use their mobile phones and they are unable to have access to the Internet along various spots, especially along the motorway because of connection problems. It is the same thing at Ébène, Pailles, Wootun, in various spots between Port Louis and the airport and between Terre Rouge-Verdun. The problem, I am told, Madam Speaker, is the unavailability of frequency station, commonly known as *station de relais*.

Therefore, I would urge the hon. Minister of ICT if he would talk to the operators, MyT, Emtel, Mahanagar so that these operators put the necessary *station de relais* so that users, passengers can use their telephones without any interruption along the motorway and other places.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of hon. Members that it is an established principle that matters which have already been discussed at Question Time may not be raised at Adjournment on the same day because Adjournment Matters is not an extension of Question Time. So, I would just ask hon. Members to refrain from taking up, once again, matters which have been raised at Question Time.

Mr Uteem: On a point of explanation, Madam Speaker. What I raised was not raised in the PQ. The PQ, this morning, was about how many buses have Wi-Fi. My question was

there is a problem, not just for users of buses. Anyone who uses public transport and car has the same issue.

Madam Speaker: But it seems that this is the same issue. I am just reminding the House that questions, which have an issue, which have been raised at Question Time, should not be raised at Adjournment Time.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): However, Madam Speaker, I will pass on the message to the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(6.56 p.m.)

DÉBARCADÈRE, POINTE-AUX-SABLES - BEACH - MAINTENANCE

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is addressed to the Minister responsible for the beaches and environment, probably.

I have, in my hand, a petition from the *Mouvement Social de Débarcadère* which they have sent since *le 22 octobre 2017*, complaining about the state of the beach at Débarcadère, Pointe-aux-Sables. And worse - it is a forest now, it has not been maintained for many years - on that beach, there is a container which was burned, I think, six or eight months ago. We have made representation, but this container has not been removed. And, unfortunately, this container is being used now for drug consumption and drug trafficking.

So, I am making an appeal to the hon. Minister concerned if, at least, we can clean, deforest that place and remove that burned container whose owner nobody knows, but it is a real source of nuisance, especially a danger for the youth of that area.

Thank you.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Madam Speaker, I am the Minister responsible for the Beach Authority. However, I must inform the House that there was a Parliamentary Question last week, if I am not mistaken, about Débarcadère, and what I found out in the course of that Parliamentary Question is that that place is not a public beach and, therefore, does not fall under the purview of the Beach Authority. However, this should,

therefore, fall under the aegis of the local authority concerned. I will pass on the message to the Minister and we will see with the local authorities what should be done.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

(6.58 p.m.)

CITÉ MARTIAL - SEWERAGE WORKS

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Madam Speaker, tonight I will raise an issue which relates to the Minister of Public utilities. It, in fact, relates to sewerage works that have been done in the region of Cité Martial.

There are many roads there whereby the works of the sewerage have already been done, already been completed since more than two months and the roads are in a very bad state, namely the Paul et Virginie Street, the Alfred Gelle Street, the Macao and Impasse Macao Street, Canal Bathurst and some other streets. As I said earlier, those streets, where sewerage works have already been completed since two months, are in a very bad state.

So, I would urge the hon. Minister to see to it that the contractors re-tar the road as soon as possible to remedy the situation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Prime Minister: As I have said many a time, after the works have been done, there is a time lag which must be respected. Of course, it causes inconvenience, but any progress causes inconvenience. We will just have to wait the time that the engineers tell us that in this particular area, it takes more time or less time because there are things like sagging or whatever the technical terms, subsidence, which have got to be done, then we wait and afterwards when everything is ready, then the tarring is done. We cannot do otherwise.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

(7.00 p.m.)

QUATRE BORNES & BELLE ROSE MARKET FAIRS - HAWKERS

Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Madame la présidente, je souhaite adresser le problème suivant au ministre du *Local Government* - je sais qu'il n'est pas là.

Chaque fin d'année est marquée par une demande pressante des marchands ambulants pour pouvoir travailler dans les rues des villes sur une base exceptionnelle. Je sais que le ministre et le gouvernement adoptent une position de non-compromis à cet effet.

Ma demande concerne la ville de Quatre Bornes pour que considération soit donnée à la possibilité d'utiliser le marché de Quatre Bornes et celui de Belle Rose pour les marchands ambulants d'*haberdasheries* pendant la période de fin d'année, et surtout pendant les jours ils ne sont pas ouvrables normalement et, aussi pendant la soirée, avec la collaboration de la force policière surtout. Car il faut bien se rendre à l'évidence que ces honnêtes marchands arrivent difficilement à trouver un emplacement convenable à un loyer raisonnable, surtout en ces périodes de fin d'année.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr P. Jhugroo): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will pass this to my hon. colleague who is coming back, I think, in two days.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ramano!

(7.01 p.m.)

LANDLORD & TENANT ACT - MORATORIUM

Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Merci, Madame la présidente, de me permettre de soulever une deuxième question.

Je souhaite adresser la question suivante au ministre du Logement et des Terres concernant le *Landlord and Tenant Act*.

Madame la présidente, le moratoire relatif au Landlord and Tenant Act arrive à expiration le 31 décembre 2017. Le dernier moratoire a été fait dans l'optique de protéger d'une part la vulnérabilité des locataires et d'autre part de rendre justice aux propriétaires qui percevaient des sommes dérisoires comme loyers.

Il existe aujourd'hui pas mal d'ambiguïté quant à l'existence du Fair Rent Tribunal ou encore du quantum d'évaluation et l'indexation des loyers après la fin du moratoire au 31 décembre 2017. Ma demande au ministre c'est de venir de l'avant avec une communication claire et nette à l'intention des locataires, à l'intention des propriétaires fonciers, des propriétaires des emplacements, à toute la population pour que la population puisse être soit au courant quelles sont les provisions de la loi qui seront toujours applicables, quelles seront les autres provisions qui ne seront pas applicables et quelles sont les mesures transitoires, parce qu'il y va de l'ordre social du pays.

Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr P. Jhugroo): Madam Speaker, I am well aware of this issue. So, I will take up this matter with my officers at the Ministry.

At 7.02 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 08 December 2017 at 3.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ICAC VS MCB LTD - CONVICTION

(No. B/900) 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 Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to if any action has been taken against the Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd. following its conviction by the Intermediate Court in the matter of the Independent Commission Against Corruption vs the Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd. on or about October 2017

Reply: On 14 February 2003, MCB Ltd informed the Bank of Mauritius about the discovery of serious irregularities which dated back to 1989. On 20 February 2003, MCB Ltd stated that around Rs600m. had been siphoned off from the accounts of the National Pensions Fund to the benefit of third parties.

Concurrently, the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) and the Police had started an investigation into the matter relating to the fraud since it was a possible criminal offence.

After completion of its enquiry, ICAC submitted its file to the DPP and criminal proceedings were instituted against the MCB. The ICAC had decided to prosecute. The cause number of the case lodged before the Intermediate Court is CN 950/09. In a 61-page judgment, the Intermediate Court, on 13 October 2017, convicted the MCB for having wilfully, unlawfully and criminally failed to take such measures to ensure that the services offered by it were not capable of being used by a person to facilitate the Commission of Money Laundering.

The IC sentenced the Bank to a fine of Rs1,8 m. plus costs on 25 October 2017.

The MCB Ltd has lodged an appeal against the judgment on 10 November 2017 on 32 grounds. The conviction is not a final conviction under section 11 of the Banking Act. To the extent that the matter is pending appeal and the Intermediate Court has ordered a stay of execution of the judgment, it would not be appropriate to cause any prejudice to the pending appeal.

REAL ESTATE SCHEME - SALE - SAFEGUARDS

(No. B/903) 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 Board of Investment, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the safeguards/guarantees provided to foreigners investing in Real Estate Scheme projects, and
- (b) state if he is aware of cases of promoters of approved RES projects refusing to go ahead with the sales even when the foreign purchasers have made more than the necessary deposits in escrow accounts with a Bank and/or Notary Public and selling the same project to others at prices above the launching prices.

Reply: A person buying a property under the Real Estate Scheme, now the Property Development Scheme is protected by a number of safeguards contained in the *Code Civil Mauricien*.

Virtually all sales under the Scheme are made on the basis of a plan and the contracts are governed by the provisions of a “*vente en l'état future d'achèvement*” (VEFA) as per the legislation. Usually, the buyer enters into a “*contrat de réservation préliminaire*”, that is, a pre-sale agreement whereby the potential buyer deposits at most 25% of the value of the property in an escrow account. The amount deposited is returned to the buyer if the sale is not made.

When pre-sale agreements are concluded up to 75% of the project value, the promoter is allowed to conclude sale of the residential units under VEFA. One of the obligations of a promoter is to provide to the buyer a ‘*Garantie Futur d'Achèvement*’ from a registered financial institution guaranteeing that the unit purchased will be completed and delivered according to project specifications and drawings.

Furthermore, as an additional protection to the buyer, the price is payable in instalments as the work progresses and effected in accordance with modalities stipulated in the *Code Civil Mauricien*.

With regard to quality of construction works, a guarantee of 10 years applies on structural defects and 2 years on minor defects in accordance with the legislation. In addition, since 2015, in the Property Development Scheme, provision has been made on one hand for the builder to provide a property damage insurance policy and on the other hand for the promoter to provide the buyer with a 10-year property damage insurance policy against structural defects.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Board of Investment of a dispute whereby foreign purchasers have alleged that they have made the necessary deposits in an escrow account pursuant to a pre-sale agreement, but the sale has not been concluded and that a case has been lodged before the Supreme Court.

INTERCONTINENTAL SLAVERY MUSEUM PROJECT- IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/926) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of an International Slavery Museum on the site of the former Labourdonnais Military Hospital, in Port Louis, he will state if the project therefor is earmarked for implementation before end 2018.

Reply: Provision for the implementation of the Intercontinental Slavery Museum project at the Ex-Military Hospital, also known as the former Labourdonnais Military Hospital, has been made in the budget of the Ministry of Arts and Culture.

The first step towards the implementation of the project is the conduct of the Preliminary Study and Survey. The Terms of Reference for launching an Expression of Interest for the Preliminary Study and Survey is being finalised and is expected to be launched shortly.

The implementation time frame for the setting up of the museum will be determined following the report of the Preliminary Study and Survey.

GRAND'BAIE PUBLIC BEACH - UPGRADING

(No. B/927) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the Grand' Baie public beach, including part of the stretch thereof at the level of Le Mauricia Hotel to the Social Welfare Centre, he will state the measures taken for the upgrading thereof, if any, since 2015, indicating if consideration will be given for the extension of the swimming zone thereof.

Reply: Upgrading works to the tune of Rs1.64 m. have been carried out at Grand' Baie public beach by the Beach Authority since 2015, namely, the –

- (a) re-profiling of beach with sand;
- (b) fixing of Informative Panels;
- (c) installation of standalone Solar Lighting;
- (d) construction of Petanque Courts;
- (e) fixing of Benches and Bollards;
- (f) upgrading of the Parking Area;
- (g) painting of amenities (wooden parapet, toilet block, benches and bins) in line with the Clean-Up Mauritius and Embellishment Campaign 2017;
- (h) upgrading of drains;
- (i) felling of dry and/or dangerous trees, and
- (j) adoption of pest control measures (rats).

Regarding the extension of the swimming zone, a swimming zone of 97 metres long and 15 metres wide has been demarcated at the Grand' Baie public beach and I am not aware of any further extension thereof for the time being.

POUDRE D'OR - PUBLIC FOUNTAIN

(No. B/928) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to whether it is in presence of a letter from the inhabitants of Poudre d'Or protesting against the disconnection of a public fountain located behind the Police post and opposite the Village Council thereat, indicating –

- (a) the reasons for the said disconnection, and

(b) if consideration will be given for the reinstatement of the connection.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Water Authority that –

- (i) the public fountain located at Royal Road, Poudre d’Or Village was under the responsibility of the District Council of Rivière du Rempart, which paid the water bills;
- (ii) on 05 August 2011, the public fountain was disconnected at meter at the request of the District Council of Rivière du Rempart, and
- (iii) on 29 January 2017, the supply was disconnected from the main pipe following a verbal request from the then President of Village Council, who reported that there was an abuse of water use at that fountain.

I am further informed that the Central Water Authority that it received a letter dated 25 July 2017 bearing 15 signatures, requesting that the water connection be restored. The Central Water Authority has advised the signatories to contact the local authority, which should make an application for reconnection and pay the reconnection fees.

CEB - ELECTRICITY GENERATION PLAN

(No. B/929) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of an Electricity Generation Plan, as announced in the 2017-2018 Budget Speech, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: There is no mention in the Budget Speech of an electricity generation plan. Nevertheless, I wish to inform the House that the Integrated Electricity Plan is a document presenting a framework and master plan, covering 10 years, for generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity taking into account the forecasted demand.

The first Plan was produced in 2002 for period 2002-2012. The second one was released in 2013 to cover period 2013-2022.

I am informed by the CEB that the Plan has been updated in the light of the report of the National Energy Commission and the World Bank’s report of 2015 on the Assessment of Electricity Demand Forecast and Generation Expansion plan.

The CEB expects to release an updated Electricity Generation Plan by March 2018.

However, if the hon. Member is referring to the electricity generation plan of the CEB, since 2015 additional generation capacity of about 83 MW has been added with –

- (i) St Louis power station - 68 MW;
- (ii) the wind farm at Plaines des Roches - 9.37 MW, and
- (iii) 6 MW of solar energy from 3 solar farms of 2 MW each.

An additional 67 MW will be available in 2018 from 6 solar projects and 29 MW from one wind project which are in the pipeline.

The CEB is also working on the setting up of a Combined-Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) project of 105-120 MW at Fort George to be undertaken in the first phase, the facility, as an open-cycle gas turbine (OCGT). This is expected to come into operation by the end of 2019. In the second phase, the facility will be converted into a fully operational combine-cycle configuration with the goal to operate on LNG.

The Alteo project of capacity of 50-60 MW is expected to be available in 2020.

CEB - COMBINE CYCLE GAS TURBINE

(No. B/930) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the proposed generation of electricity from combined Cycle Gas Turbine, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the relevance thereof considering the expected lower usage thereof in the wake of the implementation of the Metro Express Project that seeks to reduce travelling by cars and other vehicles.

Reply: I am informed by the CEB that there is ample capacity to match demand of the Metro Express project as well as other projects in the pipeline. In its recent load forecast, the CEB has estimated that the annual growth rate of the electricity demand will be around 2.25% for the period 2016/2026.

The Combine Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) will meet demand in the medium term. In fact, the CEB is planning to commission two open cycle gas turbines of capacity 70 to 80 MW by end of year 2019 to be converted into a combine cycle gas turbine of capacity 105 to 120 MW by 2023.

HOSPITALS - RENAL TRANSPLANT SPECIALIST

(No. B/931) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to renal transplant specialists, he will state the number thereof employed in the public sector, if any, and, if not, why not.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that there is no post of renal transplant Specialist on the establishment of my Ministry.

However, all cases of renal transplant are being referred to the Apollo Hospital, Chennai under the Overseas Treatment Scheme.

So far, out of 15 patients who have already undergone compatibility tests, 6 have already proceeded to India for renal transplant and 2 more patients would proceed to Chennai on 07 December 2017.

Renal transplant is a highly complex and delicate surgical intervention involving two persons namely, a donor and a recipient. It requires highly qualified and trained surgeons to perform such surgeries.

Unfortunately, one surgeon who benefitted from a specialised training in renal transplant at the University of Marseilles, France in 2015, under Technical Assistance Programme, resigned from the public service on 04 January 2016, after refunding his bonded amount.

Arrangements are being made for two Mauritian Specialists/Senior Specialists in General Surgery to undergo one year training in renal transplant at the University of Marseilles, France, as from 15 December 2017.

PONT LARDIER WATER TREATMENT PLANT PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/932) Mr K. Tarolah (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Pont Lardier Water Treatment Plant Project (GRSE/DRBC), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, indicating the –

- (a) expected start and completion dates thereof, and

- (b) actions taken in the short and medium term to deal with the acute water shortage in the eastern part of the country, pending the completion thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Water Authority that it will launch the invitation to bid for the construction of the Pont Lardier Water Treatment Plant on a design and build basis next month. Construction works are expected to start by November 2018 for duration of 18 months.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the CWA that the water supply in the East comes from boreholes or river abstraction. Generally, supply is for 10 to 24 hours. However, when there is very heavy rain, water supply is disrupted particularly in regions which receive water from river abstraction due to accumulation of mud in the water. The measures being taken to improve supply in the eastern region are -

- (i) two pressure filtration plants of treatment capacity 2,500m³/day each will be installed at Pont Lardier and Belle Rose reservoir by end of February 2018 ;
- (ii) the construction of a service reservoir of 2,000m³ capacity at Montagne Fayence and associated pipelines is expected to start by February 2018 and to be completed by July 2019;
- (iii) additional pumps and mobile treatment plants are being used by the CWA to increase production from river abstractions during the dry season.

BRAMSTHAN - VILLAGE HALL - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/933) Mr K. Tarolah (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Bramsthan, she will state if there is any project for the construction of a building to be used by the Village Council thereof and, if so, indicate the -

- (a) site identified therefor;
- (b) budget earmarked therefor, and
- (c) expected start and completion dates thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Flacq that during the present financial year, there is no project for the construction of a building for the Bramsthan Village Council.

However, the District Council of Flacq is already in consultation with Alteo Ltd to obtain a plot of land of an extent of 25 perches near the Primary School at Royal Road, Bramsthan for the construction of a Village Hall thereat.

The estimated cost of the project is Rs4 m. and the District Council of Flacq would implement the project as soon as the land issue is finalised and funds therefor are secured.

With regard to the implementation time frame of the project, I am informed that once the plot of land is available and the source of funding is confirmed, it will take around 10 months to complete the project.

OLIVIA - HOUSES - FIRE OUTBREAK

(No. B/934) Mr K. Tarolah (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the two families of Olivia whose houses were severely damaged in a fire outbreak on 10 April 2017, he will –

- (a) state if they have been granted any compensation and, if so, indicate the quantum thereof, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Empowerment Foundation, information as to if consideration will be given for the provision thereto of decent housing units under the National Empowerment Foundation.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, a total amount of Rs80,446 has been paid to the two families by the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development under its “Allowance to fire victims” Scheme.

These families are temporarily accommodated, free of charge, in a housing unit allocated by the National Housing Development Company Ltd at Residence Onyx at Quatre Cocos.

The National Empowerment Foundation is proposing to extend housing support to the two families.

MONT IDA - COMMUNITY CENTRE - RENT

(No. B/935) Mr K. Tarolah (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Community Centre of Mont Ida, she will state if her Ministry is in presence of any request from the members thereof or from the inhabitants of the said village concerning the building housing same in connection with the rent payable therefor and of the lack of space and of equipment for the holding of the activities thereof and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Reply: I am informed that no request has been received from members of the Community Centre and inhabitants of Mont Ida regarding the rent payable for the building housing the Centre and the lack of space and equipment for the holding of activities thereat.

BEL OMBRE - HOTEL RESORTS - LAND LEASE

(No. B/936) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the letters of reservations issued in favour of West Coast Leisure Ltd. over a plot of land of an extent of 14 Arpents and to ICPMM (Mtius) Ltd. over a plot of land of an extent of 15 Arpents 86 perches, respectively, in Bel Ombre for the development of hotel resorts, he will state if the said plots of land are public beaches which will have to be de-proclaimed to allow the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed that in the context of an Integrated Plan for Tourism and Leisure Development Project, a Master Plan was approved for the region of Bel Ombre in year 2001.

Two letters of reservation have been issued for hotel development in the region of Bel Ombre as follows -

- (i) West Coast Leisure Ltd over an extent of 14 *Arpents*, and
- (ii) KPMM (Mauritius) Ltd and not ICPMM (Mauritius) Ltd over an extent of 15 *Arpents* 86 Perches.

The two plots of land mentioned above do not form part of public beaches and therefore no deproclamation is required.

LA VALETTE - SOCIAL PROBLEMS

(No. B/937) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to La Valette, he will state if he is aware of the social problems existing thereat and, if so, indicate the proposed measures that will be undertaken in relation thereto.

Reply: Officers of the National Empowerment Foundation effect regular visits at La Valette to monitor the implementation of empowerment projects thereat and to provide “accompaniment” to its beneficiaries.

Whenever these officers have doubts of certain illicit activities being carried out in the village, they report same to the relevant authorities for appropriate action.

Furthermore, a Community Working Group for the district of Black River has been launched on 22 November 2017 to provide for a common platform regrouping all stakeholders to brainstorm, consider and implement poverty alleviation projects. The Community Working Group will identify and mobilise resources for specific and targeted interventions in regions highly affected by poverty and its associated social ills.