

**MAURITIUS**

**Fifth National Assembly**

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**FIRST SESSION**

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**Debate No. 15 of 2011**

**Sitting of Tuesday 05 July 2011**

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**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**FISHERIES - MASTER PLAN**

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*By Private Notice*) asked the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Rodrigues whether, in regard to fisheries, he will state -

- (a) if the Consultative Committee of the Ministry and *Syndicat desPêcheurs* is holding its meetings;
- (b) if the Master Plan has been finalised;
- (c) if Government proposes to forbid net fishing and take additional measures to prevent illegal fishing in Mauritius and in Rodrigues;
- (d) if security equipment is provided to fishermen;
- (e) where matters stand concerning the Fish Auction Market and projects under the Fishermen Investment Trust, and
- (f) the yearly catch, since 2005 to date -
  - (i) in-lagoon;
  - (ii) off-lagoon;
  - (iii) from bank fisheries;

- (iv) from aquaculture, and
- (v) of tuna in our Exclusive Economic Zone.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will, first of all, like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for raising these issues as these give me the opportunity to inform the House of development in the fisheries sector by my Ministry.

I would, at the outset, wish to indicate that the fishermen community with diverse interests has the unflinching support of my Ministry which ensures the synergies among economic, social and environmental dimensions to seek the sustainable development of the fisheries sector.

As regards part (a) of the question, the House may wish to note that consultative approach is the fundamentals of my Ministry's strategy to integrate the fishermen community in the fisheries development. Since my taking office, I adopted the participatory, responsive, transparent and adaptive approaches by first meeting the fishermen community including the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs*, and here I would like to tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the first association of fishermen that I met was the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs*, especially being given that the President of the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* was my next door neighbour in Rodrigues.

The key consultations have been the holding of “*Les Assises de la Pêche*” on 10 March 2011, in Mauritius and on 05 April 2011 in Rodrigues which served as a tool to inform, consult and involve all fisheries stakeholders to ensure that their views and aspirations are considered for the development of the Fisheries Master Plan. At the “*Les Assises de la Pêche*” in Mauritius, the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* submitted an *Aide Mémoire* for consideration besides participating in a brainstorming session to reflect on the theme Fishers in the Process to formulate recommendations for the Fisheries Master Plan.

Furthermore, the fishermen community including representatives of the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* as key stakeholders also had various meetings with the team of experts for the Fisheries Master Plan, amongst others, during the inception phase in January 2011, the first Consultations workshop in early April 2011, the Presentation workshop for further consultations and the final Validation workshop also in April 2011.

Furthermore, following a petition made by the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, two meetings were held on 12 and 19 April 2011 with the representatives of the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs*. Meetings are still on-going to discuss the issues raised in the petition.

Mr Speaker Sir, with regard to section (b) of this question, I would like to inform the House that the Master Plan has not yet been finalised as at date, but is in the process of being finalised very soon.

However, I would like to make an exposé on where matters stand to date.

Government, upon taking office in May 2010, pledged to develop a Fisheries Master Plan for Mauritius and Rodrigues.

The elaboration of a Fisheries Master Plan aimed to reinforce the capacity of Mauritius to ensure the ecological, economic, financial and social sustainability to fisheries in Mauritius.

The Fisheries Master Plan project was submitted to the ACP Fish II Programme for technical assistance. The ACP Fish II Programme is the 9<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF) funded Programme aiming at strengthening fisheries management in ACP countries. ACP Fish II is conceived as a ‘demand driven’ Programme designed to respond to the needs identified by ACP countries in terms of fisheries management and enforcement, including those related to scientific research initiatives, and intra-regional information on fisheries.

The development of the Fisheries Master Plan funded to the tune of EUR174,000 under the ACP Fish II Programme was implemented as from 16 January 2011 over a period of five months by Pescares Italia.

The House may wish to note that consultations approach is the fundamentals of my Ministry’s strategy to integrate the fishermen community in the fisheries processors. Upon taking office, I adopted the participatory, responsive, transparent and adaptive approaches by first meeting the fishermen community including the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs*.

My Ministry had arranged meetings and consultations between the team of three experts and with representative of all key stakeholders in the fishing industry including concerned Ministries during the inception mission of the experts from 19 to 27 January 2011. Three other field missions of the experts to Mauritius were held involving all the stakeholders till May 2011

to finalise the Fisheries Master Plan namely on 07 to 08 April 2011, 21 April 2011 and 25 April 2011.

The key consultations have been the holding of “*Les Assises de la Pêche*” on 10 March 2011 in Mauritius and on 5 April 2011 in Rodrigues which served as a tool to inform, consult and involve all fisheries stakeholders to ensuring that their views and aspirations are considered for the development of the Fisheries Master Plan. At “*Les Assises de la Pêche*” in Mauritius the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* submitted an *aide mémoire* for consideration besides participating in a brainstorming session to reflect on the theme Fishers in the Process to formulate recommendations for the Fisheries Master Plan. The final draft Fisheries Master Plan Report has been submitted on 20 June 2011 and is under consideration for subsequent Government approval.

Regarding part (c) of the question, Mr Speaker Sir, net fishing has been traditionally practiced in the lagoons of Mauritius. There is a closed season for net fishing starting from October to end February every year. However, disturbance of the sea floor by nets causes destruction of sea grasses, seaweeds, coral patches, habitats of juvenile fish and other invertebrates, hence impacting negatively on the productivity of the lagoon and affecting biodiversity. The Ten-Year Development Plan (1995) recommended a complete ban on the use of nets.

A buy-back of nets scheme was introduced in 1996, encouraging owners of nets and net fishermen to voluntarily surrender their net and cards on the basis of an inducement package which included financial compensation, conversion and training to join other fisheries. The buy-back scheme was to spread over a period of 10 years and estimated at the cost of Rs40 m.

In line with the policy of the Government to protect and preserve the marine ecosystem, the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 1998 limited the number of large nets to 10 and 5 gill nets; this was maintained in the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2007.

As at May 2011, there were 16 large nets (however, the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act provides for only 10 large nets for Mauritius) and 5 gill nets (in line with the provisions on the FMRA) in operation involving 145 fishermen. As regards Rodrigues, there are only seven large nets (1 individual and 6 cooperative) in operation and it involves 61 fishers.

As Government is in the process of amending the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act, the prohibition of use of nets in both Mauritius and Rodrigues will be envisaged. Thus, with the new amended Act, consideration will be given for compulsory surrender of nets over an appropriate time frame with the relocation of the net fishermen to off-lagoon fishing or other fisheries related fields. In addition, the use of other nets, namely bait nets would also be considered for phasing out. However, limited use of same would be considered on a case to case basis, in view to support fisheries development project and protect the marine ecosystems.

The following additional measures to prevent illegal fishing in the coastal waters of Mauritius and Rodrigues are in the pipeline -

- a) strengthening the provisions for enforcement of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2007 through its amendment of the Act;
- b) encourage collaboration of the coastal communities to inform the Authority on any illegal activities through the hotline facility available at the Ministry and the number of this hotline is 800 10 11;
- c) recruitment of additional Fisheries Protection Officers;
- d) purchase of additional patrol boats for surveillance of the coastal areas.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated which is known as IUU fishing in the Mauritian EEZ, my Ministry is -

- (a) implementing the measures defined in the National Plan of Action to combat IUU fishing;
- (b) implementing Port State measures based on the FAO Model Scheme and all IOTC Resolutions are strictly adhered to;
- (c) part and party to all regional surveillance programme of the *Commission de l'Océan Indien (COI)*;
- (d) receiving tangible support from the National Coast Guard more particularly under the Indian Technical Assistance to combat Piracy and the recent case of vessel Ruang Lap No. 8 of Thailand is a testimony of what I am advocating;

- (e) prior to issuing of new licence and port access, screening of all vessels by my Ministry is effected in consultations with the office of the Commissioner of Police, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, that is, the CCAMLR Secretariat;
- (f) tracking fishing licensed vessels operating in our EEZ through the Vessel Monitoring System, that is, the VMS, operational on a 24-hour basis.

It is to be noted that there is no regulation for unlicensed vessels to report to the VMS. However, any licensed or unlicensed vessels entering the EEZ of Mauritius has to inform the authorities 24 hours in advance.

With regard to part (d) of the question, safety equipment comprising life jackets, life rings, radar reflectors, tarpaulins and hand flares were last donated to fishermen in Mauritius and Rodrigues in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

An intense campaign of sensitisation on their use and benefits was concurrently held.

Regulations have been prepared in consultation with the fishermen community for the compulsory use of safety equipment at sea during fishing operations and the regulations will be promulgated soon.

Moreover, my Ministry proposes to earmark a sum of rupees 6.5 million in the next budget to assist in the procurement of safety equipment.

Regarding part (e) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Fish Auction Market Project, the construction phase of the project has been completed and the Completion Certificate has been issued by the Public Infrastructure Division of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, NDU, Land Transport and Shipping on 09 June 2011 certifying that all works have been completed...

**Mr Speaker:** There is no need to read the certificate, just say that the certificate has been issued.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Yes. The construction component of the project is now under the defects and liability period up to 06 June 2012. The contract for the 'Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Cold Room and associated Equipment' has been awarded to Florecold

Industry Ltd on 01 June 2011 for the sum of Rs6,113,421.85, inclusive of VAT. The site has been handed over to the contractor on 30 June 2011 and the duration work is for a period of 90 days. The expected completion date of this component of the project is early October 2011.

The third component of the Project which pertains to the operationalisation of the Fish Auction Market is being worked out concurrently. Two options are presently being considered at the level of my Ministry, namely -

- i. a Public Private Partnership (PPP) approach whereby the private sector, namely the MEXA Seafood Council and the fishers community, would be co-opted to operate the Fish Auction Market;
- ii. a bidding exercise would be undertaken inviting foreign expertise to operate the fish auction market.

It is expected that the Fish Auction Market would be operational by January 2012.

Regarding the Fishermen Investment Trust, FIT...

**Mr Speaker:** No. The question is where matters stand concerning the Fish Auction Market and projects under the Fishermen Investment Trust.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Yes, I am coming to it. The FIT prepared its first Corporate Plan during a time of major challenges facing the seafood sector on both the domestic and international markets following the financial crisis. Through its Corporate Plan, the FIT made known its strategic directions and incorporated the principal actions required by the FIT to attain its objectives as highlighted in the Fishermen Investment Trust Act 2006.

Projects enumerated in the Corporate Plan are -

- (a) Project 1 - Exploitation of sea cucumbers in the waters of St. Brandon (incl. ranching)
- (b) Project 2 - Fish Farm Project in the region of Bambous Virieux
- (c) Project 3 - Fishing boats for outer lagoon and FADs fishery
- (d) Project 4 - Barachois Project

**Status of Projects - Exploitation of sea cucumbers in the waters of St. Brandon (incl. ranching)**

- The sea cucumber project is a joint venture between the FIT and Brightwater Ltd for the development of a sea cucumber project in the waters of St Brandon under the name of Brightfit Ltd.
- The project provides for the setting up of a marine ranching programme to ensure the sustainability of the project let alone the protection of the marine environment and eco-system at St Brandon.
- The Government has decided to ban the fishing of sea cucumbers in the maritime zone of Mauritius for a period of two years with effect from 01 August 2009. The Ministry intends to extend the ban for a further period of 2 years as part of its conservation strategy. However, promoters for the culture of sea cucumber will exceptionally be provided with a permit to collect a minimum amount of sea cucumber for rearing purposes under the strict supervision and guidance of this Ministry.
- The project is thus put on hold pending further developments.

## **Project 2 - Fish Farm Project in the region of Bambous Virieux**

- The FIT will team up with the Ministry of Fisheries and Rodrigues and *La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg* for the cage farming of Red Drum (*Ombrine*) in the region of Bambous Virieux.
- The project would be financed by the Food Security Fund for which an initial provision of Rs15 m. have been made.
- The *Ferme Marine de Mahebourg (FMM)*, being the pioneer in the fish cage culture in Mauritius, has been approached to support the project by providing necessary expertise, technical assistance and supply of juveniles and feeds amongst others.
- The Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) will be requested to mount appropriate training programs in respect of fishers who will be directly involved in the implementation of the project. Some 30 fishers will be initially trained. Priority of employment will be given to fishermen of the region.

- Moreover, the Empowerment Programme shall be called upon to support the project by providing a stipend to fishers who will undergo training. This will also build up capacity for prospective entrepreneurs who would be investing in similar aquaculture projects. The cost of the project is now estimated at Rs18.5 m.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between FIT and *La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg* highlighting the nature of assistance to be provided by *La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg* need to be finalised.
- However, the *Ferme Marine de Mahebourg* has indicated that it has introduced a new species (the BAR species) which may be more economically viable than the Red Drums (that is, the *Ombrine*) and the FIT has been requested to wait for further developments.
- It is to be noted that the Food Security Fund Committee did not approve funding of the project at its 16<sup>th</sup> meeting due to the risk associated with the project and taking into account the high cost implication and,
- It is to be noted, Mr Speaker, Sir, the new Board of FIT...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** You are answering in my place? The question is so comprehensive that the Minister must be given time to explain his policy, but I will definitely give some more time to the Leader of the Opposition exclusively, because this is a prerogative of the Leader of the Opposition and I must give him some latitude.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the new Board of FIT is seeking a joint venture partnership with Operators from either China or Malaysia to put to productive use the site earmarked for cage culture. Discussions are presently under way.

### **Project 3 - Fishing Boats for outer lagoon and FADs fishery**

#### **Fishing Vessel MEXA 1**

- In line with the Memorandum of Understanding signed between FIT and the Mauritius Export Association (that is, the MEXA) on 11 February 2009, MEXA officially...

**Mr Speaker:** I will ask the hon. Minister to be very short with his answers, explaining shortly, don't read extensively.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

The boat of the MEXA, Mr Speaker, Sir, is meant for fishing on a pilot basis and training purposes. Investment from MEXA amounted to Rs1.5 m. VAT exempted.

- In concurrence with the bilateral agreement signed between the Government of Mauritius and the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan on the Project for rehabilitation of fisheries facilities for fisheries development in the Republic of Mauritius, FIT in collaboration with the Parent Ministry requested the OFCF for technical assistance with respect to a major overhaul of fishing boat MEXA 1. Thus, MEXA 1 was sent to GRNW Yard Ltd. in September 2010 to undergo the improvement works under close supervision of OFCF experts. The overhaul has enabled same to accommodate new fishing equipments. The amount disbursed by OFCF (approximately Rs900,000) for the rehabilitation work, consisted of change of fish hold, self bailing deck...

**Mr Speaker:** No, there is no need to go on lengthily on that part; just give the project and the amount.

**Mr Von-Mally:** I would like to tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the boat MEXA 1 is now available to embark in fishing campaign. And arrangement is being worked out at the level of the Board on leasing modalities to the fishermen community. Representatives of fishers on FIT board are spearheading this project in Mauritius.

### **Fit's New Fishing Boats**

- In December 2009, FIT invited bids for the construction, supply, commissioning and testing of 4 fishing boats.
- In view of the Trust's limited finance it was finally decided to procure only 3 boats. After a bidding exercise, the contract was awarded to GRNW Boat Yard Ltd in February 2010 for the total sum of Rs10,350,000.00 (VAT Inclusive) as it was the only responsive bid according to the Bid Evaluation Committee.
- The Trust has already enlisted...

**Mr Speaker:** I will request the hon. Minister to circulate the rest of his answer under (e), go to (f) now. This is the result of having and asking a question on the whole of the fisheries policy.

**Mr Bérenger:** I asked the question. It depends of how the Minister replies. He has gone back to histories.

**Mr Speaker:** I must say that I have no control on the answer of the Minister and the Minister is right to explain his policy. Now I will ask him to shift to (f).

*(Interruptions)*

Well, this is the way he answers the question. I have no control on the answers of the Minister. This is in the Erskine May. Yes, carry on paragraph (f) and give the figures only.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Yes.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order now!

**Mr Von-Mally:** The details of first Fishing Boat. I would like to tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the Hull of second boat is already on blocks. Let us come to the Barachois Project.

**Mr Speaker:** Not have asked the Minister to circulate the rest of his answer on (e), to go to (f) now and give the figures without any comment, please.

**Mr Bérenger:** I suggest he circulates the catches.

**Mr Speaker:** On (f) also you can circulate the catches.

*(Interruptions)*

Order, now!

**Mr Von-Mally:** I am circulating. **(APPENDIX)**

**Mr Bérenger:** If only your boats would circulate! There is a 2006 Memorandum of Understanding. I am sure the Minister is aware, because he told us about several meetings which he has had with the fishermen. That Memorandum of Understanding of 2008 between the

Ministry and the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* provides for regular consultative meetings. Can I know why none has taken place for more than a year?

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been regular meetings with my officers concerning *le Syndicat des Pêcheurs*. As I have said, the first meeting actually was held with the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* and, because of this, we invited the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* in the *assise de la pêche*. They came with the Memorandum and we are working on that. All their proposals have been taken on board and will be put in the Fisheries Master Plan. The Fisheries Master Plan will be out in a few days.

**Mr Speaker:** And all you are saying is already in your reply.

**Mr Bérenger:** Clearly, the hon. Minister does not know the difference between structured, consultative, regular meetings and one-off meeting which he has had because there have been no regular, consultative, structured meetings with minutes of proceedings and follow up. Not one of their requests put forward by the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* has been satisfied, fishermen above 60 to be helped to retire, changes to bad weather allowance, reorganisation of cooperatives, fishermen to head the Fishermen Welfare Fund and so on. Not one of their requests has been satisfied. Why?

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, to do things rightly, it takes some time and the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying that there has not been any meeting. Yes, there have been structured meetings.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No, he is saying that there have been structured meetings.

**Mr Von-Mally:** There have been structured meetings. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition does not understand, Mr Speaker, Sir. There have been structured meetings.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister is saying there have been structured meetings.

**Mr Von-Mally:** There have been structured meetings and now we are taking on board all their proposals and all these will be put in the Fisheries Master Plan. This Fisheries Master Plan will be like our Bible, our Bhagavad Gita, our Quran. And now, we are going to use this ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bérenger:** The question is later on, on the Master Plan, we can't mix up everything like that.

**Mr Von-Mally:** To go ahead with all the proposals that the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* has given. It will be in the Fisheries Master Plan. It has been taken on Board. Give us some time.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry. Questions are being put, the hon. Minister is answering to his satisfaction. We must accept the answer that he is giving in good faith and the hon. Member cannot tell the hon. Minister to sit down while he is answering.

**Mr Bérenger:** I said only I pointed out that the next question is the Master Plan. That is all I pointed out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know whether the Master Plan will rest...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, let me listen to the question.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I know whether the Master Plan will rest on a full-fledged study which must have been carried out, I hope, on the impact in the Lagoons of tourism development, wastewater developments, all the different pesticides and so on, the impact on the lagoon. Has such a study been carried out?

**Mr Von-Mally:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I would like to come back to the question the hon. Leader of the Opposition has put earlier. I will circulate the notes of meetings that have been held. Concerning...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said all this will be taken care of in the Fisheries Master Plan. We are even thinking of introducing a sustainable Fisheries Development Fund so as to cater for these and help the fishermen.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in March last the hon. Minister publicly proposed a special fund to be financed by the hotels to help the Fisheries community. Can I ask him if that is included in the Master Plan?

**Mr Von-Mally:** Yes, this is what I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are contemplating the possibility – and this will be in the Master Plan – of setting up the sustainability Fisheries Development Fund to help the fishermen. The answer is yes.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I move on. The hon. Minister was categorical on 03 August, *la pêche à la senne sera interdite*. Can I know why he is now back-peddalling? He is saying that it will be envisaged whereas he was categorical.

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not back-peddalling. We are doing it phase-wise. We are not trying to impose on the fishermen. We will have dialogue with them. We will discuss with them and we will do it phase-wise.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as illegal fishing around Mauritius and Rodrigues is concerned, I am sure the hon. Minister is aware of the amount of illegal fishing taking place and that corruption among too many officers is the main cause. Can I know what measures are going to be taken for those officers to deliver and stop illegal fishing both in Mauritius and Rodrigues?

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said in my answer - maybe the hon. Leader of the Opposition has not listened – there is a series of measures that will be undertaken to...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Will hon. Lormus Bundhoo keep quiet!

**Mr Von-Mally:** There will be a hotline, there will be consultations and...

*(Interruptions)*

But, there is ICAC, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Leader of Opposition can go to ICAC if there is any case of corruption.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister say bluntly that there has been no security equipment distributed to fishermen since 2004. Does he find that shocking or not and what is going to be done?

**Mr Von-Mally:** As I have said in my answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are proposing to put in the next budget - if I am not mistaken - some Rs16 m. to help the fishermen to have the equipment.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I refer to the FIT, the Fishermen Investment Trust. The hon. Minister tried to give the impression that we have moved forward. Can I refer him to what he said himself to my last PNQ, two years exactly ago and does he find it normal that all the four main projects of the Fishermen Investment Trust are still stuck? Some have not started at all. The fish auction market, we are told now, will be operational in January 2012. I will take a bet on that. Why is it not yet operational? Five fishing vessels, one is being finalised now; two *barachois* projects, zero, and the fish farm at Bambous Virieux, we have been told now this is going to be done. Four years later, can I know why the four main Fisheries Investment Trust projects have stayed where they are?

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we know that the Fishermen Investment Trust has only four years' existence. So, as all new borns, it has got some teething problems.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Von-Mally:** We can learn from any mistake that has been made before. We have a new Board. There is room for improvement. I would ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to give this new Board a chance. I am sure, in a few months' time, you will see what will happen at the FIT.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the figures are being circulated for catches. Can I know in lagoon catches whether the situation has kept on deteriorating over the last few years?

**Mr Von-Mally:** I am circulating the answer, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, the amount of catch in the lagoon has remained more or less constant and we are moving forward for more sustainable fishing and with aquaculture and so on, I am sure this will greatly help the fishers community.

**Mr Speaker:** I understand that the figure of the catch has remained constant.

**Mr Von-Mally:** All the figures are here, I am tabling them.

**Mr Bérenger:** Concerning the catches of tuna in our Exclusive Economic Zone, again the figures are being circulated, but can I know from the Minister what percentage of the tuna processed in Mauritius is caught in our Exclusive Economic Zone. Is it a big amount or is it a very small amount?

**Mr Von-Mally:** As far as tuna is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the figure, in fact, it is very little.

*(Interruptions)*

Because this is migratory fish. If little tuna comes in our sea, what can we do?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bérenger:** You should have known that before the *ti-papier*. The Minister has made reference to a new fish that has been introduced by *La Ferme de Mahebourg*, the bar fish and he presented that in a positive light. Is he aware that the fishermen maintained that this is a dangerous fish to bring to aquaculture? Therefore, has every precaution been taken including Environment Impact Assessment before this new variety of predatory fish, I am told, has been introduced?

**Mr Von-Mally:** In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am made to understand that all fish are carnivorous. Therefore, the bar fish is not more dangerous than the other fish and all necessary precautions have been taken. I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition for that and it has been noticed that there has been no maturity...

*(Interruptions)*

...of gonads in grown up fish. That is, even if one of the fish escapes it will not reproduce. So, there is no problem.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question!

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Minister to go two years back, down memory lane, and read attentively my last PNQ - as I said, two years nearly to the day? Will he agree with me that, over those two years, hardly any progress has been made? Now, we are promised the sky. But will he agree with me that, over those two years - nearly to the day - hardly any progress has been made? Now we are promised the sky! But, will he agree with me that when we look at

what has taken place over the last two years, hardly any progress has been made as far as the fisheries sector is concerned?

**Mr Von-Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot answer for what happened before I arrived at the Ministry. But, I assure him that I will do all that is possible to make this work. The fisheries sector will work, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over! Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Ms Deerpalsing!