



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2019

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PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 30 of 2019

Sitting of 13 September 2019

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis at 3.00 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills (In Original):
 - (i) The Skills Development Authority Bill (No. XXVII of 2019);
 - (ii) The Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill (No. XXVIII of 2019)
- (b) The Income Tax (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 134 of 2019)
- (c) The Declaration of Assets (Declaration Forms) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 135 of 2019)
- (d) The Declaration of Assets (State-owned Enterprises) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 136 of 2019)
- (e) The Land (Duties and Taxes) (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 137 of 2019)
- (f) The Digest of Social Security Statistics 2016/2017.
- (g) The Digest of Education Statistics 2018.
- (h) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Media Trust for the year ending 31 December 2013. (In Original)

B. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

The Waste Water (Miscellaneous Waste Water Services) (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 139 of 2019)

C. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands

Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

- (a) The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes (Fees for Classified Trade) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 138 of 2019)
- (b) The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2018. (In Original)
- (c) The Local Government (Application for Building and Land Use Permit) (Collection and Transfer of Fees) (Revocation) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 145 of 2019)

D. Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation

The 10th Edition of the Annual Report of the Data Protection Office for the period January to December 2018.

E. Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research

- (a) The Annual Report of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate for the 18 months' period ended 30 June 2017.

- (b) The Annual Report of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for the 18-month period ending 30 June 2017.
- (c) The Annual Report of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for the period July 2017 to June 2018.
- (d) The Annual Report of the Rabindranath Tagore Institute for the period July 2017 to June 2018.

F. Ministry of Tourism

- (a) The Annual Report of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority for the period January 2016 to June 2017.
- (b) The Tourism Authority (Tourist Enterprise License Fees and Operating Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 149 of 2019)
- (c) The Tourism Authority (Pleasure Craft License Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 150 of 2019)

G. Ministry of Health and Quality of Life

- (a) The Food (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 146 of 2019)
- (b) The Dangerous Chemicals Control (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 147 of 2019)

H. Ministry of Arts and Culture

The Annual Report of the Hindi Speaking Union for the period ended 30 June 2017.

I. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 24) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 133 of 2019)
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 140 of 2019)
- (c) The Consumer Protection (Export Control) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 141 of 2019)
- (d) The Consumer Protection (Safety Requirements) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 142 of 2019)
- (e) The Plastic and Polyethylene Pipes and Fittings (Mauritius Standard Specifications) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 143 of 2019)
- (f) The Toys (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 144 of 2019)
- (g) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 25) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 148 of 2019)
- (h) The Annual Report of the Fashion and Design Institute for the period January 2016 to June 2017.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(3.03 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

INVESTMENT ARBITRATION –

DOUTREMEPUICH MESSRS VS REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

The Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms (Mr M. Gobin): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to make a statement to inform the House of the outcome in the arbitration matter between Professor Christian Doutremepuich and Mr Antoine Doutremepuich against Mauritius – case reference PCA case number 2018/37. Professor Christian Doutremepuich and Mr Antoine Doutremepuich who are both citizens of France, commonly referred to here as the claimants, had on 30 March 2018, filed a Notice of Arbitration against Mauritius under the France/Mauritius Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) to claim, among other things, damages quantified at 11,600,000 Euros. The claimants were represented in the arbitration by Ernst and Young Société d'Avocats of Bordeaux, France and Mauritius was represented by a law firm Lalive of Geneva, Switzerland.

Arbitration proceedings were held before an Arbitral Tribunal composed of -

- (1) Prof. Olivier Caprasse, nominated by the claimants on 30 March, 2018 of Brussels, Belgium;
- (2) Prof. Jan Paulsson, nominated by Mauritius on 16 May, 2018 of Washington, USA, and
- (3) Professor Maxi Scherer, appointed as a Presiding Arbitrator on 21 June, 2018 of London, UK.

Pursuant to the terms of appointment signed by the Parties and the Tribunal, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, The Netherlands, provided

administrative support in the present case and Ms Fedelma Claire Smith, Senior Legal Counsel, served as the Tribunal Secretary.

The arbitration was governed by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Arbitration Rules 1976. On 12 and 13 June 2019, the hearing on jurisdiction took place at the Peace Palace, The Hague, Netherlands which said hearing was live recorded and broadcast simultaneously to the public via the website of the PCA. On 23 August 2019, the Arbitral Tribunal issued a final award on jurisdiction dismissing the claims for lack of jurisdiction.

The Tribunal upheld the position of the Republic of Mauritius and in its award, the Tribunal ruled that it lacked jurisdiction on two separate grounds. First, the Tribunal considered that the claimants had failed to demonstrate that they had made an investment in Mauritius in the first place finding that their alleged investment did not meet the standards of contribution, duration and risk required under the France/Mauritius BIT. The Tribunal also found that the question whether the Mauritian authorities had approved the claimants' project was irrelevant to its decision on the existence of an investment. Second, the Tribunal acknowledged that the Republic of Mauritius had not consented to arbitrate disputes with French investors under the France/Mauritius BIT in the absence of an Investor/State Dispute Settlement Mechanism in its treaty. The Tribunal further considered that such concept could not be imported from another treaty through the operation of the Most Favoured Nation clause contained in the France/Mauritius BIT. Finally, the Tribunal awarded Mauritius the reimbursement of the sum of 196,846 Euros corresponding to its share of the arbitration cost with compound interest accruing as of 60 days from the day of the award on jurisdiction.

Madam Speaker, this thorough and well-reasoned decision is of significant importance for the Republic of Mauritius. It is indeed the second time that investors wrongly attempt to rely on the France/Mauritius BIT to bring a claim against the State of Mauritius. But this International Arbitral Tribunal has now confirmed that the France/Mauritius BIT does not permit direct settlement of Investor/State disputes through arbitration in the absence of an investment agreement providing a dispute resolution provision.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

(3.08 p.m.)

ESAAMLG – FATF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr D. Sesunkur):

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I propose to make a statement on the outcome of a second application made by Mauritius to the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) for the technical compliance re-rating of 21 Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Recommendations.

I wish to remind the House that when the Mauritius Mutual Evaluation Report was published in September 2018, we were rated Largely Compliant or Compliant with only 14 out of 40 FATF Recommendations, including 3 of the Big 6 Recommendations.

The Big 6 Recommendations to which all countries have to be at least Largely-Compliant are namely -

Recommendation 3: Money Laundering Offence

Recommendation 5: Terrorist Financing Offence

Recommendation 6: Targeted Financial Sanctions related to Terrorism and Terrorist Financing

Recommendation 10: Customer Due Diligence

Recommendation 11: Record Keeping

Recommendation 20: Reporting of Suspicious Transactions

We made a first application for technical compliance re-rating, which was considered by the ESAAMLG Task Force of Senior Officials at its meeting held in April 2019 in Arusha, Tanzania. We were upgraded in 10 Recommendations, including Recommendation 10 relating to Customer Due Diligence. I reported on the outcome of the application in a Statement I made to the House at the sitting of 16 April 2019.

Madam Speaker, following several measures initiated from April 2019 to August 2019, including the enactment of the United Nations (Financial Prohibitions, Arms, Embargo and Travel Ban) Sanctions Act 2019 and the Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the

Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2019 and the completion of the National Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment of Mauritius exercise as well as the dissemination of the results thereof, we submitted a second application for the re-rating of 21 FATF Recommendations. The application together with the Second Follow-Up Report on the recommended actions contained in the Mauritius Mutual Evaluation Report, were considered by the ESAAMLG Reviewers, the Evaluation and Compliance Group (ECG) and the Task Force of Senior Officials at their respective meetings held from 01 to 05 September in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

It was noted that Mauritius has made significant progress in addressing the technical compliance deficiencies identified in the Mauritius Mutual Evaluation Report. Accordingly, at the 19th meeting of the ESAAMLG Council of Ministers held on 06 September in the Kingdom of Eswatini, the recommendation of the Task Force for the upgrading of 19 technical compliance ratings from the 21 applied for, were unanimously approved. Of these, 18 were rated Largely Compliant or Compliant and one from Non-Compliant to Partially Compliant. As such, as at date, Mauritius is either Largely Compliant or Compliant to 35 out of 40 FATF Recommendations, including the Big 6 Recommendations.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that the FATF, the UK, the USA and the ESAAMLG Secretariat have unanimously recognised and congratulated Mauritius for its commitment at highest level to resolve its shortcomings and the significant progress made in a short period of time.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the application for the technical compliance re-rating and the recommendation of the ESAAMLG Council of Ministers for the upgrading of the 19 FATF Recommendations will now be submitted to the FATF Global Network for Quality and Consistency Review. In the event that there will be no comments thereon, the report will be published on the FATF and the ESAAMLG websites within the coming weeks.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

(3.13 p.m.)

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

- (i) *The Skills Development Authority Bill (No. XXVII of 2019)*
- (ii) *The Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill (No. XXVIII of 2019)*

Second Reading

**THE MAURITIUS METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES BILL
(NO. XXVIII OF 2019)**

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Madam Speaker, I move that the Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill (No. XXVIII of 2019) be read a second time.

Madam Speaker, there has always been an intense human fascination with weather, what it has been, what it is like, what is causing it and what it is going to do, that stretches across generations and across cultures, lifestyles, occupations and stages of life. Everyone wants to know about the weather, and nowadays, everyone in every country expects to have access to reliable meteorological services and products.

Weather itself is defined as the state of the atmosphere at a particular location and at a given point in time. Climate, on the other hand, is the average weather taken over a long period of time. Both weather and climate affect and influence the livelihood of mankind and can have devastating consequences on the well-being of people and on national economies. One single heavy rain event can cause flash floods or flooding in a particular area resulting in loss of property and even in loss of life.

On the other hand, prolonged dry weather will lead to shortage of water and drought and can considerably decrease food production, which in places can even cause famine. It is, therefore, not surprising that countries throughout the world set up one institution dedicated entirely to the monitoring and forecasting of weather. The atmosphere is always in a dynamic state and knows no boundaries. Weather systems are always in motion and a system affecting one country today will most probably get into a neighbouring country in the hours or days to come, even if there is tension in between these. It is, in fact, this logic which led to the foundation of the International Meteorological Organisation in 1873, which in turn became the World Meteorological Organisation, the specialised agency of the United Nations for meteorology on 23 March 1950.

As the global meteorological networks and the scientific basis of weather forecasting gradually built up during the first half of the 20th Century, the importance of reliable daily weather information for farmers, sellers and the “man on the street” became more and more evident. This was the basis behind the establishment and operation of what were to become the Meteorological Services of almost every country.

But, in the middle decades of the last century, the focus was primarily on Meteorological Services for Civil Aviation. In the early years of operation of the World Meteorological Organisation, relatively little attention was paid to the issues associated with the provision of Public Weather Services at the national level. But, Madam, there has been much evolution internationally since the 1950s and it is now globally recognised that the role of any Meteorological Service does not limit itself to catering for stakeholders, but it is rather closely related to the responsibilities of Governments. This has been emphasised during the 17th World Meteorological Organisation Congress in 2015 where the following was stated, I quote –

“Population safety and security, water and food security, economic growth and sustainable development, increasing prosperity, enhancing resilience to disasters and climate change and improving public health are issues of fundamental importance to every Government. To deal with these issues, Governments have to develop and implement effective policies that take into consideration the challenges of climate variability and change and promote fundamental tenets of societal and environmental governance. However, with regard to societal well-being and economic growth, it is common knowledge that we are challenged by variations in our natural environment made worse by changes in the climate which threaten the sustainable development of human societies through increased occurrence of severe weather and extreme climate events causing disasters and compromising food security, reducing the availability of clean fresh water, causing the displacement of populations and the rise and spread of diseases, among other impacts.” Unquote.

In Mauritius, the first weather observations date back to as early as 1774 and they were made by M. Nicolas de Céré, the then Director of the Pamplemousses Botanical Garden.

Systematic observation, *per se*, started only about a century later when the Royal Alfred Observatory at Pamplemousses became operational as a Government Department.

Although resources were limited at that time, the foundation for weather services had been laid. However, due to the absence of proper archiving, most of these precious records have, unfortunately, been lost. The Observatory itself was later shifted to Vacoas and eventually became the headquarters of the department in 1925. Meteorological stations were also gradually set up on the outer islands, namely Agalega, St. Brandon, Diego Garcia and Rodrigues.

Previously, the Meteorological Services were issuing only routine weather forecasts for the general public and early warnings for cyclones and torrential rain. However, following the tsunami of December 2004, the Meteorological Services became the National Tsunami Warning Centre for our country.

Further, given that hydro meteorological hazards are becoming more and more impactful, other warnings have had to be considered, notably warnings for high waves and storm surges, for strong winds and for heavy rainfall. Advisories for impending heat and cold waves are also being issued. All these new undertakings have, however, been accommodated without any proper legal framework since, to date, no concrete Bill has been brought to fruition until the one which is being proposed today.

Madam Speaker, one of the main purposes of this Bill is to come up with a Meteorological Service with well-assigned and clear-cut responsibilities which have been clearly spelt out in Clause 4 of the Bill. Accordingly, the Mauritius Meteorological Services are called upon to be the official authority under Clause 4(c) of the Bill for providing weather forecasts, advisories and warnings for the Republic of Mauritius.

Warnings may be of hydro meteorological origin, such as storms and cyclones, heavy rainfall, torrential rain and high waves or of geological origin, such as seismic activity and tsunamis under Clause 4(b) of the Bill. Warnings and advisories will not be limited nationally but will go beyond boundaries, be it on the surface of the earth or space-wise. Here, I wish to draw the attention of the House that the Mauritius Meteorological Services will be mandated, pursuant to Clause 4(f) of the Bill, to fulfil our international obligations under the Convention of the World Meteorological Organisation under that of the International Civil Aviation Organisation on Meteorological Service for International Air Navigation and also under those of the International Maritime Organisation.

Perhaps many of us in this House may not be aware that each aircraft departing from Plaisance Airport is provided with an individual flight forecast folder prepared by the

Meteorological Services. This is an essential kit for the Captain and the cockpit crew and which contains information about weather parameters at take-off and weather en route, and contains information regarding impending hazards to the aircraft such as icing, turbulence and thunderstorms, amongst others. All aircrafts flying in our flight information region are also provided with the necessary weather information to ensure the protection of the aircraft and the safety of the passengers.

Furthermore, with regard to maritime navigation, it is indeed a legitimate pride and honour for Mauritius that our Meteorological Services have been assigned, by the World Meteorological Organisation and the Global Maritime Distress Safety System, the mandate to provide forecast for the weather, wind, state of the sea and also warnings for storms and cyclones in the maritime navigation area known as METAREA VIII South which encompasses an area of more than 70 million square kilometres of sea water in the Indian Ocean.

Madam Speaker, besides forecasts and warnings, a new concept has been framed by the World Meteorological Organisation since 2009. It is about moving from routine weather forecasts and warnings to provide specific climate information to meet user's needs and this is now provided for under Clause 4 (d) of the Bill. This concept termed as climate services calls upon meteorological services in each and every country to provide useable climate information which will contribute to boost different socio-economic sectors.

The Mauritius Meteorological Services are indeed already working towards meeting such requirements of the World Meteorological Organisation for the benefit of the Republic of Mauritius. In order to fulfil all of the above mentioned mandates, the Mauritius Meteorological Services must operate under specifically defined functions and powers and these have been listed in Clause 5 of the Bill. These include the very basic function of issuing forecasts and warnings for the consumption of citizens and the socio-economic sectors of the Republic. Warnings and advisories will even be issued under Clause 5 (c) of the Bill to provide protection over a much larger area at sea as defined in the METAREA VIII South, and in the air as defined in the Mauritius Flight Information Region.

Let me inform the House here that worldwide only 18 countries are mandated to issue maritime forecasts over extended areas of the sea and it is a privilege that Mauritius is one of those 18 countries in the world. The mandate to prepare customised weather forecasts for weather sensitive socio-economic sectors is also provided under Clause 5 (d) of the Bill and

this is an indication of the preponderant contribution of the meteorological services in the economic drive of the Republic of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, meteorology is not only about making forecasts, issuing warnings and the development of meteorological products. It is also about making observations and collecting meteorological data. In fact, raw meteorological data is the basis of all products and services which a meteorological service can offer. The Mauritius Meteorological Services have the expertise and mandate under Clause 5 (e) of the Bill to make, collect and exchange meteorological and related observations in accordance with the procedures and standards of the World Meteorological Organisation.

Under Clause 5 (m) of the Bill, the Mauritius Meteorological Services will be legally mandated to establish officers and stations for the observation of whether and climate-related parameters over land, in the atmosphere and in the oceans. It will under Clause 5 (m) of the Bill be the lead agency to liaise and arrange with other institutions, authorities or persons to perform and record meteorological observations in accordance with established standards of the World Meteorological Organisation.

In fact, Madam Speaker, under Clause 5 (q) of the Bill, the Mauritius Meteorological Services will henceforth have the responsibility of promoting education, sensitisation and awareness on weather and climate, be it in the field of science or as regards basic observations. As the repository of invaluable meteorological data and information, the Mauritius Meteorological Services will under Clause 5 (f) of the Bill be given the mandate for recording, processing and archiving meteorological and other related observations. Such observations will then be used for climatological for studies and for environmental, academic, operational, socio-economic and other purposes.

Madam Speaker, besides meteorological assignments, the Mauritius Meteorological Services have also been called upon, under Clause 5 (b) of the Bill, to assume the responsibility of monitoring hazards of geological origin. After the tragic tsunami events of December 2004 which affected countries of the Indian Ocean Rim region, the current Meteorological Services were designated as the National Tsunami Warning Centre for the Republic of Mauritius.

Henceforth, under Clause 5 (r) of the Bill, the Mauritius Meteorological Services will be the authority which will receive advisories from tsunami service providers and issue appropriate bulletins in this respect for the Republic of Mauritius. In addition to the

Conventions which I have mentioned earlier, the Mauritius Meteorological Services will, pursuant to Clause 5 (r) of the Bill, also collaborate with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and participate in the Intergovernmental Coordination Group of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System.

Madam Speaker, driving such a technical organisation requires both specific knowledge as well as experience. As such, pursuant to Clause 6 of the Bill, the Mauritius Meteorological Services will be spearheaded by a Director who will himself be under the administrative control of the supervising officer of the parent Ministry, pursuant to clause 6 (a) of the Bill. The Director will be responsible for the day to day business of the services but he may, under clause 6 (e) of the Bill, be given other assignments by the supervising officer or the Minister, especially as regards the execution of the policy of the Ministry on meteorological matters, under clause 6 (d) of the Bill.

All officers of the Mauritius Meteorological Services will be working under the supervision of the Director by virtue of clause 7 (2) of the Bill. The mandate and responsibilities of the Director have been spelt out at clause 6 and clause 7 point to the public officers designated to assist the Mauritius Meteorological Services in the proper discharge of its functions under this Act.

Everybody in this House, Madam, will agree with me that the exercise of forecasting the weather is not that straightforward. The atmosphere is so dynamic and, at times, the weather, particularly extreme weather, becomes quite unpredictable. Nevertheless, an officer at the Mauritius Meteorological Services will be called upon to provide a forecast and especially warnings to the best of his knowledge and judgement, as supported by available information.

As such, these officers need to be provided with some sort of legal protection and this is catered for in clause 8 of the Bill. This clause provides for the protection of the Mauritius Meteorological Services and of any of its officers from civil or criminal liability in respect of any act done or omitted in good faith in the performance of its or his functions or in the exercise of its or his powers under this Bill. By virtue of clause 8 (2) of the Bill, clause 8 (1) will be in addition to and not in derogation from the Public Officers Protection Act.

Being a Government institution within which there is a continuous flow of confidential information, provision for maintaining confidentiality is critical and this has been

taken care of in clause 9 of the Bill which applies to all officers of the Mauritius Meteorological Services.

Madam Speaker, I must now come to clause 10 of the Bill, concerning the powers of the Minister. It has come to my attention that a lot of objection is being taken to the fact that clause 10 provides that the Minister shall, is allowed to give directions to the Meteorological Services and I must say that I am quite surprised by that. I have taken the time to ask my collaborators to find 15 sets of legislation which contain powers of Minister to give directions and I did not ask them to choose which ones to bring to me. I just asked them to go and find the first 15 sets of legislation where a Minister is allowed by law to give directions. And when they brought the 15, and I had a look, they cover the 1960s, they cover the 1970s, they cover the 1990s, they cover the beginning of the 21st Century, they cover the two mandates of the former Labour Government and they concern the mandate of this Government - 15 in all. And, as we say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. When I compared all 15 legislation, I found that in 10 of them, the Minister has the power to give directions...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please! Order, please proceed!

Mr Sinatambou: I am very happy that hon. Bhagwan mentioned that because it also occurred, I checked...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Bhagwan, please do not interrupt the hon. Minister.

Mr Sinatambou: The hon. Member also ate, I have got 14 meals for you at Labourdonnais Hotel and Touessrok Hotel.

(Interruptions)

Yes, they do *miam-miam*. I am telling you hon. Bhagwan also eats at Labourdonnais Hotel and Touessrok Hotel...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bérenger, please do not interrupt!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: I have got his bills...

(Interruptions)

and I have got his bills.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, please do not engage in any conversation with Members on this side. Please proceed with your speech and you may as well never be interrupted in your speech by...

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: They speak out for newspapers to report and as he says he pays his bills; the 14 bills were paid by the Ministry, if he does not know. The House ought to know also.

(Interruptions)

Those who live in glass houses...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can we have some order please!

(Interruptions)

Can we have some order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order on this side, please!

(Interruptions)

Order on this side so that the Minister may proceed with his speech. Please, Minister, proceed with your speech and on this side, please do not interrupt the hon. Minister.

Mr Sinatambou: The point is - I hope this stops now. Going back to those 15 pieces of law which I checked, in 10 of them, the Minister has the power to give directions without such directions being in writing and in 5 of them, he has the right to give written directions.

Now, I am saying that because I have heard quite a lot, especially yesterday, about giving directions *couchou-couchou*. Now, the point here is and, in fact, Madam Speaker, I went to check, why. Because the idea to give directions, not in writing - sorry, the idea not to give written directions is not from me. So, I went to check what happened for directions from the Minister not to be in writing in this Bill. And, I must say, I was very satisfied to find out

that when one of the drafts was actually forwarded to the Meteorological Services for their comments and that goes back to the 22 of August 2018, the draft of the Ministry actually contained directions in writing to be given by the Minister. But when the Meteorological Services in Vacoas sent back the draft with their comments on the 05 of September 2018, they recommended to delete the words 'in writing'. So, I checked why - why is it that the Ministry was thinking of giving directions in writing from the Minister, why was this actually deleted? And I was given a very plausible explanation. Our meteorological services, the Bill itself, what is it about? It is about weather events and extreme weather events. Everyone is now aware of cyclone Dorian and its catastrophic consequences. Do we expect that if the Minister, pursuant to clause 10, has to give general directions while we are being hit by a cyclone of class 5, having gusts of 325 kilometres an hour, that I should put the direction in writing and send to the director of the Meteorological Services and I think this is quite plausible and this is quite acceptable. In an event, we are quite sure, I mean any direction, let's take the 10 of the other 15 legislation. I am speaking about those instances, where we have directions not being mandatorily given in writing by Ministers in those 10 legislation I have checked. It is the cursus of any public service system to put directions down to paper on a file afterwards. So, all this *ouha* about opacity, about restraint of information, I believe, is misconceived and if ever there is a problem, I believe it is better that directions be allowed, not in writing, in order to cater for those particular circumstances which the Meteorological Services have to bear with.

There is another bit which I heard yesterday about the Republic of Mauritius that this Bill should have been called not the Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill but the Republic of Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill, apparently to be more precise, to cater for the inclusion of all our dependencies. I would respectfully suggest that this is also misconceived because section 111 of our Constitution does define Mauritius as being inclusive of all our dependencies, of all the other islands which make up the Republic. So, this is what I recollect as being the main points of objection which I have heard against this Bill.

Madam Speaker, finally, I will say that, indeed, when we bring in a new Bill like this, it is quite normal that the enactment of the Bill into an Act will require amendments to be made to several existing laws in the Republic of Mauritius where reference is made to the existing meteorological services or to the meteorological services as stipulated in clause 12 of the Bill.

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

Mr Seeruttun rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(3.44 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Madam Speaker, I must admit to being totally surprised for Parliament to be recalled early, on a Friday afternoon. For what purpose? The purpose of discussing a Bill, a nine-page lightweight Bill, which merely formalises existing arrangements and practice. So, Madam Speaker, is this a sign that Government is running out of steam so far as this legislative agenda is concerned or if you want me to use some meteorological terms, is Government now in the doldrums, with no longer any wind in its sails? I don't know, Madam Speaker. Time will tell, but everyone outside, and including the Opposition here, are totally surprised at this more than surprising agenda for an early recall of Parliament. Nevertheless, we in the Opposition, at least in the PMSD, I presume the other Oppositions also, are happy that Parliament is not being prorogued and that we are seemingly going for another few weeks, which will allow well needed questions on Tuesday next and Tuesday after for Parliament and the Opposition to continue doing its work, Madam Speaker.

Now, as far as the Bill is concerned, I mentioned that I think it is a lightweight Bill, nevertheless, Madam Speaker, the context in which the Bill is being presented is absolutely important and I would like to start with the context with which the Bill is being presented.

Madam Speaker, earlier this year, I think it was March/April, there was a report that was prepared by the working group on climate change for a UN body called the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and this is what the working group had to say in its opening paragraphs, Madam Speaker –

“Warming of the climate system is unequivocal. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased.”

Madam Speaker, I am speaking on this issue because, I think, section 4(a) of the Bill relates to being able to monitor climate change. This is why I am taking this issue now. Now, climate change, Madam Speaker, is already upon us. We used to talk about it happening, but it is now accepted everywhere around the world that climate change is upon us. Madam Speaker, on average, the planet has already warmed by some one degree, when you consider the situation before the industrial revolution and the situation now, and what is even more

worrying is that in the next 20 years, it is predicted that it will rise by another half a degree. So, we are talking about a total rise of 1.5 degrees since the industrial revolution and that is, Madam Speaker, if large countries do not act fast to stop any further warming. But I must say that the US, under the Trump administration, which has withdrawn its commitments that it made under COP 21, and the other large producing countries, Madam Speaker, do not appear to be doing sufficient to prevent - and I will explain after why I am going into this - the forthcoming climate change.

Now, I know a little bit about this, Madam Speaker, because I actually chaired the committee, when I was in Government, that prepared the COP 21 Report. I chaired that and there was hon. Minister Collendavelloo, hon. Minister Dayal and several people on that committee. In fact, Madam Speaker, it is quite funny because when it was decided as to who would represent Mauritius at the COP 21, there was a big argument in Government. Was it going to be Minister Collendavelloo? Was it going to be Minister Dayal? In the end, Government decided that it would be the President who would represent Mauritius at the COP 21 because maybe it was not possible for hon. Collendavelloo; maybe he did not master the technicalities that the President, who is a scientific person, mastered. But that is for history to write in the future. But that is the fact, Madam Speaker, I will not make any further comments. But I think eventually Minister Dayal did go as sort of second in command of our presentation, Madam Speaker.

Now, it is clear from what we presented on the COP 21 that Mauritius is not a major polluter. We are an infinitely small polluter. I think we are ranked 150th in the world in terms of nations that pollute the world. And the largest polluters, USA, China, India, these are the big boys who will really make an impression when they actually stop emitting greenhouse gases. The question, of course, is: are these countries doing enough? Now, the IPCC does not think they do enough, we don't think they do enough, Madam Speaker, to prevent the disaster, and that is why you have so many demonstrations, also in Mauritius, but mostly overseas to prevent, and especially the youth are very concerned about what is happening and what is inevitably going to happen, Madam Speaker.

As I mentioned, since climate change is already upon us and further dramatic climate change is inevitable, Madam Speaker, clause 4 of the Bill rightly says that the Meteorological Services will monitor the evolution of weather and climate. I presume it was already doing so, as I mentioned, but it is now going to do so formally. But the question that we need to ask in this august Assembly this afternoon, having been recalled early, Madam Speaker, is given

the extreme vulnerability of Mauritius to natural disasters, all small islands are very, very vulnerable because we are talking about rise in sea levels, we are talking about tropical islands, tropical storms, etc. All small islands, virtually, I will say, are extremely vulnerable to extreme weather and that will include, as I mentioned, bigger storms, rise in sea level, ocean warming, beach erosion, coral bleaching, flash floods. All this, Madam Speaker, is what awaits Mauritius in the coming months, in the coming years. There is no doubt about that because the climate will continue to warm and extreme weather will continue to be upon us.

Madam Speaker, the World Risk Report, a very respected report of 2017, places Mauritius as the 7th country most at risk to natural phenomenon. I don't know how many countries there were in that report, let us say 150; we are the 7th most at risk, and that is by an international organisation. Now, coming at the end of its mandate, this little Bill, this lightweight Bill, I can only say two words, Madam Speaker, a sentence, too little, too late. Here we are, four and a half years or so after the beginning of the mandate, *la montagne qui accouche d'une souris*. And here we have, what is it called? The Meteorological Services Bill, which brings nothing new at all; more of a gimmick, Madam Speaker, than anything. And as we are discussing the Bill, I think, I would invite the hon. Minister later on to tell us why he has chosen this type of organisation for the Meteorological Services. I see that a lot of countries - in fact, probably the worldwide trend is to create a parastatal body. Kenya now is going for the process of creating a parastatal body for the Meteorological Services. The same ought to be done for the Civil Aviation Authority and other organisations like that, because there is a simple reason. It is more flexible, it has its own budget, it is more independent, it recruits if necessary, it does not have to go through the PSC, etc. So, it gives it a lot of flexibility and since he, himself, has talked about extreme weather and predictability, etc., I would have thought that the most obvious form of organisation for the Meteorological Services, for it to be agile and flexible and reactive, would have been as a parastatal body with its own Board, more independent, more flexible, able to recruit with its own budget, but that is not being proposed to us. And I would hope that the hon. Minister, in his summing-up later on, will tell us why that is so, which is, I think, going, as I mentioned, against international trends.

As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, too little, too late, because we have discussed in this House and outside the supposed Climate Change Bill which has been on the 'drafting' table - that's the word - for the last four and a half years. It has been talked about so many times,

promised to this House so many times. Are we going to have it before 13 November, the by-election date, when probably it will be prorogued or dissolved? I don't know what is going to happen to the Climate Change Bill. Because, Madam Speaker, we don't need an event like Storm Dorian to wake us up, and I would like to have a few minutes to explain to Mauritius and to this House the effect that Cyclone Dorian has had on the Bahamas, more specifically the Island of Abaco. Now, I would like also to say that the Bahamas is not some poor country. It is not! The Bahamas, Madam Speaker, if you check, is three times richer per capita income than Mauritius. That is the first point. And let's see how unprepared it was for the cyclone, which was a huge cyclone, a super cyclone, 300 kms wind. But more important perhaps than the wind, Madam Speaker, is the amount of rain that it brought. It brought, Madam Speaker, 35 inches of rain for two days on Abaco Island. Now, 35 inches of rain is six times more than the rain that fell on that fateful day in 2013 when eleven people died in Mauritius, mainly in Port Louis. Six times more! What we are entitled to ask ourselves, Madam Speaker, is how prepared is Mauritius for this type of cyclone to hit us, and that is the important point of this Bill, where there were 2,500 people dead or missing. Most of them are missing at the moment, but most, I presume, have disappeared at sea or something, because of the huge flooding that covered the island. 70,000 people homeless and displaced!

Madam Speaker, international aid organisations have described the Abaco Island as looking like an apocalypse on earth. That is what we are facing and what Mauritius will face one of these days. We cannot act like an ostrich; we are going to hide our head in the sand, Madam Speaker. The damage: Rs100 billion! It was the vast cyclone ever. But, maybe, you can say it is far away; the Bahamas is far away. Where is the Bahamas? West Indies! Nearer home, earlier this year, Storm Ida, the strongest on record in this part of the world, March 2019, 13,000 people died in Mozambique and Zimbabwe principally. Three million people were displaced, Rs70 billion of damage; wind speed, 200 kms, and again, Madam Speaker, the rain that fell, 20 inches of rain compared to the six inches on that fateful day in 2013, when so many people died in Mauritius. That is the situation that we are facing with climate change. The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) mentioned that cyclones will be rarer, but much more powerful than before. And this is what we are seeing in Mauritius. We see fewer cyclones. Obviously, some of the very strong ones have missed us recently, but *gouverner c'est prévoir*. And that is the question that the population has to ask itself about this Government, about this Minister. Are we actually, in fact, taking the precautions that we ought to be taken?

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, we are the 7th at risk. No, we have not seen the Climate Change Bill; *c'est un mirage*. The National Adaptation Plan was prepared as far back as 2012 by the previous Government and has not been updated yet by this Government. The National Disaster Risk Relation Office was also created by the last Government. But I must say, Madam Speaker - because I like to say when things are done properly - that I was pleasantly surprised, when I was in Government, of the work done by the then Minister of Environment, Mr Raj Dayal, when he prepared a plan – more than a report – on how Mauritius should react when a cyclone hits us. And as far as I know, this is the last effort, there has been nothing else since he left Government. Okay, he was going up and down in helicopters, etc. That's Commander Dayal, but he did prepare that report, and I think we have to hand it to him that he did that. But, since that time, Madam Speaker, I have not seen anything.

Madam Speaker, I am talking obviously of our response to national disasters. When we talk about the Climate Change Bill, of course, we will have a section in the Climate Change Bill as to how we are going to contribute to the reduction of gas emissions coming from Mauritius. Of course, that will, but let's get our priorities right. Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, the amount of rain that falls in these cyclones is the worrying factor – to my unprofessional layman's mind. Now, in 2013, when we had that fateful day, and again, I must say, I think it was the Prime Minister Ramgoolam at the time, who went to Japan and obtained not Rs100 m., but Rs400 m. grant, free grant from the Government of Japan and, as Minister of Finance, I included that in my Budget in November of that year, and I was happy to see that a few months ago, it was formally inaugurated. Why it took six years to have a Doppler Radar, which is I think at Trou aux Cerfs, when the money was already there, Rs400 m. from Japan? I don't know, but it is being done. At least, Madam Speaker, that shows the foresight and the reactivity of the previous Government in that respect. As I said, when things have been done properly, I will say they have been done properly, and that was done properly. What does the Doppler Radar do? This is most important for us. With the amount of rain that is coming, it can, not predict, it is too strong a word, it can estimate the amount of rainfall that is contained, the potential rainfall that will happen when clouds approach Mauritius, and that is the beauty of the Doppler Radar. Let's see whether it will work or not, whether our people – I think they are here this afternoon – will know how to operate it properly, and that it will be a relief to everyone in Mauritius. I must say that I always take these torrential warning rains from the Meteorological Services with some humour, because

as soon as our friends from the Meteorological Services issue a warning of torrential rain, immediately the rain stops.

So, this is one way and this is what happened, and I do hope that with the Doppler Radar, they will be able to be a little bit more accurate, because the trouble caused to families with children at school, for the economy, etc., is very, very much, and also I do not understand why it is always given islandwide and it should not be more precise. Schools are closed everywhere, economic activities stop everywhere and, in fact, it may only be raining in Souillac, but as long as the amount of rain somewhere has fallen more than a minimum amount, the whole country stops. I do not think, Madam Speaker, that it is right and I think that it must be improved along the way.

Madam Speaker, I must say also that the issue that affects this population with the heavy amount of rain, of course, is flooding in my constituency and everywhere. As Minister of Finance - I will say it because nobody else will say it - I gave to the then Minister Rs2 billion over two years, 2013 and 2014, and he used all of it to construct, repair and improve drains in Mauritius. When the new Government came, suddenly it was declared that the NDU was *en faillite*; people were arrested left, right and centre, and all were released with no charge. It is a bit of the common ground at the moment. All were released with no charge. What happened though - very real? Works were stopped everywhere for months and months and years!

Madam Speaker, I am going to actually support what I say. I am going to say I was shocked myself when works for drains were stopped everywhere and people were complaining, houses were flooded, and we were told: 'Well, the NDU *est en faillite*.' And now it started again, but not at the same rate as before. And the Director of Audit, Madam Speaker, no less a person than the Director of Audit who has retired, made a special performance audit report entitled 'Government's response to flooding'. Madam Speaker, it is here somewhere. It is worth to read - Government's response to mitigate the impact of flooding. And what did the Director of Audit say? On page one of her report, she found that Government's actions were reactive in nature rather than proactive, that Government's actions occurred on an *ad hoc* basis, were complaints-driven. She mentioned the long-awaited Wetlands Bill, which is still being awaited. Madam Speaker, as part of her concluding remarks, this is what she said: 'Unless - and this is a report which was issued this year, at the end of this Government's mandate - proactive actions are taken, the identified causes of flooding will continue to contribute to future flooding.' I will repeat it again, Madam

Speaker. And this is a report issued in February 2019, the last year of this Government, with a population on its knees. I am looking at the PPS of my constituency, he will confirm; a population on its knees as far as flooding is concerned, and this is what the Director of Audit has to say about his actions and other actions of Government *sur le terrain*. ‘Unless proactive actions are taken, the identified causes of flooding will continue to contribute to future flooding.’ In a polite language, what the Government has done, *zero*, and it is going to continue even worse than before. There you are, Madam Speaker. So, let’s continue!

If we take now the Director of Audit report, same year 2018/2019 and this time look at the NDU, the famous National Development Unit which, as I said, was paralysed after new elections and then started *un peu, comme ci comme ça*, this is what she said about the NDU. She said this on page 53: ‘Expenditure incurred on drain projects was only Rs367 million, that is, about 51 per cent of the allocated amount.’ What it means, Madam Speaker, is that half of the money given to the Ministry, given to the wonderful PPS, highly paid PPS, half of it remained in the bank account and was not spent. What they were doing for half the time, I do not know, compared, Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, that in 2013/14 we spent Rs2 billion on drains.

Madam Speaker, I will move on very quickly now to a few other issues. Beach erosion, we are waiting for the results of the UNDP enquiry as to how so many EIA licences have been granted when we all know that beach erosion is a major issue. And when I look at the state of the tourism industry and I look at the licences being given for new hotels, do we expect that at the rate that we are going at, the erosion that is happening at the moment, virtually uncontrolled, there will be any beaches left in 10 years’ time? Have you seen the state of parts of Flic-en-Flac beach, parts of Mon Choisy beach? That is the question, Madam Speaker. I am not saying that the solution is easy. I am not saying that, but solutions must be found. Otherwise, one of the little *fleurons* that we have in the economy - sugar is gone, textile is going every day, tourism is floundering, but it has potential. Climate change must be a part of our tourism strategy as far at least as protecting our natural assets are concerned.

And also, Madam Speaker, when we talk about beaches, we will talk about bleaching of corals. In 2012, Madam Speaker, in the report of National Adaptation Framework, it found that only 20% of our corals were then alive at that time, 2009 - 20%. What is the state now? We are doing little bits here and there, but are we doing enough? That is the question. And this is why, Madam Speaker, I am saying, all these billions must be spent to protect our population, must be spent to protect our economic assets, must be spent to protect our future.

Madam Speaker, building norms. Are we going to allow people to continue to construct houses with thatch? My house has got thatch. I have to change it; it is not possible, it is going to disappear. But shouldn't we be changing our building norms? Where are we going to construct? Are we still going to construct on low lands and with some rain, it is flooded? These must be things of great priority. We are waiting for the Land Drainage Master Plan, which will come sometime after the next General Election. That is the *bilan* of the Ministry of Environment, Madam Speaker.

Now, I am going to speak about something very serious. When storms are threatened, on TV we see population in Florida and everywhere being evacuated. In Mauritius, we don't do that. In Mauritius, we wait for the storm to come. We wait for the people to be flooded. And then we say: 'You know, *débrouillez*, find a school or whatever that is open, find somewhere and go there in the storm. Is that serious? Now, let's say tomorrow, at some time, we see a storm coming and it is a huge storm, are we going to adopt the same protocol or are we going to change the protocol? There are very poor people, squatters, you can say what you like, but they are human beings, Madam Speaker, they have children, sometimes very young children. And they live desperately near these rivers that will be flooded, in these areas, Madam Speaker. Shouldn't we say, as human beings, that we should evacuate these people ahead of a storm, ahead of torrential rains coming? And for what? To go where? In these famous – I am not going to go into this debate about the biscuits or not, Madam Speaker, but I will make a serious point. There are no showers for them to live decently; there is not even a small cuisine - cuisine everywhere, but not there. There are two mattresses for everyone. Do you expect 60 people to sleep on two mattresses? What are they going to do on these two mattresses? That is what is being offered to them today and that is shameful, Madam Speaker. That is shameful that we don't treat poor people like decent people and treat them humanely. That is shameful. You should have taken maybe - I won't go more than that. But that is shameful and it must be reviewed. There was a Committee chaired - we were told last time there was a PNQ - by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo. What has happened to that? I think now prisoners will make some more decent meals and that is about it. That is not acceptable. The minimum that should be done – these centres should be equipped properly: showers, small kitchens, proper camp beds to allow people who are distressed to live these few days there decently, Madam Speaker.

I will finish, Madam Speaker, on this famous clause 10 - Powers of Minister. I agree that many laws have this. I agree, but Madam Speaker, here we are talking about the lives of

people; we are talking about the economy, huge costs to the economy. We are talking also about a Government, which I was part of, which, in its electoral manifesto, talked about the freedom of information. Now, is the Minister going to phone up the Director? Firstly, I don't know why he talks about a particular storm because, in the law, it says of a general nature, not a specific nature. I do not understand what this has got to do with a particular storm. He is supposed to give directions of a general nature firstly. Madam Speaker, we are here to improve things. It must be in writing. Okay, you can say if it is in an exceptional circumstance, it can be put down in writing, on paper after - in exceptional circumstances - but that cannot be a reason why it is not in writing. It must be in writing and it must be public because we don't want the Director of Meteorological Services - present and future - to say: 'Oh, it was not my fault. So many people were injured, so many people died. I did not declare a torrential rain warning because I was told by the Minister on a phone call'. And the Minister says: 'No, I did not say that. I was misunderstood. I did not mean that. I meant that, not that'. We don't want that. We want responsibility to be properly ascribed to the right person, and for the right person to bear in front of public opinion and in front of the law the responsibility. That is why I find, in this instance, that it is totally unacceptable for the instructions to be given - as I mentioned, the effect on lives of people, well-being of people and the economy. Firstly, it should be of a general nature. So, it cannot be relating to any specific item such as a storm and, secondly, Madam Speaker, it should not be for a non-professional to be giving instructions of a specific nature, and already there is confusion in our minds now as to what the Minister intends to do with this clause 10, because he thinks he can intervene during a storm and I think he cannot. So, *raison de plus* that it should be put down in writing, an evidence in writing for future action to be taken.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for your attention.

(4.18 p.m.)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

The Minister of Tourism (Mr A. Gayan): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, let me, first of all, congratulate my colleague, the Minister who has brought this Bill to the House.

I think this Bill, as the Explanatory Memorandum says, is simply to provide a regulatory framework for the Mauritius Meteorological Services which, as the memorandum says, has been operating administratively. I must say that there is a specialised agency of the

United Nations for the World Meteorological Organisation which recommends to all States to have a regulatory framework for everything having to do with the weather. This is all that this Bill is providing for. The Seychelles, I think, three or four years ago, had the same law in 2015. So, this is the trend. There is nothing unusual about discussing this particular Bill today. However, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has tried to broaden the debate into climate change and other things, but all these things strictly do not relate to the Bill.

I understand there will be a Bill that will come to the House on climate change and that will be the opportunity for everybody to address the House and the nation, and the world about what we propose to deal with climate change. But since the hon. Leader of the Opposition has raised it, I will have to respond on one or two points regarding that.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was talking about cyclone Dorian having caused untold havoc in the Bahamas. It is true. The whole world was shocked to find what had happened in the Bahamas. Had we had the same communication system in 1960 in Mauritius when Cyclone Carol came to Mauritius and devastated the country totally; it would, at least, be comparable to what the Bahamas have been suffering. Maybe many in the House will not remember cyclone Carol. When Cyclone Carol came – I am sure the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor will remember and others also will remember; maybe some were not even born, all houses then, Madam Speaker, were made of wood and corrugated iron sheets. There were very few concrete houses and, if we started to have concrete houses, it was after cyclone Carol. It was after that cyclone that there was a policy that we could no longer have houses that would be blown by cyclones very easily; so, we had to build *en dur*. That is when we had Longtill, that is when we started to have houses made of concrete and more solid structures. If you look at the pictures in the Bahamas, I am sure everybody has seen; there is a lot of wood in the structure. Had their houses there been made of concrete, they would not have suffered the damage that they did suffer. So, it is good to remember what we went through in 1960. Things have happened; things have improved. In 1960, when cyclone Carol came, the schools were closed for months because all the schools were filled with refugees. There was no water, no electricity. The transport system was down and we needed the relief provided by other countries to rescue the population of Mauritius. But we learnt our lessons in 1960. We learnt them and we have been acting according to the lessons that we have learnt over time. Today, we are much more prepared to face any cyclone. I am not saying that we are not vulnerable, far from it, but what I am saying is that we are in a better position today to face all the extreme weather conditions, that unfortunately can affect us. This is what has

happened because of the work of Governments since 1960. In 1960, it was still a colony, but since then every Government – and I am not playing politics with the weather – has worked systematically to improve the housing conditions of our people.

Madam Speaker, hon. Duval was talking about providing facilities for people who are refugees. Of course, we need to do that because we need to treat people as people. But under the former Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Of course, they will say ‘ayo’ because it is going to hurt. In Baie du Tombeau, there were forty families living under one shelter – *longère tôle* – without any toilet facilities...

(Interruptions)

This is recent history. Of course, I can sense from what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said that there may be a deal already made between the Labour Party and the PMSD. But that is okay, that is fine, that is politics. That is right.

Madam Speaker: It does not form part of the debate, hon. Minister.

Mr Gayan: Now, I am just referring to something that he said, but anyway. Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has spoken about coral bleaching, about how our beaches are being degraded, how our corals are dying. Mauritius is a middle income country, but Australia, Madam Speaker, is a rich country. Australia has a great barrier reef which is an icon of nature. Do you know, Madam Speaker, that in the latest Outlook Report on the Great Barrier Reef, the number of threats has increased from 41 in 2014 to 45 in 2019. And out of the 45 threats, 42 threatened its remarkable ecosystem right now. So, we are not alone in the world facing these kinds of problems.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you have had time to intervene, please!

Mr Gayan: I will answer him, Madam Speaker, don't worry. The hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has provided Rs2 billion to cater for the environment. Work has already started on the rehabilitation of beaches. We are replacing the filao trees on the beaches with trees that will protect our sand, our beaches. Work has started, but it takes time. We cannot expect everything to happen overnight, and this is why, Madam Speaker, it is easy for the Opposition to play the politics of doomsday.

Madam Speaker, it is very interesting that we talk about the weather, extreme weather conditions and things that happen in the world about the consequences and sequels of flooding, of sea rise, ice melting. All these things are happening. But on 06 September, 2019, the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organisation who is the present Secretary-General, Mr Petteri Taalas, was in Finland and he was responding to what was being said about climate change. I do not want to be misunderstood; I am very concerned about the negative impact of climate change in the world. We must respond to that threat, but we must respond to that threat responsibly. This is what he said and I think it is important for us to know what is being said also in the world, those who are fighting to stop climate change, but those also who are reasonable people, who look at the problems and who address these problems. Let me quote, Madam Speaker. I am quoting from an article by Ivan Pentchoukov which was uploaded on 10 September, 2019 and this is what I read –

“The head of the world’s foremost weather science organization issued a surprise rebuke to climate alarmists in remarks published on Sept. 6, marking what may be, according to some experts, one of the most significant developments in the climate debate in decades.”

“(...) he disagrees with doomsday climate extremists who call for radical action to prevent a purported apocalypse.”

And he said -

“Now, we should stay calm and ponder what is really the solution to this problem. It is not going to be the end of the world. The world is just becoming more challenging. In parts of the globe, living conditions are becoming worse, but people have survived in harsh conditions.”

And he goes on –

“I think they’re beginning to realize that the whole agenda has been hijacked by extremists and undermining the economy and the social stability of European countries.”

But we must also be concerned about what can happen if we adopt the radical stand of the weather extremist. And he goes on to say –

“The establishment meteorological scientists are under increasing assault from radical climate alarmists, who are attempting to move the mainstream scientific community in

a radical direction. He expressed specific concern with some of the solutions promoted by climate alarmists, including calls for couples to have no more children.”

(Interruptions)

Yes, this is what ...

(Interruptions)

Well, some people can say whatever, but this is serious and I am just quoting from the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organisation. Some people may not agree, it is their right to disagree, but it is my right to say what I consider to be right.

I do not have to plead guilty as some people have, anyway. While climate scepticism has become less of an issue, we are being challenged from the other side. Madam Speaker, what I am trying to say is that the world Meteorological Organisation is a United Nation specialised body. The head of that organisation is saying this. I am not the one saying this. And that organisation has a lot of credibility. And he says that the alarmists have gone too far and we need to bring back the debate to a calmer environment and this is what this Bill is trying to do.

Madam Speaker, let me come back to the Bill. What this Bill is trying to do is to ensure the safety of life and property. Madam Speaker, we all know about cyclones in Mauritius. We are so well equipped that even when a cyclone is 1000 kms away from Mauritius, the meteorological services here issue warning No. 1. And it is moving at maybe 5 or 6 kms, 1000 kms away, people are prepared, people get ready for that. But the weather is very important. The weather is important for tourism, for example, and there is, Madam Speaker, a protocol of the Tourism Authority with respect to natural calamities and disasters. There are lots of sea based activities that go on in Mauritius everyday and tourists are involved. The Tourism Industry has to be very concerned about the weather and this is why whenever there is a weather bulletin from the weather services in respect of bad weather conditions such as cyclones or heavy swells, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre issues a detailed communiqué by email on the severity of the calamity and directs the Tourism Authority to inform the operators to strengthen vigilance and be ready to activate emergency plans and initiate appropriate actions. Immediately when that happens, the Tourism Authority informs all the licence operators in the Tourism Industry through an SMS blast, instructing them to take necessary precautions to ensure the safety and security of tourists. Around 17,000 SMS are sent to licence operators. Holders of tourist enterprise licences, pleasure craft licences, including private operators are also advised to consult the official bulletin of the

weather services for updated information, but when the weather changes etc, the Tourism Authority sends another SMS to the operators.

We have to be ready because we do not want to be faced with a situation where tourists have to suffer because of the lack of awareness created regarding the weather conditions. Madam Speaker, this is something which we have to do and it has to keep improving. And today, we are in a situation where we depend a lot on tourism for the economy and for the well-being of the economy. So, we have, Madam Speaker, to ensure that nothing happens with regard to the tourism industry that can impact adversely on the tourists who come to Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, when a tourist comes to Mauritius, that tourist will go to all the Meteorological Services available on-line, on the Internet, and there are facilities all over the world. We can know right now what is happening in the Bahamas, just like people can know what is happening in Mauritius. So, it is something which is a global organisation today, the Meteorological Services. And no wonder that this Bill also provides for cooperation at the international level, at the global level, at regional level, but, I am sure that with the new radar station at the Trou aux Cerfs, people will have confidence in the information disseminated by the Meteorological Services and this is what, I believe, is important.

But I agree with one thing the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said. Maybe we need to target specific areas for schools, for example. It can happen that it is raining cats and dogs, as they say, where I live in Curepipe and when you come to Port Louis it is dry, but the schools are closed all over island. I think we need to be more pragmatic about the way we use the information of the Meteorological Services. The hon. Minister has said about the uses of information, but I think that we can be more *ciblé, plus pointu*, with regard to the use that we make of the information of this nature.

Madam Speaker, let me say one or two things about clause 10. The Weather Meteorological Services are politics neutral. The way the debate is outside, and what I heard this afternoon in the House, is that the Minister responsible for the Meteorological Services may act in a manner which would be inconsistent with what the Director of the Meteorological Services is saying with regard to the weather, data, etc., that is not possible. If a cyclone is coming, the cyclone is coming. With a cyclone warning Class IV, it will be Class IV, there is no way one can escape that. Can the Minister say that there is no cyclone in Mauritius? Can that happen? Can he give directives of that nature? Can he give directions of

a general character saying: ‘no, no, as from today there will be no cyclone in Mauritius’, when the cyclones are coming? No, we have to be realistic and we have to be pragmatic about this.

(Interruptions)

Don’t worry, he will face the cyclone, and maybe you will lose your *caution* again.

Madam Speaker, what clause 10 is saying -

“(1) The Minister may give such directions of a general character to the Director, not inconsistent with this Act (...)

So, it will have to be within the confines of the Act. So, all the debate outside, Madam Speaker, is they have to say something. So, they have to say something and they have said their something, but their something is nothing.

Madam Speaker, I do not think that this Bill is controversial. I think it is something which simply sets in law what the Meteorological Services have already been doing administratively, and this is why I think that in conclusion this Bill should have no difficulty in getting the votes of everybody in the House.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

(4.38 p.m.)

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, Madame la présidente. Je ne vais pas être long.

Madame la présidente, on avait le droit de s’attendre, cet après-midi, à un radieux soleil parlementaire avec la présentation tant attendue d’un *Climate Change Bill* annoncé par ce gouvernement depuis le début de ce mandat.

Un tel projet de loi aurait permis à notre République de se démarquer en matière de lutte contre le changement climatique, d’autant que nous sommes, Madame la présidente, davantage plus vulnérables en tant que petit Etat insulaire. Or, voilà qu’on se retrouve cet après-midi avec un temps parlementaire maussade - à voir les regards de l’autre côté - et de gros nuages à l’horizon. Madame la présidente, nous voilà...

(Interruptions)

Bientôt, to pas pou là twa! Allez alle met pano!

Madam speaker: No crosstalking, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Bhagwan: nous voilà servis, Madame la présidente, avec ce maigre projet de loi dont l'objectif clair est de formaliser l'existence d'une institution qui existe depuis belle lurette et une institution qui est très respectée par l'ensemble de la population, et dont l'objectif, de ce projet de loi, caché est de placer cette institution sous le joug d'un ministre. Et pas n'importe lequel! *Pas fini gat macaroni, aster pe alle gate billetin!*

Madame la présidente, le réchauffement climatique est une crise pour la civilisation et une crise pour la vie sur terre. Les changements climatiques d'origine humaine ont été à l'origine des dizaines de catastrophiques météorologiques, notamment des sécheresses, des inondations et des vagues de chaleur.

Dans un rapport spécial publié par le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat des Nations Unies, les plus grands climatologues du monde ont prévenu qu'il ne nous reste que douze ans pour que le réchauffement planétaire soit limité à 1,5 degré centigrade. Pour atteindre cet objectif, les émissions mondiales de carbone doivent diminuer de 45% d'ici 2030. Au lieu de cela, elles augmentent. Nous avons besoin d'un changement radical et urgent.

Le changement climatique, Madame la présidente, est l'enjeu le plus important de notre époque et le moment est venu d'agir. Il est encore temps de s'y attaquer, mais tous les secteurs de la société devront produire un effort sans précédent. Il y va de la vie de la planète, de notre territoire et tout le monde, chacun doit apporter son petit grain de contribution.

Pour concrétiser et accélérer les actions visant à mettre en œuvre l'accord de Paris sur le changement climatique, le Secrétaire général de l'ONU, M. Guterres organise le Sommet Action Climat le 23 septembre 2019 afin de relever les défis qui se posent. Ce sommet, Madame la présidente, selon l'ONU, constituera une étape déterminante dans la coopération politique internationale et incitera des vastes mouvements de soutien au cœur de l'économie réelle, et nous espérons que l'île Maurice sera présente dans cette conférence. S'ensuivra ensuite la Conférence des Nations Unies sur les changements climatiques de 2019, la COP 25 qui sera la 25^e Conférence des Nations Unies sur les changements climatiques qui se tiendra au Chili, du 2 au 13 décembre 2019.

Madame la présidente, la conférence devait initialement se tenir au Brésil en novembre 2019, mais le Président brésilien a annoncé que le Brésil se retirait en novembre 2018, affirmant que c'était pour des raisons économiques, mais tout le monde devine la vraie raison.

Le changement climatique présente des défis uniques pour les petits États insulaires en développement. Les difficultés **que rencontrent** des petits États pour faire face efficacement aux impacts du changement climatique sont exacerbées en raison de leur petite zone géographique, de leur isolement et de leur exposition.

Les défis du développement associés à l'élévation du niveau de la mer, à la modification des régimes de précipitations et aux ondes de tempête menacent d'inverser les progrès accomplis dans ces pays, et même à l'Ile Maurice.

Ce sont pour ces raisons précisément que le gouvernement mauricien avait accueilli en 2005 la Conférence des Nations Unies sur les *SIDS* et qui avait abouti à la Déclaration de Maurice. Et cette conférence était présidée par le Premier ministre d'alors, l'honorable Béranger. Par la suite, le gouvernement avait pris plusieurs initiatives pour la mise en place d'un *Early Warning System* pour les tsunamis, mais, malheureusement, aucune suite ne fut donnée après 2005.

Non, Madame la présidente, tout cela est bien loin des préoccupations de l'heure du gouvernement. Actuellement, la priorité c'est avancer dans Métro. C'est, donc, une occasion ratée du gouvernement qui aurait dû venir avec un projet plus ambitieux, qui tiendrait compte des préoccupations climatiques.

Pour en revenir sur ce projet de loi, nous ne comprenons pas l'empressement du gouvernement à enfoncer une porte déjà ouverte avec ce projet bâclé. Y a-t-il anguille sous roche ? En tout cas, déjà, la section 10 conférant des pouvoirs d'intervention au ministre soulève beaucoup d'interrogations, et on se demande si l'indépendance de cette institution n'est pas ainsi menacée. Ce n'est pas nous qui le disons, mais il y a aussi des anciens directeurs de département de la météorologie, mais aussi certains hauts techniciens qui sont à la retraite, qui se sont exprimés à travers la presse et ailleurs.

En parcourant le site Internet du *Mauritius Meteorological Services*, Madame la présidente, je suis tombé sur une *provisional legislation* qui fait référence à un *National Meteorological Service*. C'est sur le site de la météo - et je ne vais pas entrer pas dans les

détails de cette législation - parle des responsabilités, de l'interprétation de cette loi, du pouvoir du directeur.

Mais je me demande comment un tel document, truffé de fautes, peut se retrouver sur un site officiel. Je demanderai aux techniciens d'aller voir et de nous informer. À moins que quelqu'un a laissé des traces d'un plan ourdi depuis longtemps avec un but précis.

J'ai évoqué, Madame la présidente, plus tôt l'urgence de l'action en faveur du climat et sans nul doute, les services météorologiques à travers le monde ont été appelés à développer de nouveaux indicateurs afin de *monitor* l'impact du dérèglement climatique.

La vie sur terre dépend du climat et une intime relation s'est établie entre le progrès et le climat. On réalise l'ampleur de la crise climatique aujourd'hui en visionnant les dramatiques images de la fonte des glaciers et de ces ours polaires affamés qui ne laissent aucun être humain indifférent.

Notre météo nationale, Madame la présidente, est, donc, appelée à être aux avant-postes, non seulement pour développer ces nouveaux indicateurs, mais surtout gérer des conditions climatiques extrêmes impliquant la sécurité civile et une coordination avec plusieurs services de l'État dont la force policière.

Je ne vais pas être méchant, Madame la présidente, la météo nationale s'est retrouvée sous la tutelle du ministère de l'Environnement quelques années de cela, lors du passage de *bal kouler* dans ce ministère. Ce dernier, friand de l'atmosphère des *Ops Room*, se permettant même d'aller observer les nuages de plus près en hélicoptère, se voyait en chef des opérations, évidemment sous les feux des projecteurs, lors de ces moments de crise, et le gouvernement d'alors, à l'époque, avait cédé à ses caprices.

Et voilà que le gouvernement s'entête toujours dans cette voie alors que logiquement un tel service essentiel et stratégique aurait dû être placé sous l'ombrelle du bureau du Premier ministre et de la Sécurité intérieure.

Je pense que le gouvernement est très mal inspiré par rapport à cette démarche et je souhaite que le tir soit rectifié. Le changement climatique impose de nouveaux défis sur les services météorologiques nationaux et surtout leur indépendance opérationnelle est vitale.

L'histoire de Météo Maurice est riche de plus de deux siècles. Selon les informations obtenues du site Internet du *Mauritius Meteorological Services*, elle remonterait aux

Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences, 1733-1754, sur les cyclones ayant affecté l'île Maurice et la Réunion.

C'est en 1774 qu'une station météorologique est installée à Pamplémousses et c'est M. Céré, directeur du jardin botanique, qui commence les observations météorologiques. Le premier observatoire public, commandé en 1861 par le Colonel Llyod, ingénieur du gouvernement, fut installé sur le quai de Port-Louis. L'observation du temps était une fonction secondaire par rapport aux observations plus urgentes d'éléments magnétiques et la détermination du temps pour les résidents et les navires faisant escale à Maurice.

Cette riche histoire, qui débute en 1774, avec l'utilisation des premiers instruments de mesures du XVII^e siècle, dont le baromètre et le thermomètre, se poursuit jusqu'à la réception de la première image satellite à la station météorologique de Vacoas en 1961, et encore maintenant avec le radar de Trou aux Cerfs, dont nous-mêmes, nous avons posé pas mal des questions depuis plusieurs années et maintenant, c'est opérationnel.

Et derrière cette histoire, Madame la présidente, technologie extraordinaire, il y a l'histoire extraordinaire des hommes et des femmes. De quoi en faire un musée sur l'histoire du climat dans cette région.

C'est pourquoi je voudrais avant de terminer, Madame la présidente, cet après-midi, rendre hommage à ces hommes et ces femmes, qui au fil des décennies, ont assuré un service jour et nuit - je parle du département de la météo - peu importe les conditions météorologiques, toujours prêts à leurs postes, loin de leurs familles, au plus fort des cyclones, ici et ailleurs, pour observer constamment les interactions entre la température, la pression barométrique, l'humidité, la lumière du soleil, afin de nous prévenir de tout danger. Leur dévouement a certainement permis de sauver des vies, des biens et des récoltes.

Leurs tâches seront à l'avenir encore plus compliquées et il va sans dire que la formation des cadres du département de la météo est vitale. Je souhaite que la météo nationale puisse à l'avenir accorder des bourses aux étudiants de la filière scientifique pour poursuivre leurs études avancées en climatologie, afin de permettre à cette institution de répondre aux nouveaux défis, et cette institution est respectée par la population.

En guise de conclusion, Madame la présidente, j'inviterai le gouvernement à réaliser l'importance vitale de la météo nationale dans cette conjoncture et de faire passer l'intérêt du pays avant l'égoïsme ministériel, mais je suis sûr que la tâche incombera un nouveau gouvernement issu des urnes prochainement pour légiférer en faveur du climat.

Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. François!

(4.52 p.m.)

Mr J. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, allow me to start my contribution on this Meteorological Services Bill (No. XXVIII of 2019) by quoting Pope François from his speech last Monday, and I quote where he said –

“Mauritius must work for an integral ecological conversion. A conversion that seeks not only to avoid terrible climatic phenomena or extreme natural catastrophes, but also to promote a change in the way we live, so that economic growth can really benefit everyone, without the risk of causing ecological catastrophes or serious social crises.”

Madam Speaker, this Bill is greatly important and timely as it is intended to ensure the monitoring, control and development of sound and scientific meteorological services, response to new trends in the area by fulfilling international obligations and introducing international best practices as per clauses 4 (e) and (f).

Government is right in transforming the Mauritius Meteorological Services into a sustainable and efficient services, which will surely increase people confidence in the weather forecasting to respond to user needs, to protect and save life and property.

This Bill is allowing the MMS not to operate in isolation, but in a coordinated international observation system through a combined effort of World Meteorological Organisations. Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agaléga, Chagos, St. Brandon, geographical location today makes us extremely vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards which pose major challenges for the development, aspirations of our people. Madam Speaker, I am still alarmed by the severe Cyclones Gelena and Joaninha that hit Rodrigues.

Today, we require more climate change information services as a means, especially to support the agro-industry sector to manage climate change risks and provide an opportunity to build the resilience of our agriculture towards both droughts and floodings. With the high probability of future extreme weather events, it is mandatory that the Mauritius Meteorological Services continue modernising the meteorological observing, forecasting and warning technology to expand its services in order to effectively achieve its mission. And

here, Madam Speaker, this must be achieved step by step through strategic investments in service delivery information and improvement to meet our evolving information and communication technology and diversifying societal needs. As per clause 5 of the Mauritius Meteorological Services will act as the National Tsunami Warning Centre for Mauritius. It is worth noting that the earlier warning system of the Services is very effective for cyclone warning, and today, the Meteorological

Services must continue to intensify its involvement with the community at large for preparedness for weather impacts, be it for tsunami, cyclone, flooding, together with a natural National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre. In fact, clauses 5(j) and (k) deal with research and investigation for the advancement of meteorology and on climate change. And here, I have to say that research components such as meteorology, climatology, hydrology, water concerns and environmental assessment will surely influence Government policy for sustainable development. Madam Speaker, I have to retaliate again that Parliament needs to establish a Parliamentary Sustainable Development Goals Caucus to promote the 17 SDGs goals, surely UN and IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) will support us in that endeavour.

Madam Speaker, one national matter which is of great concern to me is air quality monitoring which must absolutely avoid a situation of poor air quality. It must be closely monitored with corrective steps taken where necessary and one may not forget the future advancement in meteorological data capture by our Nanosatellite which is to be launched shortly.

Madam Speaker, let me say a few words in direct relation to Rodrigues. As I said, I am still alarmed by the Cyclones Gelena and Joaninha, and today, allow me to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and the Chief Commissioner to come up with a New Housing Scheme to support the vulnerable people in Rodrigues. Rodrigues needs to embark in Applied Meteorology that must be absolutely enlarged in the local context. Why I said so, because today, if you need to have some archives data from the Meteo, one has to write to Meteo Vacoas. It takes too long. Rodrigues needs to have specialised forecaster at full time. I have to say, and for the record, along with the many drain projects being implemented by NDU under my leadership, today Rodrigues, through LDA, has a digital elevation model that can be used in preparedness and responsive plans against natural disasters by the Rodrigues National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre.

The Meteorological Station at Pointe Canon, Madam Speaker, requires substantial avenues for modernisation. This firstly applies for a review of highly trained and qualified human resources capable of handling cutting edge science and technology.

Madam Speaker: Hon. François, please!

Mr François: Yes, Madam.

Madam Speaker: Hon. François, I am giving you some latitude to expand on the Bill, but I would request you to come to the specific clauses of the Bill, please.

Mr François: Of course, Madam. Why I said so, this is very important. I am relating Rodrigues, situating the position of Rodrigues Meteo Station with regard to the context of a National Meteorological Services.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. François. I will give you some latitude to expand on the Bill, I have said this, but then, come to the specific clauses also of the Bill.

Mr François: Okay. What I was going to say, Madam, the Mauritius Meteorological Services need to have data, need to have weather information, and basically those information are being captured from Rodrigues. What I am saying is that we need qualified person thereat. And today, let me extrapolate to say it, and I seize this opportunity to humbly make a request. There is a Diploma course in Meteorology being made available to Meteorological Technicians here in Mauritius. What I want to say is that this be extended to those Technicians in Rodrigues. And even further, it is very important that those Senior Observers/ Technicians gathering information and data for the National Meteorological Services; they need to be encouraged to seek Advanced Diploma and University degrees, and surely Government will have to finance and support this so that they can be specialised in Radar Meteorology, in Satellite Meteorology, in Numerical Data Modelling. Moreover, Madam, those officers will have to play an important role in school education and the community sensitisation mainly on climate change. This is very important. Being given its smallness and geographical factors, Rodrigues is in a position to initiate meteorological data project in school, as it is done by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in America where students can explore real time, pressing environmental issues, such as coral bleaching, water quality, ocean acidification, sea level rise and development solving skills employed by scientists.

Madam Speaker, I will conclude, but it is important to position Rodrigues, because Rodrigues is very strategic in its geographical position for Mauritius, even with regard to the international organisation.

(Interruptions)

Yes! We recently heard of so many earthquakes recorded in the vicinity of Rodrigues.

And, Madam Speaker, let me tell you, there was a seismometer installed at Citronnelle with a direct network to Pointe Canon Weather Station but today this seismometer has been relocated in a cave on a private property and all the data for this seismometer are being directly transferred to the *Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris* and the Rodrigues Meteo, they don't have any direct access to read from the data of the seismometer. And it is very important that today, even the Vacoas Meteorological Station can get access to those information.

Madam Speaker, Rodrigues depends on the Vacoas Meteorological Station for forecast, as I said, and synoptic data. I note sometimes there are inconsistencies with regard to forecast and calculated information as regards to the state of the sea, of the ocean in Rodrigues. Madam Speaker, ocean and marine meteorology monitoring insofar as it is concerned, I will propose that weather buoys be positioned in the vicinity of Rodrigues. I will also plead that a live national weather network be established between Rodrigues and Vacoas for all real time data transmission and reception. One may say that Rodrigues Meteorological Department is in isolation by the actual system despite Rodrigues strategic geographical location and I believe - I will nearly conclude -that Rodrigues could become an important climate change world research laboratory or a world research centre to face the challenges of climate change in the future. This will help to develop a pragmatic resilience approach for climate change issues such as microclimate, as I said, coral bleaching, water quality, acidic rain, water, ocean acidification, sea level rise, air quality monitoring from the wind coming from Australasia polluters despite we are not a big polluter. You will remember in 2004, tsunami waves travelled through Rodrigues before reaching Mauritius and it is important to monitor those today.

Madam Speaker, I concur with the National Determined Contribution of Mauritius in response to COP 21 Paris Agreement of 2015 which patriotically hon. Dayal and I presented and defended in Paris.

Let me conclude by congratulating the hon. Minister Sinatambou and expressing my support to this Bill which is a step in the right direction in terms of weather prediction, disaster management, credible information in accordance with world meteorological standards and procedures. My wish is that the Mauritius Meteorological Services becomes a top centre point reference with regard to Meteorological Information and Data Dissemination and reception.

I am done and I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed! No, hon. Rutnah, can I know how long you will take?

Mr Rutnah: I'll be less than 10 minutes.

Madam Speaker: Okay then, we will carry on with you and then...

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker,...

Madam Speaker: Is that a point of order?

Dr. Boolell: I want to raise a point of explanation. I will seek your indulgence as it has been agreed with the Whip that I would intervene in the place of hon. Mohamed, who is on a radio programme. If you...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell, I am really sorry. Now, the list of orators is discussed between the Whips. I am in presence of the list where I have hon. Mohamed right now, then I have hon. Rutnah. I am really sorry. The Whips have to agree on this and I am not in presence of a list where the Whips have agreed on a change of turn done, hon. Dr. Boolell. So, I'll proceed with hon. Rutnah and then we will see.

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker, I assure you that I will not be more than 10 minutes, but I...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I have given my ruling. I have said already that I have the list of orators and there is no amended list, I am really sorry.

(Interruptions)

There is no amended list. You know. Hon. Baboo, you are raising an objection. You have been here for five years. You know already that when a list of orators is done, it is presented to the Chair. Now, if there is an amended, I need an amended list. I don't have an amended

list as at now. So, we will proceed. If you don't take more than 10 minutes, then I will give you, otherwise I will cut you and then we will start again.

Mr Rutnah: I am a man of my words! No more than 10 minutes! It seems that the weather is disastrous on the other side.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No comments, please!

(5.09 p.m.)

Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Madam Speaker, I will stick to the Bill and this is not a Bill that is addressing the specific issue of climate change but this Bill is addressing the issue of a regulatory framework and a legal framework of how the Meteorological Services in Mauritius should function as of now when this Bill will become law.

Madam Speaker, it is not a deniable fact that over the years, since 1733 up to now, practice has evolved and the Mauritius Meteorological Services have been operating under a working practice, a working culture but given the world where we are at the moment, history will demonstrate that the effect of climate change which needs to be predicted and sometimes when we say needs to be predicted, even the Meteorological Services know that the science of prediction is not an exact science. You may predict; it will happen; it may happen but might not happen because some other events have taken place within the parameters of nature. So, what we are seeking here is we have seen the worst kind of climatic changes in the history of the world climatology and to deal with that we have to have a modern legal framework that is going to respond and reflect reality to the threat that we are facing. Now, the object of the Bill is set out in plain English language. I will not go through it. I adopt everything that has been said during the opening speech of my very able and learned friend, the hon. Minister Sinatambou. I also adopt everything that has been said by hon. Gayan in his speech and I adopt part of what hon. François has spoken. So, I am not going to repeat and rehearse everything that has been said about Rodrigues and everything, but there is one thing that I would like to highlight, a document from the World Meteorological Services. There is a document here. It's a communication plan on Public Weather Service Activities, Responsibility of the National Meteorological Services in issuing meteorological information. This is a document that deals with how responsive State should be, and I quote –

“During the Meeting of the Subgroup on Regional Aspects of Public Weather Services, held in Bucharest, Romania (4 -7 December 2006), the sub-group requested the PWS Programme to gather information on the legislated responsibility of National Meteorological Service in issuing meteorological information, and make it available to the sub-group. The information is intended to clarify the status of the National Meteorological Service as single authorised sources for meteorological information to the users in all sectors including governmental policy makers, emergency management bodies, and the media.”

And guess what, Madam Speaker?

Out of other countries in Africa, for example, in Botswana, it is stated that a Cabinet Memorandum (2003), amongst other things, sought to establish the National Meteorological Services, including the clause: ‘Designation of the Director of Meteorological Services as the official “national authority” and authoritative voice on weather and climate. Whereas in Mauritius, with a meteorological history dating back from 1733, guess what, they observe: ‘No express provision for exclusive rights to the Met Service to issue forecasts and/or warnings’. And this has been repeated twice in different aspects of meteorological activities. And today, when the hon. Minister is bringing this Bill to set the legal framework to ensure that we protect our people, our citizens, then you hear the Leader of Opposition qualifying this Bill as a light weight Bill...

(Interruptions)

Light weight Bill from a light weight Opposition! This is a heavy weight Government...

(Interruptions)

We are going to ensure that our people, our children, our citizens are protected so that they can take appropriate precautionary measure when they hear about a cyclone, about a storm, about any sort of natural disaster that is going to approach our island. When you hear the Opposition - we have not had the opportunity to hear what hon. Shakeel Mohamed, who was supposed to speak before me, had to say - they make believe that they could conquer the blue sky. When I heard the hon. Leader of Opposition speak, when I heard hon. Bhagwan speaking, it reminded me of the Australian rock group called the Crowded House, the group lead by Neil and Tim Finn, in which they said: ‘Even Julius Caesar and the entire Roman Empire could not conquer the blue sky ...’.

(Interruptions)

The Minister also will not be able to conquer the blue sky, like hon. Gayan is saying. That's why everywhere you go, you take the weather with you. When you take the weather with you, you take the appropriate precaution with you. And today, this Minister, this Government, through the leadership of our Prime Minister, is providing this legal framework so as we would be able to prevent what was, up to now, unpreventable. So, you call this light weight? You call this not seriousness? I am not going to talk about Bahamas, about the other issues that were raised because these have been responded. I am ever so grateful to you for having listened to me.

Thank you.

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

At 5.17 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.04 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Benydin!

Mr T. Benydin (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Madam Speaker. With the vagaries and inconsistencies of the weather, the Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill comes at an opportune time as the Mauritius Meteorological Services will become the sole official authority responsible for monitoring the general weather and climate conditions and will operate within a regulatory framework with wider functions and powers to better contribute to the welfare and safety of the general public, including safety of maritime and aeronautical navigation, monitoring tsunami, conducting research on climate change, disseminate relevant information on meteorological issues and so on.

Madam Speaker, generally when you meet somebody, a parent, a close relative, a friend, the first thing you would like to ask him/her is: 'how are you?' And if somebody is living a bit far, you will ask him/her: 'how is the weather?' So, health and weather together are the most important aspects in our daily lives. As such, these issues are of paramount importance to the population and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development should be congratulated for introducing this Bill to the House.

Madam Speaker, I would like to respond a bit to what the Leader of the Opposition said, for example, with regard to the work of the PPSs because he referred to me. For example, in Constituency No. 18, I can reassure him because at the time when he was the Deputy Prime Minister, together with him we effected various site visits and now if he goes

and checks, he will see that all the works where together we were, all these works have been performed, have been realised. And the greatest work that has been done is near the Candos Stadium, Hillary Blood Avenue. There was even a Parliamentary Question last year on this issue and this is one of the biggest achievements regarding drains that we have performed in Constituency No. 18 and also I think even hon. Dr. Boolell will agree if they have a walk, for example, at Berthaud Avenue, together with the PPS Aliphon who is responsible for Constituency No. 19, he will see the works including the good work that has been performed regarding the roads, the drains that are being constructed. So, we are working and if he said that PPSs are well paid and almost doing nothing, then would we be saying that, for example, when he was in Government, we had two PPSs from his own party, who are good friends of mine, hon. Abbas Mamode and hon. Thierry Henry. So, would he like to mean that these two PPSs were doing nothing and they are paid for nothing? So, at the same time, you must look into the mirror. You just don't say whatever you want just to defend yourself. And then also we know that the Leader of the Opposition is paid to talk, he is paid to criticise, but we, PPSs and even Ministers, we are paid to work and we toil night and day to promote the welfare of the citizens of this country. So, I think that we don't accept that we are being paid for nothing. I am not defending myself. If you go to Constituency Nos. 15 and 18, just have a look at the projects that have been realised and if no project has been realised, I am prepared to refund to Government the allowances that have been paid since I assumed office.

(Interruptions)

Thank you for listening to me and for allowing me to refute these arguments.

Madam Speaker, people are persistently ignoring the effects of climate change and very few listen to weather forecast even before leaving their homes for work to be done either inland or on the sea or in the air. More dangerously, Madam Speaker, some amateurs are making it a hobby to forecast the weather by themselves. Some people even acknowledge the accuracy of their guesses and God knows how exposed they become by relying on such guess works, more so people like fishermen and planters who are exposed to vagaries of the weather.

It is a fact that as an island State, we are vulnerable to high susceptibility to frequent and intense tropical cyclones and to associated storm surge, drought, tsunamis and more intense rainfall patterns which can impact negatively on various sectors of our economy,

namely agriculture, tourism, fish skills, coral bleaching and degradation of marine without losing sight of damages to our beaches and coastal ecosystem.

Madam Speaker, let us take, for example, as a reminder the 30 March 2013 flashfloods. All of a sudden and for only a few hours, most of the regions were flooded, not to say under water so much so that we had around 7 deaths, an unprecedented event in our country. The then meteorological services could not foresee the danger. On the other hand, it happened all of a sudden because we did not have advanced technology in the meteorological sector.

This Bill, therefore, is an opportunity to draw the attention of the whole population that meteorological services cannot remain a mere agency that monitors the general weather conditions or forecasts the weather situations but shall be also a service that must have a say in all matters that can affect our climate or that can cause greenhouse effects and disturbances in our climate.

As a signatory of the Kyoto Protocol, a Treaty that commits State parties to reduce greenhouse emissions and global warming caused by the emissions of carbon dioxide, commonly known as CO₂, let me remind the House that one of the main objectives of the Protocol is to reduce the greenhouse-gas emission that causes global warming. Global warming can endanger most of the living species including human beings. Extreme weather conditions can cause damage to property and infrastructure that can also cripple our economies and adverse negatively on the path of sustainable development. Just imagine if the temperature of sea waters or our rivers increases by few more degrees, what will happen to our aqua lives, to coral reefs, tiny single shell plants. Madam Speaker, it is said that 60 per cent of humanity live in coastal areas and therefore share vulnerability to climate change and sea rise level.

Having said that, let me come back to the introduction of this Bill in this august Assembly. Madam Speaker, we have set forward essential measures to mitigate their effects. Only at the NDU, contested by the Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, we are injecting billions of rupees in drain works and in retaining walls by riversides to prevent flooding as measures not only to limit material damages that can affect the country but to save lives, human beings and animals as well.

In addition, this Government has even set up a Land Drainage Authority to be responsible to monitor drain works throughout the country with the main objectives to address flood-prone regions in the country.

There is also a National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre to monitor weather conditions during cyclones, torrential rains and so on. Regular simulation activities are carried out at regional levels to sensitise people of possible risks lying ahead so that people are aware of dangers and how to react in such situations.

The operation of the meteo antenna – the speaker who preceded me has referred to the radar - the Doppler Radar Weather Observation System at Trou aux Cerfs - is a plus in our endeavours to equip Mauritius with the state-of-the art technologies that can even predict tsunamis, lightning and thunders.

Through radar technology, weather can be better predicted and even help to measure the exact amount of rainfall and precipitation. Weather predictions are essential to enable planning of activities. For instance, farmers need them to know when seeds can be sown and when crop harvesting can be effected. It also requires a monitoring body under which all matters pertaining to weather conditions and public safety be operated under a regulatory framework thus the establishment of the Mauritius Meteorological Services.

Air flights also can be scheduled in accordance with weather conditions. It also guides us on what we should wear when it is cold. Perhaps, if you are living in an apartment of 12 to 15 storeys, on the top, you feel a bit warm, but when you go down, you will feel cold or when you are up it was not raining, but by the time you are down, it is raining. So, the Meteorological Services will provide us with the relevant information and help us also not to fall sick because we know how to get dressed whether we should wear warmer dresses when it is cold and when it is raining.

Madam Speaker, the establishment of this institution should also be fully backed by a legal framework - I have already said - so that it remains the sole authority responsible to issue communiqués on climatic conditions. No other authorised Department or citizen should encroach this prerogative.

So, the establishment of this framework should also be synonymous to reliable performance from its officers backed with the state-of-the-art technology in the field of weather conditions and forecasts.

Time has come, Madam Speaker, to restore the credibility of this agency upon which people can rely. We take good note also of the well-defined functions of participation in the activities of the World Meteorological Organization and coordination of the international tsunami warning system and the activities of the Intergovernmental Coordination Group of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System.

We must not forget, Madam Speaker, that errors in forecasts are also synonymous to losing human lives on space navigating bodies like airplanes and ships. I already said that there is no harm to let ourselves be guided by legislation under which foreign meteorological services are operating. I think this can help also.

Time has come, Madam Speaker, to set up also a national law on all matters pertaining to meteorological services in terms of climate change and environmental issues.

Madam Speaker, it has become imperative to set up a special court to deal with matters pertaining to meteorological services and climate change related issues. This court, I consider, should be given the full powers to deal with people who are in breach of established laws pertaining to climate change. For example, during cyclonic conditions and even under class III, people are still driving their vehicles and expose themselves to numerous dangers and the State has to spend on them in case of accidents.

Furthermore, while under cyclonic conditions, people are not only driving, but they are also diving and swimming in the sea. These are irresponsible behaviours that need to be sanctioned by law. More dangerously, there is also electricity cut. There is no power and because we are Mauritians, we like to help each other what happens? Another neighbour illegally can give a power supply to his neighbour. This can also be dangerous to public safety. I think that these are issues that should be addressed.

At the level of the NDU, Madam Speaker, very often, we initiate projects. We see that people have either diverted the normal course of a river which, in itself, is an offence under the law or have backfilled the river to construct their houses. Some people even construct on drains which cause obstruction to the normal flow of water.

Examples can be numerous to showcase the irresponsible actions that impact on our lives. Emission of smoke from industries, gas emission from vehicles, dumping in river courses...

Madam Speaker: That has nothing to do with the Bill.

Mr Benydin: Yes; setting fires....

Madam Speaker: Come back to the main object of the Bill.

Mr Benydin: Yes. Setting fires to forests, discharging waste water in rivers or sea - all these, Madam Speaker, are wakeup calls for the establishment of the regulatory framework to urge people to comply with obligations, to protect the environment and to be more responsible in their action.

I am going to conclude. Madam Speaker, the debate on the issue of climate change and its impact on the environment can be even longer, but my speech has been an attempt to highlight the main issues and consequently, justify the introduction of the Bill with a view to providing the regulatory framework for the operation of the Mauritius Meteorological Services.

Madam Speaker, I would like to end here with the hope that such a regulatory body can help to mitigate irresponsible actions of our social actors and also mitigate the impact of climate change on our society.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(6.20 p.m.)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, since days immemorial, no person, no entity, despite the constant breakthroughs in technology, has been able to ward off threats from natural disaster. More so, a small country like Mauritius, with its microclimatic condition and different soil type, certainly will not be able to wage war on the force of nature. What we can do however is to inform, through information that is going to be disseminated, impress upon people that precautionary measures have to be taken, that there can be harm reduction and, as has been stated by hon. Benydin, we can take mitigating circumstances.

What is the relevance and importance of this Bill? To provide a regulatory framework for the establishment and operation of Mauritius Meteorological Services. There was a missing link and the Minister is right, by way of legislation, to introduce this Bill to provide a regulatory framework for the establishment and operation of the MMS.

When we refer to the objects of the Mauritius Meteorological Services, one of the objects is the fulfilling of our international obligations under the Conventions of the World Meteorological Services.

If I subscribe to one of the recommendations contained in the Expert Report of the World Meteorological Organisation submitted in November 2008, it referred to the installation of a new weather radar system in Mauritius. Now, this is the very essence of this Bill.

I would go as far as to say that there is an implied term and condition of the agreement between the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Government of Mauritius. That Agreement was signed in July 2015 and provided for a non-refundable grant of approximately Rs390 m. for the acquisition of a new radar system. Some may argue, Madam Speaker, that there is no free lunch, and I will come to this.

I am not going to repeat what has been stated loud and clear by hon. friends who have intervened on this Bill from both sides of the House. We know that there is a symbiotic relationship between climate change and weather forecast. But it is good to recall how things evolve and why, despite criticisms levelled against scientific officers and technicians of the

Mauritius Meteorological Services, it stands to reason that their competence far outweighs some of the criticisms that have been levelled against them. I would like to pay tribute to a visionary gentleman in the field of meteorological services. I have in mind late Mr Paddiah who had the full support of the then Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. The first radar was introduced in 1976 with the assistance of the US Government and, prior to the installation, Mr Paddiah, then Director of the Meteorological Services sent technical and scientific officers to undergo intensive training for two years at the manufacturing plant.

Madam Speaker, the Meteorological Services was set up in Vacoas in 1953, if my memory serves me right, not too far from HMS Mauritius, and was under the direct responsibility of the colonial secretary. The reason is simple: because it had access to weather services and other relevant information from overseas. And after independence, the Ministry of External Communications was created and the Meteorological Services became more focus, with wider functions, to provide weather forecast, advisories, warnings for the welfare and safety of the general public, and for the protection and safety of maritime and aeronautical navigation. And the services were more responsive to the economic needs of the community, that is, the interest of planters, fishers and those operating in the services sector.

Madam Speaker, as I have stated, there is no technology that can fight the force of nature to diminish the intensity of a hurricane, tsunami or earthquake. I will refer to an excellent article which was written in *l'Express* of 19 August 2016 by Mr Abbas Currimjee. Let me quote and refer to the opening paragraph of his article –

“Given the scientific evidence, I’ve become convinced that as a nation, we have let our guard down and are now sleepwalking into a dreadful situation. Over the last months I’ve spoken with some of the top Mauritian experts in engineering, infrastructure, weather and disaster management, both on the government payroll and in the private sector, both on the record and off. The picture that has emerged is scary: in the worst – but statistically not unlikely – scenario, we could lose power for several weeks, the water system could be affected temporarily, food supply chain thrown out of gear, public buildings could be damaged and out of use and the airport – our fastest link with the outside world – could be compromised. Just as bad, if less immediately visible, our internet communication with the outside world could become blocked, the mainframe computers holding all our data – banking, government social security, etc. – could become corrupted.”

Madam Speaker, these are salient facts and they constantly remind us that we cannot be caught off guard. And it is good to ask one simple question. Why is it that since 2002, we have been spared of severe cyclones, yet we have suffered major flash floods? In a PQ which the Prime Minister replied to, he stated very clearly what was done in 2008 as a result of the flash flood. The then Government sought the expertise of the World Meteorological Organisation, an entity under the umbrella of the United Nations, to assist the capacity of the MMS in regard to flash flood forecasting and to make recommendation as appropriate.

Madam Speaker, in February 2009, the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme was sought to carry out a feasibility study for the provision of a new radar system. This request for assistance, unfortunately, did not materialise. A request was made to JICA for financing both the feasibility study and the procurement of a new radar system. Even the French authorities support was sought in January 2011 to advise on the specification for the procurement of a new radar system, as well as on the suitability of the present location of the Trou aux Cerfs site to accommodate the new system. I recall, at the TICAD V, the then Prime Minister had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Abe, and the issue that was high on the agenda was climate change and weather forecasting, following which the Japanese Government agreed to disburse almost Rs400 m. for the Government of Mauritius to acquire state-of-the-art radar system, Madam Speaker. Mauritius, as a middle income country, did not qualify for such funding, but the then Prime Minister put the case of Mauritius across forcefully and reminded our Japanese friend that, like Japan, we are also frequent victims of hurricanes or cyclones and, lately, there was even high wave, reminding us of what happened in Japan and in Indonesia.

Madam Speaker, the nation can rest assured that reliable and predictable information on weather forecast is a reality. India and EU have enabled the Mauritius Meteorological Services to analyse photo satellite pictures received from geostationary satellite every 15 minutes to track and monitor the trajectory of weather conditions. The scientific officer of the Meteorological Services can forecast with high precision from the state-of-the-art technology, the scale, the scope, depth, intensity, and time of occurrence of natural calamity.

Of course, Madam Speaker, Japan, like any of the powerful nations, does not believe in free lunch. You should expect that data collected on weather forecast or any other relevant data will be relayed to a main server in Japan for good measure. The radar system, Madam Speaker, is a lifeline and it does not have to operate on a 24-hour/7-day basis.

That will be triggered for good measure to give reliable and precise information. There is no need to keep people guessing if they have to run for cover, if sports events would be held or not. With a breakthrough in technology, if a tennis match on the court is stopped, the referee can, with precision, say at what time the game will resume. This is largely due to constant breakthrough in technology and, as I have stated earlier, the radar system which is being installed in Trou aux Cerfs is, indeed, the state-of-the-art technology. Of course, weather forecasting, conveying the right information, is not an end in itself. Where the bulletin has to be broadcast *ad verbatim*, the information should not be interpreted by those whose comments are not warranted. Uncertainty can, indeed, sap confidence. The reply given to PQ No. B/669 by the then Prime Minister is revealing and highlighted measures taken by MMS to be a service of repute. The service is essential and has to be second to none. It is precisely the reason why it should operate under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office. It was wrong of this Government to transfer this essential service to the Ministry of Environment, and it was done at a time to satisfy the eccentricity of a Minister who became a risk of disaster from a worn out regime.

Madam Speaker, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act has its *raison d'être* and is a regulatory framework from a unit which existed since 2013 and gained momentum with facilities granted to the existing unit, which operated under the aegis of the Prime Minister. It has, indeed, a symbiotic relationship with the Mauritius Meteorological Services. I expect the Construction Industry Development Board and the Land Drainage Committee to work closely with the MMS.

Let me again, refer to the article which was published in *l'Express*, written by Mr Currimjee. He referred to building regulations and codes.

“A building code, building control or building regulations is a set of rules that specify minimum standards for constructed objects such as [buildings](#) and [not building structures](#). The main purpose of building codes is to protect public safety, health and general welfare as they relate to the construction and occupancy of buildings and structures. The building code becomes law of a particular jurisdiction when formally enacted by the appropriate governmental or private authority.”

This article made excellent reading with respect to national disasters and calamities.

Madam Speaker, as a Small Island Development State, our level of preparedness to face the vagaries of climatic conditions should constantly be reviewed. There are lessons to

be learnt from the disaster which hit Bahamas, and I would like to ask the Minister when was the last time that the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Committee met.

Madam Speaker, much comment has been made with respect to the Short Title. I agree with what has been said, that this definition should be in line with the first Article of our Constitution. And in clause 5(r), I propose that after the word 'from', the words 'recognise global tsunami providers' be inserted.

Madam Speaker, much comment has been made with respect to paragraph 10, but my attention was drawn by hon. Shakeel Mohamed earlier with provision which exists in legislation in Singapore, where the powers are conferred upon Minister and the powers are limited to public governance. Governance with respect to institution, governance with respect to delivery, but the Minister cannot be seen to act with a double-edged sword. He cannot be seen to give instruction to the Director of the Meteorological Services, despite what hon. Gayan has stated that he has to act within the provision of the legislation. But it is too general, it is too wide, and I expect Minister Sinatambou to adhere strictly to the provisions of public governance which, unfortunately, is not in our legislation.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude by saying that the success of the Bill will rest upon regulations that are going to be drafted and I expect when these regulations are drafted, they will be circulated, because we are talking of wealth and safety of the general public, protection and safety of maritime and aeronautical navigation. I am not saying that the Bill has been rushed through, but I am sure that we have to look at all the intended and unintended consequences.

Let me conclude, Madam Speaker, by reminding all our friends that it was the previous Government which started the construction of a Multi-Complex Tsunami Building in Quatre Soeurs. It was the former Government that negotiated with Japan to acquire a state-of-the-art weather radar system. And what is true for Mauritius is equally true for the Islet of Agalega. That's why I put the question that, with respect to Agalega, there is no harm in being told that there is a radar system being installed to gather information with respect to weather forecast, a photo satellite that has to be analysed to track the trajectory of an evolving cyclone or hurricane.

Let me finish by saying, Madam Speaker, that whatever information is dispensed by our friends from the Meteorological Services, I will reiterate what I said; that information has to be *ad verbatim*. We cannot be seen or perceived to amend a bulletin or weather forecast

issued by the MMS. I think we all have to act responsibly. Although the days of the Government are numbered, I expect the Minister to act diligently. I hope he will not make the life of our friends difficult. I expect him to have a culture of restraint, although it is not an easy thing for him to do, but it is never too late to change. We all learn from past mistakes, and certainly he has a lot of ground to recover before the demise of this Government, whose days are numbered and which is a certainty.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

(6.42 p.m.)

Mr J. B. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank hon. Sinatambou, Minister of Environment and others, for introducing this piece of legislation to this House tonight and he is right in doing so, because of the changing roles of the Meteorological Services worldwide. Therefore, it is important that here also, in the Republic of Mauritius, that Meteorological Services be adequately regulated with, therefore, proper regulatory framework.

Nowadays, Madam Speaker, Meteorological Services are not only about meteorological observation, forecast and warning, but it has a big and greater role to play national-wide. Meteorology plays an important part in enhancing national security nowadays. It forms part of precautionary measures that are to be taken against weather related disasters and the exploitation of climate insofar as I have said, the national security is concerned.

And, to my opinion, national security, Madam Speaker, means ensuring that our Republic remains a safe place to live when it comes to climate variability. To continually sustain life for generation to come, therefore, in that respect, we need to have a regulatory framework to ensure that we have a competent National Meteorological Services, which is reliable in conducting meteorological activities, and it is known now, with evidence, that an increase in climate variability is present in our Republic, thereby affecting the way we live. Climate variability, as we all know, often causes precipitation where competent authorities, including meteorological services will need to act promptly to prevent immediate negative impact to human life and to the environment we live in.

Madam Speaker, tonight, I want to raise this point by contributing to that debate and to justify, of course, my appreciation to the hon. Minister of Environment for bringing this Bill to the House. It is about the social economic benefit that meteorology has on our country,

the contribution of meteorological services in ensuring by exploiting climate to the benefit of the agricultural sector. With extreme precipitation events and change in weather patterns, farmers are no longer able to think strategically on their own. Therefore, reliable meteorological services are of great importance to ensure the availability of a good information service in assisting farmers to take decisions and maintain agricultural production. What I am trying to explain is that this Bill is giving an opportunity to further regulate the meteorological services because of an increase in variation of weather conditions. We will be more and more relying on the meteorological services to ensure our socio-economic development.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, it is clear that this regulation will not only give more value to the meteorological professions, but they will have the duty of sharing information, collecting data from as far as when it was started to be recorded to now for reference and so on. What is important to this Bill is that it is not only looking to the policy aspect as service delivery, but it is also looking into the economic aspect. That is why, therefore, the Bill is so important as it will improve the service. In so doing, it will support the sustainable development progress of our country and that is my contribution to this Bill, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Selvon!

(6.48 p.m.)

Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madame la présidente, ma question est ceci : pourquoi donner au ministre tant de pouvoir pour censurer les prévisions climatiques scientifiques de la météo sous l'article 10 de ce projet de loi, car à mon avis le seul tsunami que l'honorable ministre peut aujourd'hui prédire c'est un tsunami électoral et non pas climatique.

Avec cet article 10, le projet de loi, n'est-ce pas, oui, un tsunami électoral et non pas climatique. Je répète, avec cet article 10, le projet de loi ressemble à une tentative de politisation des décisions, des conseils au public, des avis, des opinions et des avertissements émis par un service strictement scientifique.

Ainsi, si le ministre se lève le matin et voit que les grosses pluies prévues par la météo pour tôt le matin n'arrivent pas encore à 10 heures, il pourrait économiser ses litres d'eau et ses biscuits en censurant les prévisions scientifiques, bien sûr, Madame la présidente, et en

attendant le déluge ainsi sera content de ne pas avoir à donner des repas gratuits payés par son ministère.

Désormais, un avis de forte pluie, de forte chaleur, de raz de marée, de tsunamis et autres phénomènes et risques climatiques nécessitera l'approbation du ministre. Oui, Madame la présidente. Donc, une réunion du cabinet, même si on perd un temps précieux, et aussi, je ne souhaite pas des vies humaines.

Je vais me référer maintenant à un document de l'Organisation météorologique mondiale, intitulé 'Guide des pratiques', concernant les services météorologiques destinés au public, deuxième édition. Ce document donne à tous les pays des modèles d'annonces et d'avertissements où est privilégié le principe que ces bulletins doivent être envoyés d'urgence aux médias par les prévisionnistes pour une communication immédiate et directe au public.

Ici, l'objectif est peut-être de permettre au ministre de passer dix fois par jour à la télévision pour une manipulation politique de la prochaine saison des pluies et des cyclones qui arrivera en pleine campagne électorale. L'Organisation météorologique mondiale recommande que les services météorologiques nationaux donnent, je cite : dans des délais les plus brefs, des avis et des prévisions fiables et complets.

Je demande alors si ce n'est pas un processus dangereux que ces services passent par le pouvoir politique pour avoir le feu vert pour ses annonces et ses analyses du temps, les prévisions de la trajectoire des cyclones et la possibilité des *storm surges*, cela alors que les médias, l'internet, et Météo Réunion, et les services et satellites américains donnent toujours publication immédiate aux avertissements météorologiques n'ayant aucun besoin de consulter un ministre mauricien pour le faire.

D'ailleurs, ministre au pas, nous recevons directement toutes ces informations et les photos satellites météorologiques jusque sur nos téléphones portables. Cependant, il est scandaleux et inacceptable, Madame la présidente, qu'aucun scientifique mauricien ne pourra donner une interview sur un risque météorologique sans une autorisation ministérielle et on n'est pas à un scandale près. L'article 10 impose au service météo de ne pas diffuser ses analyses sans passer par le cabinet ministériel.

Heureusement que de toute façon, les Mauriciens et la presse apprendront tout par Météo Réunion et ils sont habitués déjà. En Inde et aux États-Unis, les bulletins météo sont librement et immédiatement diffusés sur l'internet et tous les autres médias sans passer par le pouvoir politique. Oui, sans passer par le pouvoir politique, et je vais donner au ministre

l'occasion de se tester lui-même par rapport à l'article 10 du projet de loi. Est-ce qu'il peut dire pourquoi le bulletin météorologique suivant devrait avoir l'aval du président des États-Unis ? Je cite : *"The National Weather Service 10 day outlook cause for below normal temperatures of the much of the stern half of the country from the eastern Great Plains to the Appalachians and from the Canadian Border to near the Gulf Coast."*

En plus, l'Organisation météorologique mondiale recommande des graphiques pour soutenir les prévisions. Je demande au ministre de préciser si les graphiques aussi doivent passer par le cabinet via le processus de censure dans l'article 10.

Pour conclure, Madame la présidente, je demande au gouvernement...

(Interruptions)

Il y a un problème?

(Interruptions)

Okay.

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please! Please, proceed with your speech.

Mrs Selvon: Pour conclure,...

(Interruptions)

J'ai tout mon temps, j'attends. Allez-y !

Pour conclure, Madame la présidente, je demande au gouvernement de préciser qu'est-ce qu'il va politiser encore après la religion, le soleil, les cyclones, la pluie, et le temps qu'il fait.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

(6.54 p.m.)

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, I must start by thanking all the Members on both sides of the House who have taken the time to share their thoughts and views on this Bill. Unfortunately, I note with some disappointment that, with all due respect to the last orator, we have at some stage fallen into derision and unnecessary exaggeration, unworthy of the seriousness which such a Bill warrants.

Just to start with, the Minister does not need this piece of legislation to pass ten times on the television, if he wanted to. So, we should be a bit serious and not go into demagoguery when we address the House especially on such a Bill as the Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill. The first thing I would like to say is something which was taken by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member who is a former Minister of Environment. The one said that this Bill came a little bit too late and the other Member said that he did not understand *l'empressement du gouvernement à venir avec un tel projet de loi*. First of all, it is not a little bit too late, that is to reply to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and it is certainly not an instance *d'empressement de la part de ce gouvernement*, to reply to hon. Bhagwan.

In fact, what this Government is doing today is catching up on what they failed to do. I have taken the liberty to go back to memory lane to see why it is that such a piece of legislation has taken so long to come before Parliament and my going back to history brought me to 16 February 2004. That was the first time that I saw a written document, going back more than 15 years ago, concerning a Bill which was substantially similar to this one.

And that was an internal document from the Director of the Meteorological Services written to the Prime Minister's Office under whose aegis the services were then. And the document from 2004 in fact followed a recommendation of the congress of the World Meteorological Organisation...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, please!

Mr Sinatambou: ... going back to 1999 which had intimated that all Meteorological Services in the world should function according to a legislative, to a legal framework. So, it is today, 20 years since this intimation came from the governing body and from the convention to which Mauritius has subscribed and which came with this recommendation that the Bill has become a reality. And 5 years later, we come to 16 February 2004, when the leader of hon. Bhagwan was then the Prime Minister. I read from this letter dated 16 February 2004. I quote –

“The Meteorological Services have attempted to draft an Act which will help consolidate its related activities over the territories of the Republic, in the atmosphere over land and at sea. This Act aims at providing clear guidelines for its activities, namely the collection of weather-related data, of dissemination of extreme weather warnings and others.” Unquote.

And it is today, 15 years later, that we are finally going to have the Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill. Seriously, I think hon. Bhagwan is misconceived to speak of *empressement*. 15 years later unless our notion - yes, it is a question of opinion clearly, if for you 15 years is a quick thing, for us, you are certainly late. That was the first point.

Then, I got to see another document which explains that when we are being told that we are a little bit too late, either we are mistaken or we are purely and simply in the realm of hypocrisy. I have a document dated 11 June 2007 and the hon. Leader of Opposition was then a Minister in Government and the letter this time is written by the acting Director of the Meteorological Services, addressed again to the Prime Minister's Office and I read –

“Please find attached a revised version of the proposed Act related to the Meteorological Services.”

And I read further –

“It will also be noted that the Director of Audit has alluded in his report to the absence of any legal framework.”

So, now we are told in that letter that there is a duty if the Director of Audit himself alludes to the absence of a legal framework for those services. We are now in 2007 and they have got the audacity of telling us that we are coming too late. I do not think that such people deserve to get into power if that is their notion of lateness in this country.

After 11 June 2007, again in 2008, we are told that auditors who are examining the service drew the attention of the department to the necessity of the Meteorology Act. We are in 2008, more than 10 years ago, nothing came. In 2011 ...

(Interruptions)

I do not criticise, I shut up!

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking!

Mr Sinatambou: I shut up then, I do not criticise.

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking I have said because crosstalking can only bring disorder to this House.

Mr Sinatambou: When I know there is something wrong, I do not criticise the other person.

(Interruptions)

Yes, but I am not saying then that you are late. You are saying it. You were also Ministers.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I have said no crosstalking. So, you should not engage in any type of conversation with the Opposition and I ask this side of the House also not to make comments.

Mr Sinatambou: So, here we are again, and this is so wrong that after you failed to do your job, you come and complain when the other does his and does yours at the same time. That is the point which is being made, not who was the Minister when. It is that when someone fails to do his job when he had to it, he should say thank you when someone else does his job. That is the point and I go back now to 2011.

In 2011, this time, I was not a Minister. The Audit Office of this country reported that the legal framework for the Meteorological Services should be put in place urgently. This is 08 July 2011.

You can therefore understand, Madam Speaker, how one can only see how wrong people saying that it is too little, too late are, and how it is wrong to speak of *empressement*...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Sinatambou: Now, I go one step further because the intimation from the congress comes in 1999 and the first Bill I saw goes back to 2004. At long last, I came across a copy of a draft Meteorological Services Bill dated 02 August 2011. Now, this is dated 2011 and it is amended in 2012. In 2012, when it is amended, it is good to know that what is today termed as a light weight legislation, was going to be brought by no less than the then hon. Prime Minister. So, today, when in the Opposition it is called light weight but when they are in power, it is to be brought by no less than the Leader of the House, the one who runs the country. It is amusing to see how the tunes change as time goes on.

So, I believe that what one should realise is that, therefore, from 1991 to 2012, for more than 10 years, *que dirai-je, ils avaient tergiversé pendant des années et des années. Donc, ils ne devraient pas voir un empressement aujourd'hui. Ils devraient constater que nous faisons ce qui doit être fait.*

(Interruptions)

I can't hear them. But, say it louder!

So, I think this settles the matter as to whether it is inopportune to bring this Bill today, that it is certainly not too late and there is certainly no *empressement*. This Bill is long overdue and, in fact, this Government is filling a vacuum by actually filling a gap in our legislative framework and for that I believe we should not be hypocritical and criticise.

The second point which I would like to make, Madam Speaker, is those arguments - I would not say silly, no, but I would say unwarranted arguments about Clause 10. First of all, let me start with the Bill which is dated 2013, therefore, which came from a Government where the Labour Party and the PMSD were together, because Clause 10 there, about the powers of the Minister, again, allows the Minister to give directions like in this particular Bill, of a general character, again when the Minister considers it to be in the public interest. At no time, and I think this is totally uncalled for, is there any *question de pouvoir de censure*, at no time is there a question of *tentative de politisation*, at no time is there anything *qui nécessitera l'approbation du ministre* and at no time is there *le besoin de consulter le ministre*. It's his power to give directions in the public interest in a manner which is not inconsistent with this Act. Why this *hoo-ha*?

(Interruptions)

Yes! We are nearly on the verge of hysteria, not only in this House, but even outside this House. It is so simple, this power of a Minister to give direction. I alluded to it earlier in my introductory speech, Madam Speaker, but I think now, I really have to go into the details because the power to give directions - I said earlier in the 1960s - has been in existence since 1963. In the Central Electricity Board Act of 1963, in Section 21, there is such a power. And in 1963, it was a Government which was from today's Opposition. In 1971, again, a power to give directions like here, which is necessary in the public interest, exists under Section 6 of the Central Water Authority Act of 1971. 1971 was again a Government which concerned an Opposition Party.

The *Conservatoire de Musique François Mitterrand* Trust Fund Act, Section 10 has an identical Clause as Section 10 here. Section 10 of that legislation of 1992 states, I quote –

“10. Powers of the Minister

“The Minister may give such general directions to the Board not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as he considers necessary in the public interest and the Board shall comply with those directions”

Identical to this Clause! This is why I said, and I believe that anyone who actually finds the devil in Clause 10 is verging on hysteria or on some sort of hallucination. To say the least, *un peu bête*.

Now, again, if that was not enough, in 2002, we are now in a Government where the MMM was in Government. There is a power of the Minister to actually give such general directions not inconsistent with the Beach Authority Act as he considers to be necessary in the public interest and the Board shall comply with such directions. The same here, Madam Speaker, at Section 12 of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund Act –

“12. Powers of the Minister –

“The Minister may, in relation to the exercise that the Board of its powers (...) give such general directions (...) as he considers necessary.”

I have given only five, but there are 15 instances. I believe that this should be enough to alleviate any fear, any apprehension, any hysteria, any - how should I say that, any of what we have heard anyway against Clause 10. Because it is quite clear that it is misconceived, if not erroneous, if not misleading. Are we trying to mislead this country when it is clear, when we have the 15 laws here, where there is a power from the Minister to give directions in the public interest in a manner which is not inconsistent with the Act? That is, in fact, a standard provision, a frequent provision in our legislative framework. So, I think they should stop with that nonsense.

So much for the ill-advised stuff and the hysteria about the powers of the Minister! Let me say something which I believe has to be said also. At some stage, I must say, I believe there has somehow been a confusion. Whereas this Bill is about the regulatory framework which is going now to regulate the Mauritius Meteorological Services, the confusion has lied in the fact that some Members have spoken more about climate change. Let me here reassure the hon. Member for the Constituency of Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière.

According to him, *c’est le prochain gouvernement qui va légiférer sur le climat*, when

-

- (a) we are confident that we are *le prochain gouvernement*, and
- (b) It is this Government which is going to actually come with the Climate Change Bill this year.

So, let us not, either be unconsciously confused, or, if not, let us not keep trying to confuse this country because this Bill has never been about climate change. And, I must say, regretfully, a lot of what I have heard from the other side has been about climate change. Yes, there is indeed a climate change component whenever we speak of the regulatory framework for the Meteorological Services, but that does not extend to the full scope of climate change mitigation and adaptation as some have wanted it to be. However, I still need to take just a few minutes to deal with an aspect which is not fair. It came from the hon. Leader of the Opposition who stated that this Government has done nothing as regards climate change. Of course, he was right to say that things started very well with the former Minister of Environment, hon. Raj Dayal, who has done a very good work, but it is wrong to then allege that nothing was done afterwards. In fact, let me start with the premise – like I just did with the notion of a Bill to regulate Meteorological Services, let me do the same exercise with a Bill to tackle climate change. When you hear the Opposition speaking about the Climate Change Bill, it is as if this Government has committed the worst sin on earth by not coming up with a Climate Change Bill yet. But is one aware that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dates back to 1992? That Convention was passed more than 25 years ago. They had been in power for ten years. Why did they not ...

(Interruptions)

No! They are the ones criticising today, those who have been in power for ten years, who have not passed the Climate Change Bill are the ones who are harping...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode! Please!

Mr Sinatambou: They are harping! They are harping loud, and you see, they won't even stop. Why did they not do it?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Barbier! Allow the Minister to deliver his speech!

Mr Sinatambou: And that is the reason why they are on that other side, because we are going to do it. They did not do it, they could not do it, we are going to do it. However, let alone are they totally wrong to try and make out that we have been negligent in not coming up with a Climate Change Bill, because they are the ones who did not come up with one; we are coming up with one. Secondly, when it comes to climate change action, adaptation or mitigating action, which is where I just objected to what the hon. Leader had

been saying, alleging that things had not happened for the last three years also; he is totally wrong. This Government has done more than any Government ever when we come to climate change matters, when we come to disaster reduction and mitigation measures, when we come to drainage measures. It starts in 2015. In 2015, this Government reviewed what is called the NDS, the National Disaster Scheme. What is the National Disaster Scheme? It provides the protocols before, during and after cataclysms, after climate change catastrophes and after climate change disasters. We now have a protocol well set since 2015. Then, in 2016, this Government enacted the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act. We set the infrastructure and the institutions to deal with the adverse impacts of climate change. In 2017, this Government came up with a Land Drainage Authority. Under the Land Drainage Authority, we now have a mapping of all the natural and manmade drains of this country. And I must say, I saw it as ironical when earlier on the hon. Leader of the Opposition stated that, in 2013/2014, he had allotted Rs2 billions to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure for drains. I found that to be ironical. Guess why, Madam? It is because we discovered during our mandate that the drains which are built by the Road Development Authority (RDA) - while he was the Minister giving that money - cater only for the surface runoff on the roads. So, the drains on the sides of the roads only cater for the rain which falls on the roads. Whatever falls on the left hand side of the road, whatever falls on the right hand side of the road was not the business of the Government of the time there. They could not care less.

(Interruptions)

That is what the RDA has stated; it is their policy regarding the construction of drains for roads.

(Interruptions)

How dare you say I am lying!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister! Address the Chair, please!

Mr Sinatambou: They can't say I am lying.

Madam Speaker: Address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

If you have a point of order, you say what it is.

Mr Sinatambou: This is unacceptable - anyone can read tomorrow that I was allegedly lying. I have to take objection.

Madam Speaker: So, you are raising a Point of order to say that somebody on this side has said that you are lying?

Mr Sinatambou: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Who said it on this side?

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: *To mem toi!* Apologise!

Madam Speaker: Who on this side said that the hon. Minister is lying?

(Interruptions)

Who said it, hon. Minister?

(Interruptions)

I will have to check. I have said that I have to check. Okay? So, after the debates, I will go and check and then come back with a ruling.

Mr Sinatambou: Thank you, Madam.

Now, I go back to that, because this is really serious. What we found out during this mandate ...

(Interruptions)

What we have just found out - and that is so wrong - is that drains which are built on the sides of the road only cater for the rain which falls on the road. Nothing on those 2 other sides! No wonder that we have floodings, inundations right left and centre when there is heavy rainfall. In fact, I am sorry for the pun, but his Rs2 billions went to the drains. Is that what they are doing with that money? Now, the newly established Land Drainage Authority has taken what we call a Catchment Based Approach (CaBA). This Catchment Based Approach means that when you are going to build the drain by the side of the road, you must have a look at the surface runoff in the catchment, not only on the 6-metre road or the 5-metre road. And they have the gut of saying that we have done nothing! That is for 2017. In 2018, we came with an amendment to the Local Government Act, which was very important because what we found – to take an example, for 2017/2018, Rs750 m. were spent for drains, and in

2018/2019, Rs650 m. But what we found is that there are so many dwellings, so many constructions which are built on rivers, on lakes and on drains right, left and centre.

We have had to make penalties much more severe. That was in 2018 and in 2019, this year, we will have the Climate Change Bill. So, let them not come and tell us that we have not done anything! Let them not come and tell us that they were doing more! They were doing far less and we are doing far better!

Something else which, I think, I have to say is that the hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke of biscuits but then he stopped. He then went on to showers and kitchens and to camp beds. I must say that I was part of this committee chaired by no less than the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and those things are being addressed, but I think it is time for the House and the country to know something which has been exaggerated for months and months now. Time and again, on the other side of the House, and it just happened when the last orator took the floor, they speak about me of biscuits and water. The House must know that when cyclone Berguitta struck and I asked what arrangements were being made for the refugee centres all around the island, I was shocked to learn that the attendants over there were going to buy one packet of biscuits per centre. This is the protocol which existed under the previous Government. Well, I said: 'how can that be?' When I checked the files, I came to know that what was provided for in the refugee centres by the previous Government was 200 millilitres of water, one cup of water, and 25 grams of biscuits and I immediately said that we cannot give someone one glass of water, we will make it one litre in the morning and one in the afternoon. So, from 200 ml, it was increased ten-fold to two litres and from 25 grams of biscuits, it was increased ten-fold to half a pound, 250 grams of biscuits. So, why all this hoo-ha! I may have been wrong. All I am saying is if I was wrong, they were 10 times more wrong because they did 10 times less for the people of this country and they should not actually be dealing like that with the people of our country.

Another thing I have to say is that I need to correct two inaccuracies which were said by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. The first one was about COP 21 in Paris because I was also a representative of the State of Mauritius at COP 21 in Paris and the second one is a total inaccuracy concerning the Doppler Radar. The hon. Leader of the Opposition made out that the money had been there and that the project started in 2013. That is, unfortunately, not exact. I got my staff to check. The time frame is as follows: the formal agreement was signed in 2015 in Japan by this Government. The construction of the Radar building started in August 2016 and was completed in October 2018. Training and testing started in November

2018 and the project was completed in March 2019 and it is still on warranty until February 2020. So, I don't understand why so many inaccuracies. I strongly hope that it is just the result of ignorance and not of willful oblivion.

The second thing which I think I should say is about hon. Dr. Boolell. He said to the House that he would like the Minister to reply to a question: when did the NDRRM Committee, he said, last meet? Well, first of all, there is no such thing as the NDRRM Committee. There is a National Disaster Committee which, as the name stipulates, only meets in times of crisis, otherwise there is a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council and that Council has to meet at least once a month and I can gladly inform the House that this Council has met probably nearly 30 times since it was established in 2017 and the last time will be last month probably. I don't have the exact date and if he so wishes I can give him the date also. It goes without saying - because that was part of hon. Dr. Boolell's words - that there is no question of impropriety since I will certainly stick closely to public governance issues if ever I have to give directions to the Meteorological services. But I want to say it again because when I heard the Members of the Opposition, I felt that maybe they have missed something because I clearly stipulated that my Ministry had sent the Bill to the Meteorological Department with the words "in writing" as part of Clause 10 and they were the ones who actually asked for those words to be deleted. So, I don't know where the Opposition is coming from when they say that they have heard from technicians that they are against this. I don't know where they are coming from because I checked again and the officers of the department have told me that they feel that it should be as it is and, in any event, it is not at all a departure from existing legislative provisions which exist in this respect.

So, Madam Speaker, climate change is indeed, I will agree, now a reality and its impacts are being felt worldwide. Some places are facing abnormally heavy rainfall, severe thunderstorms and lightning while others experience droughts. Not only all countries are facing extreme weather events but these phenomena are becoming more frequent and more severe year after year. The number of flashflood events witnessed over the last decade provides strong evidence that Mauritius will not be spared by the adverse impacts of climate change and global warming and I believe that the Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill is indeed a very important and much needed piece of legislation which will come into force more than half a century after the coming into existence of our meteorological services.

Today, the role and scope of the interventions of the meteorological services are indeed much broader than just providing weather forecasts. They now have the responsibility of providing climate information, air and maritime navigation information, early warnings and tsunami watch. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are today global in scope and unprecedented in scale.

The Mauritius Meteorological Services will have a crucial role in addressing effective communication and information dissemination among the public, including economic operators and other stakeholders on the impending risks and dangers to which we are exposed.

Under the enlightened leadership of the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, we are addressing the existing legal vacuum under which the Mauritius Meteorological Services has been operating until today.

Through this Bill, we are also complying with our international commitments and obligations arising under the World Meteorological Organisation Convention.

It is the conviction of this Government that with this piece of legislation, it is fulfilling its duty towards the nation by bridging a gap in our legislative framework. This Government also looks forward to all the stakeholders concerned with climate change finding more comfort, protection and security with the forthcoming Mauritius Meteorological Services Act.

I sincerely, Madam Speaker, thank all Members on both sides of the House who have contributed to the debate on this Bill and also those who have made valuable contributions thereto including in particular the staff of the Meteorological Services, those of my Ministry and those of the State Law Office.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill (No. XXVIII of 2019) 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 Mauritius Meteorological Services Bill (No. XXVIII of 2019) 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 Tuesday 17 September 2019 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

(7.38 p.m.)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 19 - ROAD RESURFACING

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Riviere): Madam, I shall be very brief. My plea is to the Deputy Prime Minister as my MP in Constituency No. 19. So, we all know that there had been considerable development works by the CWA within the area of Rose Hill especially and it is taking some time for resurfacing.

Can I appeal to the Deputy Prime Minister to ask the CWA to, at least, communicate to the inhabitants the timetable of the reinstatement of the major roads where there have been pipe laying and so on which ought to have been done, that is, there are problems for the inhabitants who are moving around Rose Hill.

I know that work has started. So, can the Deputy Prime Minister, at least, request to CWA to give a timetable through the press or communiqué for the inhabitants to know and pending that if the CWA could ask his contractor to do some patching works because there are potholes which are causing inconveniences.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Of course, I will not get caught into the sort of timeline measures. What I can assure the House and the population, especially the inhabitants of this area, is that work is being done speedily as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree. Timelines cannot be given because it all depends on the situation as it evolves even after the pipes have been laid, but, I am sure that it will be done very speedily so that when the metro starts everything is in good shape. Let us hope.

(7.40 p.m.)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

MONKEYS - CONTROL

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 hon. Minister of Agro Industry and Food Security.

It is, in fact, something which I raised in this House a few months ago, and that was the invasion of monkeys. Unfortunately, *c'est de mal en pis*. Unfortunately, the situation is

deteriorating, especially in Port Louis at the bottom of the Montagne in the Vallée Pitôt area, but also where I live in Beau Bassin next to Balfour Garden.

With the summer coming in and the blossoming of fruit trees, the situation is going to be even more difficult. So, I wanted to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any hotline or any institution where people can turn to just like you have PAWS collecting stray dogs; whether there is a mechanism at the level of his Ministry where some people can call and then people can come and collect these monkeys because they are causing a lot of problems. Now, the monkeys are going into houses. They are looking for food and before they attack children also, I would be grateful if the hon. Minister updates us on the situation.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Yes, Madam Speaker. It is indeed a problem the population of monkeys keeps on growing day by day, that is why at the level of my Ministry, we have embarked on a programme to track those monkeys. So, we have been placing traps in different areas and there is also, I must say, a unit at the level of my Ministry which is the Animal Welfare Unit where you can call them to seek their intervention. The National Parks and Conservation Service also provides some services in case there are monkeys causing problems in certain areas. We are addressing the problem, and hopefully, we will be able to reduce inconveniences in those areas which have been affected.

(7.42 p.m.)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

MORCELLEMENT RAFFRAY, PAILLES - WATER SUPPLY

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you Madam Speaker.

My question is addressed to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister with regard to the water supply in Morcellement Raffray, Pailles. I am quite specific Morcellement Raffray, Pailles. At the time, I am speaking now, most of the taps are dried in the households. I just received a sms from a colleague of mine in my Constituency.

So, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to look into the matter? Up to now they are having water supply from 6.00a.m. to 9.00 a.m. and in the afternoon, it is not regular. It depends on the one who apparently opens the valve. If he wants, he opens it from 5.00a.m. to 6.00a.m. and if he does not want, he does not want.

So, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to look into the matter? Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman was kind enough to give me advance notice of the matter, so I am in a position to transmit whatever information that I have obtained.

First of all, there have been apparently two complaints today on this matter which have been looked into. The area of Morcellement Raffray is served by a reservoir which is found at Anse Courtois. Hours of supply are between 4.00 hours and 8.00 hours that is in the morning, and in the evening between 1600 hours and 2000 hours. Apparently, the person in charge is a very reliable officer and he has to withstand pressure from many people who come to try to persuade him to extend the hours of supply. I do not know about at the time that I am speaking, but apparently those are these hours. But anyway, this debate will become very academic in the forthcoming days because water is being brought over from the bagatelle water treatment plant which is going to supply this area. It is going to be a gradual flow of water into Anse Courtois so that we hope that the inhabitants of the hon. Member's constituency, Constituency No. 1 will be happy.

Thank you.

(7.45 p.m.)

ALFRED BESNARD STREET, COCOTERIE, ROCHE BOIS – DRUG TRAFFICKING

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, who is in charge of the Police. Unfortunately, he is not here, but I think his colleague will take this issue.

Madam Speaker, I am again raising the issue of drug trafficking at Alfred Besnard Street, Cocoterie region, in Roche Bois, which is found in my constituency. Despite having raised this issue several times in the House, be it at adjournment time or through Parliamentary Questions, last year and this year, there has not been any improvement in the situation. What we call 'landing', there has not been or very few landing in this place and the situation is worsening day by day. Everybody in the district of Port Louis knows where exactly this drug trafficking occurs on a 24/7 basis - this one is a 24/7 serious basis, not the joke one for the water - but on a 24/7 basis drug is being sold in Cocoterie region. As I have said earlier in the House, I have been there myself physically several times and the

inhabitants there, the young and the old, cannot open their gates, and they feel oppressed in their house and in their surroundings.

So, therefore, Madam Speaker, I am again requesting the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor to take this issue with the Commissioner of Police so that this Cocoterie region in Roche Bois be cleaned as soon as possible. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has just mentioned that this issue has been raised in the past, but I am sure that certain measures have been taken, but nevertheless, I will convey to the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor the issue raised tonight.

(7.47 p.m.)

WOMEN - VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - MURDER

Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to raise a very important matter where I am sure all of us are concerned, and which I will address to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. Madam Speaker, we all know that there have been at least four murders of women who have been victims of domestic violence in very gruesome circumstances, and I pay tribute to these women who have lost their lives. In these cases, Madam Speaker, there have been one who was in Rodrigues and last night one was in my Constituency. Among these four, two already had protection orders, but unfortunately it did not work.

Madam Speaker, *un cas c'est toujours un cas de trop*. So, I urge the Vice-Prime Minister to take immediate actions so that a strong message is passed and that these things do not happen. This is our wish and also if the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor could see with the Commissioner of Police so that the Police also take actions and take all of us on board and stop these things.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Well, Madam Speaker, this is a very serious issue which concerns not only Members of the Opposition, but, I think, the whole country. We have all been shocked by the four recent crimes, three in Mauritius and one in Rodrigues. Well, at the level of my Ministry, I am taking it very seriously, but I must say that since 2014 to date, a lot of

measures have already been taken by the Government. One of the measures taken, of course, if you can recall, is amendments to our existing law where we have enlarged the definition of domestic violence. We have increased the first fine from Rs25,000 to Rs50,000; Rs50,000 to Rs100,000 and we have also come up with an integrated centre at Phoenix where we are offering services to the victims on a 24- hour basis and a lot of sensitisation campaign is being done all over the country. But I think, domestic violence has something to do with a change of mentality also. So, we are working on it and this is something which exists everywhere. I am not saying that we are not doing much, a lot of measures have already been taken and we will continue to do what has to be done.

(7.50 p.m.)

DECAEN STREET, PORT LOUIS - HAWKERS

Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The issue I am raising tonight concerns the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government again and it concerns the street hawkers who have been relocated to Decaen since April 2016. Recently, about a month ago, there was a decision to relocate these street hawkers to three sites because of construction works, namely, I am told, immigration, Ruisseau du Pouce and Engineer Street, and I am informed that out of the 500 duly registered hawkers there, some 50 of them have not been noticed about where they need to go. They have not received a letter which others have received and obviously, they are very anxious because they depend on this for livelihood. So, my request to the hon. Minister tonight is to request the Municipal Council of Port Louis to look into this state of affairs so that these 50 people or so are relocated as soon as possible.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I do know that hon. Nando Bodha is looking at the issue of hawkers, so, I will talk to him and try to sort out the matter.

(7.51 p.m.)

ALLÉE TAMARIN ROAD, ROCHE BOIS – DEFECTIVE PIPES

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Madam Speaker. *J'ai une requête concernant l'Allée Tamarin*, which is situated in Roche Bois, Constituency No. 3. This issue has been raised by my colleagues well before. It is a very narrow road and just right now, it is being widely used. *Résultat*,

nous avons souvent des tuyaux de la CWA défectueux parce que le trafic est si dense dans ladite rue, l'Allée Tamarin à Roche Bois. So, if the hon. Minister can see with the Local Authority. Unfortunately, it falls just between two constituencies, No. 3 and No. 4. When the NDU wants to do the job, everybody will say on both sides, that it concerns the other constituency, most unfortunately. So, I will ask the Minister responsible for Local Authorities, as it falls under the City Council of Port Louis, to look urgently into the situation and if Police, during peak periods, can be present in this area. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I will look into it, Madam Speaker.

(7.53 p.m.)

FIRE – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Madame la présidente, je voudrais interpellier le ministre de la Sécurité sociale concernant un cas d'incendie d'une maison dans ma circonscription et relativement les critères de son Ministère pour le paiement d'une assistance financière à cet effet. Parmi les critères établis par le ministère, un des critères, c'est que les victimes doivent avoir au préalable obtenu un rapport de la police et un autre, parmi d'autres critères, qu'ils doivent s'y présenter pour une application à cet effet dans un délai de moins de 15 jours après l'incendie. Donc, ils se voient dans ce cas précis que je soulève que la police a pris 15 jours pour rédiger et terminer son rapport. Je ne saurais vous dire pour quelle raison, mais cela a pris 15 jours.

Et le lendemain, quand les personnes se sont présentées au ministère, les officiers ont tout simplement refusé cette application. Donc, il n'y a pas eu de paiement. C'est pour cela que je voudrais interpellier le ministre pour qu'il puisse ajuster, revoir ces critères et l'ajuster pour que d'autres victimes ne soient pas pénalisées. Je l'ai dit, Madame.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Thank you. Madam Speaker, I do not think that those criteria will prevent people who have already been victims of a disaster from receiving their allocation. So, I would suggest that the hon. Member gives me the names of those constituents of his, and I will make sure that they receive their allocation as it is due to them. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(7.55 p.m.)

QUATRE BORNES MARKET FAIR - HAWKERS

Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Madam Speaker, the matter which I am raising is addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government.

My attention has been drawn by the registered hawkers of Quatre Bornes. Those who operate in the market fair of Quatre Bornes, they were promised to have free access to toilet facilities which exist adjacent to the market fair. Unfortunately, they have to pay a fee. Their request is that this fee be waived as promised by the Lord-Mayor.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I will look into it, Madam.

At 7.55 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 17 September 2019 at 11.30 a.m.