



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 03 JULY 2018

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daareeawoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, GCSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, GCSK	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, SC	Minister of Tourism
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Marie Joseph Noël Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development
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Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives

Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training
Hon. Purmanund Jhugroo	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Marie Cyril Eddy Boissézon	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Dharmendar Sesungkur	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Mrs Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

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Deputy Speaker	Teeluckdharry, Hon. Kalidass
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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 21 of 2018

Sitting of Tuesday 03 July 2018

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A **Prime Minister's Office**

The Annual Report 2016/2017 of the Mauritius Ports Authority.

B **Ministry of Arts and Culture**

The Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Urdu Speaking Union for the year ended 31 December 2015.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

POLY TECHNOLOGIES INCORPORATED OF CHINA – PROJECTS & INVESTMENTS

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communication and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Poly Technologies Incorporated of China, he will –

- (a) state the dates on which he has met its Vice President and other representatives, indicating the purposes thereof;
- (b) state the projects and investments envisaged by the company in Mauritius, giving details thereof, and
- (c) for the benefit of the House, obtain and –
 - (i) table copy of any agreement signed between the said company and SBM (Mauritius) Infrastructure Development Company Ltd., indicating the progress thereof as at to date, and
 - (ii) give details of any other agreements signed between the said company and any other Government entity in Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that the former Board of Investment (BoI) conducted an official investment promotion mission in the People's Republic of China, along with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration and International Trade from 14 to 21 May 2017.

During that mission, the Mauritian delegation met with the representatives of the Poly Group and its Vice-President, Mr Zhang Zhengwei. They expressed the interest of the Poly Group to set up a Regional Headquarters in Mauritius for their operations in Africa. They would also be interested to execute projects in Mauritius. The Poly Group is a major State-owned player in the Real Estate sector in China.

The Board of Investment continued discussions with the Poly Group after the mission in China regarding their Regional Headquarters project. Subsequently, on 02 April 2018

Poly Group wrote a letter to the BoI informing that their Vice- President, Mr Zhang Zhenwei, would lead a delegation to Mauritius from 08 to 12 April 2018. In this context, I received the Vice-President and his delegation on 10 April 2018.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the Poly Group delegation discussed about opportunities for investment and cooperation with the Government of Mauritius as well as the possibility of regional company registration.

During the meeting, the Poly Group made proposals for the construction and financing of social housing project. The issue of financing had to be channelled through the Chinese Authorities. Discussions on this matter with the Chinese Authorities are proceeding.

As regards part (c) (i) of the question, I am informed that the SBM (Mauritius) Infrastructure Development Company Ltd. had discussions with representatives of Poly Group on the financing structure for a social housing project. No agreement has been signed with Poly Group. However, only a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which is, in fact, non-binding, has been signed between SBM (Mauritius) Infrastructure Development Company Ltd. and Poly Group. The MoU does not thus constitute an offer, agreement, agreement in principle, decision or commitment by SBM (Mauritius) Infrastructure Development Company Ltd.

As regards part (c) (ii) of the question, no formal agreement has been signed.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister keeps talking of Poly Group. Is he not aware that he met Mr Zhengwei, who is the Vice President of Poly Technologies and Mr Zhang Zhou, who is the General Manager of Poly Technologies for Africa? Is it not these two persons from Poly Technologies that he met?

The Prime Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, let me say that, following the meeting the Board of Investment had with the group in China, the BoI kept contact with that group because that group had shown interest, as I have just said, to invest in Mauritius and carry out social housing projects, I received a letter from China Poly Group Corporation dated 22 June 2018, requesting a meeting as a follow-up to the discussions that have been held in China. There was also a list of people who would be forming part of the delegation from Poly Group namely, the Chairperson for China Poly Group Corporation, the Vice-President for China Poly Group Corporation, the Assistant President for Poly Real Estate Group Corporation and, amongst others, the Deputy Director of Overseas Head Office of Poly Real Estate Group Corporation.

Now, when the delegation came to Mauritius it made the request through the Chinese Embassy, and the Chinese Ambassador spoke to me, and, of course, I said I would be very willing to welcome the delegation. Now, when they came, there were people from the Poly Technologies Group who came also. So, I do not see any problem with that. They form part of the same Group, but they have different subsidiaries.

Mr X. L. Duval: The difference being, Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister should know it - I hope he knows it – that Poly Technologies is the main arms supplier of China and is owned by the People’s Liberation Army of China. Is he aware when you received them? We will come to the MoU in a moment. Is he aware that Poly Technologies has this?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, what I am aware of is that they were interested in investing in Mauritius, first of all, and also in Africa, and that they were very keen on social housing projects, which is a priority for this Government. I was dealing with them on this issue, not about military equipments or whatever other equipments. Probably, they must be a company that also manufactures military equipment, but that was not the subject of my interest and the interest of Government of Mauritius.

Mr X. L. Duval: We will talk about Poly Technologies in a moment. Madam Speaker, is the Prime Minister tabling a copy of the agreement or the MoU, as he calls it, between Poly Technologies Incorporated and State Bank signed on 08 June? Is he tabling a copy where Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo signed for SBM?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am aware that there is a clause in that MoU. I think, it is at paragraph 11, which says that –

“The exchange of information shall be treated as confidential and solely ...

(Interruptions)

Why *ayo*?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No question, please!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Ki to gagné!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, order!

The Prime Minister: *To gagne ayo.*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Order!

The Prime Minister: I am just stating...

(Interruptions)

Can I answer?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

The Prime Minister: Paragraph 11 says that –

“The exchange of information shall be treated as confidential and solely in the interest of the parties and that these matters shall not be disclosed to any third party without the prior consent of the other party.”

So, that says all.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is the influence of Poly Technologies that they can force the Government of Mauritius to sign a confidential agreement with them dealing with a contract of Rs13 billion? What is the power that Poly Technologies has on this Government that they can force it to sign a confidential agreement dealing with public money?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition is really under a delusion because nobody has forced us to do anything. Nobody! He is talking about forcing. First of all, this is an MoU, it is not an agreement. It not binding, it is a Memorandum of Understanding as a preliminary to discussions that, hopefully will, ultimately, lead to an agreement that will be in the interest of Mauritius with regard to construction of social housing for the vulnerable and for the very poor. Now, this is my priority and this document, Madam Speaker, is a Memorandum of Understanding. I hope the hon. Leader of the Opposition does understand the difference between an MoU and an agreement, a binding agreement.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, in the *Lepep* Government Programme, this is what it said, part 9 –

“An open and transparent bidding and procurement process to combat fraud and corruption”

will be put in place by the *Lepep* Government. This is exactly the contrary that the hon. Prime Minister is doing. Will he now table a copy of the MoU?

The Prime Minister: Well, I hope that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not accusing me of being involved in corruption. I hope!

(Interruptions)

He better not!

(Interruptions)

He better not! Because ...

Madam Speaker: Address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Please proceed, hon. Prime Minister! Address the Chair rather than addressing the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition should know, first of all, two things. First, we have not come to any conclusion as yet, discussions are ongoing, and we are discussing, I must say, mainly with the Government of the People's Republic of China, and we are discussing, through the Government of the People's Republic of China, with the company with regard to the Real Estate Project.

Now, I have just stated that there is a clause in this Memorandum of Understanding whereby we need to get the consent of both parties before I can render the contents of this MoU public.

Mr X. L. Duval: A very convenient clause, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to deal now with this famous SBM Infrastructure. Where does it come into play

this SBM Infrastructure? Why was the MoU signed between SBM Infrastructure and Poly Technologies - not Poly Group - and why not the NHDC involved in this?

The Prime Minister: Well, because this is how we have been using this mechanism with regard to the number of projects. For example, when we have agreed with Government of India for a Line of Credit, we have gone through the Exim Bank of India to agree and to sign an agreement with the SBM Infrastructure Company, and this is the same mechanism, as I mention and which, eventually, if there is agreement, might be used, and then we will see in time to come if there is anything concrete.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, we have an unsolicited bid from Poly Technologies, an arms dealer, notorious arms dealer. This unsolicited bid is being channeled through SBM Infrastructure. Therefore, it will not pass under the Public Procurement Act. It will, probably, by the way it is organised, also escape, go into the public debt, and it will be totally secret. Is not that the reason why Government is using this colourable device again of SBM Infrastructure?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, there is no colourable device and there is nothing of the sort, nothing to go against transparency. Let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, maybe he is not aware, we are talking to the Government of the People's Republic of China for, first of all, concessionary financing and also for grant.

(Interruptions)

If he knows, if we get grant, there are certain conditions eventually like what we have done with the Government of India.

When we get a grant element depending on the amount, depending on the conditions of the concessionary financing, there is provision of the law that applies. The procurement law applies and he knows very well which part of the procurement law will, in fact, allow us to have such an agreement with these terms and conditions that have already been done in the past. It has been done when he was in Government also. I am not criticising what has been done in the past using that provision of the law. But the law is there and we will abide by the law.

Mr X. L. Duval: The law is being abused, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, is it not a simple trick to go into a contract with someone then seek – inflate the contract, maybe - some help from China and call the whole thing Government-to-Government, G-to-G, with no tender and the contract is allocated? Is not that just a simple trick?

The Prime Minister: As I said, Madam Speaker, discussions are not yet over, discussions are ongoing. We don't know as at today what are going to be the terms and conditions, what is going to be the amount that is going to be claimed and who is going eventually to be the contractor, with regard to the Social Housing Project, I am talking about. So, we need to be patient a little bit, probably a little bit, and then we will obviously disclose all the information with regard to the agreement that can eventually be concluded.

Mr X. L. Duval: I note that the hon. Prime Minister is not denying anything of what I am saying. Madam Speaker...

The Prime Minister: I am denying. On a point order, Madam Speaker. He cannot put in my mouth what I have not said. I am denying everything that he is saying.

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, the hon. Prime Minister is denying. He was not denying before. That is why - I was not putting anything in his mouth, he did not put it in his own mouth. Now, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

I am saying what I am saying. I will not be afraid of saying what I have to say.

Now, Madam Speaker, this SBM Infrastructure, is it going again to issue this redeemable preference shares, this time to Poly Technologies, the arms dealer? Is that what is envisaged? Is that the reason why this famous SBM Infrastructure is being used once again?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me say again, we are not going to deal with arms dealer, we are not doing any project with regard to arms equipment. What we are dealing with is with regard to one of the priorities of this Government and that is to build housing projects for the very poor and vulnerable people.

(Interruptions)

And the hon. Leader of the Opposition will wait and see, when these people will find a home, then I hope the hon. Leader of the Opposition will tell them what he is saying today.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, it is a fact that the Government has constructed and delivered only 268 houses since the beginning and this is official, Madam Speaker; the rest 300 have not been delivered and the previous ones were built by the previous Government, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, Poly Technologies Ltd...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr X. L. Duval: Poly Technologies Ltd...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please, order! I have said that you should not make provocations. I have repeated that several times, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: It is in the Hansard, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition continue!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, on question of Poly Technologies, did the Prime Minister do any due diligence before meeting them or before allowing SBM Infrastructure to sign this MoU? Did he do any due diligence on that?

The Prime Minister: Well, first of all, let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he tends to forget, when he was in Government with the Labour Party, from 2004 to 2014, they built 2,496 houses. We have been in Government since 2015 till today, we have already built 2,171.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, the intention is to build 6,800 housing units for the two years coming.

Secondly, I would like to remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that his Government was building housing units of an area of 39 m²...

(Interruptions)

...with one bedroom.

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: And no doubt that somebody called it a 'boîte zalimet'. We have been building houses with an area of 50 m² to accommodate at least two bedrooms. And I do not want to say more...

(Interruptions)

But what, Madam Speaker?

(Interruptions)

No, I am not giving way!

(Interruptions)

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

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I am not giving way, Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Prime Minister said he is not giving way.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I will take your point of order.

(Interruptions)

Are you giving way, hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I am not giving way!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Standing Order says....

Mr X. L. Duval: It is not a question of giving way!

Madam Speaker: ...that on a point of order, the hon. Member should be agreeable to give way.

(Interruptions)

Allow him to finish and then we will see!

(Interruptions)

Allow him! Because he does not want to give way!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, it is a point of order. The question is that the hon. Prime Minister is not replying to my question, which is due diligence...

(Interruptions)

... and was replying ...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Let me reply, Madam Speaker. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has chosen to make remarks about how many houses may have been supposedly constructed and how many we have constructed. And according to him, I need to sit down and shut up!

(Interruptions)

Where does he think he is?

(Interruptions)

Where does he think he is?

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, ce n'est pas la basse-cour...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Can we have some order! I cannot even listen to what the hon. Prime Minister is saying! I said several times when there is so much noise, if there are remarks which are being made either on this side or on that side, I cannot hear. I cannot hear any remarks which are being made. So, allow the hon. Prime Minister to continue.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Perraud, please!

(Interruptions)

Please continue, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I was replying to the comments that he has made. And let me tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that he has got to wait - be patient - and he will see. If everything goes on well, if we are able to come up with the project of social housing, then he will see what kind of infrastructure we are going to give to the vulnerable and to the poor people.

(Interruptions)

I have not finished!

(Interruptions)

Now, I will reply to the second part of his question. I am informed that the EDB, ex-BoI, has conducted a due diligence prior to the visit of the representatives of those people.

Mr X. L. Duval: I maintain that it is only 268 houses. It is in Hansard of three weeks ago.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, you are provoking!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, for the orderly conduct of this House, I am asking you not to be excited about anything.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, on the matter of due diligence, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that this same Poly Technologies is a banned company in the USA for sanction breaking and for selling arms to countries, which it should not have done? Is he aware of that, Madam Speaker?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I have also been able to find and gather information with regard to the USA. Let me just read what I have as information -

“The U.S. State Department had imposed sanctions on Poly Technologies in 2013 on allegations that the firm had violated the Iran, North Korea and Syria Non-proliferation Act. The company, I am told - Poly - has always denied and had made representations to the Government of the United States, and I am informed that those sanctions, therefore, have been lifted and they expired in 2015.”

Mr X. L. Duval: This is not my information, Madam Speaker. That part is true. However, I will table this, as I will table a lot of things in a moment. I will table this, namely that the company is under a presumption of denial policy by the United States, that is, a type of sanction that is being applied. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that Namibia, recently, was forced by the US to cancel a contract for arms and that, in that same Namibia, Poly Technologies was convicted or a General was convicted of taking a bribe of USD700,000 from the same Poly Technologies?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, we are not in the business of arms dealing.

(Interruptions)

We are dealing with social housing projects, with construction of houses. Well, I am not aware of what has happened. I cannot say whether what has happened in Namibia is true or not. But the question put by the hon. Leader of the Opposition itself says that it is in regard with arms dealing. So, that is not our business.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you have five more minutes to go. There are four hon. Members who wish to ask questions.

Mr X. L. Duval: I will try and finish. If I cannot, I cannot!

Madam Speaker: No, I know this is your prerogative. But then, can you please let me know when you come with your last question.

Mr X. L. Duval: It may just come like that, but I will try. Madam Speaker, it is true that this Poly Technologies has many, many companies, but it has a very, very bad reputation. Same a bit like Alvaro and all that. A very bad reputation!

(Interruptions)

Now, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that Poly Technologies was convicted of a \$13 billion art fraud in China? I will table this also. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that a subsidiary of Poly Technologies in Centreafrique was suspected by a UN agency of financing crime and terrorism? Has his people advised the hon. Prime Minister of this before he goes and meets them and all that?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me say that I have a way of dealing with foreign companies. Let me say it publicly that, before meeting with the representatives of that company, I had contacted the Chinese Ambassador. I have discussed with him. I have asked him about their credentials. And I can say that he has strongly recommended this company to me and to Government. Now, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has previously been saying that they are military and this and that. In fact, I took up the matter with the Chinese Ambassador. And you know what? I will not say what he said, but he laughed. He laughed when he heard such comments. So, I will convey this information that is being said in the National Assembly to the Chinese Ambassador.

(Interruptions)

I hope he will...

Madam Speaker: Order on this side, please!

The Prime Minister: ... get more information from him.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: I am not afraid or in the pocket of any foreign Embassy, Madam Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister can do whatever he likes to whoever Ambassador he likes.

(Interruptions)

This is up to him! I am not in the pocket. I only answer to Mauritians!

(Interruptions)

Nobody else, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker, having said all this, will the hon. Prime Minister agree that this is the last company that we want in our offshore Financial Services Centre? A company - if you only look at what is available in international Press, you would see - that had gone into tremendous problems in Africa. This is the last company, the Poly Technologies group, the major arms supplier of China, and it should be *persona non grata* in our offshore financial services sector.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am really astounded because after the India bashing from the Labour Party, now we have the China bashing...

(Interruptions)

... from the PMSD.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: So, that was the last question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/483 in regard to the appointment of a special administrator for the BAI Company Mauritius Ltd and Bramer Banking Corporation Ltd will be replied by the hon. Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance. Hon. Uteem!

SICOM TOWER - GOVERNMENT OFFICE SPACE - RENT

(No. B/481) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the office space rented by Government at the SICOM Tower from the State Investment Company of Mauritius Ltd., he will state the –

- (a) use made thereof;
- (b) rent and charges payable therefor since November 2016 to date, indicating the amount of arrears thereof, if any, and
- (c) cost incurred in terms of –
 - (i) fit out and additional works, and
 - (ii) furniture therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the State Insurance Company of Mauritius Ltd rather than the State Investment Company of Mauritius Ltd., from which no office space has ever been rented by Government.

On this assumption, and in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that Government has rented 161,036 square ft. at SICOM Tower, Ebène to be used as offices. The following Ministries are occupying office spaces there –

- (i) The Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities;
- (ii) The Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation, and
- (iii) The Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance.

In addition, three government agencies and one State-owned company are also occupying office spaces at the SICOM Tower.

As regards part (b) of the question, the total rent, inclusive of charges paid from November 2016 to June 2018 amounts to Rs103.4 m. However, there is an outstanding amount of Rs4.2 m. which is still being subject to discussion with SICOM, regarding the effective date of occupation of part of the office space, and the increase in rental, as per the lease agreement, which is presently being assessed.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (c) of the question, I am informed that the costs for fit out works and furniture incurred by Government amount to Rs6.8 m. and Rs2.9 m. respectively, for the period November 2016 to date.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, what has been the total amount of rent paid by the Government to SICOM Ltd. for space that has not been occupied by any Government body or parastatal body?

The Prime Minister: Well, I don't know whether there is space not occupied, but I have given a figure of Rs103.4 m. that have already been paid and, as I have stated, there is a sum of money now that is being claimed by SICOM, but that is subject to an issue on which date one of the tenants took possession of the office area.

The second issue is that there is in the provision of the lease agreement a reassessment to be made with regard to rental that has to be paid.

Mr Uteem: Has the hon. Prime Minister read the Report of the Director of Audit for June 2016, where she said, and I quote –

“Some Rs17.4 m. has been paid as rental up to June 2017 for three unoccupied floors at SICOM Tower.”

Has he read that we have paid Rs17.4 m. up to June 2017? That is why I wanted to know, from June 2017, are we still paying millions of rupees to SICOM for unoccupied space?

The Prime Minister: Let me explain. Initially, it was meant that the Ministry of Finance would move to the SICOM Tower, but then, there was a change in decision. The decision was reviewed and, therefore, it is true that for some time the space has been left unoccupied but, as soon as the decision for the Ministry of Finance not to move to SICOM Tower was taken, we did everything that we could in order to facilitate the rental by other Ministries and other entities and, I can say as at today, I am informed that all the spaces are occupied.

Mr Uteem: As regard to part (c), fit out and additional works, and furniture, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that, again, in the Report of the Director of Audit, the attention has been brought to his Ministry, the Ministry of Finance, that a significant amount of money, several million of rupees have not been certified by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure because authorisation of the MPI was not taken before Ministers and civil servants gave instructions to SICOM to put certain furniture and fit out claim. So, is the hon. Prime

Minister aware that other than fittings and furniture had been ordered without going through the proper channel, without making the MPI aware of this?

The Prime Minister: Well, I don't know how the process was done with regard to the fit out works. This is what I can gather. I don't know, I cannot say for sure that it was done for every floor, but I believe that SICOM had a mandate to do some fit out works.

Well, I am told that some expenses were certified by MPI, and that some are still being looked into. Well, in due course, I will be able to give, maybe a precise answer with regard to the process that is now undertaken to look into the other fit out works.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

JIN FEI PROJECT – LAND LEASE

(No. B/482) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Jin Fei Project, he will state –

- (a) the name of the lessees of land thereat, indicating in each case the extent of land leased and period thereof, and
- (b) where matters stand as to the development projects earmarked for implementation thereat, indicating the –
 - (i) number of employment generated/to be generated, and
 - (ii) quantum of Foreign Direct Investment obtained over the past three years.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me remind the House that in March 2007, the then Government and Tianli Enterprise Group signed a first Framework Agreement for the setting up of the Mauritius Tianli Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone. The project was planned to be developed over 500 arpents of land at Riche Terre. 223 small planters who were occupying individual plots of land were forced to vacate their land.

The implementation of the Cooperation Zone by Tianli Enterprise Group failed to start in 2008 as initially scheduled. New investors from the People's Republic of China were interested by the project and in 2009, under a new Lease and a Framework Agreement,

Mauritius Jinfei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone Co Ltd was granted land over an extent of 500 arpents for a period of 99 years.

Madam Speaker, under the Framework Agreement of 2009, Jin Fei had the obligation to develop and complete the construction of the zone by December 2016.

It is clear that under the previous Government, Jin Fei failed to complete the construction of the zone and was unable to meet its commitments under the provisions of the Framework Agreement, in particular to –

- (i) bring a minimum of USD 500 million as foreign investment;
- (ii) create at least 5,000 direct jobs for local citizens during the construction, development and operation of the Cooperation Zone, and
- (iii) generate export earnings of at least USD 150 million during the first two years of operation.

As a matter of fact, over the period 2009 to 2014, Jin Fei only managed to develop 20 arpents of land and completed the construction of internal roads, a warehouse and an apartment building within the zone.

Madam Speaker, this Government could not afford to let this strategic area stay undeveloped. We decided to give a boost to the Jin Fei project.

In January 2015, we started a process to recover back the 500 arpents of State land leased to Mauritius Jinfei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone Co. Ltd.

1. On 24 July 2015 over land of an extent of 75 arpents for a duration of 93 years to expire on 15 September 2108, and
2. Silkroad International Investment Company Ltd, a subsidiary of Mauritius Jinfei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone Co Ltd, on 26 May 2016 over land of an extent of 100 arpents for a duration of 92 and a fraction years to expire on 15 September 2108.

Silkroad International Investment Company Ltd has signed sub-lease agreements for a duration of 19 years, after having obtained the approval from the Ministry of Housing and Lands, with the following companies -

1. Les Moulins De La Cité Ltée - 25.35 arpents;
2. Logistique Ile de France Ltée - 4.26 arpents ;

3. One China Ltd - 2.37 arpents ;
4. Unity Logistics Ltd - 4.07 arpents, and
5. GB Warehousing - 6.37 arpents.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Economic Development Board has issued a Smart City Certificate to Mauritius Jinfei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone Co Ltd to develop a mixed use project comprising a financial zone, an international convention centre, light processing industrial zone, warehousing and logistic industrial zone, high-tech manufacturing zone, a business hotel and a Wedding Theme Square.

The onsite infrastructure works within the Smart City have already been completed. The Wedding Theme Square is currently under construction and is expected to be completed in August 2018. The EIA licence for a business hotel under the Invest Hotel Scheme has been issued on 06 February 2018 and construction works are expected to start this month.

Two projects of the five sub-lessees are at construction stage and three are at pre-construction stage.

The Smart City project by Mauritius Jinfei will generate some 2,000 to 2,500 direct jobs.

Foreign Direct Investment generated from investment made by Mauritius Jinfei over the past three years stands at Rs1.187 billion.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, in his reply, I am not sure whether the hon. Prime Minister mentioned the number of employment generated or to be generated from this project, as it is mentioned in my question.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I said. Well, this is what is being projected, some 2,000 to 2,500 jobs, probably.

Mr Ameer Meea: Answering to a PQ on the same matter on 26 April 2016, the then Finance Minister stated to the House that, as at to date, 325 arpents are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Housing and Lands, and the hon. Prime Minister confirmed that 175 arpents have been vested to Jinfei Mauritius Co. Ltd. So, my question is: where matters stand to these 325 arpents that have been vested to the Ministry of Housing and Lands?

The Prime Minister: Well, this is a different question, Madam Speaker. Of course, we will be able to provide all the information. I was looking at the Jinfei Project and I have all the information with regard to that.

Mr Ameer Meea: Also, in relation to the construction work that is being carried out at Jinfei, which I must say, at a very slow pace, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the constructions are being catered for only by Chinese foreign companies or also do we have any local construction company?

The Prime Minister: Well, I do not know if I can be provided with this information because I do not know who are the contractors involved. But I can see that there is at least one local company which is a lessee. I believe that local company would probably retain the services of a local contractor, but I cannot say for sure. Information is not available, but I will provide the information at a later stage.

LES SALINES – WASTE & DEBRIS – CLEANUP

(No. B/484) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether in regard to the seashore of Les Salines, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for the clearing of the wastes accumulated thereat since the passage of Cyclone Berguitta.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Director General of the Mauritius Ports Authority that the seashore of Les Salines falling under the responsibility of the Mauritius Ports Authority comprises the areas of Fort William and the ex-Neo Town site.

Since the passage of Cyclone Berguitta, in January 2018, the Les Salines area under the jurisdiction of the Mauritius Ports Authority, has been cleaned up on 2 occasions, one immediately after the passage of the cyclone, during a general cleanup operation of the Port area and a second time in April 2018, after heavy rainfalls which had carried waste and debris from the City Centre and its surroundings to the harbour.

Cleaning in the Port area is effected as and when required to ensure protection of the environment and that all operations are carried out in smooth conditions.

During cyclones and heavy rainfall, plastic bottles and other floating debris are carried from the Port Louis City Centre and its surroundings by not less than five rivers and

canals into the harbour which in turn are deposited on the shoreline of the Port area by tidal movement.

Madam Speaker, in view of the frequent bad weather conditions which have prevailed since January 2018, there is a considerable increase in the volume of floating debris landing on the shoreline which requires more frequent cleanup operations and a new cleaning strategy for the Port area.

The Mauritius Ports Authority has started consultations with the Port stakeholders, who are signatories of its Port Environment Charter, to pool up resources to carry out regular cleaning of the Harbour waters.

Mr Barbier: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that not only this part of Les Salines, but also all the surrounding of the Port like Pointe aux Sables, Baie du Tombeau, each time we have cyclonic conditions, we have lots of rubbish which are laid on the shore and no one cares for it. It might stay there for months. So, in this case, it is particularly the responsibility of the MPA. We have other areas in the surrounding which are left uncleaned for months. Will the hon. Prime Minister see to it with the other authority concerned so that consideration also may be given to those areas which are not under the aegis of the MPA?

The Prime Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, there are many questions in one question. First of all, the question is with regard to the jurisdiction of the Mauritius Ports Authority. The hon. Member has mentioned areas which fall outside the jurisdiction of the MPA, Pointe aux Sables, and so on. Of course, either it must be the Beach Authority...

(Interruptions)

Not Beach Authority! But then Local Government! I must try to find out under whose jurisdiction the responsibility falls.

Madam Speaker: Anyway, it does not arise from the main question.

The Prime Minister: But let me say also that with regard to the area which falls under the responsibility of the MPA, as I have stated, there are now consultations being held because the stakeholders of the Port area have already adhered to an environment charter with the MPA. I do not want to take the time of the House, but a number of initiatives are being taken up with regard to cleaning of that area.

MR O. K. D., PERMANENT SECRETARY – BOARDS – CHAIRPERSON & MEMBER

(No. B/485) **Mr V. Baloomoody** (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether in regard to Mr O. K. D., Permanent Secretary, he will state the number of –

- (a) Boards and sub-committees of which he is either the Chairperson or a member, indicating in each case the fees payable thereto, and
- (b) overseas missions he attended since January 2015 to date, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) country visited;
 - (ii) cost of airfare, and
 - (iii) amount of *per diem* and other allowances received.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the information requested by the hon. Member is being tabled.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, following the advice given by the DPP with regard to that gentleman, Mr O. K. D., that disciplinary actions be taken against him following his acts and doings in the MedPoint case? May I know what disciplinary action has been taken against him?

The Prime Minister: Well, from the information that I have on file, on 17 September 2013, Mr D. was reinstated in his post of Principal Assistant Secretary with effect from 27 July 2011. So, I can conclude that there was no outcome that is detrimental to Mr D.

Mr Baloomoody: My question is simple. There was an advice that Disciplinary Committee be instituted against him and, if need be, sanctions should be taken. My question is whether disciplinary proceeding was initiated against him?

The Prime Minister: Well, I believe it must have been taken because, as I have stated, the outcome is that the then Government, at that time, took the decision to reinstate Mr D. So, I am informed that disciplinary action had also been initiated against Mr D. under Regulation 38 of the PSC Regulations. Afterwards, it was decided to take action under

Regulation 37 instead of Regulation 38 of PSC Regulations. Later on, after consultations with the State Law Office, it was decided to initiate action under Regulation 42 of the PSC Regulations. Now, what was the outcome? I presume that there was nothing that they could reproach Mr D.

Mr Baloomoody: This gentleman now is the Permanent Secretary at his Ministry. He is also the Chairman of the GRA, member of ICTA, member of the Board of Cargo Handling and member of the MBC Board. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he found it proper for somebody who is Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Finance and also Chairman of the GRA, when, in fact, we have to deal as a regulatory body with institutions which are fully owned by Government like the Casino run by SIC, the National Lottery, etc.?

The Prime Minister: First of all, there is nothing abnormal. Secondly, let me say that he is acting Chairperson for the time being and that eventually somebody will be obviously nominated as Chairperson.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Prime Minister has just informed us that Mr O. D. is acting Chairperson of the GRA. Has his attention been drawn - this is very serious what I am saying - that Mr O. D., under the influence of the Senior Adviser, Mr Bheekarry - I am not afraid to mention names, I do not have anything personal with the guy, but the *triangle, triumvirate*, at the *Bâtiment Trésor* is daily interfering in the day-to-day matters of the GRA, giving instructions daily?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo is not the Minister to reply! Let the Prime Minister reply! He is my friend, but he is not the Minister of Finance! He should wait for his turn!

(Interruptions)

He should not behave in a disorderly manner!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! I have said several times that nobody should intervene. Allow the hon. Prime Minister to give his reply! The question has been asked to the hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Please!

Mr Bhagwan: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the other day, you drew my attention that we must not behave in a disorderly manner.

Madam Speaker: Sure!

Mr Bhagwan: I think it should be applied to Minister Jhugroo.

Madam Speaker: Sure! I just drew his attention.

Mr Bhagwan: He is my good friend, but he is behaving in a disorderly manner.

Madam Speaker: I am saying that if ever questions are being asked to the hon. Prime Minister, it is for the hon. Prime Minister to reply. I do not think he needs the support of any of you to reply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I will repeat again my question. Is the Prime Minister prepared at least to discuss with the acting Chairperson not to interfere - unless on the advice of the Prime Minister - on a daily basis? We all know what is happening at the GRA and at the races at Champ de Mars.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please! You know that all questions have to arise from the main question. The main question relates to Mr Dabeedin, but not to the GRA. Now, if the hon. Prime Minister wants to reply, he is free to do so.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me just give additional information that with regard to the Disciplinary Committee, it was considered that there was no sufficient ground to pursue the matter further. That is why under the previous Government, they had to reinstate Mr D. Now, this is not the first time that the hon. Member has been alleging that there has been interference by Mr X, Y and Z at the GRA and I have obviously gathered information. There is one thing that probably raises criticisms from certain quarters, I would say, because these people are doing their work properly. *Ils sont en train de mettre de l'ordre.*

The hon. Member is talking about GRA. Previously we were not able to find out about *dopage* concerning horse racing, but now just see what has happened. They have got a few cases already which have been detected. I must say that they are doing their work. They are assuming their responsibility and that we are here to put order, especially where there is urgent need to put order.

CENTRAL PROCUREMENT BOARD – COMPOSITION

No. B/486) Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Central Procurement Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the composition thereof, indicating in each case, the date of appointment thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the present composition of the Central Procurement Board is as follows –

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Chairperson | - | Mr Raj Hemansing Prayag, PDSM, appointed on 18 June 2018 |
| Vice-Chairpersons | - | <div style="vertical-align: top;"> (i) Mr Krishna Menon Mauremootoo, re-appointed on 18 June 2018

 (ii) Mr Hirendranath Rambhojun, re-appointed on 15 September 2017 </div> |
| Members | - | <div style="vertical-align: top;"> (i) Mrs Sharda Devi Dindoyal re-appointed on 18 June 2018

 (ii) Mr Kersley Erol Bagwan, re-appointed on 18 June 2018 </div> |

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: This is the last time I am drawing your attention, hon. Jhugroo! I have been very patient, but this is the last time that I am drawing your attention. Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister:

(iii) Mr Abdool Sattar Aboobakar, OSK, appointed on
18 June 2018

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Can the hon. Prime Minister state if any of them had mandate before?

The Prime Minister: Well, what I can say to the House is that everything is being done according to the provisions of the law.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Several judgments of the Independent Review Panel have made a suggestion with regard to the opening of the bids. Apparently, now, the procedure is only for those who have tendered, only the final tender price is given instead of the detail. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will see to it that, at least, the Procurement Board acts according to the recommendation made by the Independent Review Panel in several judgements?

Madam Speaker: Again, this is a totally different question and it does not arise from the main question. I am drawing your attention. The hon. Prime Minister may wish to reply, but I am just drawing your attention that we should not depart from the main question. The main question relates to CPB, the composition and date of appointment. Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he can confirm if, according to the legislation, these members of the CPB are required by law to declare their assets as we do, as it is in the legislation?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have to check whether they have to declare their assets. Do they? It seems that they have to.

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/501 in regard to the importation of and sale of live cattle, beef, goats and sheep for the 2017/2018 Eid-UI-Adha Festival will be replied by the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

PQ B/516 in regard to the social housing units containing asbestos at Madame Lolo will be replied by the hon. Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development.

PQ B/537 in regard to the implementation of a pilot project for the conversion of wave energy into electricity at Gris Gris/Souillac will be replied by the hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation.

PQs B/494, B/495, B/496, B/503, B/504 and B/547 have been withdrawn. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - LIGHT RAIL VEHICLES TYPE

(No. B/490) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the trains/trams to be used in the Metro Express Project, he will state the -

- (a) type, size and capacity thereof, indicating if same will be operated by overhead electrified cables or charged batteries, and
- (b) number thereof which will be operated -
 - (i) in the proposed initial period, and
 - (ii) subsequently, to recoup investment.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the trains will be supplied by Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles (CAF) from Spain. They will be of “Urbos 100” Light Rail Vehicles (LRV) type and will be bi-directional, with 100% low-floor LRVs, comprising seven modules each. Each LRV will have a total capacity of around 400 passengers and the LRVs will be electrified by overhead cables.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed that for the initial launch of the LRV System, which is scheduled as from September 2019 for Phase I, from Rose Hill to Port Louis, eight LRVs will be made operational.

With regard to part (b) (ii), I am informed that, subsequently, for the whole stretch of the alignment from Curepipe to Port Louis, 18 LRVs will be made available, out of which 16 LRVs would be operational at any given point in time, and it is expected that the investment will be recouped after 15 years, as per the Financial Appraisal Report prepared by the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, hon. Minister. I have checked the specifications of “Urbos 100”, and this is what CAF official site says -

“This family of trams is a modular solution.”

Furthermore, basing myself on what the MBC has presented about the project - I am going to circulate photos to the hon. Minister and to the House - can I ask the hon. Minister whether I can have his agreement to call the Metro from now onwards a tram rather than a LRV? Because this is officially being broadcast and defined by CAF itself.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I do not know what the MBC has reported. When they did the project, they called it Mauritius Light Rail Train (MLRT). When we are doing it, they want us to call it the Tram. This is not correct, and this is not fair.

Let me explain to you. A tram is a rail vehicle which runs on tramway tracks along public urban streets without a segregated corridor and, second, it has one or two vehicles. This one has seven - it can have from seven to nine. That is why it is called LRV. It is a Light Rail Vehicle weighing about 11 tons each, and it is about 300 – so, they are LRVs and not trams. I do not think that what they called the MLRT should now be called the tram in Mauritius. This is not fair.

We have changed nothing. What we have changed, on the contrary, is that the former project was buying “Urbos” Light Rail Vehicles. We are buying the third generation, which means that it has been upgraded twice since, and if you go on the - because the hon. Member was mentioning the CAF - CAF website, it will tell you that the CAF developed the first world verified EBD - about braking -, especially for the “Urbos 100” because they started it in the Spanish City of Zaragoza.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The MBC compared this to the Edinburgh Project, and this is the image that they broadcasted on television. According to them, it is a tram. Now, can I refer the hon. Minister to part (ii) of the question, recouping of investment. There is this very good decision, which I am fully agreeable with - hon. Collendavelloo is watching me word for word -, to make it free for the elderly, for the students and for the disabled to travel by the Metro - very good decision.

Now, can I ask the hon. Minister whether this figure of 60,000, which was aired all over the place - this is the critical number of passengers - includes the three categories that will be traveling free of charge and when will we recoup the investment of Rs18.8 billion for the Metro Express Project?

Mr Bodha: Well, the last part of the question is in relation to the trains. Now, we are discussing the whole feasibility. We came with the feasibility here. The Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, in fact, studied three cases: the base-case of 53,800 passengers,

paying passengers; mid-case was 70,000, and the high-case was 90,000. And with these figures, the total revenue expected in the first year was Rs622 m., operating cost in the 1st year was Rs461 m., and net operating surplus was Rs161 m.

Now, with regard to the Rs1.2 billion free travel budget, part of that budget will go to the Metro Express because the students, the elderly and those who have a social card will be travelling by the Metro. So, part of it will go, of course, to the Metro Express.

Mr Osman Mahomed: One last question on the speed at which the train will be moving, because in certain countries, it is said that when you miss a tram, you can run and catch it at the next station. Can we have an idea from the hon. Minister, the speed at which this train or tram or whatever will be travelling?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, we have always said that within the cities, it will go about 25/30 kms and in stretches where, for example, around Chebel, it can go up to 80 kms/hr.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We know that there are many hidden costs. Will the hon. Minister state whether, in respect of the high voltage electricity line, this cost will be met by consumers and CEB?

Mr Bodha: The consumption of electricity will be part of the operating cost.

Dr. Boolell: Can the hon. Minister disclose what the amount will be?

Mr Bodha: The amount of?

Dr. Boolell: The amount of the cost of high electricity.

Mr Bodha: No, but the electricity system forms part of the system.

Dr. Boolell: Would the hon. Minister disclose the amount?

Mr Bodha: The cost of the electricity being used forms part of the operating budget, but I do not have the figure now. If the hon. Member asks a specific question on the operating budget...

(Interruptions)

No, it is not a hidden cost. It is a cost that I cannot give now, but, of course, we can provide the answer.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - LIGHT RAIL VEHICLE – ECO-FRIENDLY

(No. B/491) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will give details of the ecological features of the trains/trams system, if any, in the quest for green/smart mobility.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) is designed to be eco-friendly and energy efficient, with no pollution and greenhouse emission. It will have Energy Saving devices for a lighting control system with occupancy sensors, timers. High efficacy LED light fixtures will be used in the Metro Stations and the buildings. Regenerative braking will be utilised for the LRV to conserve energy. Electricity will be sourced from the grid. Also, energy conservation by the Variable Refrigerant Volume will be achieved for air conditioning in office buildings.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the trains are designed with materials selected based on their recyclability and ease of dismantling at the end of their operating life; and also according to the functional, technical and regulatory requirements as per the contract, which have been drafted by the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise. The requirements are as per the established international best practice standards which can be compared to those applicable in Singapore, Spain and the United Kingdom.

I am also informed that the tracks are designed to have minimum operational noise and vibrations, as per the contract's requirements. Other sustainability aspects taken into consideration are as follows -

- excavated boulder/rock materials from the embankment works are planned to be crushed to produce subgrade and sub-ballast;
- an auto car wash system is to be put in place at the Depot for cleaning the LRV;
- 70% of water is to be recycled from the car wash at the depot;
- rain water harvesting with attenuation tank and balancing pond at the Depot, and
- recharge pits at all the stations.

The integrated public transport systems being designed and implemented will reduce in traffic decongestion and enable smart mobility with reduction of carbon emission.

Madam Speaker, furthermore, in order to ensure that the Metro Express Project is eco-friendly and has a minimum impact on the environment, provision has been made for a minimum of three tree saplings to be planted for each tree located on the alignment that has been felled. The target is to plant 6,000 saplings.

Further, those trees that could be transplanted from the train corridor, around 80 palm trees have already been transplanted. And as we are aware, a new Recreational Park of around seven *Arpents* is being set up at Ebène to make up for the loss of the Promenade Roland Armand.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, ecology is the study of relationships between plants, animals, people and their environment and the balances between these relationships. Now, since the hon. Minister in his original reply referred to the Roland Armand issue, can I ask the hon. Minister whether transferring the recreational park behind the CEB station, where all the overhead very high station cable runs, a serious health hazard, is considered an ecological move for the people living there?

Mr Bodha We have considered this factor, Madam Speaker, and we have been told that we have no issue about that. The park can be created there.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The hon. Minister has mentioned about noise level. When the train enters Port Louis, at some point in La Butte, it will run very near to windows of houses. Now, will these people be able to sustain the noise level? Because it cannot be noise free at all, it won't be zero noise level!

Mr Bodha: From what I have been told, the information that I have, Madam Speaker, is that operational vibration produced by passing trains is normally classified as intermitted vibration and is expected to have a minimum impact on local operating amenity, including structural disturbances to buildings and human comfort. So, these are the standards that we are applying. Mitigation measures in the contract include the use of suitable noise and vibration mitigation technology, such as rail dampers, ballast mats, and high resilience fasteners. Moreover, the selected LRV for Metro Express is expected to provide superior noise and vibration attenuation. And prior to the operations of the Metro Express, the requirements on noise and vibration standards would be formalised and applicable regulations and guidelines in what we call the future Railway Bill.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister has made mention of the park at Ebène. He is talking about environment and eco-friendly. I raised this issue on many, many occasions, even the other day to the hon. Minister. Still up to this morning, this area where we are supposed to have a five-star, six-star jogging park etc, lorries are continuing to dump on this site, adjoining the Ebène SSS. I won't talk about the problem of pollution, rats and so on - and there is a new bus stand there. Can the hon. Minister, at least, in the public interest have a site visit, advertise it on TV, bring the officers who are responsible, at least, *pour faire fermer ce truc-là*?

Mr Bodha: I have always been very attentive to the suggestions of hon. Bhagwan. First of all, we have to cordon off the area, but we have a holding area for the buses, and we are looking for another one. As soon as the resurfacing is done, we will move away the buses and we will cordon off the whole area. I would like to reassure the hon. Member. In fact, I had a meeting yesterday, the Coordination Meeting, and the Mayor of Rose Hill reassured me that there was no dumping. But, anyway, I will do a site visit personally. If my colleagues from the Constituency would accompany me to see how things are, and urgent measures should be taken, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question, Hon. Osman Mahomed!

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - ENERGY REQUIREMENTS

(No. B/492) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will state –

- (a) the additional electricity requirements thereof during peak hours, in terms of megawatts;
- (b) if the generation of electricity from photovoltaic sources from the roof of the stations or trains/trams is being envisaged and, if not, why not, and
- (c) the number of associated electric substations required for the running thereof.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the trains will be supplied – no, no, this is not this one!

Madam Speaker: PQ No. B/492!

Mr Bodha: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the 19 stations will be of the Open type.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the two stations at Curepipe and Rose Hill will be elevated. The remaining 17 stations will be at ground level. Proper drainage system has been designed and constructed in order to take care of heavy rainfall. The stations will be roofed and will provide comfort and shelter to users against adverse weather conditions....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Minister, you are replying to PQ B/493. We are still on PQ B/492.

(Interruptions)

PQ B/492!

Mr Bodha: We have too many questions on the Metro, Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

We are going fast!

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the estimated peak hour energy requirements for the Metro is 21 Mega Watt, half for the LRVs, that is, the vehicles, and half for the Depot and the stations.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the generation of electricity from photovoltaic sources from the roof of the stations or trains is not planned and envisaged at present as the weight of the panels of the photovoltaic system increases the energy required to propel the train, and the power generated by the photovoltaic systems is not sufficient for traction.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that 9 Traction Substations are being planned for the entire stretch of the Metro Express Project.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, we have a very speedy Minister this morning! Madam Speaker, the motto for this project is 'Smart Mauritius on Track'. Now,

can I ask the hon. Minister, 21 Mega Watt is an overhead electric cable, does it makes sense, at a time when CEB is burying all its electricity cables, that we are a cyclonic country, and tomorrow, we could be at the whims and caprices of Mother Nature if all the Metro Express cables should fall within a cyclone? This will cripple and paralyse the whole public transportation system.

Could we not have had, like other countries are resorting to, charged vehicles that will run without electric cables? Will this not be more in line with 'Smart Mauritius on Track'?

Mr Bodha: I think, this is something which we can consider in the future. In the meantime, we have to have something which is sure, that is, from the grid. This is what I have been told. Now, as regard to cyclones, the system which has been designed can stand gusts up to 100 miles per hour.

(Interruptions)

100 miles per hour! Gusts!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, wait!

Mr Bodha: The Metro will stop at Class 2, which is 85...

(Interruptions)

No, no! The Metro has been designed to be able to stand all the gusts that we have in Mauritius, but the trains will stop after Class 2.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Sorry, Madam Speaker, I think the Minister has lost me there or I have lost him.

The problem, hon. Minister, is not operation of the train. The problem is we normally design for 250 kilometres per hour. The problem is the gust might break all the cables that run on top and it will take months and months for the system to be back on track again.

Mr Bodha: To make a difference between the operating, I gave the figures. As for the system itself, the system is designed to sustain what we have with the normal electrical grid.

(Interruptions)

No, the normal one that we have here, which can stand the Class III, Class IV, the whole system has been designed for that. When it comes to the rolling stock, then the train will stop at gusts of 85 to 86, which is Class II.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The electricity consumption will very much depend on the operating hours of the Metro Express. So, may I know from the hon. Minister what time will the metro start running and the station will be open, and at what time they will close at night?

Mr Bodha: We are thinking of starting between 5.00 a.m. and 06.00 a.m. and ending between 9.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m., but this has been taken care of with the CEB, we have been working in close collaboration with the CEB as regards to the electricity feed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Madam Speaker, we have a little problem with timing, but in the area of Rose Hill and Beau Bassin, the distributed power is not enough to cater for the metro right now, and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister came up with the project of constructing a GIS Substation mainly at Ébène which will cater for this problem.

Now, the question is: is the hon. Minister aware that the Substation, the tender itself is not yet issued and that will require 18 months for construction. Right now, there is only pre-qualification exercise that has been done. So, there will be a problem of timing. My advice is: will the hon. Minister consider to request from CEB a temporary line 66 kV in the meantime?

Mr Bodha: We are working with Mr Dabeedin, who is in charge of the CEB, closely as regards the monitoring of the supply of the electricity. I would like to say that the nine substations are to be located in Curepipe, Sadally, Phoenix, Quatre Bornes, Barkly, Rose Hill, Richelieu, Belle Village and Caudan. And this is being catered for by LNT in collaboration with the CEB.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Madam Speaker, having heard from the hon. Minister that the train is using 21 MW of electricity per day, so is it feasible and like 21 MW, can we have the value in rupees, how much it is costing per day, because as to us, it is not that much feasible?

And secondly, these trains are they connected to a main grid, because we need 21 MW or is it connected on its way to several grids.

Mr Bodha: But I said that you have several substations.

As regards to the cost, I don't have the figure now. What I have been told is that 20 MW is for a small town of 15,000 households. This is what I have been told to understand what it is all about.

Madam Speaker: Last question on this, hon. Osman Mahomed.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to the substation, it is normal practice for promoters to meet the cost of construction of substation. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is CEB that is going to fork out the bill for the construction or Metro Express Company Ltd., because if it is the latter, this is deemed a hidden cost that has contributed to bringing down the former project to what it is at Rs18 billion? Can I ask the hon. Minister, therefore, which entity is forking out the bill, paying for the cost of the substation?

Mr Bodha: What I have always said is that the Rs18.8 billion is to provide for the project to be operational, and it involves the shifting of utilities, the setting up of the stations, because Metro Express is going to be a client of CEB. So, in the present instance, the project is going to be financed within the Rs18.8 billion.

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

At 12.59 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

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

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - STATIONS

(No. B/493) **Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether in regard to the trains/tram stations to be constructed as part of the Metro Express Project, he will state if they –

- (a) will be of the open or closed type;
- (b) will be elevated and, if not, indicate the mitigating measures contemplated to avoid the flooding thereof and of connecting lines in case of heavy downpour, and
- (c) have been the subject of Traffic Impact Assessment for the sake of smart mobility and, if not, why not.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the 19 stations will be of Open type.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the two stations at Curepipe and Rose Hill will be elevated. The remaining 17 stations will be at ground level. Proper drainage system has been designed and constructed, in order to take care of heavy rainfall. The stations will be roofed and will provide comfort and shelter to users against adverse weather conditions. The catenary system, which is similar to the grid providing electricity to households, will also not be affected.

With regard to part (c) of the question, Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Traffic Assessment has been carried out by Larsen and Toubro Limited, the Design and Build Contractor, in accordance with its obligations under the contract. Further, the contractor is preparing its Transport Integration Plan for stations to enable smart mobility.

The Traffic Management Liaison Group, which comprise representatives of the Road Development Authority, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, Larsen and Toubro Ltd, Metro Express Limited, RITES Ltd, National Transport Authority, they meet regularly to ensure that necessary measures are taken to see to it that there is traffic fluidity and seamless transport integration during the work period. Later, this Traffic Management Liaison Group will work on the Operation Readiness Service Provider to provide for traffic integration.

To this effect, the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise is presently working on Rail Integration and Transport Planning to bring about an integrated Metro Express/bus network to optimise public transport service routes; and the reorganisation of the bus system and feeder bus system. The exercise will include station infrastructure, future park-and-ride facilities, integrated ticketing opportunities, the cashless system and the Urban Terminals along with interchanges at roads will be set up under the Road Decongestion Programme will also contribute to traffic mobility.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you Madam Speaker. One question about traffic management; every time the train passes an intersection with the road, has it been catered for that - because the traffic is two-way - that will block the traffic along the road when two trains are passing together or each time will we need to wait for one train to go in one direction and the other train comes back a few minutes later, thereby possibly, given that no proper Traffic Impact Assessment has been done in that sense, causing a chaotic situation?

Mr Bodha: This is a very interesting remark, Madam Speaker, because if the trains are at seven minutes and, in fact, they interchange at three minutes in two directions, that will create really a very chaotic situation for the traffic because then we will have to stop the traffic every three minutes. So, this is being planned in such a manner that we do not have this chaotic situation at the interchanges.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: I now turn to the future park-and-ride. Now, where will land be catered for people to park their cars to take the ride on the train? If we take, in towns, for example, already it is very congested. What is happening now in Rose-Hill, now is very telling of what will happen later on. Can I know from the hon. Minister what provision is being made for park-and-ride?

Mr Bodha: Each Urban Terminal will have smart parking facilities, Madam Speaker. We are starting with the Victoria Urban Terminal. We will do the same at the Immigration Urban Terminal and each terminal has a component of smart parking. Now, parking is already a problem in most of the cities, so we will have to see to it that we have parking within the terminal. In Vacoas, I think the problem will not be a big one; in Curepipe, it will not be a big one because the terminal in Curepipe is going to be around 11 *arpents*. The problem will be most probably in Rose-Hill, and Victoria is Okay - I think we are thinking of 1,000 parking spaces - Immigration as well. So, maybe Quatre Bornes and Rose-Hill would have some problems about the parking facilities.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think communication is one of the most important components in this project. Now, that the project is taking shape, can I, at least, ask the hon. Minister whether he is planning? Because people are asking questions; replying to questions in Parliament although it is live, doing some *exposition* is another thing. Does not the Minister consider that it is time now to prepare a sort of *brochure* and, at least, distribute

to those people who are living along Vandermeersch Street, even giving the Municipality the responsibility to distribute it; prepare pamphlet and inform the people of the traffic problems which they will have to face and what are the alternatives. So, can I ask the hon. Minister if he can look after that? And, especially he has informed that he met the mayor yesterday. The DPM would not agree with me because he has another type of car than ours. The situation along Vandermeersch Street is very bad for the life of people, the state of the road, there is the QEC college there and all sorts of institutions. So, can I appeal again on this issue to ask the Minister to see with the Municipality or himself to go and see what is the state of the road along Vandermeersch in the public interest?

Mr Bodha: We are very concerned about the hassle, the congestion and all the problems, Madam Speaker. We have a website which is daily being re-actualised and I was saying earlier that we have, at least, today 18 sites of work. On the website we have the details of all works which are being done on each and every site. So, the website is there, but we are thinking of having a Metro News and the communication cell of Metro Express is working on it with some sort of newspaper/brochure, which we can distribute. As regards the resurfacing of the road, once all the works have been done, the roads have to be reinstated in a better state than it was before the works.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr Boolell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Would the Minister state whether to alleviate congestion along the *route* St Jean, the entrances to Quatre Bornes will require flyover and if he could tell us whether there will be additional costs?

Mr Bodha: Quatre Bornes, Madam Speaker, is a real challenge. That is why we have said that the road from Quatre Bornes towards St Jean will be just to leave the city. We are entering at Hillcrest. So, the Hillcrest project is being designed and has to be implemented before the Metro works start. And I would like to reassure the hon. Member for Belle-Rose and Quatre Bornes that I am going to set up a Committee for Quatre Bornes with the *forces vives* and everybody so that we can consider each and every difficulty and find solutions because Quatre Bornes is a real challenge.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to turn my question to the flooding part - flooding which is part of the question. It is well known that the roundabout at Beau Bassin is inundated during heavy downpour. Can I ask the hon. Minister

for that particular spot, which is a cause of worry for many people, what will happen there in order to alleviate this heavy water accumulation problem?

Mr Bodha: That roundabout at Beau Bassin has, at least, 8 outlets. So, this is another major challenge. Together with the topography, that is, the problem of drains, so we are monitoring the situation within the Traffic Modelling Unit and we will consider the civil engineering as well so that we do not have the problem of water. As far as the trains are concerned, because of the electricity, the rails cannot be at a level which can be flooded.

POUDRE D'OR - REGISTERED FISHERMEN

(No. B/494) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the registered fishermen, he will state the number thereof in the region of Poudre d'Or, along the coast line to Mont Choisy, for each of the years 2000, 2010 and 2017.

(Withdrawn)

FISHERMEN - LOAN FACILITIES

(No. B/495) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the fishermen, he will state if consideration will be given for the granting thereto of soft loan facilities without guarantee for the maintenance of their boats.

(Withdrawn)

FISHERMEN – BAD WEATHER ALLOWANCE

(No. B/496) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the fishermen, he will state the quantum of funds earmarked for the empowerment thereof in relation to climate change over the past three years, indicating if consideration will be given for changes in the payment of the bad weather allowance thereto, in the wake thereof.

(Withdrawn)

LA COLOMBE SHELTER - INCIDENTS

(No. B/497) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

whether, in regard to La Colombe Shelter, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of violent incidents that have occurred thereat in 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively, indicating in each case, the actions taken to prevent the recurrence thereof.

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As regards La Colombe Shelter, I am informed that there has been no violent incident reported in 2015.

2 incidents were reported in 2016 and 3 occurred in 2017.

In each case reported, psychological counselling and support were provided to the children. Close monitoring and counselling are ensured by the Officers of the Child Development Unit (CDU). Four out of the five incidents have also been reported to the Police.

Now, as regards what action has been taken also, in order to prevent such recurrence, the children, who were involved in the incidents respectively, have been transferred to different Residential Care Institutions/Shelters and they are closely being followed. A major decrowding exercise is also being carried at La Colombe.

For the wellbeing and development of the children, be it social, recreational, educational and from sports perspective, many activities are organised to engage the children and they are also involved Children's Club as well as home economics activities.

Moreover, after having looked at the situation, it was deemed that specialised training has to be dispensed, and has been dispensed on a regular basis to the caregivers of these institutions. On a long-term basis, we are also working on the recommendations made by the Technical Committee set up last year at the level of my Ministry, in order to elaborate a plan for rehabilitation and reintegration of the children placed under Court Orders in RCIs as provided under the Child Protection Act.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. *La Colombe* is under the aegis of the National Children's Council, that is, under her Ministry. Both the Fact-Finding Committee on Residential Care Institutions headed by Mr Vellien and the Ombudsperson for Children annual report 2016/2017 draw the attention to the fact that *La Colombe* is overcrowded. There are 95 children instead of 60, and the ratio of carers to inmates is under what is required by law. So, may I know from the hon. Minister, in light of what has been said in the

report of Mr Vellien and the Ombudsperson, what has her Ministry done to reduce the number of children in *La Colombe* and to increase the ratio of carers to inmates?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: As far back as, I believe it was in 2008, when *La Colombe* was managed by a NGO, there were about 120 children in the shelter. So, indeed, that was a great number of children. As rightly pointed out, the Ombudsperson for Children as well as the Vellien Report had recommended a decrowding, and this exercise was carried out by my predecessors. When I came, it has continued, and now we have gone to 40, I believe, children in the shelter. We are still trying to ensure that children are not just placed in those shelters and left there. The idea was that *La Colombe* would be a stopover, so that once in emergency, we take the children and then we find a place suitable for the children. In order to carry on this exercise, we are ensuring that the reintegration, be it in family or in society, is being carried out. In fact, a number of recommendations made by the Ombudsperson for Children (OC) have been implemented and a number of them, as per the Vellien Report, also have been implemented, and some are still ongoing.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At page 73 of her report, this is what the Ombudsperson stated –

“The OC has concluded with concern that there are no monitoring and support mechanisms in place to prevent incidents of violence by members of staff and among the children. There is no clear protocol to ensure that situations of violence are dealt with effectively once identified.”

So, may I know from the hon. Minister, in light of the comments made by the Ombudsperson for Children, what has her Ministry done in terms of having the protocol to avoid violence?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Indeed, a number of actions have been taken. They are all set out in this table. There is a big document, which I can table to specify what action has been taken; if I may do that at a later stage. However, as regards the protocol, there is a list of dos and don'ts that are supposed to be in place as well. A Technical Committee which was set up last year, and has been approved by Cabinet, is being implemented with precisely a list of how to proceed and how to improve the situation. So, those recommendations were indeed for 2015 to 2017 and are still being implemented.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mrs Perraud: Merci, Madame la présidente. Madame la présidente, une mauvaise condition de vie et d'hygiène de vie dans le *shelter* peut engendrer un gros problème de discipline et de violence. Est-ce que Madame la ministre peut informer la Chambre pourquoi les enfants de ce *shelter La Colombe* reçoivent des vêtements seulement une fois l'an ? En ce moment même, ils ont un gros problème, ils n'ont pas l'essentiel, c'est-à-dire les sous-vêtements et les chaussettes. Et ces enfants attendent ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, do not make a statement! Ask your question and the Minister will reply.

Mrs Perraud: Pourquoi est-ce que le *shelter* doit attendre que les dons proviennent des généreux donateurs, des ONG ? Pourquoi ces enfants reçoivent les vêtements une seule fois l'an ?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: I am not aware of such practice. In fact, I have personally visited the shelter. On many occasions, I have spoken to the children, and this is not the case. I had heard such things when I joined the Ministry and I did surprise visits on a number of occasions, and I did not find such a situation. I know that recently a number of works have been done. Of course, one will appreciate that when I went to visit the shelter, it was in the condition that it was left at the time. They had all the furniture that was required, but in spite of that, there has been a major upgrading of the shelter, improvement made, renovation work made, and accessories were given. As far as clothing is concerned, sometimes, there are gifts, donations, but nonetheless, we do not rely on these donations solely because all the children who are there receive per capita the sum of Rs400 per day. That money is used indeed to purchase clothes for the children. So, that is not the case, in other words.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Many of these innocent children are very difficult children, for reasons which are obvious. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, before a child is admitted, the child undergoes psychological assessment to ensure later on that there is proper follow-up?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: Indeed, this was highlighted in the report of the Ombudsperson that it would appear that the children are not being psychologically assessed, but that is not correct. In fact, upon admission of the children to the RCIs, they are normally seen by medical practitioner and there is a follow-up. So, a physical assessment as well as a

psychological assessment is being done at the time they are either admitted or in the course of the next day or the following day.

If I may also, bearing in mind - since the issue of psychological assessment has been raised, there is work been done right now at the Ministry. When there is process of recruitment, it is not just psychologists, but also people having worked with psychiatric patients in the past, namely psychiatric nurses, in order to ensure that we have a shelter that deals precisely with that situation. In the past, what would happen is that if a child comes out and has a certain psychological or disturbing behaviour, these children were just merely put at BSH. When I realised that was the ongoing practice, which has been going on for years, I found that not quite proper. Therefore, what we have done is we are working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, which is assisting us, in order to recruit such people so that we have a specialised place for the children, in order to deal with such situations.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the major recommendations of the Fact-Finding Committee headed by Mr Vellien was that a regulatory body should be set up to monitor and regulate the recruitment of staff, the required qualification, management profile and sustainability of the premises just like we have the Residential Care Homes Act 2013 for residential care homes. So, may I know from the hon. Minister whether Government intends to come forward with a Bill to set up this regulatory body to monitor all shelters and residential care homes?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: When we take all the reports and all recommendations of different committees that were set up in order to address the situation in shelters, Madam Speaker, a number of recommendations have been retained and will be implemented, and those will come out in the Children's Bill. We are presently working on the Bill. There was a draft, and it had to be worked and reworked upon. There were Consultants from the European Union who came to Mauritius and did their consultations and their recommendations. Those have now been finalised and have been circulated to different Ministries for responses. Once we have that, and that should be within a week, instructions will go for the review of the draft Bill, so that it can be finalised to be brought to Parliament.

EX-SMEDA - STAFF - REDEPLOYMENT

(No. B/498) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to

the former Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, he will state the number of former staff thereof who have –

- (a) been transferred to SME Mauritius;
- (b) been redeployed, and
- (c) retired, indicating the aggregate amount of money paid out thereto following the closure thereof.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, following the proclamation of the Small and Medium Enterprises Act 2017, on 18 January 2018, which repealed the SMEDA Act, all the activities of the ex-SMEDA, except registration of SMEs, have been transferred to SME Mauritius, a State-owned company which operates under the aegis of my Ministry.

Subsequently, in accordance with section 16(3) of the Small and Medium Enterprises Act, all the 94 employees of the Permanent and Pensionable Establishment of the ex-SMEDA were given the option of either to be transferred to SME Mauritius or to be redeployed to the public sector or to retire on ground of abolition of office. The employees had to exercise their option within 30 days from the date of the coming into operation of the SME Act.

On 19 February 2018, the date limit for the employees of the ex-SMEDA to submit their option forms, 10 employees have opted to join SME Mauritius, 77 to be redeployed and 7 for retirement. Madam Speaker, following the options exercised by those employees, I am informed that –

- (a) 10 employees have been transferred to SME Mauritius with effect from 20 February 2018;
- (b) 75 employees have been redeployed: 36 to Ministries and 34 to Parastatal bodies with effect from 23 April 2018, and 5 to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly with effect from 01 July 2018. The redeployment exercise was carried out by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, except for the 5 employees of the ex-SMEDA in Rodrigues, and
- (c) 7 employees have retired, one employee has resigned from the service, and one employee, who was on preretirement leave, will retire on 18 July 2018.

As regards the aggregate amount paid to the employees of the defunct institution, I am informed that, to date, an amount of around Rs14.5 m. has been paid; out of which Rs5 m. has been disbursed by SICOM.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Minister aware that certain ex-employees of the SMEDA who have been redeployed, are complaining that the redeployment exercise lacks in transparency and fairness, and was arbitrary in that certain of the ex-staff were transferred to the Ministry of Business Enterprise and others to other Ministries?

Mr Bholah: In fact, I am aware that 10 of the ex-SMEDA employees have reported the case to the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training regarding their posting where they are not satisfied with the conditions. The last meeting we had was on 21 June 2018 and the conciliation meeting is ongoing. There are certain information that have been requested from my Ministry and which will be subsequently submitted.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Is the hon. Minister aware that in the terms of the redeployment letter which was sent to the ex-SMEDA staffs, it is written, and I quote –

“The length of service for redeployed employees of ex-SMEDA will not be considered for the purpose of seniority.”

Is the hon. Minister aware of it, and does he agree that all the ex-SMEDA staffs will lose their years of employment and not be counted towards seniority?

Mr Bholah: As far as I know, they have been posted to different positions, where the terms and conditions are not less favorable to what they enjoyed, and the length of service, I believe, will be considered.

Mr Uteem: A last question to the hon. Minister! Being given that there is clearly a mismatch between the qualifications, the skills of the ex-SMEDA employees and the various Ministries and parastatal bodies where they have been redeployed to, would the hon. Minister consider having discussions with SME Mauritius and with these former staff to see whether they can be re-employed by SME Mauritius because they are trained to help SMEs?

Mr Bholah: I understand the point of the hon. Member. Anyway, I have stated that 10 members are complaining presently for their present posting. Now, the meeting will be ongoing and we will see after submission of information to the Conciliation Committee how we can proceed further.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

POLYTECHNICS MAURITIUS – CAMPUSES - OPERATIONAL

(No. B/499) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd., she will, for the

benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the amount of money paid in terms of consultancy and management fees respectively in relation to the construction of the buildings thereof, if any, indicating the –

(a) current use made thereof, and

(b) amount of rent, if any, being charged in respect thereof.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, the Polytechnics project has been the subject of numerous Parliamentary Questions in the past, yet for the information of the House, I believe it is important to provide a brief history of the project which was initiated by the previous Government before talking about the present project.

In 2011, the previous Government came up with a policy to set up three buildings at Pamplemousses, Montagne Blanche and Reduit respectively, with the main objective of renting them out to private parties for the running of university campuses. Decision was thereafter taken in May 2013, to set up the Knowledge Parks Ltd, a fully-owned Government Company to own and manage the three new university campuses. The then State Land Development Company Ltd, now Landscape Mauritius Ltd, was appointed as the implementation agency for the Knowledge Parks Ltd Project.

When this Government took office in December 2014, the three buildings which were still under construction were transferred to my Ministry. Given the major reforms taking place in the Education Sector and in particular, in the Technical Vocational Education and Training Sector, the current Government announced its decision in 2015, to use the three buildings to start the Polytechnics project with the objective of running training programmes to serve the emerging needs of Mauritius for a qualified human resource at middle-professional level.

On 19 August 2016, Government approved that a new company, Polytechnics Mauritius be set up to replace the Knowledge Parks Ltd, and thus, the Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd was gazetted in March 2017.

Madam Speaker, in reply to part (a) of the question, the then State Land Development Company Ltd had on 26 October 2010, awarded a contract for consultancy services to Luxconsult Mtius Ltd for the Design and Supervision of the Reduit Building for a sum of Rs34, 287,005 inclusive of VAT. In June 2011, the consultancy services fees were revised to Rs50,890,691 inclusive of VAT, to also cater for the concept planning, detailed design, construction and supervision of the two other buildings located at Pamplemousses and Montagne Blanche.

However, the contract price was revised to Rs58,557,238 inclusive of VAT for the provision of additional consultancy services for supervision works carried out during the extended period of the works contract. The additional provision of Rs7,666,546 prior to December 2014 is due to a change in internal designs during the construction period, and hence, extra time period was required to accommodate the changes for the final delivery of the buildings.

As at May 2018, Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd made a total payment of Rs56,947,956, inclusive of VAT to Luxconsults Mtius Ltd. The remaining amount of Rs1.6 m. will be paid upon completion of snag works at the Reduit Campus by Luxconsult Mtius Ltd and a subsequent handing over to Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd.

As regards management fees, Knowledge Parks Ltd has effected a total payment on 10 November 2013 to the then State Land Development Company Ltd for a total sum of Rs7,020,000, inclusive of VAT.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the second part of the question, I am glad to inform the House that the three campuses of Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd are now fully operational.

The Pamplemousses Campus is running the National Diploma in Nursing for some 116 students. The Montagne Blanche Campus will also be running the Diploma in International Hotel and Tourism Management and a first cohort of students is currently enrolled. As regards the Reduit Campus, it is currently housing the Corporate Office. In addition, the Programme Leader has been recruited for the ICT Faculty at Reduit and Fintech Workshop was carried out last week. Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd is currently finalising the Microsoft certification programmes which will soon start.

Madam Speaker, given that Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd is a body corporate established under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research with the objective of running training programmes to serve the emerging needs of the country, the issue of rental does not arise.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the Director of the National Audit, in 2016 and 2017 - two years - has been very critical of Polytechnics in Mauritius. And one of the recommendations that was made, and I quote -

“A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be drawn between the PML - Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd - and the Ministry whereby, the responsibilities and obligations of both parties would be clearly defined.”

So, may I know from the hon. Minister whether such a Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed upon and if she would table a copy of that Memorandum of Understanding?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd. is operating as a private company although the main shareholder remains the Government of Mauritius. No such MoU has been signed between Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd and my Ministry. However, Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd is operating on its own.

Mr Uteem: According to the Report of Audit, Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd has borrowed around Rs400 m. from the Government of Mauritius. May I know from the hon. Minister what is the interest rate and how they intend to repay that loan?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, I repeat that the previous Government had taken the decision to set up the building and to rent the building later on to private operators, and then the money was to be returned. When we took office in December 2014, discussions were held between my Ministry and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development so as to waive off this rent issue or the repayment of loans. Discussions are still ongoing between the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Mr Uteem: I have a last question. Thank you, Madam Speaker. According to the reply of the Ministry to the Audit Report, the Ministry stated that there is a number of partnerships in the fields nursing, paramedical, tourism, ICT that are being contemplated and being finalised. So, may I know from the hon. Minister since she said that all three campuses are now operational, if she can give the list of our partners who are running the courses in the three campuses?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In the case of the Pamplémousses campus, we have a partnership with the Mauritius Institute of Health through the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to run the nursing courses. At the Montagne Blanche Polytechnics, a partnership has been drawn between the Polytechnics of Montagne Blanche and HTMI of Switzerland. And in the case of the Polytechnics of Réduit, there are MoUs that are to be signed with - let me just check and I will let you know - a number of institutions, Microsoft being one of them and there are discussions on with other partners as well.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

RODRIGUES – CATTLE - IMPORTATION

(No. B/500) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to cattle, he will state if the –

- (a) banning of the importation thereof from Rodrigues following the last Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak has been waived and, if so, when and, if not, why not, and
- (b) breeding and slaughtering conditions thereof by operators other than the Mauritius Meat Authority will be reviewed, and
- (c) slaughtering thereof for the Eid-UI-Adha Festival at the Mauritius Meat Authority will be considered.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that following the outbreak of the Foot and Mouth Disease in July/August 2016 in Rodrigues and in Mauritius respectively, my Ministry has already waived the ban on importation of cattle by the Mauritius Meat Authority from Rodrigues since July 2017 and registered butchers are allowed to transfer cattle to be slaughtered at the Mauritius Meat Authority since 17 May, 2018. Communiqués have already been issued in that respect on 18 May and 07 June, 2018. The communiqué has also been posted on the website of my Ministry.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to point out that breeding and fattening of animals imported from Rodrigues is still not being allowed in Mauritius. This will be reviewed only after Mauritius has been granted its FMD freedom status by the World Organisation for Animal Health, i.e., the OIE.

In accordance with provisions of the Meat Act 1974, the MMA is the sole authority authorised and responsible for slaughter of animals in Mauritius. Special derogations are normally given to the public on specific occasions such as Eid-UI- Adha, Akika, Kali Puja and Baharia Puja for home slaughter of animals. However, in view of the prevailing conditions in Mauritius following the FMD outbreak, home slaughter of animals imported from Rodrigues is still not being allowed.

With regard to part (c), arrangements have been made for slaughtering facilities to be offered to the public for the Eid-UI-Adha festival, as has been the practice in previous years.

This includes animals procured locally, animals from Rodrigues and animals imported from overseas.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Mauritius Meat Authority until now has been selling all the beef, goat, sheep that it was importing to the public at large and also to the butchers at the same price. My question in relation to that is: by doing so, the Meat Authority *est en train de court-circuiter tous les bouchers. Ils vendent ...*

Madam Speaker: Yes, we understood your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: *Ils vendent le même prix aux bouchers et au public at large!*

Madam Speaker: Yes, we have understood ...

Mr Ameer Meea: So, my question to the hon. Minister is whether he can see to it that this practice be stopped so that in order to let the butchers as well have their gain in it.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, as I said, this situation is very exceptional because we had to face the problem with the FMD. Now that the situation is getting normalised and butchers are being allowed to import the cattle from Rodrigues, although for the time being it has to go straightaway to the slaughter house, but that question does not arise any more now.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes. Madam Speaker, according again to my information another problem the butchers are facing is that the Meat Authority is selling the beef from Rodrigues to Socovia, the sole importer of beef from South Africa, and Socovia, in turn, they are selling the beef of Meat Authority from Rodrigues to butchers whereas they were supposed to sell their beef that they import from South Africa. By doing so, the price of slaughter fees from Rodrigues is much lower than the prices from South Africa. So, my question to hon. Minister is whether he can see to it again that this practice be stopped again.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I will look into that.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to cattle, more specifically beef, perhaps as a sequel of the Foot and Mouth Disease, information that has come to me is that there are beef that are suffering from jaundice. Now, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of such information, whether beef that suffers from jaundice

that is shown clearly in their *basse boucherie*, the colour of it; I am referring to gut, liver and spleen which are being put away and the beef is being put on the market for sale, thereby having implication as regards to public health, and if the hon. Minister is not aware, whether he will enquire into this matter?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am not informed about that particular case whether there are beef that has been slaughtered with jaundice. But I will look into it anyway.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Madam Speaker, can the hon. Minister inform the House the period that the problem in Rodrigues will be settled and whether in future Rodrigues will have the priority as it will be a win-win situation within the Republic, that is cattle from Rodrigues?

Mr Seeruttun: In fact, Madam Speaker, since the outbreak, according to the protocol in place to treat this problem of FMD, we had to go for three rounds of vaccination. This was completed last year. And we have to wait for another six months to start doing a serosurveillance test. And this is ongoing and we hope by the end of this year, we will complete that surveillance and then we will ask for the three FMD status from the OIE. Then, we will be in a position to allow all cattle to come to Mauritius from Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

EID-UL-ADHA FESTIVAL - CATTLE IMPORTATION

(No. B/501) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to live cattle, beef, goats and sheep, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof –

- (a) imported and sold for the 2017 Eid-UI-Adha Festival, and
- (b) to be imported for the forthcoming Eid-UI-Adha Festival, indicating –
 - (i) the country of origin thereof, and
 - (ii) if the price thereof will be increased.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that a total of 4,400 cattle and 300 goat/sheep were imported from South Africa and sold for the 2017 Eid-UI-Adha festival.

As regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry has received applications from 8 importers from which 5 have been issued import permits for the import of 3,340 cattle and 400 goat/sheep from South Africa for the forthcoming festival. The Mauritius Meat Authority will also import some 100 cattle and 200 goat/sheep from Rodrigues for slaughter at the Central Abattoir for the festival.

I am further informed that Socovia has a stock of 2,700 cattle and M.E. Punjoo has a stock of 200 goat/sheep for sale for the festival. An import permit has also been granted to Socovia to import 1,200 cattle from South Africa. Two (2) consignments of 600 cattle each are expected to arrive in Mauritius by mid July 2018.

A total of 7,340 cattle and 800 goat/sheep will thus be available for the Eid-UL-Adha festival.

As far as price fixing of the animals to be sold is concerned, I am informed by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce which is responsible for that issue, that the price of live cattle imported from South Africa was fixed at Rs135 per kg in 2017. However, given that to date, the Commerce Division of that Ministry does not have information on the detailed costing of animals to be imported for the Eid Ul Adha Festival 2018, it is not possible for them at this stage to forecast whether there will be a rise or not in the price of live cattle for the Festival.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, I will go directly on the last part of the question, concerning the prices. Every year at the approach of the festival, the prices increase. In 2015, it was Rs125 per kg; in 2016: Rs130 per kg and in 2017: Rs135 per kg. For all these three years that I have just mentioned, for the first year, the excuse was dollar has gone up; for the second year, it was freight has gone up and, for the third year, that is, last year, prices of the cattle in South Africa has gone up. My information Madam Speaker, again, is that for this year we do not have these problems at all.

Madam Speaker: Question, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: The dollar has remained stable; the prices of freight have gone down.

Madam Speaker: Yes, no statement, but question, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: And also, the prices of cattle have remained stable. So, my question to the hon. Minister - since the Minister of Commerce is not replying - that is, to see to it that this year, there are no abuses in prices, because we all know the monopolistic situation that we are in Mauritius, and I admit it dates back to long time ago.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am informed that before the price fixing is done, the officers of the Ministry of Commerce do look at all the invoices that are submitted to the Ministry and they work out the price based on those evidence/information that are put at their disposal. So, I do not foresee any *maldonne* in that exercise. But, again, I will convey that message to my colleague so that this exercise can be done in the proper way, as usual.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, Madam Speaker. As the House is aware, we are in a monopolistic situation, unfortunately, and as I said, this is not new. And there are all sorts of abuses when we have this festival. Can I also ask the hon. Minister to see to it whether there can be any mechanism for the verification of the age of the animal to be slaughtered for the festival, because there are some religious criteria that must be respected?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am informed of that, with regard to the age specification, the veterinary officers of my Ministry do carry out that exercise through the teeth, I think, they do it, to check the proper age.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister mentioned that Socovia has been allowed to import cattle from South Africa. So, may I know from the hon. Minister, whether any other person had applied to import cattle and whether they had been refused the right to import cattle? Because Socovia already have 2,500 cattle, as he has stated, in stock.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, we received five applications by the date set, and so far, we have issued permits to bring in cattle by, at least, three other importers have been issued permit and the other few are still being looked at, because they don't have the proper quarantine farm, so that these are being looked into. So, it is not only one particular importer who had been given that permit.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Minister if Mauritius Meat Authority is also an importer of live cattle, beef, goat, and sheep? Why is it that it cannot have a butcher shop and sell fresh meat to regulate the price?

Mr Seeruttun: It is not the role of the Mauritius Meat Authority, I don't think, but it is more a regulator than a distributor.

SAUDI ARABIA - EMBASSY IN MAURITIUS

(No. B/502) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the proposed opening of a Saudi Arabia Embassy in Mauritius, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, the Ministry is pleased and welcomes the proposal of the Saudi Government for the opening of their Embassy in Mauritius. It is now up to the Saudi Government to inform us when they wish to open an Embassy.

The Saudi Government has indicated that they would open a Consulate General in Mauritius in the first instance.

In this context, a team of officials of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia came to Mauritius on 06 to 13 January 2018 to identify potential locations for the premises of the Consulate and residence of the staff, and to make necessary logistical arrangements for the opening of the Consulate General.

We have been informed that the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already appointed officers who will be posted in Mauritius to open and operate the Consulate General. The Ministry will provide all its assistance in the opening of the Consulate General.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, Madam Speaker. I also welcome the idea of the opening of a Consulate General of Saudi Arabia in Mauritius. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister to see to it when discussions are taking place, the issue of visa, because right now it is a headache for Mauritians, be it for pilgrimage, for family visit, for business visit to have visas to go to Saudi Arabia. The passport has to go to South Africa, costly at times Rs4000, Rs5000 per person. For a family of five/six persons you can imagine that!

Madam Speaker: So, your question is whether...

Mr Ameer Meea: So, my question to the hon. Minister is, whether to see to it when discussions are taking place that visas also may be issued in Mauritius.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: The hon. Member is right. In fact, with three Saudi Flights per week, there is a need now to ensure that visas for Saudi Arabia be exempted from visas totally. So, we have put a request to that, and this is being studied.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, thank you Madam Speaker. In an earlier reply to a PQ, the hon. Minister mentioned that the Saudi Authorities had been generous enough in Riyadh to put a plot of land and a building at the disposal of Mauritius to host the Embassy there. So, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the same courtesy would be reciprocated by the Mauritian Authorities to the Saudi?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Yes, Madam Speaker. In fact, we have been granted a plot of land in Riyadh which we are going to use for the construction of the Mauritius Embassy there. It is obvious that we are going to reciprocate with the Saudi Arabia regarding the plot of land. In fact, the delegation which came in January listed three plots of land, and we are in the process of locating, of identifying the plot of land that would be acceptable to the Saudi Government.

EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – DRUGS PROLIFERATION

(No. B/503) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if a proliferation of drugs thereat has been observed and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) mechanism, if any, put in place to assess the impact thereof and, if not, why not, and
- (b) number of cases thereof reported to her Ministry, since 2015 to date.

(Withdrawn)

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS SHELTERED FARMING PARK PROJECT - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/504) **Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Young Entrepreneurs Sheltered Farming Park Project, he will state the –

- (a) terms and conditions thereof, and
- (b) number of beneficiaries thereof, indicating their respective names and addresses.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

PUBLIC BEACHES - LIFEGUARD STATIONS

(No. B/505) **Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to drowning, he will state the number of persons who have perished as a result thereof in rivers, lakes and at sea respectively over the past five years, indicating if with regard to safety at sea, consideration will be given for the posting of professional lifeguards in equipped lifeguard stations on the public beaches.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Madam Speaker, as regards the posting of lifeguards along public beaches, I wish to point out that, on a daily basis, trained lifesavers from the National Coast Guard (NCG) and the Special Mobile Force (SMF) are deployed on five highly frequented public beaches, namely Mon-Choisy, Flic-en-Flac, Belle Mare, Blue Bay and Tamarin. The number of lifesavers is reinforced during weekends as well as on festive days, such as Ganga Asnan, Quasimodo, Cavadee, and Ganesh Chathurti, amongst others.

As regards other public beaches, these are under the watch of NCG Posts located around the island through regular patrols along the coastline. In all, there are 20 NCG Police Posts, which, *inter alia*, act as lifeguard stations and have the necessary lifesaving equipment, such as (i) Boats, (ii) Life Jackets, (ii) Rescue Tubes, (iii) Fins, (iv) Masks and Tubas, (v) Life-Lines, (vi) First Aid Kits, (vii) Whistles and Ropes, (viii) Trauma bags, (ix) Disaster bags, (x) Automated External Defibrillators and (xi) Resuscitation kits.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, the question which I had asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor was not with regard to what the National Coast Guard is doing. What I was getting at

was, first of all, to have the number of people who have perished as a result of drowning in rivers, lakes and sea respectively, which I believe he has not communicated to the House as yet. Does he intend to do so by tabling the figures or does he intend to do so by telling us orally what it is, and then I can get to my next question?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I have already said that 193 persons have died as a result of drowning in rivers, lakes and sea.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, sorry again. I mean it is the first time that he is saying it. I thank him for it, but my question was very specific - with regard to the past five years, whether I could have the figures, maybe circulated on a yearly basis. I would be very grateful.

Now, my question is the following: there is a difference between what the National Coast Guard or the Special Mobile Force does - what the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor has said - as opposed to what a lifeguard does. A lifeguard, when I look at what it does in many countries, is maintaining concentrated observation of the duty area and its users in order to anticipate problems that will enable a lifeguard to intervene prior to any issue happening. So, this is basically what the lifeguard does and you have lifeguard towers, as in many other places, in order to increase safety issues. So, could the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor consider, first of all, making the difference between what a lifeguard does as opposed to the National Coast Guard and consider the implementation of lifeguards, not only three, as he has said, and supplemented by others on all those five public beaches, but lifeguards on all public beaches, with lifeguard towers, in order to save our children and adults from drowning accidents?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I understand that this is being considered.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the same issue, I think there is a problem of regulations here. I spoke to the coastguard and they told me that they cannot arrest somebody who goes and swim in a place where it is prohibited to swim. They do not have the power. So, probably, the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor will look into the regulations so as to give some power to the coastguard not to allow people to swim in areas where it is dangerous to swim.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, people should not go and swim where it is prohibited.

Madam Speaker: Next question! Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

BAI CO. (MTIUS) LTD – FINANCIAL ADVISOR

(No. B/506) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd. and/or related companies, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to why it appointed the BDO as financial adviser thereof therefor in 2015 and -

- (a) obtain and table the letter of engagement thereof and
- (b) indicate if the BDO submitted its Report to his predecessor, in line with section 110A of the Insurance Act, prior to the appointment of the Special Administrators, and if so, table copy thereof.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the issue of BAI and Bramer Banking Corporation Ltd has been raised time and again in this august Assembly. It has to be pointed out that the IMF has, as far back as 2013, raised concern on the precarious state of affairs regarding the BAI, which had become a major threat to the financial sector of Mauritius. The then Leader of the Opposition had referred to BAI as a *tremblement de terre financier*.

Given the situation, especially after the revocation of the licence of the Bramer Banking Corporation Ltd by the Bank of Mauritius on 02 April 2015, I am informed that the Financial Services Commission had been monitoring the financial situation of the BAI Group. In the light of the foregoing, the FSC took a series of action in the public interest, which included the appointment of a financial advisor to obtain expert advice on the different scenari which could occur in case of the collapse of the BAI Group and to prepare a strategic plan to protect the interests of policyholders, employees and other stakeholders, and to safeguard the assets of the Group.

In this context, I am informed by the Financial Services Commission that BDO was appointed on 22 April 2015 as the financial advisor. The FSC wanted to ensure that all necessary steps were being taken to secure the interests of stakeholders and public. In fact, BDO was appointed to identify and propose possible measures to protect the value of the underlying assets.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the FSC that the engagement letter regarding the appointment of the financial advisor is private and confidential and is also subject to a confidentiality clause and cannot as such be divulged.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am not aware as to whether BDO had submitted a report to the former Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance. However, I am informed by the FSC that BDO had submitted a report dated 24 April 2015 to the Commission in its capacity as financial advisor. The report is private and confidential and is also subject to a confidentiality clause and cannot be divulged.

Madam Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House that section 110A of the Insurance Act provides, and I quote -

“(...) where the Minister is satisfied, on the basis of a report submitted by the Commission - the Financial Services Commission, I mean -, that the liabilities of an insurer and any of its related companies exceed its assets by at least one billion rupees and that such excess is likely to be a threat to the stability and soundness of the financial system of Mauritius, he may request the Commission to appoint a special administrator to the whole or part of the business activities of the insurer and any of its related companies.”

Accordingly, the appointment of a special administrator is independent of the decision in relation to the appointment of BDO.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. I thank him also for reading section 110A of the Insurance Act. To come back to what he has read, I also read here what he said: “where the Minister is satisfied, on the basis of a report submitted by the Commission.’ So, that is the ambit of my question. Was a report submitted in line with section 110A of the Insurance Act? And if it was submitted, could he table a copy of that report? Simple!

Mr Sesungkur: At the expense of repeating myself, in fact, the FSC asked for the preparation of a report by the financial advisor, and the report was submitted to the Minister at that time.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: I have the impression that the hon. Minister is trying to avoid going to what exactly is of importance and relevance here. If the hon. Minister is saying that the report

was issued, when was the report issued? And what I request is that he tables that report and tell us who were the persons who signed the report. Who?

Mr Sesungkur: If the hon. Member is referring to the report of the financial advisor, it is obvious; it is BDO which has signed the report.

Mr Mohamed: I am not referring, Madam Speaker, to that report. What I am saying here is that the financial advisor, BDO, was appointed on 22 April 2015, and the letter was received on 27 April 2015. I have a copy of that letter, and that letter does not contain any confidentiality clause, by the way. And I do not understand why the hon. Minister says there is a confidentiality clause, when I have it and it does not have it. It will be public in a few minutes and it does not have it. Now, what is interesting is that I am not referring to this report, as they were appointed, as he said, with regard to 'advise on the situation'. I am here referring to a specific section of the law, where the hon. Minister is supposed to base himself on that report. Is the Minister saying that the report upon which the Minister based himself was, indeed, the report of BDO for which they were appointed on the 22nd or is he saying that there was no other report? I am not saying it is that report. Which is the report? Is it this report that he based himself upon for section 110(a) or is there any other report?

Mr Sesungkur: Firstly, let me confirm to the hon. Member that I have the letter of engagement. Section 7 is clear. Firstly, there is a confidentiality clause in it. It is on page 3. Secondly, I have already explained in my reply that I cannot answer for the former Minister, what kind of report he had in his possession at the time he was taking the decision. What I have tried to explain here, there was a report made by the Financial Advisor, upon request of the Financial Services Commission. I have a copy here. But if there has been any other report submitted to the Minister, as I mentioned in my reply, I am not aware.

Mr Mohamed: A last question! Is the hon. Minister aware that this report produced by BDO was not *commandité* by the then hon. Minister in order to decide, in line with section 110(a) to appoint a special administrator? There is no report upon which the Minister based himself, apart from a flying sheet of paper which was prepared in his office! Is he aware of that?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, is this your last question?

Mr Mohamed: Is the hon. Minister aware of that, and that's the reason why he cannot even show us that report, because he is embarrassed?

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, What I can ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please! Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, I gave you sufficient time to ask your question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Sesungkur: I have already replied. Whatever happened at that time, I am not aware and in what condition. However, it is clear from different documents that I have been perused that there was a huge deficit of assets.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed! You had sufficient time to ask your question. Allow the Minister to reply! Please, be patient! From a sitting position, you are not allowed to ask questions.

Mr Sesungkur: The section 110 which I quoted is clear. The Minister should only confirm that there was a deficit in the assets of the company and that company presented a risk to the stability and soundness of the financial system. It can be a one-sheet paper, but provided that it is from someone who is capable of confirming that and it was not difficult.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, since the hon. Minister has the engagement letter, can I ask him what have been the fees that have been paid to BDO, up to now, when he was appointed as Financial Advisor?

Mr Sesungkur: The fee for this engagement is Rs950,000, excluding VAT.

Mr Ameer Meea: How much has been paid up to now?

Mr Sesungkur: This is the amount which has been paid, Rs950,000 plus VAT.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I know from the hon. Minister, who is also the Minister of Good Governance, if he finds it proper and compliant with good governance, that BDO is the financial adviser, then the partner of BDO becomes the special administrator, then BDO again becomes the transaction adviser with Britam Kenya in the sale of asset? Does he find that compliant with good governance, that the same accounting firm is doing conflicting ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, first of all, these decisions were already taken when I took office. Secondly, the accounting profession is a self-regulative profession. The professional accountants have to respect certain ethical standards and they, in their own judgement, have to decide whether they can accept a responsibility and if they don't find any conflict of interest. In my opinion, given that these people are experienced professionals, if they found that they could accept these assignments, then what can I say. It is for them to decide if they are not conflicting in their decision.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, next question!

MINISTRY OF TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNICATION AND INNOVATION - MRS R. Y. M., PERMANENT SECRETARY - OVERSEAS MISSIONS

(No. B/507) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to Mrs R. Y. M., Permanent Secretary at his Ministry, he will give a list of the overseas missions, conferences and workshops attended by her since September 2016 to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) country visited;
- (b) cost of air ticket;
- (c) per diem and other allowances paid out thereto, and
- (d) nature and purpose thereof.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, with regard to parts (a) and (d) of the question, I am tabling, with your permission, a statement providing the information called for by the hon. Member.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the total cost of airfare in respect of these missions amount to Rs601,843.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the *per diem* and other allowances were paid in accordance with the rates currently in force in the public service.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, any question?

Mr Mohamed: Yes. Could the hon. Minister confirm that the said person referred to in the question, in November 2016, went to Geneva alone for negotiations on the trade and

services agreement, which is an agreement which is much denounced by our trade unions? In spite of it being a technical meeting, she nominated herself and went to that meeting, and the cost of the travel, with the approval of the hon. Minister, was over Rs600,000 just for 11 days?

Mr Sawmynaden: I have just mentioned that the total cost ...

(Interruptions)

For 11 days? I do not know whether she has travelled for 11 days. But I have just mentioned that the total cost for her air travel is Rs601,843 and for the *per diem* it is according to what is being paid according to the public service. The thing is, whether she is technical or not, I think she is competent enough as a Permanent Secretary to judge herself whether she should attend that conference or not.

Mr Mohamed: Why is it that the technical cadre, since it was a technical issue on trade and services agreement in Geneva, were side-tracked in this matter, and priority was given to the person making the decision, with your approval, to go herself?

Mr Sawmynaden: It is not a question of my approval. She is the Head of the Department. She is the Head of the Ministry as Permanent Secretary. I think, she is wise enough to see whether she is the competent person to attend that conference. I am not the one to decide for her whether she should attend or not.

Mr Mohamed: Could the hon. Minister inform us, and confirm, that, he, himself, in March 2018 of this year, wanted to proceed to China on a mission?

Madam Speaker: No, no! Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, you have not finished your question. The question is about Mrs R. Y. M., and not about the Minister. If you want to come with a question about the Minister, you come with another question.

(Interruptions)

But don't start it with the Minister! Ask specifically about that person!

Mr Mohamed: All right! I mean, since ladies will come first, but not always, right, but I will go according to you for once. Now, what the issue is ...

(Interruptions)

For once, I will agree with you on this issue. We may have disagreed.

Madam Speaker: No, but this is my ruling.

Mr Mohamed: Now, with regard to this particular issue, is it true that because of the person referred to in the question had depleted the travel budget, even the hon. Minister could not go to China because of lack of budget?

Mr Sawmynaden: I think you should be happy that I did not go! At least, you have a question.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Lepoigneur!

WHITEDOT INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANCY LTD - POLICE INQUIRY

(No. B/508) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the suspicious transactions of Whitedot International Consultancy Ltd., he will state –

- (a) the total amount of funds recovered by the Asset Recovery Unit as at to date, giving details thereof;
- (b) the outcome of the Police inquiry carried out thereinto, indicating if any arrest has been effected in connection therewith, and
- (c) when the victims thereof are expected recover their investment.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, right from the outset, I wish to inform the House that Whitedot International Consultancy Ltd was not a licensee of the Financial Services Commission and, therefore, was operating illegally. Therefore, the matter raised here falls outside the purview of my Ministry. However, I am providing certain information which I have been able to gather from other authorities and departments.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Asset Recovery Investigation Division that as at date no funds have been recovered.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the enquiry has been completed and the case file has been submitted to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions on 22 May, 2018. I am further informed that the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions is still being awaited.

As regard to part (c) of the question, I am advised that the Asset Recovery Investigation Division has restrained various assets and properties belonging to Whitedot International Consultancy Ltd, but, at this stage, it cannot recover any criminal proceeds in

the absence of a conviction by the Court. Any decision regarding compensation to the victims will be considered only if and when the conviction will be pronounced.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to inform the House that subsequent to the series of alleged Ponzi schemes in 2013 and 2014, the FSC has adopted and is implementing various preventive measures to protect public investors, for example, the Financial Services Act has been amended to empower the FSC to investigate on unregulated and unauthorised entities. Investor alerts are issued on firms that are providing regulated products or services without the correct authorisation or are deliberately running scams.

The FSC works in collaboration with other institutions such as the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Independent Commission against Corruption and the Bank of Mauritius to gather intelligence. The FSC also works with its international counterparts in order to obtain, share information on unregulated and unauthorised entities.

Mr Lepoigneur: Madam Speaker, 1,213 victims are being kept in the dark. Have they been informed of the situation?

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, I just mentioned in my answer, it is not under my purview. So, I cannot, I am saddened because I remember the hon. Member tried to enquire, but I only have the few information that I have provided.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Hurreeram!

HOSPITALS – HEALTH PERSONNEL – GERONTOLOGY TRAINING

(No. B/509) Mr M. Hurreeram (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the public hospitals, he will state the –

- (a) number of qualified specialists in geriatrics presently employed thereat;
- (b) training in gerontology and geriatrics provided to health personnel, indicating the number thereof having benefitted therefrom, and
- (c) number of geriatric wards available in each one.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the proportion of the population aged 60 years and above has increased from 9.1% of the total mid-year population in 2000 to 15.6% in 2016.

However, our regional hospitals are geared to provide health services to elderly patients suffering from different types of ailments in the different units by specialist doctors.

I am further informed that the gerontology forms part of the curriculum of the health personnel during their studies and they do also avail of Continuous Professional Development Courses.

I would reassure the hon. Member that the question of setting up of Geriatric Unit is still under discussion.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Hurreeram! Okay. Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

MISSIONS OVERSEAS – AMBASSADORS & HIGH COMMISSIONERS – SALARY & BENEFITS

(No. B/510) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to each of the ambassadors employed at his Ministry, he will state the salary, benefits and gratuity drawn, indicating if in the respective terms and conditions of the contract of appointment thereof, provisions are made for leave not taken to be returned in cash and/or carried forward in the following year and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, I am tabling –

- (a) the list of Ambassadors/High commissioners on contract posted in our Embassies/High Commissions overseas, and
- (b) their terms and conditions of appointment, including the salary, allowances and other benefits drawn.

As regards leave, the Annual leave entitlement is at the rate of 21 working days for every year of contract. Unutilised annual leave may either be cashed or may be accumulated.

As for Sick leave entitlement, it is at the rate of 21 working days for every year of contract. Sick leave not taken in a particular year is however not convertible into cash and cannot be accumulated.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has been made aware or he has received representations concerning our High Commissioner in New Delhi, whether the premises of the High Commission in New Delhi have been converted into an estate agency, whether the High Commissioner uses his OCI card and is engaged in the

business of purchasing and selling flats, houses and so on, whether he has received such representations and whether he will conduct an inquiry and report to the House?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I won't conduct an inquiry on an allegation, which is very serious. I am not joking, I find this very serious. I, therefore, invite the hon. Member to go out and to make a statement at the Police Station, that this guy is cheating with us.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I am an elected Member, I am paid by the public. I am not making allegation; I am saying it in Parliament and it is live. Mauritius is hearing.

(Interruptions)

People in New Delhi are ...

(Interruptions)

We have now the IT equipment. So, I am asking the Minister, we all pay taxes, he is paid from public funds. If I am saying so, as an MP, I assume my responsibility. Others always say 'go outside', I am inside.

(Interruptions)

People are hearing, So, I am making a statement and the Minister is also paid by public funds to ask his officers to enquire. I am stating that he is using - if the Minister goes to records, the guy he has put at New Delhi was involved in *kokin électricité* in Mauritius - meter. He will see into that. This is a fact.

Madam Speaker: No statement please! Question, no statement!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, I have a problem because the Member himself agreed to it that whatever he is saying inside is public, therefore, that he can state that outside. I think that it is so serious, I am not playing with words. I really find it very serious and that we have to deal with it. But then, as I tell you, allegations which are made in the Chamber very often are made in a very superficial way. I think we have to weigh the importance of what we are saying here. And what the hon. Member is saying is so important, so serious, I have to invite him to make a statement with the CCID, and I promise him, I will have a full investigation in the matter.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, this is so easy for the Minister to tell me to go to the CCID.

(Interruptions)

He is not the Minister!

(Interruptions)

He is not the Minister!

(Interruptions)

He is not the Minister! Stay quiet!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order on this side! You have a question? Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, you have a question?

(Interruptions)

Yes, please be silent on this side! Ask your question! Don't make a statement! Hon. Bhagwan, let me say one thing. Hon. Bhagwan, if you have a question, ask your question, don't make a statement! The allegation, the Minister has said, is so serious that you have to take the entire responsibility for what you have said. Right! So, if you have another question, ask your question, and the Minister will reply, but please don't make statements!

Mr Bhagwan: I am informing the Minister, I am asking the Minister! The Minister is the Minister of External Affairs, he has his own network, he has his embassy, he has also his officers and he can contact the Indian Authorities and enquire whether our High Commissioner is a shame for Mauritius in New Delhi.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I have known the hon. Member and he is serious. I am serious also.

(Interruptions)

No, he is serious, I am serious! So, when I say that I am going to conduct a full-fledged enquiry, I am saying to the House and I will do it, but then you are serious also in what you are saying, I invite you humbly to go to the CCID and make a statement because, Madam Speaker, it is too serious to be taken lightly.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Next question!

(Interruptions)

Next question!

(Interruptions)

Order, I have already stated that the next question should be asked.

(Interruptions)

Next question!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody!

MAURITIUS & SEYCHELLES - JOINT MANAGEMENT AREA - SURVEY

(No. B/511) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Joint Commission administrating the Joint Management Area between Mauritius and the Seychelles, he will give details of the agreement signed with Spectrum Geo Survey over the JMA, indicating the fees paid for any survey carried out to acquire a 20,000 km broadband 2D Multi-Client seismic.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf has conferred upon both Mauritius and Seychelles jurisdiction over an area of 396,000 km² of Extended Continental Shelf in the Mascarene Plateau Region. This area is referred to as the Joint Management Area, over

which the two countries exercise sovereign rights jointly for the purpose of exploring and exploiting the seabed and its subsoil resources.

On 13 February 2016, the Mauritius/Seychelles Joint Commission of the Extended Continental Shelf invited 13 international companies to submit an Expression of Interest for the conduct of Multi-Client Geotechnical Surveys in the Joint Management Area (JMA).

In response to the Expression of Interest exercise, seven companies submitted their bids. The bids were evaluated by a Joint Evaluation Committee comprising representatives of both Mauritius and Seychelles, on the basis of a set of well-defined criteria approved by the Joint Commission.

On the strength of the recommendations of the Joint Evaluation Committee, the Joint Commission at its meeting on 02 March 2017 retained the bid of Spectrum GEO, UK, a subsidiary of Spectrum ASA, Norway, for the conduct of the Multi-Client Geotechnical Surveys in the Joint Management Area.

Subsequently, with the approval of both Governments, the Agreement for the conduct of Multi-Client Seismic Surveys was signed on 11 January 2018.

According to the terms of the Agreement, the surveys will be carried out at no cost, both to the Government of Mauritius and to the Government of the Seychelles.

The geotechnical data acquired pursuant to the geotechnical surveys undertaken under this Agreement shall remain at all times the property of the two countries.

The surveys which are ongoing are expected to be completed within a period of two years after which the raw data collected will be processed.

The Company will recover the expenditure incurred for the conduct of the Surveys through income generated by licensing the acquired geotechnical data. It will have the exclusive right to market and grant licenses of data acquired from the survey over a fixed period of time.

Madam Speaker, the acquisition of 2D seismic data is normally carried out, as is the practice in the Petroleum Industry, under the model referred to as a Multi-Client Survey. Such a model favours the acquisition of maximum data and information over the sub-soil and makes provision for a revenue sharing arrangement in respect of fees received from the licensing of the data.

Madam Speaker, as the decision to award the contract for the Multi-Client Survey is a joint initiative of the Government of Mauritius and the Government of Seychelles, it would not be in order for Mauritius to unilaterally disclose any other details of the Agreement.

I am further advised that the other provisions of the Agreement are of a commercially sensitive nature and disclosure thereof would cause serious prejudice to Spectrum ASA.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor for his explanation. May I know from the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, in this agreement has been signed with Spectrum where Spectrum is being given the right to sell those data, would the Government of Mauritius and Seychelles have any say about who can receive those data from Spectrum or to whom it can sell it or is it exclusively the right of Spectrum to sell it?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, in my answer it is clear there is no specific agreement on that.

MAURITIAN AMBASSADORS – OVERSEAS MISSION

(No. B/512) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to each of the Mauritian Ambassadors currently posted abroad, he will state, in each case, the number of overseas missions undertaken since their respective appointment as Heads of Missions to date, indicating the –

- (a) countries visited;
- (b) purpose/s thereof, and
- (c) amount of expenditure incurred in relation thereto.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, the list of overseas missions undertaken by Mauritian Ambassadors posted abroad, including the countries visited, purpose of each mission and amount of expenditure incurred, is being compiled and will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly at the soonest.

I will just also like to add to it that most of the missions undertaken by the Ambassadors are within their country of posting or to countries to which they are accredited.

Mr Bhagwan: It concerns us, Parliamentarians. I have been informed concerning our Mauritian Ambassador, one in South Africa, but when we, Members of Parliament, go to

PAN African Conference, our representatives in Pretoria do not care about the MPs. We are talking about our missions. So, can I appeal to the hon. Minister at least to give directives to our representatives that we, Members of Parliament and other friends, even on the side when...

(Interruptions)

Ki to dire mwa là!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Gayan!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Our representatives in Pretoria or the one who is there never even give a call and send his officers. This is what I am asking the hon. Minister to enquire and give directives to our representatives to, at least, we, Members of Parliament, when we go there, see whether they are still alive at times.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, the request is fair and reasonable. And I feel also that any Member of Parliament, whether in the Opposition or Government, has the right to knock at the door of any High Commission or Embassy and get assistance. So, I will just get the message through.

MISSIONS OVERSEAS – RENT & UTILITIES - EXPENDITURE

(No. B/513) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to each of the Mauritian Ambassadors posted abroad since 2015 to date, he will state the expenditure incurred for the rental of houses and apartments and utilities therefor.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I am not used to having so many questions! Madam Speaker, I am tabling the information with regard to PQ B/513.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister to repeat his reply? Sorry, I was...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member was distracted!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I will do it with pleasure. I am tabling the information with regard to this PQ.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I am not making any *procès d'intention à l'honorable ministre*. So many times I have been to the Library and these replies are not tabled. So, can I appeal to the hon. Minister whatever has promised to Members of Parliament, not today, but next day we have his replies. Not after months!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Here, there is no tactical strategy to delay. I am doing it at the earliest. I really mean it. It will come on the Table. At the earliest, I will try to get it in before Friday.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leopold, next question!

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE - VACCINATION PROGRAMME

(No. B/514) Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Foot and Mouth Disease, he will state where matters stand as to the containment and management of the last outbreak thereof in mainland Mauritius, indicating if the vaccination programme of all the animals which are at risk have been completed.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that following the outbreak of the Foot and Mouth Disease in Mauritius in August 2016, all necessary measures have been taken by my Ministry to contain proliferation of the disease and prevent any resurgence thereof.

The vaccination campaign which started on 21 August, 2016, has been completed on 10 April, 2017, and no new cases of the disease has been registered in Mauritius since September 2016.

The sero surveillance programme is now ongoing since October 2017 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2018. Our target is to apply to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) by the end of 2018 for Mauritius to regain its freedom from FMD status.

CLIMATE CHANGE - DISASTER RISK REDUCTION REPORT

(No. B/515) **Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to extreme weather conditions, he will state if an assessment of the impact and prevalence thereof has been carried out over the past four years and, if so, indicate the-

- (a) outcome thereof, and
- (b) measures envisaged in relation thereto.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, extreme weather conditions whether it be in terms of cyclonic conditions, torrential rain, strong winds and high waves are becoming more and more active in the face of climate change, which remains one of the biggest threats facing our country.

To address the above-mentioned issues, an assessment of the impact of the extreme weather conditions, which often result in flooding, landslide and coastal inundation, was made in a Disaster Risk Reduction Report prepared by the Climate Change Division of my Ministry.

The report includes, *inter alia*, flood, landslide, and coastal inundation hazard and risk maps of a scale of 1 to 50,000 based on modelling exercises. The hazard and risk maps are currently being used by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre of my Ministry to address the impact of flood, landslide and coastal inundation hazards during extreme weather conditions.

One of the important measures taken to tackle extreme weather conditions is the elaboration of the National Disaster Scheme of 2015. The National Disasters Scheme is meant to enhance the national effectiveness and efficiency in disaster risk reduction and management.

Another important measure taken to tackle extreme weather conditions is the enactment and implementation of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, which was promulgated in 2016. The Act provides for the setting up of a Disaster Council, of a Disaster Centre, of a National Crisis Committee, of a National Emergency Operations Command, of a Disaster Response Unit, of Local Disaster Risk Reduction Committees for every local authority as well as the Rodrigues Risk Reduction and Management Council, amongst others, to deal effectively with extreme weather conditions.

To better address one of the direct consequences of extreme weather conditions experienced during the last few years, which is the issue of flooding, Government has just come up with a Land Drainage Authority Act, which came into force in 2018 and which, I am informed, looks after the problem very well.

I am also informed that for Financial Year 2018-2019, a high-resolution Digital Elevation Model, including aerial imagery for Mauritius and Rodrigues, will be procured by the Land Drainage Authority.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

Mr Leopold: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Apart from the structures that the hon. Minister has in his Ministry, which are looking at disasters, does he have any other structure which strengthens the resilience to climate change?

Mr Sinatambou: Of course! I mean, part of the work which is being carried out by those institutions, for example, is to come up with evacuation plans, with emergency plans for all those various areas which can actually suffer from flooding, landslides and so on. Another instrument which I have come up with is a storm surge warning system, which actually warns us about tidal surges and which allows us then to take measures.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pending the construction of the Disaster Centre that the hon. Minister has mentioned in his original reply - first reply -, can I ask him whether he is aware that, since January 2018, when there was the flood, there are people who are still residing in Youth Centres and Area Health Centres? Like in Tranquebar, there are still families living in those centres and no one is attending to them. Is the hon. Minister aware of this?

Mr Sinatambou: I beg to disagree. In fact, Government has been attending to them since all this happened. However, if their houses have been damaged, it takes us time to find solutions. Let us take the NHDC, for example, Madam Speaker. We cannot just take NHDC houses and give to those people when others have been putting their money, have been waiting for years. We cannot just take those houses and give. It is a difficult situation, but surely, we cannot say that Government is not attending to them.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Barbier!

MADAME LOLO - SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS - ASBESTOS

(No. B/516) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the social housing units containing asbestos at Madame Lolo, he will state the number thereof

-

(a) having been demolished, indicating if new ones have been erected in replacement thereof, and

(b) standing as at to date.

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

According to information received from the Ministry of Housing and Lands in May, this year, there are 121 houses at the ex-CHA/EDC Housing Estate at Madame Lolo, Rose Belle.

I am informed that 31 of those houses have been removed and been replaced by concrete houses, and extensions have been carried out to another 88 EDC houses by the occupiers thereof.

I am informed that there are only two houses which are in their original state, and they are in a fair condition, according to information received.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Barbier!

Mr Barbier: Is the hon. Minister aware that one or two of these houses have already been demolished, but not reconstructed yet? I have been there; I have been visiting the people there. I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware and, if yes, whether he will do the needful for these two cases also to be considered.

Mr Sinatambou: As I said, the information I received is not to that effect, but I will try to ensure that a survey is carried out, and we will do the needful.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramano !

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, est-ce que je peux savoir de l'honorable ministre s'il existe des compagnies spécialisées dans l'enlèvement de ces structures ? En Europe et

ailleurs, vu le caractère toxique de ces matériaux, il existe des normes très spéciales à cet effet.

Mr Sinatambou: I would normally have requested the hon. Member to come with a specific question, but I do understand that there are actually specialised firms which do that, although I do not know which ones exactly.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/535, B/536, and B/537. Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

The Deputy 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.

(4.09 p.m.)

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE USE OF PESTICIDES BILL

(No. VI of 2018)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Use of Pesticides Bill (No. VI of 2018).

Question again proposed.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me first start with what hon. Osman Mahomed said in his intervention on this Bill last Friday. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Osman Mahomed mentioned about a patient who,

after a blood analysis, was identified as a Mauritian, as per an increased pesticide in his blood, and tabled a document. To my great surprise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no such Press article was tabled with this document; only a web link, which is not accessible. Probably, *Le Mauricien* removed the article from its website, as this article may have been erroneous. Surely, this story was not serious from a hon. Member in this House.

Let me say it loud and clear, no one can say, from a blood sample analysis, whether one is British, French or Mauritian. All blood samples analysis in whatever parameters, says to the lab technicians, is, of the level of various parameters. What more, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this hon. Member is irresponsible, conveying a faulty message to the Mauritians, tourists and the world, that Mauritius is a highly polluted country. What a shame from an ex-Chairman of the MID Commission, and this document that has been tabled in this House, is only a personal correspondence from himself to Mr Nowbuth, the PS of - I do not know whether he is still - the Ministry of Agro-Industry, through an e-mail, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If he only read what recommendation he made to the Ministry of Agro-Industry, he would have scored a lot of points rather than coming and telling that Mauritius is a very polluted country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come to the Bill. This Bill presented today by the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security is most welcoming, as we all know the hazards of pesticides on our health and on our surrounding environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in spite of the gradual decline of our agricultural activities, pesticides are still imported in large amount. This is due to our tropical climate and our island is vulnerable to attacks from new pests. This is the main reason for the introduction of the Bill in this House, to curb the importation of pesticides.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill is in line with the International Code of Conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides. This Bill is also in line with the FAO and WHO guidelines.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, right from the outset, let me emphasise that this Bill is not, I repeat, this Bill is not prohibiting or banning the use of pesticides. Rather, this Bill's objectives are to regulate, to control, and to monitor the importation and use of pesticides on fruits, plants, seeds and vegetables with the ultimate goal to minimise the risks on our health and on our surrounding environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the content of this Bill is very explicit. It would be better for me to clarify the benefits and hazards of pesticide use in agriculture so as to justify the objectives of this Bill. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the term ‘pesticide’ covers a wide range of compounds, including insecticide, fungicide, herbicide, rodenticide and many others’ including plant growth regulators.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have compound from the above definition of pesticides that are slowly imparting on the health of human beings and causing irreversible damage to our tissues and organs and lead to death. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I feel like coining the term ‘indirect humanicide’ of some compounds because some pesticide compounds are slowly killing human beings.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ideally, a pesticide must be lethal to the targeted pests, but not to non-targeted species, including man. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not the case. The abuse of pesticides has been very controversial. The widespread use of these chemicals, as the saying goes, I quote –

“If little is good, a lot more will be better.”

This extrapolation has played havoc on human and other life forms, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us see why the use of pesticides and fertilisers has gathered so much momentum. This was because with the democratic explosion, a few decades ago, resulted in a higher demand of food which resulted in the increasing and sustainability of food production through intensive agricultural pesticides and fertilisers which were used to increase and improve production by nearly fourfold in many countries. There were also other factors that helped to increase productivity, for example, better varieties and use of machineries. Productivity of agricultural products per acre use of pesticides has increased dramatically.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the pressure to increase productivity could have put our biodiversity at peril. Pesticides did have some benefits to maximise productivity on an existing farmland and, at the same time, alleviating pressure on non-cultivated land, for example forest, which provides important habitats for wildlife such as birds, bees and other organisms. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the process of increasing the productivity, there came the issue of pesticides’ hazards. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nothing is 100% good. Pesticides

appear to be good; the good may be temporary, the evil it does to man is permanently devastating, if the use are not properly controlled.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the advantages of pesticides include enhanced economic potential in terms of increased production of food, then the disadvantages have resulted in serious health implication to man and his environment. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is overwhelming evidence that some of these chemicals do pose a potential risk to human and other life forms and unwanted side effects to the environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, sir, the worldwide death and chronic disease from pesticide poisoning account for about one million per year. The high-risk group exposed to pesticide includes production workers, formulators, sprayers, mixers, loaders and agricultural farm workers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us see how the use of pesticides impacts on the environment. The pesticides contaminate soil, water, air, grass and other vegetations. In addition to killing insects or weeds...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I please carry on with my speech? Show respect!

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Sorefan: I will take it again. Pesticides contaminate soil, water, air, grass and other vegetation. In addition to killing insects or weeds, pesticides can be toxic to a list of other organisms, including birds, fishes, prawn, beneficial insects, for example bees, worms and non-targeted plants.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, pesticides can contaminate surface water from treated plant and soil. And this contamination phenomenon is widespread, also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, groundwater pollution is a worldwide problem. Will you believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about 143 different pesticides and 21 transformation pesticide products have been found in groundwater in many countries. Soil contamination is in the frontline to suffer, firstly, from pesticides directly, and secondly, from transformation products of many pesticides. Many pesticides have been banned over the years, but their residues are still present.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, pesticides have negative effect on soil fertility by causing population of beneficial soil microorganisms to decline. For example, worm, bacteria and fungi, which in turn cause the soil to degrade. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, overuse of chemical fertilisers and pesticides by farmers have serious effect on the soil organisms that are similar to doctors' overuse of antibiotics, leading to resistant, dangerous organisms that this world is facing overuse of antibiotics, is causing, I can say, havoc.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the right dose keeps the equilibrium, whereas overdose offsets the balance and leads to slow, painful death. Also the spraying of pesticides are found to drift or volatilise from treated areas, contaminating the air and can spread over a distance of a few metres to several miles. There is evidence that even after a few days of application, the residual pesticides is in the air.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from what I have tried to clarify above, compels us to really put an end to the overuse and overdose of pesticides. Controlling and monitoring is mandatory as from today onwards, if you want to lead a happy life without any famine. This Bill, I am sure, will strike the right balance if implemented by responsible and dedicated officers of the Ministry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the importance of education and training of workers, as a major vehicle to ensure the safe use of pesticides, is well canvassed in this Bill and is being increasingly recognised by planters, farmers and industrial pesticide importers. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is required and what this Bill's objectives are, is to weigh all the risks against the benefits, to ensure a maximum margin of safety. In Mauritius, it is imperative to use pesticides as per this Bill, as no one would prefer scarcity of food crop and famine and without forgetting communicable diseases like malaria and other vector-borne diseases. It may be convenient and practical to accept a reasonable degree of risk, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Our approach to the use of pesticides should be pragmatic, that is, all activities concerning pesticides should be dealt with sensibly and realistically in a way, that it is based on practical rather than theoretical consideration. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the same time, we must encourage the use of non-harmful pesticides and the use of alternative methods, for example, crop rotation, poly culture, organic farming, biological pest control, new crop varieties, introduction of resistant crop against pests, that is, genetically modified crops

resistant to pests, without forgetting at one time in the early 1990s, the Fruit Flies Eradication Project with lab generated sterilised flies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must think and learn globally and act locally. We must learn from scientists from abroad about their researches and apply their findings locally. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am glad that the hon. Minister of Finance has elucidated many agricultural measures in the Budget 2018/2019, namely sheltered farming, micro-gardens, vertical agriculture, rooftop gardening, aquaponics and provision of hundred farms, that will be made available on read-to-operate basis. This will definitely reduce pesticide use in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have this to say to my friend, the hon. Minister Mahen Seeruttun, if you will allow me. Your efforts to bring this Bill, to this august Assembly, will pay dividends in form of satisfaction and happiness, very soon than you imagine. For me, this Bill, brought by you, hon. Minister, is most welcoming. You instigated me to do some research on pesticides, that has helped me, I hope, to clarify some issues to my fellow Members of this House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, any Government has the obligation to feed his population and also to alleviate poverty, among others, by maximising food production. We can produce a lot of food with the increase of pesticides, but this caring Government is promoting increased production through controlled use of pesticides and alternative modes of production. Congratulations hon. Minister Seeruttun!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, let us all join hands together to promote the controlled use of pesticides because it concerns us all about other health and environment. I would like to propose to the hon. Minister to consider a national day for educative promotion of alternative to pesticides. Why not, last Friday of June, of each year, as this Bill was proposed on last Friday of June by your good self?

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo!

(4.28 p.m.)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr S. Lutchmeenaraidoo): M. le président, ça fait très rarement que je parle et si je prends

la parole aujourd'hui, c'est parce que nous allons parler d'une façon brutale de deux dangers qui menacent la population. Cela ne servirait à rien que les ministres des Finances et les gouvernements travaillent des stratégies pour la croissance économique, pour l'amélioration quantitative du niveau de vie et qu'en fin de compte, on réalise qu'on est passé à côté des problèmes qui risquent finalement de tuer à petit feu la population mauricienne. C'est très franc ce que je dis. Et si vous voyez, aujourd'hui, mon collègue, le ministre de l'Agro-Industrie, qui est venu à cette Chambre pour présenter ce *Bill* courageux, c'est parce que ce projet de loi prouve à la nation que ce problème a atteint une masse critique. Une masse critique c'est quoi? C'est un problème qui est ignoré pendant très longtemps. On parle du problème de pesticides depuis belle lurette. Je peux même remonter à 1983, mais, à chacun, la population, elle-même, n'était pas assez mûre, ou bien n'était pas assez conscientisée pour comprendre que nous sommes en train de jouer avec le feu.

Donc, ce projet de loi courageux du ministre vient à un moment opportun et prouve une chose qu'il est grand temps de bouger. Nous sommes arrivés finalement à une croisée de chemins. Je vais utiliser très peu de chiffres, mais force est de constater que la croissance d'utilisation de fertilisants chimiques, de pesticides, d'insecticides, de fongicides; c'est quatre produits chimiques nécessaires peut-être parce qu'il ne faut jamais oublier une chose, nous sommes un caillou dans l'océan. Un caillou c'est que nous sommes restreints sur la surface de terre arable. Imaginez-vous depuis 200 ans, on cultive la canne à sucre sur un caillou. Il est clair qu'après 15, 20, 30 et 50 ans, la terre était devenue, excusez-moi, non fertile. Stérile! Pour continuer à produire le sucre, il fallait alimenter la terre en permanence avec des fertilisants chimiques, avec des pesticides, fongicides et insecticides. On l'a fait! On réalise aujourd'hui, en 2018, qu'il fallait le faire parce qu'une chose est certaine, on peut parler politique comme on veut, *dimoune so vente vide pas cause politik. Ou pas cause politik ek ene dimoune ki so vente vide.*

Donc, depuis l'indépendance, on a bien fait de concentrer sur la quantité, de concentrer sur la production et on est arrivé, M. le président, ce petit pays, ce caillou a produit 600,000 tonnes de sucre à un moment. *Huge!*

Nous avons produit cette canne sur une terre qui était déjà surutilisée. Je vous donne quelques chiffres de 2016 en termes de fertilisants chimiques et je mélange le tout. Ce pays a consommé l'équivalent de 360 kg de fertilisants chimiques par an, par tête d'habitant. 360 kg de fertilisants chimiques par tête d'habitant par an! *Huge!* 1 kg de fertilisants chimiques par

jour par tête d'habitant. Ou nous réalisons que nous sommes en train de jouer avec le feu ou nous disons: '*let us kick the can down the road*', on verra plus tard. Le ministre a eu le courage de dire: '*Let us stop.*' Ce jeu est trop dangereux, premièrement.

(Interruptions)

Mais c'est vrai en plus. Ce que je te dis ça vient du cœur. Je crois que tu as eu le courage. Je crois aussi que beaucoup de petits planteurs résistent et ne comprennent pas encore une chose. Ils vont gagner beaucoup plus d'argent en produisant des légumes, des fruits sur une base de l'agriculture raisonnée qui est pratiquée à la Réunion ou sur la base de production dont je viendrai après.

Le deuxième point, pesticide, insecticide et fongicide, les derniers chiffres que j'ai, remonte à 2016 et pas 2018. Nous avons consommé 2.4 millions de litres de pesticides, d'insecticides et de fongicides. 2.4 millions de litres! 1.9 kg par tête d'habitant par an. Vous savez bien vous-même, une personne, un être humain consomme 10 millilitres de ces produits et se tue.

Ce sont des produits mortels, et nous l'avons utilisé excessivement. Et troisièmement, je dois vous dire ici, cela donnera à la population une idée de là où on a été et où il ne fallait pas aller. Le maximum *residue level* dont le ministre parle très souvent dans son texte de loi et qui dit que le maximum de pesticides autorisés pour chaque légume, chaque produit est fixé. En 2010, sur des échantillons travaillés pour le laboratoire de recherche de l'île Maurice, on est arrivé en échantillon de 2.3%, des échantillons choisis avaient utilisé des pesticides en dessus des normes acceptées.

Écoutez-moi bien, nous passons en 2010 à 2.3%, nous arrivons à 2012 à 6% en une année, en 2013 à 7.2%. Je vous dis franchement sur la base de notre croissance exponentielle, ne soyez pas surpris qu'il y a actuellement à Maurice un minimum de 10% de ce qu'on consomme à un taux de pesticides qui est largement supérieur à ce que l'être humain peut tolérer. 10%! Et vous savez pourquoi moi? Je vais vous dire, l'avidité, il n'y a pas d'autres mots. Les gens ont réalisé qu'il fallait produire plus, qu'il fallait mettre plus sur le marché et qu'il fallait tout faire pour produire plus. On a cherché la quantité et nous sommes en train de payer le prix aujourd'hui.

Si en 2011 à 2013 sur deux ans, M. le président, le pourcentage de produits non autorisés à mettre sur le marché est passé de 2.7% à 7.2%, 300% d'augmentation, imaginez

ce que c'est aujourd'hui, ce que nous sommes en train de manger, nous qui rentrons à la maison, moi, je suis en plus un peu végétarien, alors vous savez, j'ai du poison dans mon assiette. Je le dis parce que c'est vrai le taux a atteint des niveaux inacceptables, ce qui arrive à une conclusion. La population beaucoup m'en parle, et dans le gouvernement les gens parlent de plus en plus à chercher une corrélation avec les différentes formes de cancer avec le niveau de pesticides dans la consommation.

Et là, je vais vous citer une chose le *Private Medical Practitioners Association* en 2015 a fait la déclaration officielle, suivante –

« Les pesticides sont liés au cancer, aux maladies respiratoires. »

Je ne vais pas chercher des phrases ou des contacts - aujourd'hui officiellement l'association des médecins a reconnu que les pesticides actuellement est une source directe du nombre d'augmentations exponentielles à l'encontre du nombre de cancer à l'île Maurice. Donc, ce projet de loi vient à temps, et même si les petits planteurs résistent, nous avons à faire à l'éducation qu'il faut. Nous avons à descendre dans les champs, à descendre dans les villages, à descendre des centres de production agricole, expliquer à ces mêmes personnes que le changement va que leur apporter beaucoup plus en termes de revenus et de profits.

Nous avons la preuve dessus. Ce qui nous pousse automatiquement à ce qu'on fait actuellement. Je ne parle pas pour dire de ce qu'on projette de faire, je vous parle de ce qu'on fait actuellement. Parce que d'une part il y a donc les pesticides, insecticides, fongicides qui tuent, et de l'autre côté, on est malade où est-ce qu'on va? Quelqu'un qui est malade parce qu'il a mangé ou parce que à force de manger trop de pesticides, tombe malade - qu'est-ce qu'il fait ? - il va l'hôpital. Et là, je parle du deuxième danger. Le premier danger donc c'est la consommation, l'hyper consommation de ce pays en termes de consommation d'engrais chimiques, pesticides, insecticides, et de l'autre côté, l'impact direct que ceci a sur les services de la santé de ce pays.

Et je passe à ce deuxième danger. Pour vous dire qu'il y a deux dangers qui font que la population de jeunes dans 20 ans seront des malades ou seront des gens guéris, pas guéris mais soignés, traités et seront en permanence dans un état de maladie potentielle. C'est ça que nous voulons ? Donc, en tant que gouvernement nous ont dit : 'nous allons bouger dessus'. *And in a big way!* Et d'une part, au niveau de l'agriculture et d'autre part au niveau de la

santé. J'étais malade récemment, donc je peux vous le dire. La première réaction a été de me donner, excusez-moi de vous le dire, de forte concentration de cortisone et d'antibiotiques.

Et je ne sais pas pourquoi nos médecins dans ce pays - je ne suis pas là pour les critiquer - mais je pense que la médecine allopathique aujourd'hui est devenue chose très facile. Un médecin prescrit cortisone et antibiotiques et il dit à son patient : tu pars, dans une semaine seras guéri. Oh, mon fils, excusez-moi, une façon de promettre les choses qu'on ne peut pas faire ! Et finalement, on est soigné mais on n'est pas guéri. Tous ceux qui ont été traités dans les hôpitaux savent aujourd'hui qu'à force de consommer de cortisone et d'antibiotiques, le corps commence à rejeter et à réagir de moins en moins.

Le corps physique de l'être humain devient résistant donc à ces produits de base allopathique. Finalement, mon collègue, le ministre de la Santé, l'honorable Dr. Husnoo, je suis bien chagrin que pendant 20 ans il lui faudra deux fois plus de lits dans les hôpitaux pour une raison bien simple, parce qu'il y aura plus de malades. Ce que le gouvernement fait actuellement, nous sommes en train de travailler - c'est une stratégie, ce n'est pas un programme - sur une stratégie pour que dans les 20 ans qui viennent, nous ayons une population mauricienne jeune et saine. Une population saine et qui peut affronter à vie de façon beaucoup plus objective, optimiste aussi.

Premièrement, sur la partie agricole et nous travaillons ceci avec les affaires étrangères parce que nous avons les contacts à l'étranger. Nous sommes en train de dire qu'au niveau de l'agriculture, nous avons à apprendre des autres. Il n'y a aucune honte à apprendre des autres parce qu'il existe une agriculture raisonnée. Il existe une agriculture où on utilise de minimum d'engrais chimiques et de pesticides afin de produire. L'Île de la Réunion à côté est allée déjà très loin, à Rodrigues aussi, en termes de production alimentaire raisonnée.

Nous avons des accords je sais. J'ai discuté pour Rodrigues, lors des commissions mixtes, avec Saint-Denis. Nous avons discuté énormément de coopération entre la Réunion et l'île Maurice dans le domaine de la production alimentaire raisonnée, pas bio, raisonnée c'est-à-dire produisons avec le minimum d'engrais possibles et de pesticides. Et le centre de recherche de la Réunion est le centre le plus développé de toute la région et l'un des centres les plus développés de la planète. Donc, nous sommes en train de travailler en étroite coopération. Le ministre Seeruttun, lui-même, travaille énormément dans ce domaine avec La Réunion de même que le ministre de la Santé aussi.

Nous sommes en train de mettre sur pied des structures de production alimentaire, des productions de fruits et de légumes qui vont passer très vite car le temps est en train de jouer contre nous. *Time is playing against us*. Donc, nous sommes en train de dire que dans les cinq ans qui viennent nous auront au moins 50% à 60% de la production alimentaire de fruits et de légumes qui seront produits sur la base de l'agriculture raisonnée ou sur la base de ce qu'on appelle le *zero budget farming* et qui fait sourire les gens. Le *zero budget farming* - excusez-moi le mot - vous utilisez la bouse de vache et puis le pipi de vache comme produit de base avec d'autres mélanges pour produire finalement un produit magique.

Un produit - il y a 10 millions de fermiers en Inde qui pratiquent le *zero budget farming* et qui est basé sur le fait qu'on utilise ce qui est finalement la vache, ce qui est *cow dung*, bouse de vache et puis le pipi de vache qui a d'autres titres aussi beaucoup plus honorifiques que je ne vais pas utiliser. Le *zero budget farming* 10 millions d'agriculteurs en Inde le font sur une base quotidienne, sur une base très simple, une vache permet de produire suffisamment de fertilisants qui ont un effet aussi de produits pesticides, insecticides sur la plante en même temps.

Ce qui fait que les planteurs de l'Inde maintenant arrivent à avoir une production par hectare deux fois supérieurs. C'est pourquoi nos planteurs à Maurice doivent aussi apprendre ces techniques. C'est-à-dire que le rendement augmente, le produit est de meilleure qualité et le fermier a un revenu plus élevé. Voilà!

(Interruptions)

Tu n'es pas intéressé à m'écouter mon frère.

(Interruptions)

Oui, mais dans ce cas tu parles trop fort, tu me gêne.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode, allow hon. Member to do his speech!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Non, mais je ne t'en veux pas, c'était pour dire que l'attention que la Chambre mérite sur le sujet, parce qu'on parle d'un sujet qui te concerne toi aussi, tout le monde. Donc, nous sommes déjà engagés avec l'Inde sur la production alimentaire presque bio finalement, qu'on appelle '*zero budget farming*'. Nous sommes aussi en train de travailler depuis déjà très longtemps. J'appelle l'île Rodrigues 'l'île bio'. Vous savez pourquoi ?

Et mon collègue est ici et le sait. L'île Rodrigues a été trop pauvre pendant trop longtemps pour utiliser pesticides, les insecticides, les fongicides, les fertilisants. Ce qui fait que le sol de Rodrigues est actuellement très riche. Et cette petite île maintenant peut envisager à devenir une île bio. Vous comprenez pourquoi le *Marketing Board* de Maurice achète l'intégralité de la production d'oignon, d'ail, de gingembre, de haricot, directement, à un prix garanti, parce que le produit est de grande qualité. Je ne fais pas la publicité de Rodrigues évidemment.

(Interruptions)

Partie intégrante de la République ! L'honorable François et l'honorable Leopold sont là. C'est pour vous dire que l'île Rodrigues a vécu une histoire différente, heureusement, et que l'île Rodrigues actuellement a une série d'accords avec CIRAD, l'organisme de la Réunion qui justement fait de la recherche sur l'agriculture raisonnée. Et nous aussi, maintenant, le ministère de l'Agriculture, le gouvernement et moi-même comme ministre des Affaires étrangères, poussons au maximum pour que nous basculions vers ce type de protection alimentaire raisonnée.

Je dois dire aussi que lorsqu'on parle de planteurs, on parle de petits planteurs. La logique ne doit pas rester là-bas. Médine, ENL, produisent énormément déjà de légumes et de fruits sur une base suivant l'agriculture raisonnée. C'est fait déjà. Donc, il y a déjà une petite production de la consommation nationale qui est là. Voilà un peu ce qu'on est en train de faire au niveau de l'agriculture raisonnée, de la production bio, et puis, évidemment, de la production alimentaire suivant les techniques de *zero budget farming*. Ce sont des choses qui sont en voie. J'ai visité, il y a deux semaines déjà, un centre de production, un centre de plantation à Belle Rive, à côté de l'élevage de vaches qui produit justement ce fameux produit magique de fertilisant, et à côté il y a une plantation avec 500 arbres, je crois, de citron. On m'a offert un pamplemousse que je n'ai jamais pu soulever de ma vie. Gros comme ça ! *Zero budget farming*, l'utilisation de techniques naturelles de production. On n'est pas en train de plaisanter, de blaguer. On est en train de dire que c'est déjà là. C'est à nous maintenant de décider de l'utiliser.

Sur la question de la médecine allopathique, personne ne viendra dire que la médecine allopathique n'est pas nécessaire. Elle est même fondamentale. Mais nous l'avons pratiqué au point qu'on l'a fait à l'exclusion, et dans ce pays multiracial, multiculturel, nous avons des traditions asiatiques, des traditions indiennes, pakistanaises, africaines. Nous avons une

tradition de tous bords. Et nous venons de pays qui ont une civilisation de plusieurs millénaires ayant trait à la médecine naturelle. Et croyez-moi, ce n'est pas aujourd'hui. En 1989, j'étais au gouvernement, j'ai poussé pour que soit passé un projet de loi qui rend légal, donc, tout ce qui est médecine naturelle. C'est fait déjà depuis 1989, et nous sommes en 2018 aujourd'hui. Très peu ont bougé. Nous avons seulement 17 médecins ved, comme on dit, spécialisés en médecine ayurvédique seulement au niveau de l'île Maurice. Nous avons des centres qui traitent actuellement sur une base ayurvédique au ministère de la Santé, plusieurs cliniques aussi. Donc, ça bouge, mais ça bouge très lentement. Ça a bougé subitement très vite. Encore une fois, masse critique !

Le Premier ministre Modi est venu à Maurice en 2015 et nous avons signé l'accord, le MoU ayant trait à la médecine traditionnelle et homéopathique. C'est fait déjà. En 2018, le Président de l'Inde est venu ici pour les fêtes de l'indépendance et on a signé un accord pour un Ayush Chair à l'Université de Maurice. C'est déjà enclenché. Il y a deux jours, le haut-commissaire de Maurice en Inde a rencontré le ministre Ayush, et on a décidé hier, avec l'honorable ministre de la Santé, d'envoyer très vite une délégation afin que le MoU, cette lettre d'intention, se matérialise au plus vite possible.

Donc, nous sommes en train de bouger aussi au niveau de ce qui est médecine traditionnelle. La loi est là. La loi demande à être élargie. Et notre stratégie, c'est quoi ? Eh bien, c'est un peu égoïste peut-être, mais non ! Je pense que dans 20 ans, non seulement le nombre de lits dans les hôpitaux aura à être réduit, parce que la demande de lits pour les maladies liées aux pesticides va baisser, mais en plus - et ça, ce n'est pas un rêve - le tourisme mondial est basé sur quoi ? Le soleil, la mer et la plage ! Beaucoup de pays nous concurrencent dessus. Et l'île Maurice reste toujours une place dans le cœur de beaucoup de pays. Et pourquoi ne pas se poser cette hypothèse que l'île Maurice devienne pour les touristes une destination pour le bien-être et la santé ?

Le tourisme de bien-être et de santé est en train de frapper à notre porte, car tout en développant ces nouvelles techniques à Maurice, c'est-à-dire les médecines traditionnelles - homéopathique, ayurvédique, médecine traditionnelle chinoise et tout - nous sommes en train de créer l'infrastructure pour pouvoir dire aux touristes de demain, exposés au soleil, exposés aux maladies, « L'île Maurice est votre destination pour vous soigner, pour la santé et le bien-être aussi ». Donc, stratégie de tourisme de bien-être et de santé, mais aussi, parallèlement, des décisions où la population va vivre de mieux en mieux.

Deux approches qui ne sont en aucune façon non complémentaires ; très complémentaires. Donc, nous travaillons dessus actuellement. Les efforts bougent. Nous demandons maintenant à ce que la population aussi nous donne un coup de main, que les planteurs aussi nous donnent un coup de main, que les hôpitaux ne se sentent pas menacés. Un médecin allopathique n'est pas menacé par la médecine traditionnelle indienne, chinoise ou africaine. Nullement! Au fait, avec la Chine, nous avons demandé déjà, et c'est approuvé, nous allons ouvrir à l'île Maurice une antenne du Centre de recherche de médecine naturelle de Beijing. C'est fait déjà. Nous aurons ceci. Au niveau de l'Inde, nous aurons l'Aayush Hospital. L'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances l'a annoncé dans le budget. Côte d'Or sera dotée d'un hôpital Aayush, d'un hôpital ayurvédique. C'est pour vous dire que nous bougeons. L'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances a bougé. C'est le budget qui en parle. Nous bougeons très vite dessus. Et je pense que là, nous aurons consensus - pas rarement, mais de plus en plus -, opposition et nous-mêmes pour dire que finalement nous avons des enfants. J'ai des enfants et des petits-enfants en plus. Et croyez-moi, si je me suis levé aujourd'hui pour parler, c'est parce que nous sommes en train de faire face à des menaces tellement sérieuses qu'on ne peut plus l'ignorer.

Donc, c'est un peu un message de détresse, un message d'urgence, un appel aussi à la population, un appel aussi à tout le monde, pour que tout le monde y mette du soi. Je vais voir le secteur sucrier la semaine prochaine pour voir de quelle façon nous allons pouvoir basculer la canne qui est toujours là, évidemment, mais les encourager aussi à basculer vers la production bio, la production suivant les techniques de l'agriculture raisonnée ou carrément un autre système de production naturelle.

Voilà, M. le président, je me suis levé, j'ai parlé, j'ai partagé avec vous. Je ne prends pas de papier, parce que ce que je vous dis vient du cœur. Ça vient du cœur, parce que j'ai mes enfants et petits-enfants qui vont vivre dans ce pays. Et nous voulons leur léguer quoi ? Nous tous ici, nous voulons léguer à nos enfants, à nos petits-enfants une île Maurice saine, une île Maurice en pleine santé, une île Maurice où il fera surtout bon vivre.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rampertab!

(4.51 p.m.)

Mr R. Rampertab (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it gives me an immense pleasure to be able to address this august Assembly on this highly important and visionary piece of legislation.

I applaud the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, hon. Seeruttun, for bringing forward this long awaited Bill to be debated in this House. Indeed, I will try through my intervention to shed some light on how this Bill is bringing the right solutions to the excess use of pesticides in our agricultural industry which is, unfortunately, negatively affecting our public health and environment at large.

Hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo was right when he said that pesticides are more or less directly connected to cancer. And hon. Dr. Husnoo can correct me if I am wrong, that we have today about 35,000 Mauritians who suffer from cancer, and it is going up every year by 1,800.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very alarming. Our country has proudly relied on agriculture as one of the main pillars of its economy for decades now. In doing so, our Mauritian planters have developed a rich array of knowledge, tools and techniques in terms of cultivation of crops.

Since our Government came in power in 2014, we have been determined in transforming the support provided to the agricultural sector through numerous schemes and with blessing and incites of the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, a former Minister of Agriculture himself.

The introduction of this Bill is, indeed, another landmark testimony in this Government's commitment to ensure that our planters have all the right ingredients to adapting to the rapidly changing landscape in the agricultural industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote a definition by the World Health Organisation, which describes -

“Pesticides are chemical compounds that are used to kill pests, including insects, rodents, fungi and unwanted plants (weeds). Pesticides are used in public health to kill vectors of disease, such as mosquitoes, and in agriculture, to kill pests that damage crops.”

However, for too long in our country the use of pesticides has been left uncontrolled and, most importantly, the purchase and application did not have the appropriate regulations, training and professional guidance.

These old fashion techniques are, unfortunately, firmly entrenched in the norms of the local crop producers. This Bill will, indeed, have the hard task of trying to transform the way the majority of planters have operated for most of their lifetimes. Indeed, this Bill around the use and control of pesticides was long overdue, and again, I applaud the Minister of Agro-Industry for his initiative.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during one of my visits to the State of Punjab in India, I was very amazed by the sheer success achieved in implementing pesticide-free agricultural techniques. I was informed there, that thousands and thousands of acres of land, today, are already under cultivation and free from any pesticide use, which is remarkably accomplished.

I also visited a bio-fertiliser factory, which had seen its business expanding over the last three years and was extremely, in fact, interested to consider setting up a similar factory in Mauritius to service the local and use the African market. Indeed, it is very encouraging that we are following the steps of the agricultural leader such as India in terms of pesticide use, and I would again say that hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo is also right when he is going towards the AYUSH thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill has been prepared after thorough technical and stakeholders consultations, for instance, each type of crop has been allocated a specific maximum residual value, which will need to be strictly followed by the planters and eventually tested by the Pesticides Regulatory Office.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us look into the operation of this Pesticides Regulatory Office in some more details. I am fully satisfied that the Bill makes clear provision on the specific remit and authority of the office.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, undeniably, the office will have the direct responsibility to be the primary organisation to effectively ensure that the use of pesticides is controlled and monitored. However, it is also extremely positive to note that the office will also be entrusted with the responsibility of developing the right policies to solve the growing issue around the secured disposal of pesticides containers. Unfortunately, we have often come across used containers, barrels lying around in fields or being reused by planters to collect water for

irrigation. This practice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is increasingly polluting our environment as toxic chemical remnants seep into soil and water and, I will say again, I am very impressed with hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo when he said that our soil is no more fertile, and he is right, it's really a matter of concern. This practice is increasingly polluting our environment. Due to the lack of support and the correct technical knowledge, such practices are common and will now be dealt through the clear practical, sustainable and environmental friendly strategies developed by the PRO.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to change the firmly entrenched norms, the office will have to dedicate a considerable amount of time in re-education and evaluation of the planters from the backyard or the rooftop home gardens to the small planters of the industrial scale producers. To cope with the immense task ahead, the office will have to be adequately tooled and staffed. Our crops, soil and water cannot be bio-friendly, and people's health cannot be saved from pesticides poisoning and causing illness if planters at large are not fully trained in terms of the secured disposal of pesticides containers. Through this initiative, our country will be leading the battle against the improper disposal of these toxic chemicals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Use of the Pesticides Bill also fills a long- standing procedural gap, which will come as a major relief for all the stakeholders within the agricultural industry. Indeed, agricultural products also enter our food chain through importation, and hence, the control of produce with excess MRL is the right approach. As I said, it will be now compulsory to obtain the correct certification before any stock of agricultural produce enters our borders. The office shall now be empowered to take strict actions against importing entity. With import products exceeding the prescribed MRL, as per published standards, for such cases the office will instruct the destruction of the products at the cost of the importer to protect the population health and shows its firm commitment in eradicating the excess pesticides use. Such measures will act as a strong and clear deterrent to ensure that importers understand that this Government will not tolerate any excess or misuse of any type of pesticide.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill will imply a paradigmshift in our agricultural sector and ultimately impact thousands of planters throughout the island. It is reassuring to note that the Bill caters for the training of planters through the office and the Ministry. Indeed, as I mentioned previously, it is imperative that this office is fully prepared to design and implement the correct training programmes for all levels of planters. The way pesticides have

been used for decades, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will now be changed completely, and it is only fair that the office provides all the support it can to ensure that planters are trained before the inspections and control are kick-started.

The re-education timeline, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, should be clear for planters and give them enough time to assimilate the new techniques and discard their old habits. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we also note a comprehensive set of fines and imprisonment sentences detailed in the Bill which are welcomed to ensure that the law prescribed is not eventually broken. However, if fines and imprisonment are essential deterrents, we need to ensure that the planters are given enough time to be trained and supported throughout the early stages of the implementation. Applying a fine while the planters are still learning the new techniques will be a disincentive.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our Government is committed to ensuring a healthy population and sustainable environment for our future generations. Hence, our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, set up some bold initiatives to promote the evolving techniques of bio-farming training and sensitisation within the planters. Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, through these measures we have seen a lot of young entrepreneurs and planters stepping into the bio-farming industry, which is extremely encouraging.

The Government is firmly committed in providing additional support schemes and recently announced financing schemes through the DBM in our Budget 2018/2019. Also, the combined substantial efforts of the Small Planters Welfare Fund and the FAREI to provide the required initial technical expertise, training package and ongoing support demonstrate that commitment in achieving the hon. Seeruttun's national aim on bio-farming.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to conclude on the following note. The primary aim of this Bill is to support the planters in adopting a new mindset and practical techniques to ensure that no long-term irreversible harm is done to our public health and environment. Undeniably, this Bill has catered for all the right measures and framework to set up our country on a solid path. Let me congratulate, again, hon. Seeruttun, the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, and wish that similar forward looking legislations are introduced to set our agricultural industry firmly on the path of its transformative journey.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

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

At 5.05 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.38 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): M. le président, je tiendrai en premier lieu d'exprimer mon appréciation et féliciter mon collègue, le ministre de l'Agro-Industrie, l'honorable Mahen Seeruttun pour être venu, d'une manière réfléchie, courageuse et ferme, introduire ce *Use of Pesticides Bill* au Parlement. Il est clair, M. le président, qu'il y a unanimité des deux côtés de la Chambre pour légiférer en faveur d'un cadre approprié et qu'il soit en phase avec la réalité du jour. Cela, pour un meilleur contrôle sur l'utilisation des pesticides à Maurice et on doit s'en féliciter.

M. le président, ce projet de loi vient compléter les efforts déployés par le gouvernement pour une meilleure santé et qualité de vie à nos citoyens et aussi pour préserver notre environnement. *The Use of Pesticides Bill* arrive à un moment opportun où le gouvernement s'efforce à promouvoir une bonne hygiène de vie auprès de notre population ; cela à travers diverses campagnes de sensibilisation et de projets d'envergure.

Le ministère de l'Éducation, à travers la réforme du système éducatif, a déjà relancé l'activité sportive dans nos écoles. C'est aujourd'hui une réalité dans le cursus scolaire. Mon ministère compte depuis le début de l'année un *Health and Wellness Directorate* dont la mission consiste à promouvoir des meilleures pratiques pour une bonne hygiène de vie chez nos jeunes. On les éduque très tôt à devenir des citoyens avisés sur les multiples facteurs de risque pouvant mettre en péril leur bien-être physique et mental.

M. le président, on y conscientise aussi sur l'importance d'une bonne alimentation et d'une consommation saine. Et à ce chapitre, on ne peut omettre les dangers que représente l'excès de pesticide dans les aliments sur la santé humaine. Et c'est là que se situe la pertinence de l'introduction de ce projet de loi. A travers cette législation, on viendra mieux contrôler le taux de pesticide dans les produits agricoles. Soit, M. le président, les consommateurs connaissent mal les possibles méfaits de ces produits chimiques!

Sur le plan de la santé, l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo l'a si bien souligné, de nombreuses études s'accordent à établir qu'il y a un lien entre l'utilisation excessive des

pesticides et différentes pathologies, parmi, bien sûr, le cancer, les problèmes immunitaires, les maladies cardiovasculaires, et aussi des complications respiratoires.

Me référant à une étude de l'INSERM, Organisme Public de Recherches Français sur la santé humaine basé sur 30 ans de travaux dans différents pays à travers la planète, il a été prouvé qu'il existe un lien fort entre l'exposition à un taux élevé de pesticide et l'apparition de la maladie de Parkinson, du cancer de la prostate, du sang et aussi bien que l'Alzheimer. Les pesticides pouvaient être à l'origine de la malformation de l'embryon chez la femme enceinte, des problèmes de fécondité et aussi des perturbations hormonales. Le plus inquiétant, M. le président, demeure le fait que les résidus des pesticides sont stockés au fur et à mesure dans les graisses et dans le foie, ce qui est une vraie bombe à retardement car à la suite d'un choc physique ou émotionnel, voire un affaiblissement du système immunitaire, un cancer peut être déclenché selon les experts. Même laver les fruits et les légumes ne permet pas de venir à bout des résidus des pesticides.

M. le président, il serait bien de s'attarder sur la prévalence du cancer à Maurice. Le nombre de cas de cancer a connu une augmentation de 58% chez l'homme et de 61% chez la femme entre 1991 et 2010. Il paraît que chez la femme le cancer du sein a connu une hausse de 66% et celui du colon de 37%. Chez l'homme, le cancer de la prostate a augmenté par 73% et celui du colon par 75%. Et tout récemment à une question parlementaire adressée en mai dernier au ministre de la Santé, les chiffres du *National Cancer Registry* ont révélé plus de 2,600 nouveaux cas de cancer en 2016 et 1,342 personnes en sont décédées durant la même année.

Cette situation, M. le président, n'a cessé de nous interpellier; ici même, au sein de cette auguste Assemblée, nous poussant à nous interroger sur la possibilité d'un lien entre l'utilisation des pesticides et le cancer.

M. le président, face à tout cela, nous ne pouvons rester indifférents, d'où l'introduction de ce projet de loi au Parlement. On se souviendrait que tous les *organochlorides*, *Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane*, le DDT, utilisé dans les années 70/80 contre la malaria, et bien que son utilisation soit bannie, les séquelles seraient toujours présentes.

Dans une étude publiée dans la revue *JAMA Neurology* en 2014, une équipe de la *Johnson Medical School* aux États-Unis s'est penchée sur le lien entre une exposition du

DDT et l'apparition de l'Alzheimer. Les résultats ont incriminé les insecticides dans le développement de cette maladie. Et là, M. le président, je voudrais faire ressortir qu'une étude sur 86 patients d'Alzheimer et 79 personnes saines a démontré que le taux de *Dichlorodiphenyldichloroethylene (DDE)* était très élevé chez les patients. Leurs résultats donnent froid dans le dos. Le taux sanguin de *DDE* est pres de quatre fois plus important chez les malades. Cela donne également matière à réflexion, n'est-ce pas? Faut-il encore attendre aujourd'hui pour agir? Bien sûr que non, M. le président! Les risques sont là. Il nous faut protéger notre population.

Sur le plan de l'environnement, M. le président, les dangers des pesticides sont tout aussi nombreux. En plus, de tuer l'espèce visée, nous savons tous, ils peuvent aussi très bien contaminer et tuer d'autres acteurs de la chaîne alimentaire. Les oiseaux, par exemple, sont très souvent atteints par des pesticides en mangeant les insectes ou les poissons contaminés. De plus, les pesticides polluent l'air que nous respirons et cela peut être aussi le cas des réserves d'eau au point de rendre cette dernière non portable. Et là, j'aurais aimé poser la question aux camarades parlementaires qui sont là. Est-ce que nous voyons toujours les papillons dans nos jardins?

Je me souviens étant enfant, on se promenait dans la cour, on regardait les papillons, ils étaient là de toutes les couleurs. Aujourd'hui, on ne voit plus les papillons. Est-ce qu'on s'est posé la question pourquoi? Y a-t-il un lien entre l'utilisation des pesticides et la disparation, si j'utilise un mot un peu fort, des papillons de nos jardins? Nous savons tous que les insectes, les abeilles comme les papillons sont des agents de pollinisation extrêmement utile à la reproduction des plantes.

M. le président, on ne peut plus faire de concessions à ce chapitre. Nous savons tous qu'il y a beaucoup de *collateral damage* avec l'utilisation des pesticides et il nous faut surtout nous préparer à réduire au maximum ces cas-là. Les mesures prises jusqu'ici n'ont pu adresser cette problématique de manière efficace. Je suis convaincue qu'avec ce projet de loi, c'est un énorme pas que nous franchissons dans le domaine agricole. Il n'y a aucun doute que l'application de cette législation mettra fin à une utilisation excessive et exagérée des pesticides dans nos jardins. Ce projet de loi vient combler cette lacune longtemps décriée et vient établir une qualité contrôle où les contrevenants seront exposés à de lourdes amendes et même allant à l'emprisonnement. Qui plus est, ce projet de loi fait aussi provision pour la formation des planteurs dispensés par le ministère de tutelle pour que les produits qui arrivent

sur la table des consommateurs ne soient pas néfastes à leur santé. Cette formation consistera aussi à leur montrer comment utiliser le pesticide afin qu'ils ne soient pas eux-mêmes exposés aux risques. Sachez que souvent les agriculteurs sont les premiers à être exposés à ces pesticides et en font souvent les frais.

On note aussi, comme l'a mentionné l'honorable Rampertab avant moi, la création de l'instance régulatrice, *the Pesticides Regulatory Office*. Je n'irai pas trop longuement dessus. Tout a été dit déjà. Mais je passe à une autre facette que nous apporte ce projet de loi. Voyons les choses dans un autre angle. Ce projet de loi vient créer en parallèle de nouvelles opportunités. La recherche, un domaine dans lequel le gouvernement n'hésite pas à s'investir massivement. On a remarqué ces trois dernières années dans le budget. L'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo a si bien souligné les possibilités avec les plantes. La biodiversité qui existe à Maurice, c'est quand même quelque chose de formidable, un trésor que nous avons. Bien sûr, il va falloir que nos chercheurs viennent avec des nouvelles techniques, arrivent à nous démontrer comment mieux apporter notre soutien au secteur agricole. Nos chercheurs pourront apporter leur soutien sur les nouvelles méthodes capables de combattre efficacement les parasites sans être offensifs aux autres acteurs et ainsi nous aideront à diminuer la dépendance sur les pesticides.

Là, j'aurais voulu, M. le président, attirer l'attention sur la possibilité de développer la résistance sur les plantes à travers le *genetic engineering* en créant des plantes transgéniques. Il y a plusieurs exemples. Il y a aussi le cas des plantes qui ont été génétiquement modifiées afin de les rendre résistantes. Il y a le cas du maïs. Nous savons que les champs de maïs étaient complètement endommagés par les *corn borers*. Maintenant, avec l'aide de la biotechnologie, avec l'aide du *genetic engineering*, nous arrivons à modifier ses plantes afin qu'elles puissent produire des substances nocives qui, à leur tour, pourront détruire les *corn borers* et ainsi débarrasser des parasites qui attaquaient ses plantes. Il y a aussi le cas des plantes qui ne pouvaient plus tenir une baisse de température, de *frosting of plants*, qu'on arrive à éliminer toujours par la modification génétique. Aujourd'hui, on peut se rendre compte qu'une plante peut être capable de synthétiser certains éléments toxiques afin de renforcer sa résistance aux parasites. Le monde agricole évolue.

Le monde agricole évolue et c'est clair que dans le récent budget de multiples mesures ont été prises afin de moderniser ce secteur et afin de donner des incitatives visant à l'émergence d'une génération d'agripreneurs, aussi une meilleure disponibilité des terres,

accès plus souple aux finances et une exemption fiscale de huit premières années aux jeunes opérateurs. Et là, j'aurais aimé souligner que l'Université de Maurice a une *School of Agriculture* qui est d'un standard extrêmement élevé. Nous produisons chaque année des centaines d'agronomes. Il va falloir qu'on arrive à inciter ces jeunes à se lancer dans l'agriculture, mais bien sûr dans la culture moderne en se servant des techniques nouvelles, en se servant de la biotechnologie et essayer d'apporter le plus qu'il nous faut dans le secteur d'agriculture. C'est bien le cadre qu'il faut pour relancer ce secteur. Je viens de le dire l'Université de Maurice fait un travail extraordinaire. J'aurais aimé souligner aussi que l'Université de Maurice vient maintenant avec une ferme agricole extrêmement intéressante et cela, je l'espère, incitera à un bon nombre de jeunes de s'engager dans l'agriculture.

M. le président, l'avènement de the *Use of Pesticides Bill* est synonyme à un contrôle plus strict et plus rigoureux sur l'utilisation des pesticides. La communauté des planteurs et cette nouvelle génération d'agripreneurs seront définitivement appelés à adopter une agriculture biologique soucieuse du respect des équilibres naturels. Elle sera encouragée à cultiver de manière plus intelligente et plus saine. La *crop rotation*, c'est-à-dire, la culture des plantes différentes d'une année à l'autre, permettra au sol de reconstituer son stock de nutriments, de s'aérer, de nourrir les différents organismes qui y vivent. Cette rotation permettra à la maîtrise des herbes envahissantes, la réduction des maladies et des parasites, une gestion optimisée et la préservation de notre biodiversité. On ne fera ainsi que rendre le secteur plus compétitif, productif et prospère avec un accent sans précédent sur la qualité du produit et ce, dans l'intérêt de l'agriculteur comme du consommateur.

M. le président, ce projet de loi, comme l'a si bien fait ressortir le ministre Seeruttun, viendra également donner un *boost* aux productions bio. Les fertilisants bio, produit grâce à la technologie de la fermentation et qui contient du potassium, du phosphore et des nutriments essentiels, dont ont besoin les plantes pour grandir, durent plus longtemps dans le sol et l'agriculture biologique met l'accent sur la qualité des produits et aussi le respect de l'environnement. Elle consomme moins d'eau, moins d'énergie avec une productivité rehaussée.

Il est scientifiquement prouvé que l'agriculture biologique produit des aliments plus riches en nutriments, minéraux, vitamines et antioxydants et sont aussi plus savoureux. La raison est simple. Les fruits et les légumes biologiques sont récoltés quand ils sont parfaitement mûrs et par conséquent, ils ont le temps de se gorger en arôme, ce qui accentue

leur goût. En consommant bio, on s'engage aussi pour l'environnement. On voit le monde sous un autre œil. Manger bio, c'est lutter contre la pollution, des produits chimiques, et c'est aussi aider les agriculteurs à mieux vivre de leur métier.

M. le président, pour conclure, je dirais que ce projet de loi s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une vision commune de ce gouvernement, qui est de venir de l'avant avec des mesures visant au bien-être premier de nos citoyens et des futures générations. Si on veut d'une société qui respire la modernité, la sérénité et la prospérité, il nous faut d'abord tenir en compte l'importance d'une bonne santé et d'une bonne alimentation pour tous, et c'est ce que nous faisons. Encore une fois, félicitations au ministre Seeruttun pour venir de l'avant avec ce projet de loi. La santé, c'est l'affaire de tous, et ce gouvernement ne compte pas s'arrêter en si bon chemin.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

(5.53 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. François!

Mr J. F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the main object of the Use of Pesticides Bill (No. VI of 2018) is to regulate control and monitor the importation and use of pesticides in or on certain fresh fruits, plants, seeds or vegetables with a view to, *inter alia*, minimizing risk to human health and the environment.

I think there is a good call for the Government, the community at large, the planters' communities and individual users to work together to achieve these objectives. The Bill provides an opportunity to initiate a new attitude towards the use of pesticides, which will require a change in thinking and behaviour on the part of pesticide users.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are major concerns in the community about the use of pesticides today, as sufficiently canvassed by previous orators, which I will not repeat again.

However, this Bill will provide some real opportunities to reduce the overall burden of pesticides on the human health and the environment. While food scares come and go, an ongoing concern people have today is pesticide residues in food. Clause 4 of the Bill provides for the proper and safe use of pesticides, where in part (b) it says -

“No person shall, (...) exceed, when using a pesticide in or on that agricultural produce, the corresponding MRL specified (...)”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the FAO/WHO Report of September 2017 on pesticide residues states that each user country can have an acceptable daily intake of any pesticide (ADI), and my question is whether the new Pesticide Regulatory Office will look into the ADI of the authorised chemicals as per the list in the Schedule or are they already performing same.

M. le président, la tendance internationale aujourd'hui veut une réduction de l'utilisation des produits chimiques au niveau de l'agriculture. Par exemple, le gouvernement français vient de dévoiler le 25 avril dernier son plan d'action pour réduire la dépendance de l'agriculture aux produits phytopharmaceutiques. Il est rapporté qu'une des actions du gouvernement sera de multiplier les expertises sur l'impact pour la santé et les écosystèmes des pesticides. Et la ministre de la Santé a expliqué, dans une interview sur BFM TV, « nous devons améliorer nos connaissances des impacts des pesticides sur notre santé et sur notre environnement, afin de protéger nos concitoyens. »

M. le président, avec ce présent projet de loi, nous nous alignons certainement dans la même direction. Nous parlons des risques sur la santé, mais quelles sont les études qui ont été menées dans ce sens dans notre République ? Cela m'interpelle sur le suivi de l'impact des produits phytopharmaceutiques sur la santé de nos agriculteurs et les travailleurs - *bane travailleurs dan bane ti caro* - qui devraient être suivis par un médecin du travail. Et je propose que le ministère de l'Agro-industrie en collaboration avec le ministère de la Santé mette en place un centre d'analyse pour mener continuellement des tests sur tous nos agriculteurs qui sont exposés aux produits chimiques.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in terms of food security today, it is clear we are not producing the necessary amount of vegetables or other food grains in our Republic despite there is potential for same. And what we need is to produce through organic agriculture, without the use of synthetic inputs sufficiently canvassed, including pesticides. This is the way forward for a sustainable agriculture in our Republic. And one major question about sustainable agriculture, including sustainable pest management, is how sustainable are current pest management, pest practices that rely heavily on the use of pesticides products in our Republic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to agricultural production, there is need for an increased attention to be paid to the micro management of agricultural production - micro management at field level - *c'est-à-dire les pratiques agricoles de nos petits planteurs*. Clause 8 (a) of the Bill deals with powers of entry and search for authorised officers to enter any land where an agricultural produce is being harvested for the purpose of sale. My concern is about the control of use of pesticides between time of planting and time of harvesting. How will the control be effected, if you look at clause 8 of the Bill?

Most planters know about the hazardous nature of pesticide products and their handling; in some cases, caused by unfortunate accidents, more often because they have misread label instructions or listened to the advice of extension services or agro-chemical sales advisers. Thus, an essential element of proper management of disease, pests and weeds, is prevention and education, as rightly pointed out by hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun. This is where clause 11 (1) (a) of the Bill is important, which states that -

“Any person who cultivates any agricultural produce for the purpose of sale and who wishes to use or engage in the use of any pesticide shall follow such training programme as the Ministry may approve.”

In the same scope, there is need to make necessary arrangements for delivery of such training programme to stakeholders in Rodrigues. In clause 6 of the Bill, one of the functions of the Pesticide Regulatory Office is to devise a Pesticides Codes of Practice. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote Mr José Graziano da Silva, Director General of the FAO of the United Nations, in 2014, who reported -

“The code of practice describes the shared responsibility of many sectors of society to work together so that the benefits to be derived from the necessary and acceptable use of pesticides are achieved without significant adverse effects on human and animal health and/or the environment.

The International Code of Practice addresses the need for a cooperative effort between Government of pesticide exporting and importing countries to promote practices that minimize potential health and environmental risks associated with pesticides, while ensuring their effective use.”

Certainly, the Bill presented by hon. Seeruttun is in line with the International Code of Conduct on pesticide use, which, amongst others, requires governments to have the overall responsibility for regulating the availability, distribution and use of pesticides in their countries and should ensure the allocation of adequate resources for this mandate. It is important for our international image as well as our way of doing things at international level, as rightly pointed out by hon. Minister Seeruttun.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to elaborate on the implication and applicability of a Bill with regard to Rodrigues. Rodrigues' economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, fishing and tourism. This Bill will have a large impact on Rodrigues and its ecosystem which is vulnerable to the misuse of pesticides. I have to point out that despite existing laws, such as the Dangerous Chemical Act, the Environment Protection Act, in as far as the use of pesticides is concerned, I have to say that Rodrigues is operating in a sort of vacuum. There is no proper control for pesticides sale in Rodrigues. There are actually three sale permits delivered by the Dangerous Chemical Control Board and I have been informed that the Board has no representative from Rodrigues. The provisions of the Use of Pesticides Bill are not clear about its application in Rodrigues as per some of its requirements as described.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the introduction of the Use of Pesticide Bill, Rodrigues will need a thorough analysis of effectiveness of pesticide management and related policies to limit the negative externalities to human health and the environment from the use of pesticides. This shall be carried out jointly by all concerned national stakeholders in collaboration with the Regional Assembly. It is important that 'authorised officer', under clause 7 of the Bill, be clearly defined with regard to the delegation of certain powers of the 'Mother' law to Regional Assembly officers in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was told by an agricultural technician that they have procured some chemicals with a specific shelf life, but to their surprise after just a few months, most of the containers' contents have been evaporated and are empty. I understand that there are many pesticides products being used clandestinely by planters, purchased from unauthorised traders with malpractices such as unauthorised packaging, improper labelling which surely leads to improper use of the pesticides. I hope that this Bill will expedite matters between the Ministry and the Regional Assembly to establish the right mechanism to correct the situation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I humbly request that a complete survey be carried out in Rodrigues about all the chemical products on the market as well as those in the possession of planters. The survey will set a baseline statistics on all chemicals being imported to Rodrigues. The critical situation is that most planters are not fully aware of the scientific use of chemical products and their life cycles. I have been made aware that presently there are generic products on the market - which certainly need to be countercheck - leading to a sort of dumping of some chemicals in Rodrigues, which is contrary to our ecological vision and bio-agriculture farming.

M. le président, conscient de notre vision écologique, et pour rassurer l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo, il est important de souligner que Rodrigues se dirige vers une agriculture raisonnée ou bio et la protection de nos produits locales, qui, d'ailleurs, lors de son discours budgétaire, en mars dernier, le Chef Commissaire Serge Clair a annoncé quatre mesures phares dans cette direction, notamment l'introduction des règlements pour le contrôle de l'importation des produits agrochimiques, tels que les pesticides, les fertilisants et les herbicides afin de favoriser l'agriculture bio ; l'élaboration des règlements pour le contrôle de l'importation de légumes et de fruits à Rodrigues ; le renforcement de la bio sécurité dans les zones portuaires et aéroportuaires afin de diminuer le risque d'introduction des maladies à Rodrigues. Et j'ajoute que Rodrigues travaille sur l'institution d'une banque de gènes, afin d'établir des indications géographiques protégées, ce qu'on appelle le IGP, et un label pour préserver, protéger et conserver la biodiversité agricole des espèces végétales du terroir.

M. le président, nous voulons que la population de Rodrigues consomme de plus en plus de produits sains, sans engrais et sans produits chimiques en utilisant des composts ou pesticide à 100 % bio. Faisant suite à l'intervention de l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo, c'est vrai, à Rodrigues nous avons encore la chance de le faire. Rodrigues peut aussi devenir un pôle d'excellence en termes de production et de recherche à travers une agriculture raisonnée, durable, saine et respectueuse de l'environnement. Nous travaillons avec le CIRAD de la Réunion pour atteindre cet objectif et pourquoi pas avec aussi les institutions nationales, comme le souhaite l'honorable Madame Dookun-Luchoomun.

M. le président, depuis 1976, l'OPR - mon parti politique, sous le *leadership* de Serge Clair - disait au peuple de Rodrigues, face au danger de pénurie de nourriture, de maladie d'avoir une culture de travail pour se nourrir. Je cite –

« *Pa kont lor manzé ki sorti dehors, kont lor manzé ki sorti dan to la terre.* »

(Interruptions)

Je me souviens encore du temps où mes parents et grands-parents pratiquaient une agriculture responsable et naturelle comme si ils étaient en symbiose avec la nature, avec leur terre nourricière. Moi-même, comme l'agriculteur que j'étais à l'époque quand j'étais étudiant, j'ai connu cette richesse de travailler la terre d'une façon bio. J'ai encore en tête l'image de mes parents et mes grands-parents qui gardaient toujours sur la table des fruits cueillis de leur plantation ou dans la nature, des fruits sauvages comme les mangues, des pamplemousses, des grenadines, des grenades, des mandarines, des goyaves, des framboises, des prunes, des citrons doux, des corossols et tant d'autres. On n'achetait jamais des fruits venant d'ailleurs.

En termes de légumes, on mangeait bio : des brèdes martin, des *brèdes malbare*, des *brèdes giraumon* qui poussaient naturellement, des *brèdes mouroum*. Aujourd'hui, pour certains, cette vieille habitude alimentaire a disparu pour courir vers la facilité et soi-disant la vie moderne. Mais, on prépare beaucoup de lits au niveau de l'hôpital. On se dirige vers la vie moderne.

M. le président, l'heure est à une nouvelle prise de conscience pour se renouer à une culture de consommer autrement. C'est-à-dire, de privilégier une agriculture locale et des produits du pays bio. Il faut retourner vers le fondamental, retrouver les goûts, les saveurs, le parfum de nos produits.

Et c'est très important pour notre industrie touristique, l'honorable Gayan !

A Rodrigues, on croit que l'*agro-tourism* est important pour l'avenir de notre industrie touristique.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very important, as stipulated, I quote –

“Clause 9 - Analysis of samples

(1)(b) The authorised officer shall, as soon as is reasonably practicable, submit the sample for analysis in a laboratory for determining the residue level of pesticides it contains.”

However, what is the maximum time for analysis before an improvement notice could be served to the planter?

As regards to Rodrigues when this Bill will be enacted, there is need for the setting up of a laboratory with necessary facilities and technicians for a timely analysis of collected fresh samples in Rodrigues itself. I don't expect that fresh samples will have to be transferred to Mauritius for analysis. The Pesticide Regulatory Office will have to look into that issue in the same mode of operation as is the case for the Police Forensic Scientific Laboratory in Rodrigues.

And to conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I hope to see a better understanding of actual seller, consumer, planter behaviour and competences in making the right decisions on pesticides used and controlled in agricultural production. This would have certainly a positive effect for agricultural policy and the policy instruments that need to be deployed to minimise risks to human health and the environment and to allow present and future generations not to face the problems as a result of use of pesticides.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I congratulate the hon. Minister for presenting the Bill, and also I have been very inspired by hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo which I have to point out, we were together in Reunion Island in 2015 where we visited one of those agricultural farms dealing with biological agriculture, and it is very inspiring and we need to look in the same direction as well. And on this note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you very much for attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

(6.14 p.m.)

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since there is consensus in relation to this Bill in this House, I am unusually not going to be very long in my intervention. Given that I come from Piton/Rivière du Rempart, Constituency No. 7, a constituency where there are lots of small planters and small vegetable growers, I feel it duty bound to say a few words in relation to this Bill. I must also say that it is unusual that we have got such a Bill in this House today by a great Minister of Agro-Industry that we have in this country, who is struggling for the small planters, and we have only recently noted his contribution and that of the hon. Prime Minister in the way that they have dealt with the small planters of the sugarcane industry. And thanks to their intervention, the small planters of sugarcane can actually start their harvest during the start of the harvest season.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have got first-hand knowledge in working with the soil. When I was a kid, I used to go together with my mum, my grand-mother, my father and other members of the family to the sugarcane field, to the field where we used to plant vegetables. I still remember those days when we used to grow vegetables, in particular, tomatoes.

Earlier on, I heard the Minister of Education, hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun referring to butterflies. My very good friend, hon. François has referred us to a number of fruits and vegetables that we use to get bio. I still remember those days when we used to get a heavy rainfall when we used to go to the field, we used to find these wild mushrooms in the sugarcane field, and my grand-mother and other members of the family used to pick them up, take them home, fry them, eat them and make curry with them. And sometimes they used to pluck fresh tomatoes and make tomato chutney, there and there with the fresh chilli that they used to pluck as well, and they would bring an onion from home and they will eat their *farata* in the sugarcane field, and in the vegetable field.

I have first an experience and I have worked with the soil. But over the years, as I used to grow up, I started to hear words like D6, words like Teepol, a number of them, M45, etc., and then what was the use of these pesticides, it is simply to actually help to produce more, so to say. Why I say 'so to say', because previously we used to produce without those pesticides and we used to feed our family, we used to feed our children, we used to feed the nation.

But, over the years, with the personal experience that I had, is that people started to be more conscious about a little bit of black dot in a tomato, or a little bit of a dark hole in a ladyfinger. So, they started to use all these kinds of pesticides and herbicides and, eventually, what happened, we grew productivity, but what we did, we introduced a number of diseases in our country. We made no mistake about the devastating effect that pesticides can cause.

After all what are they? Pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, they are all poison, acutely toxic, lethal. They are endocrine disruptors. The endocrine disruptors cause hormone imbalance that can lead to infertility; in man that can reduce semen quality. And hon. Dr. Boolell is agreeing with me, I see, because those who are in the scientific world, they know. Things like testicular cancer and neurological disorders; these are the kinds of diseases that are caused by the heavy use of pesticides. And I know, if there is excess use of pesticide, you can actually experience the aftermath of the excessive use of pesticides only within 48 hours or 24 hours. You can experience, for example, respiratory track irritation, sore throat or even

cough. You can experience allergic conditions, eyes and skin irritation, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, loss of consciousness, extreme weakness, seizures, tiredness, and all sorts of symptoms. When they are accelerated by the continuous use of pesticides, this eventually leads to death. That is not really warranted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill is no ordinary Bill. This Bill is not about political mileage; this Bill is about the future of our children; it is about the future of our nation; it is about the future of our health care system; it is about the future of how we are going to eat in the years to come, because what we eat is what we are, and it reflects in our character, it reflects in our personality. If you eat food which is not good, in simple terms, it is food which has been interfered with to such an extent to accelerate its process of being ready for consumption, then you are going towards a recipe for disaster for yourself, for oneself, and for the nation.

If we look at the object of this Bill, it says –

“The main object of this Bill is to regulate, control and monitor the importation and use of pesticides in or on certain fresh fruits, plants, seeds, or vegetables with a view to, *inter alia*, minimising risks to human health and environment.”

And this is what it is all about. If, today, we are not going to try to improve our environment and what we eat, then we are definitely going to fail our children and our country. Let us look at what we have in the Bill! We have a Regulatory Office which has been created by virtue of clause 5 of the Bill. Clause 5 of the Bill that introduces the regulatory body is the authority that is going to ensure that those, who are in the business of using pesticides, are going to use those pesticides, those poison, those toxic chemicals responsibly. And if they do not, then the Regulatory Office will obviously have to act and to regulate in such a way that those, who are in breach, will have to be amenable to the Justice System. This is created by the powers given to authorised persons, that is, officers who will be authorised to go, to carry out the check and balances, to ensure that all the laws relating to the use of pesticide is adhered to strictly so that we can grow vegetables and food, not only for our personal consumption, but also what we can export.

We remember the other day when the hon. Prime Minister was presenting the Budget, he introduced a measure to actually encourage exportation, and he has put into the disposition of our youngsters 100 acres of land that could be used for vegetable plantation. Those who are going to acquire those lands for the purpose of plantation, I am sure, if they are given

proper training, they can produce bio products, and not only sell them on our local market, but also export them, and to show the world that, here, in Mauritius, from a small island, that we can send example to other countries, other big countries that we can produce bio.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a number of measures that has been announced in the Budget and I am not going to go through all of them. As I have said, I am not going to be long, but I am glad that in this Bill that there is a provision also for training, because without training we would not be able to sensitise people as to how to use those pesticides. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would advise, through my intervention today, for the hon. Minister to consult those who have drafted this Bill, particularly in relation to clause 3, dealing with Application of the Act. I honestly believe - and this is a matter than the hon. Minister should take advice - whether it could be dealt with. Subclause (2) of clause 3 reads as follows –

“(2) This Act shall apply to every person who, for the purposes of sale, cultivates or imports an agricultural produce.”

But I see that there is no word in relation to the use. So, I suggest that after the word ‘sale’ we add the word ‘use’ as well, because if we look at the main object of the Bill, the main object deals with the importation and use of pesticides. So, if we are making the application of the Act for the purpose of sale only and cultivation, then the application does not correspond with the main object of the Bill and also with clause 4(a) which starts by ‘use’. So, we cannot have one subclause in contradictory to the main object and clause 4(a) of the Bill. This is only a suggestion, but I anticipate the hon. Minister will take advice. But at the end of the day, if we do not have a Bill like this, what is the alternative? Then, there will be no alternative. The alternative would be death. Or, we have got this alternative called zero budget farming.

I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do zero budget farming. I plant, I grow at home for my personal consumption and I do not use any herbicide and pesticide. I use cow dung. I use neem leaf. I use gram flour in a bucket, I let it to become compost after, like a month or so, and I use them. In order to repel rodents, pests and insects, I use cow urine. I use cow urine, I spray it and I yield very good quality of tomatoes, runner beans and all sorts of vegetables at home. And I do not buy. So, we have got this alternative, we can eat healthily; if, and only if we inculcate some degree of responsibility in our children and our youngsters so that we can prepare a nation that is going to be healthy in the future. Our future, the future of this country, the destiny of this country is in the hands of the young generation. If we do not care for their health, then we are a country that is likely to be doomed in the near future.

On this note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank everybody for listening to me.

Mr Depuy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Boygah!

(6.30 p.m.)

Mrs D. Boygah (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Merci, M. le président. Je vais être très brève dans mon intervention. Je suis végétarienne, M. le président. Et comme moi, nous avons des milliers de personnes qui sont végétariens dans notre pays et des millions de végétariens dans le monde. Etre végétarien, M. le président, c'est un choix qu'on fait. Observer un régime végétarien est, en effet, un cadeau que nous nous offrons, nous nous sentons bien et notre vie s'améliore du fait de la diminution d'être karmique. Les arguments spirituels qui vont à l'encontre de la consommation de viande sont convaincants pour certaines personnes, mais il y a d'autres raisons irrésistibles pour devenir végétarien et elles sont toutes pleines de bon sens, M. le président.

M. le président, elles concernent les problèmes de santé et d'alimentation, écologie et l'environnement, éthique et la souffrance des animaux ainsi que la faim dans le monde. M. le président, consommer cinq fruits et légumes à volonté par jour est une recommandation ministérielle qu'on doit saluer très fort, très bas. Une consommation régulière des fruits et des légumes vous apporte des vitamines, des minéraux nécessaires à un bon équilibre alimentaire. Ça c'est sûr! Les fruits et légumes peuvent être consommés à l'envie car ils apportent des vitamines C, fer, et fibres, entre autres. M. le président, afin de privilégier la qualité nutritionnelle de nos fruits et légumes, nous choisissons simple de traiter chimique. Mais, M. le président, être végétarien, personne n'est épargnée par les pesticides.

Pour avoir une alimentation équilibrée, les végétariens mangent beaucoup plus qu'une personne non-végétarienne. Donc, on est exposé à de fortes doses de pesticides, et là, M. le président, il faut avoir une limite légale. C'est la limite maximale de résidus, ce qui veut dire qu'un seuil de concentration de résidus, de pesticides au-delà duquel un produit alimentaire ne peut plus être autorisé à la vente, et ceci pour éviter que le consommateur n'ingère trop de pesticides par jour. Et là, comme on l'a fait ressortir dans le *First Schedule*, que 60 pesticides vont être autorisés pour les planteurs, la limite maximale de résidus étant, en autres, *controversial*, car elle ne tient pas toujours compte des effets accumulés des pesticides, et les méthodes pour le calculer n'étant pas encore disponibles jusqu'à ce que ce projet de loi soit né, M. le président.

M. le président, d'autre part, les végétariens et végétaliens ont une semence moins fertile que celle du reste de la population au régime omnivore, établit une étude américaine aux résultats complémentaires qu'une autre qui met en cause les pesticides. Si un régime riche en fruits et légumes protège contre de nombreuses maladies, il ne participe pas à la qualité du sperme de ceux qui le suivent, révèle une étude américaine, dont *The Telegraph* relate les grandes lignes. Pour arriver à cette conclusion, les scientifiques de l'École de médecine de l'Université de Loma Linda, en Californie du Sud, se sont lancés dans un projet de quatre ans pour savoir comment les régimes alimentaires affectent le spermatozoïde. Une autre étude menée par l'Université de Harvard de 2007 à 2012, pointe pour sa part le rôle néfaste des pesticides présents dans les légumes, dont les vertus oxygénées sont ainsi annihilées.

M. le président, nous avons une population vieillissante. Alors, pour faire des bébés dans ce pays, pour la future génération, on a besoin d'être sains. Par contre, pesticides et grossesse, M. le président, ne font pas bon ménage.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please!

Mrs Boygah: Les femmes enceintes qui sont exposées aux pesticides mettent en danger leurs enfants. Ce produit neurotoxique augmente fortement le risque d'autisme chez les bébés. Les premiers mois de la grossesse sont une période critique pour le développement du cerveau fœtal. Une exposition continue aux pesticides peut affecter la sécrétion hormonale de la femme enceinte, et ainsi affecter le développement du cerveau fœtal. A l'appui de cette conclusion, une étude précédente Winchester a trouvé qu'une exposition excessive des femmes enceintes aux pesticides pourrait causer prématurité chez les nourrissons, et que le pesticide pourrait causer une maladie thyroïdienne chez les futures mamans, qui affectent le développement des fœtus. Le message est très clair, M. le président. Les femmes enceintes doivent faire attention et éviter tout contact avec les produits chimiques des agricultures. Et encore, faut-il être averti de leur usage dans les fruits et légumes, ce qui n'est pas le cas dans tous les pays, M. le président.

Nous avons la chance, M. le président, d'avoir ce projet de loi encourageant présenté dans cette auguste Assemblée, et là je profite de cette occasion pour féliciter le ministre, mon colistier, l'honorable Mahen Seeruttun, de la part de tous les végétariens et les femmes

enceintes d'apporter ce projet de loi qui est très *healthy* à la population d'aujourd'hui et de demain, M. le président.

M. le président, vendredi dernier, quand l'honorable ministre de l'Agriculture et de la Sécurité alimentaire présentait en deuxième lecture ce projet de loi dans cette Chambre, je l'écoutais avec beaucoup, beaucoup de passion. Mais, M. le président, juste après son intervention, je me demandais si vraiment ce que j'entendais été réel quand j'écoutais très attentivement l'honorable Ms Sewocksingh qui a *portrait* autrement cette loi, quand elle l'a qualifié de *political weapon*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what has this Pesticides Bill got to do with political weapon? *C'est ça la question que je pose à la Chambre.* Does the training of planters on proper utilisation of pesticides and the control of toxicity bring political mileage to this Government? No!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, order please!

Mrs Boygah: No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, it has much to do with the health of our population, and we want a healthy population. Though my good friend, hon. Ms Malini Sewocksingh, is not against this Bill, she seemed to be completely lost in her papers and arguments despite the hon. Minister made clear mention about so many details in his Second Reading. Maybe I will get some clarification regarding the concern about sampling and traceability, which was the concern hon. Ms Malini Sewocksingh when she talked about the test in labs, its accuracy and traceability. Let me inform the House that the Pesticide Regulation Office will operate closely with FAREI, which has a database on planters and their crops being grown. This database will be used for random sampling, selecting planters from sampling their harvest, while maintaining confidentiality and impartiality.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, more samples will be taken from the crops where more applications of pesticides are carried out. In order to solve the problem of traceability, samples will be taken from the farm gate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and in the market in sealed food grade plastic bags, to avoid any sort of contamination, with proper coding and labelling.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the setting up of the wholesale market at Belle Rive, all the farmers who are selling their produce will be registered and record kept. Hence, it will be much easier to trace back the source of the samples. Samples, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will be taken in presence of the planters and a notice, as per the Second Schedule of the Bill to that effect ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh, please!

Mrs Boygah: ... will be given to him, that is, the planter. The sealed sample bag will be handed over to the laboratory for testing, as far as possible, on the same day. The bag will be opened only, I repeat only, by laboratory staff. This, along with the coding, registration of sample, will eliminate all risks of tampering. Of course, this is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no dispute mechanism has been provided in this Bill. Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my good friend on the other side of the House has some confusion regarding the training courses that have been dispensed to 5,600 planters.

And there were questions also on the MQA approved courses, the content of the course, the duration of the course, who will be the trainers, are the trainers expert in the *matière* etc, but let me remind the hon. Member that training of planters on safe and rational use of pesticides has been dispensed at FAREI. FAREI has an ongoing programme for the training of planters since 2002. The trainers are officers who are fully qualified and experienced. The training programme which is MQA approved is imparted in creole and includes both theoretical and practical sessions of 10 hours over 5 sessions and this, as my good friend said on the other side, what will happen to those planters who do not know how to read and write.

The training courses include the introduction and understanding of pesticide, pesticide regulations and responsibilities, import of pesticides, types and formulation, interpretation of labels, recommendation and warning signs, pests and disease identification, integrated pest management, use of protective equipment, storage of pesticide, safe handling and preparation of mixtures, pesticide selection and application, basic records, types of sprayers and basic sprayers maintenance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, trainees, that is, planters after completing the course are awarded an attendance certificate. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, among the 7,000 planters, 5,800

planters have already followed the training programme on the rational use of pesticide. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, feedback obtained from the planters revealed that they are fully satisfied with the training programme and they have captured all the necessary details with regard to the use and handling of pesticides.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, this is not a political weapon. How can it be a political weapon when it concerns the health of 1.3 million people in our Republic! Yes, of course, consumers are already educated through media and billboards; sensitisation is already being done and more will be done.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we want a healthy Mauritius, a healthy population. The Use of Pesticide Bill comes at the right time in this august Assembly and we are very lucky, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, compared to other countries which do not have the Bill passed yet. A big congratulation to the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, hon. Mahen Seeruttun, to bring this encouraging Bill to the House!

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Husnood!

(6.46 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Dr. A. Husnood): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak prior to the adoption of the Use of Pesticides Bill. I would also like to commend my good friend and colleague, hon. Mahen Seeruttun, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security for coming up with this Bill.

I am certain that this long-awaited piece of legislation will help to exercise a better control on the use of pesticide, thus preventing environmental disaster and threat to other species in our eco-system as well as human health. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe that the subject is of utmost importance, as highlighted by previous orators. It is important for the future of our Agro-Industry Sector, considering that it is evident that the use of pesticide has its pros and cons.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, pesticide holds numerous beneficial effects such as crop protection, food preservation and the prevention of vector-borne diseases. On the other hand, the use of pesticide causes threat to human health and animal lives as well as to the

environment. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, pesticide means herbicides, insecticide, fungicide, amongst others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to go back in time so as to briefly give an overview of the introduction and the evolution of pesticide use in agriculture and how same has proved beneficial to crop safety, but also detrimental to health, before coming back to the main point of my speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, human has utilised pesticide to protect their crops from insect infestation since 2,000 years BC. The first known pesticide was elemental sulfur dusting used in ancient Sumer, i.e. about 4,500 years ago in ancient Mesopotamia. Also the Rig Veda, which is about 4,000 years old, mentions the use of poisonous plants for pest control. With time the use of pesticide has evolve, from elemental sulfur dusting and poisonous plants used as insect deterrent during the beginning of civilisation, toxic chemical such as arsenic, mercury, and lead were being applied to crops to kill pests from the 15th century to the 19th century.

But with a growing concern from the United State Department of Agriculture and the Farm Groups regarding the sale of fraudulent and sub-standard pesticide product, which was common in the early 1900, the federal government regulated the use of pesticide in 1910 with the passage of The Federal Insecticide Act by Congress. Thus, the first federal pesticide legislation was to ensure the quality of pesticide chemicals purchased by consumers. Until the 1950s, arsenic-based pesticides were dominant. However, changes in the regulation of pesticides occurred after the World War II when the use of synthetic organic pesticide in agriculture becomes widespread.

Pesticides have become an enduring feature of modern life and worldwide. It is estimated that approximately 1.8 billion people are engaged in agriculture and most of them use pesticide to protect their crops. The extensive use of pesticide in agriculture in recent years is unprecedented, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. According to FAO, the world has used more than 5.6 billion tonnes of pesticide, so far.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the use of pesticide in developing countries is about 25% of the total world consumption since 1980s. But 99% of death due to pesticide occurs in these countries, that is, the developing countries. About 20,000 people die each year of pesticide through consumption through their food. In

Mauritius, as mentioned by hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo earlier, the import of pesticides is about two kgs per person per year and this has been going on for years.

This persistent organic polluter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are going to stay in the environment for a long time. We are importing nearly two Kgs per head per population. Just a few grams, and in some case a few milligrams can cause death. So, just imagine what is happening to our country. Just to give you an idea as well. In 2015, we had 136 people who died of pesticide poisoning. In 2016, it was 135; in 2017, it was 136. It is more or less the same, that is, 135 almost every year dying of pesticide poisoning in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this dramatic situation has led researchers to wonder what sort of broader impact all these chemicals may be having on our health and environment. UN Report has highlighted that extensive pesticide use has profound effect on the environment.

As mentioned by previous Members, pesticide sprayed on crops frequently pollutes the surrounding ecosystem and beyond with unpredictable ecological consequences. From the target pest, pesticide gets into the air, the soil, and surface water. Later, it moves into the groundwater, rivers and lakes. These persistent organic pollutants persist in the environment, as I mentioned earlier, accumulating in the food chain, concentrating in the animals such as fish, meat, eggs and poultry. It also affects the honeybees and leads to a reduction of insect pollination of crops.

If we imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we compare now or when we were younger, nowadays we don't see honeybees any more. It is very rare to see it. I think one of the major reasons for that is the use of pesticides, and when we consider that, honeybees are very, very important for the fertilisation of most flowering plants. Yesterday, we were having our dinner, hon. Nandcoomar Bodha said - again the same thing - "when we were young, we used to see butterflies." When was the last time some of us saw a butterfly? When was the last time! They have disappeared. They have disappeared; again, a large measure because of pesticides.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as mentioned earlier, pesticides are poisons. Pesticides affect the biological pathways of the target pest. They also affect the same biological pathways which are present in us, human beings, thus leading to serious and aggravating health issues. It is true that pesticides have helped to feed the world. But they are also causing death, health

problems when people may be exposed to pesticides through, as I mentioned, food, water, air or direct contact with pesticides or its residues.

Pesticides have more short-term and long-term side effects. I don't want to worry you, but I have to mention it. It is very important to mention it. Short-term poisoning is usually the result of single and brief exposure to pesticides. You can take some bottles which contain pesticides, you drink it or something like that, by mistake even, and the next day you may be dead. Short-term! This is single short-term effect. This kind of poisoning can occur due to absorption through the skin, eyes, mouth and inhalation. You can inhale it as well. It can manifest itself as convulsion, loss of consciousness, diarrhoea, vomiting, cough and extreme weakness, not to mention eventually death.

Long-term side effect is due to continuous, but low dose of exposure, continuous but low dose exposure leading to severe health complications in the long-term. I am going to give some examples. Repeated exposure has been linked to cancer and Alzheimer. We know both of them are major health issues. Cancer is increasing in Mauritius. Every year, we have 2,500 new cases of cancer and it is increasing mostly in the female population. Alzheimer is increasing. I know we are getting an ageing population, but it is increasing. As I mentioned before, we have sterility. Chronic exposure leads to genetic damage. When you have genetic damage, it can affect the babies who are going to be born in the future or it can lead to cancer. And it can cause nerve damage.

Other diseases due to pesticides are asthma and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders in children. And we have seen that. So many children nowadays suffer from this Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Depression was mentioned before. Hormonal imbalance can lead to diabetes, obesity and thyroid tumours.

It also affects the nervous system causing memory loss, visual impairment, mood instability and affects the motor skill of a person. A study at Harvard University published in a journal of the American Medical Association in 2017, that is, last year, found that they compared two groups of women. The first group ate two or more servings of fruits or vegetables containing high level of pesticides. One group of women they take two servings compared to another group of women who ate only one helping of vegetable. And what did they find? That was a study that was done in USA at John Hopkins University last year. The group that takes two helpings compared to one had 18% less likely to become pregnant. 18%

less likely to become pregnant! And 26% less likely to have a live birth than the other group that was taking only one helping.

Other problem in children, it has been associated with premature delivery, pre-term birth, low birth weight babies, congenital abnormalities when the baby is born, neurobehavioural and cognitive development. That is, when the baby is born and has a lot of behaviour problems and it affects the intelligence eventually.

As I mentioned before, in children, it has also been linked to brain tumour and acute leukaemia. Pesticides as shown above – it is very important - can transfer from mother to the unborn baby through the placenta of the mother. The mother is taking it, but the pesticide can go through the placenta and affect the unborn baby.

After birth, pesticides can also be transferred from the mother to the baby after birth through the breast milk. We always agree that breast milk is the best milk for the baby, but pesticides can be transferred from the mother to the baby through breast milk.

Growing concern, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about this catastrophic impact that pesticides are having on human health and the environment has led to the United Nation to call for tougher, global regulations of substance meant to control pests or weeds for plant cultivation, vital to ensuring food security.

Following this, several countries across the world have passed new laws to limit the damage on human health and environment caused by inappropriate use of pesticides. So, it is high time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Government in Mauritius, come with this new Bill to better regulate the use of pesticides in Mauritius. For this reason provision has been made in the legislation for the maximum residue level and dosage of pesticides to be utilised given that there is a tendency for planters to make increasing and sometime unnecessary use of pesticides and chemicals in their crops.

Those pesticides are invariably strong and contain important chemicals which can be easily obtained, unfortunately, at different outlets cross the island. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a lot has said about the pesticides and I am not going to go into details. Suffice it to say that I, like most hon. Members of this House, all of us here we strongly believe that it is of utmost importance that the Government exercises a better control on the use of pesticides in order to safeguard our health and limits the harmful effects that it may have on our ecosystem as well. It is said that our health and well-being depends on the nature and the quality of our nutrition.

Here, I would like to point out that my Ministry, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life is sparing no effort to promote a healthy lifestyle comprising of a balanced diet and sound nutrition. At a time when we are encouraging the population to take five helpings of fruits and vegetables a day, it is of utmost important that the fruits or vegetables are of good quality and are not stuff with pesticides which instead will affect our health adversely.

With this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I won't be long. A lot has been said. But I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister again. And we have seen the effect on our health. I think most colleagues agree with us, if we don't control it now, in what direction and what effect that is going to have on the future generation at all levels. So, I would like to congratulate my friend, and thank him for bringing this Bill to the House.

Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(7.03 p.m.)

Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a non-partisan issue. I am glad that there is consensus, I will call it absolute consensus on this Bill. We may beg to differ on the upstream and downstream parliaments, but the fact remains that we all want to put our best endeavour to bequeath a legacy of sustainable development for future generation. As the former Mayor of New York, Mr Cuomo, used to say: 'We campaign in poetry; we govern in prose'. If we have to campaign in poetry to win over all the stakeholders, on this issue we will stand united, we will put on a common front, we will wage an intensive war to make sure that we sensitise the planters community at large.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research saying earlier that butterflies are no longer free. It reminds me of what Muhammad Ali, during his warming up session before he gets into the ring, used to say: 'I will sting like a bee, fly like a butterfly, butterflies are free.'

Unfortunately, as has been stated by the Minister of Health and Quality of Life and the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, we hardly come across a butterfly, which as kids we love to chase and catch. I really see a Bumblebee collecting pollen and nectar from a plant, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Our ecosystem worldwide is under stress, it is not only confined to Mauritius, a volcanic

island with microclimatic conditions, with different soil type. What we see here is not very serious, but we have to address the problem fundamentally, when we know what is going elsewhere in different parts of the world, in small islands. But let me, right from the outset, say that the problem is mainly due to chemicals, but not entirely due to chemicals, because we have more mouth to feed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The world over, especially in Amazon Countries, there is vast acres of forestry which is being cleared for mining and agricultural purposes.

Not far from here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we do not comply with the Ramsar Convention. As to planning, there has been poor planning of our territorial integrity. So, we cannot point figure simply at the planters. To a large extent, we are all to be blamed although this not a blame exercise.

Let me highlight from the outset the intended and unintended consequences of excessive use of pesticides and fertilisers. I have in mind a country like Puerto Rico, which is the major exporter of pineapple, the world biggest exporter of pineapple. Do you know what has happened in Puerto Rico? I am sure - unfortunately, the Deputy Prime Minister is not here - water table has gone down with the lethal cocktail of pesticides and fertilisers. Consequently, water supply on a regular basis is a major issue in Puerto Rico. As my Irish friend would say: 'It's a long way to Tipperary'. But, how far are we from the Puerto Rico scenario? And I don't think that we are too far. So, that is why I made it a point that withstanding an article which I wrote and which was published in '*Le Mauricien*', like many other people, to express our concern. But I made it a point to listen very intently to speeches delivered by all of us, very thought-provoking, and I am sure the Minister will take on board some of the valuable suggestions.

There have been harrowing tales enough to send cold shivers down the spine. We all know that pesticides residue is a causative factor of malignancy, the autoimmune disorders, chronic disorders, or ailments which, as the Minister of the Health and Quality of Life has stated, can lead to death. But it is good to bear in mind what hon. Ganoo has stated, which was reinforced by my good friend, hon. Osman Mahomed. We have to take on board the ruling from the Indian Court, and recommendations made by MID to ban the sale of sizable number of pesticides. I am glad to see some amendments have been circulated. That is why I want to impress upon the Minister. There should be no halfway home; we should go all the way to address this problem frontally. We have to be upstream, we have to be forceful, and we cannot be perceived to pick and choose, we have to make sure that the process is all-

encompassing. My friend in a PNQ which is put to the Minister in respect of the Ecological Agriculture Action Plan; in an excellent reply given by the hon. Minister, he gave a firm commitment that a list 20 pesticides was consequently identified for withdrawal and safer pesticides, bio-pesticides were proposed as alternatives. I expect that these toxic pesticides have been banned, have been withdrawn and they are not available on the market.

I was rather taken aback when the hon. PPS, Dr. Sorefan, made some uncalled remarks *vis-à-vis* my friend, hon. Osman Mahomed. What did he say? He was the former Director of the *Maurice Ile Durable* and in the light of an article which appeared in the Press, he reacted very promptly, notwithstanding the recommendations made by *MID*, he also wrote to the PS of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, impressing upon him that measures have to be addressed and have to be addressed in a very forceful manner. There was no politics on this issue and it was a decision also which was taken by the Cabinet on 22 March 2013. On this issue, we stand united. That is why I was a little bit displeased when hon. Dr. Sorefan made, what I would call, some unwarranted uncalled remarks.

So, let me highlight some of the recommendations of the working group which was submitted by the *MID* working group on environment, preservation of bio-diversity and natural resources. *MID* working group on environment, pollution, waste and environmental health.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not going to state what is in the preamble. Hon. Rutnah did say what amendment need to be brought, whether we conquer or disagree with him, is a matter that can be discussed but, at least, he highlighted what appears to him to be a shortcoming. My plea to the Minister is not to shoot the messenger, that is, the planters, they are the food soldiers, they are the sentinels, they are the best ally in this legitimate war on excessive use of pesticides, perhaps the stronger link in the cluster chain. And sadly, they are the first to absorb the organophosphates or carbamates.

Yet, they do not undergo, at the end of the year, examination of the sputum, examination of the blood, examination of the urine. They are left on their own because perhaps they do not have the political force which they used to exercise, and they need to get together. That is why - in that article which was published in *Le Mauricien* - I impress upon the hon. Minister to lend an ear to the members of the planting committee, to see how we can minimise the absorption of pesticides and the chronic effect of low-level pesticides absorption. They want to be told of the cost benefit analysis of mitigation. You want them to be committed? But

they cannot afford to lose their living. You have to show cause and tell them that they stand to gain, and that the merits of participating far, far outweigh the demerits, that the short-term pain they are going to suffer, they will gain in the long-term.

So, that is why I say that the hon. Minister should sit with planters, talk to them, exchange information and make sure that their voices are heard. When I talked to them - whether they are right or wrong I do not know -, they told me that they had been sidelined and there had been no dialogue, despite a letter which was forwarded to the hon. Minister. Do not shoot the messenger, hon. Minister. Farmers have every right to put legitimate questions. That is why I say that the hon. Minister should go all the way rather than going halfway. And their questions were very relevant. What were the questions that they asked?

Why is it that only certain produce will be subjected to bioassay? Why have pulses and rice been exempted? It is not because these products are covered in the Schedule of the Food Act that they should not feature in the Schedule list of agricultural produce. Despite storage facilities at the STC, we know how broken rice is stocked. Broken rice is infested with pests. How are these places fumigated? What are the substances used? And what is true for STC, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is equally true for AMB (Agricultural Marketing Board) or any storage facilities in the Freeport.

Earlier, hon. Mrs Boygah did not see any reason as to why there should be provision for dispute mechanism. In fact, there is every reason to make provision for the setting up of a dispute mechanism. Planters feel that the Ministry is going to be judge and party. And if you refer to clause 5(3), the officer-in-charge has unfettered powers. They are worried; they are scared that his or her decision can be arbitrary.

Another question which was put by hon. Mrs Monty and, of course, which has been highlighted by the planters is: why is sugar spared? A relevant question put by hon. Mrs Monty, as I have said. And according to agronomist Cyril Monty - I do not know whether his facts are based on substance, but what did he say?

“Approximately 1,700 tons of pesticides are used annually to spray 50,000 hectares of land under sugarcane cultivation.”

Hon. Bhagwan was right when he made reference to aerial spray, and the impact of wind dispersal of pesticide is not negligible, as some want us to believe.

The Bill, therefore, unfortunately, is being introduced to pinpoint farmers mainly. To me, this is a tunnel vision of the real issue. The answer to the adverse impact of excessive use of pesticides, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is neither smart agricultural practices nor organic agriculture. But I grant you that both can be an adjunct to responsible agriculture. In the past, farmers, through AREU, had expert advice - that has been said - from ACP - they still do -, CIRAD, to adapt to new techniques and to be in compliance with phytosanitary norms. We export some produce to Europe, and in the past, we have paid heavily for non-compliance. The culprits; one of the planters! But the process! And that is why I say the process has to be a due process.

When we look at the link in the cluster chain or in the conveyor belt, we have to make sure that the links are strengthened. Under the Freight Rebate Scheme, exporters freight forward their produce to Europe. As I have said, unfortunately, there had been dumping of Victoria pineapple by irresponsible exporters and it could have put at risk our market access.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from pre to post harvest or farm to fork, clear regulations have to be prescribed. One of the major problems is the number of pests which enter this country because of increased movement of people and freight. I cannot understand why there is no provision for the setting up of a Board with relevant relatives. I do understand that there is provision for the setting up of an office. But if you want to wage war, if you want to strengthen the process, the call to set up a Board is justified. My good friend hon. Mohamed, and hon. Ms Sewocksingh were right when they said that the approach should be comprehensive and not left mainly to the Ministry of Agriculture. It should be an inter and intra-institutional approach.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as we say, common things are common. And common things are not being addressed, and wrong signals, unfortunately, have been conveyed. How can we ask the planters to trust a Government whose priority was to release land for the construction of a nine-hole golf course? Do you know the amount of chemicals and water needed to upkeep a golf course? Do you know that a golf course will use seven times the amount of pesticide that would go in agricultural land? So, if you want to send the right signals, if you want to convey the strong signals to members of the community, you cannot have a differential treatment, there cannot be derogation for those who have the means, who can flex the muscles and say, "Stay away from my golf course!" So, that is why I say the signals are very important. You cannot have one law for the planters because they cannot flex the

political muscle and a law for those to whom a sizable number of fiscal incentives have been granted. So, that is why I say, if we are on a small island - and the hon. Minister of Tourism, I am sure, will agree with me -, you need to have a limited number of golf course. You cannot go on a spending spree simply to construct golf course.

And why did I tell the hon. Minister the other day to tread cautiously? Do not release forestry land for agricultural purposes. Let me refer to a study which was conducted by the University of Iowa. A medical school professor at the University of Iowa in the 1990s, under contract with Golf Course Superintendents Association, found that golf course superintendents have a higher mortality from cancers, including lung, brain, Hodgkin lymphoma, large intestine and prostate.

The Statistical Mortality Study reviewed the death certificates of 618 from the Golf Course Superintendents Association members between 1970 and 1992 and compared those rates to the general population and, of course, the results were obvious, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The report which was particularly concerned with the potential for ground water contamination concluded that these golf courses applied about 50,000 pounds of pesticides in one year or 4 to 7 times the average amount of pesticides used in agriculture on a pound per acre basis. So, what are the signals that we are sending outside, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I ask the hon. Minister, if amendments have to be brought to the legislation, to ensure that this legislation is all-encompassing, and we do not even create the perception that we are supportive of some and to discriminate against others we need to treat, because it is very important that when we go out, whether we are going to canvas campaigns in prose or in poetry, we have to get on board the first sentinels, the foot soldiers, the planters. If you do not have planters on board, you are a dead duck, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

As I said, let us rehabilitate abandoned land. Leave forestry alone because forestry is a good carbon sink and it fixes nitrogen. Let us go for the reforestation. Let us rehabilitate abandoned land because if land is not well prepared, there will be seepage and it becomes a fertile ground for pests and vectors. Who is not, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for agro ecological farming or smart agriculture? But we have to state the facts. I will not go along with what hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo has said. Beautiful speech! But, unfortunately, he is neither practical nor pragmatic because, as I said, we are all for agro ecological farming or smart agriculture, but neither one nor the other is the panacea to the food solution. Under the circumstances

some who can afford the luxury of bio organic food will be stuffed, but the vast majority will be starved, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There is even a debate as to the naturalness of organic agriculture. Nature, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not cruel and agriculture has always been unnatural.

Let me now turn to bio-pesticides, integrated pest management, use of neem bio-pesticide. It is our ardent wish that neem could be used extensively as it is an effective pesticide, but biopirate and bioprospectors had got in first to try to say that neem, tumeric and basmatic rice from India, as the patent law allowed, let us therefore, be rational and ask relevant questions. I have here, a report submitted by the FAO and there is a whole protocol toolbox on integrated pest management. It is nothing new. It is a tool that has been constantly used, but I do grant you that we have to consolidate, enhance in the furtherance to attain the objective. Let me put the question. What is the yield of food crop acreage with integrated pest management, bio-pesticides or composts?

The previous Government encouraged conversion of wastes to composts as one of the measures to minimise the use of pesticides. I am sure the Minister will enlighten us as to where matters stand. But I am the first to say, as I have stated earlier, they can be adjunct therapy to lower the use of pesticide and to achieve the set objective. Excessive use, whether it is neem or pesticide can be harmful, make no mistake about it. Our objective, as has been stated, is not to cross the threshold, the maximum level of pesticides. However, results should not be conflicting as was pointed out by hon. Ganoo.

I am the first to say and I reckon that it is not an easy task. I am glad that the Minister is making an effort, and rightly so, to introduce this Bill. As I said, there is absolute consensus. There is consensus on what is obvious. It is indeed a daunting task, but not insurmountable. The battle is won if we would put our finger on the trigger to follow the trail of traceability and there should not be weak or missing link in the supply chain all the way from the farm, for no stone should be left unturned. There is nothing more pleasing to the farmer if his product is quality product. He is the first to eat his produce, and the first to eat his produce also are his close relatives. It is not in his interests to harm anybody. He or she, the farmer, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is willing to be educated, to adopt good agricultural practices, but it is how you reach out to them and what is your outreach for a better reach out.

Section 11 makes provision for training. Knowledge is power and prevention is better than cure. But the planters have to be accompanied. He is the victim of stolen produce from his farm. Up to 15% of his produce are sold as stolen produce, probably harvested prematurely or sprayed with chemicals, ripeners and pesticides, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir. These products are being sold probably on the streets. It is good to recall that there was a lady - and I say it just to highlight the impact that pesticides can have when the produce is not washed under running water or when there has been excessive use of pesticide. You will recall that lady died from the consumption of a baby calabash. Up to now, we have not identified from whose garden the vegetable was harvested. As has been stated by hon. Mrs Boygah, I take it that the Ministry will come up fast and will set up the mechanism of code identification and labelling of produce. But then, as I have stated, well-structured accompanying measures to support the farmers and these have to be extended to the needs of those planters and all those in the clustering process.

As far as planters are concerned, I have stated good agricultural process from pre-harvest to post-harvest, the on-site training, the market intelligence, the technology introductory diffusion scheme, the biotech support, they are all relevant. And I ask the question - I am not saying I don't know when it was done - why the Ministry did away with what I call the National Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee. It was the coordinating and funding body for monitoring application of biotechnologies in agriculture, for sharing of responsibilities amongst the different institutions of the Ministry of Agro-industry and the University of Mauritius. I was glad to hear the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius giving firm commitment that since its budget has increased from Rs22 m. to Rs72 m., more fund would be earmarked for research and development. I ask the Minister if the setting of a Bio Security Unit will make up for the National Agricultural Biodiversity Advisory Committee (NABAC). NABAC channelled - that is what it used to do - resources into identified projects and avoided unnecessary duplication of resources.

One priority related to the minimum use since that time of pesticide for the increase in availability of high quality planting material through micro-propagation with emphasis on elite disease free high-value crops in order to raise agricultural production and achieve crop diversification. The MSIRI set up what they called a bio factory based on what I have stated. But you never win in agriculture and when they set up a pilot project, a farm where those bio plantlets were grown, you know what happened, they were so attractive that the first to damage those bio plantlets were heirs.

So, you never win, you never know. I have just mentioned that we are talking of clean plantlets free from diseases and even if you import genetic material from the best centre in the world, infection can always reach your shores. So, that is why I say you cannot know where the harm will come from, from the best institution, from your bio factory. So, we cannot simply point fingers at the planters, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And I will tell the hon. Minister why I am insisting - and it is fair to say also that many measures are being extended to the planters, but the support has to be well-structured because the problem with our friends, the small planters, they don't have economies of scale. And they will not be able to reap, benefit from the setting up of a new auction market.

The project cost to the dismay of the Director of Audit has doubled even before the construction starts. The planters, unless they are regrouped, and they are very difficult, I grant you that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to regroup the planters, to impress upon them that they stand to gain if they regroup that the merits outweigh the demerits that the services provided will be more effective. But unless and until we get them on board - and I say it to get them on board, there should be differential treatment and special treatment in favour of the planters and not of the corporate sector, because they will never be able to compete with Medline, with places that have economies of scale. Their small plots and the soil is of poor type. Sometimes, they don't have proper drains, there is no proper drainage and we know, as I said, what seepage can do.

So, unless he is given all the support, his produce will be graded low range or rejected because of noncompliance to SPS norms. I was talking earlier to somebody to whom two acres of land has been allocated to grow potatoes. He is a small planter; he has invested massively; he is hoping to reap a good harvest, to him it is going to be an early harvest, hoping for a bumper crop later on if the return and his investment are hefty. You know what he's doing? He is using cocktail of pesticide.

And he wants because he is being told: 'beware, if you don't use this pesticide, the risks of your potatoes being infected are very high'. So, what did he do, he is using a cocktail of pesticide. That is why I say reach out for better outreach.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only do they have to compete with those who have economies of scale, but they are also subjected to unfair competition and I would have thought that the Minister of Foreign Affairs would address this issue, because he is Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

From imports of food produce which are dumped on our local market and the maximum residual levels are not always complied with. So, an import certificate is not a certainty. We need to collect samples, we have to send the samples to the laboratory and, of course, examination has to be carried out. And I ask the question: 'how many random samples have been collected for bias?' And the worst is imported apples; imported apples are sprayed with pesticide despite the fact that the environment is conducive in some parts. - let us take the case of South Africa - to grow apples, but you know the amount of pesticide that go into the cultivation of apple? And then when the apples are ripe, they are sprayed with colouring matter and they are sprayed with pesticide. Yet we are told that an apple a day keeps a doctor away.

So, let me come to unfair trade practices, an anti-dumping legislation, anti-dumping legislation exists but where is the enforcement? Do you know the number of produce which are dumped on our local market and yet there is no enforcement. So, I expect the Enforcement Officers to do their job diligently and not arbitrarily hit at planters. But then we need resources, revenue to help the planters and I will make what I consider to be a humble suggestion. Why is it that there is no levy on genetically modified organism products? Why is Government reluctant to impose a levy on GMO products? Let us collect the taxes to fund pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest technology. And I see no reason why we can't do it because GMO produce is a produce which is a matter and subject of controversy even at the World Trade Organisation. And when you look at the produce on the shelf, the number of GMO produce which we consume is phenomenal.

So, that is why I say we cannot simply wear blinkers and focus our attention only on the planters. We need to have what we call a broad vision and not tunnel vision, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, rigorous control through monitoring and surveillance from import of pesticides to retain sale and judicious use in the field, the supply chain, as I said, has to be tightly scrutinised. I am not going to talk on the chemicals because that falls under the dangerous chemicals control. But it is good to remind ourselves that when criteria are not properly adhered to in respect of proper storage of chemicals, these chemicals can be a fire hazard also. And you recall there was a huge fire in Flacq over poor storage of chemicals. So, I expect regular visits would be mandatory. I am sure the Minister will say, as I have stated earlier, that this Act will be in addition to a not-interrogation from the dangerous chemical control.

Let me come to some complaints although the very essence of my speech has been in respect of complaints, but let me be specific in respect of complaints which have been registered against field officers. Although most of them do the job properly, but there is poor follow-up and random tests of agricultural produce are carried out too randomly.

Let me mention results of food basket analysis. These have to be published regularly so that the public at large is well sensitised. The Ministry had - I use the word had - an excellent food laboratory, which is still, if my memory serves me right, a reference laboratory for COMESA. But it will lose its status, if it does not acquire new and updated equipment. We talked of traceability. We say that traceability is easier if the system is well structured. Mention has been made of registered codes. My hon. friend earlier talked of equipment that has to be acquired, he mentioned about the gas chromatography and mass spectrometry. This has become an essential tool to ensure precise results, and that the residual level which we obtain, the results cannot become an issue of contestation.

Now, hon. Ganoo, as I said, referred to test carried out by independent laboratory, which did not corroborate with the results obtained from our food lab. In our endeavour to be the regional reference lab, we cannot forever rely on competent authority from overseas. We can become our own competent authority subject that we have the physical, the human resources. I hope the Government will soon make acquisition of those equipment. The hon. Minister has given assurances that the National Food Lab will be fully equipped. Let us wait and see!

As I said, compliance from all quarters is essential for procedures are to be followed, and if there is non-compliance then, of course, the guilty party has to bear the consequences of his action. It has to be established first and foremost that an offence has been committed, and from collection of samples of farm gate to food tech lab, there should be no human interference. We have been told that a certified sealing bag would be used.

Before I conclude, let me say one thing. I am rather sorry that nobody has mentioned the Internet of Things.

(Interruptions)

He did! Okay! It is very important because if we want to know the amount of pesticides or chemicals or the amount of water that needs to go into crop cultivation, we need to go for

artificial intelligence and have access to this efficient tool. I think this has become very relevant. I hope the Ministry will give due consideration to the use of Internet of Things.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by saying that the time has come to rehabilitate marginal lands and to extend accompanying measures to the planters, make sure that we conduct a cost benefit analysis to impress upon them as to the merits of using pesticides judiciously. We have moved a long way from surface to ground agriculture, of course, which is the major agricultural practice, and of course, we all want to have green fingers. But, as I said, it is a long way before we embark fully on aero or hydro aquaculture. So, Mauritius being what it is - a volcanic island - sometimes it has to bear the consequences of climatic change, especially when we have cyclone. So, sheltered agriculture has a price and very often, the equipment cannot withstand these strong gales. But with the constant breakthrough in technology, they are coming up with equipment which is more resistant.

My appeal, since there is an absolute consensus, let us move as one team! I can assure the hon. Minister that, on this side of the House, we will campaign, whether it is in prose or poetry, to ensure that we deliver. We have to make sure that the farmers should not be at the receiving end. In fact, it should be a partner within this all-encompassing responsibility.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you! Hon. Minister Seeruttun!

(7.48 p.m.)

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me, first of all, to thank all the hon. Members who have participated in the debates on the Use of Pesticides Bill. The number of hon. Members who intervened on this Bill, indeed, shows that it concerns one and all, because its impact on us is very huge if we do not do anything now.

I have listened to all the speakers very carefully and I appreciate that most hon. Members, even those from the other side, have been very objective and fair in their comments. I am happy that most of the speakers have placed the health and safety of our population before petty political considerations. Some very pertinent proposals have also been made. I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that on a whole there is a general consensus on the introduction of the Use of Pesticides Bill. However, since some concerns have been raised by a few hon. Members, allow me to clarify same and reassure the House of the following. I wish to reaffirm that the purpose of this Bill is absolutely not to target or

criminalise, as was just mentioned by the previous speaker, to shoot the messenger; not at all to criminalise the food growers, sellers and importers or to persecute them in any way.

On the contrary, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our aim, through the improvement notice, is to educate planters on the judicious use of pesticides and ensure that safe food is produced and imported, and ultimately, reaches the plates of our people, thus protecting their health, that of our soil and the environment at large.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned in my Second Reading, extensive consultations have been held since May 2016 for the drafting of this Bill. A technical committee comprising, among others, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, more specifically the Director of Public Health and Food Safety Unit and the Registrar of the Dangerous Chemicals Control Board, the Environment Division of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development, the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture, FAREI, MSIRI, the Small Farmers Welfare Fund and the University of Mauritius was set up to work on the drafting of the Bill.

The committee met five times and prepared a draft Bill for consultation with all stakeholders concerned, namely: Planters' Association, Importers and Dealers in Agro-Chemicals, importers of fruits and vegetables, Ministry of Local Government, Local Authorities, Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, Cooperative Societies, Pest Control Operators, Consumers' Association and the Corporate Sector. After the first consultation, a revised draft was prepared and once again presented to the planters' community including the Planters' Association for their comments.

They were all agreeable to the philosophy and provisions of the Bill. Comments made by them were considered during the drafting stage. Recommendations made by several experts on the judicious use of pesticides, have also been considered and incorporated in the Bill. Contrary to what has been said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, neither has any relevant stakeholder been left out nor has the Bill been prepared *à la va-vite*.

A special programme has been mounted by my Ministry for the sensitisation of one and all and the programme is ongoing. Amongst those sensitised are importers of pesticides, fruits and vegetables growers, pest control operators, consumers and farmers associations, local authorities and the public in general through the media, including MBC TV.

As regards training, the training itself is being conducted by expert officers of my Ministry and FAREI. The training is in Creole and includes both theory and practical

sessions. It is to be highlighted that all training conducted by FAREI are MQA approved. And as indicated in my Second Reading, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 5,800 planters from across the island have already been trained. The training was held at the Wooton Farmer Training School, at the FAREI Office at St. Pierre, Mapou, and also at the Flacq Demonstration Centres, amongst others.

The House may wish to note that this training programme is still ongoing, and I seize this opportunity to invite farmers and growers or any other stakeholders to register themselves if they feel they need to be trained. Let me reassure my good friend, hon. François, that our farmers from Rodrigues will not be left out of that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, question was raised also as to the resources available at the Food Technology Laboratory of my Ministry. Let me say that the Food Technology Laboratory is fully equipped to test organic volatile pesticides by a gas chromatography double mass spectrography equipment. It has also acquired a new equipment for the testing of non-volatile organic pesticides. And I did indicate in my Second Reading, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this new equipment is capable of detecting 182 pesticides molecules, that is, far above the 60 pesticides molecules that are recommended for use in the First Schedule of the Bill. It is worth noting that the services of recognised private laboratories will also be enlisted for testing of pesticides residues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the concerns expressed by hon. Osman Mahomed, I wish to apprise the House that the list of 60 pesticides detailed in the First Schedule have been approved by the DCCB for use in crops. Indeed, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/280, I had indicated that the High-Level Steering Committee set up in August 2013 had recommended a list of 20 pesticides to be prohibited for use. That has been raised by hon. Dr. Boolell.

Let me inform the House that 17 out of these 20 pesticides have already been banned as from 2013 onwards. Three of them are still in use as safer alternatives to replace them are not yet available on the market and have been included amongst the 60 pesticides listed in the First Schedule, as approved by the Dangerous Chemicals Control Board. It is to be noted that the list in the First Schedule is dynamic and is subject to periodical review.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some hon. Members made reference to the integrated pest management methods. Let me, for the benefit of the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, inform that the integrated pest management, which involves the control of agricultural pests by

integrating several control techniques, namely use of natural enemies, trapping crop rotation, use of resistant plant varieties, etc., is already being promoted to keep pests and diseases below the economic threshold level, and thus reduce the amount of pesticides being applied significantly. However, since there is a general perception among farmers that the more pesticides are applied the better the harvest, hence there is a misuse of pesticides.

With regard to the issue of traceability, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, samples would be taken essentially at farm gate level. Thus, the problem relating to traceability will not be really an issue. Even for imported fresh produce put on sale in hypermarkets, that too will be under control. So, I believe that control will ensure that contaminated agricultural produce does not enter the market.

I wish also to assure the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that any consumer association wishing to have samples of fresh agricultural produce tested for pesticides residues can submit same to the Pesticides Regulatory Office, which will do the needful for them so that they can be tested free of charge. This also applies to planters voluntarily wishing to have their agricultural produce tested.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, needless to say that our country is under the threat of several pests and diseases which are spreading throughout the world. Concerns have been expressed in the House and in the Press on the fusarium wilt of banana that is currently affecting banana plantation in Africa. I wish to assure the House that this disease is not present in Mauritius. However, as an emergency preparedness to this disease, my Ministry, well back in 2015, took the initiative to organise a disease diagnostic training with experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency. An island wide surveillance programme is ongoing, and growers are being sensitised on the disease symptoms and reporting mechanism.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me refer also to the point raised by hon. Rutnah regarding the inclusion of the word 'use' in clause 3 (2) of this Bill. I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised that there is no need to amend that clause as the subject matter of the Bill itself is 'the use of pesticides', and in general terms, the word 'cultivates' encompasses the notion of 'use'.

Let me also refer to a few points raised by hon. Dr. Boolell. You know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when I listened to him, him being a former Minister of Agriculture, it reminded me of one guy. *C'était un monsieur qui réparait des statuettes, et à l'entrée de son atelier, c'était écrit 'ici on répare des vierges cassées'*. It looks like he has been to this guy lately.

I mean, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for all these years, it is only now he realises the problems being faced by the small growers. Only now, he feels that they are being treated unfairly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ever since we came back in power in late 2014, we have been supporting the small farmers, be it growers of vegetables and fruits, be it farmers of sugar cane. All the support that we have been doing - be it also the tea growers; you just have to look at all the measures that we have been taking to support those vulnerable farmers. And now listening to him, it looks like he has been the *grand sauveur* of farmers. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it will go on record that this Government has always been on the side of the small farmers.

With this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of our main priorities when we started discussing about this Bill, was the safety of the farmers because they are the very first people who are exposed to those products that are very dangerous to their health. With the training that we are giving to them, we are emphasising on the way to use those products, the protective measures they need to take and the dosage they need to take so that they do not make excessive use of it, because it has also an economic value to that. So, do not come and tell us today that we are just wearing *une visière*. This has never been this Government's way of doing things, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The hon. Member also talked about why did not the law cater for the frozen, dried pulses and the rice and all that, but he should know that - he was in Government in 1998 - all these products are already taken care under the Food Act of 1998 and under the control of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. So, there is no need to duplicate those tests, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. He also talked about agroforestry. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you go on the website of the FAO, which is very accessible, you will see how this is being promoted now. When we talk about agroforestry, we are not talking about removing the trees from the forest, we are talking about growing altogether with the trees in the forest, vegetables that could be grown under those conditions. Again, this is one way to increase the level of food security in the country and in the world. So talking about us destroying the forest is, again, for me, a nonsense, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The hon. Member also talked about biotechnology. Again, the MSM/MMM Government, when they were in power in 2000-2005, they came up with the setting up of a biotechnology institute. Funds were provided already in the Budget and Minister Bodha was

the Minister of Agriculture at that time. Just because it was a project of the MSM-MMM Government, just because it was the project of Minister Bodha, when they got in power in 2005, they froze that project, kept it in a drawer somewhere for years. Once we were back, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we took back the file and last year we set up a committee. There was a workshop; we brought together all those different institutions that work in the biotechnology field and they have come to the conclusion that we need to set up a new Biotechnology Institute. Only last week, we brought back Professor Jones from Australia, who worked on that project in the year 2000. He had a week's discussions with officers and technicians of the Ministry and he is going to send his report shortly. We will see a new institute that is going to come up, and hopefully, this is going to help this industry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The hon. Member also talked about bio-factory at the MSIRI - I was there myself. He talked about the hares eating the plants, but in open field also the hares do eat growing sugarcane plants. It is nothing new. He was talking about biosafety. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have set up a biosafety committee since two years now and it is working and there are two subcommittees that are in place, which is ensuring how we can improve our frontiers, to make sure that we improve our vast control measures and also to keep away diseases and other pests that could come into our country.

So, like I said, sometimes when you are on the other side of the House, you tend to think more and you see things that you do not see when you are on this side of the House. We do not wear blinkers, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we try to look at everything and we have come with this piece of legislation to address the problem of security of the growers, of the planters, of the sprayers and also to ensure that food that are being offered to the consumers are safe and healthy. We are also addressing the problem of the environment. We want to make sure that what we are going to leave for our future generation is a place which is clean, which is still nice to live in.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me just say a few words on what we are also doing with regard to the disposal of containers. In this year's Budget, we have provided Rs2 m. to put in place a project for the management of empty pesticide containers. And you would probably be surprised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there are about 37 tonnes of empty pesticides containers that are thrown in the environment every year. These containers pose a threat to human health and the environment. The project will comprise sensitisation of planters on

hazards associated with empty pesticide containers, provision of their safe disposal as well as their recycling.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House may wish also to note that the Dangerous Chemicals Control Act 2004 provides for the Ministry responsible for Agriculture to control the proper and safe use of pesticides by farmers, pesticide residues on vegetables, fruits and any other agricultural material. However, such has not been the case until now. This Bill will, therefore, fuse this lacuna in terms of legal framework.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before ending, let me just thank all the team of my Ministry that has worked so hard to have come up with this Bill to the House today. And let me also extend my heartfelt thanks to the legal team of the State Law Office for having assisted us in the drafting of this Bill.

With these words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

THE USE OF PESTICIDES BILL

(No. VI of 2018)

Clauses 1 to 12 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 13 (Offences)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Chairperson, I move that clause 13 be amended as follows –

“(i) in subclause (1), by deleting sub subparagraph (B) and replacing it by the following sub subparagraph –

(B) applies a pesticide in or on an
agricultural produce which

results in the corresponding MRL specified in the third column of that Schedule being exceeded;”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 13, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 14 and 15 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

First Schedule

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Chairperson, I move that the First Schedule be amended as follows –

“(i) in the second column –

(A) by deleting the following heading –

Pesticide

and replacing it by the following heading –

Pesticide

(active ingredient)

(B) by deleting the word “Oxystrobin” wherever it appears and replacing it by the word “Azoxystrobin”;

(ii) in the third column, by deleting the following heading –

MRL

and replacing it by the following heading –

MRL

(mg/kg)”

Amendment agreed to.

First Schedule, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Second Schedule and Third Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded the Use of Pesticides Bill (No. VI of 2018) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 10 July 2018 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Hon. Members, we have a long list of interveners. Hon. Uteem!

MATTERS RAISED

(8.17 p.m.)

ERNST LE BLANC STREET, TRANQUEBAR – REPAIRS

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to raise a matter which concerns the NDU and also the Minister of Local Authorities and the Municipal Council of Port Louis.

Following cyclone Berguitta, the road, known as Ernst Le Blanc in Tranquebar next to Camp Manna, was badly damaged to the point that it is impassable. So, no traffic can go there. It needs to be repaired and we need to have a retaining wall on the side in order for the same road not to be damaged again in case of heavy waterfall.

It has been several months now since we had Berguitta cyclone and neither the NDU nor the Municipal Council of Port Louis have found it fit to come and repair the road. This is causing a lot of disruption to the inhabitants in the vicinities.

So, I would urge the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to speak to her colleague, the Prime Minister and the Municipal Council of Port Louis, now that they will have the funds which have just been voted in the budget, so that they can go and repair the road so that the inhabitants can use the road in Ernst Le Blanc Street again in Tranquebar.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I am aware of this particular issue. It is not a question of repairing the road and drain only, as has been rightly pointed out by the hon. Member, it is a question of constructing the retaining wall. I know also that a site visit has been effected by all the stakeholders concerned recently, but I assure the hon. Member that I will look at it personally and inform him accordingly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a matter to respond to. Do I?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, please, hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY - JETTING UNITS

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Member for Constituency No. 2 raised the question of the jetting unit. Wastewater Management Authority has three jetting units. One was purchased in 2007 for Rs8.6 m.; up to now, the total cost is Rs3 m. in excess of. It has just been repaired in May 2018. Two others were bought in 2009 for Rs17.4 m –

- One unit, total repairs and servicing, Rs4.3 m., and
- the second one Rs2.1 m.

The unit we are talking about was sent for repairs on 31 May 2018, delivered on 21 June. The next day, 22 June, another breakdown occurred, sent to repairs on 23 June. On 29 June, it is back to the Wastewater Management Authority at 16.30 hours. It breaks down on the same day at 21.00 hours. These machines were purchased from a company which was not specialised in heavy machinery, but was selling only motor vehicles, vans and lorries.

Now, since January 2018, the Authority has approved the procurement of two truck mounted jetting units from a company specialised in heavy machinery for Rs14 m. Delivery is expected on 02 August and we hope that it will cure the problem.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

POST OFFICE – BILLS PAYMENT - BANK NOTES

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My intervention is addressed to the hon. Minister of IT, who is responsible for the Post Office.

In fact, on Friday and Monday, many members of the public were surprised when they went to pay their utility bills, especially road tax which was the end of Friday and on this Monday, CWA bill and electricity bill. The notes of Rs2,000 and Rs1,000 were refused. So, they were asked to fill a form, to state where they got those notes from and further they have to bring their identity cards and to the surprise of anybody who does not go to the post office with their identity cards and found on the last day they had to pay their bill, their money is being refused. They had to fill a form to say where they got that Rs2,000 notes from and the Rs1,000 notes.

So, is there a policy that our legal tender is not acceptable in certain post office, or if there is, we should do a proper campaign to advise, especially those people who are old-age people, whom their sons or daughters have given them money to go and pay their bill and come back, they do not know where the Rs2,000 come from. It was given to them by one of their relatives or their son or their husband and now they find themselves in such a situation.

So, may I ask the hon. Minister to look into the matter and if there is a policy not to accept these notes, that we go public, use the MBC, at least, for positive things and inform the members of the public, so that they can take their stand and, come along with - they know who gave the money, which bank they got the money and they come along with their identity card.

So, can I ask the hon. Minister to look into the matter? And if there is a policy, not to accept these loans, that we go public, use the MBC, at least for positive things, inform the members of the public so that they can take their stand, they know who gave the money, which bank they have got the money and they come along with their identity card.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation!

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, actually, this matter was brought to my attention last week and I did discuss with the CEO of the Mauritius Post. I know that there was the issue of fake notes being in circulation and it could not even be detected by the machines.

But, actually, it was those employees who were working there; they were the ones who were more concerned because in case that it was a fake note and they were to be blamed. I do believe that this situation is sorted out, but I will take up the matter with the CEO tomorrow morning and make sure that this does not happen again.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

FOND DU SAC - DRAINS

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands. Actually, it relates once again to the problem of drain works in Fond du Sac. The Government has earmarked an amount of more than Rs150 m. for these works and consultants have already been appointed, the plans are ready, but we know that there is some issue in relation to acquisition of land. I would make a humble request to the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands to, please, look into the matter because the works are pressing and I will be obliged. I think the hon. Vice-Prime Minister is going to convey the message to the Minister, if she could kindly look into the issue and ensure that the needful is done at the earliest. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I will inform the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands of the matter raised.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

PITON & RIVIÈRE DU REMPART – POLICE PATROL

Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My concern today is addressed to the Rt. Hon. Minister Mentor. I am sure that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister will convey my concern that I am about to express. It is in relation to Police patrol in Rivière du Rempart, l'Esperance Trébuchet, Poudre d'Or Hamlet, Plaine des Papayes and Pointe de Lascars, they are part of my constituency.

I have received a number of complaints from the inhabitants that as a result of virtually no Police patrol in the area, there is an increase in larceny and drug use and all sorts of criminal activities are going on, in particular after 8 o'clock at night. And the inhabitants have also requested that Plaine des Papayes Police Station, Rivière du Rempart Police Station and Piton Headquarters be more staffed by officers and to give them adequate number of Police vehicles for patrolling. I understand at Rivière du Rempart Police Station, there is only one police vehicle that patrols the area. Similarly, in Plaine des Papayes.

So, I urge in the name of the inhabitants of Piton, Rivière du Rempart that the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor uses his best endeavour to persuade the Commissioner of Police to tackle this matter as soon as possible. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): I am sure that the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor would check on the accuracy of these complaints and take remedial action as and when necessary.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

LA FLORA INTERSECTION - TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to address my issue concerning La Flora intersection in my constituency. I would like to address the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure, with regard to the intersection at La Flora, there are around four traffic lights and they are not synchronised. This is causing quite some confusion in the drivers' mind and also they are not visible. So, would you please look into the matter.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will certainly look into the matter and raise it with the TRMSU, rest assured.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Tarolah!

BELLE ROSE CLEMENCIA – WATER SUPPLY & PIPE

Mr K. Tarolah (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My intervention is in relation to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Public Utilities regarding water distribution in the region of Belle Rose Clemencia. The first point is whether an additional reservoir could be constructed to provide a better service to the inhabitants in the region. And my second point relates to the main distribution pipe which is on the surface along the main road of Belle Rose Clemencia.

This causes difficulties and obstacles to road users. It is also aggravating water drainage in times of heavy rainfall. My request is whether this pipe can be placed under the surface so as to stop all inconveniences.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Since 2015, there are 5,550 inhabitants of that region which have seen their supply of water increase from 8 hrs to 14 hrs. The two mobile filtration plants have been installed and a new duplicate borehole at Belle Rose/Clemencia pumping station.

The CWA is now proceeding with the construction of a service reservoir with a storage capacity of 3,000 m³ at Montagne Faïence, it is also preceding the installation of a pipeline from Belle Rose/Clemencia to Ecoignard. With regard to the pipeline, it is a pipeline of 2 kms which goes along the sugar cane tracks, but 200 metres are on the main road. They will be put underground as and when the wayleaves from inhabitants is granted.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

POLICE OFFICERS - POSTING

Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My concern is addressed to the Minister of Defence, but I am sure the Deputy Prime Minister will take that. It is concerning the recruits of Police from Rodrigues. So, every time when we have Police recruited from Rodrigues, they do their training here, it is two years, but, there are some Police Officers who stay in Mauritius for four years. They have a lot of difficulties because they have to pay rent, they are not having any rent allowance or disturbance allowance and they have elderly parents in Rodrigues. I request the Minister to

look into the matter to say whether he can assess on a case-to-case basis so that the persons who have problems, can go to Rodrigues and work.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): First of all, Rodrigues and Mauritius that's one country. Secondly, Police is a disciplined force. One is not posted wherever you want. Of course, on a case-to-case basis, humanitarian matters, factors are taken into consideration. But Police Officers from Mauritius must also work in Rodrigues and vice versa. So, we cannot interfere with the internal control of the Police Force, a discipline force which has already many problems of its own.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

MEDICAL AND HEALTH OFFICERS – SUBSTANTIVE POST

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My issue tonight is addressed to the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, a very simple issue. It concerns the doctors recruited last year, in June 2017.

In fact there are 318 doctors who were recruited and they should be confirmed in a substantive capacity after one year of service. They have already done their medical tests but, unfortunately, they have not yet received their letters of confirmation. I am requesting the hon. Minister if he can look into the matter at the earliest in order for them to apply or to pursue postgraduate studies in medicine. Furthermore, on the same item, if the hon. Minister can table the priority list for the Medical and Health Officers can decide as to which courses they would like to apply. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life!

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the confirmation is concerned, that depends on the PSC. Naturally, that is going to come because they have started in June last year, so it has just gone one year. It will take a few months; that is going to come and concerning the list, we will circulate it.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance!

LA BUTTE - METRO EXPRESS PROJECT

Mr P. Armance (First Member GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My request today goes to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. It concerns the work that is going on for the Metro Express project at La Butte. I have three issues. The first one is regarding the existing drain that has been completely filled with demolition material. I have been told it is a temporary measure, but this represents a potential danger in case of rain and there may be flood.

The second issue is about the contractor working late at night, which is a constant disturbance for the inhabitants of the region.

And the third one, which is a very important one, is about the pedestrian access. The contractor has raised a temporary structure to secure the site. Actually, they have been on the pavement and there is no pedestrian access for the people to walk. So, people going to mosque at night for prayers are forced to walk on the road. Children at the time they leave school have to walk on the road, and this is a real danger for the people living there. So, I will ask the hon. Minister if he can have a look at the matter urgently.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport!

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the piling, only four are left. So, it is a question of a few days. As regards the drains, the Lord Mayor has gone there today and he is expected to give me some idea about what is happening on the site.

I think the drain upstream has to be cleaned. So, the Municipality will take care of that. It is the first time that I have heard about the problem of the pedestrian access. I will certainly look into the matter. But I would like to say that the works are almost complete there. So, it will last about a few days. So, we will have to explain to the people how things are.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Perraud!

CITE LA CURE – ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Merci. Donc, ma requête ce soir est pour le ministre Mentor. Mais comme l'honorable ministre n'est pas présent, je suis sûre que le message lui sera transmis. Il s'agit de la

situation qui prévaut à Résidence La Cure, plus précisément à la gare de Cité La Cure, où tous les soirs, il y a un trafic illicite qui s'y déroule. Donc, il y a trafic de drogue, l'achat, la vente, et même la consommation de drogue sur la gare quand les bus ne s'y trouvent pas. Et aussi, ils jouent de la musique à haut décibels. Ils font un bruit infernal, et cela dérange les habitants de la cité. Donc, les habitants, qui me regardent à la télé ce soir, m'ont demandé de demander aux autorités de faire plus de patrouilles de la part des policiers. Donc, des patrouilles souvent et aussi pour assurer la sécurité des habitants.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Is this Cité La Cure?

(Interruptions)

Alright, I shall talk to the CP personally and I shall inform the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor of what has happened.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

MIDLANDS – STREET LIGHTS

Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The issue is addressed tonight to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, and it concerns Constituency No. 17, Curepipe & Midlands, where there are some 17 streetlights which are defective in the village of Midlands.

So, I urge the hon. Vice-Prime Minister if she could look into the matter. It also includes the flyover and the health track. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister please see with the District Council of Grand Port to do the needful?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

The Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I am aware of this issue because it has been raised by the hon. Minister Stephan Toussaint yesterday. I am looking at it.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

At 8.38 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 10 July 2018 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

BAI CO. (MTIUS) LTD & BRAMER BANKING CORPORATION LIMITED – SPECIAL ADMINISTRATOR - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/483) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the decision to appoint a Special Administrator for the BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd. and Bramer Banking Corporation Limited, he will state if legal advice was sought and obtained prior thereto and, if so, indicate if the appointment was made in line therewith.

Reply (Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance): As the House is aware, the issue of BAI and Bramer Banking Corporation Limited has been raised time and again in this august Assembly. It has to be pointed out that the IMF has, as far back as 2013, raised concern regarding the precarious state of affairs concerning the BAI which had become a threat to the financial sector of Mauritius before being a legal concern.

In this respect, I am informed that following the revocation of the licence of the Bramer Banking Corporation Limited, by the Bank of Mauritius on 02 April 2015, the Financial Services Commission, pursuant to sections 106 and 107 of the Insurance Act 2005, appointed, on 03 April 2015, two Conservators to take charge of the business of BAI Co. (Mtius) Limited, that is, the BAI, and to exercise all powers necessary to preserve, protect and recover any asset of the company, collect all monies and debts due to it, assert causes of action belonging to it and file, sue and defend suits on its behalf.

Subsequently, on 30 April 2015, the Financial Services Commission forwarded a copy of the Conservator's Report to the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance highlighting that the values of the assets of BAI at 31 December 2014 were materially overstated, whereas the liabilities were understated. In fact, the Conservators had assessed the liabilities of the BAI at Rs28 billion while the assets were worth Rs16 billion, thus resulting in an excess of liabilities over the assets by an amount of Rs12 billion.

I wish here to quote section 110A(1) of the Insurance Act 2005 which reads as follows, I quote –

“where the Minister is satisfied, on the basis of a report submitted by the Commission, that the liabilities of an insurer and any of its related companies exceed its assets by at least one billion rupees and that such excess is likely to be a threat to the stability and soundness of the financial system of Mauritius, he may request the Commission to appoint a special administrator to the whole or part of the business activities of the insurer and any of its related companies.”

I am advised that based on this particular section of the Insurance Act, on 30 April 2015 itself, after having given due consideration to the Report submitted by the Financial Services Commission, the then Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance, requested the Commission to appoint a Special Administrator to the whole or part of the business activities of the BAI and any of its related companies.

Subsequently, on 01 May 2015, the Financial Services Commission appointed Messrs Mushtaq Oosman and Yogesh Rai Basgeet of PWC as Special Administrators of the BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd and related companies under section 110A(2) of the Insurance Act 2005 .

I am accordingly informed that the Financial Services Commission acted in line with the provisions of section 110A of the Insurance Act 2005 and there was as such no need to seek legal advice thereon.

SUGAR INSURANCE FUND BOARD - LAND ACQUISITION

(No. B/487) Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Sugar Insurance Fund Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if it has acquired six acres of agricultural land for the sum of Rs115 m., inclusive of taxes and, if so, indicate the terms and conditions of the said acquisition.

Reply: I am informed that the Sugar Insurance Fund Board (SIFB) has acquired six acres of land situated along Verdun-Terre Rouge-Trianon Link-Road, for a total amount of Rs115.9 m., inclusive of taxes.

I am further informed that this is not the first time that the SIFB has invested in properties.

According to Section 17 of the Sugar Insurance Fund Act, the Board may, on the recommendation of the Investment Committee, invest any money forming part of the assets of the Fund which is not required, to meet the liabilities of the Fund.

MONT ROCHES, VERGER BISSAMBAR - DRAINS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/488) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Verger Bissambar at Mont Roches, Beau Bassin, he will state if prior consideration will be given for the construction of drains thereat before the next rainy season.

Reply: I am informed by the National Development Unit that a contract for the construction and upgrading of drains at four locations in Constituency No. 20, which includes the construction of drain at Verger Bissambar Lane at Mont Roches, was awarded on 14 February 2018 for a total amount of Rs5,352,025.75, inclusive of VAT. The cost of the works at Verger Bissambar Lane was estimated at Rs272,956.64, inclusive of VAT.

The Contractor mobilised on site for the construction of the drain at Verger Bissambar Lane in May 2018. The works were scheduled to be completed by 07 June 2018, that is, well before the next rainy season. However, at the start of the works, the inhabitants of the locality made written representations regarding the type of drain proposed for construction.

Following these representations, consultations were held with the hon. Parliamentary Private Secretary of Constituency No. 20 and representatives of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, and it has been decided that the drainage system in the locality will urgently need to be looked into in a holistic way.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (FORMER) - ALLEGATIONS - INQUIRY

(No. B/489) Mr S. Baboo (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the allegations levelled against Mr R. Y., whilst he held Office as Attorney General in 2017, he will state where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto.

Reply: The Police and the Independent Commission Against Corruption have separately initiated investigations into a case involving allegations levelled against Mr R.Y. and several other persons.

Both investigations are proceeding and it would not be appropriate for me to make any statement on the matter.

AQUACULTURE PROJECTS - IMPLEMENTATION

(No B/517) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in

regard to aquaculture projects, he will state the number thereof implemented and in progress respectively, indicating in each case the -

- (a) name of the promoter thereof;
- (b) cost thereof;
- (c) number of persons to be employed therefor, and
- (d) estimated production capacity thereof.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that todate, thirteen aquaculture projects have been implemented as follows -

- (i) two large scale projects at Pointe aux Feuilles and Bambous Virieux, respectively;
- (ii) ten floating cage culture projects – two at Grand Gaube, two at Poudre d’Or, two at Grande Riviere Sud Est, two at Quatre Soeurs and two at Bambous Virieux, and
- (iii) one barachois project at Poudre d’Or.

As for part (b) of the question, eight aquaculture projects are in progress. I am tabling the information regarding the names of the promoters, the cost of each project, the number of persons to be employed, and the estimated production capacity.

POLICE – PASSING-OUT CEREMONY – PM SPEECH

(No. B/518) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the recent statement made by the Honourable Prime Minister during the Passing-Out Ceremony on 05 May 2018 to the effect that some Police Officers are attempting to sabotage the fight against drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if due diligence is being carried out to identify the Police Officers suspected of involvement therein for urgent actions to be taken against them.

Reply: I presume the hon. Member is referring to the Speech of the hon. Prime Minister at the Passing-Out Ceremony of new recruits of the Mauritius Police Force on 05 May 2018. I wish to highlight that the hon. Member seems to have misinterpreted the statement of the hon. Prime Minister on that occasion. In fact, the hon. Prime Minister stated the following, I quote-

“It is unfortunate and very sad to note that lately, even some Police Officers have been involved in drug related cases. Regrettably the acts committed by these Officers have not only tarnished the reputation of the Mauritius Police Force but also undermined the good work carried out by the numerous other dedicated officers.”

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there have been cases where some Police Officers have been involved in drug related cases. As at 02 July 2018, there are twenty-nine (29) Police Officers who have been interdicted for drug related offences.

The status of the twenty-nine (29) cases is as follows -

- one (1) case has been referred to the DPP’s Office for advice,
- five (5) cases are awaiting trial; and,
- twenty-three (23) cases are still under enquiry.

I am also informed that whenever Police is apprised of any possible involvement of any person, including Police Officers in drug related cases, ADSU immediately institutes an enquiry. Their movements and activities are closely monitored. Upon obtaining sufficient evidence of their involvement in drug-related activities, the suspects, irrespective of their status, are arrested and prosecuted.

Furthermore, there are instances where it is suspected that Police Operations could have been jeopardised due to information leaked prior to intervention on the ground. However, these suspicions could not be ascertained so far.

DRIVING – INTOXICATING DRUGS - TESTING EQUIPMENT

(No. B/519) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the testing of drivers driving under the influence of synthetic drugs, he will state if appropriate equipment will be procured therefor and, if so, when.

Reply: The Dangerous Drugs Act 2000 and the Road Traffic Act 1962 provide for sanctions for driving under the influence of intoxicating drugs.

However, I am informed by the Police that there are no established procedures for the conduct of drug tests, compared to those in respect of driving under the influence of alcohol. Police have, so far, not procured any equipment to be used for the detection of offences related to drug driving.

Amendments will be brought to the legislations with a view to sanctioning driving under the influence of intoxicating drugs. This will include synthetic drugs. Police will have to procure the necessary equipment for road side tests in line with the new legislations.

In reply to PQ B/234, I informed the House that the Forensic Science Laboratory had in year 2013 and year 2014 acquired a Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometry and a Liquid Chromatography High Resolution Mass Spectrometry to confirm presence of the drug metabolite. Furthermore, to carry out presumptive tests to facilitate screening, a Radox Evidence Investigator was purchased in year 2015.

I am also informed that a Letter of Award for procurement of a Liquid Chromatography High Resolution Mass Spectrometry for testing of physical form of both synthetic and non-synthetic drugs has already been issued by the FSL. The equipment will be delivered by end of August 2018. Tests are expected to be carried out as from September 2018 after commissioning of this equipment.

To enable a complete testing of drugs, particularly those found in body fluids, provision has been made in the Budget for year 2018/2019 for acquisition by FSL of a Liquid Chromatography tandem Mass Spectrometry, a state-of-art equipment used in all international laboratories for drug driving analysis.

In that respect, they would be in a position to provide full services for testing of synthetic and non-synthetic drugs in drivers by end of this year. These tests will be carried out as per international standards.

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS – STUDENTS - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/520) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the tertiary institutions operating in Mauritius, she will state the number of complaints received from students attending same, since 2015 to date, indicating the remedial measures taken in relation thereto, if any.

Reply: My Ministry is made aware of complaints from students of Tertiary Education Institutions (TEIs) mostly through the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The latter receives those complaints through multiple channels. It investigates into them and takes appropriate remedial measures.

I am informed that some 250 students' complaints have been received over the past two years from the TEIs. These complaints relate for the most part to infrastructure, fees,

student welfare, delays in the issue of certificates, lack of human and material resources, including library facilities.

It is interesting to point out that some of the complaints emanate from institutions which existed prior to 2015 and which my Ministry inherited as a heavy legacy. In some cases, actions have had to be taken by my Ministry for these institutions to stop operating.

The TEC follows up on all the complaints with the TEIs concerned until resolution of the problems. In some cases, meetings are held with the parties concerned with a view to finding a convenient solution to the satisfaction of both parties. In that respect, regular feedback is submitted to my Ministry by the TEC.

ACCIDENTS - WORKPLACE - CASES

(No. B/521) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to accidents occurring at the workplace, he will state the number of reported cases thereof over the past five years, indicating if consideration is being given for a review of the legislation with a view to minimizing the risks thereof?

Reply: I am tabling the information at annex regarding the number of reported cases of accidents occurring at the workplace over the past five years.

With regard to the review of the present legislation, I wish to inform the House that necessary consideration is being given to that effect at the level of my Ministry.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – ASSISTANCE

(No. B/522) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to domestic violence, she will state –

- (a) the number of reported cases thereof against women and children, respectively, since November 2017 to date, indicating in each case, the number thereof in which-
 - (i) death, and
 - (ii) serious bodily injuries ensued, and
- (b) where matters stand as to the consultations initiated with the Commissioner of Police and the Police Family Protection Unit to strengthen intervention strategies in cases thereof.

Reply: In regard to domestic violence, I am informed that, since November 2017 to 15 June 2018, 968 cases have been reported to my Ministry. I am further informed by the Mauritius Police Force that 1,691 cases of women, 78 cases of children and 363 cases of men were reported. During the same period, three victims comprising two women and one man passed away. Six cases of serious assault on women ensued.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that since 2015, tailor-made training has been given by my Ministry to some 2,562 Police Officers to empower them on issues related to domestic violence. Clear cut directives have been issued by the Police Department to all Police Officers on that issue (counselling, mediation, reconstruction and recovery programs and assistance to victims and collateral victims of domestic violence).

**GRNW & PORT LOUIS WEST - PRIVATE LANDS -
ABANDONED/NEGLECTED**

(No. B/523) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to private lands abandoned/neglected by their owners in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, she will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, a list thereof, indicating the number of complaints received in relation thereto and the number of prosecuted and pending cases thereof, and
- (b) state if additional measures will be taken by her Ministry to deal therewith.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that during the period January to May 2018, 31 complaints were received by the City Council regarding abandoned/neglected private lands. 25 notices were served on the owners whose addresses were known to the City Council. Out of these 25, 19 have complied with the requirements of the notice served on them and have cleaned their lands, while the remaining six were prosecuted. Three owners were fined by the District Courts in accordance with Section 158(1)(e) of the Local Government Act 2011 and three are awaiting trial. With regard to the six remaining complaints where the owners are unknown, the City Council has partly cleaned their land as these represented a threat to public health.

With regard to part (b) of the question, as an additional measure, my Ministry will shortly organise mass sensitisation campaigns island wide, in collaboration with all Local

Authorities and other stakeholders on the cleaning and maintenance of all bare lands. This will be in line with the Clean Up Mauritius and Embellishment Programme.

SUGAR PRODUCERS & JOINT NEGOTIATING PANEL - COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

(No. B/524) Dr A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the meeting the Honourable Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security and his goodself had with a representative of the sugar industry on 23 October 2017, he will state the outcome thereof.

Reply: The meeting was held with representatives of the Joint Negotiating Panel (JNP) to discuss possibilities for negotiation for a new collective agreement between the JNP and Sugar Producers. As the House would be aware, following the dissolution of the MSPA in 2015, there is presently no common platform to enable the Corporate Sector and unions to carry out collective bargaining on the sectoral level.

Further to this meeting, I understand that another meeting was held at the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security with representatives of the Sugar/Corporate Sector to discuss the proposal of collective bargaining made by the JNP. I am informed that they were not agreeable and favoured to maintain negotiation on an enterprise basis. I further understand that presently employers have invited Trade Unions to negotiate at enterprise level.

The Employment Relations Act does not impose any obligation on employers to carry out collective bargaining on a sectoral basis. Furthermore, any intervention on the part of the Government in the process of voluntary collective bargaining would be contrary to the ILO principles. I wish to refer the House to a request of the Committee on the Application of Standards of the ILO at the International Labour Conference 2016 to the effect that Government of Mauritius -

- (a) ceases its intervention into free and voluntary collective bargaining between employers and workers in the Sugar Industry;
- (b) takes concrete measures to promote and encourage greater development and utilisation of voluntary negotiations between employers/employers' organisations on the one hand, and workers' organisations on the other, and

- (c) refrains from infringing Article 4 of the ILO Convention 98 and from committing similar violation in the future.

PLAINE VERTE GARDEN - UPGRADING

(No. B/525) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Plaine Verte Garden, at the level of the playground up to Diego Garcia Street, she will state if she is aware of the bad state thereof, including the absence of adequate lighting, the damaged state of some bollards and benches and the abandoned state of the pool and, if so, will she, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if remedial measures will be taken, indicating if consideration will be given for the bollards to be replaced by LED lanterns.

Reply: With regard the Plaine Verte Garden, at the level of the playground up to Diego Garcia Street, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that regular maintenance works are carried out thereat by the Parks and Gardens Section of the City Council. However, the present state of the Garden and the absence of adequate lighting thereat is due to repeated acts of vandalism. According to information obtained from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, all the underground cables have been stolen. In addition, 10 single boule de neige; 20 double-armed boule de neige and 10 double-armed decorative bollards have been damaged.

The cost for the reinstatement of the lighting system and the replacement of the existing lanterns by LED lanterns have been estimated by the City Council to be around Rs850,000 and will be implemented in this financial year. In the meantime, as a temporary measure, floodlights have been installed at strategic points.

I am informed that the water pond at the Plaine Verte Garden was completely rehabilitated and fenced in 2015 by the City Council to prevent acts of vandalism. However, even though the water pond is fenced, acts of vandalism still occur on a regular basis. A complete survey will be carried out by the City Council to assess the extent of the damage and to determine the works to be carried out as well as the estimated cost.

CANCER HOSPITAL – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/526) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the

setting up of the New Cancer Centre at Solferino, Vacoas, he will state where matters stand, indicating –

- (a) the expected date of coming into operation thereof, and
- (b) if additional doctors will be recruited therefor and, if so
 - (i) give details as to the posts to be filled, and
 - (ii) proposed time frame for the recruitment thereof.

Reply: I wish to apprise the House that tender for the construction of the new Cancer Hospital was launched in January 2018 and the Bid Evaluation Exercise has already been completed. The tendering exercise was carried out by the consultant appointed under the G to G Agreement with the Government of India.

The Bid Evaluation Report has been forwarded to the EXIM Bank for clearance on 15 May 2018. Once greenlight is obtained from EXIM Bank, my Ministry will proceed with the award of contract to the successful bidder.

As regards to part (a) of the question, I am given to understand that the duration of the construction work of the project is 15 months as from the date of award of contract. It is expected that the Cancer Centre would be operational by December 2019.

Regarding the recruitment of doctors, my Ministry will be using the current staff available at the Cancer Unit of the Victoria Hospital. Recruitment of additional staff will be contemplated as and when required.

As announced in the Budget Speech, there is a budgetary provision of Rs1.5 billion in the next Budget 2018-2019, which will include renovation of old building, construction of new building and procurement of high-tech equipment.

JEETOO HOSPITAL – BED SHEETS & LIFTS

(No. B/527) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the A.G. Jeetoo Hospital, he will state if he is aware of a shortage thereof of bed sheets and of the bad condition of the lift thereof and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the taking of remedial measures in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed that there is no shortage of bed sheets at the A. G. Jeetoo Hospital or in any other public hospitals.

In fact, each ward and unit has a buffer stock of linen items, which includes bed sheets which are being used routinely and when needed. Purchases are also being made on a regular basis.

As regards the issue of lifts, I am informed that there are 11 passenger lifts and 3 document/microlifts at the new A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and all the lifts are in working condition.

HOSPITALS – WARDS – AIR CONDITIONING UNITS

(No. B/528) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the public hospitals, he will state if consideration will be given for the provision of air conditioners in all the wards thereof.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that most of our hospitals have air conditioning units, wherever possible. Air conditioners are provided in specialised wards such as Cardiac Wards, Intensive Care Unit and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit as these wards are equipped with medical equipment, which are required to be kept under cool temperature to avoid breakdown. All openings in such wards are kept closed at all times for proper ventilation.

I wish also to inform the House given that most of our hospitals are colonial and as such, the wards are mostly not suitable for the installation air conditioning units. Additionally, one of the other constraints is that all our hospitals are designed in such a way that they have large number of openings to allow a circulation of fresh air.

Many patients are not comfortable with air conditioning system as a ward can have patients with different types of illness which might not be conducive to their early recovery.

You may note that for specialised units like the ICU, special type of air conditioners (with air handling unit) is usually recommended.

Lastly, I can reassure the House that most of the hospital wards are normally provided with fans.

ICTA – SERVERS – NATIONAL SECURITY SERVICE

(No. B/529) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the Information Communication Technologies Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to when the servers located thereat were secured by the National Security Service, indicating –

- (a) the date of return thereof;
- (b) if the Child Sexual Abuse software and other applications were hosted therein, and

(c) if an IT security audit has been carried out following the return thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Information Communication Technologies Authority that the Police seized the servers from the ICTA in January 2016 and these servers were returned on 10 May 2018.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) software is a cloud based filtering system which has been set up since June 2014. The system is hosted on the cloud. The Police seized the servers located at the ICTA which hosted only applications/systems for ICTA's internal operations.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that upon receipt of these equipment from the Police, an internal testing has been carried out wherein most of the equipment have been found faulty.

BATS - CULLING

(No. B/530) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to fruits, he will state the estimated quantity thereof affected by bats in 2017, indicating if the culling thereof is being envisaged.

Reply: I am informed by the Food and Agricultural Research Extension Institute (FAREI) that due to adverse climatic conditions which prevailed last year and early this year, with high humidity and excessive rainfall, there was a drop in the production of seasonal fruits, namely litchis, mangoes and *longanes*.

As such, the total quantity of fruits that was estimated to have been affected by bats was about 2,136 tons, which is much less as compared to the previous years.

According to report from the FAREI, the damage caused by bats is estimated at 30% to 50% in unprotected backyard trees whereas, in protected commercial orchards, the damage was significantly lower, ranging from 10% to 30%.

Regarding the culling of bats this year, the decision will depend mainly on the estimated production of fruits this year and also on the final red-listing assessment of our bat species.

I have to point out here that, following the two episodes of culling of bats in 2015 and 2016, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is presently undertaking an assessment of the status of our bat species. There is an indication that the bat species will be uplisted from "Vulnerable" to "Endangered". The report from IUCN is expected shortly.

However, the FAREI, in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, namely the National Parks and Conservation Service, the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation and international organisations, is carrying out regular sensitisation campaigns with farmers and orchard growers to further encourage them to protect their trees against bats and also to find acceptable solutions to address the human/bat conflict.

Other alternative solutions to reduce the damage caused by bats are being considered, including the use of organic bat repellents.

SCHOOLS – SYNTHETIC DRUG PREVENTION PROGRAMME

(No. B/531) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to synthetic drugs, she will state if consideration will be given for the advisability of introducing a Drug Education and Intervention Programme at the level of the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions together with the setting up of a National Action Plan to deal with the prevalence and proliferation thereof.

Reply: The scourge of drug and substance abuse is becoming a concern worldwide.

Necessary actions are being taken at all levels and concerted efforts are being sustained to curb its ill effects.

We have adopted a zero-tolerance policy in regard to drug issues in schools.

Strict control measures have been put in place at the level of classes and school compounds. We have also an established protocol to address this issue and heads of schools are fully conversant with same.

In my reply to PQ B/327 at the sitting of 25 April 2017, I already elaborated on a series of control and preventive measures being implemented in schools to deal with the issue.

On 15 May 2018, in reply to a PNQ, the House was informed that a National Drug Control Master Plan 2018 – 2022 is being elaborated with the assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). This Master Plan rests on 4 strategic pillars as follows –

1. Drug Supply Reduction;
2. Drug Demand Reduction, namely drug use prevention, drug use disorders treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration;
3. Harm Reduction, and

4. Coordination Mechanism, Legislation, Implementation Framework, Monitoring & Evaluation and Strategic Information.

My Ministry is actively engaged together with partner institutions in the implementation of activities falling under the Strategic Pillar 2 “Drug Demand Reduction and drug use prevention” under Strategic Objective 2.2, that is –

To enhance, in line with national and international standards, the quality, availability and accessibility of drug use prevention programmes in all educational (primary, secondary and tertiary) and vocational institutions with a view to empowering students with drug resilience skills.

In the context of the above, a Workshop was conducted by two resource persons from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), namely Ms. Giovanna Campello, Officer responsible for the Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Section at UNODC and Dr. R. Abdool, Consultant at the UNODC on 10 and 11 May 2018 to assist in the elaboration of a drug prevention curriculum.

The Workshop focused on an integrated and standardised approach to Drugs Education in educational institutions. The curriculum proposed by the UNODC is based on the International Standards for Drug Use Prevention prepared by the UNODC and the World Health Organisation. A Validation Workshop on the drug prevention curriculum will be carried out by the UNODC on 23 July 2018.

My Ministry is also collaborating with the UNODC for the conduct of a Drug Prevention Programme at the level of secondary schools and in this connection, a 3-day Training of Trainers’ programme is scheduled from 24 to 26 July 2018 for the benefit of the Educational Social Workers of my Ministry and of the PSEA. They would be, *inter alia*, responsible for training the Educators who would deliver the programme via the curriculum and would also act as mentors to monitor, evaluate and facilitate the implementation of this programme in the curriculum. Cascade training for Educators will be held during the November/December schools holidays.

With regard to the plan of action to deal with synthetic drugs, I have already, in my earlier replies, elaborated on the series of actions being taken by my Ministry in its fight against the drug scourge.

I wish to stress that strict control and preventive measures are being taken by my Ministry, including –

- regular surveillance and enhanced vigilance inside and outside school compounds, particularly in risk prone areas;
- reinforcement of health clubs in secondary schools to better address health related issues including substance abuse, and
- continued collaboration with partner institutions for sensitisation and prevention programmes in schools.

In addition, another series of measures to intensify the fight against this scourge was announced in the Budget 2018/2019, and here, allow me to name but a few of them –

- the provision of Rs10 m. for new synthetic drug prevention programme to sensitise the students, the workforce and the community at large on the ravages of the synthetic drugs;
- specialised equipment to detect persons under the influence of drugs, and
- acquisition of modern specialised technological tools and equipment for the Forensic Laboratory and for ADSU in the pursuit against drug trafficking.

MAURITIUS EMBASSY & HONORARY CONSULS – ITALY

(No. B/532) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, he will state if consideration is being given for the setting up of a Mauritius Embassy/Consulate in Italy and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

Reply: The decision to close our Consulate in Rome was taken by the previous Government on 28 March 2012. (The argument being the savings of Rs8.5 m. annually).

With a view to assisting our diaspora in Italy after the closure of our Consulate in Rome and as part of expanding our network of Honorary Consuls, we have appointed an Honorary Consul in Bari. Furthermore, my Ministry is processing candidatures for the

appointment of Honorary Consuls in four other cities, namely Rome, Catania, Milan and Florence.

The opening of an Embassy in Rome will be considered in the context of the transformation of my Ministry and with the reorganisation of new diplomatic missions abroad.

PUBLIC ROADS – BILLBOARDS – MONEY COLLECTED

(No. B/533) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to billboards and other advertisement along public roads, he will state the amount of money collected on a yearly basis since 2015 to date.

Reply: In accordance with section 22 of the Roads Act, the Road Development Authority (RDA) is responsible for the control of advertisements along main roads and motorways.

Applications are made at the RDA against payment of a processing fee of Rs500 per application.

I am informed by the RDA that the amount of fees collected since 2015 to May 2018 is as follows –

Period	Amount (Rs)
Jan. - Dec. 2015	119,000.00
Jan. 2016 - June 2017	218,500.00
Jan. 2017 - 24 May 2018	<u>85,000.00</u>
TOTAL	<u>422,500.00</u>

I am also informed that the Mauritius Revenue Authority, on its side, collects a yearly advertising structure fee from the advertising agents. The amount collected for the period January 2015 to April 2018 is as follows –

Jan. - Dec. 2015	Rs63 m.
Jan. - June 2016	Rs34 m.
July 2016 - June 2017	Rs59 m.
July 2017 - April 2018	Rs39 m.

I also wish to inform the House that following this PQ, I asked the RDA to carry out a survey on the number of billboards being displayed around the island. The findings of the survey have revealed that out of 1,714 billboards, some 1,041 have either not renewed their

permit or have no valid permit at all. The RDA has issued 14 notices as at date and legal action has been initiated against two advertising agents.

I am concerned with these findings. However, I do recognise that this is a tedious and resource consuming exercise since it involves –

- carrying out of surveys to identify the illegal advertiser or the owner;
- issuing of 1st and 2nd notices as per legislation, and
- having resort to lengthy court proceedings.

To remedy the situation, I have given strict instructions to the RDA to put up a dedicated unit to monitor and take enforcement actions against contraveners. Additionally, the RDA has been requested to review the overall process of issuing advertising permits and come up with a more effective policy in relation to the erection of billboards.

MAURITIUS RESCUE AND FIRE SERVICE - FIRE OUTBREAKS – EQUIPMENT

(No. B/534) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the high rise buildings, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Rescue and Fire Service, information as to the equipment available to combat fire outbreaks thereat.

Reply: With regard to high rise buildings, I am informed by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service that it currently has one turntable ladder of maximum height 32 M to combat fire outbreaks thereat. Funds have been provided in the Budget 2018/2019 for the acquisition of one additional aerial ladder platform. Moreover, one turntable ladder of maximum height 30 M donated by the Australian Government to the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service in 1987 and an aerial ladder platform of maximum height 54 M acquired by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service in 2000 are not operational due to technical problems. Funds have been provided in this Budget for the repairs and the tender documents are currently being prepared for the launching of bids. Once the equipment is repaired and the new turntable ladder is acquired, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service will have two turntable ladders and two aerial ladder platforms to combat fire outbreak in high rise buildings.

CEB - HYDRO POWER STATIONS - REPAIRS

(No. B/535) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether,

in regard to the hydro power stations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to if repairs or order of new units thereof have been completed for Magenta and Tamarin, respectively.

(Withdrawn)

CWA – WATER PIPES - CONTRACTS

(No. B/536) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the contracts awarded for water pipes laying, since 2015 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –

- (a) names of the contractors, and respective contract values thereof, and
- (b) number of litigations in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

GRIS GRIS/SOULLAC - WAVE ENERGY - PILOT PROJECT

(No. B/537) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the implementation of a pilot project for the conversion of wave energy into electricity at Gris Gris/Souillac, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

COLLECTIF ARC EN CIEL - MEMBERS - ALLEGED DEATH THREAT

(No. B/538) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the alleged death threat against P. V. and members of the Collectif Arc en Ciel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that as at 02 July 2018, a member of the Collectif Arc en Ciel, namely P.V, has reported a case of “Threat” to the Police. In fact, on 01 June 2018 she made a declaration at the Central CID to the effect that she received an e-mail on 01 June 2018 and another one on 31 March 2018, the contents of which are of a threatening nature purporting to kill her.

Furthermore, M.L.M.Y, Vice-President of Collectif Arc en Ciel gave a statement to the CCID following an email she received on 17 June 2018 regarding threats to cause bodily harm to P.V and herself.

Being given that the e-mails originated from foreign countries, the assistance from several agencies, both local and foreign, have been solicited.

The Cybercrime Unit of the Central CID is currently investigating into the matter and so far no person has been interviewed or arrested in connection with the case.

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS - PETHIDINE INJECTION

(No. B/539) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the pain killer Pethidine, he will state if same is available in public health institutions.

Reply: Pethidine injection is one of the narcotic opioids which is readily available in our hospital drug formulary. Pethidine is indicated for the treatment of moderate to severe pain. Presently, there is no shortage of Pethidine injection in our public institutions. It is available in both 50 mg ampoules and 100 mg ampoules.

MUAYTHAI BOXING - MS R. C. - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/540) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to Ms R. C., Muay Thai Boxer, he will state if consideration will be given for the granting thereto by his Ministry of a high-level scholarship following her recent good performances in Thailand.

Reply: My Ministry does not provide assistance to athletes individually but through their respective National Sports Federations. To this date, My Ministry is not in presence of any request for assistance for Ms. R.C from the “*Federation Muaythai et Disciplines Assimilées*”, which is the recognised National Federation.

INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES 2019 - HOTEL ACCOMODATION

(No. B/541) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Indian Ocean Island Games 2019, he will state if tender procedures were carried out for the selection of the hotels for the accommodation of the participating delegations and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the ‘*Comité d’Organisation des 10èmes Jeux des Iles de l’Océan Indien (COJI) 2019*’ that no tender exercise was carried out for the selection of hotels for the IOIG 2019.

I am further informed that –

- (a) COJI not being a Public Body within the definition of the Public Procurement Act, the tendering procedures provided for under that Act do not apply to it.
- (b) the desiderata of finding a cluster of hotels as an alternative to a “*Village des Jeux*” to accommodate 2,000 athletes and officials could only have been met in the North. Consequently, negotiation imposed itself as the only means to obtain a fair and reasonable deal for the accommodation of athletes and officials.

For the benefit of the House, I need to point out that the COJI is subject to obligations imposed by the “*Comité International des Jeux*” (CIJ), to which it should comply.

METRO EXPRESS - RESIDENCE BARKLY – PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURES - RELOCATION

(No. B/542) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the passage of the Metro Express through Residence Barkly, in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will give a list of the public infrastructures/sites earmarked as at date for demolition in the wake thereof, indicating the alternative sites identified therefor.

Reply: I am informed that the Basketball/Volleyball Pitch, Petanque Court and the Children’s Playground and a wall of around 5 metres of the Police Station are the public infrastructures that will have to be relocated with the implementation of the Metro Express Project.

I am further informed that, in line with the policy of Government of providing for improved amenities to make up for any public infrastructure that has to be displaced, an alternative site has been vested since 02 October 2017, in the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands. The site is of an extent of 4,645 m² and is situated on the opposite side of Mandela Street at Barkly. It will be used for the setting up of a new Sports Complex.

I am also informed that the Municipal Council of Beau-Bassin/Rose Hill has already allocated the contract for the setting up of the new Sports Complex. Works started on 24 May 2018 and the new complex is expected to be completed within 6 months, that is, around November 2018.

The new complex will provide for a modern integrated complex comprising of a Basketball Ground, Petanque Court, Volleyball Pitch and a mini soccer field. It will also provide for a green space and children's playground, parking facilities and will be fitted with lighting facilities.

ILOT FOURNEAU - DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

(No. B/543) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to îlot Fourneau, located in front of Le Morne Village, in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, he will state if any development project thereof has been authorized and, if so, indicate if any lease agreement has been signed, giving details thereof, including, if an Environmental Impact Assessment licence has been issued in respect thereof.

Reply: I am not aware of any development project at îlot Fourneau, in front of Le Morne Village in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River. I am not aware of any lease agreement which has been signed either. What I can say is that no Environmental Impact Assessment licence has been issued with regard to any project at îlot Fourneau.

MAURITIUS JUDO FEDERATION – SPECIAL CARETAKER COMMITTEE

(No. B/544) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Caretaker Committee of the Mauritius Judo Federation, he will state the reasons for the holding of the general election thereof in January 2019.

Reply: The reason for the holding of election is primarily to ensure that a duly elected Managing Committee emerges in the sports landscape to take over from the Special Caretaker Committee, the management and development of Judo in Mauritius.

As regards the timing, I am informed that, like any other elections there are a series of material considerations to be factored in. In this case, I am informed that the date has been decided, taking into account, fairness and equity, adequacy of representation and the requirements of the International Judo Federation.

« LE VIEUX MAHEBOURG » - NATIONAL HERITAGE

(No. B/545) Mr M. Hurreeram (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Mahebourg Village, he will state if consideration will be given for –

- (a) “Le Vieux Mahebourg” to be declared national heritage, and
- (b) carrying out of an inventory of the buildings, structure and monuments of historical value, such as the *Lavoir*, *l’Abreuvoir*, the old cistern, the Naval Museum and its distinct road network dating back to the French colonisation period, for the preservation thereof.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, in light of the Budget measure enunciated by the hon. Prime Minister, for harnessing the potential of Mahebourg as a ‘*Village Touristique*’ and a major cultural and eco-tourism attraction, this issue will be given due consideration after consultation with all stakeholders, including the community.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the National Heritage Fund (NHF) has carried out an inventory of potential heritage sites that can be considered for listing as National Heritage. Updating of the inventory is an ongoing exercise.

As at date, eight sites have already been declared national heritage within the Mahebourg region. In addition, nine potential heritage sites have been identified, which includes the *Lavoir*, *L’Abreuvoir* and the Ex-Railway Station (including the old Cistern).

MAHEBOURG – OUTDOOR GYM

(No. B/546) Mr T. Henry (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Open Air Gym Project at Rémy Ollier, Mahebourg, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Welfare Fund, information as to if the implementation thereof is being considered and, if so, indicate the expected start and completion dates thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the Tourism Employees Welfare Fund (TEWF) that the project to implement an outdoor gym in Mahebourg is not being envisaged as the National Audit Office has pointed out that –

- (i) the purchase of outdoor gym equipment did not meet the objectives of the TEWF, and
- (ii) sports complex were not under the responsibility of the parent Ministry.

The other parts of the question thus do not arise.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE – DOCTORS – ENTRY
EXAMINATIONS**

(No. B/547) **Mr S. Baboo (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the doctors, he will state if consideration will be given for the advisability of doing away with the entry examinations for the pre-registration thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ROAD SAFETY – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/548) **Mr S. Baboo (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to road accidents, he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up of an enlarged National Committee comprising of the National Transport Authority, the Road Development Authority, the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit, the Police Force, the Non-Governmental Organisations and other public bodies to look into ways and means to prevent the occurrence thereof.

Reply: In line with the National Road Safety Strategy which has the objective of reducing by 50% the number of road crashes by 2025, my Ministry works closely with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, the National Transport Authority, the Road Development Authority and the Police which are the executing arms for the implementation of various actions under the Strategy.

I wish to inform the House that these organisations are already represented at various fora along with other public bodies, Non-Governmental Organisations and the private sector to look into ways and means of reducing the number of road accidents.

A National Road Safety Commission has been set up in 2016 and is chaired by the Minister Mentor. The Commission has the responsibility to validate strategic directions and Action Plans for implementation and take stock of developments at its meetings and comprises, *inter alia*, the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Minister of Local

Government, Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development, the Attorney General, the Chief Commissioner, Rodrigues Regional Assembly. All members of the National Road Safety Council and representatives of other bodies also participate in the meetings of the Commission. The first meeting of the Commission was held on 18 May 2016 and a second meeting was held in June 2017. The third meeting is scheduled in the coming months.

Furthermore, the National Road Safety Council set up under the Road Traffic Act meets on a monthly basis under the chair of the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry. It has the responsibility to advise all arms of Government on matters relating to road safety and to formulate policies, set goals and elaborate strategies for road safety in the country. It comprises fifteen members from various Ministries, Departments, Local Authorities, road transport industry, insurance companies and members of the public with wide knowledge in psychology, advertising and communication.

The National Road Safety Council, since its reconstitution in 2015, has met on 27 occasions and is following up on implementation of various measures in terms of legislations, enforcement, education, awareness and sensitisation, safer road infrastructure, as well as improvement of driving standards.

At the level of the Ministry of Defence and Rodrigues, a National Road Safety Committee with the participation of various public and private sector organisations was set up to undertake a National Road Safety Campaign to raise awareness on road safety which was launched on 17 February 2018. Various road safety initiatives have been taken including projection of films, messages, stepping up of enforcement by Police and the National Transport Authority as well as distribution of flyers to the public, amongst others.

Road safety is a national priority and high on the agenda of Government and as the House is aware, bold measures have been announced by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development in his Budget Speech for year 2018-2019. I am confident that with collective and concerted efforts, we should be making progress for the safety of our citizens on our roads.

PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS - CURRICULUM

(No. B/549) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and

Scientific Research whether, in regard to the pre-primary schools, she will state the measures being taken by her Ministry to level the standard of education thereof.

Reply: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is an integral part of our education system. The policy of my Ministry is to ensure that all children of the Republic, irrespective of whether they are in public or private schools, have an enriched preschool experience and are ready for their primary schooling.

In this connection we have always been working towards ensuring parity between pre-primary schools such that the development of children takes place in the best learning conditions.

The executive arm of my Ministry for the ECCE Sector, the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA), spearheads programmes for pre-primary education and is also a regulator for the sector.

In that context, a number of measures are resorted to bring all learners at par where a positive pre-school experience is concerned.

In the first place there is uniformity in the curriculum dispensed in the entire sector. The National Curriculum Framework for pre-primary sets the standards enabling the sector to be in line with new trends in education in the 21st century. In line with international trends six learning areas have been identified in the National Curriculum Framework.

We have also placed a premium on training and capacity building to professionalize the ECCE Sector. Thus all teachers in this sector are trained and hold a professional qualification that increases their teaching proficiency. This again applies across the board to all preschools. This has been possible with a deliberate effort of the Ministry to upgrade the professional qualifications of preschool teachers.

Courses are being dispensed to teachers, supervisors, managers of both public and private pre-primary schools by the Mauritius Institute of Education, the University of Technology and the Open University.

At the level ECCEA short in-service courses in such areas as Production of Teaching and Learning Aids Brain Based Learning, Planning and pedagogical issues, among others are organized. To ensure that service delivery is enhanced at all levels, Assistant Coordinators and Supervisors have been following a two-year diploma course in Pre-school Educational Management and Inspection.

We have introduced the Developmental Learner Profile to all children of both public and private preschools. This document provides a summary of the child's progress, development, and weaknesses across Pre-Primary Year 1 and 2. The document accompanies

all children as they move on to Grade 1 and helps the Grade 1 Educator to work towards the elimination of any gaps based on the records in this document.

Access has been opened for pupils in remote areas with two new pre-primary units having been opened at Petit Verger and Rajcoomar Gujadhur Government School (Flacq). The 2018/2019 Budget makes provision for the construction of two additional pre-primary units at Grand Bay and Mount Ory Government Schools.

Another important measure is equity-driven. In the spirit of providing inclusive education, children with special needs are also admitted to pre-primary schools. As at date, 66 children with Special Education Needs have been admitted in our schools. Workshops on “Special Education Needs” for all teachers have been organised by the ECCEA with the collaboration of the Mauritius Institute of Education.

Let me inform that my Ministry is currently working on the review of the ECCEA Regulations to improve norms and standards and enhance the quality of pre-primary education offered in all pre-primary schools.

To upgrade the quality of teaching-learning environment and bring greater parity between pre-primary schools located in deprived areas, provisions of an amount of Rs6,250,000 were made in each of the last two budgets of 2016/17 and 2017/18. These funds have served to equip private pre-primary schools identified in disadvantaged regions with the necessary pedagogical tools and materials. As at date, some 250 pre-primary schools representing 40% of the private pre-primary schools have benefitted from this initiative.

Finally, let me reassure the hon. Member that projects of national importance are implemented in all preschools and this contributes to levelling the playing field to all operators in the sector. One such project is the Digital Awakening Project which covered some 830 pre-primary school teachers and another has been the Kiddy Science Fair organised by the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, meant to arouse learners’ interest in science. Private pre-schools in Zones 1 and 2 have already been exposed to the working of this project.

MODEL SHELTER FOR CHILDREN - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/550) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to La Colombe Shelter, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to why the plot of land annexed thereat has not been exploited for the benefit of the children attending thereto.

Reply: The House may wish to note that in October 2017, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport proposed to change the scope of the project, including the children playground and other amenities and to instead set up a Model Shelter for Children on that plot of land. My Ministry is currently working on the development of the Model Shelter with the assistance of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport.

The project value is estimated at Rs60 m. and funds to the tune of Rs6 m. have been provided for in the Budget 2018/2019. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport is working on the specifications of the Model Shelter which would comprise, *inter alia*, the following -

1. New Dormitory;
2. Kitchen and Dining;
3. Administration Block;
4. Classroom Block;
5. Child Day Care Treatment Room & Isolation Room, and
6. Site Works and Children Playground.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS LEGISLATION - COLLECTIVE BARGAINING – MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

(No. A/6) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to collective bargaining, he will state if he is in presence of representations from trade unions to amend the existing legislation with a view to enhancing the process thereof.

Reply: In the context of the review of the Employment Rights Act and Employment Relations Act, all major stakeholders, including representatives of the Trade Unions have been consulted. All the representations made and proposals submitted have been taken on board.

The proposed amendments, including those pertaining to collective bargaining under the Employment Relations Act, are currently being examined by a Ministerial Committee under the Chair of the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo.

POLICE FORCE – VACANCIES

(No. A/7) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the grades of Inspector of Police and above, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the

Commissioner of Police, in each case, information as to the number of posts thereof which are presently vacant.

Reply: The Commissioner of Police has informed that there are presently 103 funded vacancies in the grades of Inspector and above in the Mauritius Police Force as per table below –

Post	Funded Vacancies
Deputy Commissioner of Police	1
Commanding Officer Special Mobile Force	1
Assistant Commissioner of Police (General and Special Mobile Force)	6
Assistant Commissioner of Police (Engineer Squadron)	1
Deputy Director General National Security Service	1
Woman Deputy Commissioner of Police	0
Woman Assistant Commissioner of Police	1
Superintendent of Police	7
Superintendent of Police (Engineer Squadron)	0
Woman Superintendent of Police	2
Assistant Superintendent of Police	17
Woman Assistant Superintendent of Police	1
Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Police	6
Woman Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Police	0

Chief Inspector of Police	22
Woman Police Chief Inspector	5
Inspector of Police	32
Woman Police Inspector	0
TOTAL	103

NATIONAL DRUG OBSERVATORY - COMPOSITION

(No. A/8) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the National Drug Observatory, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) composition thereof, indicating the assignment thereof, and
- (b) expected date of publication of the next report thereof.

Reply: The National Drug Observatory is chaired by the Acting Director General Health Services of my Ministry and is composed of the following members -

- a representative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports
- a representative of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education & Scientific Research
- other representatives of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life
- a representative of the Forensic Science Laboratory
- a representative of the office of the Commissioner of Police
- a representative of the Mauritius Prisons Department
- a representative of the Mauritius Revenue Authority
- a representative of the Pharmaceutical Association of Mauritius
- a representative of the members from Non-Government Organisations

The mandate of the National Drug Observatory (NDO) is to liaise with all stakeholders concerned with substance abuse, collect and compile data and to produce an annual report on the drug situation in Mauritius namely -

- Legislation and drug control policy
- Law enforcement capacity
- Recent illicit drug situation in Mauritius

- Exhibits analysed by the Forensic Scientific Laboratory (FSL)
- Illicit drugs and foreigners visiting Mauritius
- Seizures of illicit drugs by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) Customs
- New Psychoactive Substances
- Drug in educational institutions
- People Who Inject Drugs (PWID)
- Prison and drugs
- Health problems related to drug abuse

These data are also used to fulfil the country reporting obligations towards international institutions.

As regards part (b) of the question, the second report of the National Drug Observatory has been approved by Government and uploaded on the website of the Ministry. Procedures are underway to disseminate a copy of the report to concerned stakeholders.

VILLAGE COUNCILS ELECTIONS - HOLDING

(No. A/9) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Village Councils Elections, she will state when same will be held.

Reply: Section 12(1) of the Local Government Act 2011 as subsequently amended by Act No. 3 of 2015, provides for Village Council Elections to be held in 2012 and thereafter every 6 years or in such other year, and at such date, as the President shall, on the advice of the Prime Minister appoint. As such, the prerogative for the holding of Village Council Elections lies with the Prime Minister.