



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2018

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 31 of 2018

Sitting of Tuesday 13 November 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.

Prime Minister's Office

- (a) The Customs (Amendment) Regulations 2018. (Government Notice No. 145 of 2018)
- (b) The Public Procurement (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2018. (Government Notice No. 146 of 2018)
- (c) The Public Procurement (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2018. (Government Notice No. 147 of 2018)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

HOSPITALS - RENAL DIALYSIS SERVICE

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Renal Dialysis Service, he will state if he is aware that there have been numerous recurring complaints concerning the service provided thereat and, if so, indicate if he has –

- (a) taken cognizance thereof, and
- (b) met members of the Renal Disease Patients Association in relation thereto.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, my Ministry has not received any representation so far from the Renal Disease Patients Association. However, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity to shed light on the renal dialysis service of my Ministry. In fact, dialysis service is provided in all five Regional Hospitals as well as at Souillac Hospital and Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Rodrigues.

The service is also provided in seven private centres, namely AURAM, City Clinic, Nephron Dialysis Centre, National Dialysis Centre, Chisty Shifa Clinic, Wellkin Hospital and Clinique du Nord under funding from my Ministry for referred patients.

At present, 148 dialysis machines are in service in public hospitals and 75 dialysis machines are in use in the private sector. Around 980 patients are undergoing dialysis in the hospitals and nearly 383 in the private sector. Patients undergo three dialysis sessions per week on an average. The number of patients undergoing dialysis has increased from 970 in 2012 to 1,363 up to March 2018.

The policy of the Ministry is to expand further the dialysis service in the public hospitals in order to accommodate all patients requiring dialysis treatment in the future, without having recourse to private clinics.

In this respect, my Ministry is expanding the Dialysis Service by setting up a second new Dialysis Unit at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital with an additional 26 dialysis machines. This new Unit, which will cater for about 150 more patients, is expected to be operational early next year after the installation of Water Treatment Plant. In addition, a new Dialysis Unit equipped with 20 dialysis machines is expected to be operational at Long Mountain Hospital as from next year. The Dialysis Unit at SSRN Hospital will be expanded and preliminary drawings are being finalised.

We are planning to procure 75 new dialysis machines early next year (20, as I mentioned, for Long Mountain and the remaining for replacement of old machines in the different hospitals). May I also add that we are getting 20 more new machines as donation from a private organisation from India.

I am informed that treatment of dialysis is sometimes rescheduled in case of breakdown of machines. However, arrangements are made for treatment of patients on the same day as far as possible. I hasten to add that, my Ministry has a maintenance contract for the servicing and repairs of dialysis machines (Chem Tech and IBL). My Ministry has recently procured 60 new Dialysis Machines, out of which 34 will be replacing old ones and, as I mentioned, 26 have been earmarked for a second Dialysis Unit at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital.

Representations have been received from patients regarding transport facilities provided by ambulance service of the public hospitals. Sometimes, patients have to wait for long a time for pick-up and return after dialysis. My Ministry provides transport facilities to and from hospitals for about 90% of patients on dialysis. I have to inform the House that my Ministry is procuring 11 new ambulances to remedy the situation. The new ambulances will be delivered in December 2018.

It has been reported to me that, some patients undergo dialysis quite late in the evening. This happens on rare occasions when private clinics and dialysis centres are not able to provide the service due to temporary technical problem.

In addition, I wish to inform the House that, regular inspections are being carried out at private clinics by officers of my Ministry to ensure quality of service. In 2017, a private dialysis centre situated in the North had to stop operation and the patients were shifted to SSRN Hospital.

Madam Speaker, I wish to assure the House that my Ministry is continuously improving the service provided for dialysis patients.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister will agree that the risk of infection is very, very high and hygiene conditions are extremely important. Has he received any complaint? Is he even aware of the appalling state of hygiene at SSR Haemodialysis Dialysis Centre? I took pictures myself - I would like someone to bring that to the hon. Minister. I would like him to give me his opinion on these pictures which I took myself this

morning and yesterday, and to tell me whether it is fit for humans to do dialysis there. It is filthy!

Dr. Husnoo: I agree, Madam Speaker, that infection is very important as far as patients are concerned. But that problem, I must say, is not just in the Dialysis Unit. There is a problem of general maintenance in the hospital. I take the point. That is why I have been working on how to improve the overall cleanliness in the hospital. I know the problem. In fact, we have discussed it at the Ministry. We are trying to reorganise the service and the administration in the hospital to look at all the service, be it cleanliness, food and all these.

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to know whether the hon. Minister would like to make a comment of the pictures which I am giving him just at this moment, and whether having seen the pictures, he will give a public apology to all the patients who are using that Centre? Please, can he have a look at the pictures?

Dr. Husnoo: I have explained to the hon. Leader of the Opposition the situation as it is.

(Interruptions)

I have explained the problem. I am aware of the problem. We are trying to find a solution for this.

Mr X. L. Duval: The hon. Minister is refusing to look at the obvious because, I think, he is ashamed of the state of the SSR Haemodialysis Centre. Even the toilets, Madam Speaker, are filthy. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he does not have a few hundred rupees to buy even toilet papers for the toilets there? Can he give the assurance to the nation that tonight, there will be toilet papers, at least, in the toilets there?

Dr. Husnoo: I know the hon. Leader of the Opposition has been going around visiting the toilets; I appreciate that. That was very kind of you. But this picture does not mention that the toilet is in that particular place. I do not know, it does not mention it is there. That is one thing. But, I repeat it, I know about the problem of cleanliness in the hospital and we are working on it. Actually, this is going on not just now, but maybe for the last 50 years. We are working on it. The hon. Leader of the Opposition can rest assured on that.

Mr X. L. Duval: No toilet papers, Madam Speaker! I would like to ask the hon. Minister, how are the patients going to wipe their bums there at SSRN Hospital?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Husnoo: I think you can advise him about them yourself!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the patients are taking note of what the hon. Minister is saying. Everything I am saying is true; people are taking note of what he is saying, of his callous attitude towards them. It is callous attitude! People are taking note! I hope they will not vote for him again.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask, in terms of hygiene...

(Interruptions)

I am trying to keep calm. Why the staffs there - it is international. Maybe the hon. Deputy Prime Minister can help. He uses the private service *avec raison*. Now, why the people...

(Interruptions)

No, no! If a Senior Minister does not use your service, it means a lot!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: It means a lot!

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask why the staffs there do not wear gloves?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: Why the staffs there have no protective footwear? Why the staffs there do not use masks, as the international practice, in that hospital? I went there yesterday, Madam Speaker, germs must be everywhere. Are you lacking a few hundred rupees to buy these masks and protective equipment?

Dr. Husnoo: I just wonder, Madam Speaker. When the hon. Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Finance, did he provide the money to buy toilet papers?

(Interruptions)

Did he provide to buy toilet papers? That's one. As far as these measures are concerned, these should be taken by the staffs over there. It is not a question of whether we do not have hundred rupees. The hon. Leader of the Opposition should know better! He knows better, I am sure. As far as a few hundred rupees ...

(Interruptions)

We have these; if the staffs do not use it, it is not my fault.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, it was better, and it is getting worst. The hon. Minister tries to blame me of what happened; he cannot even agree with his predecessor. Half the things that his predecessor did, he reversed. Madam Speaker, I am also going to ask the hon. Minister to find a few thousand rupees to buy air-conditioners because these air-conditioners are not working.

Madam Speaker, I come to another serious issue concerning infection. It is the practice in some hospitals for the waiting list of about four months to have the fistula installed and people keep on using catheters, and everybody can tell you that catheters are far more infectious than fistula. Why is the waiting list so long? And that has been on the papers, it is not new. Had the Minister read the papers he would have known what questions I would have asked? Why are fistula operations taking up to four months and people in the meantime can die of septicaemia?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, we have a waiting list, I agree, for fistulas because we have only one vascular surgeon in Mauritius. That is why we have a very long waiting list.

To answer to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's previous question, as far as masks and gloves are concerned, they are provided to the Unit. That is number one. If he went to visit yesterday and one air-conditioner was not working, he did not see that the rest of the air-conditioners were working.

Mr X. L. Duval: The hon. Minister does not even know. They are always breaking down and his staff is not using them. Probably he has never been there, he is sitting in his office and trying to play clever.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister - there was a question before - as to why these erythropoietin injections are not available in private clinics for public sector patients. Is he going to make a commitment to have these injections available at the private clinics so that patients do not have to come a fourth time? They already go three times for

dialysis; they have to come a fourth time for that injection. It seems to be something simple, why is not it done?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, erythropoietin injection, if you are not careful with it, it can disappear from the hospital. It can be disappeared from the clinic, it can be used where it should not be used, for athletes and for horse racing. That is why you have to be strict; you have to be careful with the erythropoietin because some people make bad use...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, hon. Rutnah, you are being loud.

Dr. Husnoo: Some people do not make proper use of it, that is why it is controlled. We give it in the hospitals, I know patients who are in the private clinics, have to come to the hospital. This is for security purposes. We do not want erythropoietin to be going left, right, centre, all across the island and we do not know what use is being made of it. That is why we ask the patient to come to the hospital so that we can have a proper control of erythropoietin. I am sure he should know that.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, private clients of private clinics get it, and the danger is only for public sector clients in private clients! That does not make sense to me, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I come to this issue of the number of Nephrologists. I think, there must be four or five. According to the Minister, about 10% of the population suffers from kidney disease; he said that in this House. Let me put this question positively! What are the efforts that he is making to increase the number of Kidney Specialists - if I put it this way - in Mauritius from four or five to a decent number given the huge number of people suffering?

Dr. Husnoo: At present, we have about five Nephrologists in the service and we are arranging with Marseille to send our doctors for training in Marseille. We have been talking with them; we have been discussing with them so that we send our doctors to be trained there. That is the situation here.

Mr X. L. Duval: How long is the discussion going to take place, if I may ask?

Dr. Husnoo: Well, we have started; it takes its time, unfortunately. The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows that, we cannot do it overnight. It takes its time, we have to contact the University there, they have to agree and then we send our students for training. Unfortunately, it does take time.

Mr X. L. Duval: Buying toilet paper takes all the time.

Madam Speaker, the law on organ transplant - again something which is taking time - was passed and voted in this House six months ago, in May. It still has not been promulgated. I would like to know from the Minister when will the law - although I had my qualms about it, it is even passed now - be promulgated? What has happened to the doctors who are meant to go to Marseille for one year training?

Dr. Husnoo: Firstly, as far as the Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Bill is concerned, what is happening is that, I do not want to do the same thing that happened in 2006.

In 2006, the Bill was passed, the Board was set up and nothing was done. Since 2006, nothing has been done for the last ten years. I do not want to repeat the same mistake. What we have done, we have passed the Bill and we have been in contact with people overseas, because to set up a Transplant Unit, you do not set it overnight. You have a lot of regulations to do, and we do not have that experience in Mauritius. We are in contact with two professors, Prof. Fateh-Mamode and Prof. Phillips from Guy's Hospital in U.K. In fact, we were supposed to have a Skype Conference on 01 November, just a few days ago. Unfortunately, they were busy. It has been postponed till the end of November. So, we are working on it because it is not something we can just do like that. We do not have the experience. We have to use people who are very experienced in this field to set up all these units. That is why it takes a bit of time.

Mr X. L. Duval: My question was: what happened to the two doctors who were - the Minister himself has said it many times in this House - meant to go to Marseille for one-year training? Where are they? Are they still here? Have they gone to Marseille? What happened to them?

Dr. Husnoo: Unfortunately, they have not gone to Marseille yet, because the arrangement has not been done. So far, it has not been possible to send them to Marseille.

Mr X. L. Duval: When will they go so that they can start the transplants? That is the question.

Dr. Husnoo: Even if they go tomorrow - for the transplant, we are sending patients overseas, we cannot do the operation in Mauritius. Since we started last year, we are sending overseas all the patients who need transplant pending our doctors coming to Mauritius.

Mr X. L. Duval: It has always been the case that people have been overseas; it is nothing new. When is the Minister going to send the doctors? He passed a law as an emergency; it was passed very quickly. When is he going to send the doctors for the one-year training so that they can start the transplant? Is this a difficult question?

Dr. Husnoo: It is not a difficult question, but the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not seem to understand. It does not depend just on the Ministry of Health, it depends on the University of Marseille as well. It does not depend on us only. He does not seem to understand that.

Mr X. L. Duval: So, he has no idea when he is going to send the doctors!

Madam Speaker, we all know that, one of the major causes of kidney failure is diabetes. And if the diabetes is well taken care of, then people avoid this terrible thing of kidney failure and dialysis, etc. What concretely is the Minister doing to ensure that he will reduce the number of suffering diabetics who actually end up in kidney failure? He said himself, I think, it is 40% of these people who are going to end up under the machine.

Dr. Husnoo: Diabetes, non-communicable disease, is a major problem. I have said it so many times. I agree it is a major problem, but lots of works are being done on diabetes, on non-communicable diseases. A lot of prevention campaigns are being done, and campaign is being done at the hospital, in the community, at the workplace, it is being done at different places. That is number one.

As far as the treatment is concerned as well, we are looking at the whole treatment, we are trying to decentralise. What was happening before? Before the patient used to go to the hospital, seen by the doctor, then he continues the same medication and comes back in six months' time. And that is why we got lots of problems with that. What I am trying to do now, I am trying to have smaller groups. The patients are being decentralised to the Area Health Centres, where we are going to have smaller groups. They can be seen by a multi-disciplinary team, that is, the doctor who is in charge, the Community Health Physician, the Diabetic Nurse so that they can take care of this patient. And we can have better and strict control on the diabetics. That is the way we are going to improve it. We have 200,000 patients with diabetes. I cannot do it overnight. It takes time to organise a service. It takes time and we have been doing it and then gradually with proper care, then we are going to decrease the problem of renal failure in diabetes.

Mr X. L. Duval: Given the huge problem, the feeling generally is that not enough at all is being done to sensitise people.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister concerning dialysis machines at ICU centres. There is apparently no dialysis machine in the ICU ward at SSRN Hospital in the North. That means that anybody who is in the ICU and who is, therefore, very badly ill, he has to be taken by ambulance to the Dialysis Centre which is away and does his dialysis there. Is it a big problem to install a dialysis machine like we have at Wellkin Hospital, etc., in the ICU wards around Mauritius?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, that would depend on the doctors looking at the ICU. If the doctors had asked for a Dialysis Unit, we would have provided it. If the doctors have not asked for it, that is why it is not there. It depends on the specialists working in these centres.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition should listen as well!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, do not make remarks if they are not warranted, please!

Dr. Husnoo: There you are! It is mentioned there! SSRN Hospital has a haemodialysis filtration machine in ICU. It is mentioned there. There you are! I have taken the paper, I have told the hon. Leader of the Opposition and he does not want to listen. He is shaking his head.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister is mistaken. I have checked again this morning. SSRN Hospital has a mobile dialysis, so-called dialysis unit. That does not do the same work and his people should tell him that they do not do the same work. They only take out the water; they do not take out anything else. The hon. Minister goes and checks otherwise it will be on paper Saturday if he does not correct his information just now. They do not have the information. Madam Speaker, I am going to ask the hon. Minister to please ensure - I said please, because we are talking about many thousands of people who are sick, and in the ICU dying - that they should have a proper dialysis machine, let the Ministry of Health hear, a proper dialysis machine, that can do the job and patients do not have to be

transported; please ensure that this is done, if ever his information is wrong, which, I think, it is.

Dr. Husnoo: It is mentioned that a haemo-filtration machine is there, but I will check with them again; that is the information I have been sent. I am going to check on it, obviously.

Mr X. L. Duval: Thank you for checking. I think that the hon. Minister has been misinformed. Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister a few things, the very frequent breakdowns we have sometimes today. We have very frequent breakdowns in the machines. Everyone will tell you this. They are sitting there and the machine breaks down. Now, with these new machines, are these old machines going to be gotten rid of? Some are 18 years old. We were talking about *taxi brousse*, we can replace Rs8 m. for an unnecessary electrical generator, whatever it is, but we cannot repair machines that cost a few hundred thousand rupees which are 18 years old. Have I got the Minister's assurance that, within one year, all these old, old machines will be replaced at the dialysis centres?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, we have about 250 dialysis machines, out of which about 20 machines are actually more than 15 years old. And now, this year we have bought about 60 dialysis machines. They are here, but only the problem is that 20 are for Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, and the rest are being distributed in all the hospitals and, at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, it is not operational because I am just waiting for a water pump which is going to come soon, hopefully beginning of the new year, that is number one. So, 60 new machines! Imagine, we have about 250, 60 have been bought now, 70 are in the pipeline, and we are getting 20 from India. So, we are going to get 150 machines. So, it is not a question that we are not planning; we are planning. We know the problem. We are planning and we are working on it.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, fair enough, but the hon. Minister does not play with words; 54 machines are more than 14 years old, maybe so many are more than 15. But let us not play with words. Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, going back to this famous centre, SSR Haemodialysis Centre in Pamplémousses, these people are there being drugged. That building does not have a fire certificate. Is the hon. Minister going to tell us again that there has been no fire or is he going to look at the fact that there should be a fire certificate? We know there is no hygiene; we know it is filthy, now there is no fire certificate.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, as far as the life of this machine is concerned, it is about 12 to 15 years. That is why I said 15 years. Now, let me tell the hon. Leader of the

Opposition as well, this Government - which has not been done for so many years - is coming up with a programme to renew, to renovate our hospitals, to build new hospitals.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has talked, let me talk please! Four new hospitals are in the offing: the ENT Hospital, the Cancer Hospital, the Flacq Hospital, the Eyes Hospital. And we are working on the Master Plan for Victoria and for SSRN. I know SSRN has been there for the last 50 years. The hon. Leader of the Opposition was in the Government, did he think about it? Nothing! Victoria has been there for 70 years, he has been in the Government for 10 years, did he do anything? No, he did nothing, and he is blaming us not to do magic overnight! I cannot do magic. I do not do magic overnight, but we have been working and we have got four projects in line, four new hospitals coming, and working on the two Master Plans as well, so, we are aware of the problem, and we are doing something about it.

Mr X. L. Duval: I agree with Deputy Prime Minister who has given the hon. Minister a *certificat d'incompétence* by paying a huge sum of money every week. I can tell the cost. Huge sums of money every month for a private clinic; he has given the hon. Minister a *certificat d'incompétence*. Can I ask the hon. Minister, with regard to private institutions where they receive public clients, clients from the Ministry of Health – the Minister may or he may not know - how often are there checks, I hope surprise checks there, and how often is the quality of water, etc., checked especially since there have been a few problems recently? Can the hon. Minister tell us whether, since the issue of the City Clinic, there have been more frequent checks? Has he beefed up his team? What is he doing?

Dr. Husnoo: The checks are done regularly, Madam Speaker. Checks for water quality, for bacteriology, are done every month, and checks for metal, heavy metal, electrolytes are done every three months. So, checks are being done regularly, Madam Speaker, in these clinics.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are discussing an issue which is very important, and I am sure those suffering from the renal problems, especially those attending hospitals for dialysis, know exactly *quel cauchemar ils sont en train de vivre*. Can I ask the hon. Minister, apart from what he has said investment, plans, foreign assistance, what he intends to do, through his officers, to make an appeal to the officers, to treat those attending

hospitals for dialysis purposes to, at least, be treated as human beings? There is a real problem for those attending the hospitals.

Madam Speaker: We have understood, hon. Bhagwan.

Mr Bhagwan: I am just being complete, Madam Speaker. It is a very important issue.

Madam Speaker: Please, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Please be seated! Resume your seat! Hon. Bhagwan, we have two minutes. I want to give the opportunity to some other MPs also to intervene. So, I want you to be concise and accurate in your question. I hope the Minister has already understood your question.

(Interruptions)

What is your question? Can you be concise?

Mr Bhagwan: I will be concise. Can the Minister, apart from what he is doing, give instructions, have an emergency meeting with his officers, at least, to attend to the daily *cauchemar* of all these patients attending the hospitals for care?

Dr. Husnoo: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, to hear about the *cauchemar* that the hon. Member went through.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Dr. Husnoo: I do my work, I know! I do my work; I can assure the hon. Member about that. As far as the staff is concerned, I always...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

Dr. Husnoo: As far as the staff is concerned, I always speak...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Soodhun! Please calm down!

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

I will have to suspend! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Please, calm down!

(Interruptions)

Please! I have to remind all Parliamentarians that remarks from a sitting position are not allowed, are completely out of order! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am sorry, you have only one minute left.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I think what the hon. Member just before me said is quite true. The facts are that the people using the dialysis machines are not treated in a hygienic way, they are not given dignity, no toilet paper for instance, everything there is terrible in the way they are treated. They are picked up early in the morning by two or three ambulances and they return late at night in a very tired state. The whole situation, Madam Speaker, stinks of *délaissement*, of not caring.

So, I would ask the hon. Minister, he is a doctor, if he will now, having taken note of the feeling of the National Assembly, look at this situation very, very seriously and let us hope that with his intervention – forget about the machines, everybody can buy machines – the service will continue to improve from now on.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I have explained about what we are doing to improve the service. I have explained about the machines, about the problems that they are getting and about the transport. I have explained that 90% of the patients get transport from the hospital.

It is not easy to provide that because in one ambulance you can put only one or two patients. That is why other patients would have to wait. I know the problem. Imagine yourself, if you have 10 patients waiting, you have one patient who is on a stretcher and needs to be put in the ambulance, others would have to wait. But, despite that, we are buying

11 new ambulances. Despite what has been said by the Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, I would like just to read a letter I received on 24 October.

(Interruptions)

For you, nothing! Oh, yes!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Husnood: Listen! The Leader of the Opposition has talked! Let me talk!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please, no comments from a sitting position I have said! It is out of order! Please be quick because time is over!

Dr. Husnood: Yes. A letter addressed to me on 24 October -

“Dear Sir,

On behalf of all the dialysis patients and on my own behalf at the Dialysis Unit at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to you and the Government of the Republic of Mauritius for having kindly provided the Centre with ten brand new dialysis machines recently. Thank you very much”

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/1006 will be replied by the hon. Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms. PQ B/1008 will be replied by the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues.

(Interruptions)

Excuse me, I am on my feet and I am addressing the House! PQ B/1012 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

FLIC-EN-FLAC & BELLE MARE CASINOS – CEASED OPERATION

(No. B/1000) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the State Investment Corporation Management Services Company Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the casinos currently falling under the management thereof, indicating if the re-opening of the

Flic-en-Flac Casino and of the Belle Mare Casino are being envisaged and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor in each case.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the casinos falling under the purview of the SIC Management Services Co. Ltd are currently as follows -

- (i) Le Grand Casino Du Domaine Ltée ;
- (ii) Le Caudan Waterfront Casino Ltd ;
- (iii) Casino de Maurice Ltée ;
- (iv) Grand Baie Casino Ltd ;
- (v) Sun Casinos Ltd, and
- (vi) Beach Casinos Ltd.

Out of these casinos, two casinos have ceased operation, namely -

- (i) Beach Casinos Ltd in 2009, and
- (ii) Sun Casinos Ltd in 2015.

I am informed that Beach Casinos Ltd and Sun Casinos Ltd do not have any operating units. The employees of these two companies have been re-deployed to other operating casinos.

I am also informed that SIC Management Services Co. Ltd was also operating a casino at Belle Mare and which was located in the premises of Saint Géran Hotel. This casino unit was owned by Sun Casinos Ltd and has ceased operation in 2003.

As regards the second part of the question, I am informed that SIC Management Services Co. Ltd is, for the time being, not envisaging to re-open the casino units at Belle Mare and Flic-en-Flac.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The current Managing Director of the SIC said that opening of these two casinos will be the only way to redress *la barre des casinos*.

(Interruptions)

The current Managing Director, Mr Prem Beejan, said that opening casinos at Belle Mare and Flic-en-Flac can be the only way forward to redress the casinos which are making about Rs80 m. of loss per year. So, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister then what is the plan of the casinos to redress this situation of loss making for public funds?

The Prime Minister: Well, this is another question altogether, Madam Speaker, but I am not aware of any statement that has been made - I mean, not to me - with regard to the only way to redress the situation would be reopening those two Casinos. I know that there is a number of measures that have been taken in order to redress the situation into one of profitability. These measures include –

- the finalisation of the collective agreements with the trade unions;
- the undertaking of short-term investment plan for an amount of Rs50 m.;
- restructuring of the senior management team to improve the customer service level and the introduction of the on-the-job training across all levels;
- the reintroduction of wearing of uniforms,
- reintroduction of new gaming machines, and
- a number of other measures that are being looked at so that the future situation does improve.

I know that there is also restructuring with regard to operations and the number of employees that have been employed previously. I think we all know that the number of employees is more than what is required at the casinos, but no one has been laid off as at now. I know that there is a number of employees who have retired, and I can get the figures. I am also informed that the loss of the casinos has been reduced from Rs98 m. in 2014 to around Rs34 m. in 2017, and the turnaround is still in progress.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I will circulate, for the information of the hon. Prime Minister, what was written in the Press. In the same article, it was mentioned that there is a proposal for ex-employees of the SIC to take over in a quest for privatisation of the casinos because they are loss making. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether such proposal is on the Table at the SIC?

The Prime Minister: Well, I know, and maybe because I have personal information when I, myself, was in a previous Government, that the decision was already taken to privatise the casinos. I do not think I need to say more why this did not go ahead. The reasons, I think, should be best known by the hon. Member from the Labour Party. But then, be it as it may, the decision was to review, because the decision was nearly taken that such a group would take over, but then the then Prime Minister had stated it, not publicly, and that was a bit doubtful about how it proceeded for the taking over of the casinos. Then, a new process of consultations was carried out. I was myself Minister of Finance, but I did not last

long, and I do not know what happened eventually. But still, what we know is that, casinos were not privatised. This is something that we have to review. All options are still open, but for the time being, it is not the intention of this Government to privatise the casinos. What we are going to do is to place the casinos on a profitable level, and then eventually we shall see what are the options. But the work is being done so that we redress the situation at the level of the casinos.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has the figure and if he can circulate it? I am asking if he does not have the reply, he can circulate it. How much has been invested in the opening of the Grand'Baie Casino, the former *Centre de Conférence*? Is he aware there has been a lot of *magouilles* concerning the appointment of architects, the purchase of equipment? Can I ask him whether he can look into the management of venue, management of SIC, of the whole issue of the opening of the Grand'Baie Casino with regard to the appointment of architects, purchase of equipment, especially machines?

The Prime Minister: If I can recall, I think there was a specific question on this and the information was given. So, I cannot recall that there was any *magouille* but, obviously, I shall seek the information again and table same in this House.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano!

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON DRUG TRAFFICKING - CHAIRPERSON & ASSESSORS - FEES

(No. B/1001) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the amount of fees paid to the Chairperson and assessors thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the remuneration of Commissioners who are appointed under the Commissions of Inquiry Act is governed by Section 16 of the said Act, which provides that –

- (i) the President may direct what remuneration, if any, shall be paid to a Commissioner, to the Secretary, and to any other person engaged in the work of the Commission, and what expenses, if any, incurred in the holding of the inquiry shall be paid, and
- (ii) any remuneration or expenses directed to be paid under subsection (1) shall be a charge on the Consolidated Fund.

Madam Speaker, as the House is already aware, the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking was set up on 14 July 2015, with hon. Paul Lam Shang Leen as Chairperson and Mr Samioullah Lauthan and Dr. Ravind Kumar Domun as Members.

After completion of the inquiry, the Chairperson submitted the report of the Commission to the Acting President of the Republic of Mauritius on 24 July 2018. On the same day, the report was forwarded to my Office.

Thereafter, on 25 July 2018, hon. Paul Lam Shang Leen submitted a claim for fees to be paid to him, to the other Commissioners and staff who serviced the Commission of Inquiry.

According to the existing procedures relating to payment of fees for Commissions of Inquiry, as laid down in the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms Circular Note No. 3 of 2017, such claims are treated on a case to case basis. The claims are first examined at the level of the Ministry concerned and thereafter submitted for consideration to the High-Powered Committee, under the Chair of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service. Thereafter, Cabinet's approval is sought and a recommendation is made to the President accordingly.

Madam Speaker, in the case of the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking, no payment of fees has been effected yet. The claim submitted by the Chairperson is still being examined.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: Merci, Madame la présidente. Je n'ai pas de grands commentaires à faire en ce qui concerne les *fees*, mais quand même il y a quelques chiffres qui ont été publiés. Est-ce que je peux avoir la confirmation de l'honorable Premier ministre que le *Chairman* de la Commission a réclamé une somme de R 17 millions ?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I do not think it would be proper for me to debate on the issue of fees claimed because the matter is before the Committee, and is under consideration, and eventually, of course, once this is settled, I shall definitely inform the public about the fees that will have been paid.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, may I just ask the hon. Prime Minister, the Commission started its work, I think, in November 2015, three years ago, is it correct to say that since that time no remuneration at all has been paid to any of the Commissioners, maybe even the Secretary, etc, and they have been working for three years?

The Prime Minister: No fees have yet been paid to anyone of them.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has taken cognizance of the remark made by members of his party, hon. Teeluckdharry and hon. Rutnah, that the fees should not be paid to Mr Lam Shang Leen because he was a biased person in making this report?

Mr Rutnah: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Reference to me that I have made comments, I was Counsel for hon. Teeluckdharry, I did not make any comment given that I was...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please! Allow him to make a point of personal explanation! Please! I have said several times that comments from a sitting position are not in order. He has the right...

(Interruptions)

It is not for you to decide. He has the right to make a point of personal explanation. Right! Yes! The hon. Member has finished his point of personal explanation. Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, this Government does...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Now look, I had said several times that comments from a sitting position are out of order. Now, I am sorry, if that continues, I will have to take sanctions and this applies to both sides of the House.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, we do not go by comments that are made. Comments can be made by anybody. We are guided by the law, we are guided by the regulations, and I have just answered that this matter is under consideration.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, can the hon. Prime Minister tell us whether, first of all, with regard to the Commission itself, how many people are waiting to be paid now, whether it was on a full-time basis? And secondly, with regard to Public Procurement Provision, whether interest will be paid now?

Madam Speaker: One question at a time! I will not allow two questions.

Mr A. Duval: Because after twenty days it is due.

Madam Speaker: One question, please!

The Prime Minister: Well, I have said that this matter is under consideration. Well, the hon. Member is talking about interest. This matter will be looked into, I suppose, by the Committee.

(Interruptions)

How many people will get it? Thirty officers. I do not know whether the officers have been paid. Have they been paid? Not yet!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem, next question!

MAUBANK - CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/1002) 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 post of Chief Executive Officer of MauBank, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from MauBank, information as to the –

- (a) reason for the non-renewal of the contract of employment of Mr S. N., and
- (b) name, qualifications and terms and conditions of employment of the various persons appointed as Chief Executive Officer in replacement of Mr S. N.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by MauBank Ltd that it was a Board decision on 24 August 2018 not to renew the

contract of employment of the previous CEO at its expiry on 24 September 2018, and that the Board acted within its authority and prerogatives in not proceeding with the renewal of the contract.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Board is in the process of appointing a new CEO.

I wish to inform the House that, pending the recruitment of a CEO, Mr Ramesh Motee, the Chief Risk Officer, has been assigned the duties of Officer-in- Charge since 24 September 2018.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the Board had appointed Mr A. N. as CEO following the dismissal of Mr N. S. Was Mr A. N. appointed because that was reported in the Press and everywhere else?

The Prime Minister: Mr A. N. was not appointed as CEO.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, whether Mr A. N. is still a member of the Board of MauBank?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, whether he has taken cognizance of the fact that Mr A. N. was listed in the *Fichier Central des Chèques* in France for having issued *chèques sans provision*?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr Uteem: In Mauritius, if you issue *chèques sans provision*, it is a criminal offence, a very serious offence punishable under Section 330 of the Penal Code by imprisonment for up to 20 years and up to Rs150,000 fine. So, does the hon. Prime Minister find it normal that someone who has been guilty of such a serious offence be still sitting on Boards of public companies?

The Prime Minister: I think the hon. Member is mistaking jurisdictions.

(Interruptions)

Listen! You have asked your question, listen now!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

The Prime Minister: I will ask the hon. Member to look at the law in France instead of quoting the law here. We know the law here. Look at the law in France! The law in France does not make it a criminal offence. So, therefore, this matter has been cleared and no criminal offence has been committed. If there were a criminal offence that had been committed in even another jurisdiction, that would be taken into account.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Henry!

CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT – RIGGERS - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/1003) Mr T. Henry (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Civil Aviation Department, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of riggers on the establishment thereof, indicating the number thereof in post and since when.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Director of Civil Aviation that in accordance with the Civil Establishment Order (CEO), there are 25 posts of Riggers for the Department of Civil Aviation. Riggers form part of the minor grades who are required to have primary school leaving certificate or alternate qualification acceptable.

They assist in the installation and maintenance of Masts, Towers, Antenna Systems and other structures of height up to 600 feet used for aeronautical communication and navigation which are located on the following sites –

- (a) SSR International Airport;
- (b) Bigara Transmitting Station;
- (c) Flic en Flac;
- (d) Grand Bay;
- (e) Rodrigues;
- (f) Agalega, and
- (g) St Brandon.

They are required to undergo a physical test during the selection exercise and a medical examination prior to appointment to ascertain their fitness to work at heights of 600 feet.

With the modernisation of the Area Control Centre in 2001, some 50 aerial towers and antennae used for long distance communication with aircraft and neighbouring countries have been dismantled and replaced by four new antennae, two based at Bigara and the other two situated at SSR International Airport for long distance communication with aircraft. Communication with neighbouring countries is now being carried out through satellite. This has led to a reduction in the number of Riggers required by the DCA.

Currently, there are 10 Riggers in post out of the 11 funded positions. One was appointed in 2010, five in 2016, two in 2017 and two in 2018 to fill in existing vacancies.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Mr Henry: Merci, Madame la présidente. Est-ce que le Premier ministre peut nous expliquer, d'après nos renseignements, tous les derniers recrutements qui ont eu lieu en 2016, 2017 et les derniers mois sont de la circonscription No. 8 ?

The Prime Minister: I think you must be joking, my dear hon. Member! I have a list of all those who are in post. They come from Grand Bois. Yes, Quartier Militaire, Saint Pierre...

(Interruptions)

What *hein hein*? Listen! They come from Vacoas, Mont Roches, Rivière des Anguilles, Long Mountain, Quartier Militaire again, St Pierre and Rose Belle.

(Interruptions)

I don't know from where the hon. Member gets his information. He had better go and seek better clarification from those who have informed him. He can see the list. They are not all from Constituency No. 8.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Mr Henry: Puis-je demander au Premier ministre s'il pourra *table* cette liste ? Dans les prochains recrutements, comme on avait promis avec mes collègues, les honorables Bobby Hurreeram et Mahen Jhugroo, de donner la priorité aux habitants de la région du Sud ?

The Prime Minister: Well, the hon. Member should understand. I have just said in my reply that, whenever there is any vacancy, there is a process which requires them to undergo physical fitness, that is, an endurance test, and then, obviously they need to undergo a medical examination also.

Now, the hon. Member is saying we should give priority to people from the Constituency. How do you reconcile that criteria with the criteria of endurance test and the medical examination? I leave it for people to appreciate what the hon. Member is saying.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House, concerning jobs, especially in the Civil Aviation, as promised by *L'Alliance Lepep*, that prior to employment, the *entrevue* will be done under video recording?

The Prime Minister: Well, I know that there is no video recording for this process of recruitment of the Riggers.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Lepoigneur!

CHEBEL SPORTS COMPLEX PROJECT – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/1004) 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 the Chebel Sports Complex Project implemented by the National Development Unit scheduled for completion in June 2018, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Chebel Sports Complex was constructed more than 15 years back. In view of the poor condition of the infrastructure, the National Development Unit appointed a contractor on 19 January 2018 under its Framework Agreement (Amenities) for the 'Upgrading of the existing Volleyball Pitch at Chebel'. The estimated project value was Rs3,398,298.30. Works were scheduled to start on 09 February 2018 and completed by 30 June 2018. The main components of the project comprised replacement of fencing and all damaged poles, repair of damaged coping, reconstruction of part of the damaged boundary wall, concrete columns, existing gates, and lighting system.

However, at an early stage of construction, it was observed that the existing blockwall was not adequate for the proposed upgrading works. Following site visits and meetings with

the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, the NDU was on 29 June 2018 requested to pull down the existing blockwall and reconstruct same to accommodate a volleyball cum basketball pitch. The NDU was also requested to consider the construction of a mini-soccer pitch in the same compound.

Madam Speaker, the request of the Municipal Council was considered favourably. In view of the magnitude of works involved, the project has been reviewed and renamed as 'Reconstruction of Sports Complex at Chebel'. It comprises the demolition of all existing structures/facilities and construction of a new complex with –

- (i) a volleyball cum basketball pitch;
- (ii) a mini-soccer pitch;
- (iii) boundary wall with high level fencing;
- (iv) provision of lighting facilities;
- (v) resurfacing of parking space, and
- (vi) internal drainage works.

The project is now estimated to cost around Rs20 m.

The NDU has on 24 September 2018 appointed a consultant for the design and supervision of the project.

The consultant is currently working on the designs and scope of works. Same is expected to be finalised by mid December 2018. A procurement exercise will, thereafter, be initiated for the appointment of a contractor.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Merci, Madame la présidente. Donc, si je comprends bien, l'ancien contrat a été annulé, qui était déjà affiché, où le contracteur a été nommé. Il y aura un nouveau projet de R 20 millions qui va se faire. Les habitants de Chebel avaient demandé à ce qu'il y ait un terrain de Foot 5 synthétique. Est-ce que cela forme partie du projet ?

The Prime Minister: Je viens de répondre, Madame la présidente, étant donné l'état du complexe - si je peux appeler cela un complexe - était tel qu'on a eu des discussions avec la municipalité de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill et maintenant on vient avec un plus grand projet qui va comprendre, et je peux rassurer l'honorable membre - que cela va être seulement un *mini soccer pitch*, et cela ne peut pas être autrement mais définitivement c'est synthétique.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Madam Speaker. From the answer of the hon. Prime Minister, I understand that the first project was for Rs3 m. and then there will be a new project of Rs20 m. I would like to know from him what amount has been spent already out of the Rs3 m. to the contractor. Have there been any fees that have been paid?

The Prime Minister: Well, I asked that question also because I know that they started looking at the walls and then they found out that they had to pull down all these structures because they were not according to norms, and would be dangerous for the future. So, I know that some money might have been paid.

In fact, no amount has been spent. Probably the contractor is very understanding and the amount of work is negligible. So, I think it is a good understanding, and let us hope that the project will now move on as quickly as possible after the design has been approved.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! But please be short! Both hon. Minister and supplementary questions, please be brief in view of the time.

MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY - FIREFIGHTING SERVICES

(No. B/1005) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius Ports Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of firemen on the establishment thereof, indicating the number thereof who

—

- (a) are qualified —
 - (i) swimmers and divers, and
 - (ii) Forensic Fire Investigators, and
- (b) have followed specialised training in ship/oil tank fires.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that its mandate in relation to firefighting is to effect primary interventions to extinguish fire in the Port area until further assistance is obtained from other authorities such as Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, National Coast Guard and Mauritius Police Force in

accordance with the Port Disaster Management Plan and sections 62 and 63 of the Ports Act 1998.

The firefighting services in the Port relate to extinguishing fire on the land side and on the vessels.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Port Emergency Services of the Mauritius Ports Authority has 23 Port Firemen in post who are required to perform firefighting duties and attend to other emergencies on the landside of the Port area including pollution incidents. The Port Emergency Services operate on a round-the-clock basis on a 2-shift system comprising an average of 10 Officers including 6 Port Firemen per shift.

With regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that the scheme of service of Port Firemen has been amended in 2016 to include holding of a certificate in swimming and diving following the implementation of a Human Resource Development Plan. Henceforth, for any future recruitment exercise in the grade of Port Firemen, this new requirement will be taken into consideration.

With regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, since the responsibility for Forensic Investigations rests with the Mauritius Police Force, it is therefore not a requirement for enlisting Forensic Fire Investigators at the Mauritius Ports Authority.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, every vessel has its own firefighting protocol in accordance with international standards and the firefighting operation on board is under the responsibility of the Master of the vessel. However, in accordance with section 63 of the Ports Act 1998, the Port Master or authorised Port Pilot may proceed on board with such assistance and persons as he thinks fit to take such measures for the protection of life, property and the environment. It is to be noted that Port Firemen are not required to board any vessel on fire, but the Mauritius Ports Authority do provide assistance to all vessels in case of any fire on board by providing tugs, which are equipped with modern firefighting facilities, and are operated by skippers trained in ship firefighting with a view to protecting life, environment, property and the removal of vessels out of the Port. Only marine staff, who have appropriate training in ship firefighting, are authorised to attend marine emergencies. Therefore, the Mauritius Ports Authority has not provided the appropriate training to Port Firemen in ship/oil tank fire.

Moreover, the Mauritius Ports Authority has entered into an agreement with the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service to provide a four-month training course to its Port

Firemen. Training for a first batch of 11 Port Firemen is ongoing and will be completed by end of November 2018.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am glad that you caught my eyes at long last. Knowing that this is a high-risk area and it can easily turn into a towering inferno, can I impress upon the hon. Prime Minister to have a meeting with our friends from the Ports Authority to ensure safety and security? Because, as matters stand, it is not properly equipped. I am glad that negotiations have been entered into with the Fire and Rescue Service, but we have to enter into negotiations with countries which have put in place Contingency Plans.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me say that any system that we have put in place - and that does not, I believe, apply only here, it applies everywhere - we always need to review it and we always need to see how we can improve such kinds of measures in order to cater for unexpected events. And, obviously, I can tell the hon. Member that even before that question was put, I, myself, had meetings with the Ports Authority, because we should always be on our guard against any eventuality, and we are really concerned, and, I can assure the hon. Member that I have already taken, together with the Ports Authority, a number of measures, for example, in terms of improvement of equipment, and we are also looking at our capabilities to ensure safety and security. So, he can rest assured, and this question, of course, I am happy that it has come at this time for me to be able to explain to the House the situation as it is today, and what we shall be doing in the future also.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/1007 has been withdrawn.

COMMISSION ON THE PREROGATIVE OF MERCY - POWERS

(No. B/1007) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the powers of the Commission on the Prerogative of Mercy, he will state if consideration will be given for the Constitution to be amended with a view to ensuring that its advice to the President of the Republic is consistent with section 51 of the Reforms Institution Act of 1988.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/1039 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research. PQ B/1022 and B/1046 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports. PQ B/1028 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure. Hon. Rughoobur!

SME MAURITIUS LTD - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/1010) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Small and Medium Enterprises Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom –

- (a) copy of the organisation structure thereof, and
- (b) information as to the number of key staff recruited thereat as at to date.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling a copy of the organisation structure of SME Mauritius Ltd.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am informed that so far SME Mauritius Ltd has recruited a number of 21 key staff comprising the Chief Executive Officer, one Human Resource Manager, one Accountant, 14 Business Support Executives, one IT Administrator, one Human Resource Executive, one Procurement and Supply Executive, and one Accounts Officer.

I am also informed that -

- (i) a number of 5 key staff, comprising one Manager (Administration and Finance), one Assistant Manager, and 3 Business Development Officers have been transferred from the ex-SMEDA to SME Mauritius Ltd following options exercised to join the company on the coming into operation of the SME Act 2017 which repealed the SMEDA Act, and
- (ii) 4 Business Development Officers who were employed on contract with the ex-SMEDA have been offered a new contract of employment with SME Mauritius in the same post for a period of one year, effective from 15 May 2018.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: May I know from the hon. Minister whether - *comme préconisé* par le Master Plan for SMEs for the ten years to come - an HR audit was carried out by the SME Mauritius Ltd prior to the recruitment or prior to the implementation of this organigram?

Mr Bholah: Well, when the employees of ex-SMEDA were given the option either to stay with SME Mauritius or to ask for transfers, we saw that most of them requested to be transferred and, therefore, SME Mauritius had no other option than to recruit, but I can say that there is more recruitment to come. The job description and personnel specifications are being worked out and more recruitment will come and then an HR audit will be carried out in order to restructure or to work on the Organisation Chart again.

Mr Rughoobur: When I compare what has been proposed in the Master Plan and the organigram that has been tabled, I see that there is some disparity in as far as the departments that have been proposed in the Master Plan and what is being implemented. May I know the reason for this disparity?

Mr Bholah: As I said earlier, we had to ensure the continuity of services from SME Mauritius, that is why the staff have been recruited, but the Board will take - whatever you have said - into consideration in due course.

Mr Rughoobur: The hon. Minister will understand the reason for my question. The 10-year Master Plan was meant for a specific objective. Since there is a disparity that I have just mentioned, will the hon. Minister also look into - I know that he is not personally devising organigram and everything, but, at least - at the level of implementation, there have been five important departments that were to be set up. May I request the hon. Minister to ensure that in the implementation of this organigram or departments that are being created, business facilitation, policy and strategies - there are a list of five departments in the Master Plan - if that could be, please, taken into consideration at the implementation stage?

Mr Bholah: The Board is well aware of that. As I said earlier, the job description and personal specifications are being worked out and once finalised, the selection process will start.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Listening to the hon. Minister, I wonder if he is aware of what is going on in SME Mauritius today. Is the hon. Minister aware that today there is no Head of Strategic Planning, there is no Head of Business Support and Services Commission and there is no dedicated department for recovery of amount under MBGS?

They have recruited trainees. One of the trainees is now subject to enquiry from ICAC because they have been taking bribes. Is the hon. Minister aware of all these mal practices that are going on in SME Mauritius today?

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, this is unfounded. I have received letters and we have said that these are not exact, incorrect and even articles have been appearing in the Press.

With regard to the Head of Strategic Planning, well, there was one gentleman who was recruited on 18 June and who resigned on 17 July 2018. Now, the procedure is on for the replacement thereon.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

SME MAURITIUS LTD - EXPORTS

(No. B/1011) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Small and Medium Enterprises Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the initiatives taken to encourage exports to Africa.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, may I, at the outset, inform the hon. Member that export of SME products is not limited to Africa only, but it reaches out to other regions as well. The export strategy of SME Mauritius and that of Government through the National Export Strategy is, *inter alia*, to promote the internationalisation of our SMEs.

SME Mauritius cannot, on its own and alone, explore new markets for our SMEs. It is working in close collaboration with the different existing public and private institutions, such as the Economic Development Board, MEXA, MCCI, Business Mauritius, and the Association of Mauritian Manufacturers, to promote the visibility of SME products and services at international level, and improve the export readiness of our SMEs.

Since its creation in July 2017, I am informed, Madam Speaker, that SME Mauritius has, in collaboration with those institutions, been actively involved in encouraging the export of SME products and services –

- (i) by ensuring that necessary follow up and appropriate actions are undertaken to meet the set targets in the National Export Strategy;
- (ii) by providing financial assistance to eligible SMEs for participation in international fairs, buyers/sellers meetings, contact promotion programmes, and technology fairs to expand their share of exports or diversify into new

markets. Some 260 SMEs have benefitted from the participation in such international events during the last financial year, with a total disbursement of Rs19 m.;

- (iii) by assisting in the identification of some 32 SMEs in different economic sectors such as Apparel, Agro-industry, ICT, Jewellery, and others for the implementation of the project 'Strengthening Export Competitiveness' implemented in the context of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement. The project aimed at enhancing quality standards of SME products and productivity of SMEs. SME Mauritius has taken the full responsibility to ensure follow-up of the project, and
- (iv) by coming up with appropriate schemes geared towards increasing the contribution of the SME sector to total exports in line with the recommendations of the 10-year Master Plan for the SME sector which is to increase exports from 3% to 18%. Two of those Schemes are -
 - The Barcode Registration Scheme to enhance the quality of SME products and processes to meet international standards. It aims at providing financial assistance to SMEs with the objective to encouraging and motivating them to use barcodes for their products. Eligible SMEs are being reimbursed the total cost of Rs6,750 incurred on registration and training for developing and using the Bar Code. The scheme covers GS1 Barcode which is unique, globally recognised and registered in the GS1 Global Registry. As at date, 83 applications have been received at SME Mauritius, out of which 74 have already been approved.
 - Communication and Visibility - Online Presence which is to establish an integrated communication and visibility strategy for SMEs and enhancing SME export capabilities...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, can I just stop you. Do you have a long reply because otherwise it would be better for you to circulate? You have already taken four minutes to reply to this question. If you have got half a page, then better circulate the rest.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, in addition to these initiatives, Government is putting much effort, as part of the overall economic strategy, for a more sustainable and long term

export business development, as evidenced by the introduction last year of the Speed-to-Market Scheme which entails a 40% rebate on air freight cost, applicable also to SMEs that are exporting. A more recent budgetary measure concerns a major tax reform - a lower rate of 3% instead of 15% on the profits from exports - to encourage domestic enterprises, including SMEs, to expand their export capacity and seek new markets. SME Mauritius is proposing also to come up with more schemes to enable SMEs to meet international industry standards and thus improve their export readiness and competitiveness.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will come again to the Master Plan where as per the reports of December 2014 and January 2015, at the level of two sectors, manufacturing and ICT, the major exports to the region were almost 28%. May I know from the hon. Minister, especially in this field of ICT, what progress has been achieved during those three years as proposed by the Master Plan and whether there have been things that have been implemented at the level of the ICT?

Mr Bholah: Well, much is being done, Madam Speaker. I would also inform the hon. Member that the Africa Strategy to which the Economic Development Board is responsible for is working towards reinforcing economic collaboration with the African States whereby ICT is one of the component to which Mauritius is yet to promote.

Mr Rughoobur: The hon. Minister has been talking about financial assistance, but there was proposal for this clustered approach first, improving competitiveness second and then also, the hon. Minister mentioned that, participation in fairs and missions. At the level of clustering approach and competitiveness, it appears that not much has been done. Will the hon. Minister inform us what are the initiatives at the level of the SME Mauritius Ltd that have been taken regarding competitiveness and clustering?

Mr Bholah: Well, we have to enhance our product first of all. That is why we are coming up with policy for SMEs to adopt barcodes which is a prerequisite before we can compete on the international level and there are more initiatives to come. We are only at the start of the implementation stage of the Master Plan.

Mr Rughoobur: I have got a last supplementary, Madam Speaker. Lots of entrepreneurs have been complaining about the refund that they are supposed to get when they are participating in the fairs. May I make an appeal to the hon. Minister to, please, look into this issue?

Mr Bholah: Yes, I am aware of that. Most of the time, documents are missing within the whole batch that they submit which delays the process of refund.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me come to two specific measures announced in the Budget, and I quote –

“An SME e-platform will be set up to provide more visibility to SME products, and

(2) An export financing facility for SME (...)”

May I know from the hon. Minister where matters stand as regards the SME e-platform and the export financing facility?

Mr Bholah: For the e-platform, we have already entrusted the assignment to the State Informatics Limited and it will be launched either at the end of this month or beginning of December. Regarding the other measure, we are still working on that.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

SME MAURITIUS LTD – CHAIRPERSON & DIRECTORS

(No. B/1013) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’ Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Board of the Small and Medium Enterprises Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the names of the –

- (a) chairperson, and
- (b) directors thereof, indicating in each case, the sector which they represent.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Mauritius Ltd, which is a wholly Government-owned company, has been incorporated on 14 July 2017 as a private company limited by shares with an initial share capital of Rs25,000. It has taken over all the functions and activities of the defunct SMEDA with effect from 18 January 2018 following the proclamation of the SME Act 2017.

The company is managed by a Board comprising a Chairperson and four non-independent, non-executive Directors and three independent Directors, representing the public and the private sector respectively, in line with the National Code of Corporate Governance.

As regards parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am tabling the names of the Chairperson and the Directors of the Board of the company, with the required information.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will come again to the Master Plan where it is proposed that the Chairman of SME Mauritius Ltd should be somebody with wide experience and who should be involved in mentoring of those entrepreneurs. May I know from the hon. Minister whether this has been the case since the appointment of the Chairman?

Mr Bholah: Well, the Chairperson is Mr Peter Neubert who is Danish born and has been living in Mauritius since 1996. He occupies presently the post of Senior Manager at Harel Mallac Technologies Ltd and he had extensive and multi-faceted experience across a wide range of industries including SMEs in the manufacturing, financial services, media, advertising and IT sector. But in the circumstances, he was the best candidate to occupy the post of chairmanship at SME Mauritius Ltd.

Mr Rughoobur: Well, my question was on mentoring but anyway. I am referring regularly to this Master Plan, based on the importance of this document to the proposal that has been made in this document and how important it is at implementation stage. May I know from the hon. Minister whether after one year, six months or eight months or until now there has been a sort of an evaluation report prepared as to the implementation of the plan and whether he is personally satisfied with what has been achieved to date?

Mr Bholah: The Board and Management are already working on the annual report.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: The question is about the Chairman and the Directors of the Board of SME Mauritius Ltd. May I know from the hon. Minister what are the fees that are paid to the Chairperson and each Board member for attending Board meetings and for sitting on subcommittees and how are these compared to what salaries, fees were paid to members of SMEDA's Board?

Mr Bholah: Well, I have the information regarding the Board membership. Rs50,000 for the Chairperson and Rs20,000 for the Directors. For the other information required, I will table it later.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/1022 will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, PQs B/1055 and B/1076 have been withdrawn.

NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY – BOARD & AUDITORS

(No. B/1055) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the National Insurance Company, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) the composition of the Board thereof;
- (b) when the external auditor thereof was appointed, and
- (c) when the last audited report thereof was approved.

(Withdrawn)

EBENE – CYBER CITY – ECONOMIC OPERATORS

(No. B/1076) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the economic operators operating at the Cyber City in Ebene, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to the number thereof, indicating the amount of revenue collected in terms of licenses and local rates therefrom, over the past three years.

(Withdrawn)

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

At 1.00 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.28 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PARLIAMENT - CHAMBER - RAINWATER – LEAKING

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, you will have noticed that rainwater is leaking along the walls of the Chamber. My Office has consulted the Meteorological Services and has been informed that heavy rains will persist until late in the afternoon today.

In view of the above, I have thought it advisable that today's proceedings be adjourned. Consequently, all Members will be contacted by the Clerk with regard to Parliamentary Questions which have not been reached today.

Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in view of the prevailing situation, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday 21 November 2018 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 3.29 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 21 November 2018 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

BEAU BASSIN & PETITE RIVIÈRE – NDU PROJECTS - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/1009) Mr Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the ongoing projects implemented by the National Development Unit in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will give the list thereof, indicating, in each case, the –

- (a) description;
- (b) project cost, and
- (c) start and expected completion dates thereof.

Reply: 28 projects are presently under implementation by the National Development Unit in Constituency No. 20. These projects pertain to the construction and upgrading of roads, construction and upgrading of drains and provision of amenities. The information sought is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

DBM – MICRO SMALL MEDIUM ENTERPRISES - LOAN SCHEMES

(No. B/1012) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the total value of loans disbursed to micro enterprises for financial years ending 30 June 2017 and 2018, respectively.

Reply: (The Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development)

I am informed that the Development Bank of Mauritius Limited has, since its creation, been providing financial assistance to Micro Small Medium Enterprises.

The total of loans disbursed by the DBM to micro enterprises for financial years ending 30 June 2017 and 2018 amount to Rs4,373,600 and Rs10,931,842 respectively.

I am further informed that following measures announced in Budget 2018-2019, the DBM has implemented five new loan schemes targeting the Micro Small Medium Enterprises.

The Bank has also introduced an import substitution scheme targeting former sugarcane planters, with a view to encouraging them to undertake other agro-business activities.