



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2017

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER

ANNOUNCEMENT

BILLS (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS (*Written*)

THE CABINET

(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. Showkutally Soodhun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
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
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms
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. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and

Family Welfare

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 Local Government and Outer Islands

Hon. Marie Cyril Eddy Boissézon

Minister of Civil Service and Administrative
Reforms

Hon. Dharmendar Sesungkur

Minister of Financial Services and Good
Governance

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 23 of 2017

Sitting of Tuesday 31 October 2017

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Copyright (Amendment) Bill. (In original)
- (b) Income Tax (Negative Income Tax Allowance) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No.208 of 2017)
- (c) The Public Procurement (Amendment No.3) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No.209 of 2017)

B. Ministry of Health and Quality of Life

- (a) The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No.12) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No.212 of 2017)
- (b) The Medical Council (Postgraduate Medical Education Board) (Amendment) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No.213 of 2017)

C. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No.41) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No.210 of 2017)

D. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands

The District Council of Black River (other Public Place Naming) Regulations 2017. (Government Notice No. 211 of 2017)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ No. B/631 in regard to the Fact-Finding Committee will be replied by the hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation. PQ No. B/641 in regard to the former Bramer Banking Corporation Ltd will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting. Hon. Rughoobur!

DEVELOPMENT BANK OF MAURITIUS LTD - LOANS

(No. B/629) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) 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 Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the total value of loans approved for the years 2015 and 2016, respectively, for projects not exceeding Rs2 m., indicating the total amount of funds injected by Government therein.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the DBM that it has sanctioned loans for an amount of Rs78.3 m. in respect of 467 cases in 2015 for projects not exceeding Rs2 m.. In 2016, the loan sanctions amounted to Rs21.2 m. in respect of 97 cases. The main reasons for this decrease were: stringent credit appraisal process being adopted; commercial banks charging cheaper interest rates under SME financing scheme; operators in the SME sector and Transport sector opting for alternative source of financing under lease agreements and discontinuation of the concessional rate of interest of 3% on computer loans. The Bank did not raise funds from the market to finance these loan disbursements, but has used funds generated from its own operations.

Madam Speaker, these loans were made with concessionary rates of interest ranging from zero to 6% per annum. As the DBM still has borrowings and fixed deposits from financial and other institutions which bear higher interest rates than these concessionary rates, Government has met the interest differential between the cost of capital of DBM and the concessional rates of interest on those schemes. This allows DBM to pay interest charges on long-term loans and fixed deposits it had raised in the past to finance loans under the scheme. In this respect, Government has refunded to the DBM a total amount of Rs24.8 m. for the years 2015 and 2016.

Mr Rughoobur: I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his reply. In a reply to a PQ in April 2014, the then Minister of Finance gave statistics as to the value of loan disbursed which was Rs392 m. to 3,688 applicants. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister if this drastic fall in the amount of loan disbursed is not the result of stringent conditions being applied to those small entrepreneurs like fishers and there have been complaints?

Madam Speaker: Not too long questions, please!

The Prime Minister: Well, as I said, there has been a change in the conditions with regard to certain schemes that were available to certain sectors and, in view of these stringent conditions, in fact, I did indicate to the DBM that we should review some of those schemes, and I must say that these schemes have been reviewed. Therefore, there is a number of schemes. I just mentioned them. There are the new microcredit scheme, the sugar planters regrouping project, the SME financing scheme and the loans to religious bodies – which is new and announced in the last Budget – normal loans and the loans scheme to small fishermen in Rodrigues.

Mr Rughoobur: Recently, the hon. Prime Minister also announced a new scheme for the hotel taxi operators. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister if this scheme also has been approved by the DBM now?

The Prime Minister: No, I don't have the information with regard to that scheme, but I undertake to provide the information to the House at a later stage.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister mentioned in his recent Budget that the DBM will now be responsible for providing microfinance as opposed to MauBank, and he just mentioned the figure of only Rs78 m. having been disbursed. Wouldn't he agree that, if DBM is going to perform this role of providing microfinance, it needs a capital injection from the Government in order to be able to service the microfinance?

The Prime Minister: Well, DBM will always, of course, need capital injection because for the purpose and the very object that we want it to serve especially, I would say, the micro-enterprises which is a very difficult sector. Obviously, DBM will need further capital. We are working into it and we are looking also at re-structuring the DBM and that is

why we are not waiting for the whole exercise to be completed. I have already announced in the two Budgets that I have presented a number of schemes and, obviously, there are other schemes that will be reviewed so that they can be more effective, and so that we shall have more people who will be able to avail themselves of better conditions for their enterprise.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has received representations himself or his officers, that the time taken by the DBM for the processing of applications, especially for small entrepreneurs, takes too much time? I would say it takes too long and sometimes it is not to the benefit of the small entrepreneurs, although the DBM has to take into account the necessary precaution. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether they have discussed with the management of the DBM to request them to process as rapidly as possible the application for loans for small entrepreneurs?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I must say that I have myself received a few representations, a number of letters have been addressed to me, in the light of which I have also talked to the DBM with regard to the issue that the hon. Member has raised: delay. Now, I have been provided, in fact, with a number of information. I must say, in quite a number of cases, there are applicants who do not provide all the required information and, therefore, the bank has, through an officer, to liaise with the applicant and see to it that all the information is provided in order to be able to process the application. There might be also - I don't know - a few cases where it does take some time. I have impressed upon the DBM to see to it that, even in cases where the applicant has not furnished all the required information, we have dedicated officers to liaise with them as quickly as possible so that the applications can be processed as quickly as possible.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

PORT LOUIS SOUTH & PORT LOUIS CENTRAL - ROADS & DRAINS - CONSTRUCTION WORKS

(No. B/630) 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 road and drain construction works undertaken by the

National Development Unit in collaboration with the Municipal Council of Port Louis, if any, in Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of complaints with regard to the works carried out.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that three complaints have been received from inhabitants of Constituency No. 2.

The first complaint relates to a drain project which is being implemented by the City Council of Port Louis in the region of Upper Chalet, Vallée Pitot. The Scope of Works for this project consists of the construction of a drain and retaining walls. A site visit was effected by officers of the NDU on 26 September 2017 when the inhabitants complained about the uncovered drains.

The matter has been taken up with the City Council of Port Louis and the latter has informed that the covering of the drain has not been recommended since the drain is found on the slope of a hill and is meant to capture surface runoff. The Council has also indicated that the height of the retaining walls that have been constructed will be raised in the near future so as to reduce the risk of soil erosion and consideration will also be given for provision of handrail after raising of the retaining wall as a security measure.

Madam Speaker, the second complaint relates to another drain project covered with concrete slabs implemented by the City Council of Port Louis at Lenepveu Street in Port Louis whereby the slabs covering the new drains are causing noise disturbances whenever motor vehicles pass thereon. The Council has not been able to carry out necessary repairs due to ongoing works by the Central Water Authority and Wastewater Management Authority.

However, following consultations between the Council and hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus, Parliamentary Private Secretary of the Constituency, it has been agreed that the NDU will address this problem while undertaking the resurfacing works at the same location in the near future.

Madam Speaker, the third complaint relates to water accumulation problems in the catchment area between Diego Garcia Road and Diore Street. Site visits and surveys have already been carried out. The Scope of Works for the construction of a drain network and asphaltting between Diego Garcia Road and Diore Street is under preparation and tenders for the project would be launched by the end of November 2017.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. With regard to the Lenepveu Street Project, this is causing a real hardship to people because they cannot sleep at night. Can I have from the hon. Prime Minister a time frame to resolve this problem once and for all?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I tried to inquire further into this problem and again the way that they have constructed the drain is actually causing problems to the nearby inhabitants and, as I said, the PPS has also raised this matter. But I cannot give a time frame because it will all depend on how far and how fast the works are being done now by the CWA and the Wastewater Management Authority. It is only at the end of those works that we will be able to review. I have been told also that there is a way that they can remedy this disturbance, if I can call it, by providing some kind of rails and so on, but they will do it once it can be asphalted.

Mr Osman Mahomed: This is a case of poor quality of works. Now, there is the NDU, there is the Municipal Council of Port Louis and the newly set up Land Drainage Authority. How does this triangulum address the issue of poor works leading to wastage of funds going forward?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have also been told that in a number of sites, they have done similar works, which have not been causing disturbance to inhabitants. I am not a technical person, I tried to understand, but it seems that there is a problem there. So, they will remedy. Well, I believe that the different institutions, especially, after having created the Land Drainage Authority, will work in such a way that projects are implemented in the best possible way so that they do not cause either inconvenience to inhabitants and we will also have to see to it that the quality of the works being done is such that they are value for money.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister mentioned three complaints. In fact, there are more than that. I, myself, have spoken to the Municipal Council. There is a problem in Malakoff Street. They did drains which are higher than the houses. So, when there is going to be rain, it is going to enter the houses of people. There is problem at the end of Edgah Road where there is an elevation. No vehicle will be able to climb that hill. So, there are lots of problems. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he can talk to the NDU and have a meeting together with the responsible people in the Municipal Council because it

seems that some of the works are done by NDU, some by the Municipal Council and then look globally at all the sites instead of waiting for a complaint to be received to react? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member can rest assured that, in the light of this question, I have asked the NDU to give me all the complaints that we have received. Now, these are the complaints that I have been provided with. If, as the hon. Member has mentioned, there are specific cases, there must be specific questions also. Let me also say, we have to be careful between complaints and requests. I know there has been a number of requests to undertake some projects. Now, obviously, requests are unlimited in any Constituency for that matter. But, as I said, if there are complaints with regard to an infrastructure which has to be upgraded because it is posing a danger to the inhabitants or it is causing problem, these are the issues we will obviously give priority to, and we will attend to and the hon. Member can send me a list also, not to say that we have to put a question here, he can send me a list and I will look into it.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/641 has been withdrawn. Hon. Ameer Meea!

GRAND' BAIE CASINO - MONEY INVESTED

(No. B/632) 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 Casino of Grand' Baie, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation, information as to the quantum of money invested therein since the coming into operation thereof, indicating the -

- (a) date thereof, and
- (b) purpose therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that since the closure of the Beach Casino at Trou-aux-Biches in 2009, 144 workers were underemployed, but nevertheless the State Investment Corporation had to bear the full salary cost which worsened the financial situation of the Casino group.

To remedy the situation and avoid laying off of casino employees, SIC set up the Grand' Baie Casino located at the former Grand' Baie International Conference Centre. The Casino started its operations in February 2016. The SIC invested Rs50 m. as equity capital in

the Grand' Baie Casino Ltd. In addition to the equity capital, SIC has also provided a shareholder's loan of Rs58.5 m.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that prior to 2015, the financial situation of all casinos was in the red. In fact, in 2014 the casinos were making losses to the extent of Rs121 m. The losses have been reduced to Rs93 m. in 2015 and have turned into a profit of Rs7 m. in 2016. The expected profit for 2017 is Rs26 m. The opening of the Grand' Baie Casino is one of the measures that has contributed to turn around the situation.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to draw attention of Members of the House that SIC had, over the period 2006 to 2015, been providing monthly financial support totalling an amount of Rs656 m. to keep the casinos operational. Since January 2016, SIC has not provided any funds to the casinos to meet their recurrent expenses.

As regards part (b) of the question, the funds provided by the SIC to Grand' Baie Casino have been used to finance the following expenses -

1. refurbishment works Rs46 m.;
2. acquisition of gaming machines and equipment Rs36.6 m., and
3. working capital requirements Rs25.9 m.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Prime Minister has informed the House, the country and the nation about what has been done concerning the casinos to become more profitable or working on a new era, I can say it. But has the hon. Prime Minister's attention been drawn that, at the same time in trying to put order supposedly, we have at the Head of the SIC, an acting CEO, we know whom, related to one Minister here. So, is the hon. Prime Minister ready to conduct an inquiry as requested not only by unions, but by certain respected trade unionists, concerning the purchase of equipment and refurbishment works?

An architect has been chosen, Mr Asgarally, and certain crooks there have pocketed millions on the head of the public. So, is the Prime Minister ready to conduct an in-depth inquiry into the refurbishment issue of the Grand Bay Casino where millions have been pocketed by people *proches du gouvernement*?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I will request you not to make allegations.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Prime Minister, please reply! The hon. Member takes his responsibility.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as you have said...

(Interruptions)

These are allegations. I am not here either to cover or uncover or also to blame people who are not to be blamed, but we must be careful. Now, if the hon. Member has specific information, of course, I am very willing to look into it. Let me have those information.

Mr Bhagwan: The Prime Minister must go and look himself! He has so many officers, so many, I would say, the Police...

Madam Speaker: Ask your question, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

What is your question hon. Bhagwan? Ask your question !

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Ki tapaz zot fer zot dan dif dehor, bouse labous.*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please! Hon. Bhagwan, do not bring extraneous matters in this! Please, ask your question!

(Interruptions)

Order on this side! Order, please on this side! Don't make provocations! Please ask your questions!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Prime Minister at least go and see the files? Ask his senior officers who have been appointed as architects, who purchased it and how much has been spent?

Madam Speaker: Ask your question, hon. Bhagwan! Ask your question!

Mr Bhagwan: I am asking the hon. Minister to go and have a look as Minister of Finance, at least.

Madam Speaker: Yes, ask your question properly!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Hureeram, please don't make provocations!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Well, maybe it is good that I provide some information because otherwise I might be accused that I am trying not to give information. I am informed that there was a tendering exercise that was conducted by the Project Manager and the recommendation was received. The following architects and consultants were appointed: architect designer, Lampotang and Siew Architects Ltd, the M&E Engineer was Pro-Five Limited and Quantity Surveyor, Apex Surveyors Ltd.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please! Please! Hon. Bhagwan, please!

The Prime Minister: As I said, if the hon. Member has any issue, he can let me...

Madam Speaker: Please, don't interrupt! Allow the hon. Prime Minister to reply!

(Interruptions)

No, hon. Bhagwan, I just asked you not to make interruptions and to allow the hon. Prime Minister to reply.

The Prime Minister: Just to complete the answer, other contractors and suppliers also were appointed again after a tendering exercise by the respective consultants, and I just mentioned those who have been retained. Main contractor works: Fast Track Contracting Ltd; M&E Installations: Abbelec Engineering Ltd.; supply of luminaires, there were Flux Ltd and Simelec Ltée; supply of decorative fire retardant fabrics: Abita Shades Ltd; the surveillance equipment were provided by the Rey & Lenferna and Brinks Ltd, and LVT Tiles and carpets by Ideco Limited and slots equipment by Omega Alfastreet and AGI Africa. Now, gaming equipment also there were IC3 companies: IGT Africa, TCS John Huxley, and Signature Gaming.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea.

ELECTORAL REFORMS

(No. B/633) 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 electoral reforms, including the financing of political parties, he will state where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the House will recall that, in my reply to the Private Notice Question on 18 April 2017, I informed that the Ministerial Committee on Electoral Reform has submitted its Report on the Financing of Political Parties and the Attorney General's Office has already been requested to prepare a draft Bill based on the Committee's proposals.

I also stated that the Attorney General's Office subsequently sought further instructions on a certain number of issues which would have to be thrashed out by the Ministerial Committee before the Bill on the Financing of Political Parties could be finalised and introduced into the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the Ministerial Committee has already examined those issues and submitted its recommendations which are currently being examined. Further drafting instructions will be conveyed to the Attorney General's Office for the finalisation of the Bill once Cabinet's approval is obtained on the Ministerial Committee's recommendations.

I am informed that the Ministerial Committee is now addressing the other issues in its Terms of Reference.

Madam Speaker, let me reassure the House that Government intends to move ahead with its electoral reform agenda.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Concerning the Ministerial Committee, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned the report was tabled since April 2016, and also it mentioned only political financing. So, there was nothing on political reform on our actual system. Since then it has been almost one and a half years now. May I ask the hon. Minister how many times the Committee has sat; has there been any other interim report that has been prepared or is being circulated and also whether his Government still stands committed towards introducing a dose of proportional representation?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have said that the Committee has had a number of informal consultations. There has been a number of sessions and the hon. Member will

appreciate that these are very complex matters. Needless for me to remind the hon. Member that he is talking about this Government, but his party also has been in so many Governments...

(Interruptions)

Aret kozé don about saboter!

(Interruptions)

To ti incapable...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order please!

(Interruptions)

Can we have some order in the House?

(Interruptions)

Order please! Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bérenger!

(Interruptions)

Can we have some order in the House, please, so as not to lose the time of the House! Please!

The Prime Minister: Les incapables sont là...

(Interruptions)

Vous, vous êtes des incapables!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't make remarks, hon. Prime Minister! Please proceed with your reply!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I was about to say so many years in Government! Very few years in Government, and they have not been able to bring forward a Bill, so they are talking about this Government...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, please give your reply!

(Interruptions)

Don't make remarks!

(Interruptions)

Allow me to say that remarks - hon. Bhagwan! Allow me to say that remarks even from a sitting position is out of order! Please, proceed with your reply!

The Prime Minister: Éternellement *Leader* de l'opposition, plus maintenant d'ailleurs!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, what did I say?

The Prime Minister: *Toi to capav vine challenge moi lor No. 8, toi!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! Yes?

The Prime Minister: *Requin moustache!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, please don't make provocation!

(Interruptions)

Don't make provocation!

(Interruptions)

We are losing the time of the House.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Prime Minister, please do not bring in extraneous matters, we are losing the time of the House! I have said this several times. Please, proceed with your reply because time will already be over!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Requin moustache! Eta buver lysol!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Order please! Hon. Bhagwan, I have just said that by being disorderly in the House, we lose the time of the House. Time is already over for Prime Minister's Question Time, I will give two additional minutes...

(Interruptions)

I will give two additional minutes for the Prime Minister unless...

(Interruptions)

Order please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Béranger, are you going to make remarks?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, I am being very patient. I am asking for order in the House!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Prime Minister, please give your reply, and that will be the end of Prime Minister's Question Time.

The Prime Minister: I would give my reply, but I should not be interrupted from a sitting position by the hon. Member!

(Interruptions)

He has the right to sit down and...

(Interruptions)

Alé do requin!

(Interruptions)

Alé requin, mo guet twa mo gagne pitié...

(Interruptions)

Mo gagne plis pitié mo guet twa...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Would you continue?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I have said that there should be order in this House for all of you to be able to proceed with the business of the House. If we don't have order in the House, both sides are losing the time of the House! Hon. Prime Minister, please give your reply to this question!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: As I was saying, Madam Speaker, the Committee has had a number of consultations. The recommendations have been made with regard to the financing of political parties. There are other issues that are being looked into. I have already in the past communicated the terms of reference of that Committee and, therefore, in due course we will come with the appropriate Bill before this House.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, in the electoral manifesto, I would quote only a small paragraph whereby it is mentioned '*un code de conduite pour les responsables politiques et les ministres sera élaboré.*'

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madame la présidente, avec les récents évènements condamnables et répréhensibles, notamment les '*lalang gate*' et autres dérapages verbaux....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not bring in extraneous matters, hon. Ameer Meea! Ask your question, but do not bring in extraneous matters!

Mr Ameer Meea: Does the hon. Prime Minister think that this *code de conduite* is more than urgent?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Il faudra un code de conduite pour ceux qui commettent des plagiats aussi...*

(Interruptions)

...ceux qui copient...

(Interruptions)

Ceux qui copient des discours, qui viennent au Parlement et copient des discours.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question B/640 in regard to Diego Garcia will be replied by the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues. Parliamentary Question B/647 in regard to the proposed pulling down of

houses containing asbestos at Batimaraïs will be replied by the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development. Hon. Rughoobur!

MyBIZ - PROJECTS APPROVAL

(No. B/636) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to projects approved by MyBiz for financing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total –

- (a) amount and corresponding values thereof since May 2016 to date, and
- (b) number of applications rejected.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, I am informed that since May 2016 -

- (i) MyBiz has approved a number of 273 projects for a total project value of Rs1.2 billion.
- (ii) Out of the number of 273 projects approved by MyBiz, MauBank has approved a number of 94 projects for a total amount of approximately Rs274 m.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that -

- (i) 44 projects have been rejected at the level of MyBiz, and
- (ii) out of 273 projects referred by MyBiz to MauBank, the latter has rejected a number of 88 applications corresponding to a total amount of approximately Rs310 m.

I also wish to inform the House that MauBank has approved a number of 122 applications for micro-enterprises, that is, individuals, for a total amount of approximately Rs17.5 m. and has rejected 30 applications for a total amount of approximately Rs6.8 m.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: I find that there is a huge disparity between the value of projects approved, that is, almost Rs1.2 billion by MyBiz and only Rs274 m. that have been disbursed by MauBank. May I know the reasons, please?

Mr Bholah: Well, there are some of the projects that have been rejected and some are still under consideration. In fact, there are 91 projects under consideration for the time being at the level of MauBank.

Mr Rughoobur: Yes, but, the project financing being an important component of promotion of small enterprises, is the hon. Minister contemplating other modes of financing, especially with regard to the problem we have had with MauBank lately?

Mr Bholah: Well, as the hon. Prime Minister has replied in a question addressed to him, DBM also is helping to finance projects for SMEs. But I have had a meeting with other commercial banks early September this year and I have requested these banks also to help in the financing of SMEs.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I know from the hon. Minister why are projects that have been approved by MyBiz rejected by MauBank? Are there different criteria? Is there no coordination between MyBiz and MauBank and what happened to all these rejected projects?

Mr Bholah: No, the thing is that applications submitted to MyBiz are referred to SMEDA in respect of the different activities that fall under the SME Development Scheme. Then, at the level of MauBank, there are more stringent conditions and often it happens that relevant information is not provided, documents are not provided and at times the feasibility studies are requested to be reworked.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: The hon. Minister is talking about stringent conditions. One thing is not clear; once MyBiz approved the projects, at the level of MauBank do they have to provide a guarantee for these loans?

Mr Bholah: Well, I am not aware if any guarantee is requested.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

SMEs – JOB CREATION

(No. B/637) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to jobs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority, information as to the number thereof created by the Small and Medium Scale businesses for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016, respectively, indicating the overall percentage thereof represented in the private sector.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, I am informed that for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016, the number of jobs created by SMEs registered with SMEDA are: 3,489; 4,299 and 4,600 respectively.

It must be noted that a number of SMEs operate in the informal sector and are not registered with SMEDA and as the labour turnover in that sector is relatively high, it is, therefore, very tedious, cumbersome and difficult to capture such information on the number of jobs created by those enterprises.

However, Madam Speaker, based on the latest labour statistics, the total employment in SMEs is estimated by Statistics Mauritius at around 300,802 representing around 6 per cent increase compared to the figure of 284,900 in 2013 as per the Census of Economic Activities.

Madam Speaker, the total employment in SMEs which stands at around 300,802 which I mentioned earlier, represents around 55 per cent of total employment in the country and around 66 per cent of total employment in the private sector.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: The figures, Madam Speaker, say all about the importance of the sector. I have got a supplementary question. Will the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to the budget earmarked for capacity building in this sector and how presently this is being done?

Mr Bholah: Well, within the budget allocation given to SMEDA there is a budget thereat which is targeted for capacity building and we are making the best to use this budget for capacity building to train people, to have workshops etc.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

**SMALL MEDIUM ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY – REGIONAL
EXPORTS & FAIRS**

(No. B/638) 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 Medium Enterprise Development Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) initiatives undertaken during the years 2015 and 2016, respectively, to boost up exports in the region, and
- (b) number of exhibitions and fairs in which the local small and medium enterprises participated.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, I am informed that with a view to boosting exports of SME products and services in the region, SMEDA has undertaken during the years 2015 and 2016 a number of initiatives such as organisation of Potential Exporters Programme, workshops on promoting local products for SMEs and regular courses for improvement of quality and packaging. Moreover, information sessions on export procedures and processes were organised for SMEs.

These programmes aimed at increasing awareness of SMEs on, amongst others, trade barriers, trade agreements, regional cooperation and trade and legal aspects of importing and exporting of goods or products. Over 500 SMEs have already been sensitised on the Export Promotion Programme.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the SMEDA that during the financial year 2015-16, 757 SMEs participated in various international fairs at a total cost of approximately Rs41 m., and for the financial year 2016-17, 372 SMEs participated in such fairs for a total cost of Rs24 m.

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, hon. Minister. Based on the recent public investment by Government, through the Africa Fund, in Senegal and eventually in Côte d'Ivoire, may I know from the hon. Minister if the SMEDA is working in collaboration with the Africa Fund? Is there any collaboration?

Mr Bholah: I am not aware, but I believe that Enterprise Mauritius is working whereat SMEs are included in this process.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has recently taken the decision to introduce a new piece of legislation before this House to regulate this sector and, if this is the case, the reasons thereof?

Mr Bholah: Well, I am not aware of any decision coming, but there is a legislation which will come for SME Mauritius which we are setting up.

Madam Speaker: Next question! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

CEB FIBER NET CO. LTD - ECI TELECOM LTD - CONTRACT

(No. B/639) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the consultancy, contracting and supply of equipment by the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to if the services of any Israeli company has been sought and obtained and, if so, give details thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I have already provided this information in reply to supplementary questions to PQ B/312 of 25 April 2017. I can, therefore, only summarise what is in the Hansard, namely that after a bidding process, CEB's subsidiary CEB Fiber Net Co. Ltd contracted with ECI Telecom Ltd as follows -

- (a) contract dated 15 February 2017 for the supply of equipment for USD4,191,399;
- (b) contract dated 14 March 2017 for telecom shelters for USD1,646,695.

ECI Telecom Ltd was incorporated and registered in the State of Israel on April 27, 1961. It is a public limited liability company and operates under the provisions of Israel's Companies Law. Publicly available information shows that ECI Telecom Ltd is a well-established telecommunications vendor, serving some of the world's largest service providers. It has over 3,000 employees, with offices in over 20 countries. Its development centres are situated in India, China and Israel. It has also offices in 20 countries, including

Germany, France, UK, India, China and Indonesia. It has supplied its equipment in most of Germany's largest utilities. It is also present in Tanzania, Rwanda, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Kenya, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, amongst several other countries.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Deputy Prime Minister. In view of the international ramification, namely Non-Aligned Movement not supportive of Israel's stand vis-à-vis Palestine, which is getting worse with each passing year - Now, I understood from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister's reply. Can I ask him a further question then? Given that it was a restricted bidding exercise, can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether it would not be advisable, rather than including that Israeli company already in that restricted bidding exercise, to go for international bidding exercise, where similar services could be available, but from different companies in the world?

The Deputy Prime Minister: First of all, we must not confuse the international relations, international diplomatic relations with commercial relations. If you see countries like Egypt and Jordan, whatever the diplomatic relations may be, they have close trade relations. Indonesia is an example. Many other countries of similar, whilst not having diplomatic relations, do have trade relations. In that particular tender, the field is very narrow, and seven bidders were selected. It is very interesting - seven bidders from all over. Finally, only three were interested in the bidding. One of them did not want to put bid security; the other one also refused to comply with certain specifications, and you are left with this company which has, up to now, done its job very well.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Osman Mahomed!

DIEGO GARCIA – CONTRACT WORKERS

(No. B/640) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to Diego Garcia, he will state if any case of worker exploitation thereat has been reported, more specifically, with regard to cheap labour and, if so, indicate the measures taken in relation thereto, if any.

The Rt. hon. Minister Mentor and Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues (Sir Anerood Jugnauth): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall answer to this question. I am informed by the Commissioner of Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade as well as the Ministry of Labour, Industrial

Relations, Employment and Training, that no case of worker exploitation or cheap labour in Diego Garcia has been reported.

I have also been given to understand that the New Internationalist, an independent media organisation, published on the website, on 14 March 2017, an article referring to a two-year investigation it carried out and which revealed the US military's poor treatment of contract workers in Diego Garcia. It has not been possible to check the veracity of the information contained in that article.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Given the article, can it be envisaged to probe further? Because so far, we have resettlement issues, sovereignty issues, we have the issues of Marine Park, and this fourth issue now is human rights and exploitation of Filipino and Indian workers.

Now, in the light of this article, can I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor to probe further and to see with the instances concerned whether this can reinforce our case for our plight to get that island back?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I wonder how practical it is for us to go and probe in Diego Garcia right now. It is asking for something that I consider is almost impossible.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I, therefore, suggest to the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor whether our diplomatic services can lodge a complaint before the international instances and the UK and the US Government; going forward?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, we cannot do things like that unless we have real proof. We cannot act in vagueness.

BRAMER BANKING CORPORATION LTD - INDIVIDUALS & GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS - MONEY WITHDRAWAL

(No. B/641) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the former Bramer Banking Corporation Ltd., he will state if consideration will be given for the list of the individuals, pension funds, parastatal and Government organisations that withdrew their money therefrom within 7 days preceding the date of the revocation of the licence thereof in 2015, together with the respective amount thereof, will be provided and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

MICHAELA HARTE CASE - DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE - BARRISTERS

(No. B/642) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Disciplinary Committee initiated against Barristers K. T. and S. R. in 2013 in relation to the Michaela Harte case, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, including, the disciplinary actions taken against them, if any.

Mr Gobin: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the hon. Ag. Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court, that –

- (i) the case against Barrister S. R. bearing Supreme Court Record No. 107662 was called before their Lordships honourable Balancy, Senior Puisne Judge, honourable Mungly-Gulbul, Judge, and late hon. Bhaukaurally, then Judge on 23 September 2014, 03 October 2014 and 22 October 2014, and
- (ii) the case against Barrister K. T., bears Supreme Court Record No. 107661 was started before their Lordships, hon. Chui Yew Cheong, then Judge, honourable Hamuth, Judge, and late honourable Bhaukaurally, then Judge, on 11 October 2013, 25 October 2013, 26 October 2013 and 25 June 2014. In the meantime, late honourable Bhaukaurally passed away and honourable Chui Yew Cheong retired from the service.

Madam Speaker, these cases are within the exclusive purview of the Supreme Court and it would not be appropriate to further comment on the matter.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I have two supplementaries. We all know that it is a case concerning the Judiciary, but the Attorney General is the Vice-President of the Bar Council as well. Can we know whether the former Attorney General – commonly known as Mr Bet 365 – has not in any way been involved in any matters in his capacity, both as Attorney General, and also colleagues to the two Government lawyers? Can the Attorney General give the country the assurance that this is not the case?

Madam Speaker: I would just like to draw the attention of all hon. Members not to bring in matters for which this particular question is addressed.

Mr Bhagwan: Is the hon. Attorney General going to reply?

Madam Speaker: Yes, he will reply.

Mr Gobin: Madam Speaker, I do not propose to add more to what I have already said. These two cases are within the exclusive purview of the Supreme Court and I do not propose to comment any further thereon.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the Attorney General inform the House, the country and the nation at large, whether he is aware that there is another case concerning Barrister S. T. which has been referred for action in the case of Mr Gooljaury where it is stated that ‘DPP *faner ek politiser*’ and this again has been reported for action ...

(Interruptions)

... and whether there is a case dated 17 September ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please! First of all, the question is regarding Barristers K. T. and S. R. and no Barrister S.T and, secondly, it is in relation to the Michaela Harte Case. I do not think we can bring in another question in this one because it is not related to the main question.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the hon. Attorney General mentioned in relation to Barrister K. T. that there is one case that is pending and which has to be reheard because there is a change in Judge. So, what hon. Bhagwan was referring to, is he aware that in addition to that case, there is another disciplinary case in relation to remarks made by K.T. *vis-à-vis* the DPP and which has not been answered in his reply by the Attorney General. This is the question. Is he aware that there is a second disciplinary action against Barrister K. T. relating to what he said about the DPP?

Mr Gobin: Madam Speaker, I need notice of this question.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

ROAD ACCIDENTS (FATAL) - REPORTED CASES

(No. B/643) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to fatal road accidents, he will state the number of reported cases thereof since January 2017 to date, giving a breakdown in terms of the number thereof –

- (a) per types of vehicles
- (b) being hit and run cases, and
- (c) which occurred at pedestrian crossings.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will answer this question. I have been informed by the Police that from January 2017 till date, 127 fatal road accidents have

occurred causing 132 fatalities and involving 193 vehicles. The type of vehicles involved in these accidents are as follows -

Private cars	64
Taxis	3
Motorcycles/ Auto cycles	64
Vans	22
Goods vehicles	14
Buses	5
Bicycles	12
Other motor vehicles	11

I would like to highlight, Madam Speaker, that the number of accidents and fatalities occurring in a particular period of time varies. For instance, from January to end of March this year, there were 33 fatalities as compared to 42 in the corresponding period of last year. But from April to October this year, the number of fatalities has reached 93 compared to 73 in the corresponding period last year.

With regard to part (b) of the question, there have been 7 such cases.

Regarding fatal accidents which occurred on pedestrian crossings during the same period, I am informed that there have been 5 such cases.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that there are three main factors that may be the causes of accidents, namely -

- (i) Infrastructure;
- (ii) Vehicles, and
- (iii) Road User Behaviour.

In line with the National Road Safety Strategy which has been set to reduce the number of fatalities substantially by year 2025 as regard to infrastructure the following actions have been implemented -

- (i) Road safety audit on some 400 kms of hazardous roads;
- (ii) Construction and upgrading of footpaths;
- (iii) Installation and maintenance of traffic lights and speed cameras;
- (iv) Rehabilitation of hard shoulders;
- (v) Installation of handrails, cats eyes and other urban furniture, and

(vi) A Traffic Modelling Unit is being set up at the level of my Ministry.

In respect of vehicles, vehicle examination centres equipped with modern systems are now operational to ensure road worthiness of vehicles on our roads. A working group involving officers of the National Transport Authority, the Road Safety Coordinator, the Mauritius Revenue Authority, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and motorcycle dealers has been set up to examine the importation of motorcycle of Euro standards only.

Madam Speaker, given that human behaviour contributes to 93% of road crashes, we have taken the following actions -

- (i) Training of 23 driving instructors from '*Auto-Ecoles*' and 15 Police Examiners. The '*Moto-Ecole*' will be set very soon.
- (ii) Training of 40 Police Riders to strengthen road traffic enforcement;
- (iii) Training of a medical officer by an Expert from France in respect of medical fitness;
- (iv) Training of some 30 road crash investigators to look into the exact causes of accidents;
- (v) Introduction of a Continuum of Education Project on road safety targeting primary schools and secondary school students;
- (vi) The Road Traffic Act has been amended to provide for stricter penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol;
- (vii) A Traffic Enforcement Squad of 40 trained Police Riders to see to it that road traffic regulations are met.

Based on statistics obtained from the Police, it has been observed that 44% of the fatal accidents occurred during the night and 50% occurred before noon. Furthermore, fatal accidents are more frequent during weekends and mostly in the northern part of the island.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I am sorry to interrupt you, but I have given you some leeway to give explanation and I think that you have given sufficient explanation because you are bringing in elements which are not related to the main question. So, can you please allow ...

(Interruptions)

Your reply is very long! I take this opportunity to ask those who draft replies to questions asked to Ministers to be to the point when they draft the replies, because you should give the

opportunity to have supplementary questions and during the supplementary questions you can come up with all the information that you have. Please! Will you finish in one line?

Mr Bodha: One last. What I am saying, Madam Speaker, is that it is unfortunate that in spite of all that we have done, the figures have not shown any progress.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: This is not the first time that we are asking this question, because it concerns the public. *Il ne passe pas un jour qu'on entend qu'il y a un accident fatal.* Madam Speaker, from what we have heard from the hon. Minister, I think it's the same reply, updating figures from what I have asked last time. Doesn't the Minister believe that this is all a strategy? It has been a strategy which he has initiated and which has failed, perhaps not totally but on certain aspects. On many occasions, I have raised the issue, even at Budget time on the issue of road markings. *Il y a aussi l'ameublement des panneaux sur les routes, mais on est sur la rue,* there is a real problem of road markings and also the visibility of these traffic signs which we have raised on so many occasions here. And this is where I also consider the Minister has failed, even on 'cross here'.

Madam Speaker: Is the hon. Member asking question on the traffic signs?

Mr Bhagwan: Yes, I am...

Madam Speaker: Traffic signs.

Mr Bodha: I have always taken into account the observations and the proposals of the hon. Member. What I would like to say, Madam Speaker, is that the whole issue according to me is the driving culture of Mauritian people. And we can do a lot as regards to infrastructure, we can do a lot as regards to roadworthiness, but the problem is the way we drive. And this is an issue of education and we have two issues also, Madam Speaker. For the motorcyclists, we had no law, we had no training and there was no examination. Now, we are going to train 7,000 and we hope that we are going to have results. We are setting up a number, I have done what can be done as regards to road markings and road signs. We would continue working on that, but I am totally confident about one thing, it is the whole issue of education and changing the mentality of the people and the driving culture.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: But I, myself, raised the issue of the bad habits of the drivers and the driving culture. But, I think, *l'exemple doit venir d'en haut. Je ne fais pas de cela une affaire personnelle.*

(Interruptions)

Hon. Collendavelloo, you won't teach me how to do my job.

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Collendavelloo from a sitting position! Hon. Bhagwan, there should be no cross talking especially when a hon. Member is asking a question. I would rather ask the hon. Member to ask his question than to crosstalk with others.

Mr Bhagwan: Hon. Collendavelloo won't teach me how to ask questions, he has to go and learn himself how to behave in his Ministry.

Madam Speaker: Please, ask your question!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister that - *j'avais dit la dernière fois, je ne fais pas une affaire personnelle, l'exemple doit venir d'en haut.* We know that we have VVIPs, how the VVIPs, not themselves, their motard behave on the road. Has the Minister had the opportunity to discuss with the Director of VIPSU or whoever and the Commissioner of Police how to train these motorcycle drivers driving the VIPSUs? Has he ever had the opportunity to discuss that?

Mr Bodha: I have regular meetings with the Commissioner of Police, Madam Speaker and we are seeing to it now that official vehicles also should be taken to task when it comes to speeding and other offences.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: In his opening remarks, the hon. Minister has stopped at motorcycle dealers insofar as roadworthiness is concerned. Now, given that there are 12 deceased persons out of bicycles, can I ask the hon. Minister whether given bicycles are not registered what kind of checks are done on bicycles to ensure their roadworthiness on the one hand and whether the time has not come to make it obligatory for bicycle riders to wear crash helmets given that many of them lose lives because of head injuries like is in many other countries?

Mr Bodha: I totally agree with the hon. Member, but it is the way people behave, Madam Speaker. You have somebody driving a bicycle; he believes that everybody should take care of him whilst he is the most vulnerable person on the road. Now, the whole issue, as we have been saying as regards to standards of vehicles, standards of bicycles. For example, there are many motorcycles which are bought in Mauritius but which are not of Euro Standard. They are made for countries outside Europe, so we are talking to the dealers to see to it that we have the best vehicles on the road.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Selvon!

Mrs Selvon: Would the hon. Minister introduce the Standardised Field Sobriety Test to detect driving under the influence of substance abuse, not alcohol only, if so, when?

Mr Bodha: We are working on it, it is very complicated, Madam, because they have different categories of drugs and with what is happening with the synthetic drugs which are in fact evolving on a daily basis. But we are working on three categories, *les opiacés*, we are working on some on them and we have in fact a doctor who came from France to work on it and we are working with the State Law Office as well.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Bodha: May I say another word also, Madam Speaker, it's about how to go about the test. You have the urine test and you have the saliva test. That is also we are discussing how to go about it in practical terms.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has a breakdown with regard to the age group of the drivers involved in fatal and serious accidents and whether there is any indication that most of these drivers are young people, and if that is the case what does he intend to do to remedy the situation?

Mr Bodha: Strangely, Madam Speaker, in many other countries the most important group, the most vulnerable group are children and old people. But strangely in Mauritius the number of fatal accidents are occurring among people who are working, it's between 25 and 50. Maybe because we have also a number of accidents with motorcycles and we have tried to understand it, people working on shift, so after the shift they are driving home on a motorcycle. And then we have a number of accidents where there is no collision, there is no crash, it's just the motorcycle got out of control. So, we are trying to understand this

Mauritian culture, the Mauritian psyche to be able to address the issue of motorcycle because this is one of the most vulnerable truths.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he would consider in order to saving lives to ban autocycle, motorcycle and bicycle from the motorway like we have in European countries that only a certain CCs of motorcycles can be ridden on the motorway?

Mr Bodha: This is a very tall order, Madam Speaker. We know how people will react. What I would like to say is that with the new *moto-école*, you will have the certificate, that is, a driver licence by age groups up to a certain capacity of the engine.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to the *moto-école*, may we know when they will be operational and is the delay linked to the fact that there is a problem with regard to the allowance given to the instructor?

Mr Bodha: No, the thing is we had to start from scratch, we have to have the legislation; we have to train the trainers; we have to train the examiners; we have to have the regulations for the new test. So, that's a question of weeks.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

BATS - CULLING

(No. B/644) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the local fruits, mainly mangoes and litchis, he will state the actions taken since May 2016 to date to preserve same from the harm being caused by bats, indicating—

- (a) the number of bats culled as at to date;
- (b) if any further culling thereof is being contemplated, and
- (c) if discussions have been held with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation in relation thereto and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, let me, from the very outset, thank the hon. Member for this seasoned question in regard to damages done...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, don't make noise!

(Interruptions)

Mr Seeruttun: ... to local fruits mainly mangoes and litchis by bats.

Madam Speaker, in reply to my PQ B/469 from the same hon. Member in May 2016 on the same issue, I have stated that my Ministry decided to carry out a controlled culling of bats during the fruiting season in November/December 2015. And during this operation, a total number of 30,938 bats were culled.

I also mentioned the introduction of a Bird Net Scheme which subsidises the cost of bird net at the rate of 75%.

Following the first culling exercise, the Food and Agricultural Research Extension Institute – FAREI - of my Ministry carried out an assessment of the damages caused by bats and according to the report, there was less damage caused to properly protected trees as compared to unprotected trees.

Hence, the FAREI carried out regular sensitization campaigns with farmers and orchard growers as well as backyard growth to encourage them to protect their trees with nets.

Farmers were also trained on fruit tree management through pruning and other methods. The Bird Net Scheme was renewed for the year 2016 and about 3,600 applications for protective nets were received and vouchers for a total amount of Rs25m. were issued.

Regarding part (a) of the question, following another bats survey that was carried out in October 2016, my Ministry decided to carry out a second culling of up to 10% of the estimated bat population in order to further control the damages caused to fruit trees in selective orchards. The culling operation was conducted in December 2016 and 7,380 were culled according to the Commissioner of Police. Hence, a total number of 38,318 bats have been culled as at to date, that is, 30,938 in 2015 and 7,380 in 2016.

Regarding part (b) of the question, a bats survey is presently being carried out by the National Parks and Conservation Service of my Ministry and is due to be completed by the first week of November.

A preliminary result of the survey indicates that the number of bats recorded is 57,150 as at 30 October 2017. So far, no decision has been taken regarding any further culling of bats for this year.

As regards part (c) of the question, my Ministry has been in regular consultation with both the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) to look into the issue of protection of bats and also the management of the bat-human conflict.

As I mentioned last time, the IUCN has indicated that Mauritius has made great efforts to control the damages caused by bats to fruit trees and the IUCN has remained committed to assist the Ministry in finding alternative solutions to address the conflict between farmers and fruit bats. However, the IUCN has also expressed its disappointment with the decision to cull bats for the last two years.

The IUCN, through the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, held a workshop in August this year to discuss methods and practices to improve the efficiency of nets and netting, and to develop a netting strategy to reduce damages caused by bats to fruit trees.

Five international specialists were present and the local participants included small orchard owners, commercial orchard managers, net importers and distributors, fruit exporters and fruit traders, and extension and research staff of the Ministry. The report of the workshop includes a number of recommendations to improve the quality of nets and netting equipment, pruning of fruit trees, training of farmers, reviewing existing orchards models and developing new ones.

The development of export markets for our tropical fruits based on ethically and environmentally-friendly practices as well as the sensitization of backyard growers to address their reluctance to use nets have also been recommended. The recommendations made have been taken into consideration to enhance the Fruit Production Scheme for this year.

Furthermore, I need to point out that, following the culling carried out in the last two years, the IUCN is presently in process of reviewing the red list assessment for the Mauritian fruit bats species, and my Ministry is awaiting the assessment report from the IUCN to decide on any future course of action.

Mr Bhagwan: I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is some special assistance given to individuals, even to growers concerning this bird net scheme? The problem is the installation of these nets. There have been some – I would say - *cours* or whatever at the level of his Ministry, but there is a real problem for people purchasing these nets or having these nets, for their installation. Is there any special unit which has been set up to help people for the installation of these nets?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, there is no such unit at the level of my Ministry that provides that kind of assistance, but we do know that there are private enterprises which provide that kind of service, and we have been in touch with them. Whoever is wishing to look for that kind of service or facilities to install the nets on those huge trees, we can direct them to those service providers.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister has given us some figures for the survey; 57,000 remain actually. So, can we have an idea of the main regions identified where these species are? Can we have an idea about those regions?

Mr Seeruttun: In fact, the survey that has been carried out actually is all around the island; more than 50 roosting sites.

(Interruptions)

If you wish I can circulate the only preliminary report that I have at this point in time. I am waiting for the completion of that survey exercise to be in a better position to have the full picture about the actual bat population.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: One last question. The problem, I think everybody knows, is not concerning the *letchis* only. Now, they go for other fruits: mangoes, even jackfruits etc. Has the hon. Minister initiated some study to see the new trend of these bats? Like you have new crooks around! So, how they perform now! Have the hon. Minister, his officers, his specialists tried to see the new areas of attack of these bats apart from *letchis*, *mangues*, etc?

Madam Speaker: I will once again ask the hon. Members not to bring in extraneous matters in their questions as this may cause disorder in the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Seeruttun: Well, we have reports claiming that they also eat bananas, bilimbis and all kind of other fruits...

(Interruptions)

Jackfruits as well...

(Interruptions)

We all know that they are mammals that live on fruits. So, whatever fruits are available, they would go for just to be able to feed themselves.

Madam Speaker: One last question...

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, the favourite fruit of Mauritians is *letchis*. Everybody knows! We have heard the other day that there would be a reduction in the amount of *letchis* for this period of time. So, can the hon. Minister tell, apart the problem bats, whether he has met those people who earn their living through these trees to have money at the end of the year? Has the hon. Minister been able to have a survey and see what can be done to help these people through Development Bank of Mauritius or whatever?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, it is a fact that this year's production is going to be lower than it was last year, and that has nothing to do with bats. As you are probably aware, usually the lychee trees flower during the period of April-May when it is supposed to be cold and not rainy. Unfortunately, this year it was very rainy during that time when the trees were supposed to be flowering, that has prevented the proper flowering of those trees and I have also received reports from the Met officers. Just for indication, in Pamplemousses, the rainfall was 280 mm during the period of May compared to 40 mm last year. So, we are exposed to the climate change impact, and unfortunately the production of lychees is going to be much lower this year compared to last year.

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

At 12.58 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.34 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION - SUSPENSION

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to make an announcement in regard to the events leading to the suspension of the hon. Leader of the Opposition by the House at the sitting of Tuesday last.

Although it is not the habit of the Chair to reply to comments on observations or even questions raised in other quarters, I have deemed it fit to exceptionally make this announcement in order to dispel any doubt which may have arisen and to clear any misconception which appears to have resulted therefrom.

The Private Notice Question is the prerogative of the hon. Leader of the Opposition as stipulated in Standing Order 23(1).

Standing Order 22 (2) (a) makes provision for a maximum of 30 minutes for the Private Notice Question. It has been the practice of the House to give the Leader of the Opposition the exclusive right and the entire possibility to fully canvass the issues raised in the Private Notice Question before giving the floor to other hon. Members who wish to put supplementary questions time- permitting, before allowing the Leader of the Opposition time to conclude.

However, notwithstanding the above, over the years and at the request of the successive hon. Leaders of the Opposition themselves and/or that of other hon. Members, either invoking that the hon. Minister has taken too much of the maximum 30 minutes allocated time for his different replies or at times that the subject matter of the PNQ is of great national interest, the successive Speakers have been allocating extra time, being given the length of the question and the amount of information required in order to do justice to the subject matter of the said PNQ, as far as possible.

I take the opportunity, here, to thank hon. Members, who understand the predicament of the Chair to do this balancing exercise and to whom requests for asking supplementary questions are not acceded to unless the Leader of the Opposition gives the signal that he has sufficiently canvassed the issue.

This being said, I now refer to the events of last Tuesday with regard to the PNQ. The hon. Minister made his main reply from 11.45 to six past noon. At six past noon, the hon. Leader of the Opposition requested for additional time and pursued with his supplementary questions. He had the opportunity to put nine supplementary questions until eighteen past noon. During this interval, the proceedings were punctuated with numerous interruptions and disorderly behaviour which resulted in losing the time of the House. Hence, the time allowed to the PNQ and I reminded the House accordingly. At eighteen past noon, that is, after some 33 minutes had already elapsed, I gave advance notice to the Leader of the Opposition informing him that I would be allowing him two additional questions.

The House will appreciate in all fairness that the Chair did not impose a time limit. In other words, the two additional questions and answers could have lasted the time that they would have lasted.

However, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was not agreeable thereto and confronted the Chair on this issue. He furthermore remained standing, while I was on my feet, although I requested him to resume his seat on no less than nine occasions.

At the same time, I reminded the Leader of the Opposition that, as a seasoned Member, he should know the rules and that by continuing to stand up, he was confronting the Chair. In those circumstances, I considered the remark and the ensuing conduct of the hon. Leader of the Opposition to be grossly disorderly, and I ordered him out, that is, to withdraw immediately from the House during the remainder of that day's sitting, in accordance with Standing Order 48.

Thereafter, on the hon. Leader of the Opposition's uttering the utterly disrespectful words against the Chair, I quote –

“I have no respect for you, Madam Speaker.”

which is on record, and refusing to obey the direction to leave the Chamber, I could have named the hon. Leader of the Opposition outright and avail myself of the provisions of Standing Order 49.

However, considering this to be an extreme measure, which has been sparingly used as at to date, I deliberately chose to suspend the sitting and invite the hon. Leader of Opposition in private to review his position with a view to resuming the remaining business of the Assembly with serenity. Indeed, I invited the hon. Leader of the Opposition in my office, and he intimated to me that he would withdraw from the House for the remainder of the day, as he did not propose to tender his unreserved apologies, which would have otherwise allowed him to resume his seat in this Chamber.

However, when the Assembly was about to resume, I was informed by the Serjeant-at-Arms that the hon. Leader of Opposition had signified his intention not to withdraw from the House. In the circumstances, in order to ensure that the authority of the Chair be upheld and the business of the Assembly be proceeded with, the naming procedure had to be engaged as follows -

The person presiding names the hon. Member. A hon. Member moves to take the time of the House to present a motion without notice. On the motion being carried, the hon. Member puts the motion, which needs to be seconded. The person presiding puts the question that the said Member be suspended from the service of the Assembly for a stated period and same is to be carried to become effective.

The House will appreciate that, to all intents and purposes, the established procedure has been scrupulously observed. I trust that the above has helped clear all the misconceptions with regard to the naming procedure of Tuesday last.

I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

**CEB – ST LOUIS POWER STATION REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT - GAS
EMISSION**

(No. B/645) **Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard the engines of 15MW capacity in service at St Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the quantum of SOX & NOX toxic gas emission therefrom during the operation thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the CEB that, on 01 August 2013, it obtained an Environment Impact Licence in respect of the St Louis Power Station Redevelopment Project. One of the conditions of that licence was that all emissions from the power station and from the incinerators shall comply with the environment protection standards for air regulations promulgated under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA), and for parameters not mentioned in the EPA, international standards, (International Finance Cooperation/European Union) shall prevail.

In addition, as I have stated in previous statements, the African Development Bank imposed conditions that CBE should implement an Environment and Social Management Plan.

CEB further informs me that the quantum, actual concentration of emission of gases from the newly installed engines is as follows -

- NOx, 1,500 milligrams, that is, nitrogen oxide, per normal meter cube as compared to the IFC Standards of 1,600.
- Sulphur dioxide, 1,400 milligrams per normal meter cube as compared to IFC Standards of 1,460.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With the new number of engines in service at St Louis, the total volume of toxic gas emitted has increased, exposing the

inhabitants of Vallijee and Pailles to potential health hazard. Therefore, will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House about the interval at which gas emission sampling is done and if it is done by CEB or by third party laboratory?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The statement of fact, which is the basic premise of that question, is not true. Therefore, the question does not arise.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Being given that the subject was raised in Parliament so many times, as stated, and although within norms, the perception is that there is a lot of emission. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister indicate to the House whether it is not in the public interest, in the long run, being given that the whole island is wired, to move that power station somewhere which is not so densely inhabited and whereby there are no schools, and let this plot of land be used for something else?

The Deputy Prime Minister: We have gone down that route for a number of years. There has been no suggestion at all that St Louis be moved. Let one expert come and move that point, and then we will talk.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since the hon. Deputy Prime Minister just said that there is no health hazard, then can he confirm that the emission of gas is compliant to EU Directive 2001/80/EC?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have just replied to that question.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: In the past, at St Louis Power Station, there were stack emission tests which were being carried out by the University of Mauritius for the CEB. Can I know from the Deputy Prime Minister whether it is planned by the CEB to have stack emission tests be done by independent, such as University of Mauritius, in the process of the commissioning of the new engines?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The African Development Bank has imposed the Environment and Social Management Plan. In February, an expert came to monitor the

situation and they are going to do regular monitoring. We cannot get more independent than that.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Selvon!

Mrs Selvon: Has the hon. Deputy Prime Minister received any complaint from the public?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, we have six cases which were entered in Court. From memory, I think four have been struck out or dismissed or set aside, there are two which are coming in February. There have been complaints, lots of complaints from the *Mouvement Civique de Plaine Lauzun*. They have been attended to. We do not agree with their case, we do not agree with what they are saying and, therefore, when two people do not agree, there is an arbiter, and that is the Supreme Court. On four times, they have not been successful. Let us wait and see what is going to happen in January or February 2018.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

MONTAGNE SIGNAUX - PUBLIC AREAS - LIGHTING

(No. B/646) **Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the public areas at Montagne Signaux and in the vicinity thereof, he will state if any project is being contemplated for the provision of lighting thereat.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that public places from the vicinity of Signal Mountain along Mgr Leen Street and Marie Reine de la Paix are already provided with street lighting services.

The health track along the Signal Mountain is under the care, control and management of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development.

That Ministry, in consultation with the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, was involved in the implementation of a project for the provision of solar street lighting facilities along the health track since February 2015.

However, the project has been put on hold due to high risk of rockfall at Signal Mountain. I understand that the first report of rockfall was received in October 2015.

Madam Speaker, I shall request my colleague, the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development to consider reviving the project, in the event that his Ministry has received updated reports on the subject matter and that there is no risk of rockfall in that area.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister inform the House if his Ministry has engineered any timeframe for project implementation?

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, I will see to it that this is done at the earliest possible.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, that track starts from the bottom up to the top but, where it is, at many places there are no risk at all of rock falling because the road is high up. So, at these locations where there are no risks, can it not be envisaged to install the solar lighting already? Because they can be installed independent of each other as there are no wires involved.

Mr Jhugroo: I will take this matter with my colleague the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I am very concerned about the statement of the Minister that there are rocks falling because, as far as I know, there is absolutely no warning sign today at the track warning people that there is a risk of rockfall.

So, if in this case he has got expert evidence telling him that there is a risk, that is, a danger to people using it, I think that the Ministry should act upon it, and not only put warning signs but also if there are remedial measures to be taken to make it safe, they should do it.

Mr Jhugroo: I think this issue has been raised in the past. So, I will look into the matter with the Municipal Council of Port Louis to do the needful.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, on the part which is under the responsibility of the Municipality of Port Louis and the parking area and surroundings, there are so often

blackouts. This is a most popular jogging track of Mauritius, if I can say, where most civil servants, even residing in the Upper Plaines Wilhems use this track every evening, so can the Minister...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member...

Mr Bhagwan: Yes, Madam?

Madam Speaker: Are you talking of Montagne Signaux?

Mr Bhagwan: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister, at least, see with the Municipality of Port Louis that there are regular checks within the perimeter of this jogging track, especially in the parking area and the surroundings?

Mr Jhugroo: Yes, Madam Speaker, I will see to it.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jahangeer!

BATIMARAIS – HOUSING UNITS – ASBESTOS MATERIALS

(No. B/647) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the proposed pulling down of the houses containing asbestos at Batimaraïs, he will state where matters stand.

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

According to information obtained from the Ministry of Housing and Lands, a survey carried out in 2012 revealed that 64 EDC housing units containing asbestos materials, including 10 houses at Batimaraïs, were found to be in a dilapidated state.

In August 2015, my Ministry set up a Technical Committee to look into the problem of asbestos in the identified 64 EDC housing units. A survey team was subsequently tasked by the Technical Committee to visually assess the physical state of the housing units which

were in a dilapidated state and to propose a plan for the safe removal and disposal of asbestos therefrom whilst addressing the health and safety aspects.

Following field visits carried out by the survey team in August 2015, 60 out of the 64 houses were identified and inspected. The survey revealed that 29 of those houses were occupied, 24 were unoccupied and seven had already been dismantled and the asbestos materials carted away.

At its meeting held on 09 September 2015, the Technical Committee recommended that in the first instance the dismantling of the 24 houses which were unoccupied should be considered, subject to the consent of the owners being obtained.

Accordingly, a Working Committee was set up at the level of the Solid Waste Management Division of my Ministry to come up with a plan of action for the dismantling of the unoccupied EDC houses and the removal of asbestos therefrom.

The Working Committee met on four occasions from September 2015 to August 2016 to examine the implications of the major tasks in the Action Plan and finalise the arrangements for the dismantling and removal of asbestos from the 24 unoccupied houses.

As at December 2016, only six owners had signified their no objection to the dismantling of their unoccupied houses.

In May 2017, following a procurement exercise, a contractor was appointed by my Ministry to dismantle and remove the asbestos from these six unoccupied houses which were located at Telfair, Verdun, Argy, St. Julien and Amaury. The works were completed on 23 May 2017.

Madam Speaker, 10 of the 60 houses identified as containing asbestos materials are, as I stated earlier, located at Batimaraïs. Of these, 5 are occupied and 5 are unoccupied. The unoccupied houses could not be included in the tender exercise carried out as the consent of their owners could not be obtained due to their untraceability.

As regards the occupied houses, my Ministry will only be able to carry out the dismantling exercise and remove the asbestos materials therefrom once the housing units are vacated in view of the health and safety hazards associated in such operations.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

HONOURABLE S. S. - SPEECH - COMPLAINT

(No. B/648) **Mr R. Uteem** (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the complaint filed against Honourable S. S. for his speech delivered on or about 18 July 2017 in Flacq, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that as at now three complaints have been filed against hon. S. S. regarding his speech delivered on 18 July 2017 at Flacq.

The Central CID carried out an investigation into all the three cases, and during the course of the enquiry, the statements of the complainants and their witnesses were recorded as well as the defence statements of hon. S. S.

On completion of the enquiry, the case was referred to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for advice on 11 September 2017.

On 29 September 2017, upon the advice of the DPP, hon. S. S. was charged with the offence of ‘Outrage against Depository of Public Authority’ in breach of Section 156(1) of the Criminal Code.

The case was lodged before the Intermediate Court on 05 October 2017. The Hearing is fixed for 07 November 2017.

Mr Uteem: When the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues was the Prime Minister he did not hesitate to ask hon. Dayal to step down because there was a *prima facie* case against him. May I know from the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues why is not the same standard applied when it comes to hon. S. S.?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: The case of hon. Dayal was very different.

(Interruptions)

...colourful.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please!

(Interruptions)

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: And it was made colourless! In this case it is just an outrage. There is no case of corruption or whatsoever, therefore, I think the stand taken by the hon. Prime Minister is the right one.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: The Rt. hon. Minister Mentor should know that under section 156 subsection (1) with what the hon. S. S. has been charged, it is very clear that this offence shall - not may -

“shall be punished by imprisonment and by a fine not exceeding Rs100,000.”

Very serious offence! So, may I know from the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, being given this serious offence is an arrestable offence, why has the hon. S. S. not been arrested or bailed?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: The Police acted legally according to the provisions of the law.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: With greatest respect to you, Madam Speaker, can I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor who is a Queen's Counsel, whether the principle of presumption of innocence pursuant to section 10 of the Constitution of this country is still in force in this country?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please! Please, no comment!

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: It is in force, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem.

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS – MEDICAL EQUIPMENT - LENDING

(No. B/649) **Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the public health institutions, he will state the established protocol for the temporary transfer of medical equipment therefrom to private health institutions, indicating the –

- (a) costs implication thereof, and
- (b) number of such transfers having taken place, since January 2015 to date, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) medical equipment transferred;
 - (ii) institutions concerned therewith, and
 - (iii) costs involved in relation thereto.

Dr Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that my Ministry has, so far, received 3 requests, two were from private health institutions and one from the National Insurance Company Healthcare Ltd, for the lending of specialised medical equipment. As such, the need to establish a protocol for such requests was not felt.

In June 2016, my Ministry received a first request from the National Insurance Company Healthcare Ltd, for the lending of a Cross Linking Machine against payment at the rate of Rs10,000 per month. The request was acceded to and the equipment from Moka Eye Hospital was lent from 01 August to 23 November 2016, nearly for four months and from 21 December 2016 to 01 January 2017 for about one further week.

Madam Speaker, in 2017, my Ministry received and acceded to two other requests from two different private health institutions for the temporary transfer of medical equipment, namely –

- (i) 1 unit of Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy with Defibrillation device from Jeetoo Hospital to Fortis Clinic Darné from 21 July 2017 to 14 August 2017, that is, for about three weeks, and
- (ii) a High Frequency Oscillator Ventilator from Flacq Hospital to Wellkin Hospital from 01 to 06 August 2017, that is, for about five days.

The requests for transfer of these two equipment were acceded to based on humanitarian grounds.

Madam Speaker, in the particular case of the transfer of the High Frequency Oscillator Ventilator from Flacq Hospital, the request was made in respect of a 21-month old child who was ventilated in the ICU. The child was in such a critical condition that it was not advisable, on medical grounds to physically transfer the child to Flacq Hospital.

On the other hand, the transfer of the Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy with Defibrillation device, of life-saving nature, was made to Fortis Clinic Darné in respect of a patient requiring immediate treatment as that institution was out of stock of that given equipment. The transfer was acceded to on the understanding that the equipment would be returned immediately to Jeetoo Hospital after replenishment of its stock.

Both equipment were loaned without charges and were returned in good working condition.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, hon. Minister. Have I heard correctly that there is no protocol in existence whenever there is a request from a private clinic to receive equipment from the public hospital? There is no protocol? So, do I take it that it is the hon. Minister who himself decides, without any criteria, when the request is acceded to or not?

Dr Husnoo: Yes, you are right. So far there is no protocol. As I mentioned, there was one in 2016 and two in 2017. And because these cases do not happen frequently, that is why we have not felt it was necessary so far. It was given on an emergency basis. It was not just by the Minister. When I was asked for that equipment, I discussed with my Senior Chief Executive and the Director General of the Health Service and then I took that decision to help these patients.

Mr Uteem: And also I heard the hon. Minister say that there is no charges; when we know that whenever the public sector hospital has recourse to the private sector clinic for scanning, for radiotherapy or whatever, Government, has to pay those private clinics for the services, but when Government lends those equipment, the private clinics do not pay anything for those equipment?

Dr Husnoo: As I mentioned, in the first case, they were paid. In the second case, which was for a short time, they were short of that equipment; their equipment, I mean, the expiry date was run out. So, we lent it and when they bought it, they returned us the new one. That is the first one. And the second one was for five days only; that is why we did not charge.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the case where the private institution is not charged, are the patients charged? Does the Ministry have a look at this, whether the patients are charged? Because they are using public facilities and they are being charged for this in the private sector.

Dr Husnoo: As I mentioned, for the first case, where...

(Interruptions)

There were two cases in 2017. For the first case, the equipment, as I explained, had already expired. So, we lent them that equipment and once they bought their equipment, they returned it back to us. That is number one.

And for the second one, it was a baby who was critically ill for five days. Yes, we supported them; we helped them.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

NEW MAURITIUS HOTELS LTD - SHARES ACQUISITION – INVESTIGATION

(No. B/650) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance whether, in regard to the investigation in relation to the acquisition of shares of the New Mauritius Hotels Limited, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Sesunkur: Madam Speaker, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to a question, PQ B/381, at the sitting of 09 May 2017.

The hon. Member will recall that Sunnystars Resorts Holdings Ltd, through its Attorney, Ms Komadhi Mardemootoo, made certain allegations regarding the acquisition of the shares of New Mauritius Hotels Ltd by ENL Land Ltd, Rogers and Company Ltd and SWAN Life Ltd.

Sunnystars requested that an investigation be carried out by the FSC to determine whether ENL Land Ltd, Rogers and Company Ltd and SWAN Life Ltd acted in concert for the acquisition of the shares in NMH Ltd.

I am informed that subsequently the FSC appointed Mr K. Taukoordass as Special Investigator to ascertain whether there has been a breach of the Securities Act and the Securities (Takeover) Rules 2010 in relation to the transactions.

I am further informed that the FSC also had an elaborate look at the Securities Act which dates back to 2005 and the Securities (Takeover) Rules 2010 with a view to propose necessary amendments to the existing legal framework to bring it in line with international standards.

In the meantime, ENL, Rogers and Company Ltd, SWAN Life Ltd, SWAN Securities Ltd and NMH Ltd have filed several Court cases against the Special Investigator for alleged *abus de droit, fautes, fautes lourdes*, bad faith; claiming cumulative damages of about Rs1 billion.

Madam Speaker, I understand that the Board of the FSC met yesterday to consider the matter of obtaining legal advice. I consider it is premature at this stage to make any further comments as the FSC will issue a communiqué in due course.

I shall make a statement to the House as soon as it is appropriate.

Mr Uteem: Answering to the PQ on 09 May 2017, the hon. Minister mentioned that the fees payable to the Special Investigator would be capped at a maximum of Rs1.75 m. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether fees - that fee or any fee - have been paid to the Special Investigator?

Mr Sesungkur: I do not have this information with me right now, but I must say that the fee has not changed, but I will have to check with the FSC if there has been any change in the terms and conditions of the contract.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND LAND TRANSPORT -
ADVISERS - APPOINTMENT**

(No. B/651) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the advisers appointed by his Ministry, he will state –

- (a) the names thereof, indicating in each case, the qualifications, scope of duties and terms and conditions of appointment, and
- (b) if they have submitted reports on ways and means to prevent or reduce the number of fatal road accidents and, if so, indicate the main findings and recommendations thereof.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will answer this question. My Ministry has retained the services on contractual basis of three Advisers, namely -

- Dr. Jawaharlal Lalchand as Senior Adviser on Economic Project Monitoring;
- Mr Daniel Raymond as Road Safety Coordinator, and
- Mr Jean Daniel Simpson as Adviser on Public Relations Matters.

With your permission, I am tabling information in respect of their qualifications, scope of duties and terms and conditions of appointment.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to point out that only Mr Daniel Raymond, the Road Safety Coordinator, is involved on road safety matters. Since his appointment he has assisted the Ministry in the elaboration of the National Road Safety Strategy and has assisted in the implementation of the recommendations therein about research, safety standards on road infrastructure, road traffic law enforcement, Driving Licensing Scheme, and Road Safety Academy.

Mr D. Raymond has been instrumental in the execution of the following -

- (i) the creation of a 'National Road Safety Observatory and the Road Crash Data Management System' so that we have the data about all the accidents;
- (ii) the re-organisation of the Vehicle Examination Centres;
- (iii) the setting up of *Moto Ecole* Project and the training of Driving Instructors and Examiners;
- (iv) the signature of the Road Safety Charters with 26 public and private sector organisations;

- (v) a road safety park for children;
- (vi) the Continuum of Education on Road Safety with the Ministry of Education;
- (vii) the Road Traffic Amendment Act on stricter penalties, and
- (viii) he has also contributed on the accession to the UN Road Safety Conventions, and the training of CNT drivers.

The Road Safety Coordinator has significantly contributed in making possible the visits of international experts on Road Safety, namely Mr Jean Todt, UN Special Envoy for Road Safety; Dr. Mercier Guyon, Director of the *Centre d'Etudes et de la Médecine du Traffic à Grenoble*, and a mission of CARRS-Q (University of Queensland Accident-Research Center) from Australia along with other experts who assisted in capacity building.

My Ministry has already put in place the necessary structures, the institutional set up and the various tools to make our roads safer.

I am tabling a copy of a document of all the reports which have been submitted by the Road Safety Coordinator in relation to his assignments to make our roads safer.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister, I am sure he has this information, what is the total pay packet including allowances everything in Mauritian rupees...

(Interruptions)

One second, please!

(Interruptions)

Not in Euro for this Mr Raymond? What is his total monthly pay packet and all the allowances included?

Mr Bodha: From the information that I have here, is that he has the status of a Senior Adviser with €3,000 per month and an allocation of €1,000 for travelling and other expenses.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister say this amount in Mauritian Rupee, how much?

Mr Bodha: €4,000 *cela fait R 150,000*.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In his reply this morning - I am talking about fatal road accident which is in the question - the hon. Minister mentioned that it depends on the attitude of drivers and road users. What is the value addition of Mr Daniel Raymond in that respect? What is he doing concretely to try and change the driving habits of road users and drivers accordingly?

Mr Bodha: Well, we had a number of workshops. For example, with the drivers at the CNT, we have trained 200 drivers. We have had a number of workshops with private

companies which are in the transport industry. We are training the trainers for the *Moto Ecole*. As regards the attitude and the driving culture, this is the whole issue of education. We have had a number of programmes on TV; he has been on TV. We came with a number of clips from the United Nations. There was one showing people crossing the motorway, and children. In fact, we have 50,000 children dying on the streets every year, schools children. We have had a number of a series of campaigns with the media on TV and radio.

Mr Bhagwan: From what the Minister has informed the House, the different courses given by Mr Raymond. He is a Superman! Has this Mr Raymond had any briefing with the VIPSU officers trying to coach them how to drive the motor cycles? He has been instructing everybody! CNT here and there! Has he had the opportunity of coaching these very efficient drivers like these Supermen on the road?

Mr Bodha: As regards the VIPSU, they have been trained by foreign experts I have been told. My own VIPSU, I think, you must be familiar with this...

(Interruptions)

Anyway, we have ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, we have trained 40 Police officers and now you see them on the road, the Traffic Security System. They are here, in fact, to enforce the law, not necessarily to see to it that there is an offence, but to see to it that there is fluidity in the traffic and that people respect the Road Act.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, next question!

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE - PRIVATE HEALTH INSTITUTIONS – SERVICES - FEES

(No. B/652) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the private health institutions and clinics, he will give a list thereof to which fees have been paid for the provision of services, since September 2015 to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) nature of the services provided and the date of provision thereof, and
- (b) cost thereof.

Dr Husnoo: Madam Speaker, with your kind permission, I am tabling the information requested for.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In relation to my question about fees paid to private health institutions, in many cases these fees are being paid in relation to MRI and CT Scan. I will refer to my PQ in 2015 whereby I asked the then hon. Health Minister and I will quote –

“If he is aware that the CT Scan has been broken at the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital since long and Government is paying millions of rupees to private clinics - *notamment à une clinique à Port Louis* - and if the hon. Minister was aware of the case?”

He mentioned that, and I will quote –

“I know that there are problems with CT Scan and other equipment. We are doing the needful to have them replaced and repaired.”

So, may I ask the hon. Minister whether since then, that is, from 2015 till now, these CT Scans, whereby we are spending a lot of money on outsourcing the services, have been repaired and these are being offered in-house in the hospitals?

Dr Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I do not have the exact figures, but as far as I can remember all the CT Scans are working in the hospitals. As far as the MRI is concerned, I think there is one which is broken and it is being repaired.

Mr Ameer Meea: Also, when equipment and machines are being broken, they are diverted to some specific clinics. May I know from the hon. Minister what are the criteria being used to choose this clinic and not another clinic?

Dr Husnoo: Actually, the cost is the same to each and every one of them. It is more according to the area where the patients are or from which hospital the patient is being treated and the patient is referred to a clinic which is nearer to the place.

Mr Ameer Meea: Also, if I can ask the hon. Minister, if he is aware, there is a post in the hospital called Regional Public Health Superintendent. To my information, this person - I mean in whatever hospital - one of his duties is to verify whether machine and equipment are working in private clinics and also his job is to verify the machines are working and thus renew their licence. I know in one instance where this Regional Public Health Superintendent, when he retired from service, is employed by the same clinic where he used to verify whether the equipment was working or not. So I will ask the hon. Minister - even if he is not aware if he can have an enquiry because to my information there is some very dodgy business in this.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Husnoo: Exactly! It is a bit difficult for me to answer the question Madam. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: No, it does not relate to the main question. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Outsourcing to private clinics costs millions of rupees, it has just been said. Does the Ministry have a specialised engineer or technicians who are on standby and verify and who can act swiftly on these equipment? Does the Ministry have such officers?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, we do have qualified people, but obviously these are very sophisticated equipment. Sometimes this one person who is here cannot look after all the sophisticated equipment. You need to get the technician from overseas to come and sort it out. That is why it takes a bit of time.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, next question!

DRUGS – SEIZURE

(No. B/653) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the total amount thereof seized since January 2017 to date, indicating the –

- (a) value thereof regarding –
 - (i) heroin;
 - (ii) cannabis, and
 - (iii) synthetic drugs, respectively, and
- (b) number of –
 - (i) arrests effected;
 - (ii) suspects charged, and
 - (iii) suspects charged and currently on bail, in connection therewith.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the respective amounts and values of the following drugs seized since January 2017 are as follows -

- (i) Heroin: 197.9 kilograms valued at Rs2,957,255,200;
- (ii) Cannabis: 214.7 kilograms valued at Rs55,600,046.40, and
- (iii) Synthetic Drugs: 24.2 kilograms valued at Rs8,768,090.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that 2010 persons have been arrested. So far, 1971 suspects have been charged, out of whom 1778 are currently on bail.

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker, the figures seem to be very impressive, but can today the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor give an undertaking to this House that the fight against drug barons will be stepped up in order to ensure that Mauritius eventually becomes a drug free country?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: From what I know, everything possible is being done in that respect and, therefore, whether it can be stepped up, I don't know but stepped down will certainly not.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed! Hon. Bhagwan, please no comment from sitting position!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In his opening remarks, the hon. Minister Mentor has stated that the value of heroin seized is Rs2 billion and for synthetic drugs it is Rs8 m. There is a big disparity! Now, it is a fact and I have inquired at treatment centres, 7 out of 10 treatment seekers are on synthetic drugs. Does the hon. Minister Mentor agree with me that there is a lot of works which still need to be done insofar as synthetic drugs are concerned and how does he propose to address this issue?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, this is already being looked into and everything possible is being done. But we know that synthetic drug is easily available, it is being produced by students themselves and to get rid of it is not an easy affair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: The Minister Mentor has stated his commitment - Government - for the fight against drug trafficking. Does he find it normal that the institution which has been linked and mentioned like the Gambling Regulatory Authority still has a Chairperson, Mr Gulbul, who is facing the Commission of Inquiry and the GRA itself has been one of the party involved and also the Law Reform Commission? Is it not time for him, as ex-Prime Minister and Minister Mentor, to have this man sacked at the GRA and the Law Reform Commission?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I do not agree at all with what is being said.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, you have asked your question, do not make remarks, please!

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: That gentleman who is being questioned, it is on allegations made by people who are themselves involved in drug trafficking.

(Interruptions)

Convicted drug traffickers! How far we can rely on what they say.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody! Hon. Baloomoody!

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: ... on what has been alleged. The Commission is enquiring, let us wait for the result then we can take certain actions.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister Mentor a question, Madam Speaker? In view of this serious situation concerning drug problems in our country, sometime back *les travailleurs sociaux* and different NGOs were asking Government to come up with a Master Plan in order to curb this scourge. Can I ask the hon. Minister Mentor whether things have progressed on that score and whether a Master Plan is being, at the moment, looked into and will come up shortly?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, we don't see any need for a Master Plan right now because everything is being done and we know the results and so long as we can get along

with success in what we are doing, I think we will be able to bring this question of drug trafficking well under control.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

U16 AFROBASKET COMPETITION - NATIONAL TECHNICAL DIRECTOR - CONTRACT

(No. B/654) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to basketball, he will state the remedial actions taken, if any, following the poor performance of the national team in the U16 Afrobasket held in Mauritius last year.

Mr Toussaint: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, following the U16 Afrobasket competition at the beginning of July this year, the work and performance of the then National Technical Director was under close scrutiny by the Mauritius Basketball Federation and after another poor performance at the *Francophonie* Games at the end of July 2017, the Federation has had no alternative but to terminate his contract. Meanwhile, two coaches have been appointed for the National preselected basketball team and the Federation is in the process of identifying a new '*Sélectionneur National*.'

In addition, my Ministry, in consultation with the Mauritius Basketball Federation, is focusing on grass root and talent identification with the opening of 9 '*Écoles de Basket*' and 4 regional training centres as from January 2018.

My Ministry will invest an initial sum of Rs1 m. for the operation of the '*Écoles de Basket*' and regional training centres as from this financial year itself.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir, Madame la présidente, s'il existe actuellement au sein de la fédération de basket une structure d'encadrement permettant aux jeunes qui ont participé à l'*Afrobasket* de poursuivre leur formation ? Si tel est le cas, peut-on connaître les noms des entraîneurs ?

Mr Toussaint: Comme je viens de le dire, Madame la présidente, au niveau de la fédération de basket il n'y a pas de telles structures mais dans le cas des jeux des îles, la

préparation pour les jeux des îles, donc il y a deux entraîneurs qui ont été nommés, notamment messieurs Vincent Boitier et Thierry Julie. Et bien sûr, de par ce que je viens de dire, donc la nouvelle structure prendra place à partir de l'année prochaine pour tout ce qui est *grassroot* et *talent identification*.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, ajouté aux mauvaises performances de nos jeunes lors de l'Afrobasket, il y a aussi la débâcle, dont vient de souligner l'honorable ministre lui-même, de la sélection féminine aux Jeux de la Francophonie. Peut-on savoir, vu que cette discipline, le basket, sera au programme des prochains Jeux des Iles, n'est-il pas urgent de mettre en place, sur pied, un plan d'urgence de façon à ce que la sélection de basket, nos sélections ne connaissent pas les mêmes humiliations subies lors des derniers Jeux des Iles à la Réunion ?

Mr Toussaint: Tout à fait, Madame la présidente. Je suis entièrement d'accord avec l'honorable membre. Donc, déjà dans un premier temps, le basket fera partie des Jeux des Iles et toutes les mesures nécessaires sont en train d'être prises pour éviter ce genre de résultat, et aussi bien sûr pour viser l'or, pourquoi pas !

Mr Quirin: L'honorable ministre ne constate-t-il pas qu'il y a un manque de compétition de basket de haut niveau actuellement?

Mr Toussaint: La ligue vient de reprendre. Mais c'est vrai aussi qu'il n'y a pas assez de compétition, surtout pour les filles, parce qu'il y a un manque d'équipes. Et donc, comme je viens de le dire, nous sommes en train de travailler en étroite collaboration avec la fédération pour voir les différentes mesures qui doivent être prises pour qu'il y ait plus de matchs, plus de compétitions, plus de *training camps*, afin de donner les meilleurs moyens à nos basketteurs pour les Jeux des Iles.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY - SETTING-UP

(No. B/655) **Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the setting-up of a National Sports Policy, as announced in the Budget Speech 2017-2018, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Toussaint: Madam Speaker, following the measure announced in the Budget Speech 2017-2018 for the formulation of the National Sports Policy, my Ministry has undertaken a pre-selection exercise, following which seven potential overseas bidders were identified and retained. Subsequently, a request for proposal for the design, drafting and formulation of the National Sports Policy was launched on 10 October 2017. The closing date for submission is 20 November 2017.

It is expected that, once the bid evaluation exercise is completed and the contract is awarded by the end of this year, the selected consultant would start his assignment in January 2018, to be completed by May 2018.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, le fait de venir avec un *National Sports Policy*, l'honorable ministre n'est-il pas en train de confirmer le constat d'échec fait par beaucoup d'autres en ce qui concerne notre politique sportive locale?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, je dois dire que quand j'ai été nommée ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports, il était dans ma tête qu'il fallait revoir certaines choses, parce que nous avons des échéances très importantes à venir en ce qui concerne le sport d'élite. Mais le sport d'élite n'est pas le seul facteur qu'il faut prendre en considération. C'est aussi le sport pour tous les Mauriciens en général. Alors, il y a un travail à faire, et je le fais.

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir, Madame la présidente, si l'honorable ministre partage les propos tenus par le *Chief Executive* du comité d'organisation des prochains Jeux des Iles, M. Sauzier, qui récemment, dans un quotidien, a affirmé que l'environnement sportif n'est pas au mieux de sa forme ? En d'autres mots, on peut penser qu'il a voulu dire que le sport mauricien est malade. Est-ce que l'honorable ministre partage ces impressions?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, bien sûr que...

Madam Speaker: I do not think the hon. Minister can reply to a statement which has been made by somebody else, and it is not proper for the hon. Member to ask the Minister his opinion on this matter.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, la personne en question a été récemment nommée à la tête du comité d'organisation des prochains Jeux des Iles. Donc, ce que dit ce monsieur, je crois, quand même, a de l'importance, et l'honorable ministre était bien disposé à répondre à ma question, si vous permettez.

Madam Speaker: No. I have already given my ruling on this matter. Next question, if you have, on the same PQ! No? Next question!

MAURITIUS SWIMMING FEDERATION - NATIONAL TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

(No. B/656) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to swimming, he will state if the Australian Coach, B. H., is currently the National Technical Director of the Mauritius Swimming Federation and, if not, why not.

Mr Toussaint: Madam Speaker, Mr Ben Hiddlestone, who was employed as the National Technical Director (Swimming) since 20 April 2016, resigned on 31 May 2017 to take up employment in the private sector. In view of preparation of swimmers for the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2019, the Mauritius Swimming Federation, in consultation with my Ministry, has agreed to retain the services of Mr Ben Hiddlestone as Head Coach on a part-time basis with effect from 01 June 2017, to ensure the continued preparation of the swimmers for the forthcoming Indian Ocean Games, in line with the Ministry's objectives of aiming at the maximum number of medals in swimming. Mr Ben Hiddlestone is currently remunerated at a flat rate of Rs20,000 per month.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, cette situation au sein de la natation est à mon avis inconcevable, dans la mesure où ce monsieur a été recruté en avril 2016 pour être le Directeur Technique National de la natation, et pratiquement une année après, il décide de laisser tomber son emploi comme DTN, il prend de l'emploi chez Médine, et la fédération, en accord avec l'honorable ministre, décide de lui permettre d'être un *part-time coach*. Madame la présidente, vu la situation actuelle, la natation mauricienne, et l'honorable ministre, je suis sûr, sera d'accord, a besoin d'un technicien à plein temps et non un *part-time coach*. Les Jeux des Iles vont vite arriver, Madame la présidente. Est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire si son ministère ne considère pas cela urgent que de recruter un DTN à plein temps pour la natation? C'est une discipline où il y aura beaucoup de médailles qui vont être...

Madam Speaker: I think we have understood the hon. Member's question!

Mr Quirin: J'attends la réponse du ministre.

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, il faut d'abord comprendre le travail d'un DTN et d'un *National Coach*. Dans la préparation pour les Jeux des Iles, M. Ben Hiddlestone a la responsabilité - il a été retenu *on a part-time basis* par la fédération – justement, avec l'aide d'autres *coaches*, de préparer les nageurs pour les Jeux des Iles. En ce qu'il s'agit du DTN qui, normalement, a le travail de regarder la discipline dans toute sa fonction, ça c'est quelque chose d'autre. Mais je peux assurer l'honorable membre que nous suivons de près le travail et la performance de nos nageurs, et nous prendrons bien sûr toutes les mesures nécessaires, afin que les nageurs soient dans de meilleures conditions pour les Jeux des Iles.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, l'honorable ministre vient de nous dire qu'il y a un suivi du travail de M. Hiddlestone. Mais est-il au courant que régulièrement ce monsieur n'assiste pas aux entraînements de nos nageurs et qu'il délègue d'autres entraîneurs moins qualifiés que lui pour s'occuper de l'entraînement de ces nageurs ? Est-ce que l'honorable ministre est au courant ? Et peut-on savoir en même temps quand, pour la dernière fois, on a fait une évaluation...

Madam Speaker: One question at a time!

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, je n'ai pas ce renseignement là avec moi. Mais, bien sûr, je vais faire mon enquête, et s'il y a des mesures à prendre, je vais le faire.

Madam Speaker: Next Question, hon. Ramano!

MEDPOINT CLINIC – SECURITY FEES

(No. B/657) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the acquisition of the Medpoint Clinic by the State, he will state –

- (a) if the renovation thereof is being envisaged, and
- (b) the yearly total expenditure incurred in terms of security fees and maintenance cost since the acquisition thereof to date.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry is finalising a comprehensive state-of-the-art Cancer Centre, which will include renovation of the existing building. Additionally, there will be a bunker with a five-storey building on top of it, including two Linear Accelerators, Radiotherapy,

Nuclear Medicine (PET scan, CT scan), Stem Cell Transplant Unit, ICU with eight beds, Operating Theatre Complex with four Operating Theatres.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, I am informed that there is a yearly cost of Rs519,570 which comprises a total monthly cost of Rs43,297 representing fees for one Security Guard during the day and two Security Guards at night. The contract was awarded on 29 April 2013 for three years but, however, due to some complaints, the contract was converted into a month-to-month basis as from 01 June 2015.

Since the Cancer Centre Project was being projected, there was no maintenance cost as it would not be cost-effective. The tender documents for the new Cancer Hospital are being finalised and is expected to be launched by latest in December 2017. Construction will hopefully start in February 2018.

This project is being implemented by HSCC (India) Ltd under a G-to-G arrangement with India and part of the financing will be under the Indian Line of Credit.

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, suivant la réponse de l'honorable ministre, est-ce que je peux savoir si un exercice d'évaluation a été effectuée pour connaître le coût de la rénovation du bâtiment ?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, the hon. Member is right. There was a tender which was launched earlier. A tender was done, but the Bid Evaluation Committee, in its report of 13 April 2017, said that we have to do a rebid exercise.

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, lors de l'acquisition du Medpoint Clinic, il a été question de l'acquisition des *second-hand equipment*. Est-ce que je peux savoir de l'honorable ministre si ces équipements sont présentement utilisés ou bien il y a un coût de maintenance en ce qui concerne ces *second-hand equipment* ?

Dr Husnoo: No, actually, we are not, because we do not have any patient there, as I said. The first part is there, but we are going to do the whole hospital, the present part and the new building is going to come up. So, we do not have any patient over there.

Mr Uteem: I did not hear whether the hon. Minister mentioned how much is budgeted for this renovation. He mentioned about launching tenders which were concerned. Does he have an idea about what is the budget globally for the renovation, for the additional works to be carried out at the hospital?

Dr Husnoo: As I mentioned, we have a bid which was done but it was not responsive. They asked for rebidding. I mean, roughly for the renovation, it was going to be between Rs143 m. to Rs199 m., but we have to rebid.

Mr Baloomoody: I understand the hon. Minister said that we are going ahead with the Cancer Hospital. Are we going now with India and not with the Swiss? There was a Swiss connection mentioned earlier by the previous Minister. So, with whom are we going to partner ourselves for this specific hospital?

Dr Husnoo: No, no. We have to get it straight. Now, we are going with India for the building, but before we have been talking with different countries about the treatment aspect; that is different. Do you see what I mean?

(Interruptions)

I mean, for the construction, we are going with the Indian Line of Credit, but as far as the management helping for the treatment....

(Interruptions)

We are going to buy the equipment that we require, although we have a consultant who is going to help us. Well, if you have any other questions, please!

Madam Speaker: No, no! Hon. Minister, I am really sorry! You have accepted to answer a question which was not related to the main question. It is not up to you to ask the hon. Member whether he has any other questions. It is up to him to see whether he has to do so.

Dr. Husnoo: I apologise, Madam.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Selvon!

GRNW - JAMES RUSSELL STREET – WASTEWATER DISPOSAL

(No. B/658) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if his Ministry is in presence of a petition dated 29 September 2017 signed by inhabitants of James Russell Street, in Grand River North West, complaining of wastewater disposal into the street and of the health hazards posed thereby and, if so, indicate the actions, if any, taken by the relevant authorities to date.

Dr Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Port Louis Health Office has received, on 04 October 2017, a copy of a petition dated 29 September 2017, from inhabitants of James Russell Street, Grand River North West complaining about the longstanding problem of discharge of wastewater into that street. On 29 September 2017, a similar complaint, made by another inhabitant, was registered on the online Citizen Support Portal.

On 06 October 2017, the Port Louis Health Office investigated into the complaint and it was noted that there was seepage of wastewater along James Russell Street, originating from the onsite waste water disposal systems of two households.

On the same day, sanitary notices were issued to the two perpetrators of the nuisance to empty their improved pits within a delay of forty-eight hours and maintain the pits in good condition. Larviciding and disinfection were carried out.

Follow-up visits were undertaken by the Health Office on 12 and 16 October 2017 and it was found that the waste water nuisances had abated and no seepage of waste water was noted at that time in the area.

Another visit was effected on Friday 27 October 2017 and seepage of waste water along the James Russell Street was again noted. As regard to one perpetrator of nuisance, her onsite wastewater disposal system, consisting of a septic tank and an improved pit, was found to be full. Consequently, a sanitary notice was served upon her on the same day to empty the disposal system within 5 days.

As for the second perpetrator of the nuisance, it was noted that his onsite waste water disposal system, consisting of two improved pits, were full and causing seepage. Sanitary notices were served upon him as well to empty the improved pits within 5 days and to divert all wastewater generated from water closet to a septic tank within a delay of 15 days.

The Port Louis Health Office is maintaining regular larviciding and disinfection and is closely monitoring the situation.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry had, since July 2014, drawn the attention of the Wastewater Management Authority on the need for that region to be sewered.

I am now informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that the region of James Russell Street in Grand River North West has been earmarked to be sewered under the Phase 2 of Pailles Guibies Sewerage Project. An Invitation for Bids has been launched on 17

October 2017 for that project and the closing date for submission of bids has been set for 05 December 2017. The contract is expected to be awarded by March/April next year and will be for a duration of 40 months.

Mr Baloomoody: Pending the decision to have the wastewater sewerage connected, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can intervene *vis-à-vis* the Wastewater Management Authority so as to have the septic tank to be emptied regularly? Because, Madam Speaker, it costs quite a lot - and when we know these people in this area - and these people can be assisted with regard to the emptying of these septic tanks.

Dr. Husnoo: I can pass on the message to them.

VALE - KASHMIR ROAD - SURVEY

(No. B/659) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Kashmir Road in the village of Vale, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the reasons why it has been left almost impracticable, especially, during rainy weather conditions even though it urgently needs tarring and other repair works.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that Kashmir Road of the Vale village is in good condition and as such does not require any repair works.

This information has been confirmed by officers of the District Council, following a site visit effected on 26 October 2017.

With your permission, Madam Speaker, I am going to table some photographs which clearly show that the road is in good state.

Further, the District Council will arrange for a survey to be carried out at Kashmir Road during the rainy period, in order to find out whether there is any accumulation of rainwater thereat. Necessary remedial action, if so required, will be taken accordingly.

Mrs Selvon: Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, I am precisely talking about a dirt road known as Talipots Lane in Kashmir Road. I would be grateful if you could please look into the matter as it is urgent.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, the road unofficially known as Talipots Road at The Vale, is a lateral lane starting from Kashmir Road.

A request to declare the public road was made to the Village Council of The Vale on 25 July 2010. The request was not however transmitted to the District Council. Thus, the road has not yet been declared public up to now.

For the District Council to undertake any roadworks, for the road, has in the first instance to be declared public. I am informed by the District Council that the request to declare the public road will be considered by the Public Infrastructure Committee of the Council at its next meeting scheduled in the month of November 2017.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

MOKA CID - ALLEGED SWINDLING CASE - INQUIRY

(No. B/660) **Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to an alleged case of swindling of an important sum of money reported by one Mr R. D. to the Moka Central Investigation Division, on 03 August 2000, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 07 December 1999, Mr R. D. reported a case of swindling at Quartier Militaire Police Station. He gave a further statement at Moka Central Investigation Division on 03 August 2000, to provide clarifications on the declaration made.

On completion of the enquiry, the case file was forwarded to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions who had, on 27 September 2002, advised no further action into the matter. Subsequently on 07 October 2002, the case was classified.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Selvon!

DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS – ECONOMIC PROMOTION

(No. B/661) **Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Mauritian diplomatic missions, he will give a list of the persons appointed thereto, if any, for the promotion of Mauritius on the economic front and, if so, indicate –

- (a) in each case, the qualifications, date of appointment and terms and conditions of appointment thereof, and
- (b) if the expected output to be generated have materialised and, if not, why not.

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

Madam Speaker, I am informed that up to now no such appointment has been made by the Ministry. I am therefore not in a position to provide the information asked for by the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Baloomoody.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON DRUGS - “LANATTE” - ALLEGED REMITTANCE

(No. B/662) 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 alleged remittance of a dangerous substance, commonly known as “*Lanatte*”, by Mr S. I., inmate of the Melrose Prison, to one of the Commissioners of the Commission of Inquiry on Drugs he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated therein, indicating the –

- (a) number of people arrested in connection therewith, if any, and
- (b) circumstances in which the dangerous substance reached the said prisoner.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that enquiry into the case of remittance of a dangerous substance by Mr S. I. to one of the Commissioners of the Commission of Inquiry on Drugs has been completed and the matter has been referred to the DPP for advice.

As regards part (a) of the question, no arrest has been effected so far in connection with the case.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the enquiry relating to the circumstances in which the dangerous substance reached Mr S. I. have not been established as the latter has refused to give a statement. However, internal investigations by the Prison Authorities are still ongoing.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor whether with regard to the Escort Officer, who escorted Mr S. I. from the cell to the Boardroom where the “*Lanatte*” was found, whether he has been questioned or whether action has been taken against him?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I don’t have the information with me. Come with a specific question!

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Baloomoody.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor - we know this is a high security prison and supposed to have over hundred cameras. Were the cameras, with regard to that Boardroom and the Police Cell, not the internal but the corridor leading from the Police Cell to the Boardroom, operational?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I know there are many cameras, but at one time, we saw the cameras were not working, and I don’t know whether this has been inquired into and what has been the result.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor whether he would inquire to see whether that Escort Officer is a member of what they call in that prison *le 24/7*? There is a team called 24/7. These people are allowed to enter the prison any time, without being searched, and whether this gentleman who escorted that Mr S. I., is a member of the 24/7 and apparently people forming part of that team 24/7 are not inquired upon, are not investigated upon, are not searched when they enter the Melrose prison.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I don’t have the information. I can’t say whether he formed part of the group of 24/7 and what followed. I think it is better to come with a specific question on this.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is a high security prison. The Rt. hon. Minister Mentor mentioned that no one has been arrested so far. So, does he have any information as to whether anyone has been transferred or suspended within the prison? Because it is not difficult to find out who have been working, and clearly there has been shortcomings with that prison operation.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member should come with a new question.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I can't answer. The information is not there. Please come with a specific question!

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Ganoo, last question!

Mr Ganoo: I have one question, Madam Speaker. One of the measures announced in the Budget this year to prevent the permeation of drugs in prisons was to provide for the acquisition of two body scanners for the Melrose and the Beau Bassin prisons. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor whether this has been done?

Madam Speaker: I don't know whether you want to reply, because this question does not arise from the main question.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I don't have these information, I can't reply.

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/664, B/665 and B/666. Time is over!

RODRIGUES - INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

(No. B/664) Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to internet connectivity in Rodrigues, he will state if –

- (a) consideration will be given for an increase in the satellite bandwidth thereat and, if so, when, and
- (b) Government will consider providing financial support for the laying of the submarine fibre optic cable project thereto.

(Withdrawn)

STATE RECOGNITION AWARD - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/665) Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the State Recognition Award, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, indicating the eligibility criteria therefor.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES - SALE BY LEVY PROCEDURES

(No. B/666) **Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms whether he will state if he is aware that sale by levy procedures in respect of lands in Rodrigues are held in Mauritius and that same cause considerable inconveniences to the people concerned therewith and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for such procedures to be held in Rodrigues.

(Withdrawn)

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.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

KLM – INAUGURAL FLIGHT

The Minister of Tourism (Mr A. Gayan): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I have two statements to make.

I wish to inform the House that KLM has started its new flight services to Mauritius today and the inaugural KLM flight from Amsterdam landed at 7h30 this morning. The KLM flight is a Boeing 787-Dreamliner with a total seat capacity of 297 both in Business and Economy Classes.

Madam Speaker, this is a historic development for the tourism industry. It is the first time that KLM is coming on scheduled flights to Mauritius. KLM will operate 3 weekly flights during the IATA summer and will dovetail with Air Mauritius operations in Schiphol for an all-year round service. For the new flights, KLM and the MTPA have launched a big promotional campaign, intensive communication as well as use of electronic platforms since February 2017. KLM is looking forward to a long-term relationship with Mauritius.

The KLM/Air Mauritius venture will provide an extensive feeder network from the Amsterdam hub, offering possibilities to tourists from traditional and new markets to travel to Mauritius. The new targeted markets will comprise the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg and Scandinavia (Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland), the Czech Republic, Russia, Poland & Ukraine.

Bookings, Madam Speaker, with KLM look very promising and for the month of November they are to the tune of 80% and the expected target for December is as high as 95%.

Madam Speaker, from January to September 2017, there have been 934, 679 tourists who have visited Mauritius. This represents 6.1% growth over the same period last year. The realistic targets for the period October to December this year are at approximately 429,400 arrivals with record arrivals for each month until the end of the year. In December, we expect to have the highest number of arrivals ever. It is expected that Mauritius would welcome approximately 1.36 million tourists this year as compared to 1.275 million last year.

Tourism and connectivity go hand in hand and connectivity is even more important for a long haul destination like ours. Direct flights are the most preferred option by tourists.

As we come close towards the year end, there are also additional encouraging factors which will no doubt push forward our realistic objectives for 2017 namely –

- (i) with acquisition of the brand -new aircraft A350-900, “Le Morne Brabant” which landed at SSR International Airport on 20 October 2017, Air Mauritius has opened a new chapter in air connectivity. This is in line with the vision of Government to modernise the existing airbus fleet and transform Mauritius into a regional aviation hub. The new aircraft, apart from being energy efficient, is equipped with the latest best-in-class cabin amenities and our national carrier is, accordingly, positioning itself as a major player;
- (ii) the arrival of Saudi Airlines as well, Madam Speaker, as from September this year will positively boost that market which is the largest outbound market in the Middle East;
- (iii) two additional flights from British Airways will boost connectivity for the period November to March. The MTPA is working closely with the airline to support their marketing efforts so as to bring significantly a larger number of

tourists to Mauritius and enhance the profile of the destination to the aspirational audience from the UK;

- (iv) the request from Emirates to operate six additional flights on the Mauritius-Dubai route has been granted as this will provide the much-needed seat capacity during the peak period where the demand for airline seats exceeds point to point capacity for many traditional and emerging markets, and
- (v) Thompson Airways and TUIFly Netherlands have been granted the authorisation to operate special/charter flights from the Nordic countries during the period November 2017 to March 2018.

The year 2017 is a promising year for our tourism industry. The tourism statistics clearly demonstrate that the sector is gathering further momentum and the extra airlift will increase new arrivals and contribute to additional growth for 2017.

Despite Brexit, Madam Speaker, tourist arrivals from the United Kingdom for the first semester of 2017 have increased at the rate of 6.8%. Mauritius is now outperforming its competitors in the region.

Madam Speaker, we have also been very pleased to learn that Lonely Planet's 'Best in Travel 2018', the renowned British travel guide, has listed Mauritius as one of the top 10 countries of the world to visit. The top 10 category also features, *inter alia*, Chile, Portugal and New Zealand. The countries initially nominated for the 'Best in Travel 2018' were assessed rigorously against specific criteria by a team of tourism industry experts. The list was thereafter fine-tuned before the prestigious top 10 category was published. The countries that made it to the list are required to offer travellers a unique experience during the forthcoming year, such as a milestone celebration or new activities to discover in the destination.

The Golden Jubilee celebration of 50 years of Independence of Mauritius in 2018 is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the country's achievements. This title will further enhance the visibility of Mauritius in the international arena, especially with respect to potential travellers, social media fans as well as the 1.6 million readers subscribed to Lonely Planet.

Mauritius, Madam Speaker, was also in the spotlight as the 7th edition of the ‘*Carnaval International de Victoria*’ in Seychelles on Saturday, October 28, 2017. The Mauritian destination took the coveted trophy for the best performing international group, followed by Reunion Island and Notting Hill from London.

The Mauritian delegation comprised of 22 performers (musicians and dancers) who were supported by the MTPA. They performed in a traditional Segga costume and there was also the national flag with the wording ‘celebration 50 years of Independence’ fully visible. 30 international delegations were present for this cultural event. The ‘*Carnaval International de Victoria*’ brings countries together and gives a rare opportunity to tourism destinations participating with a cultural troupe to raise their profile through culture.

Madam Speaker, as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development comes to a close, we still must ensure that we raise awareness of the potential of the sector for economic growth, social inclusion as well as cultural and environmental preservation. Tourism is and must be for all.

(4.04 p.m.)

PLEASURE CRAFTS - CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP

The Minister of Tourism (Mr A. Gayan): The second Statement, Madam Speaker, relates to the pleasure craft sector.

The pleasure craft sector is a key component of the tourism industry generating some 3000 direct employment. Currently there are some 1200 commercial pleasure crafts and some 1600 private pleasure crafts operating in our lagoons.

A Consultative Workshop was organised by the Tourism Authority of my Ministry yesterday to reflect on the challenges facing the sector and to chart a roadmap for the harmonious development of sea-based activities in the new tourism landscape.

More than 200 pleasure crafts operators, boat builders, skippers, owners of boathouses, diving and kite surf centres, insurance companies and dealers in marine engines as well as public sector stakeholders participated in the Workshop. The main areas which were discussed related to –

- (i) safety and security at sea;

- (ii) innovation and sustainability of the pleasure craft sector;
- (iii) business facilitation and modernisation of procedures;
- (iv) boat construction in line with international norms, and
- (v) law enforcement and monitoring.

The Workshop provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to take stock of the situation prevailing in the sector, identify the problems facing the operators and make appropriate recommendations to re-energise the sector and create a level playing field for all stakeholders. The Workshop has also re-affirmed that the pleasure craft sector has considerable growth potential with diversification and innovation of our tourism product to cater for the increasing demands and expectations of modern tourists. The Tourism Authority will study the recommendations and implement those that will make the tourism product attractive and responsive.

I wish to inform the House, Madam Speaker, that the participants unanimously recognised that this was the first time the Ministry organised such a forum to give opportunities to all operators to voice their views, concerns and their vision for this particular sector.

I thank you for your attention.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Copyright (Amendment) Bill (No. XIII of 2017) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT BILL

(No. XII OF 2017)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the National Employment Bill (No. XII of 2017).

Question again proposed

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(4.06 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central):
Madam Speaker, 42600 unemployed! 44% of the unemployed were aged below 25; 36% had been looking for work for more than one year; 31% were looking for a job for the first time. These are official latest figures from Statistics Mauritius published in September 2017.

Yes, Madam Speaker, we have an unemployment problem. We have a problem. We have graduates who are sitting at home. We have people coming out from schools who are looking for jobs. We have women looking for jobs. We have an unemployment issue and I am afraid, Madam Speaker, the Bill that is before us is not going to make any significant change to reverse the trend.

I have to confess, Madam Speaker, reading the speech of the hon. Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training, the mover of the Bill last week, I could not but wonder whether we were reading the same Bill! Because my appreciation of this Bill is completely different from his appreciation and he used words such as ‘historic moment of this Bill’! He used words like ‘modern legislative framework’.

He used the words -

“The Employment and Training Ordinance 1963 was a legacy of our colonial masters and this setup remains unchanged and is clearly an artefact.”

This is what he said about the existing system. But, Madam Speaker, when we take a closer look of what is being proposed in this Bill, how different is this Bill from the existing provisions of the Employment and Training Act of 1963?

First of all, this Bill is going to introduce a department, a National Economic Department. The department is going to replace the Employment Service, which is already a department of the same Ministry. This department would be headed by a director. The existing employment service is also headed by a controller, just a change of name, from a director to a controller. Now, let us look at the object of that department which is in section 5 of the Bill. If we look at the first one –

“The Department shall –

(a) promote employment;”

This is already the mandate of this Ministry, there is nothing new.

“(b) facilitate the employment of job seekers and ensure that job seekers are able to find employment that meet their aspirations;”

But this is exactly what the employment services were doing. This is found in section 3 of the existing Employment and Training Act of 1963. Same thing! The next object -

“(c) provide assistance and guidance with regard to employment prospects, including future employment prospects;”

Again, this is taken almost verbatim from section 4 (4) of the existing Employment and Training Act 1963 which even used the same identical words –

“(...)Provision of advice, guidance and other services for persons of any class(...).”

Object (d) -

“provide labour market information on the demand and supply of skills to local employers, job seekers and training institutions.”

If we look at section 4 (4) of the existing Act, again –

“(...) the Minister may make such arrangements (...) for the collection and furnishing of information for persons of any class (whether employed or not)(...)”

Same thing! Same object! Then, when it comes to object (e), the fifth object-

“(e) promote placement and training of job seekers through approved programmes.”

Again, section 5 of the existing legislation –

“(1) The Minister may provide such vocational training courses for persons, whether employed or not, as he thinks necessary or expedient (...)”

So identical! The same functions that are being given to the new department, the same functions were already given to the employment service, were already with the Minister. But when we look at this section (e), again, Madam Speaker - I do not see anyone from the State Law Office - there is a serious drafting problem. When we look at the Explanatory Memorandum, section 2 (e) reads that the department shall –

“(e) promote placement and training of job seekers, including young persons and persons with disabilities, through approved programmes;”

But when we look at the substantive provisions of the law, section 5(e) talks about promoting placement and training of job seekers through approved programmes, but we do not find young persons, we do not find persons with disabilities. What has happened?

From the Explanatory Note to the substantive provisions, has there been any amendment? Has anyone, in the meantime told the hon. Minister, “but you know there already exists an institution, the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board which is supposed to precisely provide training to people with disabilities?” And we have had occasions to talk about this Board, how inefficient it is, how it is unable to apply the law which requires certain employers to employ at least 3% of their workforce from people with disabilities.

So, if this new Bill was going to create an inroad, was going to promote the employability of people with disabilities that would have been a historical moment. But it is not doing that. It is not even part of the object. It is only in its Explanatory Memorandum but not part of the object.

And what happened to the training of young people? Who is going to do that? Is it going to be the department or is it going to be the existing Ministry? Is it going to be the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development? What will happen to MITD? Will MITD run training courses now? Will MITD identify training courses or will that be the responsibility of the department? Will there be a coordination between the department and MITD?

And it is unfortunate that hon. Dookun-Luchoomun is not here. As Minister, I would have expected her to enlighten us on what she thinks about this new department and whether that is going to have any impact on the services already offered by officers from her Ministry. And indeed, I am thinking about mismatch between demand and supply, I am thinking about career guidance. Who will provide career guidance? Who will identify the areas where there is shortage? Will it be this department or will it be people from her Ministry, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research?

The next object, this is new –

“(f) promote labour migration;”

Yes, this was not in the 1963 legislation. But circular migration has been part of the mandate of the Ministry for many years ago. We had many agreements signed already between the Ministry and other countries to facilitate the employment of Mauritians.

But, Madam Speaker, I for one, do not favour migration as a solution to solve our unemployment problem. I will say it clearly; we have children, we grow our children, we nurture our children, we provide them free education, we provide them free healthcare, we look after them, and when they reach an age to serve the country, what we are doing? We are sending them abroad. It is like as if we have planted a seed, we have watered it, we have looked after it, today the seed has become a tree, the tree has fruits and instead of us reaping the fruits, foreigners, outsiders are taking our fruits. We cannot have a policy of migration, of brain drain. We cannot encourage our Mauritians to go and work abroad. If we do that, this is an *aveu d’echec*, it means that Mauritius is not able to look after her children and this is what this Government should be doing. Creating jobs, creating all the necessary environment for job creation and not favouring migration, not telling our children: “Do not come back home! Stay abroad! Migrate! Go to Canada! Go to Australia! Do not come home!” No, we should not separate our children. Mauritius needs every single one of us; because our priciest asset is our manpower, our human resources.

Then, the last object of this new department is –

“(g) encourage and promote home-based work.”

Yes, this is a good initiative. We should promote, as far as possible, people who can work from home, that will give them the flexibility of not travelling to say Port-Louis or Ebene. And now with internet, a lot of things can be done through Mauritius. But it serves no purpose having a department to promote home-based work if it is not followed by fiscal incentives.

Today, we have a problem because the MRA, the Income Tax Department, when they disallow expenditure, if you have an office, if you have a phone, if you have a fax from your office; they will give you the whole exemption, the whole deduction. But if you use the same fax, the same telephone, the same facilities at home; they would say that part of it is personal expenditure and therefore they would use an arbitrary formula, sometime they will disallow one third of it.

So, if we want home-based work to work, we will have to get the MRA on board so that a person who is working at home is not fiscally disadvantaged compared to someone who goes to an office.

Madam Speaker, I have gone through the object of this National Employment Department extensively because unlike the hon. Minister, I do not think that this Bill is historical, but I think it is an *occasion manquée*. I think that there is so much more that could have been done, so much better that could have been done. Unfortunately, it is an *occasion ratée*.

Now, I would turn to a few specific sections of the law, which I think deserve certain comments.

9. Powers of Authorised Officers

The officers under section 9 are now given the blank cheque. During office hours, they can enter the premises of any employer and ask him to furnish any information which he may require. I can see this was a provision which was already in the 1963 Act, but I think it is a dangerous provision. I think it was a provision that was there when we did not have data protection legislation, when we did not have secrecy.

There may be valid reasons why a person would not want the officers from the Ministry to know how much he earns. I mean, he may be perfectly doing his filing with the National Pension Fund; he may be filing his tax return. But why should he be giving confidential, sensitive information to officers of the Ministry of Labour? And worse, Madam Speaker, when we look at the definition of ‘employer,’ ‘employer’ is defined as a person, a Government department, a local authority, a statutory body, a company, a firm who hires the services of another person other than a part-time employee, which basically means that anyone who hires a full-time employee becomes an employer. This means that anyone of us here who has a full-time driver, who has a full-time maid, who has a full-time gardener, we are all employers, and that means that, at any time, during office hours, you can get a representative of the Labour Office to come to your house - because this is where you employ your maid - and ask you to give information about all your employees and ask you any information that they want - because this is how it is typed. Any information that they want, you have to give them. What happen if we do not give? In section –

“17. Offences

Any person who –

- (a) obstructs or gives false or misleading information to an officer under this Act; or
- (b) otherwise contravenes this Act,

shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 25,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months.”

So, Madam Speaker, I do not want Big Brother watching us. I do not want KGB. If the hon. Minister will go ahead and think that this coercive measure is important for the running of the Department, at least, qualify the definition of ‘employer’. Make ‘employer’ being the employer who employs more than X number of people - We already have it in the Employment Relations Act. It is only applicable if you employ more than 10 people - or make it by reference to turnover. It is only if you have a turnover of X thousand rupees or hundred thousand rupees, but do not make it general and put anyone under pressure of being investigated by the Department.

The next provision that I would like to draw the hon. Minister’s attention to is section 10.

10. Registration of job seekers

Every jobseeker, anyone who is looking for a job is now going to be required to register with the Director. And this Director - the Department - will provide job opportunities or job training to that jobless person, and if the jobseeker refuses the training or the job for three times, then he will be taken out of the Department. He will not be given any more training. He will not be given any more jobs. But worse, he will not be treated as jobless, as a jobseeker. So, that may reduce the statistics about jobseekers.

Now, I think this is very unfair because there may be valid reasons, and I know you are talking about any reasonable excuse. There may be reasons why a person refuses a job or training. Here, we are talking about training offer which is in line with his profile and qualification. Who decides what is in line with this profile and qualification? Let us take an example of a person who does not have CPE or PSAC. What type of job should he be doing? What is his job profile? As hon. Rutnah says, ‘General Worker’. He does not want to be a General Worker! He has greater aspiration. He wants to do *un métier*. He does not want to be

a refuse collector. Who will determine his job profile? If he is a graduate, again, he may not wish to work in a certain category of work, but in other categories. Now, if he refuses for three times, he will be taken out. So, I think this will create problems and, as I said, the aim should not be coercion. The aim should be helping these people to find a job. So, it would not serve any purpose to withdraw them from the system.

The next area of concern is section 11.

11. Responsibility of employers

Now, every employer is required to register through the National Employment Dashboard. The National Employment Dashboard will be this new website of the Ministry. This would be completely computerised. So, any employer, including, now, you and I who employ a full-time employee, all of us here, all the employers, will have to go and register on the electronic dashboard, which means that all of us need to have a computer, we need to have access to the Internet and we need to have access to the website. Now, what will happen? Once you have registered yourself, section 11 (a) (ii) provides, and I read it –

“Every employer shall –

(ii) advertise any vacancy, open to the public, within 7 days of the advertisement;”

Now, what does that mean? Every employer must advertise any vacancy within seven days of the advertisement. I can understand you advertising any vacancy within seven days of the vacancy, but advertising any vacancy within seven days of the advertisement. I am a lawyer and I do not even know how to interpret this. What does it mean to advertise within seven days of the advertisement? When you advertise, you are advertising on the day! Right! How are you going to advertise within seven days of the advertisement? Again, if you do not follow this, you have this sanction of six months’ imprisonment. Every time you have a vacancy, therefore, you have to go on that website, key in the name and the vacancy. So, if I take the example of our ordinary Small and Medium Enterprise, our ordinary *marchand dholl puri* wants to sack his helper, he has to go and find a computer, go on the internet and say, ‘I don’t have a helper’. Same thing, if you have a mason and he usually has two helpers with him, today he has decided to sack one of them because he did not come up for work, he has to find a computer, key in and go to the Dashboard. I mean, is it how we are going to help Small and Medium Enterprises? Are we facilitating recruitment or are we imposing a burden on

Small and Medium Enterprises? Is this National Dashboard going to create more jobs or is it going to create more administrative hassle for the Small and Medium Enterprises? So, this is why I will make an appeal to the Minister. It is not a bad idea of having a Dashboard. I can understand the logic. But, at least, redefine ‘employer’. Make it applicable to only those who can afford to do it, people who have a certain turnover or who employ a certain number of people. But the way it is drafted, all employers, everyone will have to go on that Dashboard, and that is going to be an administrative hassle and an economical headache for all the Small and Medium Enterprises.

The next area of concern, Madam Speaker, and that would be my final comment on this Bill, will be Section 12, the National Employment Advisory Committee. Now, again, this is not a historical measure because if we look at the existing Employment and Training Act, Section 3 (2) already gave the power to the Minister –

“... the Minister may refer such matters as he thinks fit to such advisory committees or boards as he may appoint.”

So, there already was this provision in the existing legislation, not a historical move, but now that it has been codified there is going to be this committee which is going to assist the Minister on a lot of issues, mainly Section 13 (a) Employment Policies and Strategies. It’s a very important committee which is going to advise the Minister on Employment Strategies. And when we look at the composition of this committee, who are going to be on this committee?

We all know that jobs are created by the Private Sector and the Public Sector, but for the Public Sector there are very minimal new jobs. It’s mostly replacing people, filling vacancies. The main drivers of employment are the Private Sector. But when we look at the composition of this committee, how many are representatives from the private sector? Where is the representative of Business Mauritius, which has replaced the Mauritius Employers Federation? The main organisation which looks after the interest of employers in the Private Sector is not even included. I have spoken to these people; they were not even consulted when this was done.

And today who is going to be the representative of the employers? Someone appointed by the Minister! The Minister is going to choose the representative of the Private Sector. Just like the Minister is going to choose who, among the Trade Unionists, will sit on

that committee. So, at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, what will this committee be? It will be a bunch of Civil Servants and Political appointees; Ministerial appointees. So, how is this committee going to fairly advise on strategy? How is it going to really represent the demand from the Private Sector from the employer?

So, again, I would ask the hon. Minister to, at least, consider allowing the Trade Unionists and the employers to appoint their own representatives. Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister mentioned in his speech that his Ministry has signed an agreement with the French Authorities for assistance towards restructuring employment services. And he said that he has done that in line with *Pôle Emploi*. But is the hon. Minister aware that this *Pôle Emploi*, which has replaced *l'Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi (ANPE)* has been severely criticised in France, severely criticised by *La Cour des comptes* which said, and I quote –

« *La fusion est acquise mais les résultats attendus n'ont pas été atteints.* »

The results were not achieved. You just have to google *Pôle Emploi* on the internet and you will see the number of criticisms, the number of mismanagement, of mishandling of cases. So, I am afraid, Madam Speaker, *Pôle Emploi* is anything but a reference. What we need in Mauritius is a Mauritius solution to a Mauritius problem and this is where the problem lies. We all know, Madam Speaker, how the system works today. People are asked to go and stamp cards. They stamp cards and they wait. They wait for months, they wait for years and they don't receive anything. Is this Bill going to change it? No, this Bill is going to do exactly the same thing. It is going to require the job seekers to go and register with the new department instead of registering and stamping card with the employment service; they are now going to register electronically with the Dashboard.

But why will the system not change? It is because, today, there is the perception that in order to get a job you need a political backing. This is the problem. The problem is not with registering the unemployed, the problem is ensuring that an unemployed who registers himself is given the same chance, the same opportunity to get a job as anyone else who registers, but we all know that this is not the case. We all know how appointment is done under delegated powers, when the PSC gives delegated powers to certain Ministers, to certain departments to employ. How people are selected? I dare say, Ministers, PPSs, and Government officials themselves like to brag that they are able to find employment. We have seen this in this House, it's in Hansard. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister himself said that

when he employs someone, he needs someone with the same vision as him. He said it, it's in Hansard!

(Interruptions)

Exactly! In your Parastatal Body! Absolutely! In your Parastatal Body! So, even if I am super qualified, in your Parastatal Body I am not.

(Interruptions)

It serves no purpose for me to go and register in a Dashboard because I am not going to get a chance, because I don't share the same views as the hon. Minister responsible for this parastatal body. So, there is no equal opportunity. We have heard another Senior Minister who gave an interview where he said that there is nothing wrong in recruiting people from your party. He said there is nothing wrong - hon. Gayan said so. There is nothing wrong! So, why have this Employment Service? Why do we have this National Dashboard if we don't change the mentality? Nothing will change. It's not just this Government, it has been the same. We heard a former PPS from another party - it was tape recorded - saying that he has provided a list of people from his constituency to PSC for appointment.

(Interruptions)

It is this mentality that has to change. If this mentality does not change, having all this legislation will not make any difference. Madam Speaker, I had lunch with a Minister from Singapore the other day, and I said to him: how do you cope with all these people from your constituency who come and look for job? Do they queue up in the morning? Because, in Mauritius, it is a big problem, every week you go to the CAB, people are queuing up, they brought the CVs of their children, of their nephews/ nieces; they all want to have a job. So, how do you in Singapore tackle this? Do you know what he said to me, Madam Speaker? He said: no one ever comes to me for a job because I cannot give them a job, and if I were to represent that I can give them a job, then it would mean effectively that this agency we have for job creation is not working. So, this is the message. It doesn't matter if you have this new Employment Dashboard, if you have this new Employment Department, if Ministers, Members of the Governments will continue to give the perception that they can provide job, that you need political backing to get a job, it will serve no purpose having all these law until there is a change in mentality.

Madam Speaker, Albert Einstein is reported to have said - although there is dispute whether he said it the first time or someone else said it before him - that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. I am afraid, Madam Speaker, unless there is a change in mentality, unless Ministers and Government stop interfering in the recruitment process, I am afraid but to think that this Bill will make any difference is pure insanity. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Boissézon!

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr E. Boissézon): Madame la présidente, merci de me permettre d'intervenir sur ce projet de loi. Tout d'abord en écoutant le précédent orateur, je me suis posé moi aussi une question. Est-ce qu'il avait le devoir de regarder le verre vide plutôt que le verre rempli ? Son discours a été un chapelet de récriminations.

Il n'a rien vu. Il n'a rien voulu comprendre. Il n'a pas vu la morale, la philosophie derrière ce projet de loi. Il a commencé par dire de ce projet de loi, qu'on devait redéfinir la définition de l'employeur. Et moi, en lisant, je vois qu'il a oublié de lire deux phrases. Quand je regarde le projet de loi, je vois que '*employer*' means -

"(...) a Government department, a local authority, a statutory body, a company, a firm or other entity who or which pays for or hires the services of another person, other than a part-time employee, in exchange of his labour for production of goods or the provision of services."

Et, ici, je me pose la question: *Where is 'person'?* *Where is 'person'?* Parce qu'en lisant, et pour quelqu'un, un intellectuel comme lui et je ne vois pas; *Where is 'person'; where is 'household' and where is 'driver'?* Et je pense qu'en lisant cette partie de ce projet de loi, c'est à ce moment-là qu'il s'est complètement perdu et embourbé. Maintenant, il a parlé, il a tellement dit des choses que je n'ai pas eu le temps de peut-être les noter. Il a parlé d'un certain moment de *young person*, et il a dit que dans le '*Explanatory Memorandum*' on parle des jeunes, et après dans la loi il n'a pas vu des jeunes. Or, juste après la définition de '*employer*', nous avons eu -

"jobseeker includes -

(a) A young person who is over the age of 16, but under the age of 18."

Mais si ça ce n'est pas un jeune, qui est un jeune? 40 ans!

(Interruptions)

A l'âge du précédent orateur!

En allant plus loin, il parle sur la section 10(2). Il parle de qui décidera des qualifications pour offrir une formation ou un *job offer*. Et là voilà encore une fois il oublie de lire –

“Any registered job seeker who, without any reasonable excuse, declines a job offer or training offer which is in line with his profile and qualifications (...).”

(Interruptions)

I am asking myself whether hon. Rutnah has the profile of scavenger.

(Interruptions)

Perhaps a mathematician, but not scavenger!

Furthermore, he went on to say that it was not there to penalise somebody who has refused three job offers or training during a year, and then he is penalised. He is not penalised all his life. He is penalised only for a period of one year.

(Interruptions)

One year only he is penalised! Try to see, during a year somebody is being offered three jobs or training according to his profile and qualification and that person is refusing the job. Then, I think he can wait for 12 months.

The other point is that when you are speaking of National Employment Dashboard and you are saying that those persons must have computers in their offices. Can you tell me when you look – and I think that was your error when you said that you forgot...

Madam Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Mr Boissézon: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Don't address the hon. Member!

Mr Boissézon: And I think the hon. Member...

(Interruptions)

...misunderstood the definition of ‘employer’ so that he can then come and say that somebody who is in a company or organisation doesn’t have a computer today. But I think he may have a smart phone. And with a smart phone tomorrow, you can do that type of duty.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Boissézon: The hon. Member spoke of Business Mauritius. The hon. Member spoke of the representation on the Advisory Committee. Madam Speaker, if we look at Clause 12(2)(i), we see –

“a member representing organisations of employers, to be appointed by the Minister after consultation with the most representative organisations of employers”

So, he will consult not only Business Mauritius, but the most important organisations. ‘s’ at plural! So, the Minister will go and seek information from Mauritius Chamber of Commerce, Business Mauritius, and other federations of employers. And it appears that if the Minister does not have to choose, who will choose, if not the Minister! The hon. Member has said: “not the Minister”. Who?

(Interruptions)

Who? Representation of trade unionists, it is the same thing - ‘the Minister after consultation with the most representative organisations of workers.’ So, I am asking myself whether the Minister wanted to debate on that Bill or, in other words, he wanted to see only *le verre vide*.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member.

Mr Boissézon: *In fact*, Madame la présidente, moi, je crois que ce projet de loi est un projet très important. Il démontre la volonté et l’engagement du gouvernement à s’adresser au problème du chômage malgré les aléas et contraintes inhérents à cette issue sensible.

Ce projet de loi arrive à un moment opportun. Avec les investissements massifs du gouvernement, plus de 97 milliards en trois ans pour la modernisation de notre État, et

l'effort conjugué du secteur privé, il est impérieux d'avoir une politique nationale de l'emploi moderne et cohérente.

Aujourd'hui, notre politique d'emploi est régie par *Employment and Training Act de 1963...*

(Interruptions)

Combien de changements...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr Boissézon: ... fondamentaux sont intervenus depuis. Nous avons obtenu l'indépendance. Notre économie a mué d'une économie d'une seule culture à une économie diversifiée dont plusieurs piliers avec chacun sa spécificité et ses besoins spécifiques.

L'économie globale a évolué. On parle de village global.

(Interruptions)

Avec l'organisation mondiale du commerce plus de filets de protection,....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, don't interrupt the Minister!

Mr Boissézon: ... tels que les Conventions de Yaoundé et Cotonou, plus de quota de sucre ou accords multifibres.

Avec les avancées technologiques et informatiques, et les moyens de communication, la façon de travailler a changé. Nous sommes connectés entre nous et avec le monde en temps réel.

Ce n'est pas une liste exhaustive, mais tous ces points mis ensemble requièrent une approche intelligente pour connaître le marché de l'emploi et la mise en place des structures modernes - peut-être, le mot moderne ne sied pas - pour faire face à la demande du jour.

Je félicite le ministre du Travail, des relations industrielles de l'emploi et de la formation pour la présentation de ce projet de loi qui est exhaustif et traite le sujet de l'emploi de façon complète.

Madame la présidente, ce projet de loi fait provision pour la création de deux structures organisationnelles - la National Employment Department ; le National Employment Advisory Committee. Elles imposent des responsabilités aux employeurs comme aux demandeurs d'emplois. Elles utilisent l'informatique pour la création et le maintien de sa base de données. Le National Employment Dashboard sera aussi un carrefour où les employeurs et demandeurs d'emplois pourront se rencontrer.

Cet outil de travail permettra d'avoir une compréhension du marché du travail, des changements de comportements, des besoins du marché de travail et, d'autre part, littéralement guider les demandeurs d'emplois dans leurs entreprises à trouver un emploi stable, enrichissant et compatible avec leurs aspirations.

De par ces deux objectifs, le National Employment Bill devrait se traduire en un instrument effectif pour la convergence des aspirations des demandeurs d'emplois d'un côté et le besoin de main-d'œuvre et de ressources humaines des employeurs d'un autre côté. Franchement, dans le concret, cela va améliorer le dialogue entre les différentes parties afin que les réformes institutionnelles mises en place rapportent des fruits.

Madame la présidente, la Chambre, l'île Maurice savent comme beaucoup d'Etats, qu'ils soient dans la catégorie d'Etats à fort revenu ou en émergence ont à faire face au mal socio-économique qu'est le chômage et ses effets néfastes sur l'économie et le moral des demandeurs d'emplois.

L'année dernière, le ministre des Finances avait, lors de son discours du budget 2016-2017, préconisé le lancement d'une ère nouvelle de développement, montrant sa priorité, sa volonté de créer un environnement propice à la création d'emplois.

Sur les dix points stratégiques évoqués ce jour-là, les deux premiers concernés, les parties concernées sont par le présent projet de loi. Je cite – *“First, fostering a wave of modern entrepreneurs; Second, creating more job opportunities for all;”* Outre cette volonté, il y a eu référence aux investissements massifs, auxquels j'ai fait allusion précédemment, qui ont eu et qui auront un effet direct sur la création d'emplois.

Madame la présidente, dans ce même budget, autre mesure d'incitation à la création d'emplois, le gouvernement a budgétisé le financement pour le remplissage des vacances

dans le service public. Depuis son ascension, ce gouvernement a rempli 8472 postes. Ces recrutements pour plusieurs services comme la Police, les services de santé, de l'éducation, etc. concernent tous les grades d'employés. Pour cette année financière, 7375 postes ont été budgétisés.

Madame la présidente, je voudrai faire ressortir que, de par les effets initiés par le gouvernement, le taux de chômage a diminué. D'après le rapport du bureau des statistiques, le chiffre de 7.9% en 2015 a chuté à 7.3% en 2016. Fait notoire est que cette chute est ressentie chez les hommes comme chez les dames. Avec la mise en exécution de projets en préparation, cette tendance perdurera.

Madame la présidente, même si le secteur privé et le gouvernement conjuguent leurs efforts pour créer de l'emploi, ils ne feront qu'acheter du temps s'ils se concentrent à créer des postes seulement.

Il est impérieux de comprendre que les emplois productifs sont à la base primaire d'une croissance économique soutenue. Les emplois productifs génèrent plus de revenus pour la population, qui la remet dans le circuit économique avec un effet multiplicateur pour l'emploi, ainsi gagner le combat du chômage.

Pour combattre le chômage, il faut comprendre les causes de ce mal. A Maurice les causes principales sont premièrement l'inadéquation des compétences, le *skills mismatch*, le décalage entre les qualifications obtenues et les besoins du marché. Le gouvernement précédent avait préconisé un slogan 'Enn gradué par foyer' sans avoir fait une étude préalable, pas d'analyse de marché, pas de projection des besoins avec pour résultat que le pays se retrouve avec plusieurs milliers de gradués chômeurs, avec des expertises pas compatibles avec les besoins du marché ou en surnombre dans d'autres cas. Alors que les employeurs se plaignent du manque de maîtrise dans plusieurs domaines tels l'ingénierie et les compétences en informatique.

Deuxièmement, un sujet dont on n'entend pas souvent l'employabilité. Selon l'organisation internationale du travail, l'employabilité est l'aptitude de chacun à trouver et conserver un emploi, à progresser au travail et à s'adapter au changement tout au long de sa vie professionnelle.

Madame la présidente, il y a une dizaine d'années, un employé, ayant occupé le même poste pendant plusieurs années, était considéré comme un employé loyal, modèle à l'entreprise. Aujourd'hui, un tel employé serait une cause de soucis pour son employeur.

Avec les changements technologiques quotidiens, sera-t-il apte à s'adapter aux changements qui sont inévitables? Si la technologie n'est pas nécessairement source de chômage à long terme, le développement technologique peut avoir des conséquences négatives à court terme si les employés n'ont pas été formés en conséquence.

La responsabilité de l'individu en la matière est indispensable mais celle-ci suppose en premier lieu une certaine transparence et un travail d'information. Il est important que le service de l'emploi, et dans notre cas ce sera le National Employment Department, informe mieux la population active sur les perspectives d'emploi et des métiers qui recruteront ou qui disparaîtront à l'avenir.

La motivation est primordiale à ce stage, tout un chacun avec une bonne volonté peut développer son employabilité pour autant qu'il soit accompagné et encouragé dans sa démarche. Le besoin d'une approche psychologique et d'un coaching approprié sont nécessaires.

Troisièmement, la préférence des Mauriciens, Maurice a une population instruite et aujourd'hui elle est plus encline à accepter des travaux à dur labeur, répétitifs et mal rétribués mais, en même temps, une grande majorité n'a pas les aptitudes, la formation, le savoir-faire compatible avec les besoins du monde de travail.

A Maurice, Madame la présidente, nous vivons un paradoxe alors que nous enregistrons des milliers de chômeurs, nous avons recours à la main-d'œuvre étrangère.

Nous devons revoir les conditions et les possibilités pouvant être octroyées aux possibles employés de cette catégorie pour les inciter à faire ces métiers ou à se former pour être recrutés autre part.

Quatrièmement, l'instabilité de l'emploi dans le secteur privé. Nous notons que les demandeurs d'emplois sont réticents à se tourner vers des employeurs pour le recrutement. Nous savons, qu'année après année, que le secteur privé se tourne vers le bureau de l'emploi pour le recrutement, l'offre tourne autour de 2500 postes mais reçoit seulement environ 8% de réponses favorables.

Les employeurs se plaignent du manque de savoir faire des opérationnels, et ces derniers se plaignent des conditions d'emplois défavorables et la stabilité précaire.

Il est nécessaire qu'une institution favorise le dialogue entre ces deux acteurs importants de notre économie.

Madame la présidente, le projet de loi, contrairement à ce qui a été dit précédemment, prend en considération les causes du chômage à Maurice. Les objectifs et fonctions du *National Employment Department* sont et forment le cadre nécessaire pour la compréhension du marché de l'emploi. Ainsi nous devons transformer notre service d'emplois, nous devons avoir la capacité en ressources humaines et les compétences nécessaires pour être en mesure de cerner les problèmes, les résoudre, avoir un control et le suivi de l'évolution du monde de travail, et en faire la projection pour le futur, pour prendre les mesures qui s'imposent au bon moment.

Pour terminer, Madame la présidente, je dirai que ce projet de loi est l'instrument nécessaire dont nous avons besoin au bon moment pour moderniser le suivi du marché du travail et la canalisation et l'accompagnement des demandeurs d'emplois.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

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

At 5.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.39 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus.

(5.39 p.m.)

Mrs R. Jadoo-Jaunbocus (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We often hear the saying that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but today I saw negativity and distortion in the eyes of the distorted beholder. What I mean to say is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have heard the debates of the first intervener, hon. Uteem, and how negative the National Employment Bill sounded.

In fact, sitting here and I was turning to and through within the legislation, thinking how could this have escaped the eyes of the hon. Minister who is a lawyer, how could this have escaped the eyes of the hon. Attorney General who is a lawyer, and a fine lawyer and how could it have escaped the eyes of the officers of the Attorney General's Office.

Then, when I re-read the Bill again, I realised it is only that distorted eyes who want to see negative things. Well, he said himself that a lawyer with experience reading this Bill, and he could not understand how certain sections were formulated. But how could a basic lawyer reading clause 2, reading just underneath the definition under employer, which was

cited by him, the definition of job seeker. How can one miss that? Unless one does not want to see or unless one does not want the House to see.

Need I say more or has hon. Boissézon killed the point raised, not so valid, on the clause 12 (2) (j) about who will choose the representatives from the most represented organisations. I don't want to go for the overkill on that, but it is really sad to see lawyers coming and saying things which are not quite right as depicted in the Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Thomas Carlyle has said –

“A man willing to work, and unable to find work, is perhaps the saddest sight that fortune's inequality exhibits under this sun.”

Indeed, employment is a fundamental component of any development strategy of a country and employment is one of the most effective ways of eradicating poverty. This is the spirit with which this Government has started its mandate. This is the spirit with which the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, in his two successive Budgets presented to this House, dealt with the issue of poverty, that is, working towards the eradication of poverty and increase of employment, be it in the formal or informal sector.

In fact, employment, economic development and poverty are all inexorably intertwined and linked. In fact, when we look at the United Nations SDGs, out of the 17 SDGs, that is, the 2030 Agenda, we find that number one is no poverty. Number 8 is decent work and economic growth, number 10 is reduce inequalities, that is promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Indeed, goal 8.3 states that a country should –

“Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises including through access to financial services.”

This is what the goal says.

Now, let us look at the state of employment worldwide. In fact, it is a common plight worldwide, and in fact, ILO identified this problem of unemployment. As far back as 2013, it was predicted by ILO that unemployment rate will keep on increasing at an alarming rate and would top its highest in 2017. Yet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we look at figures, 2015:

7.9% and we go to 2016 with the Budget, with the implementation, with measures being put into force, 2016: 7.3% and in 2017, Statistics Mauritius says that for the second quarter, unemployment rate has fallen down to 7.2%. So, in spite of the prediction of the ILO, Mauritius has done fairly well.

Having said that, the labour scenario is becoming more and more challenging and it must be ensured that those entering the labour market for the first time to find decent jobs are sufficiently skilled to find decent works and remain in that employment. It must also be ensured that conditions of work are satisfactory to one and all. These are all the challenges that are being faced by anybody, any Government and especially any Minister of Labour dealing with the issue of unemployment.

Indeed, one of the most observed factors is that we have a problem of skills mismatch and that of unemployment, with the creation of more job opportunities for the youth and women. When we look at this Bill, what we find is that, if I may summarise in the hon. Minister's word, what he says is that, what the Bill is about, it is about the labour market, gathering career information, gathering information for career guidance, improving employment prospects, improving technological support, man power, planning and training.

What this Bill, after reading it thoroughly with a clear and dispassionate view, not with tainted eyes to see only negative elements, what this Bill is doing, it is doing a rethinking of unemployment. It is rethinking it and re-engineering it in a responsive, intelligent way, analysing coherent and developing a strategy to eradicate unemployment. And this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is in line with the ILO employment service convention dating as far back as 1948, which provides an obligation for Member States - Mauritius being one - to maintain a free public employment service, to ensure in corporation with the public and private bodies, that the best possible organisation for employment market is being set up as part of the national programme for achieving and maintaining full employment and development use of productive resources.

Today, where we stand, at any point in time, we cannot make an accurate, scientific prediction or a calculated prediction of the future needs of the labour market, especially, in this fast moving world of technology. If one were to ask in ten years' time, what should one be doing, what would be the market's most searches for labour or skills or qualifications, one would not be able to answer with any accuracy. Why? Because, there is a void, there is no

point comparing the incomparable that is, comparing the previous Employment and Training Act, with this National Employment Bill.

For sure, what the existing Employment and Training Act did was merely the gathering of information and indeed putting stamps on employment cards and collecting data, but we have to compare it with what is being done today.

Let us look at the Bill itself. I will first turn to clause 3, which is very relevant, which if one were to compare the previous one, that is, the Employment and Training Act, one sees that what is new is the

“Application of Act

(1) This Act shall apply to a resident of Mauritius.”

How can we not see that? This is very relevant. What we have is that, we have foreigners, so many foreigners in employment in this country. At one point in time, according to Statistics Mauritius, I believe it is in 2013, we had 43,400 unemployed people and what did we have? We had 38,800 foreign workers in the country.

So, this Act, through this clause, is in part addressing part of that issue.

What we had previously - the Employment and Training Act 1963 - was all under the aegis of the Minister, but now we have a National Employment Department being set up, with the Director who is, in fact, a public officer, and that shows that Government in, Government out, there is no political agenda. We have heard so much about people going to see the Members of Parliament in the previous speech, about jobs for only those who are being protected, only for agents! What are we talking about? When we look at what is being set up, we have the National Employment Department which is being set up under the aegis of a public officer, who is non-political at all.

Now, let us turn to clause 9 of the Bill - Powers of authorised officers. One is so keen on showing how bad this present Bill is that hon. Uteem missed out the point that the powers of authorised officers has always been there. It was there since 1963. Let us see how many cases we have of officers just going into houses, as he said it, going into offices, going into local government or wherever an employer is and forcing them to give confidential and private data. As far as I understand, and I hear the Minister stating for a fact no such complaint has been raised. I am sure if such was the case, we would have had many questions

raised in this House on this specific issue, unless we have the Opposition who does not see certain things! So, I am sure this is not the case.

So, we have this provision and, in fact, what does the power of entry that we have, reinforced with the issue of summons, do? In fact, what it does is it is in line with the policy, that is, it is responsabilising, and I will address the House in a minute on this issue of employers and employees. Because what is the state of things today? What we have is people wolf in, be it in CAB offices or Members of Parliament offices, career advice offices, saying that they are unemployed. But are they really unemployed? Must I ask this question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

50 per cent of those who come to seek for jobs are already in employment, but what they are looking for is an employment that they want, an employment within the Government most likely or in a parastatal. Therefore, what they do so that they have the green card being stamped, that is, the employment registration card, they will state that they do not work. Is not that a fraud? Is not that a forgery to the State? *Donc, faut-il autoriser ce genre d'acte contre l'Etat?*

Yet, we have responsible, and the Act talked about an authorised officer. Not just any officer will wolf in any employer's premises. It will be an authorised officer who will have such power of entry and summon, and the purpose is for inspection and information gathering and investigation. This is to ensure that the National Employment Dashboard functions properly and that information that is provided by the Dashboard is credible, viable and reliable, and not distorted, and I keep saying distorted.

Now, registration of jobseekers. In fact, it is a sort of mandatory registration, if we like, because a jobseeker, according to the Bill –

“(...) shall, in order to benefit from the services offered by the Department, register in person with the Department.”

Then, what are the implications? They are if -

“Any job seeker who, without any reasonable excuse (...)”

We must really dwell on this for a minute -

“(...) without any reasonable excuse (...)”

In all laws, there may be a certain provision, but there is always a clause which will provide for certain circumstances, and it says -

“(...) without any reasonable excuse declines a job offer or training offer which is in line with his profile and qualifications (...)”

Again, hon. Minister Boissézon has talked about that. But that person refuses three times successively, not once, not twice, but thrice. Three times, he refuses a job over a period of one year, not indefinitely. We may criticise France, we may criticise any other country, but wherever you go, any employment rehabilitation service, if it gives you benefits, for example, in England, it will say that if you do not take up the job that is offered, these benefits will cease to apply to you. So, we are doing what all democratic States would do and what is done legitimately because at the end of the day, one cannot, *comme on dit*, ‘have your cake and eat it’. You cannot say you are unemployed, you cannot say you want benefits and, yet, when you are given certain benefits, then you say, “No, I do not want that.” Three occasions!

And, again, as has been said, the whole essence of this Bill starts with skills mismatch, that is, we have to match qualifications and skills to the job, to the market needs. So, obviously, I am sure that a responsible officer would not ask someone who has no qualification at all to go and do a high-powered executive job. Of course, that will not happen. And, the inverse, of course, will not happen unless that person says or requests for any particular job because he cannot find a job that suits his needs, because at least we have to take the reality of the market into consideration.

This is the imperative mandatory registration I was talking about –

“Every registered job seeker shall, within 15 days after obtaining an employment, notify the Department.”

Of course, let us just go back to the definition of jobseeker in case we have any distorted misunderstanding. A jobseeker includes, amongst others –

“(a) a young person who is over the age of 16 but under the age of 18; and

(b) a person in employment;”

And that person has to register in order to avoid duplicity, that is, appearing as registered unemployed with the Ministry of Labour and, at the same time, seeking for a job whilst being in paid employment.

Similarly, together with a duty being imposed on jobseekers, a similar responsibility is imposed on employers, and that is imperative. They shall –

“(a) through the National Employment Dashboard –

- (i) register with the Department;
- (ii) advertise (...);
- (iii) submit names (...)

Before we go and point out any shortcomings of this clause, let us now think about it. What is this Act doing? We are all talking about modernity. We are all talking about how we are in the computer age. We are talking about children having tablets. We are talking about youngsters having touch screen phones, smart phones in their hands. We are talking about free Wi-Fi provided by this Government in so many public places such as *centre communautaire*, *centre social*. Everywhere you go, you have free Wi-Fi these days.

So, what is being asked that seems so onerous and so unrealistic that the employer registers through the Dashboard with the Department? And, of course, if the employer, whoever be it, a *marchand dholl puri* or however high up the ladder, no difference is made because at the end of the day the duty and the obligation to the law remain. One cannot differentiate between two types of employers because one may be a *marchand dholl puri*, but we must not underestimate. He will have a high turnover. Well, *marchands cotomili* are famous for that, we all know. Or he can be a high-powered executive - business - and yet the turnover may not be the same, but the duty is the same. He has to register to ensure that there is transparency, to ensure, again, that the data being provided by the Employment Dashboard is actually accurate and there is integrity to such figures.

Now, I shall be very brief on the National Employment Advisory Committee because much has been said already. In fact, what it does is it is advising on employment policies and strategies and on all issues associated thereto such as training, employment opportunities, be it local or overseas. Once more, this provision, I shall say, demonstrates the Ministry’s responsiveness, that is, addressing skills mismatch and modernising the system, and it is, again, what we talked about, reengineering and the modern mechanism adapted to needs rather than just being there as a fact collecting body.

In essence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall say that this Bill, once passed and shall receive the assent of the President, will provide a coherent framework and will be an important tool to enable all of our citizens, men and women, who are all willing to work to attain secure and sustainable livelihood and to enhance their standard of living through productive and freely chosen employment, of course, within the limit set by this Bill.

And I also hope that this Bill, because the SDGs have recommended it, the LIO talks about it and recommends it, but we have a National Employment Policy and I understand that, as far back as to 2014, we had a National Employment Policy, a draft, which has been remained draft because there was such a busy talk between the *modernité et l'alliance de modernité* and the Parliament was kept shut for so many months that this draft policy has remained draft policy. But I do hope, and I have been assured by the hon. Minister that, indeed a National Employment Policy is being worked upon in conjunction with ILO and that soon it will be a reality. So, this Government is not just mere talk and negativity and seeing things which are not in the law and pointing out things which do not exist in the law. This Government is about action and true modernity is with this Government. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) : Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker sir. Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the preamble to the Bill reads as follows. It shows the intent of the Bill, the intent of the Minister and it reads that the purpose of the Bill is to provide for a more appropriate and modern legislative framework to address the needs of the labour market.

Now, we all agree in this House, be it on the Opposition side or the Government side, that there is a need to relook at the law, there is a need to revisit the Employment and Training Act as it has served its purpose. It is now outdated and we need to modernise the system that is presently in place so that we can address the problems, the concerns of job seekers. However, when I look at the Bill, unfortunately I have to say that this Bill lamentably fails to meet its objective. And I am going rely on three issues -

- (i) It is about lack of transparency in the system which is being proposed;
- (ii) About the independence or lack of independence of the Director of the National Employment Department, and
- (iii) Duplication of functions.

So, these are the three issues which I believe would be sufficient for me to show that, in fact, this Bill does not meet its objective at all. Before I proceed any further, let me answer hon. Minister Boissezon, because I think there was a genuine slip of the tongue – well, I am not talking about the tongue of hon. Tarolah who paid us a courtesy visit and then disappeared. But I think it was a genuine slip of the tongue on his behalf whilst he was reading the Interpretation Section of the Bill. Hon. Uteem made the point that employer also includes an individual, a person and, therefore, every employer, be it a person or a company will have to register. This is the point that was made by hon. Uteem.

And when we read the definition of employer at Section 2 of the Interpretation Section, we see clearly “employer” means a person. So an individual, a person also falls within the category of persons, of employers who are required to register. There is the point made by hon. Mrs Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus, she spoke about distorted mind, I am of the view that she gave a distorted version of Section 12, Subsection (2) (i). The point that was made by hon. Uteem was that the private employers should be given a free-hand for them to appoint their representative. This was the point that was made by hon. Uteem. When we read that Subsection, what can we see?

We see that –

“ (2) The Committee shall consist of –

(i) a member representing organisations of employers, to be appointed by the Minister after consultation with the most representative organisations of employers.”

And we know what happens. At the end of the day, it is the Minister who has the final say on the appointment of the representative, he is the one who chooses who should sit as representative of the organisation. So, these are the points that I wished to rebut with regard to hon. Boissézon and hon. Mrs Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus.

Now, talking about transparency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we talk about modernising the system, modernising means also putting in place a transparent system. And I am sure all MPs, even Ministers in this House, they have had numerous complaints from their constituents about the lack of transparency at the Employment Service. The system, as it is today, there is a lack of transparency. We receive various complaints from constituents

about having registered their name from years back and not having a secured employment as at today.

And they keep asking the questions again: How transparent is that system? Why is it that we see people who are close to politicians, activists, political agents and those who are close to Ministers being selected for jobs and these meritorious and needy job seekers, they find it difficult to get a job? So, when I talk about transparency, this is what we are talking about, to put in place a transparent system.

How does this Bill, what is being proposed, how does it ensure that those needy and meritorious job seekers - we have seen what has happened at the CEB, people have been recruited from a few constituencies. What has happened at the National Health Service? People being recruited from a particular constituency! How will this Bill ensure that this will not repeat? This is what we call about modernisation, a transparent system so that meritorious and needy job seekers can trust the system, they can go give their names and they would be sure that they will be selected in case there is the opportunity of a job.

Now, I was also expecting - well, I am hoping, I do not see it in the Bill. Maybe the hon. Minister will have the opportunity to reply later on. Will this database, this register going to be made public? Will someone be able to consult this register and then see to it that the process is being dealt with in a transparent and fair manner? I do not know. Is it going to be kept only for the civil servants, the director? They will deal with the system or is it going to be open to the public? I would wish the Minister to let us know because he stated that this Bill has been inspired largely from the *Pôle emploi* from France. And this has been the criticisms about the *Pôle emploi* in France; at first, the Director there did not want the information to go public.

There were much criticism and finally they had to give all the information. Today, when we look at what is happening in France, all the information about the jobseekers, the other candidates, everything goes public.

There is a second point about the independence of the National Employment Department. Now, I am talking here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the collection and analysis of data on employment related matters. This is one of the functions of the Department in particular with regard to statistics on unemployment. I know that the hon. Minister is allergic to the figures that are published by the Statistics Office. In fact, in the

past, he has even publicly criticised the figures that are published regularly by the Statistics Office.

However, this is not a reason to dilute the figures that are regularly published by the Statistics Office because there at the Statistics Office, we have a Director who is independent. He is not answerable to anybody, except to the PSC and that only on disciplinary matters. Here, what we are proposing? The appointment of a Director, who is going to be responsible to a Supervising Officer at the Ministry of Labour! So, we have to be careful there. I am of the opinion that the figures that are published by the Statistics Office should, at all times, remain the reference when it comes to rates of unemployment in the country.

Lastly, there is this issue about duplication of functions. Now, apart from the setting up of this National Employment Dashboard, we are also told that the functions of that particular Department shall also be – it will deal with issues relating to Human Resource Development such as career guidance, skills, mismatch, training, etc. But we already have a Ministry of Human Resources, which has a budget and under that Ministry, we have institutions like the HRDC and MITD doing training. What will happen to those institutions? Is there not going to be a duplication of functions? We want to know from the Minister. We know that the MITD is already offering training programmes and also the HRDC is operating, what we call, the National Training Fund to promote training in the country. What is going to happen to these institutions? In fact, when we look at the law, the HRDC law and the MITD law, the representative of the Ministry of Labour sits on the Board of HRDC and MITD. So, is there not going to be a duplication of functions?

I hope that the Minister will make it clear what more the National Employment Department would do over and above what the Ministry of Human Resource is doing. So, these are the few points, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

(6.12 p.m.)

The Minister of Tourism (Mr A. Gayan): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me, first of all, say how much I appreciate that the hon. Minister has brought this Bill to the House. It is the fulfilment of an electoral promise, but over and above

that electoral promise, this Bill does something that is highly important and very timely for the country.

But before I go into that, I would like to respond to hon. Uteem, who spoke on the Bill. I must say that I am always not to say mortified, but I am amazed at the capacity the Opposition has to say things as though they are holier-than-thou and that they are above reproach.

The same applies to hon. Ritesh Ramful. When I was listening to him, he seemed to have forgotten the episode of Khamajeet. Mr Khamajeet was a Member of the Labour Party. They were in power all those years and what did they do to change that. Where was transparency? PPS Khamajeet was walking with a list of people to be recruited. No one on this side of the House has done that or has been found doing that. We have lived up to the principles of good governance with regard to recruitment. Of course, they keep saying that. Hon. Bhagwan is not here. Hon. Bhagwan seems to pretend that he is above reproach. Ask him how his brother was recruited at the SPDC. Ask him! And I take full responsibility of what I am saying. I can go on. When hon. Bérenger was Prime Minister, the recruitment of all the Advisers based on considerations which are shameful for this country, but he was the Prime Minister. We can go to the list and we all know the kind of recruitment that was being done.

Hon. Uteem spoke of meritocracy, spoke of all those high principles as though this applies fully in Mauritius. I know of a case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, somebody who went to study in Australia. He went to study Psychology and then he went to specialise in Brussels in Neuropsychology. He came back, but he happened to be related to somebody in Government. He wanted to apply for a job and then he saw how the media operate and questions in Parliament being asked about anybody related to a Minister or to anybody. That young man decided not to apply. He was specially trained in Alzheimer's disease and we know how important it is for a country like Mauritius, mental illness. He applied to go to Canada. Last week, he was given his permanent resident status and he went to Canada. That man is my son. He refused to apply for a job because the media would have said that he got the job because he was related to a Minister. This is the fact! And then you want intelligentsia to stay in this country when you have this kind of Opposition and this kind of media! As though those who are related to Ministers or to politicians, they have no right. They are *pariahs* in this society and that they have no right to apply for any job! Is this the kind of country that

we want to live in? This is the reality, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And I know what I am talking about. We are losing and we are going to lose more people because of this attitude, of this mentality. I wanted to say this not because I want to claim any sympathy or seek any sympathy. I want no sympathy. But I want the people of this country and the world to know what kind of Opposition we have and what kind of media we have. Holier-than-thou, reproaching everything, PQs on everybody, when they did worse. Much worse!

The other thing they talk about, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about appointments. The law provides for Ministers to appoint certain people in parastatal bodies. The law is there. This is the law. We have not changed the law and yet they go on and on. I hope that, after this debate in the House, they reflect and if they are intellectually honest, they have to make amends not only the Opposition but also the media. I think it is very important that we...

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member may shake his head as much as he wants and say anything from a sitting position but what I am saying is the truth and nothing but the truth. And I can say things about hon. Uteem also, but I will refrain to do that because I am not a gutter politician.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Gayan, please address the Chair.

Mr Gayan: Yes, I am sorry. Mr Deputy Speaker, let me say that we hear a lot about transparency and all this. The reality, Mr Deputy Speaker, and all those on this side of the House and maybe also those on the other side of the House know the mismatch that we have between what appears in statistics and what is the reality on the ground. I am sure all my colleagues on this of the House, we go every Wednesday to receive our *mandants*. We all have people coming to us, they all want a job in parastatal bodies or in Government or in Municipalities.

No one can deny that. So there is a problem not only with the way we keep records but we also have a problem with the private sector because the jobs that are available with the private sector are not desirable for those who want to work. So, employability, Mr Deputy Speaker, depends on two things – availability and the willingness to work. Unfortunately, there is a third element that comes in, it is desirability. They want the work that they want and not the work that is available.

How many times I have seen people coming to me on a Wednesday, I say to them that, while you are waiting for a job why you do not go to the private sector in the meantime until you get a better job because we are not recruiting agencies, there are bodies that do that. But they say no, and I tell them: if, in fact, you are starving, you have a family to feed, you must take whatever is available. Today we have criticisms about somebody being offered

training after 3 times; he is removed from the register for 1 year. That is the reality, that is what we live every Wednesday. How many times Mr Deputy Speaker, people have come to us? I have myself seen somebody, he has, as we say, *stamped carte* for 15 years and he had been in regular employment with a major company for those 15 years.

So there is a problem. When we look at the statistics there are so many unemployed persons. In fact, hon. Uteem mentioned the number of unemployed people but that is not the reality. I am not saying that somebody who is in employment must stay in that employment, it is perfectly natural and normal for anybody to seek better employment. I am for that but to say that 'you are unemployed' defeats the whole purpose of keeping statistics and what this Bill will do is to restore the integrity of the statistics department in this country.

This is what this Bill does. We have been talking of an *Agence Nationale de l'Emploi* for years. I remember in 1982 the first 60 – 0, I was then part of the MMM, we had promised an *Agence Nationale de L'Emploi*. It was never implemented. Now, we are going to do it and I hope that when we do it, it will really be an instrument to empower people, to empower the young to seek jobs. Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning during question time, I was taking some notes, it is important that we look at the reality.

Hon. Bhagwan mentioned something about bats, and people not being available to put their nets on the fruit trees. That is a major potential for business for the young ones, innovation, creativity, SMEs. There are orchards all over the country and if you just get a team that is well organized, that goes and puts the nets they are going to mint money. It doesn't have to be the Ministry of Agro Industry. It can be the private sector. There are possibilities for employment, there are empowerment opportunities for the young ones but they must be able to seize them instead of thinking that the only way for security is through a Government job.

There was another question this morning about CT scans. When I was the Minister of Health, Mr Deputy Speaker, I kept putting the questions to the officers why is it that an equipment that breaks down in a hospital takes months to be repaired. You know why Mr Deputy Speaker, there is only one medical engineer. The others are being trained for a couple of years and when you have five major regional hospitals and the billions of rupees of equipment, you can just imagine the state in which we find ourselves. Where are the young ones who want to do those jobs that are needed and are available for the country?

Mr Deputy Speaker, when Singapore started its life away from Malaysia, Singapore was a simple fishing village about 55 years ago. Today it is a megalopolis, a major financial centre. The secret of that major development was engineering, they trained thousands of

engineer in top class universities. They needed engineers for their utilities, for their airports, for their ports, for their petrochemicals, for their roads, everything they needed; for the lift, they needed engineers and they constructed from nothing something that became today's Singapore.

It is not over yet, but they realised that they had to plan for the future – in new areas. What this Bill will do is to plan for the future setting the stage for training, setting the stage for what are the requirements for Mauritius in the years to come, in 10 years, in 20 years. I heard in the House and this was a legacy of the previous Government '*un gradué par maison*'. Of course, I am for a graduate in every household provided that graduates are employable. We cannot just train for the sake of training for beating our drums and saying that we have produced so many graduates in one year.

That is not what training is all about, that is not what the future has in store. The work environment as it is today, Mr Deputy Speaker, will not be the same in the years to come. The world has changed and the world is changing every single day. Robotisation is coming, I am happy that the hon. Minister mentioned artificial intelligence. The internet of things, robots - so lots of things will change but there will be new opportunities. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister is doing so much about renewable energy, how many engineers are we training for renewable energy? How many? We need to train them, not only for solar energy, for wind energy, for wave energy because that's where the future is. In the next 10 to 20 years, all the cars, all the vehicles in the world will be electric. How many engineers are we training to look after those things? This is what this Bill is going to do and this is what we require to get this country to move forward. We are now reaching the mango season. We pride ourselves on having tropical fruits. Are we aware that millions of tonnes of fruits are simply wasted in Mauritius. They just fall under the trees and they rot, they are a nuisance. Isn't it possible for the Universities, for the training institutions to find ways to capture that resource? And instead of importing fruit juice, we can make our own fruit juice and export. Why isn't it possible? But we need to innovate. We need to change the way we do things. Life cannot go on as it is. I take another area that we want to develop: Ocean Economy.

How many graduates do we have in Ocean Economy? We want to develop aquaculture. We want to develop all sorts of things in the oceans. But training! We have to get out of that mind-set that everybody has to be a lawyer, a doctor. In fact, when I was Minister of Health and Quality of Life, I had 400 unemployed doctors. We had to do all sorts of *coustiques*, as we say, to get them to be in employment. There comes a saturation point, and what this Bill will do is to do the planning; the planning for all those who will need to be

employed in the areas where employment is necessary for the development of the country; for the security of the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in IT, how many top-class IT specialists do we have? And really sometimes I get so frustrated whenever there is a problem, and I used to have that great frustration when I was in the Ministry of Health. Whenever there was a problem in the Ministry of Health, the advice I received was to get the WHO to come. I said: “but you are professionals. You have the skills, the talent and the knowledge, why can’t you try to solve it? In case we can’t, then we call for help.” But the first reaction in Mauritius is: get an expert to come, get a foreigner to come, whereas we can be a pool of talent for export to Africa, to the region and to the world. This is what this Bill is all about. I think instead of talking about little things whether there is a typing mistake or whatever; we have to look at the large picture. The time has come for this country to look at the large picture. We have a great future if we make good use of it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are talking about the Cancer Centre. My colleague, the Minister of Health and Quality of life was talking about the bunker. You will be surprised and the whole country will be surprised that when we were looking at the specification for that bunker - because it needs to have nuclear powered equipment, it has to be safe - no one in this country has the skills and the knowledge to design a bunker. No one! We have a serious problem. We tend, unfortunately, to be satisfied with the minimum when the world is going for the maximum. And because we need that Cancer Centre, we need to get expertise from elsewhere. We are getting it from India. But we could have it here! So, since we know for long that we have a situation where cancer is a serious health concern, still no one has bothered to train anybody in bunker and no one even thought about that! But we must think ahead and this is what this Bill is going to do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are lot of things that can be said about this Bill, but let me say that we have to follow the Singapore example. Of course, some people will say it is a cliché, but Singapore has the best formula. It trains its people and it gets its Universities to provide programmes for training to meet its development needs. And this is what we need to also do in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the time when somebody had a job for life is gone. Skills, reskilling, training, retraining this is what the future is all about. This is why I would urge this House to look at this Bill in a larger context rather than the nitty-gritty of what is going to

happen, transparency or whatever they were talking about. That is not the issue. The world has changed and the world is going to change faster as we move into the digital world. We have already moved into the digital world. And this is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to say that the Universities in Mauritius have a role to play in this. They cannot simply keep offering courses that are no longer relevant for the development needs of the country. They have to be focused on what we require. The Agenda 2030 set out by the former Prime Minister has charted a roadmap. Let us work on that roadmap and let us see how we can develop our country; how we can use the talent that we have. Just because somebody has graduated in one area does not mean that he has to stay in that area. The sky is the limit for avant-garde training.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the Minister of Tourism, I need sometimes to give my approval for expatriates to be given a work permit in the tourism sector. I was shocked recently, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when there was an application for a work permit for somebody to work as a food and beverages manager. Just imagine...

(Interruptions)

I said 'no' in the beginning. The reality is that we have a shortage of skills even in food and beverages management. And if we want our hotels to be top class, we want to attract tourists to Mauritius because we want to be a prestige destination; we must give them the services that they are looking for. So, even in the hotel industry, we must be able to provide training to get people to reach the level of skills and competence which are available in the best hotels of the world. We want to market Mauritius as one of the great destinations of tourism. So, we must have the people. And when we give permits to expatriates, of course we are criticised. For me, my first option is not to give to an expatriate. But if I want to maintain the quality, the standards and the service; I sometimes have no choice but to give the approval for occupational permits. But I was shocked because this was for the food and beverages manager, not a top class general manager. So, we have a serious problem. We must get our young people to be trained in the areas where there are jobs, well-paying jobs. And tourism is not the only sector. I am sure in agriculture there must be lots of opportunities. In all the major sectors of the economy there are lots of opportunities.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say that this Bill is paving the way for the modern Mauritius. It is a historical development. Of course, people can quibble about what is historical and what is not. But if you look at the large picture, this is what is desirable and

necessary for the country. But let me finish on one note. I want to appeal also to the private sector. People in Mauritius would rather not work for the private sector if they have the choice of working in the public sector. I am not blaming them. I understand them because when they work for the private sector there is, in their mind, no security of employment. And if there is no security of employment, they don't get a payslip, they can't get a loan and they can't get anything of a permanent nature in order to advance their future. So, my appeal to the private sector is to let us have an environment where security is the dominant feature of any employment contract. Of course, if there are problems with an employee that is a different issue. But security is the key. Security is much more important than the quantum of salary. So, we must have a holistic approach to this problem.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say once again that the best route out of poverty is employment, and this Bill creates the environment for employment.

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Fowdar!

Mr S. Fowdar (Third Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will join the previous orators to commend the Bill. I know that the Bill may not be of importance to some people, but I think this is really important for me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I used to be Minister for employment sometime, and I know what my friend, the Minister, is facing nowadays. When there is unemployment, people think that the Minister of Employment is responsible to create jobs and he is responsible to find jobs for people, which is totally wrong.

I think the debate today is an economic debate. It is not *peccadille qu'on voit*, typewriting mistakes or whatever is wrong in the Bill. I think this is a very important Bill and it has *une portée économique* really important.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, year in year out, for years - it is not this Government, so many other governments in the past - we have been facing the problem of skills mismatch. Well, it is a problem which has been never resolved. This is the root of the whole problem. The Bill is about fixing jobs, facilitating employment, but everything bogs down to one thing: skills mismatch. If we happen to close the gap, there is no problem. Jobseekers will find jobs; employers will find jobseekers with the appropriate skills. So, I really commend the Minister

for bringing this Bill. When I saw the Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *j'étais emballé de pouvoir venir* deliver a speech because what says the Bill here. The object of this Bill is –

“(...) to address the needs of the labour market, including skills mismatch, underemployment, unemployment (...)”

I think skills mismatch, underemployment are the problems that really matter these days. Now, finding jobs for jobseekers and finding jobseekers for employers is not a difficult task, unless there are job vacancies which match with the available skills on the market. If we have this, there is no problem.

By the way, hon. Uteem was saying that we have 42,000 *chômeurs*, unemployed people. I do not disagree. It is true. But it is also true that we have nearly 50,000 expatriates working in the country. So, if we counter one with the other, we do not have any unemployment. What is missing here is the skills of the people. We do not need those skills. Otherwise some people do not want to go to work in the fields where there are jobs.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although the problem of skills mismatch is a very complex one and there is no easy solution, there is no quick fit, there is no quick solution, but it is good that we start addressing the problem. The skills mismatch is also not the end of the world. It exists almost everywhere around the world. Almost all countries have skills mismatch. We must also know that it cannot be cured at 100%. There will always be a degree of skills mismatch.

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, skills gap has enormous effect on the economy. If employers are unable to find people with the right skills, it means that they will not meet their business objectives and if they do not meet their business objectives, it means that it affects negatively, it has an impact on our GDP. And also, if it has an impact on our GDP, then it affects our standard of living in the country.

So, the right formula, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for a successful economic growth is certainly optimisation of our labour force, and this will happen unless we have got the right people with the right skills in the right place. Our mission is to boost our GDP, to raise our standard of living, to come out from the middle-income trap. Therefore, it is urgent to address the issue of skills mismatch.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our aim and ambition is to turn our economy into a service economy, and if we want to do that, we have got no right to waste our human capital at all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, jobseekers with amazing qualifications and certificates are not able to find jobs and they are not being able to be rewarded for their efforts. They are severely frustrated; we know that. Somebody has just said, “On Wednesday, we meet people.” We know how much these people are frustrated, they have got really good qualifications, they are really successful in their studies, but we cannot find a job for them, the economy has got no jobs for them. These people are losing confidence, they are desperate, their parents have spent huge sums of money to make them study. Yet, now they are unemployed or they are underemployed, that is, they are working in a lower position than what they best deserve.

We know how many graduates these days, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are employed in clerical positions. I know, in my constituency, one of the graduates is employed as a manual worker. But this is desperate. The economy is not making optimum use of their skills. As we know, certainly they blame the Government; they blame the authorities for not finding jobs for them.

But, let us see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who is to be blamed. Is it the authorities for not being able to create jobs for them or is it the jobseekers themselves for having not chosen the right field of study for them to get jobs? Certainly, jobs are created by the economy - it is not the authorities, not the Government -, by the private sector and the public sector, and they are based on demand. I do not think the public sector or the private sector will create jobs that will not get them dividend in return. Who will employ people who will sit and do nothing in the office?

I do not see private sector employing scientists in place of accountants or doctors in place of accountants. So, they will need to find people with the right skills for their job vacancies. So, jobseekers will always be recruited on the basis of their qualifications and on the basis of merit. If their skills are not required by the economy, there will be no job for them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This must be clear for them. Entrepreneurs will require people who will increase their wealth. For example, as I said, they cannot employ doctors when they need accountants. The whole problem is: do our students know about it? Are they informed that they cannot find a job if they do not choose the right field of study? But what have we done as the authority, the Government, the Ministry, to advise the students what to study, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

In fact, we know - in villages we have seen that - lots of students choose their field of study out of passion and out of emotion rather than demand driven, and this is dramatic. I used to be MP for Constituency No. 9, Flacq-Bon Accueil, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There, it is more than dramatic. Lots of people with amazing qualifications, but which do not match the needs of the economy. We have recently seen a large number of graduates who have applied to be enlisted as Police Constables, although the required qualification is School Certificate.

On the other hand, a large number of students are still enrolling to study medicines, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although there is an excess of doctors on the market. The craze towards medicine has not ended yet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Moreover, there exists still a big craze in some quarters to study for languages, be it English language, French, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Telugu and so on. How much of these are required by the country? Have we carried out a study, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? What have we done to discourage and advise these parents and students where the scope is limited?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe it is high time in some cases to introduce capping, to put numbers, if 400 doctors, not to exceed 400 doctors, or if 500 engineers, not to exceed 500 engineers. Anyone going above that number, we need to stop them, and we used to do that before. The Ministry of Education were discouraging students to go for study in accountancy if there were too many accountants on the market. So, the capping would help to discourage those who want to study fields of studies which are not in demand on the market.

Additionally, as hon. Gayan said, we need to direct, I mean, we need to order colleges and universities to review the whole curriculum, to do away with all those curriculum not required by the economy, to adopt new curriculum so that it meets the future economic needs of the country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, skills mismatch is the biggest problem. But why do we have skills mismatch? Simply the students are not guided! Honestly, I don't think our career guidance is efficient and effective, because our career guidance is not based on a scientific approach. Have we worked on a career guidance which really works *à merveille, comme on dit*? What do we do to have a good career guidance service, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? So, the best first thing is how do we tackle the issue of skills mismatch?

First of all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to define our economic strategy for the country for the next five years, for the next 10 years, for the next 15 years. We need to define it for the short-term and for the long-term, and we need to inform the educators, we need to

inform the students what would be the economic strategy for the country in the next 5, 10, or 15 years, and career guidance must be imperatively based on the economic strategies and prospects. It cannot be one off *ad hoc*, it has to be continuous.

That is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am happy that the Minister has brought the Bill, but I would have been happier if this Bill would have been brought in by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development or jointly with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Employment. I think this is a concern for the Ministry of Economic Development and the Minister of Education in priority, because the Minister of Employment is the one who feeds in people to the job, he does not work out on the economic strategy, he does not work on career guidance.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, education and training curriculum needs to fit the future requirements of our economy, and this can only happen if we develop our economic strategy very clearly and precisely so that, we, the parents, the students know what to study and what will come for them in the future.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, universities and colleges must be directed firmly, as I said, to stop providing courses not required by the economy. I remember when I was the Minister of Training, I was having a regular argument with the Minister of Education on one issue, and the University of Mauritius at that time had 80 seats for BA Humanities, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and all those students who were applying for accountancy, engineering, maths or whatever, and when they didn't have any seat up there, they were dropped to BA Humanities. So, we were producing 80 BA Humanities graduates every year, which were not required by the economy. But, somewhere somebody has to come forward and stop the university, tell them not to do the subjects and the curriculum which are not required by the economy.

Now, as I said, we cannot guide our students unless we know where this country is going. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, saying all this, the problem where there is skills mismatch is again not a new problem, it is not arising now, not with this Government, not with the previous Government, it is an ongoing problem. Nobody has taken the initiative of resolving the problem and that is why I am really happy with the Minister today, for having brought this Bill, spelling out clearly that he wants to close the gap, the skills gap. But, as I said, he needs to work with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Economic Development, as

well as the private sector. The private sector is the biggest job creator and we need to work together with them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do agree with one thing with hon. Ramful, but my concern is, it seems there would be some duplication of work with the creation of the National Employment Department.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the year 2003, the MMM-MSM Government created, what is known as the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC). So, the HRDC was instituted as an apex body for human resource development. It was supposed to be the link between the different sectors of the economy and the Government, hence, to guide them on the future human resource development strategies. It was supposed to be the appropriate forum that would guide education and training strategies with a view to maximise our human resources and to reduce the skills gap. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after 14 years, we still have skills mismatch.

In 2005, when we left the MMM/MSM Government, the HRDC has been seen more often as a paying agent rather than an advisory role that we conferred to them. They were no more advising what to do and what not to do, they were just taking money for training on behalf of the Government. After 14 years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have never come across any recommendation, any report from the HRDC that would have guided parents and students in choosing the right field of study, although that was the main purpose. If you go and see the initial Bill, that was the main purpose. It was to close the gap; it was to resolve the skills mismatch. But the HRDC, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regroups the most important sectors of the economy and they are supposed to be discussing the future manpower needs in the different sectors. They are supposed to come up with proper indications and findings. These findings should form the basis of the advice to be given to students and parents on the choice of their field of study.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Education is not here today, but I would advise her to look into HRDC and to get HRDC to be more proactive in its advisory role rather than acting simply as a paying agent. It must take a lead role in manpower planning. I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the HRDC and the National Employment Department should find a *modus operandi* and they should work together and reduce unnecessary duplication.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the objectives of the National Employment Department is to promote labour migration. I am all out for it although my friend, hon.

Uteem, is against it. But I am all out for it, Sir. I think people who cannot find a job, if they find a job elsewhere, let them leave. Why make them suffer here if there are prospects? And, do not forget, if they are working overseas, they are sending foreign currency in the country, it is benefiting the economy. And if they stay here as unemployed, it is going to create a lot of problems: social problem; family problem; human problem.

So, I think we need to do something here. If there are opportunities, why not, we need to tap the opportunities and we must also guide them. I think we need to guide them. There are lots of opportunities in Canada and in Australia. There are lots of opportunities for graduates and professionals, but there are lots of opportunities for manual workers. I hope the hon. Minister is listening to me. There are lots of opportunities for manual workers. But the problem with manual workers is that they do not have a formal qualification. They do not have certificates. They have not been to school, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And, they cannot get employment overseas.

And this is what we had thought for them when we were in Government, the MMM/MSM Government 2000-2005, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I brought in through the MQA what is called *reconnaissance des compétences*, recognition of prior learning. Through this recognition of prior learning today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a builder, a plumber, an electrician, a sweeper or whoever with no formal qualifications can get a qualification. They can be tested. They can be given a formal recognition of their competence and this can be used within the National Qualification Framework for them to progress further. So, they can progress inland or they can have employment overseas.

But I feel sorry that the Mauritius Qualifications Authority is not making big publicity about this recognition of prior learning. This is an opportunity for those people who have not been to schools or colleges but they have good skills. They are highly skilled. They can do a lot of good jobs and they can get a lot of opportunities to work overseas. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, recognition of prior learning is one thing which the Employment Department can look into.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am happy that the skills mismatch, which has a direct bearing on our GDP growth and on our standard of living, is being taken seriously by the Minister and the Government. But there is one word of caution here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it needs to be a teamwork. It cannot be *tiraillements entres les ministres, entres les ministères*. There are three Ministries concerned here and they need to work together: the

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development; the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment. If they work together what they have put on paper today will happen. *Mais s'il y aura des tiraillements*, it is going to stay on paper, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

My sincere wish is that they start the work, they set the ball rolling. It is not going to happen today, it is not going to happen tomorrow but let us wait, start the ball rolling, let us hope that we reduce the skills gap and we make the country happy with everybody getting an employment.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dayal!

(7.03 p.m.)

Mr R. Dayal (First Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Soodesh Callichurn, Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training must be thoroughly commended for coming up with this Bill to repeal the Employment and Training Act which dates as far back as 1963, that is, three years prior to our Independence, the 50th anniversary of which we will be celebrating next year.

This is a yeoman achievement for our Government. True it is that we have gone a long way in optimising educational prospects responding to the needs of the Mauritian society. Career guidance has to be reinforced with more staff in order to respond proactively to the fast changing environment of the labour market. With the plethora of green initiatives imposed by climate change, it is a subject of concern that despite the availability of funds at the level of the Global Green Fund and the availability of abundant arable land, the project for the production of pellets for potatoes and Tapioca for the production of eco-friendly bags enhancing revenue and employability at the level of small planters, leave alone *arundo donax*.

The non-utilisation locally of some 80,000 litres of Ethanol produced daily by Omnicane, that is, some 25 million litres annually because of the absence of a legal framework highlights uncoordinated measures to reduce our dependency on fossil fuel and create job opportunities locally instead of exporting Ethanol overseas.

As the first returned candidate of Constituency No. 9, Flacq & Bon Accueil, which witnessed the famous *Andolan* Movement of the Independent Forward Block triggered by the Bissoondoyal brothers while struggling for independence, our ancestors struggled for inclusive education, empowerment, career guidance training, right to increase the wealth of the nation through judicious utilisation of human resources, access to employment democratically based on meritocracy, fair competition and job satisfaction to sustain the progress and prosperity of our motherland in all sectors in peace, justice and harmony.

Today, almost every day the Citizens Advice Bureaus are flooded with citizens of each Constituency who seek avenues of employment bluntly telling us that in certain cases they have been stamping their cards given at the employment service for more than 20 years and they have not been proposed any employment and they are in their 50s. This state of affair is simply not acceptable in the modern Republic of Mauritius! And I strongly feel that our Government has the political will to walk the talk spelt out in our electoral manifesto with the tabling of the National Employment Bill.

This vision is to iron the creases in the system to eliminate frustration at all levels among the majority of those who have sacrificed and invested in the education of their children in the hope of them finding a job with the appropriate gratification, their educational qualification and their competencies and, above everything, their status. I strongly feel that the new role carved for the Citizens Advice Bureaus must be further enhanced with the provision of an interactive Dashboard run by the dedicated staff as proposed in Part I section 6 (b) to –

“set up and operate a website, to be known as the National Employment Dashboard, to –

- (i) assist jobseekers to search for career opportunities;
- (ii) provide a platform for employers to advertise vacancies;
- (iii) ensure easy access, in a timely manner, to job vacancies and key labour market indicators;
- (iv) provide labour market information for the benefit of employers and job seekers (...).”

Hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger in 1982 cosmetically opted for an *Agence Nationale de l'emploi*, but did not succeed.

And despite the fact that he was the Prime Minister, he did not have the political will for a National Employment Bill, Maurice étant un État de droit. The Labour Party as well did

not show credible initiative for a National Employment Bill. The Opposition, as a whole, never came with such a political option for the general good. It is crystal clear that we are working in the supreme interest of the people of the Republic of Mauritius as we have committed to undertake for the general good, to foster job opportunities at all levels for the sons and daughters of the Republic of Mauritius.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Benydin!

(7.10 p.m.)

Mr T. Benydin (First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The introduction of this Bill reflects the commitment of a caring Government to address important and essential issues related to the promotion of employment and to facilitate labour market adjustments and the employment of job seekers to find jobs that meet their aspirations. It goes without saying that the National Employment Bill will strengthen employment services to allow a well-functioning labour market, particularly at a time when rapid technological and organisational developments are having consequential effects on employment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, employment and decent work are of paramount importance and as such transcend all political barriers in the wake of increasing demand for jobs and young people in quest of assistance in finding jobs; advise of new career avenues, training options and employment prospects. As I said, this issue transcends all political barriers and today I think it is sad that, at a time when we are speaking about employment, particularly for the young people, the PMSD has decided to be absent. So we should take note of these issues. Yesterday, I took leave at 3 o'clock just to participate in the inauguration of the second phase of the Quatre Bornes Market/Fair and I am sure that the electorate of Constituency number 18 will take note of that absence and who really are working for the benefit of the young people and job seekers of this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill underlines the pivotal role that a National Employment Service can play to meet new challenges and specific needs of the labour market with regard to job seeking, placement, advise to enterprises, occupational retraining activities, organisation of special programs for the creation of jobs, promotion of independent

employment, management of migratory movements and specific measures in favour of employment for youth and people with disabilities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, skills development is a pre-requisite to meet the objectives of the decent work agenda to enhance, what we call, youth employability and increase in access to better employment. It is therefore necessary to align training supply and demand in the labour market to ensure equality of opportunity in access to training and to development strategies which respond to the changes of technology, trade environment and growing challenges in a modern economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being a former trade unionist, I have to refer to the ILO Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007-2015 which spells out clearly that skill upgrading is important at all levels of the economy; from the unskilled work of those at the bottom of the ladder to the highest cadres of the administration. Linking higher skills to the application of new technologies, in fact, lies at the heart of the capacity of improving productivity of workers and businesses, including micro enterprises. Skills development policies and programs contribute to improve access to employability development, facilitating young people to enter the labour market including returning migrant workers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the training programs should equally address the needs of people working in the informal economy because these people lack access to public and private programs training courses. Informal apprenticeship should also be recognised in the National Employment and Training Policies. One of the best ways of facilitating the transition from one job to another is through career counselling and, in many countries, this service has become increasingly important as one of the core services to be offered. In the case of Mauritius, the National Employment Dashboard can provide electronic or internet-based job seeker data information. It is a fact that effective counselling services can only be provided when there is reliable and updated labour market information.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another field which is gaining momentum is labour migration. Here I would like to disagree with my colleague, hon. Uteem, who has some reserves concerning migration. I think that we are living in a global world. The world has become a village. There should be mobility. Just like we go to study abroad to get new knowledge, new skills, new experiences, when we come back, we can share the acquired knowledge to citizens of our country. I think that labour migration, therefore, is an essential issue and it is even discussed in many forums at regional and international levels.

This channel, therefore, should be considered as another priority in our employment policy where not only our job seekers can benefit, but the Mauritian economy as well; provided we can explore all the avenues and support our youngsters with the appropriate training and skills. I think that hon. Fowdar referred to the cases of manual workers; I think that with appropriate training skills and recognition, this issue can be solved. We have also for reference people getting jobs on *croisières*, there are vivid examples where Mauritians are being recruited. We have the sea training school and even the Ecole Hotelière Sir Gaëtan Duval of Ebene which can be useful instruments in our quest for better training and employment policies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard again to the promotion of labour migration, the National Employment Department should have policies to ensure that migrant workers have regular authorised status and are fully protected by the labour legislation of the host country in line with international norms and labour standards.

While promoting labour migration, due care and attention should be taken to avoid sizeable brain drain of qualified and skilled workers. It is to be recognised that migrant remittances contribute to enhancing the investment environment in the country of origin. However, it is important that we should be able to monitor returns and also promotes the reintegration of returnees and use their skills and social capital to sustain our economic activities. At an ILO annual Conference in 2004, it was outlined in a Multilateral Framework document on Labour Migration that, I quote –

“The contribution of labour migration to employment, economic growth, development and the alleviation of poverty should be recognized and maximized for the benefit of both origin and destination countries.”

Migrant workers, therefore, contribute to development. They alleviate pressure on labour markets, sending remittances home, acquiring increase in skills and contribute to boost investments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in line with persons with disabilities as mentioned in the Bill and in conformity with the Charter of Fundamental Social Rights in SADC countries, all persons with disabilities should be entitled to additional concrete measures aimed at providing the social and professional integration. As such, facilities should be given by the National Employment Department to persons with disabilities to vocational training,

accessibility and mobility, means of transport as well as appropriate organisations of work and workplaces to take into consideration their needs. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we speak of employment, it must be viewed from its multi-dimensional perspective and not as an isolated term summarised in a nutshell to connote simply a job and a salary.

Employment embraces every aspect that has to do with occupational safety and health, education and qualification, training, guidance, market needs and skills, all in a legal framework to be respected by both the employer and the employee as well. From this perspective, the setting up of a National Employment Department becomes pertinent and relevant in the turning point of our history when much emphasis is being laid on revolutionary measures taken by Government to introduce, for example, the Negative Income Tax, to reflect on the introduction of the minimum wage and also to promote the philosophy of a decent work and a decent pay principle. The setting up of an appropriate department within the legal framework, therefore, constitutes an important pillar in the promotion of employment policies.

This piece of legislation will play a pivotal role to outlaw all forms of discrimination, for example, not to discriminate employee on grounds of age, sex, race, labour, religion, ethnicity and social origin or political opinion. This Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, must take on board measures to combat all forms of discrimination. Employees must be paid due respect so that they can develop their own potential. Mismatch in supply and demand particularly of young people is a burning issue to be dealt with by the National Employment Department as graduates are emerging in increasing number and skills required in industries and services do not exist in sufficient numbers. As such, many job seekers have no alternative than to migrate to other countries or take up work that is below their skill's range. Vocational needs have also to be restructured and upgraded to assess the growth sectors where skills shortages exist and the curriculum of activities be readapted accordingly. It is equally important to raise labour standards and eliminate discriminatory hiring barriers in the private sector to attract more job seekers. It is here that the National Employment Department can play a crucial role by encouraging campaigns to enhance the image of the private sector as well as entrepreneurship among the youth.

For the labour market to perform well, the objectives of efficiency and fairness should be present. It is important that a well-functioning labour market should protect workers against the risk of income loss and promote better opportunities at micro and macro levels to

stimulate the creation of new jobs. I can still remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there was the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development which was doing a good job in the preparation of the three-year plan, the five-year plan and the long-term planning as well. It is, therefore, relevant to reintroduce a specialised section in the National Employment Department to work out on such laudable initiatives and to forecast our short, medium and long-term employment policies requirements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to anticipate future needs of the labour market, there is a pressing need to reintroduce a Youth Guidance Service. I think this has been mentioned by my colleague, hon. Fowdar. I also think that we are on the same wavelength because he said that the National Employment Board must work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education so that new subjects be introduced to meet future market demands. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the private sectors and bodies can invest in the economy to meet new emerging demands in the labour market. I think that Statistics Mauritius also has an important role to play to assess labour demands in each sector of the economy. The Mauritius Research Council as well as Universities can provide appropriate courses and relevant curriculum of studies to respond to short and long-term demands of our market. The Nine Year Schooling can provide the necessary platform to start the reform that is required to meet new challenges and start offering basic skills and trainings from a tender age in a wide scope of activities. These trainings can afterwards be strengthened at secondary education level and ultimately at university level alongside with appropriate placements that can supply, in addition to academic background, the necessary skills.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill comes at an opportune time and evidently translate this Government's willingness to usher and promote a new era of social justice through its geared policy of sustainable development. It reflects a vision and a new era in our employment policy that will bring hope to the young people and job seekers where the dignity of labour is promoted and respected.

Before resuming my seat, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Labour for the introduction of this Bill to this august Assembly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Selvon!

(7.25 p.m.)

Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président de m'accorder la parole. Ce projet de loi est une démarche nécessaire parce que l'ancienne législation était *l'Employment and Training Act* entrée en vigueur il y a 54 ans, soit le 18 mai 1963.

Ce projet de loi donne l'occasion à la Chambre de commenter l'action du ministre dans les secteurs du développement socio-économique et humain du pays et de commenter aussi son discours sur ce *Bill* prononcé le 24 octobre.

Tout d'abord, disons que chercher un emploi alors que la promesse de miracle économique ne s'est pas réalisée en trois ans de pouvoir est très problématique pour les chômeurs les plus qualifiés allant de la main-d'œuvre ouvrière au catégorie professionnelle. Ce n'est pas ce projet de loi qui réalisera le miracle économique ou le plein-emploi, mais quand même selon le ministre, la nouvelle loi se propose d'offrir des outils de recherche ou demandeurs d'emploi et d'employeurs. Je pense que le ministre aurait pu mieux faire dans sa tentative de modernisation. Ce qui est central à ce genre de texte de loi c'est l'établissement et le renforcement des liens entre les acteurs dans les secteurs de l'emploi et une assistance active de l'État face aux demandeurs d'emploi et aux employeurs dans leurs recherches respectives.

Ayant vécu et travaillé des années au Canada, j'estime qu'en faisant la comparaison avec ce pays, l'actuel projet de loi vise à rejoindre sous seulement certains rapports, quelques normes modernes, mais pas tout à fait. Dans son discours prononcé le 24 octobre, le ministre a précisé, je le cite -

«Notre mission est de hausser le niveau des compétences pour encourager l'entreprise, créer des emplois supplémentaires, meilleures et promouvoir la croissance économique. Nos objectifs stratégiques sont – (...) »

Je résume -

« Améliorer le *Labour Market Intelligence* pour permettre aux entreprises et les demandeurs d'emploi de faire eux-mêmes les meilleurs choix.

Travailler avec les employeurs dans la création d'emplois durables, fondée sur des compétences avancées.

Maximiser l'impact de l'emploi des politiques concernant les qualifications et les efforts des employeurs pour soutenir l'emploi et obtenir une main-d'œuvre internationalement compétitive. »

Je constate que le ministre parle, dans son discours, d'une réforme des lois de l'immigration - j'ai moi-même travaillé dans trois pays étrangers - et qu'il faut rendre plus facile l'accès à l'emploi à l'étranger, qui ouvre des horizons extraordinaires. Mais l'immigration est financièrement coûteuse. Il y a des frais liés aux applications, comme dans le cas du Canada. Il y a aussi la question de l'expérience et des qualifications requises. Je demande au gouvernement de considérer comment aider les personnes de tout âge dans ces trois domaines clés de l'immigration professionnelle pour travailler à l'étranger.

Pour les finances, la famille devrait pouvoir accéder à une assistance gouvernementale que le chef de famille à Maurice pourrait garantir. Pour l'expérience, il faut un placement dans une entreprise à Maurice sur une période donnée et le gouvernement devrait s'arranger pour apporter sa contribution. Et pour les qualifications, il faudra travailler avec la *Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA)* pour la reconnaissance des diplômes et surtout, ce qui est crucial, l'expérience des candidats à l'immigration professionnelle.

Je souhaite donc que le ministre essaie d'innover en la matière. Le ministre affirme offrir de meilleurs outils pour l'emploi. Le devoir qui lui incombe maintenant, c'est d'agir vite et sur tous les fronts, alors que son gouvernement devrait faire exploser la création d'emplois, comme promis en 2014. Cela le rapprochera davantage de ce qu'il a écrit dans le préambule de son projet de loi que je rappelle ici, avec mes commentaires et suggestions.

Premièrement, faciliter l'emploi qui est l'objectif le plus important de tout gouvernement confronté au fléau du chômage. Ce gouvernement doit encore plus faciliter l'emploi en créant les 15,000 emplois par an qu'il a promis aux Mauriciens.

Deuxièmement, satisfaire les Mauriciens dans leur recherche d'emploi, conforme à leurs aspirations. Ici, il faut le plus vite possible une étude complémentaire à cette nouvelle loi sur les aspirations réelles des jeunes en ce qu'il s'agit de l'emploi.

Troisièmement, offrir de l'information aux chercheurs d'emploi sur les possibilités de trouver du travail et les tendances futures du marché de l'emploi. J'espère que les agences privées de recherche d'emploi bénéficient de ces facilités, surtout que ces moteurs de recherche de job existent déjà sur Internet, y compris celui du ministère qui devrait, pour sa part, bénéficier d'une amélioration. Ce site s'appelle « *mauritiushjobs.mu* ».

Je pense aussi que le ministre devrait continuer à participer à l'exercice de l'*International Labour Organisation*, auquel il fait référence et qui est *ongoing*, le *Future of Work Initiative, The Way Ahead* qui sera suivi par la création d'une *High Level Global Commission* en 2018/2019.

Quatrièmement, guider et assister les Mauriciens dans leur recherche d'un emploi en leur offrant des informations sur le marché de l'emploi. Dans les sociétés modernes, c'est un outil offert depuis longtemps dans les bureaux et agences de l'emploi.

Cinquièmement, promouvoir à l'emploi et la formation professionnelle aux jeunes et aux personnes souffrant de handicap. Cet objectif s'insère dans le concept de l'équité et de celui de la non-discrimination.

Sixièmement, promouvoir ce que le ministre appelle *job migration*. Cela se réfère au travail à l'étranger et la nécessité exprimée par le ministre de faciliter l'immigration à la main-d'œuvre. J'encourage le gouvernement à offrir aux demandeurs d'emploi des informations et des liens Internet qui leur donnent accès au marché de l'emploi et de l'immigration à l'étranger, comme au Canada et d'autres pays. Je connais des personnes que j'ai moi-même aidées et qui ont utilisé avec succès de tels liens pour avoir des emplois au Canada à partir de leur ordinateur à Maurice.

Septièmement, cette partie du mémorandum se propose d'encourager le *home based work*, et je crois avoir été le parlementaire qui a le plus parlé sur ce type d'emploi à encourager. Il y a différentes catégories reconnues en Angleterre. Il y a les personnes qui sont basées à la maison et qui vont travailler à leur propre compte ailleurs ; les travailleurs ambulants, dirait-on à Maurice.

Ce secteur explose dans tous les pays. Il y a la possibilité que des employés travaillent à la maison, ce qu'on appelle en Angleterre le *flexible working*. Un secteur qui explose lui aussi dans le monde. Tout cela amène les statisticiens à parler de *telecommuters* et de *remote workers*. Le ministre pourrait mieux nous informer à ce sujet, dans une époque où

l'ordinateur et Internet permettent aux gens de travailler à la maison. Il y a les personnes qui travaillent à leur propre compte chez eux, allant des artisans travaillant avec leurs mains dans l'artisanat aux personnes qui travaillent sur leurs ordinateurs.

Ce secteur du travail également explose en Grande-Bretagne, où le nombre de *home workers* a dépassé les cinq millions, soit environ 5 % du *work force*. Le ministre devrait offrir les chiffres des *home workers* à Maurice, avec les détails de ceux qui travaillent à leur propre compte et ceux qui travaillent pour des organisations, firmes locales et internationales. Il nous faut raffiner ces statistiques. Si c'est bon que sous l'article 3(2) de la loi proposée, je cite –

“This Act shall bind the State [of Mauritius]”

et que l'article 2 inclut les départements du gouvernement, je trouve dommage que certains principes et devoirs de l'État et certains concepts ne sont pas mentionnés dans la législation. Les principes d'équité et de *fairness* ne sont pas mentionnés dans ce projet de loi sur l'emploi et sur la formation professionnelle. Ces principes devraient s'appliquer dans les recrutements, et en disant cela, j'exprime un sentiment populaire très fort à Maurice qui est en faveur d'un renforcement des principes de *fairness* et d'*equity* au niveau des recrutements.

On dit dans la rue, à Maurice, qu'une seule nomination injuste dans le service civil fait 200,000 personnes mécontentes. Au Canada, il y a même une loi séparée, le *Employment Equity Act*. Je cite ici l'article 2 de la version officielle française, une obligation légale bilingue oubliée par bêtise à Maurice dans les années 1920. Cette loi canadienne sur l'équité nous dit ceci, je cite –

« La présente loi a pour objet de réaliser l'égalité en milieu de travail de façon que nul ne se voie refuser d'avantages ou de chances en matière d'emploi pour des motifs étrangers à sa compétence [...] »

Le ministre peut même venir avec un amendement avec cette phrase simple mais lourde de sens en matière d'équité et de *fairness*. Sinon, il peut présenter une loi spécifique, renforçant le principe d'égalité et de non-discrimination dans la constitution, une loi qui serait un *Employment Equity Act* pour Maurice.

Deuxièmement, le projet de loi, dans l'article 2(2), parle des *vacancies* qui sont *open to the public*, sans autre précision. Il y a bien sûr des vacances quand il y a des offres réservées au personnel existant, notamment dans le secteur public. Mais j'espère que le

ministre vienne expliquer davantage ce que sont les *vacancies* qui ne sont pas *open to the public*.

Troisièmement il y a plusieurs agences privées offrant des emplois à Maurice sur Internet. Une interaction, un échange de lien devrait être encouragé entre ces agences et le site gouvernemental mauritiusjobs.mu.

Quatrièmement je vais mentionner le plus gros employeur de Maurice, c'est-à-dire l'ensemble des petites et moyennes entreprises. Les PME, qui comme il a été dit ce matin, emploient 55% de la main-d'œuvre nationale, ne sont pas mentionnées dans le projet de loi. Mais ces employeurs auront quand même à se faire enregistrer. Il y a un risque que l'obligation pour tous les employeurs de se faire enregistrer et contrôler sous l'angle de l'emploi prenne les petites PME dans élan d'entrepreneurs. Il serait souhaitable qu'un seuil soit spécifié pour protéger les micro-entreprises. Les tracasseries administratives lourdes qu'entraînerait l'enregistrement de tous les employeurs des PME pour leur donner le temps de s'agrandir.

Cinquièmement, je suggère au ministre de rendre son site d'offres d'emplois interactif avec tous les citoyens recherchant un emploi. Il faut pour cela que les demandeurs d'emploi puissent s'enregistrer sur ce site gratuitement pour donner uniquement leur adresse e-mail, pour recevoir des *jobs alert*, une pratique courante à travers le monde. Chaque personne inscrite recevra automatiquement un message à chaque fois que de nouveaux emplois sont offerts.

Je vous remercie, M. le président et je remercie la Chambre.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

(07.40 p.m.)

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for this opportunity to say my views on this important Bill. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me, first of all, congratulate my friend, the hon. Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training for coming forward with this Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is actually an important Bill for our country. The strength of the Bill which is in front of this House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, lies in the fact that it is generating a debate on the most important resource that this country has: human

resources. I don't know when the last time we have had a debate on the whole issue of human resources in the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been looking at the objectives of this Bill which talk about mismatch, the creation of a platform where stakeholders are going to interact, the job seekers, the employers, their employees. To meet this objective there is the proposal for the setting up of a Dashboard. Another objective is the promotion of labour migration, home-based work. Now, all these are, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, measures, objectives, that have been enumerated in the Bill. I think what is most important today and, as I said at the beginning of my speech, the strength of this Bill is that it has enabled this House to generate a debate on this whole issue of human resource management. And in my intervention today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wanted to dwell on the issue of excellence in human resource management in our country, and the second issue, upon which very briefly I am going to dwell upon, would be this issue of accountability.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been reference on the other side of the House from hon. Members taking the case of Singapore, and even by hon. Gayan who spoke about the phenomenal transformation of the Singaporean economy. It is true, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the number one contribution has been the contribution of the quality of their human resources, and the former Prime Minister of Singapore puts it so well in his autobiography. He states three reasons, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for this phenomenal transformation of Singapore. He speaks about the social discipline. He speaks about the effective and efficient public administration. And thirdly, he speaks about leadership.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when you reflect on these three factors that have brought about this phenomenal transformation of the Singaporean economy, one common component is *justement*, excellence in the management of human resources in Singapore. And, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is what we are trying to debate today in the House. This is what should be the objectives of us, here, as hon. Members of this august Assembly. We need to reflect on how, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are going to ensure that there is excellence at all level in the management of the *réservoir* of human resources that we have in our country. And how are we going to, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? With this Bill, of course, but we have to go a step further.

These are some measures that we are proposing but we have to go beyond this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Coming to this issue of accountability, there is a serious problem today

in Mauritius and this is with successive Governments, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have a Ministry of Education which is talking about how to solve the problem of mismatch, and we also have the Ministry of Labour which is talking about the same thing. So, rightly, there are some hon. Members who have been referring this issue of duplication. So, we have got to be clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we talk of this whole issue of management of human resources. If there is a problem in strategy, the way we are managing human resources in our country, who is accountable for this? If we have got a problem, for example, the problem of mismatch, who is going to be accountable for it? Is it the Ministry of Education? Is it the Ministry of Labour? Now I will go further, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Because when we talk of human resources, it is not only a question of job creation, it is not only a question of training. What is most important as well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the issue of productivity. While the Ministry of Education is talking of mismatch, while the Ministry of Education has Human Resources Development Council, IVTB has got Mauritius Qualifications Authority under its aegis, under its responsibility. We have part of the problem of human resource management under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, and then we have this issue of productivity which is being handled by the Ministry of Financial Services. So, this is where you have this problem of accountability, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reason why I thank and congratulate the hon. Minister for coming forward with this Bill and generating this debate in the House is, *justement*, it enables the House to reflect on the need for any Government to put in place a Ministry which is dedicated fully to this whole issue of the management of our human resources, *notre reservoir*, because this is the most important asset that we have.

Now, talking about the Ministry of my hon. friend who is footing this Bill, he has the responsibility for employers' and employees' rights, and partly probably for training. But we need to have a holistic approach, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to this issue of Human Resource Management, and to have a holistic approach, we need to have a single Ministry that is going to cater first for this issue of counselling. Then, you have the issue of training and development. You also have this issue of employers' and employees' rights. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you have the issue of job placement, employment and you also have the issue of productivity. All these issues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, should be under a single Ministry. All these, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe would have to be addressed in a very holistic way.

So, in my very brief intervention today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my appeal to the House is that we will need, in the months to come, to reflect on the need to have a single Ministry taking care of this and these institutions, whether it is the Human Resources Development Council, whether it is the MQA, the MITD, all these institutions shall fall under the responsibility of that single Ministry in charge of Human Resources Development.

I believe this is the only way we have to ensure that over the months, over the years, we have better accountability. We end up optimising on our human resources requirements and ensure that moving from a primary to a secondary, today to the tertiary sector, ensure that we cater for the needs of these sectors because without this, without an adequate and an appropriate pool of human resources, we will not be able to meet the challenge of the tertiary sector in the months and in the years to come, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, this is basically, very briefly, the comments that I have in this Bill.

I would like to thank Members of the House for their attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

(7.51 p.m.)

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not going to be long. I would like just to add my voice to the debate. I totally agree with what has been said so far by hon. Rughoobur. We are a land of human resources. That is the only thing that we have. So, the best we can make of our human resources is the best for the country.

I listened to the Vice-Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Shanmugaratnam. The Deputy Prime Minister was here, he hosted a dinner, he is a member of the Group 30, that is, the 30 Most Influential Economists in the World, and they advise the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. He said that the most important thing which can bring change in Singapore is the public service. He said that Ministers just come, they voice out their policy and it is the public servant who shows him how to make this policy happen.

We are a land where we have, as I said, only the human resources. But we have today a very complex situation. I listened to hon. Uteem. He said that not much will change and that this changing from one institution to the other will not bring fundamental changes, but I believe that this is a base. It is a base because when we see what has been done in France, *ce qu'on appelle l'Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi. Et, si je me souviens bien, le gouvernement MMM/PSM de 1982 avait déjà dans son programme la création d'une Agence Nationale*

pour l'Emploi. Those who have studied in England know about the job centres where you can go, where you have this interface between those who want to work and those who want to employ people. Now, is this instrument that we are setting the right interface? That is the big question.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on Wednesday what do we see? We go to our Constituency on Wednesday and we have about 50 people who come with their CVs and they...

(Interruptions)

Okay! I think when you are in the Opposition, you can go every day.

So, you have 50 people who come to you or a 100 and they all come with CVs and then they want you to have them, at least, to go at the stage of the interview. When they have the interview, they come up with the paper and say: "I have had the interview." Then, they say that they would like to be in the shortlist.

Now, what is happening, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? We have about 550,000 people working in Mauritius, only 80,000 people work in the public sector. So, we have about more than 450,000 people who are working in the private sector one way or the other and we have maybe about 150,000 and 200,000 people who are working in the small and medium industry. Now, the question of this National Employment Centre, how many of the recruitments that are going to happen, are going to go through the centre.

As regards the recruitment in the public sector, we know that we have the Public Service Commission and we know how it works; but then we have perceptions. We have a perception today that in the Public Service Commission, we do not know, a lot of people will come to you and will say: 'I have got interview' or 'I never got an interview. I never got an acknowledgment'. I can understand what is happening. I have a post of Accounts Officer at the Road Development Authority and we have 400 people who have applied for that post. How do we...

(Interruptions)

Non, non!

But how do we manage this situation? The problem is that we should have the right person in the right place. When we have the right person in the right place, we have productivity, we have excellence. But when we do not have the right person in the right place, what happens, you have a lot of frustration. Every exercise where you are recruiting

people in the public sector creates 75% of frustrated people because 25% of people have been chosen.

Now, we have to set the record straight and I hope that the problems that we have today, that is, the interface between those who want to employ and those who want to find a job, the needs of the labour market, the skills mismatch which is terrible in Mauritius. I am going to give an example. We do not have a Geotechnical Engineer in my Ministry. I want to create a Geotechnical Unit and we have sent somebody to Japan, he is going to come in two years. So, you have to have consultants and you have to have expertise from abroad. How many Environment Engineers we have in Mauritius? We do not have many.

Just go for an EIA, how many people can prepare an EIA for you? At the same time, we are a cyber island and we want to have a cyber city, we want to have the IT sector growing more than 6%, 7%. We have a lot of graduates who have gone through IT, but they are not employable. So, this is a fundamental weakness of our labour force today. This problem of mismatch, then you have the problem of underemployment. You have a graduate applying to be OMA because he wants to get into the service and he will climb the ladder over years. You have underemployment. Of course, you have unemployment and hon. Uteem gave some figures. He talked about 40,000 people. He said 30% of people are looking for a job for the first time and we have 40% who are under 25. Now, these people, what are they looking for? What sort of a job they are looking for? Are they looking for an opportunity? No!

The problem is, today, we have a perception that you can have job security only in the public sector. This is the perception in the country today that the only job security you can have, so that you can have a career, you can take a loan, you can have a career path, is being employed in the public sector.

How is the private sector being seen? It is being seen as precarious, it is being seen as a sector where you have no job security, you have no possibility of promotion, and you are at the mercy of the employer. So, there is something which we have to do in this country and I sincerely wish my colleague to be able to change this perception, because we have more than 400,000 people who are working in the private sector.

Now, who are the people who are going to recruit from the National Employment Centre, I discuss this matter with him? Those who register, they can say that I am looking for such and such skills, but they can also recruit without registering. The problem in Mauritius is that we are not aware of all the opportunities that are there, and the only place where we

are aware of all the opportunities is the Public Service Commission. So, I think that this is the base that we are setting, a base to address this issue of mismatch, underemployment, unemployment and employment prospects.

Let us see what is happening in the world today. I met the Director of the Stock Exchange of Mumbai, and he told me that half of the jobs of tomorrow have not yet been defined. We are going to be in a situation where we are going to have new sectors, totally new sectors, for example we are talking about the blue economy, about the green economy; we have been talking about the virtual economy, at the internet of things. So we are going to have a number of new sectors and we should be able to prepare ourselves for that.

But then there is something which has to happen it is the attitude to work. We have a problem today as regards to productivity and we have a problem today as regards to attitude to work. Formally, we had a history of people who have worked very hard to succeed from slavery to the indentured labourers, to all those who toil in the sugar cane fields to send their children, to send a whole generation of people to colleges and to the university to be able to have a secure job.

Now where do we move on from here, and what has happened for example, is that, the last ten years we have had a lot people doing law, and so we have today 1000 barristers, I don't know, I think it should be 100. We have surplus of doctors. So what is happening? In fact, in all the sectors today, there is overemployment because the island is small, we have only 1.3 million people, a market of 1.3 million people.

So, what we should do is that's where there is the whole issue of migration. The President of the Seychelles came, I want to have teachers from Mauritius, I want to have doctors from Mauritius. We need to have financial services experts from Mauritius working into Africa. I hope that, with the setup of this institution - and I congratulate my colleague for that - we will be able to address all this issue, because today we are in a period of, I would say, of very difficult transition, and the best of our people are not necessarily being trained in the new areas where we are going to need them in the years to come.

So, my plea is that we should be able to have the right interface. We should be able to have the right reskilling. I am going to give you an example. The other day we chaired a meeting about the light rail, we have no engineer who understands light rail technology in Mauritius, and light rail has five different levels of engineering.

You have the civil engineering where you have the levelling, you have the civil works and structures; then you have the electrical engineer who is going to prepare for the electrification of the laying of the rails. Then you have the electronic engineers, then the last

one is the most important one, he is the one who, in fact, has to be able to manage the system so that when the train starts in Curepipe, at the nearest seconds at all the stations everything has been programmed, and it should be seamless and it should be perfect.

So we don't have people, we have about 150 jobs which are going to be created by Metro Express, and we don't have the people. So we should train the people. I think there should be a major and thorough thinking about what to make of this, *ce que j'appelle moi le génie Mauricien*.

Because we have done so many extraordinary things and the challenges of tomorrow are going to be really very important challenges. I really welcome this Bill. I really welcome the creation of this institution. I don't think that, as hon. Uteem said, this is going to take us nowhere, and it is just a change in name. I think that today we should be able to have the facilitation, to have the interface and above all to inform people of the opportunities out there.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(8.05 p.m.)

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Before I get to my speech, let me reply or give what impression I have after having listened about so many orators from the Government side.

Hon. Bodha and hon. Gayan seem to believe that this institution will create jobs, will provide for the engineers, the specialists that we do not have in all the Ministries. This institution, which we are creating under that Bill, will provide all the skills that we do not have today. Hon. Rughoobur believes that this institution will be a human resource institution which will be an apex body who will distribute to each and every sector the skills this country needs. And I must say I agree 90% with hon. Fowdar, when he comes and tell us that this institution will be only a sort of coordinator, and if we don't have strict collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and the Ministry of Finance, forget about resolving the question of mismatching, and it is a matter of regret. Then what are we supposed to be debating? Let me quote what the hon. Minister say with regard to this Bill, let me quote the last paragraph, page 72 of what I have, I quote –

‘With this legislation, we are putting in place a modern structure, which will enable the formulation of coherent labour policies responsive to the needs of the country. This is, indeed, a historic moment and Mauritius will be among the first countries in the region to provide the structure for professional manpower planning.’

Historic moment, professional manpower planning, when the Minister responsible for human resources, responsible for IVTB, responsible for the other institution - the MITD, the Human Resource Development Bill, this Minister is not here, and does not intervene on such a historic Bill which our friends want us to believe, the hon. Minister. The Minister of Finance does not intervene when we know that this Bill is important if it becomes operational and we will come to that later, and if it gets the credibility that it needs in the eyes of the public, will have much impact on the economic sector.

So, what we are doing today is, in fact, we are renaming, updating and putting some technology in the functioning of the employment service that we had before. It is good to note, we are all talking about youngsters, planning, education, make sure that the youngsters who are qualified get the job they want, but this was the intention of the mover of the motion in 1963! Mr Ringadoo was the Minister of Labour and Social Security, when he moved the Bill at that time, let me quote what he had to say –

“I have said that the functions of an employment service are varied. Apart from normal placing work which is designed to have the right man in the right job, there is link with its question of the vocational guidance of applicants. This is particularly important in the area in the case of young persons and I will refer to this again later.”

So, the question of gearing young persons towards the right formation to get the job was there in 1963! So, there is nothing new that we are inventing today. There is nothing historic! Let me quote again –

“I have referred to the question of young persons. Their vocational guidance is matter of great concern to me and my Ministry and to my hon. friend, the Minister of Education.”

Where is the Minister of Education today when we know human resources, *formation*, are under her responsibility?

“And I consider it advisable that youth employment and training matters (...)”

They are linked!

“(...) should be examined by an inter-departmental working party.”

So, what we are doing today, as rightly pointed out by my friend, hon. Uteem, is that we are in fact, updating, modernising - if I may use this word – our employment service. We

are having computers, on that Board every person will have to register. But, the principle remains the same. And, what is a matter of regret, probably, is that with regard to this Bill, when we read the Explanatory Memorandum, the object of this Bill is to repeal the Employment and Training Act. I don't know why this Bill is called only the National Employment Bill which will become the National Employment Act, when in fact one of its functions is also training. So, we are keeping the training in the objectives but it is not in the heading. It will deal with skills mismatch, underemployment, underemployment and future employment prospects and to anticipate future needs and expectations of individuals and employers.

According to our information, there has been no consultation whatsoever with those who create the majority jobs in this country, with the private sector. No consultation! And, not even with the unions! When it comes to employment policy, according to my information, the last sitting they had was in 2014! So, this Bill which is supposed to look for the needs of the prospective workers will have to have the support from the private sector and, hence, Government choses to come with a Bill without consulting the unions or the private sector!

So, what is new with that Bill if not we are creating another institution which will be the National Employment Advisory Committee? When we look at the composition of that Advisory Committee, the majority on that Committee will be either civil servants or people appointed by the Minister. And, this will be only an Advisory Committee which will advise the Government on issues concerning mismatch, employment, career guidance. But, they can only advise! There will be one representative of the Ministry of Education on that Board. But, is he aware of what the other wings of the Ministry of Education are doing?

At the Ministry of Education itself we have the Universities. Very soon, we are going to have what we call the polytechnic. We have the Human Resources Department and the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development. All these are supposed to do the same job and under the Ministry we will have the National Employment Advisory Committee. Four institutions under two different Ministries and God knows whether the Minister of Education is aware, after having listened to my friend, hon. Fowdar. It would seem that there is not much being done at the Human Resources section which the Bill – which was presented, in fact, by hon. Fowdar himself when he was Minister under the MSM/MMM Government.

We know the function of this HRD Council, I quote –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, the HRD Council will also be responsible to develop schemes for retraining and multi-skilling. This has become important with the change of occurring industries in the economy. Today, what we need is people who are multi-skilled and who can easily adapt to changing situations in the world of work. The Council will have to develop appropriate schemes to enable our workers to become multi-skilled - and not only that - but also to propose schemes for retraining especially for those workers who may have become redundant due to firms, industries closing down and diversity in the activities.”

So, we have already an institution and if that institution was operating as it should be under the law, there would have been no mismatch today, 14 years after this Bill was passed. So, there is a problem already in the functioning of our existing institution and now, we are complaining about mismatching and we are creating another institution under the Ministry of Labour, another Advisory Committee to advise the Minister on mismatching! So, we have a problem with regard to what, in fact, we are doing today.

When we come to mismatching, I do not know whether Mauritius was present at the Geneva Conference organised by the ILO. If we look on the website, mismatching is of much concern today and it is not only in Mauritius. It says -

“Skills mismatches are driven by low quality education and systems, demographic change, rapid technological development, new sources of job creation and newly created forms of work organization.”

So, we need collaboration between the Ministries and the Ministry more responsible today with regard to mismatching, if there is and there is, is indeed the Ministry of Education and Human Resources. The institutions which are under that Ministry are not functioning according to their objectives. And, now, we are going with the Nine-Year Schooling; we are going to have polytechnics; new Universities are being created without proper guidance!

So, like I say, we are modernising what the 1963 law created, the Employment Agency, all the shortcomings which, I will not repeat myself, have been said by my friends, hon. Uteem and hon. Mrs Selvon, but one thing which is important, whatever institution we put on, be it under the Ministry of Labour, be it under the Ministry of Education, if it does not

have credibility in the eyes of the public, it will fail like our employment agencies have failed.

We know people who have stamped cards for years. When I talk about recruitment, I hope that the Deputy Prime Minister will understand that I am not talking about those who are being recruited at upper level or as Chairman or members of Board. I am talking about those who stamp card. How many times do we hear - not only under this Government, I must say - "I have been stamping my card for the last 20 years, *mo voisin li*, he has just stamped his card for the last two years, he has got a job in one of the parastatal bodies."?

If we want to change, forget it has been done! It has happened in the past, true! Under the Labour Party, the PPS Khamajeet did that. And if we want to bring an historical law, let us correct the mistake in the law that we have today with regard to that issue of delegated powers to Ministers; recruitment by Ministers, delegated powers. Let us do away with that. Let us give credibility to the new institution we want to create and get people to believe in it. Let it be transparent. How many times my friend, hon. Fowdar, has asked questions with regard to the Ministry of Health? Give us a list of how many people have been recruited! And he knows what he is talking about. And I am sure he knows the answer as well. This is what we should have done if we want that institution we are creating to be credible.

We have to encourage people to trust that institution. But, unfortunately, the way it is presented, again, there is no transparency, we are left with that same opaque institution, with new names. And, unfortunately, like I said, we do not know how the Ministry of Education will adapt her Ministry with regard to that new institution we are creating.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will not be long, like I have said. All that has been said regarding the integrities of this Bill has been mentioned by my two colleagues but, unfortunately, this is not an historic event. Whatever bad practice there has been in the past will continue. Whatever abuse there has been on the actual system will continue. Whatever lack of credibility the members of public have in that employment institution will continue because we have not come forward, it is a missed opportunity. We have not seized that opportunity more than 50 years after the previous Bill to change the practice, to come with a new Bill which is more transparent, more acceptable and, of course, the absence of the Minister of Education today leaves us to doubt whether there will be collaboration between the institution under the Ministry of Education and the one we are creating today.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Callichurn!

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am indeed pleased to note the sustained interest from both sides of the House on the substance of the National Employment Bill, and I would like to thank all hon. Members who intervened with interest. And also, I would like to thank them for their comments, suggestions as well as their criticisms.

However, it is a matter of regret that some Members have elected not to be present for such an important Bill, and I have in mind hon. Ganoo, hon. Ramano, who are always present and ready to intervene on all the Bills that are passed in this august Assembly. It is also a regret that Members of the PMSD are not present. We understand the position of the Leader of the Opposition who has been suspended for two weeks. What about the rest of them? Where are they? I guess, campaigning in Quatre Bornes. I wish them good luck.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the introduction of this Bill, we are deleting from the Statute Book a piece of legislation that was designed to deal with the employment situation. Needless to remind you that was in the 60s and 70s, in a well-defined socioeconomic climate prevailing at that time. We recall the difficulties to secure a job in those days, especially when the potential for job creation was at its lowest ebb. The country depended essentially on the sugar industry where the prospects of employment creation has been historically low, be it in quantitative or qualitative terms.

As I mentioned in my address on Tuesday last, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Employment and Training Act 1963 has outlived all its usefulness since very long ago, and no one can dispute that fact that we need a new legislation to address the concerns for today and for the future as well. We need to provide a conducive environment where young people can make rational decisions for their career, based on rational strategies and reliable information. We need a consensus on this issue, which is intrinsically linked to the future of this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the opportunity was always there. During the last 54 years, any regime could have come forward with a new piece of legislation to replace the Employment and Training Act. The MMM was in Government for I do not know how many years. Why they did not think of coming up with a new piece of legislation? I recall someone

was saying that hon. Bérenger had the intention, in those days, to come with a piece of legislation, i.e., to create a National Employment Agency. But why did he fail? We need to ask ourselves this simple question. Was it lack of vision or simply a lack of interest? Well, anyway, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the credit goes to this Government which came with a strong agenda for reform and modernisation and this agenda, *inter alia*, included the reform of the labour market.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill before the House today has to be examined from a different perspective and more importantly beyond the frontiers of political party, which tend to distort rational thinking like we have listened today.

In the drafting of this piece of legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have taken care of the need to address, as far as possible, in an exhaustive manner, all the issues required for a smooth and effective operation of the labour market in the interest of all stakeholders, including one very important aspect, namely that of transparency.

Hon. Members have certainly noted the provision of section 11 of the Bill, dealing with the responsibilities of the employer. On this aspect, I would like to inform the House that in this country, it has always being fashionable to disclose all vacancies in the Public Service as well as the full particulars of those who have been recruited to fill these vacancies. However, the conditions are different in the private sector, which has no obligation of either advertising its vacancies to the general public and even less to inform the public of the names and qualifications of those they recruit. Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, things have to change in this country and this rhetoric should not be betrayed by other acts and omissions.

The legal obligation that we are introducing under section 11, to compel employers in the private sector to advertise vacancies in their enterprises and to make public the particulars of the beneficiaries, has to be construed as an important step towards democratisation of the labour market and an impetus to introduce a strong dose of transparency on how recruitment is made in the private sector. Here, I must inform the House, contrary to what hon. Baloomoody stated earlier, I did have consultation with the private sector at the very initial stage...

(Interruptions)

No, not three years ago! When we started drafting this Bill at my office, the representative of the Mauritius Employers Federation, Mr Pradeep Dursun, was present on that day. I made it a

must to call one well-known trade unionist, Mr Sadien, and we discussed the Bill thoroughly. I discussed the Bill thoroughly with them and invited for suggestions, but, unfortunately like always, the Mauritius Employers Federation was against some provisions which I intended to include in that piece of legislation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, here, I must inform the House that representations have been made to my Ministry even after the Bill was introduced for the First Reading last week. The representations of the private sector to my Ministry were to remove this obligation on private sector employers. Instead - listen to this very carefully - they had proposed that the disclosure of information on persons recruited be limited to positions carrying a basic salary or wage salary of less than Rs360,000 per annum. I do not see the logic! This proposal has been rejected as there is no valid justification to it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as this is purely arbitrary and discriminatory, which would go against the letter and spirit of this Bill.

Another aspect which has been brought to my attention is the tendency of the job seekers to seek employment mainly in Government institutions. This tendency has persisted over the years to the detriment of job seekers and the community at large. We have to admit that Government cannot provide employment to every citizen. This is not a realistic perspective. This situation has to be reversed by providing more visibility in the employment opportunities and within the remit of this new legislation this will be done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Employment Department will replace the Employment Service. As I have already informed the House, the Department will have a wider remit than the Employment Service and will provide a wide spectrum of services to job seekers, employers and training institutions. It is important to note that some of the services which the Department will be called upon to provide will require specific qualifications, competencies, skills and training which are currently not available and I need, at this juncture, to reassure the staff who are currently posted at the Employment Division of my Ministry.

Well, the new Department will provide state-of-the-art services combining a personalised service to the job seekers, including effective counselling and guidance. Job seekers will, henceforth, benefit from guidance at the very first day they call at the Department which will ensure that constant follow-up to the time that the incumbents obtain a job according to their qualifications and profile, including individual aspiration. The effort of the officers of the Department will therefore, be sustained.

Hence, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, we are aiming at excellence in service delivery. We undertake to put an end at the misery of the common people and make them feel as valued citizens of the Republic. This is our commitment. However, this can only be achieved only if we have a staff possessing the relevant qualifications, skills and competencies. As such, the staff of the Department will comprise of professionals to be recruited by the Public Service Commission. However, we have not written off the employees of the current Employment Service. These officers will be given the opportunity to follow training courses and depending on their suitability they could be offered employment in the new Department. Those who would not be selected to serve in the Department - this is very important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - would be redeployed in the Public Service on terms and conditions not less favourable than those they derive at present.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has discussed with the trade unions on the approach and, as I explained earlier, I am pleased to mention that I have obtained their concurrence on this matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall now address the main concerns raised by some hon. Members. I have listened with attention to the intervention of hon. Uteem. I must say that I am quite disappointed on the tenor of his address, especially focused on semantics and a comparison with the legislation to be repealed. In fact, I expected the able hon. Member to come with a contribution of substance, but unfortunately that was not the case.

Coming to the points raised by hon. Uteem, most of these have been extensively addressed in my intervention last Tuesday. It would appear that hon. Uteem just brushed over the speech. He did not read it thoroughly; I would invite him, therefore, to have a look. He must read it carefully, then he would understand our approach and the philosophy behind this piece of legislation that is being presented today.

The hon. Member spoke of the absence of a provision regarding disabled persons. I wish to draw the attention of the hon. Member to the definition of “job seeker” in section 2 which does not discriminate in any manner between job seekers, even those with disability.

There is nothing to suggest that the person with disability will have a disadvantage as opposed to a person without disability. Well, regarding the promotion of migration, even Members from his party, hon. Mrs Selvon has extensively explained and agreed with the

principles that we are proposing. Labour migration is an important aspect which we cannot simply overlook.

Regarding promotion of migration, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are in no way suggesting like hon. Uteem mentioned that our children and relatives should leave this country. The intention is to provide opportunities for our citizens to gain meaningful experience and exposure abroad. Well, is this in any way improper? I don't think so. I leave it to the appreciation of the House and even people outside this House.

Regarding home based work, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is suggesting that this has no merit unless this is supported by fiscal incentives. Well, the point is taken. However, I should like to remind the hon. Member that we are committed to a legislation that will work for the people of this country. And propositions will be made to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to have funds in order to encourage home based work, be it for the setting up for any incentives that must be given to encourage home based work.

In respect of section 9 of the Bill regarding powers of entry, I have already canvassed this issue in my address last week. The contention of the hon. Member to the effect that this is a dangerous precedent is again devoid of any merits to the extent that such powers are available to the Enforcement Officers of the Labour Division of my Ministry.

Section 11 of the Bill has also been canvassed by hon. Uteem and he concluded in his address by saying that nothing will change with the introduction of this Bill as the only way to secure a job is with the support and intervention of politicians in power. This comment of hon. Uteem in nothing less than an insult to citizens – not just hon. Uteem, hon. Baloomoody and hon. Ramful also made it a point.

This comment from all the hon. Members is nothing less than an insult to the citizens of this country and is an abuse of Parliamentary immunity.

(Interruptions)

The House and citizens of this country will appreciate.

Another aspect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of section 11 which was mentioned...

(Interruptions)

I said all hon. Members who stated this particular thing.

Another aspect of section 11 which was mentioned by the hon. Member is access to computer, etc., I am sorry to say that this looks more like a joke than anything else.

Actually, we have employment services around the island. We will be having Employment Department around the island. So, anyone who is not familiar with computers, mobile phones, they can simply walk in those offices, ask the officer at the counter to register them on the system and my able officers will simply jot down the information and input it in the system. What's the big fuss about it?

(Interruptions)

Simple!

In respect of section 12 of the Bill, the hon. Member has once more made an unsuccessful attempt to distort the facts. My colleague, hon. Boissézon - unfortunately he has gone home early today - has rightly underlined the actual provisions and needless to remind you that hon. Gayan has beautifully responded to them, responded to their unwarranted comments.

Well, the final issue raised by hon. Uteem is the failure of *Pôle d'Emploi* in France and the adverse comment made by *La Cour des Comptes* on the management of the Institution. Here again, the hon. Member has tried to undermine the initiative of the Government by indirectly imputing motives and the integrity of the new organisation and its staff. This is highly objectionable, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

My friend, hon. Ramful, spoke on three issues, namely –

- (i) lack of transparency;
- (ii) lack of independence, and
- (iii) duplication of functions.

His contention is that the new institution will suffer from a lack of transparency in its operation. He supports his contention by anecdotal evidence on the recruitment made by public bodies. I must say that his qualms are clearly unfounded and unjustified. Nowadays, it is too easy to bring into disrepute any institution or person by merely talking about transparency and lack of independence. Again, this is tantamount to bringing into disrepute all civil servants of this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is unfortunate that hon. Baloomoody has chosen to have a limited view and thought finding. He has failed to seize a golden opportunity to contribute to solving the unemployment problem.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Callichurn: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not practical to have all institutions in a large committee. However, a collaborative approach with other institutions will be developed. We are not creating another institution here, but reengineering the institution to meet the new challenges and to fit in the new environment.

There is another point raised by hon. Baloomoody, and I share his concern and promise that everything will be done to revisit and strengthen our administrative practices.

Well, as regards the comments made by hon. Mrs Selvon, I welcome those comments. They are very interesting indeed. We shall look into the different propositions made and take remedial actions.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate the commitment of this Government to move for a greater integration....

(Interruptions)

of the National Employment Department in the national economy...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Callichurn: We need to create a dynamic level of synergy with the various stakeholders so as to enhance the potential for investment opportunities, the creation of new lines of business, promote research and development, and, more importantly, provide a platform for collaboration in the best interest of this country. The National Employment Bill seeks to fill the vacuum which has existed for too long. It will provide timely and reliable information on the labour market to facilitate informed decision-making within both public and private sectors and the community at large. It will also provide a comprehensive range of statistical information on the economic activities of the population and through the advisory committee and technical committees detailed analysis on employment and unemployment as well as the characteristics of the persons in and outside the labour market. For all this to happen we need a pragmatic rationality coupled with a technical rationality which should transcend partisan interest.

Before ending, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to commend the staff of my Ministry and thank them for their valuable contribution in the drafting of this beautiful piece of legislation.

I would also like to thank the officers from the Attorney General's Office who have been of much help to the officers of my Ministry and myself.

On this note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT BILL

(No. XII of 2017)

Clauses 1 to 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 10 (Registration of job seekers)

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

Mr Callichurn: I move for the following amendments in clause 10 –

- “(i) in subclause (1), by deleting the words “with the Department” and replacing them by the words “with the Director”;
- (ii) in subclause (2), by inserting, after the word “Any”, the word “registered”;
- (iii) in subclause (3), by deleting the word “Department” and replacing it by the word “Director”;

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 11 (Responsibilities of employers)

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

Mr Callichurn: I move for the following amendments in clause 11 –

- “(i) by deleting the word “Department” wherever it appears and replacing it by the word “Director”;
- (ii) in paragraph (a) –
 - (A) by deleting subparagraph (ii) and replacing it by the following subparagraph –

- (ii) notify any vacancy, open to the public, within 7 days of its occurrence;
- (B) by adding the following new subparagraph –
 - (v) advertise any vacancy which is open to the public;
- (iii) by adding the following new paragraph, the full stop at the end of paragraph (b) being deleted and replaced by a semicolon –
 - (c) keep a record, in the prescribed form, relating to the persons in his service.”

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 11, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 12 to 15 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 16 (Submission of reports)

Mr Callichurn: I move for the following amendment in clause 16 –

“by deleting the word “Department” wherever it appears and replacing it by the word “Director”.”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 16, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 17 to 22 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 National Employment Bill (No. XII of 2017) was read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the House be adjourned to Tuesday 07 of November 2017 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Bodha rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTER RAISED

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(8.57 p.m.)

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – LOW FLOOR BUSES

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I won't be very long at this very early hour.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *je me fais le porte-parole* for people with disabilities; the problem which they are enduring for the integration into the society of Mauritius specifically with regard to access to buses.

The persons, who have suffered or are still suffering from disabilities, have been struggling hard over the years for the introduction of low floor buses. *Nous avons tous été témoins. Nous avons demandé pas mal des questions ici à l'Assemblée* since far back the 1980s.

It was at long last when one company, a very good company, the Rose Hill Transport Ltd., has been convinced and the persons with disabilities have been made aware that same would be made available, that is, the Rose-Hill Transport Ltd would put up a system, a new type of equipment in the low-floor buses to enable users of wheelchairs to be autonomous while getting into the buses.

They have been informed that the Rose Hill Transport Ltd imported the same type of low-floor buses which is being currently used and provisions were supposed to be made for these handicapped persons. Even an official launching was organised on 29 June 2017 at Place Margéot, Rose Hill. Invitations were launched. I, myself, had an invitation which, unfortunately, I did not attend. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one day prior to the launching, everybody was informed that the ceremony has been postponed. I am following that case. We have been made to understand that the National Transport Authority has objected to its introduction without giving any reason.

Now, four months have lapsed since the NTA was supposed to commission a report and send a recommendation to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. We are of the opinion - I say 'we' because I am talking on behalf of this association, FMMH, Mr Jacques Lim Kee,

who is a very respected person - and we would request the hon. Minister to investigate into the matter and let people of disabilities know when, at least, this project will be materialised.

We all know that *les trottoirs que nous avons à Maurice ne sont pas selon les normes*, with the low-floor buses, even we have been commissioned, they have been ordered and now spread over in many companies, but it is very difficult when we use the footpath and then we have low-floor buses. I, myself, have witnessed the other day in Rose Hill, near Plaza somewhere, somebody with a wheelchair having a lot of difficulties to get in the bus and without any help as such.

So, can I appeal to the hon. Minister, at least, this is very urgent, to meet this association, to meet these organisations. I know the people of the Rose Hill Transport Ltd, it is a very reputed and good company, as well as the other companies. If the Minister, at least, could use his good office to impress upon his officers at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, of the NTA, especially, to come up with recommendations and implement and even do some PR over the island to see to it because all these buses now go all over the place. So, this is very urgent. I impress upon the Minister if he can look into the matter and report to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Member for raising this point because, in fact, access to public transport and public places by the disabled people in our modern society has become a priority.

From the notes which have been given to me, in fact, as you are aware, we have the semi-low floor buses and we have, in fact, encouraged the acquisition of such buses because we give a subsidy of Rs1 m.

From what I have understood, there was a company which, in fact, proposed the possibility of accommodating two wheelchairs and equipped with a wheelchair ramp which was received from an importer. From what I have been told, the NTA, the TMRSU, the RDA, the Police and the Ministry of Social Security analysed the situation and they have given me some comments about it.

First of all, they said that the space within the bus was not convenient.

Second, they said that the only restraint to prevent the wheelchair from moving was a seat belt; the footrest of the wheelchair protruded on the gangway because it came out to enable the wheelchair to enter the bus. There was no adequate anchorage and the road infrastructure and road furniture, as we have it today, is not very conducive, but I am going definitely to look into the matter.

But I would like to raise one issue to the suggestion made by my colleague is that we have semi-low floor buses and we have low-floor buses which we do not have in Mauritius. In fact, the solution for wheelchairs is low-floor buses. When we go, for example, on the underground in London or elsewhere, you just move from the platform into the Metro and the Metro is going to be, in fact, we will see to it that for the Metro, you can access the Metro at the low-floor. So, we have this problem of moving one floor because when you get into the bus, there is still one floor. But the solution is that in the middle of the bus, they do not access the bus from the front like everybody. They can access at the middle and at the middle of the bus we can have one level where, in fact, it is a low-floor.

I will look definitely into the matter and I think we should show the concern that the disabled deserve from us. I thank the hon. Member for giving me this opportunity to answer this issue in the House.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

At 9.05 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 07 November 2017 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AUTHORITY – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE - REPORT

(No. B/631) 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 Fact-Finding Committee set up to look into alleged irregularities at the Information Communication Technologies Authority when Mrs Y. C. was the Executive Director thereof, he will state the date of the setting up and of the start of the works thereof, indicating –

- (a) the number of sittings held, and

- (b) if the assignment has been completed and, if so -
 - (i) when, and
 - (ii) if any report has been submitted to Government and, if so, indicate the main findings and recommendations thereof.

Reply (Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation): I am informed that the Fact-Finding Committee was set up on 08 May 2017 under the chairpersonship of Mrs Prameeta Devi Rasheela Goordyal-Chitto, Acting Assistant Solicitor General. The Committee started its work on 15 June 2017.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Committee held 22 sittings and the last one being on 29 September 2017.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Committee is currently drafting its report.

MAURITIAN AIRSPACE - EMIRATES FLIGHT UAE 703 & AIR SEYCHELLES FLIGHT HM 054 - AIR TRAFFIC INCIDENT

(No. B/634) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to a near miss between an A380 Emirates flight and an A330 Air Seychelles flight on 14 July 2017 within the Mauritian air space, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Civil Aviation Authority, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) outcome thereof, and
- (b) if all the personnel who were on duty in connection with the said flights, including the respective pilots, were interviewed.

Reply: I am informed by the Director Civil Aviation that, following the air traffic incident involving Emirates Flight UAE 703 and Air Seychelles Flight HM 054 in the Mauritian airspace, he has set up an Investigation Committee to determine the exact cause of the incident and to make recommendations to prevent any such recurrence.

The investigation is being carried out in accordance with the requirements of Annex 13 of the International Civil Aviation Organisation standards and recommended practices on Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation.

I am also informed by the Director Civil Aviation that he has sought assistance from *Bureau d'Enquêtes et d'Analyse* of France on the decoding of flight data of both aircraft from the Quick Access Recorder. The report of the *Bureau d'Enquêtes et d'Analyse* of France is awaited to complete the investigation.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that all concerned personnel, including flight crews of both aircraft have been interviewed by the Investigation Committee.

FIU – FROZEN ASSETS

(No. B/635) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Assets Recovery Investigation Division of the Financial Intelligence Unit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, for the period November 2015 to date, information as to the –

- (a) number of –
 - (i) restraining orders;
 - (ii) restriction orders;
 - (iii) confiscation orders, and
 - (iv) recovery orders applied for, indicating the outcome thereof in each case;
- (b) value of the assets recovered, and
- (c) quantum of funds used therefrom to compensate victims of unlawful activities.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) was to become the Enforcement Authority under the Asset Recovery Act following the Proclamation of the Asset Recovery (Amendment) Act on 26 January 2016.

The Office of the DPP was the Enforcement Authority from November 2015 to 26 January 2016.

I am informed by the FIU that during period 27 January 2016 to 27 October 2017-

- (i) 36 Restraining Orders were applied for, out of which 34 have been granted by the Court and a decision of the Court is awaited for the remaining 2;
- (ii) 3 Restriction Orders have been applied for and obtained. No criminal enquiries are carried out in such cases;
- (iii) only 1 Confiscation Order was applied for in 2017, and the matter is still before the Supreme Court, and
- (iv) 4 Recovery Orders have been applied for in 2017 for a total amount of approximately Rs45 m., and all the applications are still pending before Court.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that, under the Restraining and Restriction Orders, the value of assets frozen amounts to around Rs70m. Moreover, under the Confiscation and Recovery Orders, the amount recovered is about Rs986,000. The whole amount has already been transferred to the Recovered Asset Fund, out of which 80% has been transferred to the Consolidated Fund in accordance with provisions under the Finance and Audit (Recovered Asset Fund) Regulations 2014.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that, so far, no compensation has been paid from the Recovered Asset Fund because none of the cases have yet been determined by the Court.

GRNW BRIDGE - REHABILITATION

(No. B/663) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the proposed re-opening of the old Grand River North West Bridge, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if the rehabilitation study thereof is now completed and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) total estimated rehabilitation cost thereof, and
- (b) expected start and completion dates of works in relation thereto and date of coming into operation thereof.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question B/389 at the sitting of the National Assembly on 03 May 2016 wherein I informed the House that after a preliminary study carried out by the Road Development Authority (RDA), my Ministry decided to proceed with the rehabilitation of the Grand River North West Bridge.

It should be highlighted that further to the preliminary study, it was realised that, apart from surveying the structural soundness of the bridge, there was also need to carry out an in-depth investigation with respect to the following -

- (i) the structural integrity, stability and durability of the existing bridge;
- (ii) site investigations and detailed geotechnical analysis for the foundations, and
- (iii) detailed and comprehensive transport and traffic impact, among others.

I am informed by the RDA that, in view of the complexity of the works, the services of a consultant are being hired to carry out the above exercise. A Request for Proposals was launched on 28 July 2017 in this connection, following which two proposals have been received by the closing date on 27 September 2017. The evaluation is in progress. After the selection of the successful consultant, the study is expected to start by end of November 2017 and be completed by May 2018.

Regarding part (a) of the question, the detailed and exact scope of works as well as the estimated cost of the project will be determined only after the selected consultant has carried out its detailed investigation and study.

As regards part (b) of the question, based on the findings of the study, it is proposed to include these works in the Financial Year 2018/2019.