

**SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY****PARLIAMENTARY****DEBATES****(HANSARD)****FIRST SESSION****TUESDAY 13 JUNE 2017**

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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
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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

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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, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 10 of 2017

Sitting of 13 June 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)

ANNOUNCEMENT

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – TABLED DOCUMENTS - AUTHENTICATION

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have a short announcement to make. Hon. Members, during the course of his intervention on the Appropriation Bill yesterday, the hon. Leader of the Opposition handed over a document to the Table purporting to be the Minutes of proceedings of the first Board meeting of the CEB (GREEN ENERGY) Co Ltd.

After perusing the document, the Table took note that the said document is unsigned. It has been ruled in the past by one of my predecessors that a paper or document which is laid on the Table must be duly authenticated by the Minister or the Member laying same. I quote -

“The purpose of authentication of a paper or document is to ascertain the genuineness and correctness thereof. Once laid on the Table, the paper or document becomes part of the permanent record of the House and hence a public document open to inspection and use by Members.”

In the light of the above, I, therefore, rule that this document cannot be laid. However, as per the practice prevailing in the House, the hon. Leader of the Opposition may, if he so wishes, hand over the said document to the Prime Minister for his information.

I thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: May I, Madam Speaker, ask you for some clarification on what you have said?

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. I just wish to draw the attention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition to Standing Order 41(4), which provides that the ruling of the Speaker is not subject to debate and is final, but you may wish to come and see me in my office and we will discuss on the whole matter. Thank you.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I have the record of all the documents tabled with me. There are a number of documents unsigned and undated. Therefore, I would humbly request that these documents be removed from the records of the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I have just mentioned that there is no debate on the ruling of the Speaker. I have already given my ruling on the matter and for me the matter is closed.

(Interruptions)

Yes, please proceed!

Mr A. Duval: If I may, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, the hon. Member cannot. Please proceed!

(Interruptions)

I am sorry. I have already given my ruling. If the hon. Member wishes to have any further discussion on this matter - and I have quoted my predecessors - I invite him to see me in my office. We will discuss.

(Interruptions)

There is no debate on this!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, it is not subject to your ruling. It is...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: There is no point of order on a ruling which has been given by the Speaker. I have just quoted Standing Order 41(4) and this is the end of the matter.

(Interruptions)

No! Look, I am sorry! I have told the hon. Member several times. As Deputy Speaker, he should have known! Please proceed!

(Interruptions)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. **Ministry of Arts and Culture**

The Annual Report of the Mauritius Marathi Cultural Centre Trust for the period January to December 2012.

B. **Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands**

The Annual Reports and Audited Financial Statements of the Outer Islands Development Corporation for years 2013 and 2014.

C. **Office of the President**

43rd Annual Report of the Ombudsman for the period January to December 2016.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Cover-up Government!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

There is serious matter to be debated. Allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition to proceed with his PNQ, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: This is a cover-up Government, Madam Speaker.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

HORSE RACING – COMMISSION OF INQUIRY - REPORT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communication and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing in Mauritius appointed on 24 September 2014, he will state if -

- (a) he has requested the Commissioners thereof to provide thereto copy of the Confidential Interim Report thereof submitted to the President of the Republic on 28 November 2014 and, if so, indicate if he has been provided therewith and the actions he proposes to take in relation thereto;
- (b) copy of the Implementation Report thereof dated June 2016 will be tabled, and
- (c) Recommendations 11 and 18 of the Final Report thereof have now been implemented.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in September 2014, the then Government decided to set up a Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing in Mauritius and, in this context, the then President of the Republic appointed Mr Richard Parry as Chairperson of the Commission and Messrs. Dennis Gunn and Paul Scotney as Commissioners.

The Commission subsequently effected a fact-finding visit to Mauritius in October 2014 and had formal sittings of the Commission in November 2014. I am informed that, following the formal evidence gathering during the sessions of the inquiry, the Commissioners submitted an interim confidential report to the then President of the Republic of Mauritius on 28 November 2014.

With regard to part (a) of the question, before writing to the Commissioners, as I stated at our sitting of 16 May 2017, I wanted to make sure that the interim report is untraceable in my Office. Having been satisfied that it is indeed untraceable, arrangements have been made to obtain a copy thereof directly from the Commissioners.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the Implementation Report dated June 2016 was commissioned by my Office and the Gambling Regulatory Authority to see how best to implement the recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing. I am advised that in view of the sensitive information contained in the Report, more particularly in respect to intelligence gathering, it will not be proper to table the Implementation Report.

In regard to part (c) of the question, recommendation 11 of the final Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing reads as follows -

“Whilst noting the current limitations of the ICAC’s jurisdiction over horse racing/betting matters, it strongly supports the proposed amendment to the Prevention of Corruption Act 2002 to allow the ICAC to engage in relevant horse racing/betting corruption in the future.”

Madam Speaker, offences relating to Horse Racing and the gambling industry, for instance, cheating are dealt with under section 146 of the GRA Act. It is of wide spectrum because any person who commits or who is suspected of having committed an offence can be investigated upon and prosecuted by the Police, including the specialised Division of the ‘Police des Jeux’.

The proposal of the Commissioners in the said recommendation 11 is to bring the power to inquire and prosecute offences relating to a proposed specific corruption offence

between private individuals relating to Horse Racing/Betting Corruption within the ambit of PoCA.

I am advised that under section 20(1)(d) of PoCA, the Commission is empowered to investigate any act of corruption. I quote –

“The functions of the Commission shall be to detect or investigate any act of corruption.”

In addition section 2 of PoCA defines an act of corruption as including –

“an agreement between 2 or more persons to act or refrain from acting in violation of a person’s duties in the private or public sector for profit or gain.”

However, the corresponding offences in sections 4 to 11 do not encompass situations as contemplated in recommendation 11 of the final report.

This loophole identified by the Commission of Inquiry will be addressed by way of an amendment to the PoCA. I understand that there is a Committee already working on all the amendments relating to PoCA.

Recommendation 18 of the Report states that, I quote –

“the new Regulatory Body should refer all future deliberate doping of a horse, including anabolic steroids to the *Police des Jeux*.”

The new regulatory body referred to recommendation 18 relates to the proposed creation of the “Mauritius Horse Racing Authority.”

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the GRA has, after studying this proposal, created a Horse Racing Division and an Integrity Division under its ambit to address all problems relating to the horse racing including cheating, illegal betting and doping of horses. In this regard, the GRA will also sign a MoU with the Forensic Science Laboratory and has already signed one with the Financial Intelligence Unit. Moreover, as announced in my Budget Speech, I am bringing amendments to the GRA Act to strengthen the powers of the relevant authorities for a more effective control on money laundering and illegal betting.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, may I know the date on which apparently the Prime Minister’s Office requested the Commissioners to send a copy of the confidential interim report?

The Prime Minister: 07 June 2017.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, would the hon. Prime Minister table a copy of the request that has been sent?

The Prime Minister: I can table it. It is signed by Mrs S. D. Gujadhur-Nowbuth, for Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Aurore Perraud, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Roopun, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Roopun, please allow the Leader of the Opposition. There is serious matter to be debated. Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: I note that he has taken three weeks, but still! Can I ask the Prime Minister, concerning this report which seems to have gone missing not once, but twice - I am sure he is aware that it has gone missing twice - whether he has made a Police enquiry into this matter to see why this mysterious report has disappeared twice from the hands of Government?

The Prime Minister: Well, I do not know how come it has gone missing twice. I am not privileged to have had that kind of information. The Leader of the Opposition was in Government before together with the former Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

No, I am just saying! Probably, he knows better at that time. But, Madam Speaker, I have just answered that I have requested my office to try to trace this interim report. It was nowhere to be found and that is the reason why when I replied to a question that was asked in this House, I stated that I will ask my office to write to the Commissioners so that we can get

a copy of that interim report. Well, we will be waiting for them to communicate to us a copy of that report.

Mr X. L. Duval: *Anne, ma sœur Anne!* Would the hon. Prime Minister be surprised to know that the Commissioners have not received any request from his office? I will show later that I am in contact with the Commissioners.

The Prime Minister: Well...

(*Interruptions*)

I am not...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Bhagwan, please!

The Prime Minister: This is the very boat, the MMM and the Labour Party, which crashed on the reef at the last General Elections.

(*Interruptions*)

To bateau ine crasé!

(*Interruptions*)

With you!

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: With you, you *le traître*!

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order! Can we have some order in the House!

(*Interruptions*)

Can we have some order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, please!

(Interruptions)

Please! Please! I am calling...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bérenger, I am trying to calm down the House, why are you getting excited? I have called everybody to order, but you are looking there!

(Interruptions)

You are looking there, right!

(Interruptions)

You don't look at me and then you make remarks, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please proceed!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I will quote from a correspondence from Mr Benn Gunn. In case you want to put Mr Gunn's credentials in doubt, Mr Gunn was former Chief Constable in the UK, that is, equivalent to a Commissioner of Police. I will quote from a correspondence he sent to one Mr Beekarry. I think he is well-known in the circle...

(Interruptions)

And this is what he says, Madam Speaker, and this is what is shocking -

"The handling of the highly sensitive interim report is also shrouded in mystery in spite of a copy being handed personally to you – this is to Mr Beekarry - in March 2015".

This is why I asked the hon. Prime Minister why he was not aware of this. I don't see Mr Beekarry today. What a surprise!

(Interruptions)

He is in New York. Coincidence!

(Interruptions)

But why he has not instituted a Police enquiry and why he will not tell us why he will not do so now and take disciplinary action which is obviously required?

The Prime Minister: The Leader of the Opposition is asking me to say why I have not acted after he has mentioned this letter. I am not aware of this letter.

(Interruptions)

I do not have this letter. You give me a copy of that letter and then I will try to find out what has happened to this supposed interim report.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I will table a copy of that letter. I will also, Madam Speaker, not do so usually, but I will table a copy of the interim report which has been covered up by the Government. And I will tell you, Madam Speaker, in case people think I got it when I was in Government because – surprise, surprise - I have an email this morning from one same Mr Benn Gunn, and it authenticates “as you request, the document that you wanted (...).” It is not such a long document. People can read it. I would not have done so usually, but I am fed up, Madam Speaker, of this cover-up. I would like, hon. Prime Minister, now that I have...

(Interruptions)

He must be delighted; he had been looking for it for two years! Now that I give it to him, he will tell us what he wants to do with this report. He wants to throw it in the bin. It will be difficult to hide it again. So, what does he want to do with it?

The Prime Minister: Throw it! The Leader of the Opposition is talking for himself. Now we know where the copy is. Now, we know who has taken that Interim Report. It is good that you are giving it back.

(Interruptions)

It is good!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Thierry Henry, please!

Please, calm down!

(Interruptions)

Please!

(Interruptions)

Please, calm down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, please!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it would be interesting to know since when the hon. Leader of the Opposition has had this copy because he could have tabled it or he would have sent it much earlier so that we could have inquired into the contents.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Please, we cannot hear what the reply is. I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition has been able to listen to the reply of the hon. Prime Minister. There is too much noise. Please, order!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the email is dated Tuesday, June 13 and it says: “I have read the document entitled “Commission (...)”. It says: “can state that it is a true copy of the Interim Report”. So, you have it here, Madam Speaker. Anyway, you want to take it! There is Facebook, there is everything. So, everything will come out. Do not worry about it!

Now, Madam Speaker, the previous Prime Minister stated - perhaps, let us say the current Prime Minister does not know about this, he has not phoned Mr Beekarry to ask him - on 08 September 2013: “I have not seen any Interim Report”.

I hope you do not want me to certify Hansard. This is what the hon. Prime Minister said. This is why I want the hon. Prime Minister to tell us what sort of inquiry he is going to have with the cover-up of the century here that we have in front of us.

The Prime Minister: There is absolutely no cover-up, Madam Speaker. I have replied. When I looked for the report at my office, there was no report. Supposedly, now...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Maneesh Gobin!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Maneesh Gobin, do not make provocative remarks!

(Interruptions)

Do not make provocative remarks! I am warning you!

The Prime Minister: We now know who supposedly has the report. Well, it has been tabled. I do not know if it has been tabled together with the email. I will be looking into that document.

Mr X. L. Duval: Do not put my integrity in doubt if I were you, hon. Prime Minister! I would not do that! You will cross something that you will not come out well.

Madam Speaker, this obviously cost millions.

(Interruptions)

I will, but do not go along that line! Do not question my integrity! I will not do that. It would not be right of you and I will then react.

Now, Madam Speaker,...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...in relation to the implementation now - not the Interim Report we have never found it apparently. It had gone missing for two years and a half or more. What about the implementation of the final report which is here and that famous report which had been paid for by taxpayers' funds on the implementation thereof? Now, I must tell you, Madam Speaker, that the Commissioners are wild with the Government of Mauritius for non-implementation of their report which they say, vast amounts of recommendations. There were 23 in the final report and another 10 in this report which bears the Arms of the Government of Mauritius by the way and this they were wild, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why so many of these recommendations, including the one on ICAC, that the ICAC

should be given stronger, wider powers - what was wrong with implementing these recommendations of the Commissioners?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I have said that when recommendations were made, the GRA has looked into all these recommendations. Some have been acted upon. I have stated that a Division has been set up with regard to the horse racing. A number of other measures have been taken by the *Police des Jeux*, and at the level of the MRA, and I have also proposed amendments in the Budget. I have said that I am coming with amendments to the law and there are other proposed recommendations that are being looked into with regard to amending the Prevention of Corruption Act. I said that there is a Committee. It is not only looking at that aspect of the amendment, they are looking also at other amendments with regard to Prevention of Corruption so that all of them taken together will eventually come before this House for amendments.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, for the sake of completeness, I will also table a copy of the report entitled 'Report on Implementation of Recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on horse racing in Mauritius'. I must now ask the hon. Prime Minister. One of the main recommendations of the Commission was to get rid of political control. What they say - I agree with them - is a political control on the GRA in Mauritius and to have a separate Division of independent people, also staffed by overseas experts who would come for some time to help us get rid of corruption, money laundering and race rigging that is occurring in Mauritius, apparently, on a daily basis.

The Prime Minister: Well, again, I said whatever recommendations have been made are being considered. I have just replied that some of them have already been put in practice. Others are taking some time before Government and the relevant authority will act upon them.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister is also Minister of Finance; the report says that apparently there is Rs800 m. of lost revenue annually to the Government by failure to implement appropriate control measures. So, this is obviously something that is very important. Now, there is one document which is missing, which I do not have. I do not have that one: 'The GRA - Strategic Roadmap 2016-18' which is supposed to work and supposed to show that they are going to put some of these things into practice. Would the Prime Minister be kind enough now, so that we have a complete set, to table the Strategic Roadmap?

The Prime Minister: I will look into it and then I will take a decision with regard to the request of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the main recommendations, as stated by the Leader of the Opposition and pointed out by the Prime Minister, is the reorganisation of the GRA. We have asked several Parliamentary Questions even to the previous Prime Minister. One of the main problems is political interference. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that his Senior Adviser, Mr Prakash Maunthrooa and the Senior Adviser, Mr Dev Beekarry, who is also a Member of the GRA, are meddling with the day to day operation of the MTC and also of the GRA, to enable a dark network headed by Mr Michel Lee Shim, owner of SMS Pariaz, a supporter of his party MSM, to have the upper hand in the activities of horse racing in Mauritius? This is the Mafia which is being tolerated by him...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No. Hon. Bhagwan, you have asked your question!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Let me remind you...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, you have already asked your question, please!

The Prime Minister: Let me remind you who gave the licence...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Please, order!

(Interruptions)

Order, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Please, you have asked your question. Yes!

The Prime Minister: Allegations are being made! What question is the hon. Member asking?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Who gave...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Who gave the licence to Paul Foo Kune?

Madam Speaker: ...you have to order your hon. Member!

(Interruptions)

Please, hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please!

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member should know who gave the licence to Paul Foo Kune when his leader was Minister of Finance.

He was Minister of Finance and he gave licence to Paul Foo Kune at that time!

(Interruptions)

Bann mafia! And that is where they were being financed! *Ti pe finance zot lerla ! Mafia!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please order!

Hon. Armance!

(Interruptions)

Mr Armance: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to know, regarding this famous report, whether there has been any cost related to the preparation cost and, if yes, how much?

The Prime Minister: Cost of the report...

(*Interruptions*)

Line fini reponn !

(*Interruptions*)

The cost of the report, Madam Speaker, amounts to £123,636. So, that translates to Rs6,231,600. The Rs2 m. must have gone somewhere maybe.

(*Interruptions*)

He must ask the Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, as recommended in the report, Government envisages giving a sports betting licence to the MTC? Because the whole question of control of the races is also a question of funding and the control of funding also relates to contributions from various players; sports betting licence to the MTC will greatly enhance the income in the whole sector. Am I making myself clear?

(*Interruptions*)

The final report - which you have a copy of - mentions the fact that they are recommended to give a sports betting licence to the MTC. Is the Prime Minister going to do so?

The Prime Minister: Well, what the hon. Leader of the Opposition fails to say also is, when he talks - I do not mean him, this side talks about mafia, but the mafia, at the level of the MTC, is he aware about this mafia? Why no word has been said about how we are going to dismantle this mafia, the connection between drug trafficking and money laundering and illegal betting? Madam Speaker, I can say that this Government and I, as Prime Minister, *nous sommes en train de mener une bataille sans pitié contre ces trafiquants de drogues, le blanchiment d'argent ! Ça, c'est résultat sur résultat !*

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order! Enough ! Order, please!

(*Interruptions*)

The Prime Minister: *Madame la présidente, le peuple est en train de voir nos actions...*

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order, hon. Bhagwan!

Hon. Jhugroo! This is the last time I am warning you!

(*Interruptions*)

Please, calm down!

The Prime Minister: Le peuple est en train de témoigner de nos actions qui mènent à des résultats et à des saisies.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody! Hon. Baloomoody!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Baloomoody, I have called you three times. This is the final warning. Yes!

The Prime Minister: Madame la présidente, il y a des saisies record. Jamais il n'y a eu autant de saisies de drogues. Et ces mafias ont été soutirées par l'ancien régime travailliste pendant des années et des années ! Ils ont accumulé des richesses, des millions et des millions de roupies ! Et nous, nous sommes là pour mettre de l'ordre et nous allons nettoyer ce pays.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: Let us just see how the words translate into action. We have an Interim Report that has disappeared twice; once in the hands of a Senior Advisor. We have a final report in which there are 23 recommendations; only one or two have been put into practice. And we have a third one, the Implementation Report, which has 13 recommendations and not one has been put into practice, Madam Speaker. I would ask the hon. Prime Minister, given the obvious interest of the House in this matter, given all the claims he is making, all the words he is saying, but no action as far as racing is concerned, and that can be proven, will he not have a Select Committee of the House to look in the handling of these very serious matters which I have raised this morning?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the population of Mauritius is seeing the actions we are taking and the results that are being concretely achieved. There is no need for a Select Committee on this issue. Government, I have said, has taken a number of measures and will be taking other measures in the future.

Madam Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been advised that PQ B/409 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister has been withdrawn. Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Is the hon. Member raising a point of order?

Mr Ameer Meea: I am raising a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am raising a point which pertains to the credibility of our official Hansard, which is of national importance. The House would recall that on 04 April 2017, I asked PQ No. B/114 on Agalega Island which was addressed to the hon. Minister Jhugroo. In this PQ, I asked a first supplementary question whereby I asked that the memorandum that was signed in 2015 and the detailed report project be made available. I asked the hon. Minister whether these documents can be placed in the Library of the National Assembly and the hon. Minister, Minister Jhugroo stated to the House, and I quote -

‘I will do the needful’.

He stated in Hansard: ‘I will do the needful’. And to my great astonishment, today, when I consulted Hansard, that is, this morning, the sentence that the hon. Minister stated to the House, which was on the first copy of the Hansard: ‘I will do the needful’ has simply been deleted.

(Interruptions)

This, Madam Speaker, tantamounts to falsification of Hansard, tampering of Hansard, which is at the heart of our Parliament.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Mr Ameer Meea: I am tabling copies of both replies where the sentence appears and the second one where the sentence has simply been erased. So, Madam Speaker, I am kindly requesting you, as Speaker in your Office, to make an enquiry so that we can establish who has instructed that this sentence be removed and also to re-establish this sentence in our Hansard. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member, for drawing my attention to this. In fact, this is a very serious matter and I will have to carry out an enquiry to see who is responsible for what and I will come back to this House and inform the House of what is the outcome of that enquiry. Thank you!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, no crosstalking please! I have said crosstalking is not allowed!

SERVICE TO MAURITIUS PROGRAMME – MS A. B. - INTERNSHIP

(No. B/402) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Ms A. B., a visually impaired LLB holder, he will state the reasons why her application to be considered anew for the 2016 intake under the Service to Mauritius Programme was not retained.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that enlistment of interns with disabilities under the Service to Mauritius Programme is made through the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board which is the authority for establishing and maintaining a register of disabled persons.

On 14 December 2012, the Training and Disabled Persons Board submitted the list of candidates with disabilities including Ms A. B. for consideration under the programme. After the normal screening exercise, 14 candidates who were degree holders including Ms A. B. were found to be qualified for enlistment.

Ms A. B. benefitted from the internship under the Service to Mauritius Programme for a period of three years as from 01 March 2013. Her internship was exceptionally extended up to 31 May 2016 to compensate for the three months during which she was unable to attend her internship due to transport problems.

Madam Speaker, as you are aware, following the extension of the Youth Employment Programme to the Public Sector, the Service to Mauritius Programme was reviewed in 2016 to cater for the enlistment of 200 candidates in scarcity areas in the public service and to honour Government's commitment for placement of laureates under the Education (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

Ms A. B. reapplied directly to my Ministry for internship under the Service to Mauritius Programme which was advertised in July 2016.

In accordance with existing policy, the applications of candidates who have already benefitted from the full three-year internship under the programme are not retained in order to give opportunities to a maximum number of unemployed young graduates to benefit from the Programme.

For the 2016 intake, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions requested the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to reserve six seats for persons with disabilities and to liaise with the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board accordingly. The Board submitted the applications of three candidates for placement under the programme which did not include the name of Ms A. B. Out of the three candidates, two are presently serving under the programme and one has declined the offer of internship as she has been offered employment with another organisation.

The Service to Mauritius Programme has been re-advertised in April 2017 in certain fields which are in high demand. In this context, the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board has been requested to submit the names of four other persons with disabilities to be considered under the present enlistment exercise.

Madam Speaker, furthermore, my Ministry referred the application of Ms A. B. to the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development, which has supported her application.

My Ministry will now proceed with the enlistment of Ms A. B. under the Service to Mauritius Programme.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his answer. Could the hon. Prime Minister consider - for people with disabilities clearly are having a lot of problems to find employment and after having spent a lot of time or the three years with Service to Mauritius -

removing this precondition or this condition that when they have had three years at the STM that these three years' time limit be removed specifically for people with disabilities because precisely they have a lot of problems having employment in other places in the public or in the private service?

The Prime Minister: This is the rule with regard to that programme, Madam Speaker. Of course, we can look at the past and see how many people in a *situation de handicap* have applied and how many have benefitted from this programme and see whether we can have, maybe, a different policy as suggested by the hon. Member. We will look into that, but I cannot say now that we are going to amend it right away.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister just mentioned that the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board recommended that six people with disabilities be nominated, but they were only able to provide three names. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister if, henceforth, when there is advertisement for Service to Mauritius Programme, in the advertisement itself, there is an appeal to people with disabilities to apply directly to the Ministry instead of going through the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board?

The Prime Minister: It would not be appropriate to do that because the Ministry would not be in a position to take a decision as we need to go through the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board. It is up to them to recommend as we do not have the necessary expertise to be able to make the appropriate choice. It is up to them therefore to recommend to us, and then, of course, we stand to be guided by their recommendations. So, we need to keep this process in place, otherwise the Ministry can be accused of favouring one at the expense of the other for a number of reasons. That is why we need to keep that process.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, next question!

CLARISSE HOUSE – PRIVATE DINNER - COST

(No. B/403) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the gathering held at Clarisse House, on or about 23 December 2016, he will state who organised same and under whose instructions, indicating the –

- (a) cost thereof, and
- (b) name of the catering service provider therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the then Prime Minister had organised a private dinner on 23 December 2016 at Clarisse House in the context of the New Year where were invited colleagues Ministers, MPs and other personal guests.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you very much to the Prime Minister. I have asked other questions here about the cost of the dinner and the caterer who was used since it was organised on public premises. Did the then Prime Minister, since he organised a private dinner, pay any due to Government for using public premises for private reasons?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: What? Is the hon. Member suggesting that the Prime Minister cannot use Clarisse House? Maybe I should remind him of the former Prime Minister, how he was abusing of Clarisse House at that time and I have...

(Interruptions)

...and I have, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

in this case the...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, if you continue, I will order you out!

(Interruptions)

Yes.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: In this case, Sir Anerood Jugnauth had organised a private dinner and had incurred all the costs with regard to that private dinner, but I have here and maybe I can - I don't want to lay it on the Table of the House, but I can show the hon. Member on how many occasions, parties were organised in Clarisse House and...

(Interruptions)

...who paid for them. Do you know who paid for them? Government paid for them at that time!

(*Interruptions*)

I would not say in one case, Madam Speaker, I think it was not a party that was organised, it must have been an orgy!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Mohamed: Could the hon. Prime Minister come back to the issue? We are not talking about the past every time...

(*Interruptions*)

... because each and every time...

(*Interruptions*)

... each and every time one way of running away from the present truth is of referring to the past. The fact is that he is in Government right now, he is Prime Minister, so now, can he consider the facts of today? As far as his Government is concerned, does he consider it totally in order for his Government or the Prime Minister, the previous one or himself, to use Clarisse House which is public premises for private purposes without paying any *redevance* whatsoever even for electricity or even for water or even for the use of the private premises?

(*Interruptions*)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker...

(*Interruptions*)

I think this hon. Member - something must have gone wrong with him!

(*Interruptions*)

You know, maybe he is not aware that Clarisse House is the official residence of the Prime Minister. In fact, the former Prime Minister could have stayed there. He would have been using electricity, water and all the amenities there. Now, he chose not to stay there and to use his private residence, but it has been the practice and I don't see anything wrong with that for him to use Clarisse House for a private dinner when, I say again, he has incurred all the expenses with regard to that private dinner. I again say to the hon. Member, let me remind

him, that private – he is saying not to look at the past, but he was in that Government of Navin Ramgoolam, he has been...

(Interruptions)

He has not been to Clarisse House?

(Interruptions)

Well, then, he was excluded from all those parties!

(Interruptions)

I can understand why! Because he did not want to have any witness!

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: So, could he, therefore, consider...

Madam Speaker: No! Sorry! Next question!

‘G NEWS’ - PUBLICATION - COST

(No. B/404) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the publication, on 01 March 2017, of an edition of a paper called Government News, he will state the -

- (a) cost thereof;
- (b) names of the persons, company or organisation having worked thereon;
- (c) procedure followed for the selection of the publisher thereof;
- (d) name of the printer thereof, and
- (e) mode of distribution and cost thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, a High Level Inter-Ministerial Committee, under my chairmanship, meets on a regular basis to ensure proper coordination and prompt implementation of measures and projects announced in 2016-17 Budget, including effective elimination of bottlenecks. In order to sensitise all stakeholders, including members of the public, of actions taken by all Ministries/Departments and progress achieved in the implementation of these measures and projects, it was agreed to publish an appropriate document entitled ‘G News’ for wide distribution.

In this connection, the communication cell of my Office has been mandated to coordinate and disseminate the publication of *G News* in collaboration with Ministries and departments.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development carried out, in accordance with established procedures, a procurement exercise for the printing and distribution of the *G News*.

Following the tender exercise for printing services, the following bids were received -

(i)	Caractère Ltd (La Sentinelle)	Rs258,750.00
(ii)	T-Printers Co Ltd	Rs275,000.00
(iii)	Government Printing	Rs507,000.00

The two bidders also responded for the distribution of the publication as follows –

(i)	Défiplus Co Ltd	Rs63,250.00
(ii)	La Sentinelle	Rs92,000.00

Based on the above tender exercises, the contracts were awarded to the lowest responsive bidders as follows –

(i)	for printing services	– Caractère Ltd for the sum of Rs258,750.00, and
(ii)	for distribution services	– Défiplus Co Ltd for the sum of Rs63,250.00.

Mr Mohamed: I have two questions, with your permission. One of them would be...

Madam Speaker: One by one, please!

Mr Mohamed: Yes, one by one. Is this the only publication that is being paid by Government funds and distributed to all MPs and the whole population with regard to this Government propaganda? Is this the only one or is there any other one?

The Prime Minister: Well, if the hon. Member would have asked a question with regard to all publications that are made, I would have answered. He asked a question about *G News* published on 01 March 2017. I can gather all the information with regard to other publications and furnish this information to the House.

Mr Mohamed: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that this particular publication contains nothing else, but Government propaganda and does not, in any way, cover a balanced news of what exactly Government business is all about? It is only with regard to propaganda, to the glory of himself and his Ministers, and nothing else! And does he find it in order, therefore, that Government funds should be for paying for printing and distribution of Government propaganda? Is it in order?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is about all the projects and all the measures that have been taken by this Government which are being disseminated so that people are aware about all the information. I must remind the hon. Member that I have gone and seen what has been the practice in the past. When he was in the previous Government, they also have been publishing a number of magazines and a number of letters for dissemination of what Government was doing at that time. I have no problem with that! And that is why I think it is absolutely normal for people to know what has been achieved by this Government.

Mr Mohamed: A last question. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there is another publication called *Xournal* that is also paid for the propaganda of the MSM, in particular, for political propaganda, and it is paid by Government funds in the same way?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me answer because there is no paper that is being printed by Government for the MSM party. That is not something that we do. Probably, that could have been done in the past by the Labour party, but not by us! Secondly, I remind the hon. Member that his question is with regard to one publication on 01 March, and then he is asking supplementary questions which have no relevance to this main question.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhadain!

Mr Bhadain: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to *Xournal*, Madam Speaker, this is a publication which is received by all MPs, I believe. Of course, it would be good to know whether this is being paid from public funds. The hon. Prime Minister has also mentioned that the publication *G News* is actually being printed by Le Défi. Would he inform the House how much is being paid to Le Défi group from taxpayers' funds?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhadain, the first part of your question is irrelevant because it does not pertain to the main question. The second part of the question, the hon. Prime Minister...

The Prime Minister: With regard to the second part, I have just answered, Madam Speaker. There was a tender procedure and Caractère Ltd - this is La Sentinel - quoted the lowest price, that is...

(Interruptions)

Non! Caractère! Printed! The hon. Member asked for printed. So, Rs258,750, whereas for distribution, Défiplus quoted the lowest price of Rs63,250.

Madam Speaker: Next question! Hon. Uteem!

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – VIP LOUNGES – ELIGIBILITY

(No. B/405) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the VIP lounges at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will state the criteria for eligibility thereto on behalf of the State and table the list of the persons to whom the said facilities have been extended, since March 2015 to date, indicating in each case, the reasons therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the provision of VIP facilities to Government officials and foreign visiting dignitaries is an international practice to facilitate the movement of certain passengers at the airport. It is also a sign of courtesy of the State extended to VIPs and other dignitaries, and which help to maintain friendly diplomatic and bilateral relations with other countries.

The eligibility criteria, which are currently applied to grant access to the VIP Lounge at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, were last reviewed in 2000 and approved by Cabinet. As such, access to the VIP Lounge is granted to both outgoing and incoming passengers in accordance with an established list of eligible persons comprising eminent personalities and senior officials. These include -

- (i) Heads of States, Prime Ministers and Ministers, and all Members of the National Assembly as well as their spouse and children;
- (ii) visiting dignitaries;
- (iii) Senior Government officials;
- (iv) Ambassadors and Heads of international organisations;

- (v) Heads of religious bodies;
- (vi) persons who have been decorated as GOSK and GCSK or equivalent.
- (vii) Chairperson and Commissioners and Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.
- (viii) officers of the rank of Deputy Permanent Secretary and above, proceeding on mission, and
- (ix) other persons as per the discretion of the Prime Minister.

Requests from other personalities to access the VIP Lounge are also considered on a case to case basis and approved by my Office.

Madam Speaker, I wish to point out that it has been a long-standing practice to extend VIP facilities to special guests of some eminent personalities. However, my Office is presently reviewing the policy regarding access to the VIP Lounges at the airport with a view to ensuring more effective control on their utilisation, including the prevention of any misuse and abuse of the facilities of access.

It is also worth mentioning that travellers going through the VIP Lounges are normally met by a maximum of two persons on arrival and seen off by two persons on departure.

Madam Speaker, during the period mentioned by the hon. Member, it is estimated that some 10,000 persons may have transited through the VIP Lounges both at arrival and departure. Therefore, it would not be practical to table the whole list of these persons. However, if the hon. Member wishes to have information on specific persons, I am prepared to provide same to the House.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, answering to a PNQ on 04 April, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned that in the case of Alvaro Sobrinho, he was given 31 times access and his family and close collaborators – we do not know who – were given VIP access on 21 occasions. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister before his office grants permission for access to VIP, do they carry out any due diligence or do they simply rubber stamp whatever personalities have applied for these facilities?

The Prime Minister: Well, I do not know for the past, but I can say for now - since I am Prime Minister - that I do not personally approve the list of those people who are going to be entitled to use the VIP Lounges. It is up to the Secretary to Cabinet to approve, based on

these criteria which I have just mentioned, but I have said that with regard to maybe past experience, we are reviewing this process. So, if it is not the practice, I do not know.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have not heard anything about senior members of the Judiciary. Are they granted access to the lounge?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister following the supplementary question of hon. Reza Uteem, pertaining to the reply that he made with regard to Mr Sobrinho. As a result of what he told the House some time back, I asked a specific question for further information with regard to the 31 and 21 guests who had used the VIP facilities, but this question has never been answered so far. So, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he can see to it that the PQ I put to him, weeks and weeks ago, concerning details about the guests of Mr Sobrinho who used the VIP facilities that this answer be provided to the House, please?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member can rest assured that all the information will be tabled and will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker: I will ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

**STATE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LTD./ LANDSCOPE
(MAURITIUS) LTD. - MISS N. H. - APPOINTMENT**

(No. B/406) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Miss N. H., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Property Development Company Ltd./and Landscope (Mauritius) Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) mode of recruitment thereof and date of appointment thereat;
- (b) terms and conditions of appointment thereof, indicating the make and model of the car put at the disposal thereof, and

(c) number of overseas missions attended, indicating the -

- (i) countries visited;
- (ii) duration thereof;
- (iii) composition of the delegations, and
- (iv) total expenses incurred.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Miss N. H. was appointed as Chief Executive Officer of ex-State Property Development Company Ltd. now merged into Landscope (Mauritius) Ltd on 03 November 2015 following an open advertising exercise by a professional recruitment agency.

The selection exercise was carried out in two stages -

In the first stage, a selection panel comprising the recruitment agency and one Board member of ex-State Property Development Company Ltd interviewed the eligible candidates and short-listed two candidates to proceed to the next stage, and

In the second, the two short-listed candidates were interviewed by the full Board of Directors of ex-State Property Development Company Ltd.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am tabling a copy of the terms and conditions of appointment and subsequent revision thereof.

I am further informed that the car of the previous Chief Executive Officer, a Mercedes Benz, model E250 purchased in 2013 was put at the disposal of Miss N. H.

Regarding part (c) of the question, Miss N. H. has not attended any overseas mission since her appointment to date, and therefore the issues raised in part (c)(i), (c)(ii) and (c)(iv) do not arise.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after Miss N. H. has been selected Chief Executive of SPDC, she made a public statement which was in the Press on 13 December 2015 in *Le Defi Media*, in *l'Express* and in all the Press, and I will quote -

« Je ne savais même pas que c'était pour le poste de CEO de la SPDC. C'est lorsqu'on m'a appelé pour m'informer que j'avais été sélectionnée pour un entretien que j'ai su de quel poste il s'agissait. »

M. le président, nous savons tous que durant la dernière campagne électorale, les prises de position de Miss N. H. en faveur de l’Alliance *Lepep* ne sont pas passées inaperçues.

I will ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will agree with me whether this is not a clear case of favouritism.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am just having a look at the advert. Normally, in such cases, it says vacancy for the post of Chief Executive Officer and it only states that – I will read it so that Members can understand –

“We are specialised in property development and project management from conceptualisation to completion and we also provide state-of-the-art services in management (...).”

When I look at it, I do not see any mention being made of the relevant body that is going to recruit. So, probably that can explain why this statement has been made. But I am not aware of that particular statement. I have not read it. But this is the kind of advert normally those institutions make. They do not say for which institution.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Ameer Meea, you should raise your hand!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Ameer Meea: It goes without saying that I will put a second supplementary.

(*Interruptions*)

It is a supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, carry on!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, *s'il est au courant qu'un employé de la SPDC a porté plainte contre Miss N. H. pour conspiracy and breach of ICTA Act et cela en date du 07 Octobre 2016.*

The Prime Minister: Well, the question is about what? It is about whether, in regard to Miss N. H. he will state the mode of recruitment, the terms and conditions, the car that was

put at her disposal and the overseas missions. If the hon. Member comes with another question, of course, I will look into it and I will give you the information.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: The hon. Prime Minister said that an interview was carried out for the selection exercise of Miss N. H. Could he please tell us the date of the interview or interviews and who are the members of the Board who form part of the interview panel, their names?

The Prime Minister: The second interview, the hon. Member means, because there are two interviews?

Mr Mohamed: Both interviews.

The Prime Minister: For the first one, it was done by the Professional Recruitment Agency Talent Solutions Ltd. I don't have the date, but I can find out the date. The second one was held at the Board on 06 July 2015. The interview panel consisted of all Board Directors, that is, Mrs Jugmohun, Mr Goburdhone, Mr Sultoo, Mr de Maroussem, Mr Lepoigneur...

(Interruptions)

Not the hon. Member, it cannot be him! Mr Dooke, Mr Raffique and Mr Boodhoo. There was one member who was absent Mr Pursunon.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister state what were and what are the qualifications of Miss N. H., her experience and what post did she occupy prior to joining the SPDC?

The Prime Minister: Well, I should have it somewhere.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, she holds a first class Degree in Quantity Surveying, a Master's Degree in Project Management and a chartership with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in London. I am also informed that she has 17 years of experience before joining the SPDC. She was also an Associate Director at McBains Cooper Consulting in London, an interdisciplinary property practice providing project management, architecture, master planning, urban design, quantity surveying, property development, engineering and sustainable services.

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether, since she has been employed at the Landscape, a policeman of the VIPSU unit has been attached to her at any time? Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm same?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not think that a VIPSU officer would be attached because she is not entitled to a VIPSU officer...

(Interruptions)

... not that I am not aware.

(Interruptions)

It's not false! It's not true!

(Interruptions)

Maybe if the hon. Member can repeat that outside, if he has the guts and courage, instead of coming to this House under immunity.

(Interruptions)

GAMING HOUSES - PERMITS

(No. B/409) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the gaming houses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the number of permits issued for the operation thereof, since April 2017 to date, indicating the –

- (a) names of the applicants therefor, and
- (b) place of operation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over! We are now moving to PQs addressed to hon. Ministers. Hon. Rughoobur!

COURT CASES - HEARING

(No. B/410) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the Court cases, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Master and Registrar, information as to the measures being envisaged to reduce the delay in the trial thereof.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Master and Registrar as follows –

- (a) Delaying disposing of cases has always been a matter of concern for the Judiciary. Whilst the Judiciary endeavours to hear those cases fixed for trial, there are circumstances which are independent of the Courts and which, at the end of the day, result in the postponement of trials and thus undue delay in hearing of cases.
- (b) The decision to postpone a case is the decision of the bench which is taken judiciously having regard to all the circumstances. A return of postponed cases is submitted to the Master and Registrar by each Court every month, setting down the reasons for the postponement of trials. These returns are examined by the Office of the Master and Registrar and a report is submitted periodically to the hon. Chief Justice for his information. Cases are postponed for valid reasons and include, among others –
 - 1. non-availability of Counsel and dates convenient to the Court;
 - 2. ill health or other predicaments of legal advisor on the date of a hearing;
 - 3. non-attendance of witnesses;
 - 4. non-attendance of parties;
 - 5. case files at the Director of Public Prosecutions for stand, and
 - 6. prosecutors not ready for trial.

At the end of the day, all the Courts are fully booked for several months because of these problems. Only a significant increase in judicial officers, supporting staff and above, adequate infrastructure and there are adequate Courtrooms being provided for can reduce the backlog of the cases and shorten the time delay to hear cases. Now, it is worth pointing out

that the Courts are nowadays also flooded with frivolous cases; therefore, unless and until appropriate legislation is introduced with regard to rationalising the issue of costs, there cannot be any further effective steps which can be taken by the Judiciary to curb the inflow of frivolous litigations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also invite all hon. Members to read the Annual Report of the Judiciary for the year 2016 which has just been posted on the website of the Supreme Court this very month, in June 2017. It is also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir worthwhile to highlight that, in his Budget 2017/2018, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has earmarked Rs15 m. to assist the Judiciary in monitoring progress of Court cases and assist in the timely disposal, and it is worthwhile to quote paragraph 251 of the Budget Speech of the hon. Prime Minister, where he says, I quote –

“I am earmarking Rs15 million for a modern computerised system to better monitor payment of fines and other Court fees and keep track of the progress of cases. Thus, fines and fees will be paid at any District Court and even online.”

This will no doubt enable the Judiciary to better monitor the progress of cases.

Mr Rughooobur: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Attorney General has been referring to the Annual Report of the Judiciary, where it is mentioned the congestion that we have at the level of the District Courts. The hon. Attorney General stated that one of the main reasons was the issue of postponement of cases. Will he also enlighten the House as to why, as compared to 2015, in 2016 there has been a drastic increase of 18% in the number of outstanding cases?

Mr Yerrigadoo: Well, if the hon. Member has consulted the report of the Judiciary for year 2016, he would have seen that there has been an additional number at the level of District Courts of cases, especially at criminal level, at the criminal Courts.

Secondly, there are a number of complex trials which are booking the time of the Court and the Magistrate for continuation. I have not fully analysed the report, I will be more fully dissecting that report when I would be talking in my speech to the Budget, but the hon. Member would see very detailed reasons are given in that report on that specific issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir. Would the hon. Attorney General consider, in relation to delays, setting up or bringing reform to the Judiciary so that we can set up what we call case management hearing both in civil and criminal matters so that there

is time management of cases and the time management that would also lead to a timetable whereby cases could be disposed of within a certain reasonable time limit.

Mr Yerrigadoo: It is a very valid proposal but suffice it to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is already, as it stands, case management but then case management on itself, without appropriate legislation, cannot work. Also there is the issue of cost. We all know that in civil cases, in the UK, when a Law Reform Commission managed to bring in, with Lord Woolf in the late 1990s, reforms in the Civil Justice System in the UK, there was a series of measures associated, including wasted cost orders, mediation and all. But I can assure the hon. Member that at the level of the Judiciary, a lot of thought is being given to it, and my office and all practitioners as well are addressing the issue. But there was, the hon. Member should know, quite a row when it was proposed. I think it was last year, that the costs of cases, especially frivolous cases, be reviewed and this is still at the level of the Rules Committee being strongly opposed to by, I believe, the law society and the Bar Council. There are discussions ongoing on cost, but then a holistic situation would encompass all of these for proper case management.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. One of the main reasons why cases are postponed is absence of witnesses. And the cost we pay them to attend Court - I think it is Rs250 - encourages them to be absent from Court when their day of duty is more than that. They have to forgo a day of duty, Rs1,000 probably, to come and attend Court to get Rs250. Can I ask the hon. Attorney General to look into the matter to encourage witnesses to come to Court?

Mr Yerrigadoo: Certainly, as part of a holistic situation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can I also ask the hon. Attorney General to look into the possibility of having a reduction in the delay in the time taken to deliver judgment after trial is heard?

Mr Yerrigadoo: This is a very delicate matter and I can pass it on to the Chief Justice.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Attorney General has been speaking about investment in IT. The first phase of e-Judiciary, I think, was implemented in 2013. The second phase is due since quite a while. May I know from him what is the status to date?

Mr Yerrigadoo: Well, I don't have all the details, but I can assure the hon. Member another issue which causes delay is the issue of transcript. Right now, the Supreme Court is investing in a modern system for transcripts because legal practitioners will know sometimes continuation cases get delayed because transcripts are not ready. This specific issue is being addressed. And may I say with the advent of a new Supreme Court which will be undertaken in this mandate, the design phase the hon. Prime Minister alluded to in his Budget Speech, there will be investment in new IT infrastructure, not just for the new Supreme Court but we would be in a timely phrased manner in the years to come, invest in a modern system which will help with the disposal of cases. Suffice it to say that the Rs15 m. earmarked in this Budget for the payment of fines itself because I think hon. Members should know the fact that fines would very soon be able to be paid online, would unclog a lot of time of District Court Magistrates all over the island and this in lieu and instead then be used for other purposes of expediting disposal cases as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

DISTRICT COURTS - PREMISES

(No. B/411) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the proposed transfer of the district courts in premises owned by the Sugar Industry Fund Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Master and Registrar, information as to where matters stand, indicating the monthly rental currently payable for the premises presently hosting the District Court of Pamplemousses.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Master and Registrar as follows. The two old buildings in shingles, constructed during colonial times and housing the District Courts of Pamplemousses and Rivière du Rempart were declared structurally unsafe for occupation and constituted great hazard for the public and staff. Both buildings standing on State lands, vested in the Judiciary, were vacated in August and September 2014 respectively.

These two Courts are now located in a single-storey building at Pamplemousses. The lease agreement was signed on 16 October 2013 with Maritime Models Co. Ltd, represented by Mr Sam Gangala Ramsamy. The initial monthly rent was Rs460,000 with a provision for a yearly increase of 5%. The current rent payable is Rs532,507.50 monthly.

On 07 July 2016, the Sugar Insurance Fund Board, SIFB, informed the Judiciary that its sub-office at Pamplemousses is vacant and invited any party to take on the lease of the said premises. The site was visited by the Judiciary, the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport to assess suitability to house the District Courts of Pamplemousses and Rivière du Rempart.

The current Prime Minister has always had a special attention to housing of Courts because this is where justice is given and in his last budget he provided for this to be housed in that new building. And then, on 12 July 2016, the Judiciary informed the Ministry of Housing and Lands that the site is appropriate to house the two District Courts, and in the event Government decides to proceed with the compulsory acquisition of a site to also consider acquiring compulsory portion of land belonging adjacent to it, the Mount Sugar Estate found next to it for parking purposes. In his Budget Speech, as I said, 2016-2017, Government decided to relocate the two District Courts in the SIFB building in Pamplemousses.

On 03 April 2017, following Cabinet decision to acquire a site for Rs23 m., the Financial Secretary wrote to the Ministry of Housing and Lands with a request to look into the matter and finalise the acquisition on behalf of the Judiciary. This matter is being looked into. The drafting of the deed of sale is being awaited and this matter is being expedited. I had spoken very recently to my colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands to expedite the matter. There are issues of valuation involved as well for the adjacent site, but this is being looked into, and then renovation works proper can start to the Court.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Gobin!

Mr Gobin: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Since the matter concerns the proposed transfer of District Courts in premises owned by the SIFB, may I request the hon. Attorney General to expedite the transfer of the District Court of Savanne also from rented premises to those of the SIFB. Thank you.

Mr Yerrigadoo: I would transmit.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Could the hon. Attorney General consider when setting up those Courts in the new building that sufficient provision is made for a robing room in each of the Court premises so that Counsel and Solicitors can go and robe into that, just like we have in civilised countries like England, France, Germany and all the Commonwealth countries?

Mr Yerrigadoo: I will transmit to the Master and Registrar.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

CERTIFICATE OF CHARACTER LEGISLATION – AMENDMENT

(No. B/412) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the Certificate of Character Act, he will state when proposed amendments will be introduced in the House in relation thereto regarding the –

- (a) conditions for the issue of a clean certificate, and
- (b) reduction in the delay in the processing thereof.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would be replying to PQ Nos. B/412 and B/417 addressed by hon. Lepoigneur together as they relate to the same subject matter.

I wish to ensure the House that amendments to both Certificate of Character Act and as I will say there are other Acts as well, I will mention them shortly, will be brought to this House by the end of this year time permitting.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the law of the Certificate of Character Act as it presently stands, offences amounting to crimes or misdemeanours appear on the Certificate of Character. Consequently, where minor offences amount to misdemeanour and less than 5 years have lapsed since the conviction and the fine imposed was more than Rs5,000, and where no probation order was made in favour of persons convicted; the said minor offences would still appear in the certificate.

On the other hand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a crime or misdemeanour will not appear in a certificate where the person has in Mauritius amongst others, *inter alia*, following a conviction for crime or misdemeanour other than an offence specified in the Second Schedule and that is the operating schedule of the Certificate of Character Act. My learned colleagues would want to see. Being given only (a) an absolute discharge or (b) conditional discharge

and as complied with the terms and conditions of the discharge or has been granted free pardon in respect of the crime or misdemeanour pursuant to section 75 of the Constitution.

Now, it is to be noted that under the Criminal Code, misdemeanours are offences punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding 10 days and a fine exceeding Rs5,000, and crimes or offences punishable by penal servitude and a fine exceeding Rs5,000.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, examples of other minor offences which are included in the Certificate of Character and which we will deal with in the coming amendments are -

- smoking in the public place;
- throwing cigarette;
- consuming alcoholic drinks in public place;
- illegal littering;
- insult;
- being found in a place of amusement outside prohibited hours.

Now, in line with paragraph 39 of the Government Programme 2015-2019 and with a view to implementing the said paragraph in order to increase the employability of people convicted of minor crimes or misdemeanours, we have had brainstorming sessions and I have been studying the amendments to be brought to the Certificate of Character Act and maybe to the Employment Rights Act and to the Equal Opportunities Act as well as to avoid issues of vice and stigma because it's employability which is important.

Now, as I stated in the previous PQ relating to the Certificate of Character, in certain jurisdictions like the UK, for instance, even some minor offences involving an element of dishonesty although spent which still appear in the Certificate of Character with a caveat which could lead the employer discriminating against the person who could normally have already been repented and served whatever he had done to society.

Also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has to be ensured that the Certificate of Character is admissible internationally for the simple reason that many of our citizens seek employment abroad or work on *bateau de croisière*, for instance. Consequently, in view of all the above matters and bearing in mind that misdemeanours also include serious offences, consideration is being given, as I said, to amending the Act in order to exclude certain minor offences such as those mentioned earlier which do not involve an element of dishonesty.

With regard to the issue of alleged delay in delivering Certificates of Character, the issue of reduction of delays does not arise because where the applicant indicates urgency on his application form, a student going abroad studying, applying for jobs where there are interviews and that Certificate of Character is important, the matter is being expedited by the Office of the DPP. I have already replied to this issue on 07 June 2016 in PQ B/531.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: M. le président, il y a un drame humain en ce moment-ci, ce n'est pas de la politique, mais il y a beaucoup de personnes qui sont lésées pour avoir un *job* à travers le *Certificate of Character*. Je pense qu'il faut traiter cela en urgence, au plus vite et de venir avec une loi, pas à la fin de l'année c'est trop tard. Il y a beaucoup de personnes qui sont lésées dessus, qui n'arrivent pas à trouver de l'emploi. Il y a beaucoup de personnes qui n'ont pas de casier judiciaire, mais de par le rapport, le laps de temps qu'on prend pour donner un certificat de caractère c'est plus de deux mois actuellement. Mais, je pense qu'il faut traiter cela en urgence pour pouvoir soulager beaucoup de personnes à trouver un travail décent. Merci.

Mr Yerrigadoo: M. le président, je crois que j'ai déjà été assez clair. Le calendrier parlementaire, étant ce qu'il est, évidemment, on traite cela avec diligence, mais le *issue* c'est *employability*. Le *issue* c'est le concept de *spent conviction* c'est aussi le *bias* ou le stigma d'un employeur. C'est pourquoi je dis ce n'est pas un simple amendement au *Certificate of Character Act*. Si vous allez voir ce que mon prédécesseur a dit lorsqu'en 2013 on a amendé cette loi, il y avait des objectifs aussi sur l'*employability* - c'était cela le discours, mais c'est dans la pratique. Donc, il y a une réflexion plus approfondie sur le besoin sans doute d'amender aussi l'*Employment Rights Act* et aussi sans doute pour déstigmatiser l'employeur qui aurait des tendances à stigmatiser l'*Equal Opportunities Act*. C'est quelque chose de très sérieux. Comme je l'ai dit, ce gouvernement viendra avec certains amendements avant la fin de cette année, *time permitting*.

Mr Osman Mahomed: In the Press, even yesterday on the radio, it was aired that there are some 6,000 people awaiting processing for free pardon at the Office of the Commission of Prerogative of Mercy. In June 2016, the hon. Minister said he would bring the legislation to Parliament in December 2016, but, now, we hear it is going to be delayed by one year. Can we know from the hon. Attorney General whether the principle of spent conviction will be taken on board when he brings the Bill to the House?

Mr Yerrigadoo: I have just explained the reason for the delay, precisely, because we want to take the issue of spent convictions, but then it works also with convictions. One must understand the criminal justice system as it is when cases are heard and our Courts, our Learned Magistrates deliver sentence and then introducing a new concept of spent conviction, it has to be well grafted on the system.

Secondly, the issue of employability leads to us looking at more than amending a Certificate of Character Act. The issue of the Commission of Prerogative of Mercy is a separate issue, as the hon. Member would know, and I cannot answer for that.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have, in the past, put two questions to the hon. Attorney General concerning the same issue. The Attorney General has just explained to us the intricacies of the matter and the complexity of the proposed legislation. But may I ask him, in view of the fact that this question, worded more or less similarly, has been put to him some one year or more ago, why is it that the Attorney General's Office cannot come up with a Bill after having considered all the suggestions that have been made in this House, especially in view of the urgency of the matter? I know a case recently where somebody has been dismissed from his employment at the Local Government Service because of a case of disturbance. A case of disturbance means an offence having only spoken loudly on a public way and this is a disturbance. He had lost his job because he had a previous conviction of disturbance. So, may I ask the hon. Minister to come up with this law as quickly as possible so that we can find a solution to this question especially with regard to the issue of employability?

Mr Yerrigadoo: Let me reassure the hon. Member that it is not that the Attorney General's Office cannot come up with a draft. There is unanimity on all the sides of this House about the importance of this. Again, it would be very befitting if all hon. Members would go and read what my predecessor said when he was moving the Bill. In 2013, the same objectives were there, but then I ask a simple question: why with all the good intentions my predecessor had, were those objectives not successful in practice? This is what we are addressing. There are a number of institutions. We want it to be workable. We do not want to come up with an amendment just for the sake of saying we have amended the Certificate of Character Act. Let me reassure all Members of the House. Brainstorming sessions have been held in all quarters with all those concerned and it is very delicate. The Judiciary also, I can say, is very much aware of this discussion and when the amendments would be brought, and, as I said, we are doing our best to bring it by the end of this year and not just to the

Certificate of Character Act. We all want to achieve our same objective on all the sides of this House.

Mr Rughoobur: I just wanted to suggest, if I may, to the hon. Attorney General, *la réinsertion* of the ex-detainees in their social and professional life, there have been many representations from NGOs. I am happy that the hon. Attorney General is coming up with amendments. If he could also take on board the reinsertion of these ex-detainees in their social and professional life. Thank you.

Mr Yerrigadoo: I thank the hon. Member for his suggestion. I will consult relevant Ministries, the Prime Minister's Office and the Minister Mentor's Office under whose aegis these fall as well. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The sitting is suspended. We shall resume after lunch.

At 1.12 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.48 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

DRIVING LICENCE – DEAF PEOPLE - ISSUE

(No. B/413) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the driving licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of deaf people who -

- (a) are holders thereof, and
- (b) have been refused the issue thereof over the past two years, indicating the reasons therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, section 45(2) of the Road Traffic Act 1962 provides that any person deemed to be totally deaf is not eligible for a driving licence. However, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, as to date, 151 persons suffering from partial hearing impairment are holders of a driving licence after having cleared the prescribed competency test.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am also informed that, over the past two years, two applications from deaf people have been turned down as they were suffering from

profound hearing impairment and they could only communicate by lip reading and may be a source of danger to the public.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: The hon. Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, referred to section 45(2). Is it so? Which section was that?

The Prime Minister: Section 45(2), which deals with disease or physical disabilities...

Mr Mohamed: Thank you. Madam Speaker, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that this particular section of the law is in total contravention with Article 5 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which clearly states equality of non-discrimination, where State parties shall prohibit such discrimination? Because, at no time, does section 45(2) refer to any deafness or complete deafness! The word 'deaf', if I am not mistaken, is not even used in that particular section, and this is in contravention, as I explained, with Article 5 of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, which Mauritius is a signatory to.

The Prime Minister: No. True it is that the section does not speak or does not specify about deafness. But the section talks about the fitness of an applicant. I am advised that it is interpreted subject to sub-section 2(a), where it is stated that, from enquiry, it appears that the applicant is suffering from a disease or disability. So, that must be interpreted in line with the particular disability.

Today, we are talking about deafness. The disability could be blindness; it could be other impairment that would render the person who would be driving a vehicle being a risk to other users of the road. This is the first part that was mentioned by the hon. Member. Well, I will seek the advice of the State Law Office as to whether this is in contravention with the UN Charter or not. I am not able to give an opinion on that today.

Mr Mohamed: I have here a publicised statement, Madam Speaker, from the President of the World Federation of the Deaf, which is a Non-Governmental Organisation with official liaison with ECOSOC, UNESCO, ILO, WHO and the Council of Europe based in Finland. And in that particular statement, which I shall table, it is precisely a call where it shows that research made in many other countries shows that - if I may be allowed just to quote that because this is a very sensitive question for people with disabilities -

“It is a well-known fact deaf drivers have been involved in car accidents less than average drivers. Hearing is not a necessary sense for driving a car. For example, it is possible to check by sense of touch whether the car horn functions or not. Also, it is possible to use visual means during driving and seeing the ambulance or a police vehicle lights flashing.”

It is a call upon all countries to allow such discrimination to stop and is he finally aware that there are only 29 countries in the world, 26 as at today, that do not allow driving licences to be delivered to people with deafness and Mauritius is one of the 26 countries not allowing people who are deaf from obtaining a driving licence whereas all the other hundred or so countries including the European Union, South Africa,...

Madam Speaker: So, this is your question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed?

Mr Mohamed: That is my question.

Madam Speaker: Don’t take too much time, please!

Mr Mohamed: ... Reunion, Mozambique...

Madam Speaker: Ask your question!

Mr Mohamed: This is allowed and this is the document.

Madam Speaker: Ask your question!

Mr Mohamed: So, with a great majority of countries allowing it, not finding it to be an impediment, not finding it to be a handicap, not finding it to be a danger to road users...

Madam Speaker: Yes, don’t make a statement! Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, you are taking the time of the House...

Mr Mohamed: Yes, I am.

Madam Speaker: ...to make a long statement whereas during question time we have to be fair to others who have got their questions on the agenda also. Please, ask your question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: I am trying to be fair to the deaf!

(Interruptions)

I mean, some people might find it theatrical, but I am just trying to be fair to the deaf! Could the hon. Prime Minister therefore consider that if a great majority of countries do not find it an impediment that we do not interpret the Road Traffic Act in a restrictive manner which has to be discriminatory? And I shall table therefore those two documents.

The Prime Minister: Well, I will obviously look at all the information that is being provided by the hon. Member. Of course, it is for the authorities to have a look at it. I believe, my natural, logical reaction would be that there is, of course, a problem with regard to somebody who is deaf. I am not saying that if ever - he should not be penalised - that person should not be unduly penalised to be able to move freely by car, but I believe that probably there must be in other countries certain vehicles which are specially adapted probably for those people. If not, okay. But we will look into it and consider the request of the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question No. B/414 has been withdrawn! Hon. Mrs Perraud!

MARJOLAIN - SQUATTERS - RELOCATION

(No. B/414) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the proposed relocation of the squatters of Marjolain, in residence La Cure, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

AGALEGA ISLAND – CPE EXAMINATIONS – PASS RATE

(No. B/415) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, following the poor performance of the pupils of the Agalega Island who participated in the 2016 Certificate of Primary Education Examinations, she will state if the matter has been looked into and measures taken in relation thereto and, if so, give details thereof.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, the performance levels of pupils of Agalega taking part in the Certificate of Primary Education Examinations has been relatively low over the years.

With regard to the performance of pupils of Agalega, who have participated in the 2016 CPE Examinations, the pass rate stood at 40%. This figure, although still low, shows a slight improvement as the pass rate was much lower over the past years.

The slight improvement in performance has been due to a number of actions taken by the Ministry with regards mainly to pedagogy and staffing. For year 2017, the Ministry has posted one additional teaching Deputy Head Master and four Educators to the primary schools.

However, efforts should be sustained for a marked improvement of same through reinforcement of the teaching and learning process.

Moreover, Expression of Interest would be called for teachers to conduct remedial education in the island.

In order to monitor the teaching and learning process, regular visits are conducted to Agalega by School Inspectors. In this context, apart from the visit in March 2017, there has been a technical and pedagogical team from the Ministry comprising School Inspectors, representatives of the MES and MIE who have proceeded to Agalega on 12 June this year with a view to assessing the situation and making recommendations for remedial measures to be taken and to look into ways and means to improve teaching and learning.

Further, Madam Speaker, in order to enhance performance of students on the island, we are envisaging upgrading of school infrastructure and reinforcement of capacity building as well as community mobilisation.

Furthermore, in line with the Nine-Year Schooling reforms, the Early Support Programme which caters for pupils with learning difficulties, the Holistic Education Programme and the Social and Emotional Well-being Programme are being implemented.

Mrs Perraud: Madam Speaker, in the interest of everybody, teachers, students, education and teaching, will the hon. Minister envisage to review the contract of teachers working in Agalega, I mean, giving incentives to teachers so that they are willing to go and work in Agalega and stay in Agalega long enough so that learning takes place?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, this year, we have sent a new team and a new set of teachers has been there and they seem to be happy there and I hope that they will continue with their teaching in the island.

Mrs Perraud: Je voudrais aussi demander à la ministre si l'éducation dispensée à Agaléga prend en compte la spécificité de l'île, des enfants Agaléens. Nous savons tous que l'isolement géographique de l'île Agaléga, la réalité est totalement différente de la réalité à Maurice.

Madam Speaker : Put your question !

Mrs Perraud : Donc, si dans l'éducation qui est dispensée, on prend en compte la spécificité ?

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Certainement, Madame la présidente. Tout cela se fait dans le contexte de la réforme et nous allons nous assurer à ce que les enfants reçoivent une éducation adéquate et prenant en considération leur environnement.

Mr Baloomoody: In this year's Audit Report, the Audit made severe remarks with regard to the distribution of books to the Agalean students. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether action has been taken to ensure that the same mistake does not repeat itself for this academic year and the future years?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is a fact, Madam Speaker, that there was a delay in the submission of books in Agalega due to bad weather conditions and the poor connection that we have with Agalega in terms of ships, etc. But we are taking care of this.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Perraud!

SCHOOL MATERIALS - CASH GRANT - DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/416) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Cash Grant in lieu of School Materials, he will state how the distribution thereof has been carried out in each of the poverty-stricken areas.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, for the academic year 2017, a cash grant for the purchase of school materials has been provided to eligible households under the new Social Register of Mauritius whose children are attending pre-primary, primary, pre-vocational and secondary schools.

Beneficiaries have been provided with a cash grant of Rs1,500 for children in pre-primary and primary schools, and Rs2,000 for those in pre-vocational and secondary schools.

The cash grant has not been distributed in poverty-stricken areas but instead was directly credited to the bank account of the eligible households and those who do not have a bank account are being paid through the Mauritius Post.

Mrs Perraud: Madame la présidente, je voudrais demander au ministre s'il est en faveur de la décision du gouvernement de donner de l'argent au lieu des matériels scolaires.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, in fact, representations have been received to the effect that the decision for the payment of a cash grant should be reviewed and that the previous arrangement for the distribution of school materials should be resorted to.

The whole question of distribution of school materials for academic year 2018 will be reviewed. In fact, my Ministry, in collaboration with the National Empowerment Foundation, is presently conducting a survey and in light of the report, we will come up with a new strategy for the distribution of school materials. Thank you.

Mrs Perraud: Madame la présidente, la question n'a pas été répondue. Elle a été répondue à côté et je vais répéter la question. Je voudrais savoir si le ministre est en faveur de la décision du gouvernement de donner de l'argent au lieu des matériels scolaires.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I believe by saying the Ministry it is the Minister himself, we are reviewing how it is going to be distributed and I think there are a few options that we are envisaging about how to do it. We will find the best options and we will come up with what is best for the children to receive. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Minister what mechanism is there *sur place* to ensure that the money credited in the accounts of the family household is used for the benefit of the children, especially to buy school materials?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, it is the responsibility of parents, who have received the money, that have the responsibility to buy the materials as it should be. We do not have any mechanism to follow what the parents do.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Is the hon. Minister aware of any representation made concerning the payment of cash grant in lieu of school materials and will he consider reviewing same?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, in fact, I have already answered the question. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I know from the hon. Minister what criteria are used for the beneficiaries? Is it the new social register that is used as criteria to help them or are we using the previous list where there are more people?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, the decision of the Government is to use the new criteria, but, for this year, it has been allowed that we could use the old criteria so that everyone from the old SRM should receive the school materials.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: This issue, Madam Speaker, was canvassed in the House. Is the hon. Minister aware that, even before he assumed office, the Ministry, under the previous Minister, had announced that it will change course; that it will shift to the old system of distributing the school materials instead of giving cash grant? I even raised this matter at Adjournment time and although the Ministry did not agree and accede to my request, after the experience was made, the Ministry, itself, was convinced that they should change the method. Is the Minister telling the House that the Ministry has not yet made up its mind to shift back to the old system?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, as I explained, myself I am in favour to find the best way to do it. I do not believe that now with the representation that we had from the public, in general, the actual way of cash grant has been seen as the best. So, we will analyse it with the help of the NEF and will come up to the best solution.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhuboo!

CERTIFICATE OF CHARACTER - MINOR OFFENCES

(No. B/417) **Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the Certificate of Character, he will state where matters stand concerning the proposal for consideration to be given for minor offences not to be mentioned therein.

(Vide reply to PQ B/412)

IOIG 2019 – ATHLETES - TRAINING

(No. B/418) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the *Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien* 2019, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the federations, information as to if they have started preparing for participation therein and, if not, why not.

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, je souhaite informer la Chambre que la formation et la préparation des athlètes constituent un exercice permanent au niveau de chaque fédération sportive nationale. La préparation s'effectue en fonction des objectifs fixés par chaque fédération pour participer à des compétitions nationales et internationales, y compris les plus importantes comme le Championnat du Monde et d'autres évènements régionaux et continentaux.

En ce qui concerne la préparation des athlètes pour les Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien 2019, un Comité de Suivi a été mis en place depuis février 2016. Le Comité, qui comprend les représentants de différents partenaires, a, comme principal objectif, de suivre la préparation des athlètes. Le Comité, qui se réunit au moins une fois par trimestre, a mis en place sept sous-comités afin de suivre la préparation des athlètes. Des réunions ont déjà été organisées avec chacune des fédérations sportives nationales concernées et un plan de travail de trois ans, ainsi que des lignes directrices mettant en évidence la stratégie à adopter pour la préparation des athlètes, ont déjà été élaborés. La stratégie comprend –

- (i) l'organisation de camps d'entraînement locaux ;
- (ii) la participation des athlètes dans des camps d'entraînement à l'étranger dans des centres de haute performance ;
- (iii) la participation à des compétitions locales et à l'étranger ;
- (iv) l'assistance et le suivi médical et paramédical ;
- (v) conseils diététiques et alimentation pour le sport, et
- (vi) les soutiens logistiques.

Je tiens à souligner que la préparation des athlètes pour les Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien 2019 augmentera en fréquence et en intensité à mesure que les jeux se rapprocheront.

Madame la présidente, il convient de souligner qu'un montant de R 18 millions au-dessus du budget normal des fédérations sportives nationales a été prévu dans le Budget

2017/2018 pour la préparation des athlètes en vue des Jeux des Iles de l’Océan Indien de 2019. C’est aussi la première fois dans l’histoire que des fonds additionnels sont fournis deux ans avant les jeux.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Merci, M. le ministre. Le ministre a dit qu’il a élaboré un plan de travail mais moi, ma question était : « Est-ce que les préparations ont commencé ? ». Moi, d’après mes sources, d’après les athlètes que je côtoie, la préparation n’a toujours pas commencé. Maintenant que R 18 millions ont été allouées pour la préparation, est-ce qu’il y aura un *time frame* pour que les fédérations mettent en place les sélections qui n’ont toujours pas été faites. C’est ça ma question pour savoir à quand va démarrer. Le ministre parle de trois ans de préparation mais on est déjà à moins de trois ans des Jeux des Iles.

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, je tiens à informer la Chambre que la formation et la préparation des athlètes est un exercice permanent qui continue et les R 18 millions sont là pour aider nos athlètes à se préparer. Donc, c’est dans le budget de cette année et nous aurons aussi d’autres budgets à venir.

Mr Lepoigneur: Personnellement, moi je sais que les préparations n’ont pas commencées parce qu’il y a des athlètes qui côtoient déjà une équipe que j’entraîne mais ils ne sont pas en préparation pour les Jeux des Iles. Ils n’ont pas été appelés en pré-sélection. Les pré-sélections n’ont pas été formées jusqu’à l’heure. C’est pour cela je tire la sonnette d’alarme parce qu’on a déjà pris beaucoup de retard sur la préparation. En étant le pays organisateur, il y a R 18 millions qui ont été mises à la disposition ; il faut que ce soit servi à bon escient. Est-ce qu’il y aura un comité spécial qui va venir évaluer si les stages, les préparations, des budgets qui vont être alloués à la préparation, vont être dépensés à bon escient parce que dans le passé, il y a eu beaucoup de gaspillage qu’il faudrait éviter ?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, l’honorable membre est en train de parler aussi de pré-sélection qui fait partie de la question parlementaire B/420 dont je donnerai la réponse en temps et lieu. Donc, je pourrai vous informer par rapport à la présélection et préparation de ces athlètes.

Mr Lepoigneur: Oui, mais le ministre n’a pas répondu à ma question, Madame la présidente. J’ai demandé si les préparations ont commencé ; pourquoi ça n’a pas été commencé ? Moi, je peux confirmer à l’heure actuelle qu’il y a très peu de fédérations, très peu d’athlètes qui ne savent même pas s’ils vont être présélectionnés, s’ils vont faire partie

des Jeux des Iles. Des compétitions nationales n'ont toujours pas commencé qui forment partie de cette préparation au niveau de certaines fédérations. Ils ont fait un calendrier. On est arrivé à juin mais il n'y a toujours pas de préparation.

Madam Speaker: Ask your question! Ask your question, please!

Mr Lepoigneur: C'est ça ! Moi je veux une réponse par rapport à s'il y a des fédérations qui ont commencé leur préparation, oui ou non.

Mr Toussaint: Définitivement, Madame la présidente, les préparations ont déjà démarré.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur! Next question!

Mr Lepoigneur: Madame...

Madam Speaker: Next question!

CHEBEL - HOUSING UNITS - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/419) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the housing units delivered to the inhabitants of Chebel, in Beau Bassin, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., a list of the beneficiaries thereof, indicating in each case the -

- (a) former address thereof ;
- (b) date of delivery thereof, and
- (c) application reference thereof.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will answer this question.

Madam Speaker, it is assumed that the hon. Member is referring to the allocation exercise which was effected during the period 2015-2017 and not to previous projects. This is what I have been advised.

I am tabling the list of beneficiaries together with the requested information.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: L'honorable ministre n'est pas le titulaire, je ne sais s'il va pouvoir répondre à la question. Est-ce qu'il y a un conseiller municipal de la ville de Beau

Bassin/Rose Hill du MSM qui a été bénéficiaire d'une maison de la NHDC dans cette livraison?

Mr Bodha: Je ne saurai pas le dire. Ce que je peux dire, Madame la présidente, c'est que j'ai la liste avec les adresses, donc, mon collègue député pourra éventuellement vérifier si tel est le cas.

Mr Lepoigneur: Madame la présidente, je peux donner le nom pour savoir si le nom est sur la liste?

Madam Speaker: You will have the opportunity to see the document.

Mr Lepoigneur: Pardon?

Madam Speaker: You will have the opportunity to see the document.

Mr Lepoigneur: But I cannot put more questions otherwise.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, you are tabling the document? The document, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Lepoigneur: *Laisse mo poze mo question!*

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: No provocation, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Don't make any provocative remarks on this side of the House!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Lepoigneur, please ask your question, if you have!

Mr Lepoigneur: Mais je cherche s'il y a le nom, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Yes, don't take much time, but then ask your question.

Mr Lepoigneur: Effectivement, c'est le numéro B/21. Est-ce que les critères ont été respectés par rapport à cela? Parce que d'après mes sources, elle n'était pas sur la liste. Pourquoi elle n'était pas sur la liste le jour de la livraison? Moi, j'étais présent lors de la livraison de ces maisons et elle n'a même pas été appelée comme bénéficiaire. Peut-on savoir pourquoi ?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, what I can do is to submit the criteria in general. Now, whether these criteria have been met, I believe so, because we have so many of them. For example, the construction of a concrete house, it has to be an income less than Rs20,000 per month. The eligibility criteria for the application are as follows -

- not to be owner of a house (including NHDC or CHA);
- not to own a residential plot of land;
- not to hold a residential plot of State land;
- not having granted any Government sponsored loan by MHC,
- not have benefitted from any Government grant for the casting of a roof slab and for purchase of building materials, and
- not have received any financial assistance from Government or any form of assistance for housing purposes.

What we can do is, in fact, we can ask the NHDC. I will submit it to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to see to it. I believe this has been done.

Mr Lepoigneur: Peut-être, je reviendrai là-dessus après. Maintenant, quels sont les critères pour l'agrandissement de ces maisons? Parce que cette même personne, quelques semaines après la livraison, elle a fait les agrandissements avant d'avoir le permis de la municipalité. J'ai besoin de savoir si c'est autorisé, elle a eu la permission et si les critères ont été respectés par rapport à cela.

Mr Bodha: Well, this is a question which, I think, would fall under the purview of the Municipality of Rose Hill, whether the criteria for extension of the house has been respected.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Lepoigneur!

IOIG 2019 - VILLAGE DES JEUX - FLIC EN FLAC & BALACLAVA HOTELS

(No. B/420) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the *Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien* 2019, he will state where matters stand as to the organisation thereof, indicating -

- (a) the location of the *Village des Jeux*, indicating the cost of accommodation thereat;
- (b) if the national coaches have been nominated therefor, and

- (c) if the Mauritian pre-selected athletes have started preparing for participation therein.

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, la République de Maurice a été chargée de l'organisation de l'IOIG 2019 lors de la réunion du Comité International des Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien (CIJ) en octobre 2015 à l'île de la Réunion. Pour la bonne organisation de ces jeux, un Comité d'Organisation des Jeux des Iles (COJI) 2019 a été mis en place en 2015 dont je suis le président. Conformément à la charte des jeux, le Comité d'Organisation a été présenté lors d'une première réunion du CIJ tenue à Maurice en 2016.

Comme en 2003, une organisation appelée *Association for the Upgrading of IOIG Infrastructure* (AUGI) a été créée en 2016. À ce jour, AUGI a déjà fait un constat complet des infrastructures sportives qui seraient utilisées pour les jeux. Les travaux de réaménagement et réparations de ces sites devraient commencer en janvier 2018.

Une unité spéciale a également été mise en place au niveau de mon ministère pour faciliter la préparation des Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien 2019.

En ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, je souhaite informer la Chambre que tous les athlètes et les officiels seront hébergés dans un groupe d'hôtels dans la région de Flic en Flac et de Balaclava, qui constituera le Village des Jeux. Les coûts ne sont pas encore finalisés et il est prématuré à ce stade d'en donner une indication.

En ce qui concerne les parties (b) et (c) de la question, on m'a informé que les entraîneurs nationaux de toutes les disciplines, à l'exception de l'athlétisme et du *basketball* ont déjà été nommés par les fédérations sportives nationales. Les athlètes présélectionnés s'entraînent déjà pour les jeux.

Je souhaite également inviter l'honorable député à se référer à ma réponse à la question B/418 que j'ai donnée plus tôt.

Mr Lepoigneur: Donc, si je comprends bien, mis à part le *basketball* et l'athlétisme, les autres entraîneurs nationaux ont été nommés. Est-ce qu'on peut avoir la liste de ces entraîneurs qui ont été nominés ?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, je n'ai pas en ma possession la liste des noms, mais je pourrais éventuellement faire circuler.

Mr Lepoigneur: Donc, si je comprends bien, il n'y a que deux disciplines qui n'ont pas encore commencé la préparation et il n'y a pas eu de nomination. Est-ce qu'au niveau du volleyball, l'entraîneur a été nommé et que les préparations ont déjà commencé ?

Mr Toussaint: Alors, d'après ce que j'ai comme renseignements, Madame la présidente, l'entraîneur national a déjà été nommé. Le plan de travail a déjà été soumis, mais ils n'ont pas encore commencé à utiliser ce plan de travail.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

Mr Leopold: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to ask the hon. Minister whether there is any infrastructure which will be used for the game in Rodrigues and which discipline is he contemplating to do for the game in Rodrigues and how many?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, je tiens à informer la Chambre qu'il y a eu une demande au niveau de Rodrigues à ce que certaines disciplines se tiennent dans l'île, notamment le semi-marathon féminin, la boxe et le judo. Donc, pour le moment, nous n'avons pas encore finalisé, mais nous sommes en train de prendre en considération sérieusement ces demandes.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Madame la présidente, je souhaiterais que le ministre aille vérifier ces indications. Je suis sûr qu'il a été berné par certaines fédérations que je sais, moi, personnellement où je suis impliqué. Il y a beaucoup de préparations qui n'ont pas été commencées. Je lui conseillerais de bien voir ses notes avant de venir dire quoi que ce soit à l'Assemblée.

Madam Speaker: Ask your question! Don't make comments! You have to ask your question. I have said several times and I am drawing your attention to Standing Order 26(1) which states that you ask questions for further elucidation of the information requested.

Mr Lepoigneur: Est-ce que le ministre va vérifier la liste qu'il a présentée aujourd'hui parce que personnellement *he is misleading the House today* ? Est-ce que cela va être vérifié?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I am really sorry, you can't say that the hon. Minister is misleading the House. If the hon. Minister is misleading the House, then your only recourse is that you have to come with a Motion.

Mr Lepoigneur: Madame la présidente, je sais de quoi je parle. Je souhaiterais que le ministre ...

Madam Speaker: Do you have a question? Ask your question!

Mr Lepoigneur: Madame la présidente, je pose une question.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't interrupt!

(Interruptions)

Please, don't interrupt!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Lepoigneur, please proceed with your question!

Mr Lepoigneur: Je demande au ministre s'il va revérifier sa liste et confirmer ces dires après.

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry, you are interrupting the business of the House!

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, je n'ai aucun souci, comme dit l'honorable membre, à revérifier et si toutefois il a des informations qu'il souhaiterait partager avec moi, il n'y a pas de souci. C'est pour le bien de nos athlètes et pour la bonne marche des Jeux des Iles. Merci.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

FOOTBALL - CLUB M – PERFORMANCE

(No. B/421) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to football, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Football Association, information as to the –

- (a) results obtained by Club M, competition wise and the list of the respective managers thereof, since January 2015 to date, and

- (b) actions taken following the unsatisfactory results obtained by the Club M against Comoros in March 2017, which resulted in the non-qualification thereof for the preliminary of the CAN 2019.

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, je vais circuler l'information reçue de la MFA concernant les résultats obtenus par le Club M avec les noms des coaches respectifs depuis janvier 2015 à ce jour.

En ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, la MFA m'a informé qu'une session de débriefing a eu lieu entre les membres de l'Association de football de Maurice et le personnel technique de l'équipe nationale de football après les deux matchs contre les Comores.

La MFA prépare également le match du Club M v/s Angola dans le cadre des qualificatifs pour le « Championnat d'Afrique des Nations » prévu entre le 14 et 21 Juillet 2017. Dans le premier round du même championnat, Maurice a gagné contre les Seychelles deux buts à un pour ensuite faire un match nul, un but partout.

Mon ministère a déjà eu des sessions de travail avec la MFA pour discuter des moyens d'améliorer la performance de notre équipe nationale de football, surtout dans le contexte des Jeux des Iles 2019. Les sujets discutés, entre autres, sont –

- (i) les soutiens logistiques pour l'entraînement de l'équipe nationale;
- (ii) l'évaluation de l'entraîneur national, et
- (iii) l'utilisation de joueurs expatriés.

Je souhaite attirer l'attention de la Chambre sur le fait que les Jeux des Iles est un évènement à court terme, mais mon ministère envisage l'amélioration à long terme du football, et, dans ce sens, travaille déjà sur différents projets, comme, par exemple –

- (i) le *Grassroot football*;
- (ii) les Écoles de Foot;
- (iii) réorganisation de la direction technique nationale, et
- (iv) tout récemment, la visite de M. Ian Hendon de West Ham dans le cadre éventuel d'un partenariat avec West Ham.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente. Peut-on savoir si l'honorable ministre ne trouve-t-il pas alarmante cette élimination du Club M face aux Comores et cela, bien sûr, comme il a dit, lui-même, à deux ans des prochains Jeux des Iles ?

Mr Toussaint: C'est vrai que nous n'avons pas pu faire mieux vis-à-vis des Comores, mais je peux rassurer l'honorable membre que nous allons prendre toutes les dispositions nécessaires pour que le football mauricien s'améliore et que nous fassions de très bons résultats pour les Jeux des Iles.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, peut-on savoir si l'honorable ministre a personnellement rencontré, suite à cette défaite face aux Comores, les dirigeants de la MFA ?

Mr Toussaint: Alors, en plusieurs occasions, j'ai rencontré les membres de la MFA. On en a parlé et de façon plus structurée et officielle, comme je viens de le dire dans ma réponse. Donc, il y a eu des sessions de travail avec les membres de la MFA et mon ministère.

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir, Madame la présidente, justement suite aux rencontres qu'a eu l'honorable ministre avec les dirigeants de la MFA, quelles sont les actions qui ont été prises afin d'améliorer les performances du Club M ?

Mr Toussaint: Donc, Madame la présidente, comme je viens de dire, après les sessions de travail, nous avons tenu à voir trois points - le soutien logistique pour l'entraînement, l'évaluation de l'entraîneur national et, éventuellement, voir nos jeunes joueurs qui sont à l'extérieur.

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir, Madame la présidente, si l'honorable ministre trouve cela normal que la MFA continue à faire confiance au staff technique actuel malgré justement les contre-performances du Club M ?

Mr Toussaint: Alors, Madame la présidente, comme je l'ai dit, nous allons revoir un peu la réorganisation de la direction technique nationale et j'ai dit aussi que nous parlons de l'évaluation de l'entraîneur national en vue de juger les performances.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, peut-on savoir si l'honorable ministre a pris connaissance des propos tenus dans un quotidien de Christopher Caserne, capitaine de la sélection de Maurice dans l'interview ; le joueur en question a déploré le manque de soutien de la MFA aux joueurs ? Peut-on savoir ce qu'en pense le ministre ?

Mr Toussaint: Je dis que j'ai vu l'article de presse et, à plusieurs reprises, j'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer M. Caserne dans les matchs de football, il faudra voir.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhuboo!

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – MAURITIUS SOVEREIGNTY

(No. B/422) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Chagos Archipelago, he will state the initiatives pursued, since November 2016 to date, for the Government of Mauritius to exercise its full sovereignty over same.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, we are at a critical juncture as item 87 of the UN General Assembly agenda is expected to be considered on 22 June 2017. It would, therefore, not be appropriate at this stage to engage in a debate on the initiatives pursued by Government with regard to the Chagos Archipelago.

This having been said, I would like to reassure the hon. Members that they will be kept fully informed of developments at the opportune time.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Being given the confidentiality around the Chagos issue, can we know from the hon. Minister whether putting a motion at the UN is very important and is of a strategic issue? Can we know whether an intense lobbying exercise has been done by yourself or by the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor with other Heads of States?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course, Madam Speaker, by myself, by the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, by all Ministers who, at one point in time, have been in touch with foreign counterparts. So, the work is being done.

Mr Jhuboo: Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister the number of people accompanying the delegation at the United Nations?

The Prime Minister: Well, if you had asked a specific question, I would have given you the answer, but we don't have any problem disclosing the delegation of the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhuboo!

FOOD SECURITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2015 - AUDIT PERFORMANCE REPORT

(No. B/423) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to food security, he will state the reasons why the various schemes introduced for the benefit of the small and medium planters have not yielded the expected results, indicating the measures being contemplated to reverse the current trend in the annual crop production.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I presume that this Parliamentary Question refers to the Audit Performance Report on the Food Security Strategic Plan 2013-2015. I am advised that this plan was a continuation of the Food Security Strategic Plan 2008-2011 which was developed in the wake of the world food crisis in 2007 to ensure food security in the country.

As the House may be aware, the country was facing difficulties during the world food crisis to import basic and essential commodities from our traditional markets and the main objective of the Food Security Strategic Plan was to increase agricultural production to reduce, to a certain extent, our dependency on imports.

I am informed that the Food Security Strategic Plan 2008-2011 did not produce the expected results, hence the formulation of a second Food Security Strategic Plan 2013-2015. For the latter strategy, a number of schemes were implemented for vegetables, fruits and livestock production in order to boost these sectors and ensure a better level of self-sufficiency.

Madam Speaker, planters involved in food crop cultivation, are mainly small holders who are burdened by multiple constraints, namely –

- scarcity of land and labour;
- natural disasters and calamities;
- pests and diseases;
- high costs of inputs and high production costs;
- low market prices, and
- effects of climate change.

Two schemes, the Rainwater Harvesting Scheme and the Fruit Protection Scheme were introduced in 2013 and the Post-Harvest Scheme and Purchase of Livestock Equipment came into operation in 2014.

However, the schemes have not yielded the targeted results because they did not adequately address the problems and difficulties faced by planters.

As a consequence, actual food crop production (excluding fruits) showed a declining trend from 2012 to 2015.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry came up with the Non-Sugar Sector Strategic Plan for the period 2016-2020 to cover the food crop, livestock and Forestry Sector and a comprehensive action plan has been elaborated to increase agricultural production and address problems faced by planters in a more holistic manner. Accordingly, existing schemes have been revised and new ones have been introduced to offer better incentives and facilities to the planting community.

For example, the Sheltered Farming Scheme was introduced in 2015 to encourage farmers to shift from traditional open-field cultivation to sheltered farming so as to mitigate the effect of adverse climatic conditions and improve production capacity and quality of farm produce. The grant under this scheme has been increased from Rs250,000 in 2015 to Rs400,000 in 2016 given the high cost of greenhouses. 65 planters have taken advantage of the scheme so far.

My Ministry is also encouraging planters to mechanise their production systems to address the labour shortage problem and also venture in food processing and other value-addition activities. The “Purchase of Agricultural Equipment” Scheme introduced in 2015 has enabled some 133 planters to purchase equipment and machinery under the scheme. The grant offered to planters has increased from Rs100,000 to Rs350,000.

As regards shortage of land, my Ministry has released an additional extent of 272 *arpents* for food crop cultivation and livestock production. Agricultural land acquired under the Government/MSPA Agreement will be leased for food crop production as and when the lands are ready for cultivation. Moreover, the MCIA is liaising with the sugar companies to see whether land could be leased to small planters, especially for potato cultivation.

As regards the low prices obtained by planters, it is expected that they will fetch better prices for their produce once the National Wholesale Market becomes operational.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry, through FAREI, is accompanying the planters and is giving them the necessary technical support and advice to enable them to adopt good agricultural practices. For the past year, 1,180 planters have been offered training accordingly. A Pest and Disease Surveillance System is being maintained on major crops

around the island. 1,500 samples of plants were diagnosed and appropriate control measures were recommended. FAREI is also operating the Agricultural Production Management Information System, the APMIS, whereby planters can obtain first-hand information on their mobile phone regarding the actual acreage under cultivation for the different crops and the selling price thereof on the market.

Madam Speaker: Have you nearly finished, hon. Minister? Because your reply is very long! If it is too long, then you may better circulate it.

(Interruptions)

Yes, because you have taken already five minutes!

Mr Seeruttun: According to the report of Statistics Mauritius for 2016, production of food crop has increased by 4.7% from 102,663 tonnes in 2015 to 107,457 tonnes in 2016. My Ministry will pursue its effort to provide the necessary support and incentives to the farming community to increase agricultural production and meet the target set in the Non-Sugar Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2020.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Madame la présidente, il y a presque 25,000 arpents de terrains qui étaient sous cannes et qui ne le sont plus, qui sont laissés aujourd’hui à l’abandon. Il semblerait que cela n’intéresse plus les petits planteurs de se convertir vers la production vivrière. Un des points du rapport du plan stratégique 2015-2020 préconisait la construction d’infrastructures pour permettre le stockage de ces denrées, notamment des zones de séchage et des zones de conservation. Est-ce que l’honorable ministre est satisfait que ces infrastructures ont été faites ?

Mr Seeruttun: Madame la présidente, c'est un fait qu'il y a pas mal de terres qui sont laissées à l'abandon et c'est la raison pour laquelle, l'année dernière, pour le budget, l'honorable ministre des Finances avait alloué des fonds pour pouvoir venir avec un projet pour identifier tous les sites abandonnés et rendre ces terrains productifs. Déjà, je peux dire qu'au courant de cette année, il y a 1,000 *arpents* qui ont été identifiés, dont 200 hectares qui vont être remis à la culture agricole. En ce qui concerne les équipements pour le stockage, je dois dire qu'au niveau de l'*AMB*, l'*Agricultural Marketing Board*, il y a des mesures déjà prises pour faire l'acquisition des facilités pour pouvoir stocker des produits agricoles pour qu'il y ait une longue période de stockage.

Mr Jhuboo: Un des points du plan aussi est l'attrait des jeunes vers l'agriculture. Un point important de ce plan était justement que les mesures allaient être mises en place pour attirer les jeunes vers le monde agricole. Est-ce que l'honorable ministre est satisfait du nombre de jeunes qui suivent ou qui adhèrent à cette nouvelle politique ?

Mr Seeruttun: Madame la présidente, effectivement le problème de ce secteur c'est qu'il y a une population vieillissante d'agriculteurs, et un des défis est justement d'attirer les jeunes vers ce secteur. Et justement, au niveau du ministère, on est venu avec un projet pilote pour accompagner les jeunes gradués. Donc, ce projet démarre incessamment pour pouvoir les accompagner, pour les intéresser au secteur agricole et aussi de ne pas s'arrêter à la production, mais de les faire devenir des agri-entrepreneurs.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Land is scarce in Mauritius, and I would like to know from the hon. Minister how he can reconcile what he has just said about food security and the need to cultivate more land and the decision announced in the Budget - at least at the back of the Budget - that the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act will be amended to extend the Land Conversion Tax exemption to cover golf courses of 9 holes as well. So, more lands which are now under agricultural cultivation would be converted, free of charge, to do golf instead of growing crops.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, land availability is very limited in this island. There is always pressure on the one hand to produce more agricultural products and on the other hand to devote land for urbanisation and other development projects. So, we have to strike the right balance to make sure that we can allow other projects to develop and, at the same time, ensure to produce enough to be less dependent on importation. What we are trying to do now with new agricultural practices is to produce more with less.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhuboo!

GOVERNMENT PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS - NGOs- COUNSELLING & CIVIC TALKS

(No. B/424) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Government primary and secondary schools, she will state if the Non-Governmental Organisations have access thereto to provide counselling and civic talks

and, if not, why not, indicating if the psychologists attached to her Ministry provide same thereat.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, my Ministry works in close collaboration with recognised and *bona fide* NGOs such as Terre de Paix, Action Familiale, Mauritius Family Planning Association, Ti Diams, Reef Conservation, Autisme, Mouvement pour l'Autosuffisance, Mauritius Marine Conservation Society, Lions Club, Transparency International, Blood Donor's Association, TIPA, amongst others, for the conduct of talks and sensitisation programmes in schools in areas such as health, environmental awareness, sexuality education, life skills, family ties, amongst others.

However, I must highlight that requests made by NGOs to deliver talks to students are evaluated and examined by my Ministry. To the extent that their interventions would be in the interest of students and are in line with the provision of the curriculum, they are granted access to the primary and secondary schools.

In parallel, my Ministry has a well-structured unit in place, the National Education Counselling Service, which acts as a support service to promote psychological and social well-being of pupils attending schools. Their families sometimes also avail of this facility.

The educational psychologists and educational social workers provide help, support, guidance and counselling to pupils who experience behavioural, learning, social and emotional difficulties. In addition, the educational social workers carry out home visits to assist parents concerned and provide advice and support.

Madam Speaker, the National Education Counselling Service also conducts talks on topics such as positive behaviour, stress management and the negative impacts of bullying, amongst others. Furthermore, it also works in collaboration with other Ministries and Departments such as the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, Child Development Unit, Life Plus, *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*, ADSU, as well as the above-mentioned recognised NGOs to deliver talks and carry out sensitisation campaigns.

Madam Speaker, the necessary exposure to topical issues and civic education are currently being provided to pupils of the primary and secondary schools, both by officers of my Ministry in collaboration with Government agencies on the one hand and by recognised NGOs on the other hand.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In view of the recent rise in the cases of indiscipline and drug-related issues, will the hon. Minister consider increasing the number of psychologists in primary and secondary schools?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, we have, at present, 23 psychologists and these psychologists serve both our primary and secondary schools, and, at times, support the private secondary sector. However, with the new regulations at the PSEA, they are also going to be in a position to recruit psychologists for the private sector. In fact, the number of psychologists that we have serving under my Ministry is adequate, but we will need support and, as time goes on, we might even recruit more.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo! Yes, you have a question!

Mr Jhuboo: Un petit point spécifique. L'éducation sexuelle dans les écoles primaires est dispensée à travers un petit livret qui est distribué dans chaque classe. Ensuite, une causerie est animée par des officiers de Police, donc, qui inspire l'ordre et la discipline. La ministre ne pense-t-elle pas que ce serait plus *advisable* d'avoir des gens spécialisés pour délivrer ce genre de cours ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Certainement, Madame la présidente. Pour le nouveau *curriculum* que nous sommes en train de préparer à la *MIE*, nous sommes en train de travailler en collaboration avec d'autres associations afin d'avoir un programme de l'éducation à la sexualité plus propice pour les enfants au primaire comme au secondaire.

Mr Baloomoody: With the coming of synthetic drugs on the market, it is a fact that more and more youths are tempted to go towards synthetic drugs. In fact, we have the official report to that effect. And there are complaints from NGOs who are involved in sensitising youth in drugs, be it synthetic drugs or hard drugs, but, unfortunately, they do not get access to primary and secondary Government schools. So, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the matter will be reviewed?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, we have to be very careful while allowing people into our schools. We have had cases where they were allowed in and someone talking to the students told them how they could prepare drugs, coming up with all types of devices. So, we have to be careful and we have to be very, very vigilant to make sure that people getting into contact with our students are proper. I am not saying that those who have made requests are not, but then, I am sure that the Ministry will have to be very, very careful about this issue.

Madam Speaker: Does the hon. Member have another question on this one? Okay, next question!

GOVERNMENT PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS - CLEAN-UP MAURITIUS AND EMBELLISHMENT PROGRAMME 2017-2018

(No. B/425) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Government primary and secondary schools, she will state if consideration will be given for the implementation of targeted educational programmes at the level thereof regarding the cleaning campaigns.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, the New National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education developed by the MIE in 2015 already provides for the inclusion of education programmes with emphasis on cleanliness where pupils of primary and secondary schools are taught about the importance of protecting the environment and the public property.

These competencies are addressed across the primary cycle, that is, Grade 1 to 6. Moreover, basics about hygiene are already integrated across the curriculum.

At the lower secondary level, this is taken care of under the “Life Skills and Values Education”. Moreover, there are cross curricular competencies which are also addressed in other subject areas such as Languages and Science, amongst others. We are adopting a targeted approach to cleaning programmes touching on preventive actions at classrooms as well as school environment levels. Schools are working towards inculcating good habits in students to keep the environment clean, to protect it and to maintain high standards of hygiene.

As from this year, a number of primary and secondary schools have embarked on the Clean-up Mauritius and Embellishment Programme 2017-2018. Appropriate actions are being taken by schools to ensure that classes, yards and our murals are clean and eco-friendly. These include –

- sorting out of waste;
- collection of plastic bottles for recycling purposes;
- setting up kitchen gardens, endemic gardens;

- re-use of used tyres;
- composting, etc.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the above, there are a number of initiatives and projects being run in schools to enhance environmental awareness and cleanliness. The Eco-School Indian Ocean Programme, operated by the Foundation for Environmental Education, is being implemented since 2015 in 28 primary schools and 47 secondary schools. Schools joining the programme followed a seven-step process and work on themes such as climate change, energy, waste, water, healthy living, biodiversity, soil and air, livelihoods, ocean and coast. Students are motivated to participate in the programme and gain an award including the ecological green flag award.

In the same breath, it has been further announced in the 2017-2018 Budget Speech that the campaign Cleaner Mauritius will be extended to all schools. Each and every stakeholder of the school will have to take an active part in this initiative and work in collaboration with institutions concerned, including NGOs, local bodies, etc.

Madam Speaker, the commitment towards maintaining a clean, embellished and healthy environment is one taken at the highest level and should concern not only the schools but the nation at large and every citizen.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

AMBASSADORS – APPOINTMENT

(No. B/426) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Ambassadors, he will give the list thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) posting and terms and conditions of appointment thereof, and
- (b) number of overseas missions effected as at to date, indicating the –
 - (i) countries visited;
 - (ii) purposes thereof, and
 - (iii) amount of *per diem* and other allowances paid thereto.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question relating to the list of Ambassadors, their postings as well as their terms and conditions of appointment, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as ready.

Mr Bhagwan: Coming to the last reply of the Minister, I think you are aware that it takes months, I won't say years, for Ministers to send replies to us in the National Assembly. Can I have a time limit from the hon. Minister in which the Assembly can receive this reply which is being compiled?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Sure! We will ensure – the information is quite extensive, if not we would have given it to you. Part (a) has been compiled in a large file. Part (b) implies a lot of work. So, it would be laid as soon as possible.

Mr Bhagwan: Perhaps the Minister could give us a time frame. But is the Minister aware that there are some very important personalities working in our High Commissions and they are being paid from public funds. They are like *pigeons voyageurs*. The Minister of Finance must have a clear look as to where they go, where they stay, how much *per diem* they are receiving, whether they are genuine cases? Because from information received, some are travelling more than even Ministers.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: In fact, there are missions outside the country of posting and there are missions within the country - like the Ambassador in Washington travelling within the USA and then travelling outside the USA. In all cases, missions have to be approved by the Ministry. And secondly, we insist on receiving a mission report each time they return back from mission as a follow-up.

Mr Bhagwan: Has the attention of the Minister been drawn that there are lots of abuses by High Commissioners, Ambassadors with respect to claims which they are sending regarding refund of leave, local leave, overseas leave – and I don't know what leaves – but there are some very dirty things which are happening in the books at the different Embassies just to cash money? So, is the Minister aware of this? Can we know whether he has received representations and whether he will request the Director of Audit or whatever section of his Ministry to carry out a survey in that direction?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: In fact, if you look at the terms and conditions of employment of our Ambassadors, you will see that risk of abuse is quite restricted. So, when

they go on local leave or sick leave, it has got to be approved. The Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs himself personally ensures the follow-up on request for sick leave, request to take leave locally or any request. So, the employment contract is always clear. You will see in the contracts that the terms and conditions are well fixed and adhered to.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Minister how often these High Commissioners, Ambassadors are called to base here? Are they called on a yearly basis, quarterly basis? How often are they called here to base for consultation, whether there also, there is not an abuse in that sector?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, there have been proposals that each year we call in Mauritius a meeting of all Ambassadors. Then, we have thought that cost-wise, it might be too high. So, we call in Ambassadors as and when necessary. Ambassadors are called to attend meetings also. In fact, we are more and more sending our High Commissioners to attend meetings where Ministers cannot attend or should not attend. So, to the question of them coming to Mauritius, it is normally on leave or they have been requested to come to Mauritius on mission.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister, since we are talking about Ambassadors, how many Ambassadors' positions on Establishment are vacant and how many of our Embassies are currently not headed by an Ambassador?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, most of the posts of High Commissioners and Ambassadors have been filled except for the three vacancies that were created when the PMSD left Government: Paris, Islamabad and Australia. Australia has been finalised. We have two embassies where nomination procedures have been...

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/427) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to Mr A. S., Executive Director of the Mauritius Research Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the -

- (a) terms and conditions of appointment thereof, indicating the total monthly pay packet thereof, including the allowances, and

(b) parastatal bodies or Government-owned companies of which he is the Chairperson or a Board member, giving details as to the remuneration paid thereto in each case.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Research Council that Dr. A. S., Executive Director of the Council is drawing a monthly salary of Rs152,000 together with a monthly petrol allowance of Rs15,940 and a monthly ADSL allowance of Rs1,349. The other terms and conditions of his appointment relating to leaves and gratuity are as per recommendation of the PRB report, except for passage benefits where he is entitled to one first class ticket for Mauritius-London-Mauritius every year.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that Dr. A. S. is also the Chairperson of the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency falling under the aegis of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, and he is being paid a monthly allowance of Rs29,925 as per the recommendation of the PRB report.

He is also a member of the Board of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute falling under the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping and he is paid a fee of Rs1,000 per sitting.

Dr. A. S. is also the Chairperson of Air Mauritius Ltd. As the hon. Member is aware, Air Mauritius is a listed company on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius governed by the Companies Act. I would, therefore, invite the hon. Member to refer to the Annual Report of the company which gives relevant information about that company.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the Minister be surprised to learn, and the public, and the shareholders of Air Mauritius, because they don't give details that Dr. Suddhoo is drawing a monthly allowance of Rs75,000 as Chairperson of Air Mauritius and he is drawing another Rs40,000 for each of the six subsidiaries of Air Mauritius, namely Airmate, MEDCOR, Cotton Bay, amongst others. Is the Minister aware of that? Does he intend to discuss with Dr. Suddhoo? Does he still have time to assume his responsibilities of Director of Mauritius Research Council?

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, as far as Air Mauritius is concerned, it does not fall under my Ministry. But let me reassure the hon. Member the work being done by Dr. Suddhoo at the Mauritius Research Council is greatly appreciated and so far he is collaborating with my Ministry to get the Research Council moving and he is bringing new

models, new research work and, lastly, he did the robotics festival for the kids and it went very well.

Mr Bhagwan: It would be good if the Minister could enquire whether one of the reasons why Mr Megh Pillay, the former CEO of Air Mauritius, was sacked in a dirty manner, I would say, by certain people it is because Dr. Suddhoo is acting also as PDG of Air Mauritius. Apart from being the Chairperson of subsidiaries, he is also paid as Member of the sub committees like Procurement Committee, Recruitment Committee, and Audit Committee. Apart from flying first class in MK, there is also an abuse in sub committees.

Mr Sawmynaden: Unfortunately, I can only answer for the Mauritius Research Council. I cannot answer for the other parastatal body where he is sitting.

Mr Bhagwan: When was the last time that the hon. Minister met Dr. Suddhoo to discuss the work of the Mauritius Research Council falling under his responsibility? What is the time he spends at the Mauritius Research Council and what is his intention?

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, we do meet on a regular basis, and we have discussed on the future plans of the Mauritius Research Council, which is now the Mauritius Research Innovation Council. Actually, we will be meeting just after the Budget to go on the future projects and the future plan of the Mauritius Research Innovation Council and he will be fully in charge of that.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

Mr Bhagwan: One last question, Madam. One last?

Madam Speaker: Five minutes already. I am giving five minutes for each question, so that we can work out a maximum number of questions.

NTC – HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGER – APPOINTMENT

(No. B/428) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to Mr P. K. P., Human Resource Manager of the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the date and terms and conditions of appointment thereof, including the total monthly pay packet thereof.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will answer this question.

I have been informed by the National Transport Corporation that Mr P. K. P. was appointed as Human Resource Manager by the NTC Board on 12 October 2015 under a two-year contract following a selection exercise carried out in September 2015.

The terms and conditions of contractual employment of Mr P. K. P. are as per the recommendations of the Pay Research Bureau with a basic salary of Rs69,575 plus extra remuneration. His current monthly pay packet is Rs74,350, which includes travelling allowance.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I have four supplementary questions. I am just asking in the public interest.

Will the Minister be surprised to learn - I am quite sure he is aware of that VIP - I will not call it VIP, very dangerous person, Mr Pradipkumar Pursun. What is his title? Director of Human Resource! He was charged by the Police with an offence of larceny in breach of Section 301 of Criminal Code and he was found guilty by the District Magistrate of Flacq – the hon. Minister is aware – on 09 March 2017.

(Interruptions)

The Court is satisfied that the prosecution has proved its case beyond reasonable doubt and the Court finds the accused guilty as charged - *vol.* So, I am tabling a copy.

Is this how this Government runs? There is somebody guilty at the Prime Minister's Office, Mr Maunthrooa. There is somebody here who is guilty of another thing, and they have all of them appealed. How is this Government being run? By guilty people!

Mr Bodha: I am aware.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has just said Mr Maunthrooa, who everybody knows is the advisor at the Prime Minister's Office, being guilty because he just mentioned about a Court judgment. Now,...

(Interruptions)

MedPoint? Tonn gayne enn claque. Tonn gayne en claque ek la Cour. La Cour ine donn toi enn claque. La Cour...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Calm down! Hon. Jhugroo, please calm down! Hon. Baloomoody, please calm down!

(Interruptions)

Calm down! Okay, yes please, you were raising a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Prime Minister, you were raising a point of order?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member should withdraw because the Senior Advisor at the Prime Minister's Office has never so far been convicted of any criminal offence.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: He should be ashamed of himself.

(Interruptions)

Ale do ta.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, sit down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please sit down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody! Hon. Bhagwan and hon. Baloomoody, if you continue, I will have to suspend.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, I order you out. Hon. Baloomoody, I am ordering you out. Because I have called you several times and you seem to ignore.

(Interruptions)

You are ignoring. I order you out.

(Interruptions)

Yes, because I have called you to order several times and you seemed to ignore me completely and this is not...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Shame on you!

Madam Speaker: Shame on you! This is not acceptable because I have called you several times and you continue to ignore me!

(Interruptions)

Okay, but you cannot ignore the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Okay, I have not finished...

(Interruptions)

Now, out!

(Interruptions)

Out, please!

(Interruptions)

I order you out!

(Interruptions)

Okay, if you want to leave okay, now go!

(Interruptions)

At this stage, the Opposition Members of the MMM left the Chamber.

(Interruptions)

Order, I said!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: If you will allow me, Madam Speaker, I would like to answer to the last comment which was made and the Prime Minister was right to raise the issue of being guilty or not.

As regards Mr Pursun, he was found guilty on 09 March 2017. The sentence was passed on 16 March 2017 and he has appealed against the judgment to the Supreme Court. The matter was called for Mention before the Master and Registrar on 01 June 2017 and will be taken up in the following month.

When this conviction was passed, the Board requested the legal adviser of the NTC to rule on whether any action could be taken against him and Me Ithier, the Legal Counsel of NTC, has intimated that in the given circumstances he cannot be suspended and he cannot be dismissed. So, we have to go by the legal advice, but I have asked the Board to consider the matter.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer, next question!

CWA - WATER PIPES – REPLACEMENT

(No. B/430) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Replacement of Water Pipes Project for 2015-2016, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –

- (a) names of the contractors thereof, and
- (b) contract values thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, information on contracts awarded by public bodies is posted on the Public Procurement portal. I am nevertheless tabling the information.

Currently contracts for the replacement of 129 km of pipes for a total amount of Rs1.14 billion have been awarded. In addition, it is expected that within the next six months contract for an additional 67.1 km will be awarded.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House if any of these contractors has caused substantial delay in the execution of work?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, I would invite the hon. Member to ask a specific question instead of a general wide open question. Right now, it is impossible for me to answer.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jahangeer!

CITÉ MALHERBES – 10-YEAR OLD CHILD – ELECTRIC SHOCK

(No. B/431) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the incident which occurred on 11 April 2017 in the course of which a child of ten years sustained serious injuries through electric shock on coming into contact with a transmission tower in Cité Malherbes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the circumstances surrounding same.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that on Tuesday 11 April, 2017 at around 13.15 hours, it was informed by Eau Coulée Police Station of a case of electric shock at Cité Malherbes, Curepipe.

A Police enquiry is currently being carried out to determine the exact circumstances of the accident. It would, therefore, be advisable to await the outcome of the enquiry.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jahangeer!

ARABIC SPEAKING UNION - SETTING UP

(No. B/432) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of an Arabic Speaking Union, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, the Arabic Speaking Union Act was passed in the National Assembly on 14 June 2011 and proclaimed on 01 April 2013.

As from January 2015, a review exercise was initiated with a view to harmonising all the Speaking Unions Acts to enable the adoption of a holistic approach for the promotion and preservation of our ancestral languages.

Amendments were brought to all the Speaking Unions Acts in October 2015. The Arabic Speaking Union (Amendment) Act 2015 was proclaimed on 31 October 2015. As per the transitional provisions of Section 19 (1)(a) of the said Act –

“the Minister shall, at the commencement of this Act, appoint—

- (a) not more than 40 ordinary members, who shall be the initial ordinary members of the Union;”

And under section 19(1)(b) -

“12 members of the Council from amongst the ordinary members appointed under paragraph 19(1)(a).”

Unfortunately, nothing was done and given that no decision was taken, the advice of the State Law Office was sought. Following the advice received from the State Law Office on 08 June 2017, I am coming up shortly with the constitution of the Executive Council of the Arabic Speaking Union under section 6(1) of the Arabic Speaking Union (Amendment) Act 2015.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister inform the House if there is a time frame set for the Arabic Speaking Union to be in operation?

Mr Roopun: The Board has to be constituted and the needful is being done at the earliest.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jahangeer!

DISTRICT COUNCILS - ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION

(No. B/433) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to electricity consumption, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from each District Council, information as to the bill amount thereof over the period 2015 to date.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, with your permission I am arranging for the information requested by the hon. Member to be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

BEACH HAWKERS - LICENCE - CERTIFICATE OF CHARACTER

(No. B/434) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the beach hawker's licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Beach Authority, information as to if an applicant is required to produce a Certificate of Character on submitting an application for the issue thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the Tourism Authority which is the licensing body for this activity and not for the Beach Authority.

Beach hawkers are issued with a tourist enterprise licence under Section 26 of the Tourism Authority Act and as per procedures which are now operational, there is a requirement to submit a Certificate of Character at the time of first application.

It is also good to note that since December 2012, no new tourist enterprise licence for operating as beach hawker in front of hotels has been issued.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: May we know from the hon. Minister when was the requirement for not submitting the Certificate of Character decided and by whom?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, from information I have in my file, it appears that my predecessor who is now the Leader of the Opposition, on 06 April 2015, took a policy decision to the effect that the Certificate of Character was no longer required for the renewal of a permit.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: May we know from the hon. Minister how many got licences following the decision of the ex-Minister?

Mr Gayan: Well, I wish to make it clear that since 2012, there has been no new licences issued, but it is only at the time of renewal that the Certificate of Character which is a requirement was not being pressed on.

SKIPPER'S LICENCE - CERTIFICATE OF CHARACTER

(No. B/435) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the skipper's licence, he will, for the benefit of

the House, obtain from the Beach Authority, information as to if an applicant is required to produce a Certificate of Character on submitting an application for the issue thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I assume again that the hon. Member is referring to the Tourism Authority which is the body responsible for the grant of skippers' licences. The hon. Member will also recall that in my reply to PQ B/186 at the sitting of 11 April 2017, I indicated to the House that section 84 subsection (4) of the Tourism Authority Act provides that the Authority may refuse to grant or renew a skipper's licence on ground of character, conduct or record of convictions of the applicant and the Tourism Authority would have to strictly adhere to the provisions of the law.

Accordingly, as from 11 April 2017, the Tourism Authority is requesting for a Certificate of Character at the time of application for a skipper's licence. And, again, this also was as a result of a policy decision taken by my predecessor, who is now the Leader of the Opposition.

HOSPITALS – CTSCAN & MRI

(No. B/436) Dr. R Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to the CT scan and MRI found in the regional hospitals, he will state the number thereof which are not operational, indicating if consideration will be given for the replacement thereof in the next financial year.

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall answer to this question.

I am informed that all 5 CT scans in the regional hospitals are fully operational. With regard to the 3 magnetic resonance imaging, the one at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital is presently not operational as it has been declared to be beyond economic repairs.

I am pleased to inform the House that corrective action has already been initiated. Bids for the supply, installation and commissioning of a digital 1.5T magnetic resonance imaging for SSR Hospital has already been launched on 21 March 2017 with closing date on 24 May 2017. The bids are presently being evaluated and once the Bid Evaluation Committee Report is finalised, the successful bidder will be issued with a letter of award.

Dr. Sorefan: I know the hon. Minister is not the substantive Minister. Can he inform us about the date of purchase of those CT and MRI appliances and their lifespan?

Mr Sawmynaden: I do not have the information about the CT or MRI. But I have the information regarding the magnetic resonance imaging which is not working, which was purchased in 2002 and inoperational since 2016.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

METHADONE SUBSTITUTION THERAPY - REINTRODUCTION

(No. B/437) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the proposed reintroduction of Methadone as a substitution therapy, he will state the rationale thereof, indicating how the dispensing thereof will be organised.

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall answer to this question.

Madam Speaker, the rationale for the re-introduction of Methadone substitution therapy is to cater for –

- (i) patients who have failed or are likely to fail abstinence based treatments like detoxification with Suboxone or with Codeine, and
- (ii) patients who have not responded to other treatment programmes, including rehabilitation programmes and other psycho-social interventions.

Moreover, the Methadone substitution therapy is a proven evidence-based therapy for treatment of drug addicts. Methadone induction will be re-introduced as from 19 June 2017. Induction will be carried out on a day-care basis at 2 Methadone Centres situated at the Ste Croix drop-in centre and Mahebourg drop-in centre in the first instance. Potential Methadone beneficiaries will be induced at these centres under close medical supervision between 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. for a maximum period of 14 days. There will be a provision for counselling to adopt a social oriented and humanitarian approach in our service. The Methadone dispensing service is mainly carried out through mobile caravans between 6.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. Methadone is presently being dispensed daily at 42 points, including 3 within the present departments. Special arrangements have been made to dispense Methadone during the fasting period of Ramadan.

Madam Speaker, presently the number of persons who have expressed their wish to be embarked on the programme is around 300. Depending on the waiting list, the setting up of additional induction centres will be considered. Methadone beneficiaries, who have undergone the induction programme, are directed to a dispensing point nearest to their place of residence or place of work. Thank you.

Dr. Sorefan: The hon. Minister, I am sure, knows very well that those who go to have their Methadone at the Police Station, namely the one that I know, is at...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan, you have to reply from your seat!

Dr. Sorefan: I have to move.

Madam Speaker: Where is your seat?

Dr. Sorefan: Yes, I was saying mainly at Phoenix Police Station...

(Interruptions)

Yes, what I am saying is, at Phoenix Police Station, there are certain other places which are very near religious places. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will see to it that these people, after taking their Methadone, they do not disturb the peaceful environment at those religious places and certain commercial places, especially at Vacoas?

Mr Sawmynaden: I will definitely look into it and I will talk to the substantive Minister so that he can take action, so that we do not disturb those people going to pray.

Madam Speaker: The next question is for hon. Ganoo! Who is replacing the Minister of Housing and Lands? PQ B/451!

SAVANNE & BLACK RIVER - SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/451) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands, whether, in regard to Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd. and/or other Government agencies, information as to the number of social housing units built in Surinam, Chemin Grenier, Chamouny, Bel Ombre, Saint Martin, Baie du Cap, Le Morne, Case Noyale, Black River and Tamarin respectively,

since 2005 to date, indicating if measures will be taken to address the shortage thereof thereat.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): With your permission, Madam Speaker, I will answer to this question.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation that since 2005 to date, a total of 381 housing units have been constructed by the NEF at Surinam, Chemin Grenier, Chamouny, Bel Ombre, St Martin and Baie du Cap. This figure includes a total of 346 housing units made of corrugated iron sheets and 35 housing units made of concrete and corrugated iron sheets.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that due to non-availability of suitable State land in the region of Surinam, Chemin Grenier, Chamouny, Bel Ombre, St Martin, Baie du Cap, Le Morne, Case Noyale, Black River and Tamarin, no housing project has been implemented by the National Housing Development Company Ltd thereat.

However, as housing demand in other regions of Constituency No. 14, namely, at Bambous is significant and land has become available under the Government/MSPA Agreement, some 300 housing units will be constructed by the NHDC Ltd at Beaux Songes, Cascavelle and Bassin. The construction works are expected to start by the end of this year.

Furthermore, 395 housing units will be constructed by the NHDC Ltd at Surinam on land obtained under the Government/MSPA Agreement. The total project cost of these housing units is estimated at Rs900 m. and it is expected that construction works would be completed by next year 2018.

Applicants living in the regions of Surinam, Bel Ombre, St Martin, Chamouny, Baie du Cap, Le Morne and Case Noyale in Constituency No. 14, who have registered themselves at the NHDC Ltd, but have not benefitted from any housing assistance for the allocation of a housing unit from the NEF, would be considered for the allocation of a housing unit at Surinam, subject to them satisfying the eligibility criteria.

Mr Ganoo: In fact, my question was about the NHDC, the houses which are being built by the National Housing Development Co. Ltd. The hon. Minister gave the figure of about 300 units which have been constructed by the NEF, that is, not under the aegis of the NHDC, the Ministry of Housing. Is that correct?

Mr Bodha: Yes, this is correct, Madam Speaker.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister has confirmed the fact that no NHDC houses have been constructed in all these regions for the past years. Is the hon. Minister aware that, in fact, there are regions like Surinam and Bel Ombre where there are areas of State lands available to start social housing development programmes?

Mr Bodha: From what I have been made to understand, Madam Speaker, is that, in the region of Bambous, land is now available under the Government MSPA Agreement and 300 housing units will be constructed, and works are supposed to start by the end of this year. We have land which has also been obtained under the Government MSPA Agreement at Surinam, where 395 housing units will be constructed, and the construction works will be completed by 2018.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, do you have a supplementary question on this one?

Mr Ganoo: No.

Madam Speaker: No supplementary on this one. So, time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

ASSOCIATION OF PRE-PRIMARY MANAGERS - CORRESPONDENCE

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I propose to make a statement on an issue raised by hon. Mrs Sewocksingh at Adjournment time on 16 May 2017, relating to a correspondence from the Association of Pre-Primary Managers that was purported to have been mailed to me.

Madam Speaker, I have taken cognizance of the email that was tabled by the hon. Member. Contrary to what was stated, it was not addressed to me nor to my Ministry. It

was, in fact, sent to the Budget Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and related to budget proposals. That being said, if the Association wishes to meet officers of my Ministry, this can be arranged following a formal request.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2017-2018) BILL 2017

(No. VII of 2017)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2017-2018) Bill 2017 (No. VII of 2017).

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gungah!

The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr A. Gungah):

Madam Speaker, it is indeed with great pleasure that I am commenting on this year's Budget. At the very outset, let me congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for having presented a Budget with breakthrough measures to unfold a new chapter in the socio-economic history of our country.

The 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 Budgets are complementary. Last year, we set the scene for a new era of development and this year's Budget accentuates the process to rise to this ambition. 'Rising to the Challenge of our Ambitions', the title itself tells a story, Madam Speaker. The challenges are many compared to our ambition of becoming a high-income country in 2023. This is why this Budget is unlike anything before. A strategic plan of this Budget will help us meet our objectives and measure performance against set targets.

There is something for everyone in this Budget: from the young students to the family, from the big corporates to the small enterprises, and finally from the citizen worried about the environment to the technology savvy person. Indeed, the five axes of this Budget lay the foundation for a modern and sustainable economy, but, more importantly, a society where no one is left behind, a society where everyone is contributing to development, *une société où il fait bon vivre*. This is our mission, and rest assured we are doing everything to achieve it.

Madam Speaker, this Budget presents a vision for the long-term and blends economic and social measures marvellously well. A new ecosystem will enhance modernism, develop new pillars and integrate all citizens in the society. Indeed, an innovative Mauritius is in the making. One critical measure is to project the country as one bestowed with modern infrastructure, and this Budget builds on the previous ones by this Government.

The Metro Express is one iconic project that will change the transport landscape in the country. The road network will be improved significantly, reducing time to travel and facilitate movement of both goods and people. Unfortunately, the former Government had undermined this project. The country was not a priority for them. Some had to fill their coffers.

This Government is going forward for a modernised Mauritius. I can also mention about major projects such as the Smart Cities, development at the Port and the airport, the Côte d'Or City at Highlands, administrative towers for Government offices, upgrading of Ébène Cyber City, among others. This is in line with the concept of a Smart Mauritius to complement our attractiveness as a beautiful island.

Madam Speaker, water supply is a major problem during periods of drought. Massive investment in the water sector is of a magnitude that heralds better times. I will only mention investment of Rs598 m. in water treatment for the Bagatelle Dam, Rs1.3 billion for upgrading drainage system. The concept of 24/7 water supply will become a reality, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, a country does not achieve meaningful prosperity when a segment of its population is living below poverty line. This Budget addresses the stigma of two-speed developments where some are left marginalised. It is a defining moment towards more equitable distribution of wealth. The highlight of this Budget has been the negative income taxation. The introduction of a negative tax system will provide financial support to about 150,000 employees and earning emoluments less than Rs10,000 per month. At the same time, we will introduce a solidarity levy on high-income earners and those having a chargeable income plus dividends in excess of Rs3.5 m. will be required to pay 5% of the excess. This will greatly benefit the country by reducing income inequality and ensuring that each and every citizen can, at least, afford his basic needs.

Madame la présidente, ce budget témoigne de la volonté du gouvernement à soulager le quotidien de la population. Cette année, le gouvernement a fait un effort supplémentaire par rapport aux produits de base. En effet, on ne ménage pas nos efforts pour améliorer le

pouvoir d'achat de la population. Malgré une hausse du prix du gaz ménager sur le marché mondial, le gouvernement maintient la baisse de prix, effective depuis le Budget 2016/2017.

You will recall, Madam Speaker, that the price of LPG for domestic use was decreased from Rs330 to Rs270 for a cylinder of 12 kg. This measure has necessitated an amount of Rs267.3 m. as subsidy. And this year, Madam Speaker, Government is making an additional effort. Indeed for the forthcoming financial year 2017/2018, a subsidy of an amount of Rs589 m. will be provided to maintain the current price.

Madame la présidente, cette année nous démontrons encore une fois notre volonté. Nous avons baissé le prix de la farine qui est un produit de base pour toute la population. Le prix du demi-kilo au détail de la farine blanche a connu une baisse d'une R 1 passant de R 5.85 à R 4.85. Et pour encourager une consommation plus saine et promouvoir un meilleur cadre de vie, le gouvernement a apporté une baisse plus substantielle dans le prix de la farine de blé. De ce fait, le prix du demi-kilo au détail de la farine de blé a connu une baisse de R 1.85 passant de R 5.85 à R 4.

Madame la présidente, les informations recueillies par la STC et par les officiers de mon ministère ont démontré que le prix pratiqué par certains commerçants est nettement supérieur à celui fixé. Par exemple, le prix du demi-kilo au détail se vendait à R 7 au lieu du prix fixé de R 5.85. Il y avait aussi abus pour le sac de 25 kg et 50 kg. Pour mettre un frein à cela, la STC va s'engager encore plus dans l'emballage et la distribution afin que les Mauriciens puissent se pourvoir de la farine au prix fixé. Les sacs de 50 kg et 25 kg sont déjà disponibles sur le marché. Et d'ici une semaine, la STC va commercialiser le sachet de 2.5 kg. Je dois préciser que tous les sachets commercialisés par la STC afficheront le logo, le poids et le prix fixé. Afin d'appliquer ces mesures, un montant additionnel de R 256 millions sera requis en termes de subsides.

Je voudrais souligner que le ministère du Commerce exercera un contrôle plus rigoureux sur la vente de la farine et nous serons intransigeants pour ceux qui ne respectent pas le prix fixé. Nous voulons nous assurer que la population ait accès à la farine à un prix raisonnable et abordable. En conséquence, le prix d'un pain maison de 100 g a été revu à la baisse par 10 sous passant de R 2.70 à R 2.60 et les prix des baguettes et moules ont aussi été revus à la baisse.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais préciser que mon ministère fixe les prix de certaines commodités tels que le lait, les médicaments, quelques produits en conserve, le gaz

ménager, l'essence et le diesel entre autres. Les prix des commodités tels que les *dholl puris*, *farata*, etc. ne sont pas fixés. Nous laissons jouer les forces du marché pour plus de compétition afin que le consommateur en sorte gagnant. Mais avec cette baisse conséquente du prix de la farine, qui est de 17% sur la farine blanche et 31% sur la farine de blé, le coût de la fabrication des produits à base de farine doit baisser.

Je fais un appel à ceux concernés dans la fabrication des produits tels que les nouilles, les pâtes, les macaronis, *dholl puris*, *farata*, les pâtisseries, etc. pour qu'ils jouent le jeu et coopèrent dans la mise en pratique de la politique du gouvernement pour que ces aliments de base soient accessibles à la population à des prix inférieurs que ceux pratiqués actuellement.

Madam Speaker, in the context of further protecting the consumers, I wish to inform the House that a new Consumer Protection and Fair Trading Bill is under preparation at my Ministry. I must admit that the preparation of the legal framework is taking more time than expected. This is due to the fact that we are living in a dynamic world and we have to adapt to the fast changing rules in the global trading arena. A team of officials of my Ministry have redrafted a new piece of legislation which will cover both consumer protection and fair trading. As was the case for the first draft, consultations will be held with relevant stakeholders before its finalisation.

Madam Speaker, allow me now to comment on the manufacturing sector. Last year, a series of measures were taken in favour of the industry sector. For the first time, a mechanism was put in place to monitor implementation. You would recall that the Prime Minister took a laudable initiative for a close monitoring of measures in Budget 2016/2017. In this context, I have personally chaired a subcommittee on manufacturing, exports and film industry. It is noteworthy that most of the measures have been implemented. I would refer only to a few. For example, fiscal measures and schemes for film industry. An enhanced bid preference for new sectors, computerisation of the Price-Fixing Unit, improved tax credit scheme for specific activities. The speed to market scheme, all these have already been implemented, Madam Speaker.

Economies of our major trading partners characterised by continued uncertainties and low growth rates is plaguing our manufacturing sector. The Brexit is also impacting negatively on our enterprises. It is the first time that the manufacturing sector is benefiting from so many measures to cope with these challenges. A national export strategy has been prepared with the assistance of the International Trade Centre and was launched in March this

year. It covers key economic sectors and key issues such as innovation, branding and institutional alignment. I am chairing the Inter-Ministerial Committee to drive implementation of the MES. We have set up the necessary mechanism through a Steering Committee and subcommittees and, Madam Speaker, I am confident that measures taken for the export sector in this Budget would have far-reaching positive impact and would bring a new conducive landscape to our operators. I will mention a few of them. Corporate tax reduced from 15% to 3% constitutes a revolutionary measure. The Prime Minister has done it and the industrial sector will benefit. I personally foresee a new wave of confidence among our operators; new investment as well as export capacity of domestic enterprises will be on the rise.

Also, the speed to market scheme which was one of the measures announced in last year's Budget and implemented as from 01 April this year, has proved beneficial. For the month of April, Rs6.1 m. has been disbursed to 13 enterprises and this has resulted in 2% increase in their exports. This is encouraging and we foresee more of our operators to leverage on it. In this Budget, the scheme has been extended to priority sectors such as medical devices, jewellery, fruits, flowers and fish products.

Reduction in the freight cost by 40% will definitely enhance competitiveness in the European Market.

Madam Speaker, the eight-year income tax holiday for new companies engaged in the manufacture of pharmaceutical products, medical devices, and high-tech products is also one of these critical measures. It will help carve-out a new model of industrial development creating a new circle of opportunities for a higher qualified workforce and act as a formidable proposition to attract investors in high value activities.

Institutions under my Ministry have also been active in their respective fields. I am pleased that MAURITAS, the sole Government agency in the area of accreditation, is well underway to obtain international recognition. It will be a major step forward to provide nationally recognised services with the lower costs of accreditation for our exporters.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais maintenant mentionner deux mesures clés pour mon ministère qui apporteront un nouveau dynamisme au secteur industriel. La mise sur pied de l'*Economic Development Board* regroupant différents organismes est une mesure révolutionnaire pour écrire une nouvelle page de notre histoire économique. Je suis

convaincu que le nouvel organisme débouchera sur un nouveau paysage institutionnel et apportera des résultats probants et déterminants.

Une autre décision majeure a aussi été prise pour intégrer le *School of Jewellery* avec le *Fashion and Design Institute*. Cela apportera une meilleure coordination dans la formation pour le secteur textile et la bijouterie. C'est en ligne avec notre objectif de faire de Maurice un *Fashion hub*.

TO CHECK

Madam Speaker, let know come to the case of Betamax. Lots of questions have been raised in the House and outside also, and, of course, I will try to give information as far as possible. As you are aware, the award of the Tribunal in the arbitration case lodged by Betamax Ltd. against the STC was issued last week and the arbitrator has ruled mostly in favour of Betamax Ltd. and a sum of around Rs4.5 billion be paid by the STC. However, the legal advisers of the STC have opined that the STC applies to the Supreme Court to set aside the award.

Let me give some facts about this contract and the way it was allocated. Firstly, Madam Speaker, the contract was awarded by the then Minister of Public Infrastructure in 2009, Mr Bachoo when the Labour-PMSD alliance was in the Government. Secondly, the State Law Office did not give its clearance to the contract proposed by Mr Bhunjun. One of the points was that the Public Procurement Act had not been followed. Despite that, matters were still pursued by the then Government, it is not a mere coincidence that it was on the very day that the STC Board was considering the COA, that is, the Contract of Affreightment that Betamax Ltd. was incorporated on the same day. Thirdly, Madam Speaker, the experts consulted by the STC are unanimous in saying that they have never seen such a Contract of Affreightment. It throws all the burdens on STC. The opinion of the experts is that the STC should never have signed such a Contract of Affreightment in which it is responsible for all charges. Fourthly, Madam Speaker, the central element is that the price structure was changed by Betamax and approved by the then Government whereby, instead of applying market rates for the freight, for transport, a fixed rate much higher than the prevailing ones was retained. And *cerise sur le gâteau, Madame la présidente*, the Contract of Affreightment also included an escalation clause with an increase every five years.

In view of the above, as soon as the new Government took office in December 2014, we engaged discussions with Betamax Ltd to review the Contract of Affreightment, but there

was no positive conclusion. So, Madam Speaker, in January 2015, we took a bold decision and we were right. We were right because since having stopped using the services of Betamax, STC has incurred substantial savings. The average rate that was paid to Betamax while we were, of course, having recourse to its services was 30.79 US dollars per metric tonne. After having stopped using the services of Betamax, that is, for the period February 2015 to May 2017, an average rate of 24.25 US dollars per metric tonne has been paid by STC, that is, a saving of 6.54 US dollars per metric tonne. Already to date, around Rs600 m. has been saved and, Madam Speaker, over a period of 15 years, the savings would be around 83 m. US dollars, that is, Rs2.9 billion. That is the minimum that we have calculated because, in fact, freight rates are still going down these days. *Madame la présidente, notre objectif était et demeure l'arrêt de l'hémorragie des fonds publics. C'est pourquoi la STC entrera une action à la Cour suprême pour le rejet de l'award.*

Madam Speaker, let me now come to Government's vision to develop Mauritius as a petroleum hub for the region. The construction of storage tanks of a total volume of 528,000 metric tonnes will be carried out in two phases over an area of some 135 *arpents* at Albion. We all know that the Port Louis Harbour is already congested. Many persons asked the question: why Albion? Well, Madam Speaker, according to studies carried out by consultants, Albion is the only region in Mauritius where physical conditions such as land and drafts of around 20 metres are available to accommodate such a development. And it is good to note that, as far back as 1996, the site at Albion was identified in the Port Master Plan study to accommodate dry and liquid bulk terminals. Again, in the 2002 Port Master Plan, it was recommended that the Albion site be reserved for long-term Port development mainly for dedicated tank farms for petroleum products. Madam Speaker, it is the current Government which has come up with such a project. It is a project that will be implemented by a joint working group comprising of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd and the State Trading Corporation.

In 2015/2016, the joint working group undertook a pre-feasibility study for the project. In order for the project to be viable, the construction of a jetty at Albion of about 600 metres long, with a draft of around 20 metres, is a prerequisite and will be funded by a grant from the Government of India.

On 08 May 2017, the joint working group issued a request for proposal to Engineers India Ltd for the carrying out of a detailed feasibility study for the project. This is expected to

be completed early next year and the construction is expected to start in 2018 and to end in 2021.

Madam Speaker, I can assure the House and the population at large that all precautions will be taken to ensure that the project is environment-friendly. I seize this opportunity to confirm that the Refinery project at Albion is not going ahead.

Madam Speaker, bunkering is a promising sector for our economy. Since the liberalisation in the importation of bunker fuel, the volume of bunker fuel has increased from 284,000 metric tonnes to 337,000 metric tonnes during the period of 2015 to 2016 and this represents an increase of 18.5%. As at 31 May 2017, a growth of 23% has already been realised which would bring us to the targeted 30% as at end June 2017. The growth in the bunkering sector encourages the private sector to invest in the construction of new storage tanks for bunker fuel. For instance, at least, one promoter is planning to invest some Rs800 m. in new tanks for storing around 45,000 tonnes of bunker fuel.

Madam Speaker, let me now talk on business facilitation which is high on Government's agenda. My Ministry is fully involved in this endeavour. The Trade Division of my Ministry is the first Government Department to have joined the single window system. Applications are made online so that traders no longer need to come physically to the Division to submit documents manually.

Furthermore, in case additional authorisation is required from other Governmental organisations, such as the Mauritius Standards Bureau, the system itself seeks approval from those organisations electronically.

In terms of benefits, trade permits are being approved more rapidly, sometimes even within minutes. The single window system has also led to a paperless work system getting down on costs of such services. Some 7,000 permits have already been approved in the single window system. In line with Business Facilitation Act 2017, various items have been removed from the list of controlled items at import and export at the level of my Ministry.

Moreover, various procedures and processes have been streamlined to facilitate traders in carrying out their trading activities faster and at less cost. MRA Customs will liaise directly with line Ministries and institutions for clearances, approvals and permits.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the Price Fixing Unit of my Ministry. This unit deals with the price control of essential commodities. The main objectives of this unit are to protect the interests of the consumers and to prevent traders from profiteering. Previously, all

the works and calculations were performed manually. To be in line with the Government's policy of providing e-services to its stakeholders, my Ministry has computerised the Price Fixing Unit. In fact, the Price Fixing Information System allows online submission of return, e-calculation and online issue of approval of prices in real time. Thus, as a responsible and innovative Ministry, we strive to promote transparency and environment consciousness in our actions.

Madam Speaker, global trade is evolving constantly and Mauritius has to adapt. In this context, the development of an e-commerce platform was announced in the last budget. This would connect consumers from the rest of the world directly to our exporters. My Ministry, together with the Mauritius Export Association, that is, the MEXA, initiated preliminary work for recruitment of a consultant to undertake a feasibility study. I am informed that SADC, under the trade-related facility, has now provided financial assistance to conduct the study. This measure is expected to boost the exports of our products to every corner of the world.

Madam Speaker, bilateral relationship is very important for Mauritius. Our improved relationship with India can be a game changer. The conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Partnership Agreement, that is, CECPA, negotiations set for this year will be of immense benefit to our country. We must thank the Prime Minister for having taken this matter during his recent visit to India. We can only say that we are proud that India, a major economic powerhouse, is standing at our side.

Madam Speaker, before concluding, let me thank the Prime Minister for the consideration he has given to my constituency in terms of infrastructural projects. Never before have so many projects been announced for the Constituency of Grand' Baie/Poudre d'Or! Among these projects, I will mention the construction of a market fair and traffic centre at Goodlands.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, we all know that during the last decade, economic activities have been on the rise in Goodlands and today, the village is congested. The only solution to relieve the inhabitants of Goodlands and the nearby villages is to extend the physical boundary of the region. In this context, the procedure to obtain land from St. Antoine Sugar Estate is underway and I am confident that once everything has been finalised, the launching will be done very soon and this project will definitely be a reality in the years to come.

Madam Speaker, I have also witnessed, together with my colleague, hon. Rughoobur, the trauma and miseries of many inhabitants of the region of Fond du Sac, Grand'Baie and Pereybere after heavy rainfalls in 2013 and 2016. I am glad that the Prime Minister has been sensitive to their plight. The budget makes provision for funds to address this issue. I would also like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for the provisions made for the construction of two community health centres at Grand'Baie and Cap Malheureux and also for the fund allocated for the new bypass in the region of Cap Malheureux. This will certainly solve the traffic congestion in this coastal region.

Madam Speaker, these projects will surely facilitate the life of people of these regions. Implementation of these projects definitely takes time to materialise, but we will endeavour to make them happen as early as possible.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, let me quote Joel Barker, famous American businessman. I quote -

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.”

I am glad that our Prime Minister, with his exceptional leadership, qualities and vision will not only change the fate of Mauritius, but will transform the country into a better one. This Budget provides solutions to these challenges and paves the way for a new Mauritius, for a modern Mauritius and a more equal Mauritius.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to intervene on the Budget and I shall confine myself to certain aspects of the Bill.

Madame, nous avons tout entendu, tous les qualificatifs attribués à ce budget, un budget ‘*menti menti*’, un budget confetti, un budget irresponsable et j’en passe. Quant à moi, je me contenterai de l’avis de M. Pierre Dinan, qui est tout à fait pertinent. M. Dinan est un homme respecté, qui n’a pas sa langue dans sa poche, indépendamment des gouvernants du jour et le résume à sa façon, le qualifiant de budget au ras du sol. Des mesures sociales populaires mais l’économie est absente. Et en cela je partage totalement son opinion.

Ce budget va-t-il créer la croissance de demain? Va-t-il semer aujourd’hui ce que nous allons récolter demain? J’en doute fort. Je m’attendais à un budget qui traite les

problèmes économiques urgents. Je m'attendais à un budget qui soulage le mal à sa source, mais tel n'est pas le cas.

Madame la présidente, ces urgences sont l'investissement, ces urgences sont l'*offshore*, ces urgences sont l'exportation et les petites et moyennes entreprises, ces urgences sont le tourisme en marge des conclusions inquiétantes qui ont émergé des assises du tourisme. Ces urgences sont la lutte contre le gaspillage et les vraies réformes structurelles.

Si on prend pour commencer le secteur manufacturier, les mesures annoncées pour ce secteur vont-elles apporter les solutions nécessaires aux entreprises exportatrices, en sachant que les exportations ont chuté de 11% par rapport à l'année dernière ?

Prenons une mesure annoncée l'année dernière: la réduction de 50% des coûts de fret aérien accordés par l'État pour soutenir ces entreprises. Quels ont été les résultats? Les répercussions, Madame la présidente, ont été minimes sur ce secteur. Pourquoi? Il faut savoir que la majorité du fret de l'export se fait par bateau. Et que ce n'est que dans le cadre où une entreprise est en retard sur sa commande, qu'elle décide d'expédier par avion. C'est une mesure qui a, certes, soulagé les entreprises mais elle a eu un impact minime.

La deuxième mesure aujourd'hui concerne la baisse du *corporate tax* de 15% à 3% des profits, mais encore faut-t-il que l'entreprise fasse des profits. La majorité des petits et moyens opérateurs sont au bord de l'asphyxie. Celles et ceux qui réalisent des profits sont des grosses entreprises, les gros conglomérats et où est-ce qu'ils investissent ? Ils investissent principalement vers Madagascar, en Inde ou encore en Afrique. Donc, ils peuvent faire une bascule fiscale, pour faire quoi ? Pour délocaliser et investir à l'étranger. Il n'y a aucune mesure qui aura un impact fort sur la compétitivité, sur l'innovation, sur l'attraction. L'attractivité de nos entreprises exportatrices, fussent-elles petites, moyennes ou grandes.

Concernant les PME, les *SMEs*, le précédent ministre des Finances voulait créer une nation d'entrepreneurs pour stimuler ce secteur. Mais qu'en est-il réellement pour moderniser leur outil de production ? Pour avoir un rayonnement régional ou international, ces entreprises ont besoin d'avoir un accès au capital, du financement, des liquidités et, entre autres, un fonds de roulement. Mais quelle est la réalité ? L'honorable Uteem a fait remarquer hier que la MauBank, la banque dédiée à l'entreprenariat - ce qui théoriquement doit supporter le petit entrepreneur - sur une enveloppe de R 10 milliards a dépensé seulement R 70 millions. Voilà la triste réalité de l'entreprenariat !

Concernant l'*offshore*, Madame la présidente, après la fin du traité avec l'Inde, on s'attendait à une vraie stratégie africaine, comme annoncé. Mais que voit-on à la place ? L'industrie se restructure et s'investit dans la restructuration de la dette pour le marché indien mais rien n'est mis en place pour conquérir les nouveaux marchés. Rien, aucune mesure d'accompagnement n'a été proposée dans ce budget.

Concernant l'investissement, Madame la présidente, l'investissement d'aujourd'hui c'est la croissance de demain, c'est la création d'emplois, mention n'est pas faite dans ce budget, à part de 2,000 emplois dans le secteur public, notamment pour le recrutement de nouveaux policiers. Une croissance de 5%, ce sont de meilleurs salaires, plus d'emplois et mieux rémunérés. Des taxes additionnelles pour l'État pour financer un meilleur service public, un meilleur service hospitalier, des meilleures routes, malheureusement, une croissance anémique de 3.9% ne créera pas de richesses. Voilà où on est !

En ce qui s'agit de cette manne, Madame la présidente, qu'est le tourisme, nous avons tendance à considérer le tourisme comme une rente dont il ne faut pas trop s'occuper, un secteur qui fonctionne tout seul. Il s'agit là d'une profonde erreur d'analyse. A l'heure où les moyens de transport se démocratisent, à l'heure où les frontières s'ouvrent et permettent aux consommateurs de bénéficier d'une offre touristique de plus en plus variée, notre rente, pour exceptionnelle qu'elle soit, n'est plus à l'abri des vents de la concurrence étrangère. Les assises du tourisme, organisées sous l'égide du ministère du Tourisme, ont révélé le vrai visage de ce secteur, les réelles appréhensions et les *challenges* des petits, moyens et gros opérateurs. Il est ressorti, de ces assises du tourisme, une vraie feuille de route sur les réels défis de demain, sur ce qui doit être mis en place pour inverser la vapeur, pour inverser la tendance. Il n'est pas fait mention d'une seule ligne dans ce budget, et c'est assez symptomatique d'un réel dysfonctionnement.

Il y a deux semaines, le ministre du tourisme a réuni tous les *stakeholders*, du plus petit au plus grand, des *taxi operators* aux plus grands hôteliers, en passant par les *beach hawkers*, tout le monde est réuni. Alors que tous les opérateurs pensaient être entendus dans ce budget avec des mesures concrètes, rien ! Pas une ligne ne figure dans ce budget.

Madame la présidente, la croissance viendra du secteur touristique. Elle viendra du secteur informel. Nous n'avons plus de littoral, plus de plages pour construire de grands hôtels. La croissance viendra de l'informel, du gîte structuré, de la table d'hôte, de l'appartement, de la location de maison mais pas une seule mesure ne figure dans ce budget.

Plus grave, Madame la présidente, on parle de *rebranding exercise*. Un *rebranding* a été fait quelques années de cela, une certaine somme d'argent conséquente avait été dépensée. Maintenant qu'on apprend que le *rebranding* va être refait, on va sûrement être appelé, dans les semaines qui viennent, à passer un *supplementary appropriation* pour la somme nécessaire pour faire ce *rebranding*.

Concernant l'agro-industrie, Madame la présidente, la communauté des planteurs est restée sur sa faim. 25,000 arpents étaient sous culture et 25,000 arpents ont été abandonnés. Un fonds de R 50 millions a été dédié pour mécaniser 500 arpents, alors que tous les ans 1,000 arpents sont abandonnés. Il n'y a pas de mesures réelles pour aller vers l'autosuffisance. Les stratégies mises en place ont été des échecs, nous importons la quasi-totalité de tout ce que nous consommons. Donc, il y a un réel problème et il n'en est fait aucune mention dans ce budget.

Ce qui m'interpelle, Madame la présidente, nous avons assisté à une distribution de goodies, de sucrerie dans ce budget avec de l'argent du contribuable, du mauricien et celui de l'indien, mais quand on regarde les fondamentaux, nous avons une dette publique qui a atteint 66% du PIB, qui aurait pu grimper encore plus haut, si ce n'était le SPV mis en place pour *channel* les 500 millions de dollars qui ont été octroyés par l'Inde. Quid maintenant des 5 milliards additionnels qu'on aura sûrement avoir à débourser pour payer M. Bhunjun dû à la décision hasardeuse du gouvernement de résilier le contrat avec Betamax ? Et, Madame la présidente, même pas une provision, même pas une dotation dans ce budget, alors qu'un *award* a été obtenu par la firme Betamax.

Madame la présidente, nous sommes dans une phase d'austérité économique où la rigueur et la prudence doivent être de mise. Nous sommes dans une spirale à tel point que nous avons besoin de l'aide étrangère pour équilibrer notre propre budget. On a assisté à des parlementaires du gouvernement qui tapaient sur la table à chaque mesure annoncée. Et la question que je me posais à ce moment était est-ce que vous réalisiez vraiment dans quelle situation nous sommes.

Pour dresser un parallèle, c'est l'histoire d'une famille, comme beaucoup de familles mauriciennes, qui ne peuvent plus emprunter à aucune institution financière pour financer leur train de vie. Et quel est son dernier recours ? Emprunter à la famille directe, emprunter aux amis. C'est là où on en est aujourd'hui.

Alors, qu'est-ce qui est proposé ? Des réformes structurelles sur *Landscope*, sur le *Town and Country Planning Board*, l'*Economic Development Board*, qui ont certes peut-être leur raison d'être. Il n'y a, dans ce budget, aucune indication de réforme en profondeur sur la gestion quotidienne et le gaspillage dans nos institutions. Gestion pourtant tant décriée par les rapports successifs de l'audit et mis en exergue par les rapports du *Public Accounts Committee*.

J'aimerais citer un rapport d'un consultant de PricewaterhouseCoopers qui a fait le commentaire suivant –

"The creation of the Economic Development Board, e-licensing business platform and public institution reforms are welcome. However, experience from the past Budget initiatives such as the Electronic Procurement System indicates that the level of adoption remains low, as it requires a change in culture. Unless working methods evolve, the desired efficiency gains will not be derived."

Et là, je voudrais argumenter mes propos, Madame la présidente, de simples exemples qui ont jailli du rapport de l'audit pour illustrer mon point par rapport au gaspillage : R 102 millions de 2014 à 2016 ; R 102 millions qui ont pourri, qui ont périmé dans un store au ministère de la Santé - R 102 m. de 2014 à 2016.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhuboo: R 211 millions!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, you will have time to intervene. So, please, do not interrupt!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhuboo: R 211 millions, Madame, payées à des policiers qui ont été *interdicted*, des recettes collectées par la police à hauteur de R 74 millions sous diverses formes, *passport fee, firearm licence*, etc., et seulement R 41 millions versées, R 33 millions disparues dans la caisse. Des soupçons de corruption sur l'achat de fuel pour les hélicoptères à hauteur de R 10.8 millions, des soupçons de maldonne sur l'achat d'équipements, d'uniformes, et j'en

pas. Ce ne sont là que quelques exemples. Le rapport de l'audit est choquant, édifiant, et d'année en année c'est la même chose.

Au-delà de la pandémie de scandales qui ont touché ce gouvernement, ce qui m'interpelle c'est la vraie réforme ; une réforme forte, une réforme salutaire qui est, malheureusement, absente ; une réforme pour mettre en place des mécanismes pour une gestion saine, transparente, responsable de nos institutions pour lutter contre le gaspillage, contre l'impunité zéro, pour lutter contre l'*unaccountability* pour chaque roupie dépensée. Il n'y a rien dans ce budget.

Madame la présidente, ce qu'il y a de plus grave, le plus grand drame se joue au niveau du ministère de l'*Ocean Economy*. Un ministère qui aurait pu devenir un pilier de notre économie, un gisement de croissance pour notre pays, et là encore, c'est une occasion ratée, une occasion gâchée pour un secteur avec autant de potentiels. Ce qui est maintenant plus grave, c'est qu'on entend des projets d'aquaculture, des concessions qui sont données à droite et à gauche, des concessions données dans des endroits à fort potentiel touristique sans aucune étude préalable.

On se contente de faire des *EIA*s. Il y a un *Environmental Impact Assessment* (EIA) qui a été déposé la semaine dernière, et il est fait mention dans cet *EIA* quelles sont les *mitigating measures* concernant l'aquaculture au-delà, bien sûr, des problèmes de pollution. Ils ont identifié effectivement qu'il y a des problèmes sur les requins. Et quelles sont les *mitigating measures* que ces personnes proposent ? Des filets plus solides ! Donc, la question que j'aimerais poser au ministre et que j'aimerais qu'il étudie, c'est que si le requin n'arrive pas à pénétrer dans le filet, puisque les filets sont très solides, qui ira-t-il croquer ?

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, on met des projets...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: You do not have to reply now, hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhuboo: On met des projets dans la région de Grand' Baie ; on met des projets dans la région de Flic-en-Flac ; on met des projets en face des fleurons de notre hôtellerie, où il est incompatible d'avoir de l'hôtellerie de luxe et des fermes d'aquaculture. On met des

fermes d'aquaculture dans la Baie de Tamarin, un sanctuaire de requins qui aurait déjà dû être protégé.

(Interruptions)

J'aimerais, Madame la présidente, attirer votre attention sur les *unintended consequences* que ce développement peut avoir sur l'industrie touristique. Il suffit qu'une personne, qu'un touriste se fasse croquer, il suffit qu'un de nos concitoyens sur une de ces plages publiques se fasse croquer, et ce sera un drame. Donc, je fais appel au gouvernement pour regarder ce projet.

Concernant maintenant, le bien de nos concitoyens, il coule de source, il va de soi que cela devrait être la priorité de tout gouvernant, mais apprendre à nager, pratiquer du sport sont certes de bonnes choses. Mais si l'on veut s'atteler au bien-être de nos citoyens, la priorité des priorités devrait être une ré-urbanisation, une oxygénation de nos villes, de nos cités et de nos villages. Pendant trop longtemps, ces derniers explosent par manque de planification et de gestion. Il faut les réinventer, créer des parcs, végétaliser, les doter de nouveaux outils communautaires.

Un exemple dans ma circonscription où effectivement nous avons un problème de logement. Il faut prévoir du logement. Un terrain avait été identifié pour des projets communautaires. Ce projet avait été validé par les conseillers municipaux, donc était passé par le sceau de la Municipalité de Quatre Bornes. Ce terrain avait été identifié pour un centre de sport, pour une piscine, pourquoi pas, pour un centre de personnes âgées, pour une garderie, pour une école, pour une station de police. Aujourd'hui, on apprend que ce terrain va être utilisé pour des logements sociaux. Donc, d'un côté on annonce la refonte du *Town and Country Planning Board*, on annonce des projets de ré-urbanisation urbaine, mais finalement on répète les mêmes erreurs d'autrefois. Donc, d'un côté, des effets d'annonce sur la planification, et de l'autre côté le contraire.

Concernant la lutte contre la pauvreté, Madame la présidente, pour finir, elle doit être mieux coordonnée. Elle demande une approche multidimensionnelle, rapide et ciblée, un alignement des besoins immédiats combiné avec une lutte contre les fléaux et autres dépendances qui touchent les plus démunis de notre société. Si nous voulons éradiquer la pauvreté, il faut des mesures ciblées, pas disperses et diffuses qui n'auront pas les effets escomptés. Il faut des logements décents. Il faut des outils communautaires adaptés, une bonne éducation, de la formation, du micro crédit, du *counselling* sur l'enfer des

dépendances, du *counselling* sur la nutrition, sur l'importance de l'éducation et sur l'importance de la vie communautaire. Bref, tout doit être mis en exergue et converger vers l'élargissement des opportunités pour les plus démunis de notre société.

Pour conclure, Madame la présidente, la solution pour amener ce pays vers la modernité est en nous-mêmes. Nous avons besoin de réformes fortes, pas seulement cosmétiques. Il s'agit de trouver des femmes et des hommes qui seront capables de porter un projet, qui ont des capacités managériales et une vision pour le faire. C'est là où, malheureusement, ce gouvernement a failli.

Merci de votre attention.

(Interruptions)

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

At 5.22 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.03 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Seeruttun!

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): M. le Président, permettez-moi d'abord d'étendre mes félicitations, celles de mes mandants et aussi de la population, au Premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour la présentation du Budget 2017-18. C'est en effet son cinquième budget, M. le président. Et je me souviens en 2003, à l'issue de sa première présentation, on avait parlé de 'coup d'essai, coup de maître'. Cette fois, j'aurai espéré que les membres parlementaires de l'autre côté de la Chambre se montrent plus juste et reconnaissent aussi que ce budget est un budget innovant et sans précédent. Mais quoi entendre des membres de l'Opposition ? A vrai dire, M. le président, c'est un budget fait par un homme de terrain. Un budget de peuple pour *lepep*.

La voix de la nation a été entendue et ça c'est le signe d'un gouvernement à l'écoute de sa population. Nous avons, M. le président, un chef de file, un meneur d'hommes et de femmes, qui a une vision, il réfléchit à ce qu'il veut accomplir et il est animé par ses convictions et aussi un ensemble de principes auxquels il reste et restera fidèle. Il transmet son message avec passion et intégrité. Il inspire donc le respect de tous, même de ses détracteurs les plus virulents.

Mais avant d'entrer dans le fond du sujet, M. le président, je voudrai d'abord répondre à quelques points émis par l'honorable Ezra Jhuboo. Il a fait référence à l'entrevue

de l'économiste Pierre Dinan, mais ce qu'il n'a pas dit, ce que l'économiste a dit dans l'intégralité. Il a pris une partie de son entrevue et il a fait mention de que cette partie-là.

M. le président, ça fait 2 ans et 6 mois que ce gouvernement est au pouvoir. On a hérité d'une situation catastrophique après presque 10 ans du règne du Parti Travailiste-PMSD. Nous savons tous comment le pays était anéanti, et qu'il fallait redémarrer la machinerie économique. Aujourd'hui, ces mêmes personnes qui étaient à la tête du pays viennent nous demander de réaliser dans si peu de temps, autant de résultats.

L'honorable Jhuboo - comme dit mon collègue, l'honorable Sinatambou - se joint à ses camarades pour dire que le syndrome '*narien pas bon*' est toujours là. Depuis le début de 2015, ce gouvernement met tout pour pouvoir redonner la machinerie économique la force qu'il faut pour améliorer le sort de toute la population. Aujourd'hui, les indicateurs sont là. C'est malheureux qu'il ne va pas reconnaître que les indicateurs sont là et ça démontre que les choses sont en train d'aller dans la bonne direction. Et l'honorable Jhuboo et le *Leader* de l'Opposition hier, ne veulent pas accepter que le chômage est à la baisse. Ils viennent avec toutes sortes d'explications pour dire que c'est une baisse oui, mais il y a un vieillissement de la population qui explique ceci. Les faits sont là, M. le président. On est sorti de 8% pour descendre à 7.3%. Et la tendance à la baisse, je suis sûr, va continuer cette année-ci et l'année prochaine et après encore.

De par les mesures qu'on vient d'annoncer dans ce budget, et d'ailleurs c'est bien clair, on veut, à travers les mesures annoncées, offrir à nos jeunes de meilleurs jobs, de meilleures opportunités. Lorsqu'on voit la somme allouée dans la recherche et le développement de ce qu'on veut faire du *MRC*, tout ça démontre l'importance qu'on donne pour pouvoir donner plus de chance à nos jeunes de ce pays. Ce qu'on fait aujourd'hui pour les PME, c'est sans précédent. Et on connaît tous et je suis sûr qu'ils vont être d'accord avec nous; ce sont les petites et moyennes entreprises qui sont les gros pourvoyeurs d'emplois. Et aujourd'hui, ce qu'on donne, ce qu'on les offre comme facilités, c'est justement pour pouvoir les faire grandir et offrir encore plus d'emplois à ceux qui sont à la recherche d'un emploi. Mais ils n'ont pas vu tout ça.

La loi qu'on vient de présenter, le *Business Facilitation*, et avec des mesures qui vont venir dans ce budget pour renforcer encore cet environnement pour le business, ils n'ont rien vu encore. Soit ils ne veulent pas voir, ou c'est que de la démagogie, M. le président.

On a introduit récemment un *scheme*, *Speed to Market*, pour faire face à la situation en Grande-Bretagne. Et je dois dire qu'en un mois seulement, l'exportation a augmenté par 2% et ça démontre que c'est un *scheme* qui marche. Et je peux dire encore une fois dans les mesures annoncées, ce *scheme* va être étendu à d'autres secteurs, dont le secteur agricole.

L'honorable Jhuboo a aussi parlé du secteur de l'agro-industrie, il parlait justement du nombre d'arpents qui sont laissés à l'abandon. La question qu'il faut se poser, pourquoi, qu'est-ce qu'on a fait pendant les 10 ans de règne du Parti travailliste ? Qu'est-ce que le ministère de l'Agro-Industrie a fait ? D'ailleurs dans la réponse que j'ai donnée plus tôt, une question de lui-même, dont le rapport de l'Audit fait mention, comment les mesures, les *schemes* qui ont été présentés, qui ont été proposés aux planteurs, n'ont pas donné les résultats escomptés, parce qu'il n'y avait pas vraiment au sein de l'ancien régime une envie de donner le support qu'il fallait aux planteurs. Et d'ailleurs je l'ai dit, et il y a le rapport *Statistics Mauritius* pour 2016. On a eu le plan stratégique non-sucre 2016-2020. Et depuis son application, j'avais dit 4.7% d'augmentation de la production agricole.

Les terres abandonnées, nous les avons identifiées depuis 2015. Combien de terres ont été données à des proches du pouvoir de l'ancien régime et qui étaient restées à l'abandon. On a repris toutes ces terres abandonnées pour pouvoir les donner à de vrais producteurs. Voilà comment le pays était géré avant. Mais on ne peut pas non plus, d'une année à l'autre, sortir d'où on était et passer à une autre étape mais petit à petit on va le faire. D'ailleurs le plan stipule clairement ce qu'on veut atteindre dans cinq ans. Il parlait aussi du gaspillage dans le secteur de la santé et des suspensions dans la force policière. Il faut voir depuis quand ces policiers sont suspendus. J'apprends qu'il y a certains qui ont pris leur retraite tout en étant en suspension. Mais tout cela, au niveau du gouvernement, on est en train de revoir comment arrêter ce genre d'abus.

L'indice de confiance est en hausse. Ce n'est pas moi qui le dis, c'est la Chambre de Commerce et de l'Industrie. Le *FDI* pour 2016 était de R13.6 milliards et pour 2017, pour trois mois ...

(Interruptions)

Attendez la fin de l'année financière, honorable membre, vous allez voir avec tous les projets qui sont dans le *pipeline*. Avec tout ce qu'on est en train de réaliser, toujours le syndrome - *narien pas bon*.

Le Leader de l'opposition a été ministre pendant les 12 dernières années : ministre du Tourisme, ministre de l'Intégration Sociale, ministre des Finances et Premier ministre adjoint. Hier, il trouvait à dire que les gens sont pauvres à Maurice. La croissance est en baisse. Le chômage est en hausse. La question qu'on doit lui poser : mais quand il était en position de pouvoir prendre des décisions, de corriger les erreurs, d'améliorer le sort de la population qu'a-t-il fait ?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Seeruttun: J'ai écouté tranquillement quand les intervenants avant moi ont parlé. J'attends le même quand moi maintenant je suis en train d'intervenir. Vous aurez tous le temps de répondre.

Le Leader de l'opposition hier a parlé d'un budget '*menti-menti*' parce qu'on avait prédit une croissance de 4.1% mais on va finir à 3.9%, alors il trouve cela *menti-menti*. Laissez-moi dire, M. le président, qu'il était lui-même ministre des Finances en 2012, en 2013 et en 2014. Il avait prédit à l'époque alors qu'il était ministre des Finances une croissance de 4% lors de son discours, or la croissance a été seulement de 3.4%. En 2013, dans son discours encore une fois, il prédisait 3.4%, la croissance n'était que de 3.2%. En 2014, il avait dit entre 3.8% et 4%, c'était 3.7%. Je peux comprendre, on fait des *forecasts* mais il y a des choses qui se passent. Nous avons connu l'année dernière le cas du Brexit, les élections aux États-Unis, la nouvelle politique du président Trump, la situation géopolitique dans le monde, le terrorisme, le prix du pétrole, mais, bien sûr, l'estimation faite à un moment donné peut changer. Mais de là à venir dire que c'est un budget *menti-menti*, je trouve cela pour quelqu'un qui été ministre des Finances vraiment...

(Interruptions)

Mais ce qui est bon de voir, M. le président - d'ailleurs mon ami l'honorable Mahen Jhugroo avec bien raison de dire il y a quelques temps de cela que le PMSD *si li pas en pendan avek MSM, li en pendan li ek PTR*. Voilà un peu comment le PMSD...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Seeruttun: Mais ce qu'il faut savoir, M. le président, le Leader de l'opposition, il y a six mois, était encore dans ce gouvernement. Qu'est-ce qu'il avait dit sur le budget

2016/2007. Laissez-moi reprendre du *Hansard* les extraits de son discours lors des débats du Budget 2016/2017. Je dis cela pour que le peuple le juge. Voilà ce qu'il avait déclaré, et je cite –

“(...) the Budget is *excellent dans la forme et dans le fond*. I mean it (...).»

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Duval!

Mr Seeruttun: “(...) I like this Budget. I like it because it has been well-drafted in clear language, the speech was well-delivered; (...) the Budget is comprehensive. It is coherent and to me, it is also innovative.”

I must say and this is a compliment again to the Minister of Finance, Madam Speaker, that the Budget is very comprehensive and very exclusive. Everybody finds himself and it is really a Budget of equal opportunities.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Duval, I can hear your voice! Allow me to listen to the speech.

Mr Seeruttun: Pour conclure, M. le président, il avait lancé, avec délectation, et écoutez cela bien –

“Madam Speaker, just to end, I would like to say that once again I would like to congratulate my colleague and friend, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, for a beautiful Budget. I would like to say that this Budget, in my opinion, will go a long way to make of Mauritius a better, more prosperous country and a fairer society.”

Voilà, quelqu'un qui était là et voilà ce qu'il avait dit ...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mr Seeruttun: Eux, ils ont décidé de faire un autre chemin, nous, nous n'allons pas changer notre trajectoire. M. le président, une des priorités de ce gouvernement était d'améliorer le pouvoir d'achat de la population et c'est ce qu'on fait depuis le début de notre mandat, en améliorant la pension de vieillesse de nos retraités, des personnes handicapées. Le taux de la compensation salariale, année après année, depuis qu'on est au pouvoir, est beaucoup plus élevé que le taux d'inflation. Les facilités données aux parents pour aider leurs

enfants pour les études ; les tarifs d'électricité et les tarifs de l'eau ont été réduits, le prix du gaz, du jamais vu, a baissé de R 60 et là le prix de la farine.

Tout cela c'est pour montrer qu'on est cohérent dans notre politique de venir en aide aux gens qui sont le plus mal lotis, les gens vulnérables, les gens qui ont plus besoin du support. Il fut un temps, M. le président, où le gouvernement prenait de la poche des petits pour donner aux riches. N'oubliez pas la politique de Rama Sithanen, taxer les petits, épargnant, exempter les gros investisseurs. C'était ça la politique de l'ancien régime avec la complicité du PMSD. Voilà la politique de l'ancien régime. Qu'est-ce qu'on a vu cette fois-ci ? Le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances vient avec une mesure innovante pour la première fois. Pour la première fois, c'est la *MRA* qui va payer aux gens ce qu'on appelle une taxe négative et demander à ceux qui touchent beaucoup plus que R 3.5 m. de payer une taxe de solidarité. Donc, on va prendre aux plus riches pour partager avec les plus pauvres. C'est ça la différence, M. le président, entre ce gouvernement et le précédent gouvernement.

M. le président, je crois qu'il existe deux types de politiciens dans la vie. L'un le démagogue, un escroc qui maîtrise la séduction, caresse l'instinct des électeurs et se transforme en charmeur qui promet la tromperie et derrière ce masque, un sourire illuminé des démagogues, se cachent la tricherie, l'illusion et le mensonge. Le second, c'est le pédagogue. Lui, il a un autre caractère. Il n'est pas vendeur de rêves, il n'a qu'un intérêt, celui du peuple et d'un pays. Il n'a qu'une arme, la raison, la franchise et la vérité. Le pédagogue est courageux, le démagogue est perfide et cherche toujours à nuire.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, des gens disent qu'ils veulent faire de la politique autrement, gouverner autrement. Ça me fait penser à un certain Eric Stofer. Ça vous dit quelque chose !

(Interruptions)

Cindy Legallant !

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud, please! You will have the opportunity to rebut. Allow the hon. Minister to make his speech!

Mr Seeruttun: Survoler le Mont-Blanc, M. le président, en jet privé !

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Duval, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Seeruttun: Gouverner autrement, M. le président, voilà un peu ce que préconisent ces gens-là. Gouverner autrement !

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget is for all Mauritians. Just as the night gives energy to all, just like water never asks anyone about his *appartenance* but quenches everyone's thirst, whatever criticism will be leveled against us, we will stay focused on our mission, we will stay united.

M. le président, comment peut-on oublier cette tâche qu'on avait en décembre 2014, les frasques de l'ancien gouvernement ? Qui a oublié comment ils étaient en train de dilapider le fonds public. Ce que je peux dire, M. le président, power is an opportunity to serve, power is not an opportunity to store dollars and euros in coffre-fort, power is not Macarena party, power is not allowing Mr ... to have big fortune. Power does not mean having a Prime Minister qui aime les escapades pour aller rouler les cigares sur les cuisses dans son campement. Power is not bouillabaisse party in Davos, power is about doing things for the well-being of the people. We bear this well in mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the people of our country can rely on us. We belong to a team that thinks of moving society magnificently. We are doing it with good heart.

Ce que je peux dire, ce qu'on a accompli depuis qu'on est au pouvoir, M. le président, j'ai fait mention tout à l'heure comment le chômage est en baisse et la croissance en hausse. Le leader de l'opposition parlait du secteur du tourisme et il prétend que c'est lui qui est le seul responsable de la croissance dans ce secteur. Mais il était ministre du Tourisme dans le passé, pourquoi à l'époque la croissance n'était pas aussi élevée qu'on a connu depuis qu'on est au pouvoir ? Parce qu'il y a eu une politique différente. On a permis beaucoup plus de créativité. Il y a eu *l'Air Corridor* entre l'Asie et l'Afrique, et on ne va pas s'arrêter là. Alors quand c'est bon, le coq aime prendre la paternité...

(*Interruptions*)

M. le président, l'investissement privé aussi commence à connaître une croissance.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance, please!

Mr Seeruttun: Aujourd’hui l’environnement économique s’améliore. Le gouvernement est devenu un facilitateur afin de permettre aux gens d’opérer d’une manière efficace et efficiente. C’est ça l’objectif de ce gouvernement, M. le président. Et c’est ça qu’ils refusent de voir. Aujourd’hui, lorsqu’on a des pays amis qui nous aident, ils ne sont pas contents. Ça les dérange.

(Interruptions)

Alors, ils viennent avec toutes sortes de...

(Interruptions)

...manigances. Franchement, je dis, aujourd’hui, que les mauriciens ne sont pas dupes.

(Interruptions)

Peut-être fût un temps où on pouvait faire peur aux gens et c’est à cause de cela qu’ils ont pu convaincre ces personnes de voter contre l’indépendance. Mais ça ne va plus marcher cette fois-ci, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Allow the hon. Minister to make his speech!

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président...

(Interruptions)

....la relation diplomatique...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Duval, please!

Mr Seeruttun: La relation diplomatique entre Maurice et beaucoup de pays amis est en train de se renforcer. Ce ne sont pas des gens qui ne veulent pas voir que le pays se développe ; ils veulent nous empêcher d’aller réaliser le rêve de chaque mauricienne, de chaque mauricien de ce pays.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me now to report on the performance of the agricultural sector and let me go through what we have realised for the past financial year. I will start with the sugarcane sector first, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As you are aware, the sector continues to contribute significantly to the economy in terms of foreign exchange income earned on the sale of refined white sugar and also special sugar to the EU market and also with regard to the production of electricity from bagasse and the production of industrial ethanol and rum from molasses. But still, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the sugarcane industry is trying to find its way forward following the major reforms in the EU sugar regime...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur, please!

Mr Seeruttun: ...that had drastically eroded the preferential treatment previously enjoyed under the defunct Sugar Protocol.

The forthcoming abolition of quotas on the EU internal market as from the end of September this year also represents a major threat for the export of our sugar on that market.

Permettez-moi de référer aussi au discours de l'honorable Madame Selvon hier. Elle parlait justement de ce changement qui aura lieu en septembre de cette année en ce qui concerne l'abolition totale des quotas sur le marché européen et elle parlait de la baisse dans le prix par rapport à cette abolition. Mais je dois faire ressortir que la baisse, depuis l'annonce même de cette abolition, avait déjà pris effet à partir de 2013. C'est pour cela que le gouvernement était venu avec des mesures pour accompagner les planteurs et surtout les petits planteurs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, sugar production has, for two consecutive years, dropped below the psychological level of 400,000 tonnes. However, a slight improvement has been made in 2016 with the sugar production of 389,000 tonnes compared to 369,000 tonnes in 2015 representing a 5.5 % increase.

Likewise, export price of sugar has increased to Rs15,550 per tonne as opposed to Rs13,160 per tonne in 2015. And the final provisional figure regarding revenue generated by the industry is estimated at Rs10.6 billion for crop 2016 compared to a revenue of Rs8.1 billion for crop 2015. However, the area harvested has declined and we are coming with measures to address this problem as well. The contribution of small and medium planters in the sugarcane industry deserves to be highlighted and praised, and Government, in these

difficult times, will ensure that these planters get a fair deal to encourage them to stay in the cane cultivation business.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that special measures have been taken by Government in 2015 and 2016 to ensure that planters obtain an adequate revenue.

These include the payment of compensation under the Sugar Cane Sustainability Fund and the Sugar Insurance Fund. Moreover, planters producing up to 60 tonnes of sugar were exempted from payment of insurance premium.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, except for the compensation from the Sugar Insurance Fund, Government has again made provision for payment of compensation under the Sugar Cane Sustainability Fund and exemption from payment of insurance premium by planters producing up to 60 tonnes of sugar for Crop 2017.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act 2001 was amended in December last year to, *inter alia*, make provision for new revenue streams for the planters and these include -

- (a) the ethanol framework to promote the use of molasses for production of fuel ethanol;
- (b) the renewable sugarcane industry based biomass framework to promote production of energy and biomass, and
- (c) the sugar based agro-industry framework to promote sugar based agro industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the MCIA is holding consultations with the relevant stakeholders for the elaboration of these frameworks and they will be finalised shortly.

Another issue that concerns this Ministry, this Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the abandonment of land under sugarcane cultivation, which is growing at an alarming rate. As announced in the last Budget, an Agricultural Land Management System has been set up under the aegis of the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority to address this problem.

Consultations have been held with the relevant stakeholders and many planters have indicated their willingness to replant their fields subject to Government assisting them to meet the replantation costs.

I am pleased to note that, in this Budget, a provision of Rs50 m. is being accordingly made to address this request.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that the MCIA has already identified more than 1,000 hectares of abandoned land and has succeeded to bring back 200 hectares under cane cultivation this year.

The target for 2017/2018 is 500 hectares and the objective is to put the abandoned land not only under cane cultivation, but also under other crops, including fruits and vegetables and macadamia, for which there is a big potential.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as at date, 10,787 hectares of land belonging to small and medium planters have been regrouped, de-rocked and planted, representing 90% of the targeted extent of 12,000 hectares.

The extent earmarked for 2017/2018 is 400 hectares, and a provision of Rs160 m. has been made in this Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the crop 2016, some 3,500 tonnes of canes of small and medium planters were left in the fields and could not be harvested because of labour shortage.

We, therefore, welcome the measure announced in the Budget Speech regarding importation of foreign labour by SMEs and cooperatives and for the agro-industry sector as well. This measure will definitely be of great help to the planting community, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

In order to facilitate harvest of crops of small and medium planters, the MCIA has embarked on a pilot project for the testing of two harvesters on planters' fields during the 2017 harvest season.

Moreover, the Agricultural Mechanisation Unit of the MCIA will introduce a service of bell loaders to individual and regrouped planters for the mechanical loading of canes during the harvest 2017 across the island at a concessionary rate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the MCIA will also provide additional support to planters, under the Planters Fund, to facilitate access to the fields through road mending and other infrastructural works.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, innovation in sugar cane breeding is necessary in order to meet the new challenges facing the industry. The support of innovative technologies is needed to ensure the sustainability of the industry.

The MSIRI will implement the New Plant Breeding Techniques whose main driver is its potential to hasten the breeding process and its capacity to target specific traits, including reduced flowering, pest and disease resistance, resistance to climate change and improved nutrient intake.

This technology, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will enable a better performance of new varieties to be developed within a shorter period of time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the MSIRI also intends to make use of a drone technology in the agricultural sector to acquire data in a smarter and more effective manner. Furthermore, once the data is acquired, it will be processed and used for a whole host of activities in the agricultural sector, from crop management to monitoring and taking timely actions.

Necessary provisions are being made in this Budget for these two research projects.

Speaking of research, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a series of measures have been announced to build an innovative and globally competitive Mauritius.

The agro-biotechnology sector can contribute significantly to enhance our global competitiveness by shifting from traditional breeding methods to the use of scientific tools and modern techniques such as genetic engineering, molecular markers, molecular diagnostics, vaccines and tissue culture.

A Bio-Technology Institute will be set up under the aegis of my Ministry to further promote research and development in the agro-industry sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to food crop production. As the House is aware, production of food crops, that is, vegetables and fruits has registered a downward trend since 2013 despite several schemes introduced under the Food Security Strategic Plan 2013-2015.

With the implementation of the Non-Sugar Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2020 for the food crop, livestock and forestry sector, and the review of schemes for the food crop sector, the trend in agricultural production has been reversed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Agricultural production has registered an increase of 4.7% from 102,663 tonnes in 2015 to 107,457 in 2016 despite a reduction in cultivable area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a number of schemes have been introduced to assist farmers to shift to sheltered farming and to mechanise their production systems through the purchase of agricultural equipment and machinery to address some of the main problems they are facing.

These problems range from old age, labour shortage, increased cost of production to pest and diseases, natural disasters and calamities and effects of climate change.

However, funds provided under these schemes are limited and not all the planters can benefit therefrom. That is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the grant facility for sheltered farming was increased from Rs250,000 to Rs400,000 to encourage planters to undertake crop

production under protected structures. So far, more than Rs12 m. has been disbursed to 65 beneficiaries.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, with regard to the scheme for the purchase of agricultural and processing equipment, the grant has been increased from Rs100,000 to Rs350,000 and a sum of Rs5.5 m. has been allocated to 133 beneficiaries.

2,487 fruit growers have taken advantage of the benefit under the Fruit Protection Scheme for the purchase of bird nets to protect their litchi plantation from bats. A sum of Rs16.7 m. has been disbursed to that effect.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, most of the 8,000 planters engaged in food crop production, are small holders who are facing difficulties to maintain production at a reasonable level. They also do not have the means to contribute to the Sheltered Farming Scheme and the Purchase of Agricultural Equipment Scheme.

The cost of a greenhouse is relatively high and is out of reach of the small planters. FAREI is currently discussing with a French supplier of greenhouses, who has expressed interest to export his products to Mauritius, and the cost of a greenhouse is comparatively lower than prevailing prices on the local market and the quality is good. If this materialises, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, greenhouses may be made accessible to small growers at affordable price. Moreover, enquiries are also being made for the import of low-cost greenhouses from China.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a Biofarming Promotion Scheme has been introduced last year to promote biofarming activities. Around 100 applications have been received and, so far, 19 Biofarming Development Certificates have been issued by my Ministry.

The dedicated organic zone of 65 *arpents* at Britannia was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on 27 February this year. The beneficiaries have already followed the necessary training and will start cultivation soon. The bio products are expected to be on the market by October this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, an Organic Research Station has been launched at Pamplemousses early this month. This Research Station will provide training in organic production to farmers.

10 new biofertilizers have been recommended for use in organic farming. 20 bioproducts, i.e., 12 biopesticides and 8 biofungicides have also been recommended. 3,000 farmers have been sensitised on sustainable agriculture and biofarming techniques.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is introducing the Skills and Entrepreneurship Development Programme for Educated Youth in the Food Crop Sector. This programme is a unique opportunity for educated youth to venture into commercial agricultural production and become self-employed.

The programme is so designed to foster greater participation in agricultural development and further encourage the youth to engage in the field of innovative agriculture and agro-processing.

More than 50 educated youths have expressed interest to participate in this programme. The programme is expected to start by August next.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ultra Performance Liquid Chromatograph with Double Mass Spectrometer for the analysis of fruits and vegetables for pesticide residue has been purchased and will be delivered shortly.

This equipment will also be used for detection of *ethephon* in pineapple, tomato and other matrices. Installation, commissioning and training are expected to be completed by end of July.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the building plan for the fruit fly rearing facility has been prepared and tenders will be launched by the end of this month. It is expected that 10 million sterile flies will be released weekly by the end of June 2018 which will eliminate fruit flies that are actually causing large losses to fruits and vegetables.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Wholesale Market Project is under way and the consultants are finalising the designs of the building as well as the tender documents. Tender for the construction of the Wholesale Market is expected to be launched by October this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the production of green tea leaves went up by 8.5% from 6,732 tonnes in 2015 to 7,301 tonnes in 2016, despite a reduction in acreage. Production of manufactured tea increased by 4.5% from 1,295 tonnes in 2015 to 1,353 tonnes in 2016.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with a view to further developing the tea sector, 100 *Arpents* of land has been released for tea cultivation. A new tea nursery for tea plantlets production is being set up at La Brasserie and will be operational by the end of this month. Under the Tea Support Scheme, 1,120 planters have received hand-pruning shears as well as fertilizer for their tea plantation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to future prospects, 20 mini shade tunnels will be constructed for propagation of tea plantlets from cuttings. A Tea Unit will be set up at NAPRO to better address problems faced by tea planters. A new tea plantation will be established at Grande Chartreuse.

A Chinese promoter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will engage in tea plantation and tea manufacturing in Mauritius. The company proposes to buy the ex-Dubreuil Tea Factory Building and is awaiting necessary clearances from relevant authorities to embark on this project.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and this has to be underlined, for the first time, the tea-growers are being given due consideration. For the last ten years, they have been left on their own by the previous Government. There used to be a Tea Board, whereby they could, at least, go and address their problems. This was dismantled by the previous Government. And they had nowhere and no one to go to. But since we have been at the head of this country, we have been giving them due consideration.

All the planters and the growers, be it the sugarcane planters, be it the vegetable planters, they were entitled to a 4x4 duty-free vehicle. This budget is going to allow tea growers to also benefit from 4x4 duty-free vehicle for the very first time, thanks to the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

(Interruptions)

But *syndrome ‘narien pas bon’, non ?*

Over and above that exemption, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they will be also entitled to VAT Refund Scheme for tea planting equipment, so that they can increase their tea production.

Let me now turn to the livestock sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As the House is aware, the country was hit by the Foot and Mouth Disease in August last year. Prompt remedial measures were taken and the disease was successfully contained within a short period of time. In fact, no further sign of the disease was detected as from mid-September last year and breeders who lost their animals because of the Foot and Mouth Disease were adequately compensated. A sum of Rs32 m. was paid as compensation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. All animals susceptible to be affected by the disease have been vaccinated and the third and last dose of the vaccine has already been administered. A Sero-surveillance is now being implemented to monitor the presence of the disease.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was also the occurrence of the Salmonella Disease that affected the poultry production of small breeders. Necessary measures were immediately taken to cull all infected birds on affected farms. The Poultry Breeding Centre which produces day-old chicks for sale to small breeders was temporarily closed to review the existing bio security measures. Corrective measures have been taken and the breeding centre will resume its operation this month and sale of day-old chicks to breeders will start in February next year. It is worth pointing out that breeders who incurred losses because of that disease have also been adequately compensated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Heifer Farm Project and the Livestock Zone Project at Melrose over a total extent of 40 acres of land are being implemented and it is expected that the farms will be operational early next year.

Hier l'honorable Barbier faisait référence à cette ferme et se posait la question où on en est avec ce projet. Voilà, M. le président, le projet est déjà bien entamé et, bien sûr, le projet va être réalisé au début de l'année prochaine.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has, over the past 10 years, witnessed several outbreaks of diseases many of which were exotic such as the African swine fever in 2007, the Bovine Tuberculosis in 2011, the contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia in 2013 and the Foot and Mouth Disease and Salmonellosis in 2016. The cumulative impact of these diseases on the national economy and the livelihood of farmers is very significant.

Diseases impact negatively on the profitability of the livestock sector and also affect food supply and food security. My Ministry will enlist consultancy services to make a comprehensive assessment of bio security measures in place at national level and will come up with a bio security plan comprising, *inter alia*, a contingency plan for notifiable animal diseases that would prevent the entry and spread of diseases. The terms of reference of the consultancy services are ready and an international request for proposals will be launched shortly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, despite significant efforts made to boost the livestock sector, production and productivity have not reached the expected level. Major constraints identified are, among others, illegal slaughter, lack of traceability and movement control, absence of a reliable record system on animals and lack of information on the sector for policy-making. A national animal identification system will be set up to accurately register all livestock and to determine their exact location. The identification system will be electronically linked to an

information system to enable access of information by all institutions and stakeholders involved in the livestock sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the sheep population has witnessed an increasing trend from 1510 heads in 2008 to 2845 heads in 2016. The number of farmers has also increased from 147 to 245. However, one of the major constraints limiting the development of this sector is the unavailability of improved genetic stock at affordable price. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a sheep reproduction farm will be set up at Salazie to rear a maximum of 200 animals. Parent stocks of improved genetics will be imported to upgrade the local sheep herd. Necessary provisions to kick-start this project have been made in this Budget.

With regard to honey production and promotion of bee keeping, two bee reserve zones have been set up at Bras d'Eau over 20 hectares of land and Les Salines Black River over five hectares. 215 bee keepers have been trained on new techniques of bee keeping. Honey production in 2016 was 20 tonnes and it is expected to go up now with these new reserve zones.

My Ministry is planning to create two additional zones with the plantation of 10,000 melliferous plants at Plaine Sophie and La Ferme. The salient features of this project include training of bee keepers in management of bee colonies, control of pests and diseases with bio products, organic certification of honey to enable its branding and pollination of crops to increase production of quality fruits and vegetables.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now talk about a very serious and sensitive issue which is the control of stray dogs in the country. The population of stray dogs continues to increase and complaints are received daily regarding the problems that these animals are causing. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the time of the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA), the only method used to control stray dogs was the catch and euthanasia method. This practice has continued with the creation of the MSAW. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since some two years now, an aggressive campaign is being undertaken against MSAW, especially with regard to the catch and euthanasia practice of eliminating stray dogs. This campaign has attained an international dimension and MSAW has had to restrain its activities to dog catching thus aggravating the situation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, MSAW, by virtue of its very appellation, is called upon to promote animal welfare and the catch and euthanasia practice does not fit with this mandate. The role and function of MSAW will thus be revisited and greater emphasis will henceforth

be placed on sterilization rather than euthanising dogs. It is proposed to set up dog shelters in different parts of the country to accommodate stray dogs after their sterilisation. It is expected that NGOs defending animal causes will assist in this project. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, an animal control unit will be established to take care of stray animals like dogs, cats and monkeys that represent dangerous risks to the society, especially if they carry contagious diseases.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would now like to highlight the progress that my Ministry has made for the preservation of our existing forests and our biodiversity.

As the House is aware, due to climate change and development pressures mainly, we are facing major challenges to maintain our existing forest cover which has kept on decreasing over the years.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, being conscious of the urgent need to reverse the trend, my Ministry has embarked, since last year, on a very ambitious and strategic programme to plant 500,000 trees over the next five years.

This programme aims at enhancing our forest cover and, more specifically, at increasing our native forest from 2% to 12%. The programme has gathered momentum and so far more than 100,000 plants have been planted in many forest areas and also non forest areas.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our public gardens, parks and our islets nature reserves will be given a special uplifting to promote nature-based activities for the benefit and enjoyment of both the population and tourists visitors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are several public gardens in Mauritius, the main ones being the Pamplemousses Botanical Garden, the Botanical Garden of Curepipe, the Balfour Garden in Beau Bassin, the Telfair Garden in Souillac, the Robert Edward Hart Garden at Les Salines, les Jardins de la Compagnie and the Vallée d'Osterlog Endemic Garden.

There are also two national parks, the Black River Gorges National Park and the Bras d'Eau National Park and three nature walks at Mon Vert, Sophie and Powder Mills. Several islets nature reserves have potential for the development of eco-tourism activities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these public gardens and parks are managed by different institutions, but in a rather uncoordinated manner, I should say. The general state of some of the public gardens leaves much to be desired.

It is proposed to set up a coordinating committee under the aegis of my Ministry comprising all concerned stakeholders to work out an integrated management plan for all public gardens and parks with a view to promoting them as major tourist attractions.

Furthermore, the Master Plan for the rehabilitation of the Pamplemousses Botanical Garden has been finalised and will soon be implemented to give back to the garden its real historical, cultural and botanical identity. Le *Chateau Mon Plaisir*, which was under renovation, will reopen in the coming months and it will be used in the most optimal manner which befits such a historical symbol and heritage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are also giving a particular attention to the embellishment of our motorways to make them more attractive and aesthetic with the appropriate plants. My Ministry will enlist the services of a landscape consultant to work on the landscape design for our motorways, including the roundabouts, central verges and the road sides. Provision has also been made in this Budget for the upkeep of the green areas along the motorway.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, our endemic fauna and flora are unique in the world for which our country is recognised as a biodiversity hotspot. We have a duty to protect our endemic fauna and flora and their living habitats so as to halt further biodiversity loss.

My Ministry recently launched two major policy strategies, namely, the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan 2017-2025 and the Protected Area Network Expansion Strategy 2017-2026. These two strategies will be our roadmap for the next 10 years and I am fully confident that in the long term we will ensure the survival of a lot more of our endemic species than we have today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have given an overview of the activities undertaken in the agricultural sector at the National Level and at the level of my Ministry. There are still many challenges that need to be addressed.

To conclude, I would just say a word on my constituency. I must thank the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance with regard to one project, he, himself, when he was Deputy Prime Minister in 2005, he initiated that project. And I am talking about creating a waterfront at the *village* of *Deux Frères*. Unfortunately, with the change of Government, because it was a project of hon. Pravind Jugnauth, the previous Government cancelled that project to the detriment of the people of *Deux Frères* and the surrounding villages, *par pure mesquinerie*, *M. le président*. I am glad today that the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is providing funds so that this project can be realised.

(Interruptions)

12 years later, as rightly pointed out by hon. Rutnah! This is how the previous Government was governing this country. Because for the remote village, somewhere lost in the area of, what we call, *la côte*, they thought it not fit to have this kind of infrastructure. But, again, we have our Prime Minister who is someone, like I said, who would not only look for big towns and big villages to provide them with infrastructure, he is also providing, all over the island, infrastructure that is going to improve the quality of life of each and every Mauritian.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, like I have said, this budget, I have no doubt will give a boost to this country and is paving the way for a new Mauritius. We can only be thankful to the Prime Minister for having put so much funds in this budget so that we can realise the aspirations of all Mauritians.

With these words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you for your attention and I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his excellent budget. Thank you!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance!

(7.22 p.m.)

Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity today to give my views on the Budget that the hon. Prime Minister brought to this House on Thursday 08 June.

This is the third Budget that I am commenting in this House and I do remember last year, the then Minister of Finance, brought a budget to the House and many people said it was quite an interesting budget. I do remember the then Prime Minister was saying with authority: “we need to fully implement the Budget.” I do remember again, the then Finance Minister said: ‘yes, we are going to set up committees for the full implementation of all the measures that were announced last year.’

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the whole population has been waiting in vain for a fully implemented budget that was supposed to change the life of all Mauritians and bring Mauritius to the new era of development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Parliament has been a battlefield for some time now. The Government has focused itself on fighting actions of the previous Government and they have embarked on numerous frauds, allegations and covered issues.

Le précédent budget était un budget qui a été annoncé comme un budget d'effet d'annonce. Ce budget de 2017/2018 a les mêmes critères d'un budget d'effet d'annonce. C'est pourquoi j'ai des craintes aujourd'hui que ce gouvernement n'arrive pas à tenir les promesses comme ils ont fait l'année dernière, avoir un budget d'effet d'annonce et puis ne pas pouvoir tenir les promesses. Quand on regarde la liste des mesures qui ont été implémentées, M. le président, très peu de mesures ont été implémentées *so far*.

Now, I ask myself: 'how does this Government intend to raise the challenge of its ambitions?' Maybe, we should ask ourselves: 'what are their ambitions? Is it the interest of Mauritius or their own personal interest?' Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, out of 10 persons, you will meet on the road, nine persons have the feeling that if the Government of India has not provided the loan facility to Mauritius, there would have been no budget this year. This is shocking, Mr Deputy Speaker! Really shocking! The whole population of Mauritius has the feeling that the country is not generating enough revenue to cater for our own needs and we have the feeling that the loan will pass on the next generation. Many thanks to the Government of India for caring about Mauritius! But is it the priority of Mauritius today to embark on a Metro Express Project, which is taking Rs20 billion out of the funds received from India, when many statistics show that the country is facing hard time and investment is very low?

I am going to reply to Minister Seeruttun who was trying to give us lesson. He was giving us very wide figures. Let me remind him that GDP in 2011 was 3.9%; 2012: 3.6%; 2014: 3.6%, but in 2015, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it dropped to 3% and 3.5% in 2016. The World Bank is saying now it is going to be 3.4% and I trust the World Bank. The investment ratio, again, in 2012 was 17.2%. And you know what is the figure in 2016? 12.8%! There is a drop.

FDI in 2012 was Rs20 billion. In 2015, it was Rs10 billion. In 2016, it was Rs13 m. You can compare, when the PMSD was in the Government in 2012, it was Rs20 billion. We were well-off. Transparency International, we were 45th and now we are on the 50th position. Heritage Foundation Economic Freedom Index, we were 12th, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, in 2011 onwards. You know what is the ranking of Mauritius now? We are 21st in the rank. So, I fear that Minister Seeruttun has got the figure wrong. He gives us an indication for one year. He has to compare the figures of 2011 onwards. He was here standing and in his own speech he was dreaming. He was saying a lot of cases where the PMSD was supposedly involved. Let me remind him, why doesn't he ...

(Interruptions)

It took us one minute, my friend and I, to draw a small list. It is only a few of them. I am going to refresh his mind. Why does he talk about the kitchen cabinet? Why does he not talk about Dahodari who is a *zenfant la caze* or Mr Hans Ballah, *enn lott zefant la caze*? Why does he not talk about the biscuit saga? Why does he not talk about the Senior Adviser who has a serious fraud and corruption against him and is facing trial? The Sheik and his famous loan of Rs1 m.! The Euro-Loan, alias Goldfinger, why does no one talk about it? Why does no one talk about Mr Alvaro Sobrinho, the blue-eyed boy looking in your eyes and you are the right guys? He is trying to give us lesson. Son of Minister beating people! The adviser spitting on people! And our very senior Minister Mentor urinating on people! Is this Government trying to give us lesson in Mauritius? Is this the way they want us, people of Mauritius, to believe that they are a caring Government? There is a very long list and I can go on.

There are so many sagas: the Barbara Saga, the Choomka Saga, the Trilochan Saga, the Medpoint Saga, all of them we did it in one minute. And if you will give us some more time, I think, we are going to have a very, very long list. I am going to leave it for now because this is going to lose the time of the House as most people of Mauritius know about all these. This is on the Press every day. You just need to look at the face of some of the people sitting here and you can imagine what harm all these are doing to the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition gave some figures yesterday about job creation. We heard the alarming figures compared to what has been announced by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development and the then Prime Minister in his Vision 2030. How will there be higher growth for more and better jobs? I fail to understand, as I can see, in the country we have to pay back USD 22 billion with an annual interest rate of 1.8%. We can give a calculator to my good friend, hon. Rutnah, maybe he can give us the right figure some time.

M. le président, j'ai écouté attentivement à l'intervention de mon collègue, l'honorable Lepoigneur, hier, malgré que je n'étais pas dans la Chambre. Il a dressé une liste des promesses que le gouvernement a faites alors qu'il était membre de ce même gouvernement. Il est déçu, outré et il a un sentiment de dégoût.

Laissez-moi faire une requête à l'honorable Aliphon qui se sentait pousser des ailes hier en affirmant dans cette Chambre que le projet de raffinerie à Albion va bientôt voir le

jour. Ce même membre, est-il au courant qu'un tel projet va mettre en péril la santé des habitants d'Albion, de Pointe aux Sables et aux alentours? Est-ce que ce même membre sait que la valeur des terrains est dévaluée dans les alentours d'Albion et de Pointe aux Sables?

(Interruptions)

Pareil!

(Interruptions)

Est-ce que l'honorable membre sait que les plages d'Albion vont être désertées? Moi, j'aurai eu honte à sa place, honnêtement. Et ce même membre est un habitant d'Albion, s'il vous plaît ! Il est en train de mettre en péril l'avenir des habitants d'Albion et de Pointe aux Sables et il vient se vanter devant la télé, faire son show et dire que le projet de raffinerie d'Albion va bientôt voir le jour. Excusez-moi, on ne peut pas couillonner les mauriciens à ce point-là !

(Interruptions)

Laissez-moi lui dire aussi - il parle de mon Leader - le comité qui gérait le dossier de la raffinerie d'Albion, c'était Xavier-Luc Duval qui était à la tête de ce comité-là. Et l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, leader de l'opposition actuel, a rejeté le projet de la raffinerie à Albion. Et moi, en tant que député responsable, j'ai parlé avec l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval. Je me suis adressé à l'honorable Collendavelloo. J'en ai même parlé au Premier ministre actuel de mes craintes concernant ce projet parce que c'est un projet qui, pour moi, va nuire à la santé de la population. Aujourd'hui, c'est Albion. Demain, cela peut être n'importe où vous habitez. Cela peut être n'importe où à l'île Maurice. On ne peut pas implémenter des projets qui vont nuire à la santé des gens. Je souhaiterais que l'honorable Aliphon aille aux réunions quand les ONGs l'invitent pour qu'il puisse entendre et écouter les doléances et ne pas fuir devant la réalité.

J'aurais pu continuer encore à dresser la liste des projets qui ont été promis et pas réalisés, mais cela va être une longue liste. Néanmoins, j'ai envie de parler sur quelques points de ma circonscription.

La gare de Pointe-aux-Sables, le ministre Bodha, en réponse à ma question parlementaire - c'était très clair et net - avait vu le besoin d'avoir une gare à Pointe-aux-Sables. Et ça c'était en 2015. Aujourd'hui, on est en 2017 ; toujours pas ! Regardez ce qu'il avait dit, *I quote* –

“The creation of a new route between Pointe-aux-Sables and Rose Hill is justified. However, NTA is looking into all implications, including related infrastructure and amenities before taking a decision to approve the application for the new bus route.”

Two years later, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nothing has been done! In 2015, hon. Bodha stated: “The construction of a new bus route terminal is a priority for my Ministry.” He further replied that he would look into the matter to enlarge a narrow road to prevent accidents. However, what has changed now? Has his priority changed? Is he only looking at the Metro Express? He said it was a priority for him. Two years later, still not done! And now, suddenly, the Minister of Finance comes and puts it in his Budget again! Do you think I am going to believe again and again, after two years?

Then, I was sitting there, next to hon. Rutnah. They told me, “Yes, we are going to do it soon for you.” Now I am sitting on the other side!

(Interruptions)

Not the hon. Member! Relax brother! Now I am sitting on the other side and I am going to believe this, namely that the new traffic centre is coming soon. Soon is when? I do not know.

Semblable pour la construction d'un dispensaire à Pointe-aux-Sables. L'honorable ministre Husnoo avait mentionné que le projet allait partir de l'avant. On attend toujours le projet à être implanté. Même le ministre de la circonscription ne sait plus où mettre sa tête quand il vient dans la circonscription, parce que ce projet n'a toujours pas abouti et c'est un flop total. Les habitants sont déçus.

I can keep on giving examples again and again, projects not implemented in Grande Rivière, in Vallijee, in Cassis, in Cité Richelieu, in Pailles, but I think I am going to leave it for now.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member is right. This is a good point. I am happy to see some projects that myself, hon. Abbas Mamode who was PPS and the Lord Mayor of Port Louis started, and now some people are the *parrain* of the projects; *pe déclare piti pas pou zot*.

M. le président, je suis un député déçu ; déçu de voir que le gouvernement n'entend pas l'appel du peuple ; déçu que le gouvernement ignore les cris de détresse des Mauriciens sur leur mode de vie et les conditions de vie ; déçu de voir que ce gouvernement traite les mauriciens qui ont fait confiance à cette alliance dite l'Alliance *Lepep*, qui est aujourd'hui

l'alliance MSM-ML. Laissez-moi soutenir M. Salim Muthy et tout le monde qui souffre de la catastrophe de la fermeture de la BAI. Je comprends leur inquiétude aujourd'hui d'avoir eu affaire à *liar liar*. Fausses promesses ; promesses non-tenues encore une fois ; *motto* du gouvernement Jugnauth, je pense. Promesses non-tenues.

Je préfère ne pas citer le ML. Ça n'existe même pas ! En mars 2015, M. le président, j'ai moi-même acheté une voiture chez Iframac. Et pendant que le Premier ministre et ses amis retiraient l'argent du groupe BAI, moi j'ai dû annuler ma voiture, attendre six mois pour avoir une autre voiture. Ça démontre comment la cuisine fonctionnait ; sans notre collaboration, et juste venir nous informer en tant que députés que la cuisine a pris la décision de fermer la BAI. On n'était pas au courant ! On nous a informés après que la balle soit partie ! Il faut être clair dessus.

Laissez-moi prendre encore une petite minute de mon temps pour parler des squatters que l'honorable Soodhun a délogés de certains endroits pour venir mettre à Pointe-aux-Sables. Comment on peut, en 2017, déloger des personnes et les livrer à eux-mêmes ? À la cité Blanche, M. le président, ces personnes vivent dans des conditions inhumaines, privées d'eau, privées d'électricité, laissées à elles-mêmes. Ces gens sont en train de vivre et dormir sur le sol avec un toit qui risque de s'effondrer sur leur tête, bâti avec des feuilles de tôle récupérées des usines. J'ai même soulevé la question lors des travaux parlementaires ici, et, malheureusement, jamais personne n'a rien fait pour ces gens. Vous savez quelle action le ministère de l'Intégration sociale a fait jusqu'à présent ? Il a envoyé un camion pour ramasser les ordures une fois ; une seule fois !

(Interruptions)

L'honorable membre peut venir voir ! Je l'invite !

(Interruptions)

Vous savez, c'est triste de voir des enfants partir à l'école avec des vêtements même pas repassés. Savez-vous comment les gens repassent les vêtements ? Ils les mettent sous l'oreiller pour les réchauffer pour que les enfants puissent aller à l'école. Allez voir ! Je vous invite tous à venir voir. L'honorable Soodhun a délogé ces gens. Venez voir dans quelles conditions ils sont en train de vivre. Venez entendre leurs cris de douleur quand ils disent qu'ils ne veulent plus vivre dans le noir. Le soir, c'est au chevet d'une bougie que les enfants peinent à faire leurs devoirs. Et croyez-moi, M. le président, ces enfants ont besoin d'encadrement. Ces familles ont besoin de considération.

Certes, le ministre de l'Intégration sociale, à maintes fois, promis qu'un montant de R 50 millions allait être déboursé par son ministère pour améliorer les conditions de vie. Quand? Je n'ai rien vu dans le budget. Je n'ai rien entendu dans le budget. Encore une promesse ? Vous savez, heureusement qu'il y a des gens qui ont un cœur. Il y a des ONG qui aident ces gens.

Je souhaiterais, à travers mon discours, remercier ces ONG. Il y a plusieurs qui aident, parce qu'on ne peut pas laisser les gens vivre dans des conditions inhumaines. J'aurais bien aimé que, pendant son discours, le ministre de l'Intégration Sociale vienne me dire quelle action concrète il va prendre pour remédier à la situation, parce que l'erreur vient du ministère des Terres et du Logement qui a délogé ces gens sans même prendre en compte qu'il n'y avait pas d'infrastructures nécessaires pour les accommoder. Il n'y a pas de route, M. le président. Comment ces gens peuvent rentrer chez eux ? Marcher dans des buissons le soir, c'est un danger pas croyable. On aimerait bien que ce ministre grassement payé par les contribuables se mette un peu au travail et vienne vraiment avec des actions concrètes pour essayer de soulager la misère dans la circonscription et dans toute l'île Maurice. Il y a beaucoup de poches de pauvreté.

Récemment, on a vu une vidéo sur Internet qui montre qu'actuellement, en 2017, à l'île Maurice, il y a toujours des gens qui sont carrément classifiés comme des gens pauvres, qui sont livrés à eux-mêmes. Le ministère de l'Intégration sociale a été justement créé pour venir aider ces gens-là. Alors, j'aimerais bien que ce ministère soit redynamisé, que des actions concrètes soient prises et qu'on puisse soulager ces gens. Je vais laisser aux soins de mes autres collègues de commenter dessus. Je n'ai pas trop envie de parler du ministère de l'Intégration sociale.

I would like to raise another point on item 195 mentioned in the 2016/2017 Budget, that is, the round-the-clock supply of water. M. le président, je suis désolé de constater que l'eau ne coule toujours pas dans le robinet dans certains endroits. Je suis désolé de dire que pour le *round-the-clock*, l'horloge ne fonctionne pas. Combien de temps devrons-nous encore attendre pour que la population puisse enfin avoir de l'eau potable dans leurs maisons ? Pas une heure le matin et une heure le soir ! Une des priorités de ce gouvernement soi-disant. Pour l'instant, on n'entend parler que du Métro Express alors que nous, on a besoin de l'eau express de nos robinets ; on ne peut plus attendre. Les gens souffrent. L'eau c'est la vie, et beaucoup de foyers peinent à vivre convenablement faute de fourniture d'eau adéquate.

M. le président, nous sommes entourés de 2.5 kilomètres carrés de mer.

Mr Rutnah: 2.5 km?

Mr Armance: Carrés.

(*Interruptions*)

Rutnah ki ine dire mwa!

(*Interruptions*)

C'est encore une fois une occasion ratée pour le gouvernement de promouvoir convenablement l'utilisation de nos ressources marines. Malgré les mesures annoncées dans le budget pour l'*Ocean Economy*, je note que les pêcheurs sont complètement oubliés aux dépens des grosses compagnies qui évoluent dans les secteurs.

(*Interruptions*)

Après ou réponn mwa !

Ce n'est pas en rénovant les maisons des pêcheurs, en donnant des *grants* pour acheter des *semi-industrial vessels* ou les *grants* pour acheter des véhicules frigorifiés que la vie de certains pêcheurs vont changer dans ma circonscription où ailleurs. Il faut être réaliste. L'honorable ministre des Finances aurait dû exploiter concrètement le secteur et valoriser le travail de nos pêcheurs, pas des marins qui transitent par milliers dans nos ports tous les mois. De nos jours, les bateaux de pêche, M. le président, même ceux qui bénéficient des avantages fournis par ce budget, ils s'alimentent en ressources humaines. Vous savez où ? À Madagascar ou en Asie ! Combien de mauriciens marins-pêcheurs vous avez qui transitent sur ces bateaux-là ? Et nos pêcheurs sont livrés à eux-mêmes en attendant des jours meilleurs. Il est grand temps je pense que nos pêcheurs aient des alternatives de métier. Je l'ai déjà dit lors d'un interview à la radio qu'il faut voir plus loin, nous assurer que la pêche à Maurice ne meurt pas pour qu'on puisse toujours avoir un autre statut d'île ayant des ressources marines et mettre fin aux pêches illégales, immorales que subissent les pêcheurs.

Let me now talk about the environment! Budget 2016-2017, made provision for a series of measures regarding environment while Budget 2017-2018 makes no mention at all of how Mauritius is going to adopt to COP 21 or 22 and to climate change.

In 2015 and 2016, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there have been two measures pertaining to environment. On 29 September, the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA), it

has been set up since end 2015 and beginning of 2016. The question I ask myself now is: ‘what are the productive outcomes so far, nearly 18 months after existence?’ Is this in line with the energy strategy 2011-2025? Are we still on target to achieve 35% of renewable energy by 2025?

On 12 April, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act was passed in this august Assembly. However, taking into consideration the critical nature of work, role and responsibility of this centre, no provision has been made in the present Budget with respect to enhancing its operational capabilities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is mentioned and I want to quote from what the then Minister of Environment, hon. Alain Wong Yen Cheong stated in his speech on the Budget -

“Let us not forget that climate change is already happening - climate change is already happening - and I would like to congratulate hon. Pravind Jugnauth for the measures announced in the Budget and which are in line with the protection of the environment.”

Now, what has happened in 2017? Hon. Pravind Jugnauth has forgotten that climate change is happening. What are the measures which he has put forward in the Budget as preventive or adaptive measures to face the climate changes? I fail to understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. How a critical issue like environment has been left aside in this Budget? He mentioned in paragraph 2017 – “*Moris nou zoli péi*” and renovation of some beaches. Repetitive measures announced already under the Beach Management Plan! Can we say now that the Beach Authority is functioning properly? Do you know that we have 122 beaches listed in Mauritius, and out of the 122, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development is proudly announcing he will upgrade infrastructure on 11 beaches. 11, less than 10%!

(Interruptions)

You have to update your website!

For many years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our beaches have suffered from lack of consideration. For example, in the coastal region of Pointe aux Sables, there is only one public beach where people can swim and yet the public beaches at La Pointe suffer from erosion and no work has been done so far despite the numerous promises of, again, the Minister of the Constituency, hon. Alain Wong Yen Cheong. We can observe several impacts of climate change in Mauritius and they are listed on the website of the Ministry. Let me just point out four of them -

- rise in sea level by 2.1 mm every year;
- decrease in trend of annual rainfall;
- raise in temperature by 0.74%, and
- flash flood.

Globally, the adverse effects of climate change impact directly on people's health, and worst, it will also affect our future generation if not taken into consideration. Mauritius has been among the 130 countries to ratify the Paris agreement, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have reaffirmed our commitment to addressing the issues pertaining to climate changes. This budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, makes no provision in addressing the above. I am very sorry and very sad to say that. It seems that the Government does not care about people's health in Mauritius, showing a major lack of seriousness of the Government's approach to the ratification of Paris agreement. And this is very serious. Mauritius signed this agreement and has been doing nothing. We are missing the opportunity of this budget to put forward measures that will bring us to catch up of what we have been doing in the past on climate changes.

I will go further down, in my PQ No. B/398, where the Ministry informed us that the draft regarding the Climate Change Bill has been prepared and is still under consideration. I can conclude that the Government has failed in his approach again. In PQ No. B/396 regarding the revival of the National Environment Commission, this was listed in the Presidential Address and also in paragraph 114 in Budget 2015-2016. Two years have gone now since the Government announced this measure, but yet we have been informed by the Ministry of Environment that they have already started consultation with different stakeholders to submit proposals, and, again, we have been told it will come soon. Again, PQ No. 399 where I have asked about the Beach Authority Act. The answer was: "it is on-going with the Attorney General's Office and a Draft Amendment Bill will be available soon." Soon, when? This Beach Authority Act dated year 2002, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and we seriously need to reconsider our position in regard to our beaches and the way they are managed and maintained. Let me remind the House that the main objective of the Bill is to ensure proper control and management of public beaches in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Before concluding, I would like to raise an issue again concerning the Ministry of Environment. Somewhere in La Tour Koenig, there is a factory, *une fonderie* where the owner has applied for a PER licence and there were guidelines that he has to adhere to have his licence, The owner has respected all the guidelines and he got his licence, but,

unfortunately, when he started his operation after six months, there is a very thick smoke emerging from the chimney of this factory. 2 kms away people are complaining that their health is now at stake. This factory is in the region where you have about 10,000 workers working every day and it is found at 50 m from a dormitory where Indian labourers sleep. Now, I ask myself a very serious question: 'Is there a *capitaine* on this ship at the Ministry of Environment after hon. Dayal?' We have a part-time Minister after hon. Dayal. We have now another part-time Minister.

(Interruptions)

The Press conference Minister! I know he is busy doing Press conference now! And issues like that, the Police of Environment has been informed. They came for visit, but there is no action. If the guidelines are wrong, if they have been doing some mistakes somewhere when doing the permit, they have to work into it now.

I think the hon. Prime Minister should consider that we need a full-time Minister in this Ministry. We need to address climate change. We need to look at the Beach Authority. We need to look at all aspects of the environment now. We cannot again wait for next Budget and then he will come with some more promise and then he will tell me soon.

I will conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, with the suggestion to the Government. Instead of investing massively in projects like the Metro Express, we should start encouraging our people by giving them initiatives to reduce, re-use and recycle our waste with the firm intention of making our island a free waste island on a long-term obviously. There should always be a start and this should have been done now with this Government if the Government was very caring about the environment and people's health.

I thank you and I thank all the attention of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Hurreeram!

(7.54 p.m.)

Mr M. Hurreeram (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let me, from the very outset, extend my heartfelt congratulations to the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the outstanding Budget presented Thursday last.

For the second consecutive year, hon. Pravind Jugnauth showed that he is a man of vision, having his country at heart. The negative income tax is yet another example of the

bold, courageous and meaningful step taken by the hon. Prime Minister in his sincere and resolute endeavour to eradicate absolute poverty and to pave the way for *une société juste et équitable, une société où personne ne sera laissé-pour-compte*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before going any further, I would like, with your permission, to comment on the statement made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition yesterday.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that hon. Xavier-Luc Duval was the Minister of Finance and Economic Development between 2011 and 2014. It is also a fact that hon. Duval was a full-time Minister of Finance and Economic Development, just as he was a full-time Minister of Social Integration between 2010 and 2011. Let us ask ourselves a key question: what has he done for the poor as a full-time Minister? The only thing that we can remember is that hon. Duval took a plane in the name of the poor of this country and went to Brazil. This is the way he deals with the poor! *Politique de proximité envers les plus vulnérables de la société, une balade à Rio*. We all know how the people on the sandy beaches of Rio are dressed with very little clothes on them. Is this how you work for the poor and combat poverty?

M. le président, sous le règne de l'ancien régime, les plus vulnérables de notre société étaient livrés à leur propre compte. Et il a fallu que le présent gouvernement vienne au pouvoir pour rétablir la balance à travers l'augmentation sans précédent et considérable de la pension pour nos personnes âgées, où 240,000 de nos aînés avaient bénéficié de cette mesure ; les personnes en situation d'handicap, les employés les plus vulnérables, à travers une augmentation salariale de R 600, en janvier 2015; le SRM pour éliminer la pauvreté absolue en 2016 ; aujourd'hui à travers le *Negative Income Tax*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who proudly stated yesterday, the real GDP growth was 3.7% in 2014 when he was Minister of Finance and Economic Development. What hon. Duval deliberately did not mention, we can understand why, is the following: our growth rate was 4.1% in 2011 and the Minister of Finance and Economic Development at that time was hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. Today, after the mess of hon. Duval, as full-time Minister of Finance in the previous Government, we are moving away from the declining 3.5% growth and getting closer to the 4.1% again under the leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

Let me now come to the Budget 2017-2018, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Sharp, efficient and green, this is how I will qualify this Budget. There is more that meet the eye in this

Budget. The value is in the details and anyone connecting the dots, will see that it is part of a well-crafted plan, based on a five-year vision that this Government had when he took office. We are keeping our promises. Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

The Budget is truly geared towards nation-building. Each year, since December 2014, with each Budget, with each measure, with each project, this Government had assembled the building blocks towards achieving a better Mauritius, a worthy budget, as we enter our 50th year of Independence. Long gone of the Labour and PMSD days where Budgets were patched together, *rafistolés*, in the last week, without any consideration from the stakeholders, not even his own Ministers!

By contrast, in the building up of this Budget, the aspiration of the people, NGOs and the business world were heard, and, more importantly, taken into consideration. The amount of work that has gone in the consultation phase itself is worthy of appreciation and praise.

I remember meeting an artist the next day of the Budget and he mentioned: “*Premyer fois enn Premier ministre ine ecoute nou comme sa et finn mett ce ki bizin dan budget. Mersi.*”

This feedback does not only show that this Government has a vision, it also has an ear for feedback from its *Lepep* and a heart to understand the concerns and difficulties. We are already hearing the petty political critics without substance and sensed by the disbanded Opposition for this Budget and there will be more, I am sure, whereas all stakeholders viewed this Budget as one of *relance économique*. Sustainable development and the feel good factor is being maintained. It is, once again, sad to note that the Opposition is having no concrete argument, but frivolous statements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the people of this country know better. They feel better. They are now experiencing a better quality of life. We are bringing the infrastructural development to the doorsteps of our citizens. We work for everyone, *nou pa guett figir, nou travay pou tout dimounn*. Like this Village President of Mare d’Albert, in the presence of my hon. friend Ramful, had to express his grievances in public against the ex-PPS.

With this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to name a few projects planned in my Constituency which will serve for all the inhabitants –

- upgrade and equip *Maison des Pêcheurs* to provide fishermen cooperatives with facilities to transform their catch into value-added fish product;

- construction of market fair costing Rs15 m. in Mahebourg;
- SMEs and co-operative societies will be given dedicated space in the fair;
- construction of incinerator at Tombeau, Mahebourg;
- rehabilitation of Grand Port Memorial to promote local historical values;
- drains at Camp Carol and Trois Boutiques;
- uploading of Blue Bay beach, public beach for greater cleanliness and safety, and
- rehabilitation of Joli Bois Bridge at Mare Tabac.

The constituency number 12, Mahebourg, has been mentioned so much in the budget and like my good friend, hon. Yogida Sawmynaden, is reminding us the renovation of Harry Latour Stadium, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister on behalf of my constituents for these projects and so much consideration for the south, without forgetting the new modern hospital in Rivière Noire. My good friend, hon. Jhuboo, will appreciate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the ingredients for success are simple. It is hard work, intelligence, honesty and determination. Our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has shown, time and again, that he has those qualities and that he does not shy from his responsibilities. Be it by taking audacious decisions such as Metro Express or even hard decisions, but necessary ones.

Over the years, Mauritius has lost sight of one of its key factors that made its reputation and resilience - exports. This Government believes that this proven principle for Mauritius is going to be, once again, the driving force of the region. Of course, this has been *remis au goût du jour*.

This budget continues in its effort to promote manufacturing and export sector. With the uncertainty of our traditional markets, the survival of our businesses is at stake. The Brexit is a prime example. Therefore, we need new horizons. The tie-ups and economic zone agreement with Senegal and other countries are farsighted measures to allow our entrepreneurs to be closer to their markets and be more competitive while still contributing to the Mauritian economy.

The Economic Development Board set up as a one-stop shop can only enhance investment and ease up further the ability to do business in Mauritius. We know that the markets for traditional products are now very competitive. This is why this budget has encouraged emerging sectors, the one where value is added through transformation and re-

exportation. With the right framework outlined in this budget, innovative, biotech and pharmaceuticals will be the driving force behind this knowledge-based export centred revolution.

The SMEs is one of the pillars of our economy. Thanks to measures taken in the two years, it is, once again, fast growing. This sector employs around 280,000 people in some 108 establishments and represents around 40% of our GDP. This is why it is our duty to encourage entrepreneurship skills among the population, particularly the youth. Again, this year, more administrative hurdles are being removed and processes simplified to create a seamless business environment, without compromising on monitoring and environment impacts. The creation of new agencies such as the Economic Development Board, through the merger of BOI, Enterprise Mauritius, FSPA and Mauritius Africa Fund, is a prime example of the effort of this Government to get better results through efficiency, a word that those opposing this budget find difficult to comprehend.

Handicraft and co-operative are part and parcel of our traditional industry. They have given a well-deserved boost with this budget with various measures, including dedicated space in the new four market fairs in villages like Goodlands, Bel Air, Chemin Grenier, and the region I represent, Mahebourg.

Each tourist spending Rs1000 on handicraft will receive a voucher of Rs200 as simple as it is efficient. This will mean that the tourist will actually spend a minimum of Rs1,200 which goes back directly to our entrepreneur. Without doubt, the proposed amendment to force this play, the country of origin will favour our makers against competition from imports.

Moreover, by implementing an SME e-platform for products and contributions for adhesion of Rs5,000 to the *Made in Moris* brand, most importantly, by the export financing, includes loan at concessionary rates and the setting up of the Master Plan for SME at the cost of Rs200 m. will definitely give more impetus to the vital sector. *Lepep* has this Government at heart and we have kept *lepep* at our heart as well. *Nu ki ena leker!*

The positive impact of the last two budgets is undeniable. More than 8,000 families are benefiting from the Absolute Poverty Eradication Programme, as our Prime Minister rightly said, this figure is too high and we will ensure that these families get an equal chance to do better and have a brighter future.

The Negative Income Tax, as I mentioned earlier, is yet another gutsy measure in that direction. It is expected that at least 150,000 people will benefit from this. It will make a difference to those earning less than Rs10,000, without burdening the small businesses that employ these people; make no mistake, by increasing the spending power of 150,000 salary earners. This money will be spent and will boost consumption which will mostly benefit our SMEs which, in turn, will benefit the economy of the country and, as I said earlier, connect the dots, and you will see.

One of our key promises, that is, to provide water 24/7 to the population is not something that is achieved overnight. It requires diligent planning and careful investment. We will do it. This budget highlights this as a priority with so many initiatives being started, including replacement of 264 km of water pipes at a cost of Rs2.3 billion. This will not only help save water that we lose due to leakage, but also allow clean water to reach one and all. The consideration given to the construction of a dam at Rivière des Anguilles is greatly anticipated in the south. It will provide the much awaited relief to the daily water concerns that my constituents have been facing.

The renovation of the old Airport terminal and the construction of a new terminal will provide a better welcoming experience to tourists visiting the island as well as create jobs for the people living in the area. As the representative of this constituency, I applaud this initiative, not only as a national project but also as one that will reinvigorate the region.

M. le président, c'est aussi un budget vert. This budget is ecological in every aspect, for example, the use of solar energy to power the additional boreholes. The use of renewable energy is essential for us to become a greener island. This budget achieves that by prioritising investment in clean and renewable energy.

Initiatives such as the setting up of 2 megawatt solar photovoltaic farm as soon as 2018, is a matter of pride. The farsighted solar home project which comprises of the installation of 10,000 rooftop solar panels over the next five years for low-income households and another 3,000 solar panels to be installed on forthcoming low-cost houses is also laudable.

In addition to that, the incentive to allow businesses to deduct investment in solar energy from the Income Tax, can only help the cause and encourage businesses to invest in cleaner energy and reduce their dependence on CEB for electricity production.

A more efficient management of wastewater will also be essential to reduce pollution. This budget has earmarked significant investment in that regard. The distribution of 10,000 compost bins to transform organic home waste will help sensitising the Mauritian families to contribute to a greener country through recycling. We must take the example of our ex-Leader of the Opposition who is an expert in recycling as he always recycles the '*élections derrière la porte*' phrase each time this Government brings forth ground-breaking incentives. *Enfin, la caravane passe!*

However, we cannot skip the effort made to reconcile environmental sustainability and our agricultural needs. We also see that this Budget has many incentives to promote sustainable agriculture like helping those in biofarming get international bio label for their products. This means more export.

The modernisation of our agriculture is an important aspect of this Budget. With a view of its long-term viability, introduction of drone technology in agriculture, monitoring and surveillance is, indeed, very innovative. It will not only give us better control of our crop needs, but provide the much-needed security. This will also create new jobs such as drone pilots that will attract youngsters back to agriculture.

Reviving our agro-industry is the motto here and Rs50 m. to bring back 500 hectares to cane cultivation does just that. I commend the decision to facilitate the process to get foreign workers to feel the need for low skilled jobs that will keep our manufacturing competitive, while we build on knowledge-based businesses with our young and qualified people.

Our sportsmen, who often fly high the *quadricolore*, have often been neglected. The system did not allow us to value them as is due. This Government is rectifying this injustice by introducing the Hall of Fame for our retired athletes who have made all of us proud. It is only a small recognition of their great service to the nation. This Government also wants to give us more fond memories by giving our up-and-coming athletes the best chances in the forthcoming *Jeux des Iles* with Rs18 m. earmarked for their preparation; '*pli la haut, pli loin*'.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my pride to be part of this Government, to be in the team, supporting our Prime Minister to create a more ambitious Mauritius where the social works hand-in-hand with the economics, where we all feel safe and secure, where our youngsters feel they can achieve their dream without needing to be born with a golden spoon. A true land of opportunities!

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Léopold!

(8.16 p.m.)

Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to thank hon. Pravind Jugnauth for his visit to Rodrigues as a newly appointed Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development. He has made, as Head of Government and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, his first overseas visit to the autonomous island of Rodrigues.

That was a golden opportunity for the new Rodrigues Regional Government which just got elected by a landslide victory defeating all the Opposition parties and securing a comfortable majority in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. It was the right time for the OPR Party of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly led by the Chief Commissioner and Leader of OPR, Mr Serge Clair, to meet the Prime Minister with his team in the light of pre-budgetary exercise.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius has had the opportunity as well to meet the civil society of Rodrigues and other partners for discussion on vision as to how the autonomous island of Rodrigues would benefit in its development from the Budget 2017-2018. He had listened to the people of Rodrigues and had ensured that as Head of Government and Minister of Finance and Economic Development at the same time, he understands the vision of the people of Rodrigues represented by the OPR Party in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. In a declaration from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, he stated that his Government will give every consideration for the economic development of the island so as to improve the quality of life of its citizens.

Before I elaborate further on how the Rodrigues Regional Assembly will judiciously and consciously spend the Rs825 m. allocated to us for development, it is important to put on record, once again, what autonomy of Rodrigues really means and the status of autonomous island of Rodrigues within the Republic of Mauritius.

Let me get it clear once and for all, and I will not repeat that again, that there are only nine districts in the Republic of Mauritius. Rodrigues is not the tenth district of the Republic of Mauritius. Rodrigues is not a dependence of the Republic of Mauritius. Rodrigues is part of the Republic of Mauritius. It is a territorial continuity of the Republic of Mauritius. That is why...

(Interruptions)

... people from mainland Mauritius can reach Rodrigues Island without having to leave the border of the Republic. This is why the people of Rodrigues can reach the Island of Mauritius to any part as Mauritians, who live on the island, without having to apply for a visa or to seek permission from the State.

But it is understood by great leaders that the Republic has ever produced - I am talking here of the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger, the actual Prime Minister - that the people of Rodrigues have the capacity to look after Rodrigues and its population, as we know better of our priorities for the development of Rodrigues. That is why autonomy to Rodrigues was granted by the then MMM/MSM coalition Government to which the people of Rodrigues are ever so grateful to both the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth and hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger. It took the OPR Party 25 years to get it, but there we are, and this process will continue to devolve whereby we will be called to take greater responsibilities.

Autonomy means transfer of power from the Central Government to the regional administration. What does devolution of power mean to the people of Rodrigues? It means that the local people take decisions altogether thus removing geographical restrictions. What the autonomy is doing here is preserving the Rodriguan identity within the Republic of Mauritius.

It is also nice to remember that since 1976, the OPR Party had campaigned and sensitised people on the benefit of a decentralised Government. It was for the emancipation of the Rodriguan people that the OPR Party opted for autonomy. Autonomy is the greatest achievement in the emancipation of the people of Rodrigues post-slavery era. It is the greatest achievement in the emancipation of Rodriguan people, so far. Therefore, autonomy is for the preservation of the unique Rodriguan identity.

Once again, I have to say that Rodrigues forms an integral part of the Republic of Mauritius, with cultural differences, of course. Showing disrespect to the Rodriguan cultural identity is violation to the integrity of the persons of Rodrigues. Such thing may lead to violation of human rights.

Autonomy means whether you are a Muslim, whether you are of Muslim faith, Hindu, Chinese or other, once you are born and decide to live in Rodrigues, one has to claim that

rodriganism. Rodriaganism is the way we live, the way we interact with nature. It is all about culture and it has nothing to do with religion. Once again, we are setting good example.

So, autonomy is something that brings people together. It allows people, group of people of different religious faith to unite with one another. With autonomy, the idea of divide and rule will never arise because within this autonomy, we are all bound into the process of rodriganism. So, with autonomy and rodriganism, it also means that we are not against others and we are for the Rodriguans.

Owing to the recent debate in Rodrigues, within the spirit of autonomy, the Chief Commissioner, by way of a motion, in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, gave back the original name of the Airport of Rodrigues, that is, Plaine Corail Airport, because of its cultural value to the people of Rodrigues. The Rodriguan people were appalled by the reaction of a few people in Mauritius and their misunderstanding of the autonomy of Rodrigues. Among them are some senior political figures of the Republic. While the reason for giving back the name of Plaine Corail Airport, its original name, is of cultural importance to us, a few people have allowed themselves, publicly, to get into skids and divisionist demagogery. They had offered themselves the luxury to be very offensive towards the cultural integrity of the people of Rodrigues by using offensive language. We were named as *defroqué, loups-garou*, stating that Rodrigues is a Crown land, and they said that they were going to *menace de débarquer à Rodrigues pour nettoyer Rodrigues*. They even used war language, as if Rodrigues is a foreign country to them. The word ‘conquer’ was cited. They said they are coming to conquer Rodrigues. How are they going to do that? I wonder.

I did not expect to hear that from the mouth of a senior political figure, who aspires to become Prime minister of the Republic. That would have made me proud to have seen him one day being Prime Minister of this country, but he has let the people of Rodrigues down. He has deceived us and has shown disrespect to the people of Rodrigues. By comparing Rodrigues to the people of Kosovo, Syria, in front of a crowd of young people, he has not only shown disrespect to the people of Rodrigues, he has shown disrespect to the people of the Republic of Mauritius, to the people of Kosovo and that of Syria.

Further to that, he has stated that there is no economic development in Rodrigues. My question is: ‘where was he when he was the Minister of Finance to tackle the economic problems of Rodrigues? Where was he when he was the Minister of Tourism?’ As he has stated himself that tourism is one of the economic pillars in Mauritius, what has he done? I

have to point out here that OPR party is a non-alliance movement and does not need to get into any coalition whatsoever to win elections since 1976. Yesterday, the same person used another sinister word about the people of Rodrigues, stating that Rodriguans are fleeing from Rodrigues - the word 'flee' - and then coming to Mauritius, squatting in suburbs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are free to move to any part of the Republic of Mauritius. The Rodriguan people have contributed a lot in the construction of the Republic of Mauritius. There are so many people from Rodrigues working in the construction industry in Mauritius. We give our fair bit of the contribution in building roads, bridges, houses in the Republic of Mauritius, and other infrastructure in Mauritius. Coming to say that Rodriguans are fleeing Rodrigues to squat in suburbs is not proper. Suburbanisation occurs all around the world and it will remain as long as there are people living on earth. People who come from Rodrigues tend to stay around town because that is where the economic activities are and most facilities like hospital and so on are close to them. Suburbanisation has its advantage and disadvantage. It is the job of the Government to come with urbanised planning to prevent all the infrastructural problems that come with suburbanisation.

The name, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, given to our villages always evokes something very strong to the Rodriguan people. When we bring change, we bring it to preserve the cultural value of its people. We do not make changes out of revenge. If we do that, we will not go far in our economic development. We are not renaming the airport of Rodrigues anyway; we are bringing back its original name, Plaine Corail. That is all.

So, the names of villages and places in Rodrigues have always been of an evocative nature which always strike people's imagination. Those names are characteristics of our island, which make us proud. The names of villages like - you might have heard some names - Soupir, Mangue, Anse aux Anglais, Plaine Corail evoke a lot of things to us and the island. It characterises the long road to the construction of our identity; an identity which must be respected by all, as we respect that of others.

I have read as well in the Press that people are criticising the length of speech by the hon. Minister of Finance on Rodrigues. They say it was just a short mention on Rodrigues and they say that the Prime Minister has spoken more on Agalega. Yes, that is true, and that is because the Minister of Finance respects autonomy, because we have presented our own budget. Just after the election in February 2017, the Chief Commissioner has presented *son programme 2017-2022 pour 5 ans*, under the title '*Continuons à bâtir l'île Rodrigues de nos*

rêves'. That was done on 03 March 2017, and then they consulted the Minister of Finance. He was in Rodrigues to visit us, and then we presented our budget. The Minister has given assurance and told us: 'Yes, you have a quantum, and you make your budget.'

That is why he does not need to elaborate on it because we have already passed our budget in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. We have an Executive Council. Autonomy means that Mauritius will support us with financial help and then we will prioritise our needs in Rodrigues. That is why he does not need to talk lengthily on Rodrigues.

As I have said, during the speech of the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues, a sum of Rs825 m. has been allocated to us and that we will spend it wisely, so as to consolidate the autonomy of Rodrigues. With this budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we will show our capacity to excel and take the next level to our personal and professional development.

The 2017/2018 Budget is the first budget of a new Regional Government. This Budget will kick-start the 16 engagements to be undertaken by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly over the five years. Amongst the engagement we took, the people of Rodrigues have given us confidence and have given us another mandate, so as to continue with good development in Rodrigues. So, one of our engagements is to protect, formalise and create sustainable and decent jobs for our youth.

As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have a lot of challenges in Rodrigues, especially in the water sector. So, we are putting a lot of money to improve the distribution of water in Rodrigues. Rodrigues is a very dry island and we do not have water like in mainland Mauritius. Even in mainland Mauritius, they have a lot of water and they are still complaining. We have very little water and that is why we are putting money in desalinisation.

With that money as well, we will promote health in Rodrigues. There has been recruitment of new doctors from the Republic of Mauritius and there will be approximately 25 of them who will go and work in Rodrigues. We will introduce in that concept, the concept of family doctor and that as well will be a model. I think that the Republic of Mauritius will learn from us even if we are very small. So, we will put that concept in Rodrigues so as to help in the prevention of diseases.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I won't be long because the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has already presented its budget and I do not need to come and repeat that. But, once again, I am thanking the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his

consideration in providing money so that we succeed in our economic development. And for that to happen, we need to have Port expansion that the Minister is considering, the airport expansion, IT connectivity with fibre optic cable and social housing.

So, I thank you for your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dayal!

(8.37 p.m.)

Mr R. Dayal (First Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I must lay special emphasis on the fact that the 2017/2018 Budget is an event in itself because it is heralding a host of processes and avenues for Mauritius to develop in an integrated holistic and sustainable manner and for which our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has to be congratulated and commended.

There is so much to be said in this budget that one has to confine himself to certain pertinent issues, which is of interest to the public and I have identified some of these issues. The first one is law and order. Coming to the chapter of law and order, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, by appellation and responsibility, made it sure that the law and order issue is addressed in a manner which has a lot of bearing on a series of criminogenic factors and also of the possibility of changing mindsets, attitudes and behaviours of our Police officers. We have a tendency to criticise Police officers, but then what have we done to provide them the appropriate infrastructure for training with appropriate pedagogical support.

Since 1953, our colonial masters thought it proper to have a Police Training School, and, that too, it was a building for housing purposes. I was groomed there. I can say we were groomed in very difficult conditions because I have also been groomed in some of the best academies in the world. I can say, without any fear of contradiction, that when our Minister of Finance mentioned the creation and the implementation of the Police Academy at Cote d'Or City, he was fully aware of what he was doing because he was the Minister of Finance of the MMM/MSM alliance. When Paul Bérenger was Prime Minister, he announced - I will give the exact date, on 18 January 2004 - the setting up of a Police Academy in Mauritius, with a view to boosting professionalism within the Force. He even did make it a point as Minister of Finance to earmark Rs360 m. and nothing was done.

Today, I am very hopeful because the feasibility study is there, the land has been identified and I have no doubt whatsoever that this project is going to go through. Through this project, we are going to have Police officers who will get the appropriate training to

discharge their roles and responsibilities as per the expectations, hopes and aspirations of all Mauritians where the fundamental rights and liberties will be guaranteed, where there would not be miscarriages of justice, where we will have appropriate officers and not half-baked professionals like we have in certain establishments. I am victim and I know what I am talking about. We are going to have people who can deliver the goods and deliver it in a fair and equitable manner.

Therefore, it is important that we move forward and the provision of four billion rupees for the Police Force is a testimony that this Government is positively embarking on improving the law and order situation in Mauritius and I must say it is sorely the issue all over the world with the advent of terrorism, cross-border crime, smuggling, drug trafficking, name it even hijacking of vessels in the waters of Mauritius and its vicinity. So, therefore, it is a challenge that has to be addressed in a systematic manner and the investment in the Coast Guard is yet another testimony of the political will of this Government to make things happen for the interests of each and every one, not only in Mauritius but in the region.

I must say that it is important that all aspects of law and order be taken into consideration. We have a very complex Police Force in Mauritius. Unlike other countries of the world, we do not have an Air Force, we do not have a Navy, we do not have an army, but we have Police Force fulfilling all those roles and responsibilities and they do it well. I have been the Commissioner of Police of this country and I can say we have had 100% rate of success in all operations not a single civil war like it is happening all over the world and this is because our tactical doctrine is based on Mauritian realities.

This is important. This is why I was all for the academic project when I was the Commissioner of Police in 1994 and I had the blessing of the Mentor Minister when he was the Prime Minister. Definitely, I think it is an area where we are going to change policing in a very holistic manner all throughout the terms of reference of the Mauritius Police Force. Therefore, I must say there is another area where we have lots of problems these days and there is a lot of hue and cry about the drug problem.

Let me say it. I was a privileged personality of this country together with the then Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth. I was responsible for all the documents and the security of Sir Maurice Rault when we had the first Commission of Inquiry. All the documents were kept under lock and key in Vacoas, in the headquarters of the Special Mobile Force. Even the star witness was there and I must say we knew if you want to address the

drug problem, you cannot do it in a vacuum. You have to go through a Commission of Inquiry. Let people come and voice their feelings and I want to voice my feeling as a Minister of this Government. I am very happy that the person behind this innovative Budget is a homage because he has to be commended for the bold incisive and full of wisdom provision he has made in this Budget to sort out the law and order problem and, of course, I am now on the drug issue. So, therefore, if we want to deal with the drug problem, we have to go not only in one specific area, we have to go in various areas and, as I said, we have to address all those chromogenic factors.

And where are they? They are in places where we call the breeding grounds of crimes. And what is this Government providing? Rs1.8 billion for housing purposes and, for the first time, I don't know of any country where it is done and this is an idea which I launched where there will be solar panels on rooftops of those social housing units. They are going to get money out of infrastructure where they are not going to spend any money and, on top of that, they are going to provide electricity not only for themselves but for the Mauritian population as well. This is a really innovative idea and it forms part of our INDC which my friend, hon. François and myself, we defended at COP21.

Many people in Paris said they are not going to get anything, it's a waste of time and you know how much Mauritius has got in the global green fund only for renewable energy? I leave it to the journalists, to those who write things without checking. Go and check for yourself and you will see the sum. It's not 1 million it's not 2 million it's not 100 million. It's bagful of millions and this is but part of it. We are going to get more. I am very happy to note that, apart from that, we have the full support of many countries. We had a problem about garbage. Let me say we have already asked professionals to study how we are going to change our transfer stations into stations where we are going to create wealth out of rubbish and the study is on. I just met the French personality who was part of the very important persons in the gallery when the Budget was being introduced. Therefore, many things that we have done are there. Many people are referring to environmental issues talking about what is in 'The Economist' of May 2017. Let me say it, I don't have to worry, this Government does not have to worry; the people of this country do not have to worry because you have already banned plastic bags. It's no more a problem for us, but it's a worldwide problem.

Five trillion bits of plastics that have been forecasted and not any organisation for that matter; it is a very credible organisation known as Helen MacArthur Foundation. When we

talk about global warming, it is as if it is new to Mauritius. I launched a project of one billion trees and I repeat it for those journalists who are not too good at mathematical calculations...

(Interruptions)

I am saying to the Deputy Speaker that journalists did not realise the importance of one billion trees; it is to reduce global warming, it is to reduce the problem of pollution in Mauritius. I must say that in our INDC for food security, hon. Mahen Seeruttun has come with a very laudable adaptation scheme to meet the challenges of climate change and food crisis. I have no doubt that we are going to succeed fully on that. For energy in our IDC, we are ahead of our scheduled scheme for lots of other projects like public infrastructure. Hon. Nando Bodha is on it for lots of projects.

In terms of human factor engineering, the educational sector is there. For Youth and Sports, we are tackling very thorny issues as far as environmental issues are concerned and we have launched a series of tool kits to students. Lots of things have happened. So, we should not say that nothing is happening. We have done a lot and it is done in a phased manner with clear-cut goals and objectives. For empowerment, poverty alleviation, it is clear it is meant to deal with criminogenic factors. It is meant to deal with issues that will help us sort out the law and order problems in Mauritius. We are not sitting on a bomb. We have already defused the bomb. We have already defused it with the appropriate technology because we have got experts in bomb disposal and this budget is a proof of it.

There are other issues which I would like to say and one of them is coral farming. In 1998, we had the problem of coal bleaching and in 2004, problem of El Nino. We have a big problem of coral bleaching and I must say I went to Seychelles. In Seychelles, they took the copy of our plastic banning legislation - and I must congratulate our Attorney General who did a fantastic job on that - and I must say they are implementing that. So, in the region, we are a trend setter and I would take it one step further. Our consul who is an expert in one of the islands, I went to visit the coral farming, and a variety. I discussed with a professional about coral and I brought a specimen, and I introduced that to my colleagues, and in one year you get a coral that big and it is not influenced by coral bleaching because when you put soft water on top of it, it starts puking again. Therefore, it is not a big issue and we have tried it with the Australian experts and it is working. My friend who is in front of me for the blue economy, lots of things have been forecasted and things are going to improve.

I won't be long. I will conclude in a couple of minutes. I have been given 20 minutes. I think I have not overshot the 20 minutes. I would just like to add a couple of things, and the first one is: in a Budget, not everything can be done. All of us know about it. Lots of things happen because of circumstances beyond our control. I am standing here, I had lots of plans for my Ministry and, unfortunately, things happened and I could not do it. But then, my conscience is clear. Therefore, those people who started making adverse remarks, I won't answer them now, but, in due course, I will be making statements to show that they are wrong. I won't make further comments on that because the case is on.

The second thing that I want to highlight is that things happen in any organisation and, more particularly, in this country because of command, control and communication. And I must say that we have got a very good team heading various Departments and Ministries of this Government and I have no doubt that we are going to steer clear this country of trouble waters on all the issues affecting the Republic of Mauritius.

As far as my constituency is concerned, I must say a big thank you to people who told me to express their gratitude for whatever the Minister of Finance and Economic Development is forecasting in this Budget for our constituency because our constituency, I must say, is a constituency where they are expected to have, at Belle Mare and Palmar, a replica of the sea-storey beach front which is unique in the world and which also brought us lots of favourable comments in Germany and throughout the world and we could not do it. But, hopefully, it will be done.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur!

Mr Sesungkur: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Sawmynaden rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday 14 June 2017 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Sawmynaden rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned. Hon. Rughoobur!

MATTERS RAISED

(8.59 p.m.)

GRAND GAUBE - DRAINS - CONSTRUCTION

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have got a request for the hon. Prime Minister who is also responsible for the National Development Unit. Well, there is a project in Grand Gaube, construction of drains near Jean-Éon RCA School and this is due since quite some time now and I would request the hon. Prime Minister to, please, look into this issue and if he could speed up matters at the level of the NDU.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Barbier!

CHAMP CHAPELON & BAIN DES DAMES - SEWERAGE

Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My plea is addressed to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, who is not here. It concerns projects of *tout-à-l'égout*, sewerage problem in my constituency and it concerns three regions.

Cela concerne Camp Chapelon en partie et en partie Cassis, région Reserves et Route Ménagerie et Cassis, région qu'on appelle Bain des Dames. Ces régions sont en partie, je dirai, desservies par le tout-à-l'égout et depuis des années, depuis plus de 10 ans, malheureusement, certaines régions n'ont pas pu être connectées parce qu'il y avait des problèmes techniques et on nous avait dit - 10 ans de cela - que le gouvernement, les techniciens allaient étudier la possibilité de revoir l'aspect technique et de proposer des amendements qui s'imposent pour pouvoir continuer à connecter ces régions-là au système de tout-à-l'égout.

Mais, malheureusement, les années passent. On vient d'avoir un budget et quand j'ai parcouru le budget, je vois qu'il y a des propositions un peu partout pour *sewerage* mais ces régions-là, je pense qu'ils sont restés dans l'oubliette entre-temps. C'est pour ça que je

voudrais relancer le ministre pour qu'il puisse voir le dossier et donner des explications à la Chambre où est-ce qu'on en est avec le projet pour qu'on puisse redynamiser et redonner la possibilité aux gens d'espérer de pouvoir être connectés bientôt par le système de tout-à-l'égout dans ces régions.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Well, I will convey the observation of the hon. Member to my colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

BASSIN – NHDC HOUSING PROJECT

Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to raise an issue and it is addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Soodhun. It is in relation to a housing project, an NHDC project in the region of Bassin. Maybe hon. Minister Bodha could readdress the request to the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Soodhun.

There is an urgent need for housing units and this is an undeniable fact, but I will request on behalf of the inhabitants of the region of Bassin. A portion of land of an extent of 7 *arpents* was earmarked 10 years back, I think, for social housing project. This land was dedicated to a football ground, a holistic park, future social development project such as kindergarten, schools, social halls, even a Police station could have been implemented there. Now, the housing project is being finalised by the NHDC, implemented on the said portion of land and the inhabitants of Bassin feel aggrieved by this decision. So, I would humbly request the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to look into this matter.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will certainly raise the issue with the hon. Vice-Prime Minister as soon as he is back. I think he is going to be back tomorrow.

From what I have been told, the works have started, to prepare the terrain, but we have not yet started civil works. I will certainly raise the matter with the Vice-Prime Minister.

At 9.04 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 14 June at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

FOREIGNERS – OCCUPATION PERMIT

(No. B/407) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)

asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the foreigners, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Passport and Immigration Office, information as to the number thereof having –

- (a) since January 2015 to date, on a yearly basis –
 - (i) been issued with occupational permits, and
 - (ii) acquired immovable properties, and
- (b) since April 2016 to date, been issued with permanent residence permits.

Reply: With a view to attracting foreign investors and professionals, the Occupation Permit and Permanent Residence Permit Schemes have been established since 2006 and 2012 respectively.

The Occupation Permit is a combined permit allowing foreign nationals in the categories of investors, self-employed and professionals to reside and work in Mauritius. After having held the Occupation Permit for three years, a foreign national is eligible for a Permanent Residence Permit for the duration of ten years, upon satisfying the eligibility criteria in terms of turnover or income threshold, as provided in the Investment Promotion Act.

Furthermore, retired non-citizens aged 50 years and above, and who transfer from abroad to Mauritius an amount of 40,000 US dollars or its equivalent in convertible currency annually, are eligible for a residence permit to reside in Mauritius for a period of three years. After holding the residence permit for three years, they become eligible for a Permanent Residence Permit for ten years, provided that they continue to transfer the same amount annually.

In regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that since January 2015 to 09 June 2017, a total of 6,087 Occupation

Permits have been issued to foreigners as investor, professional or self-employed yearly, as follows -

- 2,676 in 2015;
- 2,891 in 2016, and
- 1,240 as at 09 June 2017.

Moreover, a total of 487 Residence Permits have been issued to retired non-citizens during the same period, as follows -

- 179 in 2015;
- 211 in 2016, and
- 93 in 2017.

Concerning part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Board of Investment that foreign nationals are eligible to acquire a residential property under the following schemes -

- Integrated Resort Scheme;
- Real Estate Scheme;
- Property Development Scheme, and
- Smart City Scheme.

A non-citizen who invests a minimum amount of 500,000 US dollars for the acquisition of a residential property under these schemes is eligible for a Residence Permit, which remains in force until such time that he holds the property. For the period January 2015 to 10 June 2017, 737 non-citizens have acquired a residential property under the Integrated Resort Scheme, Real Estate Scheme and Property Development Scheme, as follows -

- 382 in 2015;
- 270 in 2016, and
- 85 in 2017.

In addition, foreign nationals are eligible to acquire an apartment in condominium developments of at least two levels above ground level. Initially, as from January 2012, only holders of Permanent Residence Permit for ten years were eligible to purchase such

apartments. The scheme was later extended to investors and professionals holding an Occupation Permit as well as to retired non-citizens, subject to established criteria. In December 2016, the Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act was amended to allow foreign nationals, with or without an Occupation Permit, Residence Permit or Permanent Residence Permit to purchase apartments in condominium developments of at least two levels above ground level. The amount payable for the acquisition of an apartment must not be less than Rs6 m.

Thirty-four non-citizens have acquired an apartment under this scheme during the period January 2015 to 09 June 2017. Non-citizens are also allowed to acquire land or buildings for business purposes subject to clearance from my Office and approval from the Board of Investment. In this connection, 68 non-citizens have acquired property for business purpose, namely -

- 25 in 2015;
- 36 in 2016, and
- 7 in 2017.

Apart from the schemes I have outlined, only four non-citizens married to citizens of Mauritius under the “*Régime légal de séparation de biens*” have been issued a certificate authorising them to acquire an immovable property for private purpose under section 3(2) of the Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act since January 2015 to date.

With regard to part (b) of the question, 36 Permanent Residence Permits for ten years have been issued to non-citizens since April 2016 to date.

LANDSCOPE (MAURITIUS) LTD - OFFICES - RENOVATION - PROCUREMENT EXERCISE

(No. B/408) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Landscope (Mauritius) Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the total cost of the renovation of the offices thereof, indicating the –

- (a) name of the contractor therefor, and
- (b) procurement procedure followed therefor.

Reply: I am informed that Landscape (Mtius) Ltd is a company governed by the Companies Act. Moreover, matters relating to procurement at Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd do not fall under the purview of the Public Procurement Act. The procurement policies and procedures are determined by the Board of the company.

It would, therefore, not be appropriate for me to provide details regarding a procurement exercise carried out by the company.

**TERRE ROUGE-VERDUN LINK ROAD - REMEDIAL WORKS -
CONTRACT**

(No. B/429) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to when the contract was awarded for the carrying out of the last leg of repair works thereat, indicating the –

- (a) name of the contractor thereof;
- (b) contract value thereof;
- (c) expected completion date thereof, and
- (d) actions initiated to recover the said costs from the contractor of the main Project therefor, namely Colas, on the same basis as the one regarding the Ring Road failure.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question B/1120 on 06 December 2016 wherein I explained the various tests that had to be carried out before proceeding with the remedial works in respect of the embankment failure along the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road and the methodology used.

I pointed out that extensive geotechnical tests had to be carried out by ARQ (Pty) between March and September 2015 to ensure that the design and technical measures on this project were appropriate. The ARQ recommended a vertical solution with the construction of over 1,300 stone columns over a length of 160 metres. During the same period, the assistance of the Korean Expressway Corporation (KEC), which was in Mauritius on an assignment in connection with the Road Decongestion Programme, was sought to carry out a counter-expertise on the design solution proposed by ARQ. The KEC submitted its own design report in July 2016 with an alternative solution comprising a horizontal replacement of the unsuitable materials by a proper fill.

Accordingly, after following all necessary tender procedures, the contract for the repairs to the collapsed part of the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road between Ripailles and Valton has been awarded to Transinvest Construction Co. Ltd. on 28 March 2017 for an amount of MUR 283,556,663, exclusive of VAT. The works have started in May this year and are expected to be completed by March 2018.

As regards part (c) of the question, I would like to inform the House that the case of Terre Rouge-Verdun is fundamentally different from that of the Ring Road. The defect for Terre Rouge-Verdun was detected after the Defects Liability Period, whereas that of the Ring Road was identified during the Defects Liability Period. As per provisions of the contract, any defect that is identified during the Defects Liability Period has to be remedied at the contractor's own cost.

In the case of the Terre Rouge-Verdun Project, although the defects were identified outside the Defects Liability Period, the RDA has carried out an internal in-depth assessment relating to the various problems taking into consideration the technical, contractual, legal and financial aspects thereof. The advice of the State Law Office has accordingly been sought on the way forward. A reply is still being awaited.

BAI CO. (MTIUS) LTD (FORMER) - KPMG AUDITOR - INVESTIGATIONS

(No. B/438) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the former BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Reporting Council, the Financial Services Commission and the Special Administrators thereof, information as to if they have conducted inquiries into the role played by KPMG as the auditor thereof and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Reply: I am informed that in May 2015 the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, referred the matter to the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) for investigation.

I am also informed that the Financial Services Commission has, as such, not carried out any inquiry as the matter was referred to the FRC for investigation.

I am given to understand that the FRC completed its investigation on 31 May 2017.

The FRC intends to take action as appropriate under section 43 of the Financial Reporting Act.

TAYSUN CORPORATE SERVICES LTD – SHARES - TRANSFER

(No. B/439) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the change in ownership of Taysun Corporate Services Ltd in 2017, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to the date on which the application therefor was –

- (a) received, and
- (b) approved, indicating who approved same.

Reply: I am informed that, on 10 February 2017, an application for the transfer of shares was received at the Financial Services Commission.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am also informed that the application was approved on 14 February 2017 by the then Head of Supervision (Global Business).

HAJJ PILGRIMAGE 2016 – ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

(No. B/440) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the contracts for the accommodation of the pilgrims for the 2016 Hajj pilgrimage in Makkah and Madinah respectively, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to -

- (a) the procurement procedure followed therefor;
- (b) who negotiated and signed the contracts on behalf of the Centre;
- (c) who authorised the execution of the contracts, and
- (d) if there has been any breach of contract in respect thereof.

Reply: In reply to parts (a) and (b) of the question, an offer for accommodation facilities was received from the Al Massa Crystal Establishment.

The offer was presented to the representatives of the licensed Hajj Operators at two meetings held in the presence of members of the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC) Hajj Committee, on 11 and 13 July 2016 respectively.

The Operators were invited to inspect the proposed hotel and to come forward with accommodation proposals which were better or at least similar to the offer received from Al Massa Crystal Establishment.

However, no better offer was presented and the Operators were agreeable to the proposal made by the Al Massa Crystal Establishment as –

- (a) the offer was the best at the total price of 4,400 Saudi Riyals per bed for both Makkah and Madinah;
- (b) the hotel was flexible regarding check-in and check-out dates, and
- (c) the hotel could accommodate all the pilgrims within a single building .

The ICC Board was informed of same at its meeting held on 20 July 2016.

With regard to parts (c) and (d) of the question, as per the practice, once hotels have been identified by the Hajj Operators and validated by the ICC, an online booking is effected by the ICC with the relevant Saudi Authorities. Payment is subsequently made to the Saudi Authorities and the latter transfers the funds to the Service Providers.

QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITAL - CANCER PATIENTS - TREATMENT

(No. B/441) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the cancer patients, he will state the number thereof who have been undergoing treatment at the Queen Victoria Hospital, since January 2016 to date, indicating the number thereof being treated thereat on a daily basis.

Reply: As per statistics available the total number of attendances for treatment at the Cancer Unit at Victoria hospital for period January 2016 to 31 May 2017 amounts to 45,140. The average daily attendance is around 120 patients.

SUPER CASH BACK GOLD SCHEME - POLICYHOLDERS - REPAYMENT

(No. B/442) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Super Cash Back Gold policyholders of the former BAI Co. (Mtius) Ltd, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Property Fund Ltd, information as to the number thereof having selected repayment under Option 1 and Option 2, respectively, indicating –

- (a) the agreed amount of money and the terms of repayment thereof;
- (b) if those having selected repayment under Option 1 will be paid 20 per cent of their invested capital by 30 June 2017, as undertaken by the Fund, and
- (c) the amount due for 30 June 2017 and the subsequent remaining balance and the quantum presently available for disbursement on 30 June 2017.

Reply: I am informed that in regard to the Super Cash Back Gold Scheme, there are 5,035 policyholders, out of which 3,024 have opted for repayment under Option 1 and 2,011 for repayment under Option 2.

As for part (a) of the question, a sum of Rs5,618,140,506 is payable, under Option 1, in five equal instalments starting 30 June 2016 until 30 June 2020. In regard to those who have opted for Option 2, a sum of Rs1,870,199,058 is payable in two instalments on 30 June 2016 and 30 June 2019.

As regards part (b) of the question, as the House is aware, the Prime Minister and myself had a meeting with Mr Mutty and some other policyholders during which the latter were informed that Government was examining all possible avenues to reimburse the policyholders of the Super Cash Back Gold Scheme and the investors of Bramer Asset Management Ltd. I can reassure the House that since then, all efforts are being undertaken by Government with a view to come to a solution at the soonest possible. To this effect, a Ministerial Committee has met several times under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister himself, where the implications of various scenarios are being examined.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that an amount of Rs1,284,124,854 is payable on 30 June 2017 to the 3,024 policyholders having selected Option 1. The subsequent remaining balance payable to policyholders stands at Rs5,461,817,119. I am further informed that the cash presently available is around Rs100,000,000. Discussions are still ongoing.

DECAEN & IMMIGRATION SQUARES – HAWKING SITES

(No. B/443) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to each of the hawking sites at Decaen and Immigration Squares, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, indicating in each case the number of stalls available thereat, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the –
 - (i) covering thereof, and
 - (ii) provision of adequate toilet facilities thereat and, if not, why not.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that all the 606 and 357 stalls available at Decaen and Transportation Centre (Immigration) Market fairs, respectively, are currently occupied.

As regards part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed that in view of the project for the modernisation of Victoria Terminal and Immigration Square Bus Stations, the Council is not envisaging to cover these two sites for the time being given that these sites are temporary.

The House may wish to note that the new terminals to be developed at both Victoria Terminal and Immigration Square would have the dedicated place for the accommodation of the hawkers.

The House may further wish to note that action has already been initiated by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport for the redevelopment and modernisation project of the Victoria Terminal. As regards the Immigration Square Bus Station, Government is currently working on a scheme for the development and reorganisation of the area with a view to modernising it, taking into consideration all stakeholders operating in the area, including the hawkers.

As far as part (b) (ii) of the question is concerned, I am informed that adequate toilet facilities for male and female are already available at these two sites.

PORt LOUIS SOUTH & PORt LOUIS CENTRAL - DRUG SEARCHES

(No. B/444) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of searches effected thereat in relation to the possession and selling of synthetic and other drugs, since January 2017 to date, indicating the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 01 January 2017 to date, 76 searches were carried out in Constituency No. 2 by virtue of search warrants in connection with drug offences.

With regard to the second part of the question, I am informed that 76 suspects were arrested. Enquiries are ongoing.

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD GREEN ENERGY CO. LTD -

PROJECTS

(No. B/445) 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 Central Electricity Board Green Energy Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the composition of the Board

thereof, indicating the projects initiated as at to date and the estimated cost thereof in each case.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that CEB (Green) Co Ltd was incorporated on 11 October 2016.

The Directors of the company are as follows –

Company Name	Directors
CEB (Green Energy) Co Ltd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr Mootoosamy Naidoo, Chairperson of the CEB Board 2. Mr Rajcoomar Bikoo, Director General at Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities 3. Mr Gerard Hebrard, General Manager of CEB 4. Mr Kesnalall Balgobin, Chief Finance Manager, CEB 5. Mr M. Shamshir Mukoon, Production Manager, CEB

Independent directors are expected to be appointed shortly.

The company has initiated two projects, namely -

- (a) 2 MW Solar PV Farm at Henrietta, estimated to cost Rs100 m., and
- (b) procurement of 2,000 rooftop solar photovoltaic kits for 2000 households in the Social Tariff 110A. The project is estimated to cost Rs100 m.

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD FACILITIES CO. LTD - PROJECTS

(No. B/446) 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 Central Electricity Board Facilities Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the composition of the Board thereof, indicating the projects initiated as at to date and the estimated cost thereof in each case.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that CEB (Facilities) Co Ltd was incorporated on 03 March 2017. The Directors of the Company are as follows -

CEB (Facilities) Co Ltd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr Mootoosamy Naidoo, Chairperson of the CEB Board 2. Mrs Sadhna Appanah, Lead Analyst, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 3. Dr P. M. Kumar Soonarane, Director Technical Services, Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities
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Independent directors are expected to be appointed shortly.

One project has been initiated by CEB (Facilities) Co Ltd, namely a Utility Customer Centre which is operational as from 10 April 2017. It provides 24-hour hotline services to CEB and CWA customers.

The company has incurred a total cost of Rs4,260,519 to set up the Utility Customer Centre and the monthly operating costs is around Rs900,000.

RAOUL RIVET STREET, PORT LOUIS – SEWER NETWORK

(No. B/447) 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 sewerage network in Ward IV, in Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to the projects being envisaged thereat, indicating the estimated cost thereof and the time frame set for the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that it is planning to rehabilitate the sewer network along Raoul Rivet Street in Port Louis, which is prone to frequent overflows.

The project will involve the replacement of 700 m of sewer pipeline and reconnection of 80 houses. The estimated cost is about Rs16 m. Works are expected to start by end of this year.

ISRAEL - ECONOMIC & TRADE RELATIONS

(No. B/448) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to Israel, he will state if Government has changed its diplomatic/commercial relationships therewith and, if so, indicate -

- (a) when, and
- (b) the value of the commercial dealings therewith as at to date.

Reply:

(a) No, Government has not changed its policy towards the State of Israel. Mauritius maintains cordial relations with that State.

(b) The figures relating to economic and trade relations with Israel are as follows

—

<u>Year</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
<u>Imports</u> <u>(Mn. Rs)</u>	204	203	179	128
<u>Export</u> <u>(Mn. Rs)</u>	86	82	51	77

Source: Statistics Mauritius

The main imports from Israel during the above period comprised fruits, vegetable seeds, cheese, common salt, heavy oils and preparations, phosphoric acids, vaccines for veterinary medicines, printing ink.

Mauritius exports raw sugar, textile articles, medical apparatus, machine tools, fish products.

Tourist Arrivals from Israel.

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016
No. of Tourists	552	617	762	1,161

FDI figures from the Bank of Mauritius.

Based on banking records as well as other official sources, there has been only one direct investment transaction in Mauritius from Israel and it took place in 2016. The direct investment amounted to Rs18 m. and was channelled to the 'Real estate activities' sector. There has been no outward direct investment flows to Israel from Mauritius between 2016 and 2017 up to the first quarter.

BASIC INVALIDITY PENSION – CARER'S ALLOWANCE

(No. B/449) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)
asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable

Development whether, in regard to the Basic Retirement Pension, he will state the number of beneficiaries thereof who are equally living with a disability or who are dependent on carers, indicating if consideration will be given for a review of the present policy consisting of the beneficiaries thereof losing the benefit of the Basic Invalidity Pension on becoming eligible therefor and for the introduction of alternative measures in respect of the specific needs of elderly persons with disabilities.

Reply: Basic Invalidity Pension is payable to beneficiaries who are below the age of 60. Upon attaining the age of 60, these beneficiaries become entitled to the Basic Retirement Pension and the Basic Invalidity Pension lapses. However, those beneficiaries who are in receipt of a Carer's Allowance as certified by a Medical Board to be permanently incapacitated and needing the constant care and attention of another person are automatically entitled to a monthly additional allowance of Rs3,000 instead of the normal Carer's Allowance of Rs2,500 paid to beneficiaries of Basic Invalidity Pension who are below the age of 60.

I am informed that out of the 204,517 beneficiaries of Basic Retirement Pension, 15,507 are in receipt of an additional monthly Carer's Allowance of Rs3,000 as these beneficiaries need the constant care and attention of another person as certified by a Medical Board.

As matters stand, no review of the present policy is currently envisaged.

ZEP SCHOOLS – HOT MEAL PROGRAMME - CONTRACTORS

(No. B/450) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Hot Meal Programme for the *Zone d'Éducation Prioritaire* schools, she will state the –

- (a) date of implementation thereof, and
- (b) names of the contractors for the supply of hot meals, indicating –
 - (i) the procurement procedure followed therefor, and
 - (ii) if consultations were held with the supplier, prior to the award of the contracts.

Reply: As from 24 April, that is, the beginning of second term of 2017, my Ministry, in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, is providing an enhanced meal comprising of bread and different vegetarian fillings, a fruit and water to the pupils of ZEP schools.

It is to be recalled that provision of hot meal was suspended in 2013 following a case of food poisoning which occurred at Bambous, a Government school. An analysis revealed the presence of *E. Coli* beyond acceptable norms in some samples taken. It was then decided to suspend the provision of hot meal. An alternative arrangement has been in place ever since and up to the end of the first term 2017 where pupils of the ZEP Schools were provided with a bread, butter, cheese, fruits, water and biscuits.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am tabling the list of contractors who are supplying the enhanced meal in ZEP schools for the year 2017.

I wish to highlight that prior to the recent tender exercise, the tenders for allocation of contract for the provision of meal was carried out at the level of the PTA.

Regarding the procurement procedure for the enhanced meal, the tenders for the supply of the enhanced meal were floated through open advertised bidding by the four zones of my Ministry and following the tendering procedure, contracts were awarded at the zonal level itself. The specifications have been worked out at the level of my Ministry following inputs received from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. I am advised that no consultation with the suppliers is done prior to allocation of contract as it would not be in order.

The hot meal programme will be implemented on a pilot basis in four ZEP Schools, one in each educational zone. Each of these schools will be provided with a kitchenette and eating area. The school Bois des Amourettes GS has been provided with such infrastructure where the hot meals will be served upon completion of some additional works such as bird netting, provision of aluminium openings.

EDC ESTATES - SALE

(No. B/452) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the EDC Estates, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of cases in which the sale of the plots of land to the occupiers of houses standing thereon have not yet been finalised, indicating the –

- (a) location thereof, constituency-wise;
- (b) reasons therefor, and

(c) measures that will be taken to address the issue.

Reply: I am informed that there are 19,442 ex-CHA houses found on 177 housing estates throughout the island. Out of these 177 housing estates, only 59 have 3,113 EDC housing units.

Out of the 19,442 ex-CHA houses, a total of 2,580 plots of land on which stand Ex-CHA houses cannot be sold for the time being as 1,630 are found on private land, 54 on Ex-railway land, and 896 on *Pas Géométriques*. The private lands are yet to be acquired by Government.

Out of the remaining 16,862 plots of land that can be sold, 13,284 applications have been received for the sale of the land. 13,239 applications have already been processed and letters of intent have been issued to the applicants for finalisation of their title deeds at a Public Notary. The remaining 45 applications are currently being processed.

As at date, 10,949 deeds of sale for the plot of land on which stand the ex-CHA houses have been signed. 2,290 plots of land have not yet been sold as the deeds of sale for these plots of land have not been finalised at the Notary due to delays in submission of relevant documents such as Affidavit, National Identity Card, Birth and Death certificates by the applicants and in a number of cases the heirs are living abroad.

Due to financial constraints a number of applicants are unable to finalise their deeds of sale for the plot of land. Financial assistance is being provided to the applicants who meet the eligibility criteria, in terms of waiving of Rs2,000, representing the purchase price of the land, waiving of registration fees and payment of Notary and Survey fees.

1,595 applicants have benefitted from this financial assistance and 989 applicants have already finalised their deeds of sale for the plot of land on which stand their ex-CHA house.

The list of the ex-CHA houses for which the deeds of sale of the plot of land have not yet been finalised and their location district-wise is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

BLACK RIVER - VILLAGE HALL - RELOCATION

(No. B/453) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Village Hall of

Black River, he will state if consideration will be given for the relocation thereof within the build up area of Black River, with a view to allowing better use of the facilities found thereat, especially, by the youth?

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Black River that the Village Council of Grande Rivière Noire has decided, at its meeting held on 30 May 2017 to make a request to the District Council of Black River for the Village Hall presently located next to the Grande Rivière Noire Government School to be relocated within the floor space presently occupied by the *Mouvement D'Aide à la Maternité* and which has been leased to it by the District Council. The reason put forward by the Village Council was that the youngsters and women of the village were not willing to attend the Village Hall for activities as they considered that the Village Hall was too far from their place of residence.

I am further informed that the Village Council has also indicated that this request for relocation to the building occupied by *Mouvement D'Aide à la Maternité* could be considered upon the expiry of the present lease agreement which is due on 28 February 2019.

This issue will be on the agenda of the next meeting of the District Council of Black River for a decision.

MAURITIUS POST LIMITED – CHAIRPERSON - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/454) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the Chairperson of the Mauritius Post Limited, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –
 - (i) qualifications, and
 - (ii) terms and conditions of appointment thereof, including the salary package and other benefits drawn, and
- (b) state if he is in presence of representations from the Union of Post Office workers complaining of the interference thereof in the day-to-day running of the Post Office.

Reply: As the House is aware, Mauritius Post Limited is a private company governed by the Companies Act and by its Board of Directors. The House will appreciate that it will not be appropriate for me to give details on the company. I will, therefore, invite the hon.

Member to refer to the Annual Report of the company which gives all the relevant information.

CHILDREN'S BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/455) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the proposed Children's Bill, she will state when same will be introduced in the House.

Reply: As announced in the Budget Speech 2017-2018, the Children's Bill, which will give effect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and provide a framework for the better protection and care of children, is high on the agenda of this Government.

In view thereof and taking into consideration the highly sensitive nature and technical complexity of this legislation, my Ministry is seeking technical assistance from the European Union in terms of consultancy services for an International Legal Consultant on child matters as well as a National Legal Consultant to finalise the Children's Bill.

As soon as the draft Bill is finalised, it will be introduced in the National Assembly.

CITÉ ST LOUIS, PAILLES - FOOTBALL GROUND - UPGRADING

(No. A/4) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the proposed renovation works to be carried out for the lighting and upgrading of the fencing of the Football Ground found in Cité St Louis, Pailles, in financial year 2016-2017 under the Vote Item: 31113.006, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The consultant, Servansingh Jadav & Partners Consulting Engineers Ltd, has been appointed for the design and supervision of this project. While undertaking surveys for the preparation of the Preliminary Design Report, the consultant has recommended that trial pits be effected to investigate the quality of soil. The trial pits would be carried out by 15 July 2017. Based on the outcome of the trial pits, the consultant will be requested to finalise the design of the project and to prepare the draft bidding document for the launching of bids for the appointment of a contractor for the execution of works.

POINTE AUX SABLES - FOOTBALL GROUND – CONSTRUCTION

(No. A/5) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the construction of a football ground near the Area Health Centre at Pointe aux Sables, as mentioned in the list of projects to be implemented in financial year 2016-2017 under the Vote Item: 3113.006, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The consultant, Servansingh Jadav & Partners Consulting Engineers Ltd has been appointed for the design and supervision of this project. The Preliminary Design Report was submitted in April 2017. Approval has been given to the consultant to proceed with the detailed design of the project and to prepare the draft bidding document for the launching of bids for the appointment of a contractor for the execution of works.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 – DRAINS – CONSTRUCTION & UPGRADING

(No. A/6) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the construction and upgrading of drains in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, as mentioned in the list of the projects to be implemented in financial year 2016-2017 under the Vote Item: 3113.017, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The status of drain projects in Constituency No. 1 is as follows -

SN	Projects	Status
1	Construction of drain and resurfacing of Balsamine Street, Terrasson, Pointe aux Sables	Completed
2	Construction of drain at Impasse Menagerie, Cassis	Completed
3	Construction of drain at Lane Off St Marie, Residence Vallijee	Completed
4	Construction of drain at Rubinstein Street, Residence Vallijee	Completed

5	Construction of drain at Canal Dayot Street, Residence Vallijee	Completed
6	Upgrading of drains and resurfacing at E. Anquetil Road, Cassis	The project was awarded to Gamma Construction Ltd on 21 March 2017. The commencement date was 02 May 2017 and expected completion date is 10 July 2017.
7	Construction of drain at Batterie Street, GRNW	The project was awarded to H. Padiacy Co. Ltd on 20 February 2017. The commencement date was 01 April 2017. The expected completion date is end of June 2017.
8	Drain network at Stevenson Road, Cassis	The construction of drains at both locations will be considered under one project. The consultant, Servansingh Jadav & Partners Consulting Engineers Ltd has been appointed for the design of this project. The Preliminary Design Report is expected by end of June 2017 following which the consultant will be requested to finalise the detailed design and to prepare the draft bidding document for the launching of bids for the appointment of a contractor for the execution of works.
9	Construction of drain at Bain Des Dames Coastal Road near Temple, Cassis	

10	Drain network at La Tourelle, La Tour Koenig	<p>The consultant, Servansingh Jadav & Partners Consulting Engineers Ltd, has been appointed for the design of this project. The Preliminary Design Report is expected by end of June 2017, following which the consultant will be requested to finalise the detailed design and to prepare the draft bidding document for the launching of bids for the appointment of a contractor for the execution of works.</p>
11	Construction of drain at Cnr Strauss/Bach Lane, Residence Vallijee	<p>The consultant, Desai and Associates Ltd has been appointed for the design of this project. The Preliminary Design Report was submitted in May 2017. Approval has been given to the consultant to proceed with the detailed design and to prepare the draft bidding document for the launching of bids for the appointment of a contractor for the execution of works.</p>
12	Construction of drain at James Russel Street, GRNW	<p>The project has been cancelled. A technical feasibility study carried out by the NDU showed that there is no need for a drain along James Russel Street as the road gradient is sufficient to drain surface runoff.</p>

13	Extension of drain at La Fourche Lane, Cité Richelieu	In March 2017, it was agreed between the NDU and the District Council of Black River that the project would be undertaken by the latter. On 01 June 2017, the District Council of Black River has informed the NDU for the need to have recourse to the services of a consultant for an in-depth study of the catchment area and has requested the NDU to appoint a consultant accordingly.
14	Construction of cross drain at Jackaria Street, Pailles	The project is on hold due to ongoing works (Pailles/Guibies Sewerage Project Phase 2) being undertaken by the Wastewater Management Authority.
15	Construction of drain at Camp Firinga	The construction of drains at the three locations will be considered under one project as it is critical to have a holistic approach and appropriate solution for that region.
16	Construction of drain at Dr. Beaugeard Street, Débarcadère, Pointe aux Sables	Request for proposals for consultancy services is being prepared and it is expected that bids for same be invited by end of July 2017.
17	Construction of drain at Stella Road, Débarcadère, Pointe aux Sables	

PAILLES – ROADS – PATCHING WORKS

(No. A/7) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the roads in Pailles, he will state if consideration will be given for urgent patching works to be carried out therein in view of the bad conditions thereof, pending the completion of the Pailles Sewerage Project for the re-asphalting thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that regular patching works are being carried out in the region of Pailles as and when required.

The House may wish to note that a list of patching works undertaken as at date during the present financial year at Pailles is being placed in the Library.

**RABINDRANATH TAGORE SSS, BELL VILLAGE SSS & EBENE SSS –
CLASSROOM BLOCKS - CONSTRUCTION**

(No. A/8) Mr G. Oree (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Rabindranath Tagore State Secondary School at Ilot, the Bell Village State Secondary School and the Ébène State Secondary School respectively, she will state where matters stand as to the proposed construction of additional facilities and classroom blocks thereat, in the wake of the implementation of the Nine-Year Basic Schooling Programme, indicating if works have started therefor and, if not, why not.

Reply: In the context of the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education, a number of initiatives and measures are being implemented amongst which the construction of additional facilities to create a more conducive teaching/learning environment for all students.

With regard to the construction of additional facilities at Rabindranath Tagore State Secondary School at Ilot, the Bell Village State Secondary School and the Ébène State Secondary School respectively, the requested information is being tabled.