



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 19 APRIL 2016

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Members

THE CABINET**(Formed by the Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC)**

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 04 of 2016

Sitting of 19 April 2016

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

MISS DARSHINEE SEETUL – CLERK ASSISTANT – APPOINTMENT

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I am pleased to introduce Miss Darshinee Seetul who has recently been appointed Clerk Assistant.

Miss Seetul joined the Civil Service in 2005 as Clerical Officer and was posted at the Public Service Commission. In 2009, she joined the Judiciary as Court Officer until she joined the National Assembly.

Miss Seetul holds a Bachelor of Laws Degree from the University of Mauritius.

On behalf of the House and in my own name, I extend a warm welcome to Miss Seetul and wish her a successful career.

PAPERS LAID

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

A Office of the President –

The Annual Report 2015 of the National Human Rights Commission.

B. Prime Minister's Office –

- (a) The Annual Report 2013 of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. (In Original)
- (b) The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (Collection of Licence Fees) (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 94 of 2016)

C. Ministry of Health and Quality of Life –

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care for the year ended 31 December 2014.
- (b) The Dental Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 95 of 2016).

D Ministry of Local Government –

- (a) The City Council of Port Louis (Streets and Squares) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 87 of 2016).
- (b) The District Council of Black River (Fees for Classified Trades) Regulations 2016 (Government Notice No. 88 of 2016).
- (c) The District Council of Flacq (Fees Dues and other charges for Classified

Trades) Regulations 2016 (Government Notice No. 89 of 2016).

E. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection –

- (a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 86 of 2016)
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods) (Maximum Mark-Up) (Amendment) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 91 of 2016)
- (c) The Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods) (Maximum Price) (Amendment) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 92 of 2016)
- (d) The Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) (Amendment of Schedules) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 93 of 2016)

F. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training –

The Employment Relations (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2016. (Government Notice No. 90 of 2016)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

HERITAGE CITY PROJECT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Heritage City Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Land Development Company Limited and Heritage City Company Limited, information as to

–

- (a) if a consultant has been appointed to prepare a Master Plan for the Highlands Project, including the Heritage City;
- (b) if a feasibility study is available therefor;
- (c) if an EIA has been obtained therefor;
- (d) if Stree Consulting of Dubai has been appointed for the design thereof without any tender procedure and, if so, indicate the terms of appointment thereof;
- (e) if the contractors therefor have been pre-qualified, and
- (f) the latest funding proposals therefor.

The Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms (Mr S. Bhadain): Madam Speaker, the House will be aware that the Highlands Project dates

back to 2003 when Halcrow prepared a concept Master Plan for the whole site of 2,179 *Arpents* (920 Hectares) at Highlands.

With the change in Government in 2005, the project was re-actualised and CRISIL was commissioned to prepare a pre-feasibility study report on the Highlands Project. Based on the findings of CRISIL report, a transaction advisor was recruited and a tender was launched for the selection of a master developer. In 2008, 2 master developers were shortlisted, namely BLOOM and MAHINDRA.

From 2008 to 2014, nothing much happened, Madam Speaker, probably because the then government decided to go for the NeoTown Project, for reasons which are best known to themselves. In 2015, this Government reconsidered the Highlands Project and the realisation of the whole Highlands City Project would have spanned over a period of 10 years in a phased manner.

On 09 October 2015, Government decided that my Ministry would be responsible for the development of the Heritage City Project on a plot of land of 336 *Arpents* which is 141 Hectares situated opposite Ebene Cybercity, at Minissy, on the left of Bagatelle Dam. In this context, on 18 December 2015, Government approved the setting up of Heritage City Co. Ltd., a wholly State-owned company, for the implementation of the Heritage City Project within a time frame of three years as from 2016.

The Heritage City will be an 'ellipse shape' symbolising the unity of public and private dimensions, with an International Convention Centre placed at the fulcrum of the ellipse, joining the public buildings and the commercial half. The objective of Government is to create an integrated development for the current and future working generations in a 'work, live and play' environment, that serve a range of people including: students, young professionals, families with children, retired persons and high net worth investors in Mauritius.

The Heritage City represents the synthesis of the civic world and the commercial domain, public spirit and local community. It will unify a complex mix of uses, people and institutions and involve the construction of a new iconic Parliament Building; Prime Minister's Office; six Government office buildings with high-end ICT and E-Governance infrastructure and data centres; a new international convention centre; mixed-use retail and commercial centres; and affordable mid-scale, upper-scale apartments, town-homes and villas.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the State Land Development Company Ltd. (SLDC) invited proposals on 02 October 2015 for consultancy services for the development of the Highlands Smart City Project comprising of 2,179 *Arpents*, including the 336 *Arpents* for the 'Administrative City' which was later renamed as the 'Heritage City Project'. In the Request for Proposals, it was clearly indicated that the 'Administrative City' can either be located near the Côte d'Or Roundabout or downstream of the Bagatelle dam. At close of the deadline for submission of proposals, eleven (11) bids were received from local and international consortiums. A Bid Evaluation Committee was set up by the SLDC and independent evaluators from the Professional Architect Council and the Institution of Engineers Mauritius were enlisted to form part of the Committee.

Based on the recommendations of the Bid Evaluation Committee, I am informed that the SLDC has retained the services of Luxconsult (Mtius) Ltd. for the preparation of the Master Plan of the Highlands Project. In respect of the Heritage City, the Heritage City Co. Ltd. will retain the same consultant as part of the same contract and in line with the advice received from the Solicitor General.

The Master Plan for the Heritage City has been entrusted to Stree Consulting, a Dubai based consulting firm on the basis of a Government to Government agreement with the Government of Dubai in accordance with section 3 of the Public Procurement Act.

With regard to part (b) of the question, a feasibility study for the Heritage City Project which consists of the list of requirements from all relevant Ministries, the concept Master Plan, cash flow and financial forecasts, including impact on GDP growth and national debt, the legal due diligence report, the value-for-money assessment, the proposed scope of works and the arrangements for funding were submitted to the High-Powered Committee as required by the provisions of Section 3 of the Public Procurement Act.

The innovative financial modelling is one which involves minimal public funding and maximal equity participation through redeemable shares. It is a project that is going to create value, the benefits of which will accrue to the Government.

With regard to part (c) of the question, Madam Speaker, the EIA forms part of the terms of reference of the consultancy services and I am informed that Luxconsult (Mtius) Ltd has been selected by SLDC, as I stated before, to conduct this exercise.

With regard to part (d) of the question, following the G2G Agreement which was entered into by the Government of Mauritius and the Emirate of Dubai, the statutory procedures set out under Section 3 of the Public Procurement Act have been followed. After examination of the reports, the High-Powered Committee has, on 23 February 2016, submitted its report to Cabinet for the procurement of professional services of Stree in the context of the proposed G2G arrangement with Heritage City Co. Ltd. for an amount not exceeding USD 4.3 m. for the detailed Master Plan; engineering design of the Government offices; the schematic design including infrastructure design, ICT infrastructure, renewable energy component of the six government buildings.

Following the formulation of the detailed Master Plan and the schematic design, local and international tenders will be launched for construction works to start.

With regard to part (e) of the question, I am informed that Heritage City Co. Ltd. invited application for pre-qualification of contractors for the project. The notice was published in the Press as from 10 March 2016. The deadline for submissions of applications was 28 March 2016.

Twenty-eight applicants, Madam Speaker, collected the pre-qualification documents from Heritage City Co. Ltd. and 18 of them have submitted applications for pre-qualification. The evaluation of these applications is ongoing.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the services of local consultants, contractors, sub-contractors and labour will be a priority. This, Madam Speaker, will bring the much awaited impetus to boost our local construction sector and create jobs.

With regard to part (f) of the question, the project value for the construction of a new Parliament Building, Prime Minister's Office, the Government buildings; Civic and Cultural facilities; the Pedestrian Spine and infrastructure for the whole site is estimated at USD 375 m. which is approximately Rs13 billion.

With regard to the private residential and commercial phase of the project, this will be under the "*Vente en Etat Futur d'Achèvement*" (VEFA) model and will include mid-scale apartments; upper scale apartments; town-homes; villas; two hotels; and mix-use retail facilities. The cost for this part is also estimated at USD375 m.

The New International Convention Centre will in addition cost around USD50 m.

The total project value is therefore estimated at USD800 m., i.e. USD375 m.: for the public buildings and infrastructure; USD375 m.: for the private residences and commercial buildings; and USD50 m.: for the International Convention Centre.

Madam Speaker, the Government buildings and infrastructure will require financing of up to USD375 m., which will be raised by Heritage City Co. Ltd as follows –

(i) a syndicated loan of around Rs2.9 billion which is USD 83 m. from a consortium of leading local banks on terms and conditions which Heritage City Co. Ltd is currently finalising with these banks. Three banks have already confirmed their participation of up to Rs2 billion and the fourth bank will be concluding shortly. I must say, Madam Speaker, that this is in line with Government's objective of mopping up the existing liquidity which is also available with banks in Mauritius;

(ii) the issue of Cumulative Redeemable Preference Shares with a defined Coupon rate for a total amount of Rs10 billion which is USD292 m. Two foreign States namely Saudi Arabia and India have been presented with the financial model, agreements in principle have been obtained, the terms of which are being finalised and of course, for confidentiality purposes, Madam Speaker, cannot be disclosed at this stage.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the private residences and commercial buildings, these will be pre-sold under the VEFA model. I also wish to inform the House that the implementation of this project will contribute positively to an increase in GDP growth by an estimated: 0.2% in 2016; 0.8% in 2017; 0.9% in 2018; 0.4% in 2019 and 0.3% in 2020. This will have the benefit of reducing the ratio of public sector debt to GDP, which is in line with our mandatory obligations under the Public Debt Management Act, as well as the commitments that have been given to the IMF.

I wish to emphasise the fact that the previous Government has heavily burdened the State finances to such an extent that today, it is almost impossible to borrow more for executing public sector projects. There is therefore, no alternative, but to come up with innovative mode of financing which will enable us to bring the much required capital projects, more so that these projects are required at this stage to bring an impetus to our economy. This project will boost the construction industry without taking public funds for raising the capital. Residential units will be self-financing. Rental of the Government buildings will be paid to Heritage City Co. Ltd. which is a State-owned enterprise and after a

defined period of time, Government will be the owner of these buildings and will not have to pay rent going forward. This will also, Madam Speaker, create a new environment for the public sector which is conducive to the advancement in new technology and e-governance which will significantly reduce the cost of inefficiencies in the public sector and deliver better quality service by public sector organisations. It will also create data centres for necessary backups and new methodologies for the public sector to operate in line with the principles of e-governance.

It is an intelligent way of financing a project that will allow us to do what we have set out to do, which is going towards the second economic miracle.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister say that Luxconsult has finally been appointed as a consultant for the Highlands projects including the Heritage City Project. Can I know the date when SLDC appointed Luxconsult?

Mr Bhadain: The selection process has been ongoing over a period of time and I believe that SLDC has communicated its decision to Luxconsult. I don't know the exact date, but it was recently.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the feasibility study is concerned, can I know, at least pending the studies now going to start, who has estimated the total project to be worth USD800 m., that is, Rs3 billion roughly? Who has made that estimate? Is it based on at least pre-feasibility study?

Mr Bhadain: Yes, there has been a whole team working, Madam Speaker. An independent financial consultancy firm was also retained, that was BDO, to have a look at all the figures and to validate the figures. International construction rates have been used in the estimates for the construction of the project and I can also say that it is only USD375 m. which is required for the Government buildings, the new Parliament, the Prime Minister's Office and the infrastructural works. The other USD375 m., as I have stated before, will be financed through the VEFA model which is pre-selling those residential and commercial apartments.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the EIA is concerned, I understand from what I have heard that it is again Luxconsult that will be in charge of preparing the EIA, but already we have been presented with models, with the outlines of the Heritage City. Can I know who has advised Government as to where exactly to place that development being given security

problems with the Bagatelle Dam not far away? Who has advised Government in that choice that has already been put forward?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, the EIA process will follow its course as per the law and it is in the terms of reference of the consultant to do a number of things and the whole procedures for the EIA part is listed in the terms of reference which will be conducted by Luxconsult, appointed by SLDC and for which the State Law Office has advised us that Heritage City Co. Ltd. does not have to repeat this exercise and waste time and we can go with that terms of reference of Luxconsult.

With regard to the site, as I have explained in the earlier part of my answer, the survey and a pre-feasibility study were already done for the Highlands Project and that dates back from 2003 up to 2008. Bagatelle Dam being where it is, the project in itself was going to be both on the left-hand side and the right-hand side of Bagatelle Dam on a total plot of 2179 *Arpents*.

The Heritage City Project will be based on the left-hand side between the motorway and Bagatelle Dam. 336 *Arpents* which was initially for the overall project was earmarked for the Police Academy. So, it has been changed to the Heritage City Project on those 336 *Arpents*.

Mr Bérenger: It is not the same site that is being used as in the 2000-2005 Government. Not at all! Both the Dam, in fact, has moved and the project has moved. Therefore, I would wish to know, at this stage, what specialised advice Government has received that there is no problem with the site chosen as at now?

Mr Bhadain: I must say, Madam Speaker, that, at this stage, as we speak, there are geotechnical tests which are being performed on the land and Heritage City Co. Ltd. has already appointed the relevant people to do those tests and the topographic design of the site is being looked at. At this stage, we are awaiting the conclusions of those geotechnical tests and also looking at the whole topography of the land. But, as I said before, I don't think there is any specific reason as to why this land would not be appropriate for such development at this stage. But, we are moving fast. We are working quickly.

Mr Bérenger: If I can move to Stree Consulting, which I understand has been appointed without tender procedures because it is a Government to Government project.

Which Government are we talking about? The Government of Mauritius is one thing. Is it the Government of Dubai or the United Arab Emirates?

Mr Bhadain: It is Dubai, Madam Speaker, following the Prime Minister's delegation visiting Dubai. I was, myself, part of the delegation and also hon. Vice-Prime Minister. We had meetings with the representatives of the Government there and they decided that they were going to provide the assistance of somebody who is very well qualified into this field. On that basis, a due diligence report has been conducted on the company, on the person, and has been submitted to the High-Powered Committee. I must say that there was a legal due diligence which has been done by a law firm in Dubai also, AC&H Legal Consultants, together with all the relevant documents, as required by law, have been presented to the High-Powered Committee. I must also say, Madam Speaker, that the High-Powered Committee took two days to scrutinise everything and examine all the documents which have been submitted. They had additional questions, explanations have been provided and at the end of the process, the High-Powered Committee, being satisfied, has actually sent its report to Cabinet which has been duly approved.

Mr Bérenger: I hear with surprise the hon. Minister saying that Stree Consulting is well-known, is equipped and so on. Is he aware – I am sure that he is – that it is nowhere to be found on the Internet and not one architect in Mauritius or outside Mauritius knows of that very – according to the hon. Minister – qualified consulting firm?

Mr Bhadain: Well, it is the person, Mr Saeed Ahmed Saeed, who is the representative of Stree Consulting. He has been working with one of the largest developers in Dubai, Nakheel, I believe, he was in the Executive Management Team, if not, the Chief Executive himself, for a number of years and has been working on so many projects according to the due diligence report and also according to what the High-Powered Committee has scrutinised and approved. He worked on the Palm Island Development in Dubai. He worked on Jumeirah Islands. His team worked on Petronas Towers in Malaysia and also in terms of the New World Trading Centre in US. He has a wealth of expertise in this field. I believe that based on the concept Master Plan, which has been designed, he is creating something fabulous for Mauritius.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know whether the hon. Minister has been made aware of forceful protests by the architects of Mauritius who feel insulted by this whole saga and is he prepared to table copy of the letters that have been sent to others?

Mr Bhadain: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, which letters are we referring to?

Mr Bérenger: I have, in my hands, a letter from the Mauritius Association of Architects dated 25 March, which says in one paragraph, and I quote –

“Despite our protest that the tender requirements are totally unreasonable (...) the start of the project.”

They’ve protested that the consultant has been chosen without proper procedures and that they have had no chance as local architects to participate.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, with great respect to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we cannot say without proper procedures being followed because we have followed section 3 of the Public Procurement Act, which details a process and this whole process has been followed, stringent due diligence has been conducted, not only by my Ministry, by other professional firms, the High-Powered Committee has scrutinised everything, Cabinet has looked at everything. This is where we are and we are moving very fast on this project. So, proper procedures have been followed. Also, I can reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition and also through him the local architects that they will be involved in the project.

Mr Bérenger: We have been informed that this Stree Consulting will be paid for – if I heard correctly – USD4.3 m. which is not cheap money. Can I know how this figure has been arrived at? It is a percentage of what? How has it been arrived at?

Mr Bhadain: It is based on the proposals which have been submitted and the relevant letters of engagement which were attached to the proposals and submitted to the High-Powered Committee. Part of the assessment of the High-Powered Committee is to establish whether there is value for money. This value for money assessment has been conducted by the Secretary to Cabinet, the Financial Secretary, the Solicitor General and they have concluded that this is definitely value for money especially bearing in mind the type of development, what is being brought in this project, Madam Speaker. I must say that this is going to be one development which is going to be conducted in Mauritius after many years because in the last ten years, we have not seen anything like that. It is going to be done in a way whereby this is going to be a jewel not only for Mauritius, but for the whole of Africa. I must also correct one thing, Madam Speaker, if I may. The Architect’s problem which was

referred to and the letter referred to by the hon. Leader of the Opposition was with SLDC and not Heritage City Co. Ltd.

Mr Bérenger: A copy has been sent to you, as Minister responsible for Financial Services, to the hon. Prime Minister, to the hon. Minister of Finance and to everybody including the Leader of the Opposition. Regarding the issue of pre-qualification, I heard that 18 firms have taken out the required documents. Can I know how many local firms are found therein?

Mr Bhadain: I very much believe, Madam Speaker, that we are talking about local firms. These are local firms and the advertisement was placed in the local newspapers, unless I am mistaken on this issue. I will probably get the answer in a few minutes. But these are local firms. Yes, the majority are local firms out of the 18, three are foreign and the rest are all local firms.

Mr Bérenger: Can we have the names of those foreign firms?

Mr Bhadain: Well, I can certainly table the names of the local firms as well as the foreign firms to the National Assembly in all transparency, Madam Speaker.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether it is still scheduled that work will start as stated by both Cabinet and the Minister concerned in August this year?

Mr Bhadain: This is the challenge that we have undertaken to achieve and I have no doubt whatsoever that we will be able to start construction works in August, unless there is a major problem. This is the objective. This is what we are going to work for and this is what we shall do.

Mr Mahomed: The hon. Minister mentioned about mopping up excess liquidity as the one of the windfall advantages of the Heritage City Project. Now, there is one domain where there is excess is floor space in Port Louis and in Ebene and where prices have dropped dramatically to Rs20 in Port Louis and Rs30 approximately in Ebene, fully-fitted. May I know from the hon. Minister what is the estimated rental that we are expected to pay for governmental buildings on land that belongs to us until such time the building will become ours?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, firstly let me say that if we get Rs20 and Rs30, I mean, we would go and take that deal straightaway. I do not know where the hon. Member is

getting those figures from. My Ministry is in Ebene and we are paying rent and we know what price we are paying. It is certainly not Rs30. Having said that, Madam Speaker, I believe what is important to understand is why is it that the whole project is an innovative way of financing? One thing we know is that we cannot use debt finance in terms of increasing the national debt too much because we have already given commitment to the IMF and we are already bound by the provision of the Public Debt Management Act. So, therefore, we are coming with an alternative way of raising finance where Heritage City Co. Ltd. will issue cumulative preference shares which will basically bring in the finance together with the syndicated loan of the local banks to start the project and then, at the end of the process, when the project is completed, those buildings will be rented by Ministries, the Prime Minister's Office. The rental income of Heritage City Co. Ltd. will be the rental expenditure of Government on the other side. So, it is going from one Government pocket to another Government pocket. Now, in terms, of the pre-selling on the VEFA model, all the commercial and residential units, the VEFA profits will also accrue to Heritage City Co. Ltd, which is 100% Government owned. Now, with that money, those redeemable preference shares will be redeemed over time. So, it is a very intelligent way of financing a project in a situation where the previous Government have left us with so much debt that we cannot even contemplate borrowing to do projects in Mauritius.

At the end of the process, when those shares will be redeemed, then those buildings will be freehold, meaning that the Government of Mauritius will not have to pay any rent after 15 years or so and will enjoy the rental of those buildings for free.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't interrupt, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Bhadain: If I may finish on this, Madam Speaker, we must also consider that this project is going to provide the public sector with the much awaited progress and development in the field of technology - because when we look at the Government buildings today and where public officials are working, whether it is Emmanuel Anquetil or NPF or all these other buildings, now you will have a conducive environment - create that ecosystem for the young generation who are going to come and work for the public sector, in this environment where you will have all the principles of e-governance, all the technology which is there and also the data centres.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition, last question!

(Interruptions)

No comment, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

No comment, I have said! Hon. Ameer Meea, please!

(Interruptions)

Please! Hon. Ameer Meea! Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: I have to sit down, then you sit down, then I stand up!

(Interruptions)

It's tiring!

This concerns the last part of my question. We have heard a lot about public debt and so on, that this is a very imaginative way of getting round it. What is going to be guaranteed by Government and that, therefore, will go into the public debt? Can we have a straight answer? What will be guaranteed? The money borrowed from local banks? The shares that will be issued? The money that will be obtained - from what we have heard - from Saudi Arabia and India? Secondly, this is *spéculation immobilière*. Who is going to take the risk if the residential part thereof ends up like we have seen at St Jean and in other places? Who will bear the risk? Government, finally? How will all this go into the public debt?

Mr Bhadain: This appears to be another Private Notice Question, Madam Speaker. There are so many questions in one question. Well, first and foremost, what has happened in Saint Jean, Le Meritt and all of that was bad planning, and it was done in the wrong model. Here, we are talking about an innovative model where Government is going to be renting and Government is paying to Government, and the money is being used to repay the redeemable preference shares. With regard to who is going to buy, I must say that we have a number of initiatives that we are putting in place, including the FSC creating the concept of overseas

family corporation, which is going to allow people to come and buy property in this area, plus you have all the public officials. I stated in my answer! We are talking about students, we are talking about people with children and families, we are talking about young professionals and public officials.

(Interruptions)

With regard to the other issue raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition as to the risk, but this is risk free! I can't see where the risk is. What is the risk?

(Interruptions)

He is talking about Government guarantee. Government is not giving any guarantee. That is why I believe that the model has not been understood, because it is the rental agreements from Government, Government paying to Government, which is the guarantee. There is no Government guarantee being given! On top of that, if we look at the Public Debt Management Act, cumulative preference shares is classified as equity not as debt...

(Interruptions)

But this is in the law! I can also reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we have talked to the IMF about this and the IMF approves that this is equity. There is no need to make any speculation.

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question No. B/203, in regard to the speed cameras, will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Parliamentary Question No. B/204, in regard to the sale by levy, will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions. Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

BANK OF MAURITIUS - CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCE - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/201) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the post of Chief Human Resource, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to the –

- (a) qualifications requirements therefor, and
- (b) name of the incumbent thereof, indicating the -
 - (i) date of appointment, and
 - (ii) qualifications thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that, in accordance with the Bank of Mauritius Act, the Bank of Mauritius is not subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority. In this respect, matters relating to the recruitment, appointment and promotion of staff rest exclusively within the purview of the Bank of Mauritius. It would, therefore, not be appropriate to provide the information requested by the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker, however, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that ICAC is conducting an inquiry into the appointment of the Chief-Human Resource. The Bank has provided ICAC with all the information necessary for the inquiry.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know when ICAC started the inquiry?

The Prime Minister: Well, ICAC has started the inquiry. I can't say exactly on what date, but the inquiry is on.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Sesungkur!

PUBLIC TRANSPORT - UNCIVIL BEHAVIOUR

(No. B/202) **Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the public transport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from

the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of alleged anti-social behaviour of which women, students and elderly persons have been victims when making use thereof over the past five years, indicating the actions taken/that will be taken, if any, to ensure the protection of the abovementioned categories of users thereof against such behaviour.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, by using the term ‘anti-social behaviour’ in regard to public transport, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to offences such as assault, insult, incivility and attempt upon chastity towards passengers.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since 2011 to date, there have been 134 cases of such offences reported to the Police by women, students and elderly persons.

I am also informed by Police that, in order to reduce these offences, the Motorway and Traffic Field Division and the Divisional Traffic Police of the Traffic Branch carry out regular patrols in order to attend to complaints and incidents related to the transport sector. Furthermore, the *Brigade pour la protection des mineurs* assists regular Police in dealing with problems concerning students.

In addition to the above, I am informed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport that the National Transport Authority (NTA) has taken disciplinary action against bus drivers, bus conductors and operators in 33 cases of uncivil behaviour towards passengers during the past five years as follows -

- (i) in 25 cases, there has been suspension of licences;
- (ii) three cases have been struck out, and
- (iii) five cases have been dismissed.

I am also informed by the NTA that 211 cases of offences other than misbehaviours have also been heard and the licences of bus operators and bus crews have been suspended. In each case where there has been a failure to pick up students and old-aged pensioners, the free travel compensation for five days, amounting to Rs15,000 paid to the operator, has been retained.

In order to curtail anti-social behaviour, I am informed that the National Transport Corporation has embarked on a customer care training programme for bus crews.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, is the Rt. hon. Prime Minister aware that similar anti-social behaviours have been noted around bus stations like Central Flacq, La Gare du

Nord, Rose Hill, and if he will ask the Commissioner of Police to take severe action against those? It has been reported that those anti-social behaviours often come from students.

The Prime Minister: I have already answered this. It is in my answer.

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, in UK, they have a special Division called the BTP (British Transport Police) which is in charge of offenders on buses, trains and coaches. Could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister consider having a special unit at the level of the Police?

The Prime Minister: Well, I can pass on this message to the Commissioner of Police.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: May I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to look into the cases of bus employees who are subject to assaults or to anti-social behaviour, especially female conductors? Recently, there was a case where a bus conductor was assaulted, nearly losing one of his eyes with a cutter used by one of the passengers who was drunk. Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister see to it that the law be strengthened and protect more employees of the transport sector who are subject to assaults or to anti-social behaviour?

The Prime Minister: Not only women, students and elderly persons are subject of assault, there are also many cases of assault and insults towards bus drivers and bus conductors. Since 2011 to date, there have been 262 cases of assault and insult on bus drivers and conductors which have been reported against only 134 cases mentioned in my reply with regard to women, students and elderly. And, of course, the serious case just mentioned, the Police is taking action.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

SPEED CAMERAS - OPERATION

(No. B/203) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the speed cameras, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if -

- (a) they are all fully operational and, if not, why not, and
- (b) a study has been carried out to ascertain if the use thereof has generated the expected outcome of reducing the number of road accidents.

(Withdrawn)

SALE BY LEVY – NATIONAL SOLIDARITY FUND - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/204) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Sale by Levy, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information from the -

- (a) National Solidarity Fund, as to the composition of the Committee that considers disbursements therefrom, indicating the -
 - (i) criteria used for the granting of assistance and for the determination of the quantum thereof, and
 - (ii) number of requests for assistance received, considered, turned down/ granted and quantum disbursed, and
- (b) Bank of Mauritius, as to where matters stand regarding the proposed setting up of an Asset Management Company to provide, *inter alia*, for the replacement of the Sale by Levy procedure.

(Withdrawn)

TELEPHONE TAPPING

(No. B/205) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to telephone tapping, he will state if the National Security Service or any other specially formed cell is resorting thereto under the direct orders of the Executive.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the answer is no.

I wish to point out that Mauritius is an *Etat de droit* where the fundamental rights and freedom of any individual are guaranteed by our Constitution. Indeed, Section 3 of the Constitution guarantees the right to the protection for the privacy of one's home and other property which includes the privacy of communication made within the home, including any communication requiring the use of telephone apparatus.

However, Section 12 of the Constitution makes provision for interference with our fundamental rights under certain circumstances, such as in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that where information is required for the purpose of enquiry and criminal proceedings, an application is made before a Judge in Chambers, to intercept, withhold or disclose to the Police, a communication message.

Thereafter, the Judge's Order is forwarded to the public operator directing the latter to disclose the name and address of the alleged offender.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. I will ask you, Madam Speaker, to bear with me. I have two more questions, just only two.

Madam Speaker: One by one, please!

Mr Mohamed: One by one. I apologise if it is a bit long, but then again, it has to be explained very carefully. Could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, in light of the answers he has just given, explain to the House how does he reconcile his answer with two facts: number one, that all the licences that are issued, be it for Internet or be it for use of mobile phones by the network operators or even landlines; each of the licences contains a clause whereby the licensee is obliged to make available on demand to ICTA, the Authority, full access to gateways, switching centres, transmission centres, servers, routers, recordings, scrutiny for visual and even operational inspection? Secondly, how does he reconcile that with the fact that in Orleans Street there is an empty building with a specialised IT Unit which has parallel landlines that are operating for precisely listening purposes and recording purposes? That is one question.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member spoke of the conditions that have been put in the licences and what not. Well, if the conditions are there, people have to comply with the conditions and these conditions do not date yesterday. Everything this hon. Member is mentioning had been there for years while he was in Government together with the previous Government.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

The Prime Minister: Why did he not have it done away with?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister since he is telling us that there is no telephone tapping except with a Judge's Order, can I know since the last elections how many such Judges' Orders have been obtained?

The Prime Minister: Well, I need a specific question for that.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the Chairperson of ICTA travelled to India recently and recruited three consultants for phone tapping?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: That is not a question for the Rt. hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware.

Madam Speaker: Yes, last question, hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Just to pick up from where the Rt. hon. Prime Minister left off, true it is, but then again, he is here for change and I rely on him for change. Now, the second question would be very simple. How does he reconcile what he has just said - first answer and second answer - to the fact that some individuals from the National Security Services in May 2015 went to Copenhagen - nothing to do with the KGB operatives - and met with Israeli operatives, and those Israeli operatives were contacted for the purposes of purchase of equipment, for mobile equipment, in order to listen into conversations? Those three Israeli operatives came...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please, put your question! You are providing information instead of asking your question. You are not there to provide information. Ask your question!

Mr Mohamed: Let me finish, this is laying the foundation. This is trite knowledge. Now, those three operatives came to Mauritius to commission that equipment in a Nissan panel van and this van is found very often before the houses of Members of the Opposition and some Members of Government.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, I am sorry, I have to interrupt you. I have told you that the object of asking a question is to get information, whereas you are providing information.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: The question is very simple: how does the Rt. hon. Prime Minister reconcile that this Government has clearly been accepting and approving collaboration with Israeli operatives to listen in to Members of the Opposition and some Members of Government as well?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of this whole business which is being mentioned by the hon. Member. If the hon. Member comes with a specific question, I will get information and come with an answer.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

FOREIGNERS – NATURALIZATION

(No. B/206) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the foreigners, he will state the number thereof who have obtained naturalization since December 2014 to date, indicating in each case, the reasons why the Mauritian citizenship has been granted thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in accordance with Section 9 of the Mauritius Citizenship Act, the Minister may grant a Certificate of naturalization to foreigners who have resided in Mauritius for aggregate periods amounting to not less than five years during the last seven years and for a continuous residence period of 12 months immediately preceding their applications.

Pursuant to section 9 (3) of the Act, a continuous residence period of not less than two years may also be accepted, where applicants cannot satisfy the above-mentioned residence criteria; but have invested an amount of not less than 500,000 US Dollars in Mauritius.

Moreover, the Minister may also grant a Certificate of Naturalization to a foreigner, if he is satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so.

Accordingly, 13 foreigners have obtained naturalization since December 2014 to date. Five of them have satisfied the residence criteria and the other eight applicants have invested heavily in our hotel, tourism, property development and textile sectors, leading to the creation of more than one thousand direct jobs.

Mr Mohamed: I thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for his answer. Would it be possible for him to let the House know - and that is a prelude to my second question - how long does it really take for such nationality or citizenship to be granted from the moment of application, on average, ever since the Rt. hon. Prime Minister is Prime Minister once again?

The Prime Minister: Well, how long does it take, it depends on the officers and it depends also when the file comes to the Prime Minister. I can't give an exact timing.

Mr Mohamed: Could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House that there is a French national going by the name of Mr Touati who applied for a passport on 25 May 2015 and was granted that passport five days later on? A French national, M. Frédéric Joseph Touati, applied for a Mauritian passport on 25 May 2015 and was granted the passport five days later on. And this is the same gentleman who visited the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to make an exposé of this beautiful Eco-City project in Plaisance.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the hon. Member has made his point!

The Prime Minister: I don't know what the hon. Member is insinuating, but if this was done rapidly, well, I say: "Bravo".

(Interruptions)

In all cases, it should be done like this, not in the past when they were sleeping on so many files. We have more than 500 files...

(Interruptions)

...which were left there and I am dealing with them.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No comments!

The Prime Minister: Mr Frédéric Joseph Touati and Mrs Ariel Cécile Touati born Sabapathee, French nationals, were naturalised on 07 May 2015. They have invested about Rs100 m. in property development.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Last question!

Mr Mohamed: In the light of what was just given - and I thank him for the details - could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether this very same person had applied for naturalisation or Mauritian citizenship in the past and when did he apply for the nationality before it was granted to him? The point I am trying to get at, my information is that it was once upon a time turned down for very important national security reasons.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of that, why was it turned down, whether it was turned down. But I didn't turn it down.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Well, the exact date when he applied, I don't have it. Come with a specific question, I will give the date!

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Fowdar!

FOND DU SAC – DRAINS – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/207) Mr S. Fowdar (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, following the floods of February 2016, he will –

(a) state -

- (i) where matters stand regarding the construction of a Cut-Off drain in Fond du Sac, indicating the expected start and completion dates and estimated costs thereof, and
 - (ii) the number of households of Fond du Sac and of Camp Carol registered as victims thereof, indicating when compensation will be paid thereto, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund, information as to the quantum of the contributions of the private sector thereinto in the aftermath thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Development Unit that in view of prevailing site conditions and topography of the land, implementation of short term measures such as the construction of small drains and absorption drains will not alleviate the problem of flooding at Fond du Sac.

Consequently, Invitation for Proposals for Consultancy Services for the Design and Construction of Flood Mitigating measures at Fond du Sac was launched by the National Development Unit on 01 April 2016 and the closing date for the submission of bids is 17 May 2016. The National Development Unit has resorted to Consultancy Services in view of the complexity of the flooding problem in that locality and the need for long term measures to address the problem permanently.

At this stage, it cannot be established that the work will comprise only a cut-off drain. The scope of works and measures to address the flooding problems as well as the cost of the project will be known after the detailed designs are carried out by the selected Consultant.

Remedial works may, *inter alia*, comprise of a combination of cut-off drains, collector drains, detention ponds and roadside drains.

In respect of part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions that 192 households were affected in Fond du Sac and 524 persons were registered as victims. As regards Camp Carol, 20 households were affected and the number of persons registered as victims was 70. All heads of household for the two regions were paid the allowance for flood victims at the rate of Rs165 per day per person for a maximum of three days as set out in the First Schedule of the Social Aid Regulations 1984.

As regards part (b) of the question, no contribution has been made by the private sector to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund, in the aftermath of the floods in February 2016.

Mr Fowdar: Madam Speaker, can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister if in case the private sector wants to contribute directly to the victims, can they do that?

The Prime Minister: If they want to contribute directly, if they want to give charity, I have no objection.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

PMO – MR K. R - SALARY & ALLOWANCES

(No. B/208) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Mr K. R., Senior Adviser attached to the Prime Minister's Office since July 2005 to December 2014, he will state the –

- (a) net monthly salary and allowances drawn, and
- (b) Boards on which he served as representative of the said Office thereon, indicating in each case, the -
 - (i) date of appointment thereto;
 - (ii) allowances drawn therefor, and
 - (iii) number of overseas missions undertaken in connection therewith, indicating the countries visited and expenditure incurred therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the net monthly salary and allowances drawn by Mr K. R. before his resignation on 12 December 2014 was Rs195,000, excluding travelling allowance.

In regard to part (b) of the question, Mr K. R. was not serving on any Board as representative of the Prime Minister's Office.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! No! Next question, hon. Uteem!

BANQUE DES MASCAREIGNES - BAI CO. (MTIUS) – ALLEGED TRANSFER OF FUNDS

(No. B/209) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the alleged transfer of funds by the *Banque des Mascareignes* to the BAI Co. (Mtius), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof, including the number of arrests effected in connection therewith and the charges lodged, if any.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 03 April 2015, Police have instituted an enquiry in regard to the alleged transfer of funds from *Banque des Mascareignes* to the BA Investment Co. (Mtius) Ltd.

During the course of the investigation, the Police have arrested four suspects and have provisionally charged them with the offence of “conspiracy to make false entries” in breach of section 109 (1) of the Criminal Code (Supplementary) Act and section 97 (21) (a) of the Banking Act 2004.

The enquiry is still in progress.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, may I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether the four suspects who have been arrested, do they all come from the same bank or are there other people not related to the bank who have been arrested?

The Prime Minister: Yes, they all come from the same bank.

Mr Uteem: Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House why is it that there is a conspiracy by a bank to give money to the BAI, no one from BAI is arrested; Beebeejaun is not arrested, Taher is not arrested, the CEO and the CFO are not arrested?

The Prime Minister: Well, I will ask the hon. Member to come with a specific question on that.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether there were instructions given to the Police to make an arrest on Mr Saleem Beebeejaun and Mr Taher and, ultimately, there has been political interference so that these two people be refrained from being arrested and these instructions came from Senior Ministers of Government?

The Prime Minister: That is not correct.

Mr Uteem: May I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister if anyone at the Bank of Mauritius has been interviewed being given that it concerns a bank?

The Prime Minister: Well, I don't know whether anybody has been interviewed. I am not aware.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I hope the Rt. hon. Prime Minister won't be angry. Is it not a fact that Mr Beebeejaun has not been arrested because he has been actively campaigning for the MSM, for the municipal election and he is now an active Member of the MSM?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, allow the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to reply, please!

(Interruptions)

And silence!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

The Prime Minister: I always thought it was otherwise because he was a staunch Labourite.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Lesjongard!

RIVIÈRE NOIRE – LARCENY – ARREST

(No. B/210) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Rivière Noire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of thefts committed thereat over the past three months, indicating –

- (a) the number thereof in which foreign nationals are the victims, and

- (b) in each case, the number of suspects arrested, indicating if most of them are drug addicts.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/210, B/211 and B/213 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

I presume that the hon. Member is referring to reported cases of “larceny” which is defined under sections 301 to 311 of the Criminal Code Act as the term “theft” is not provided for in our legislation.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of reported cases of larceny in the region of Rivière Noire from January to December 2015 is 52.

Out of the 52 cases -

- (i) 13 are under enquiry;
- (ii) 33 cases have been filed *pro-tem*;
- (iii) 5 are pending court decision, and
- (iv) 1 case has been completed and the accused has been sentenced to six months imprisonment.

From January to 14 April 2016, 16 cases of larceny have been reported in the same region and all cases are under enquiry.

Out of these, three have been reported by foreign nationals. Three suspects have been arrested and none of them is a drug addict.

Madam Speaker, the Commissioner of Police has also informed that from January 2015 to 14 April 2016, 125 cases of larceny in the region of Tamarin have been reported to the Police.

Out of the 125 reported cases -

- (i) 73 cases are under enquiry;
- (ii) 45 cases have been filed *pro-tem*;
- (iii) 4 are pending court decision, and

- (iv) 3 cases have been completed. In two cases, accused have been fined Rs2,000 each and in one case, the accused has been fined Rs1,000.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that a Community Policy Forum was held by the Police at the Black River Police Station on 30 March 2016 with members of the local community from various villages falling under the jurisdiction of the Police Station.

During the meeting, matters pertaining to crime prevention measures, implementation of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and the reinforcement of the Police Public Partnership with a view to curbing down larceny in the region were discussed.

The Community was also informed of the different measures that are being implemented by the Police to ensure the security of the inhabitants in the region, among others -

- (i) at least four Police vehicles doing mobile police patrols round the clock. It is to be noted that there are also 17 vehicles for the whole district of Black River which can be made available to any of the Police Station of the district in case of emergency, and
- (ii) maintaining the light bar on the police vehicles continuously so as to indicate visible Police presence to reassure the community.

The Community was also reassured that additional measures were being taken by the Police to address the upsurge of larceny cases reported at the Black River Police Station, namely -

- (i) reinforcement of the Police strength in the region from the Divisional Support Unit, the SMF, the Special Support Unit and the Emergency Response Service, among others, to increase Police presence in the region;
- (ii) road blocks at strategic places, and
- (iii) the introduction of Hotspots policing and Bottleneck Operations.

As regards larceny being reported from the seaward side, the community was informed that to address the issue, the NCG personnel has increased the number of patrols along the coastal areas. In addition, a patrol vessel with a crew of 20 coast guards has been anchored in Black River Bay to monitor all seaborne activities.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, I haven't heard the Rt. hon. Prime Minister confirm whether that Senior Police Officer made a statement to the inhabitants of that area that he was facing problems to cope with the situation because of the lack of vehicles and he made a statement where he said that he told the inhabitants that they should go back to their houses before 6 p.m. Did he make that statement during that meeting?

The Prime Minister: I don't know whether anyone made that statement, but I have just mentioned all the measures that have been taken. If he made it, I don't know when he made it. It could have been much before.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon Jhugroo, you will continue with your comments? Yes, hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: I would like to thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for all the measures taken. Could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister see to it that cameras are installed in the regions of Tamarin and Black River, as it is the case in Flic-en-Flac?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member could come with a specific question, I can't say what happened in Flic-en-Flac.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, since it seems that there is - following the question of hon. Lesjongard - a serious deterioration in the matter of law and order in that part of Mauritius, at least, does...

(Interruptions)

We will come with other specific questions on those other parts. But, with regard to this part, is this the reason why the PMSD leader, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, has been mandated to himself chair this Committee to sort out serious problems with regard to law and order which Government is not managing to sort out?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member must say thank you...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: ...for all the steps we are taking because the Deputy Prime Minister is a Minister of this Government and he is entitled to do what he has been asked to do.

RIVIERE NOIRE - POLICE OFFICERS & INHABITANTS - MEETING

(No. B/211) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Rivière Noire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a meeting was held on 30 March last between the inhabitants thereof and officers of the Police Station thereof in the course of which the said Police Officers averred that they -

- (a) cannot effect regular patrol thereat due to lack of vehicles, and
- (b) guarantee the security of the inhabitants after 6.00 p.m. and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/210)

RIVIÈRE NOIRE - THEFT & LARCENY - INQUIRIES

(No. B/213) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Tamarin and Rivière Noire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of theft and larceny thereat since January 2015 to date, indicating -

- (a) where matters stand as to the inquiries carried out thereinto, and
- (b) measures taken or that will be taken to curb the incidence thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/210)

AIR MAURITIUS LTD. – BOARD GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE

(No. B/214) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Air Mauritius Ltd., he will state the names of the representative of

Government sitting thereon, indicating the capacity in which the said person is representing Government on the Board thereof.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/214, addressed to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, has been withdrawn. Time is over! Next question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

DR. A. G. JEETOO HOSPITAL – MS R. B. – DEMISE

(No. B/222) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the demise of Ms R. B. following a surgical operation for the removal of the gall bladder in September/October 2015 at the Dr A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, he will state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate –

- (a) who carried out the said inquiry, and
- (b) the outcome thereof.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that, following the recommendation of a preliminary investigation, the Inquiry Committee was set up on 06 January 2016.

The Inquiry Committee was chaired by the then Acting Regional Health Director of Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and having as members -

- (a) one Consultant-in-charge Internal Medicine from Victoria Hospital;
- (b) one Consultant-in-charge General Surgery from Victoria Hospital, and
- (c) one Assistant Permanent Secretary to act as Secretary.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Inquiry Committee has, on 22 March 2016, recommended that, in view of the shortcomings identified in the management of that particular case, they will be referred to the Medical Council for appropriate actions. The Medical Council has been informed accordingly on 14 April 2016 and the outcome is awaiting.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Minister aware that the cause of death was attributed to pulmonary and cardiac of origin, whereas there was also an autopsy on that patient which confirmed otherwise, that the doctor who did that mismanaged and did the laparoscopy differently by clipping the biliary duct and that caused the death of that patient?

Mr Gayan: Well, Madam Speaker, I have just said that there was an enquiry that was set up, shortcomings were identified and this is the reason why it has been referred to the Medical Council.

Dr. Joomaye: Madam Speaker, I would like to know from the hon. Minister if he is aware that there have been several deaths following that type of surgery at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and what are the measures that have been taken to prevent this from happening?

Mr Gayan: Well, I am not aware whether there have been several deaths, but what I have asked all the doctors and surgeons, Madam Speaker, is that they should be working in teams instead of working individually. Unfortunately, this has been the practice in Mauritius that they work individually. They should follow the international practice that they should discuss the case as a team and perform surgery as a team.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Does the hon. Minister find it proper that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life did the enquiry on its own hospital doctors? Like he mentioned, some consultants who did the primary enquiry, did the enquiry on its own doctors. Does not that tantamount to judge and party the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life doing enquiry on its own doctors?

Mr Gayan: Well, Madam Speaker, I am informed that the procedure, whenever there is an allegation of professional misconduct, is to have an internal enquiry and once the findings are given and there are indications of any shortcomings, then the enquiry and the recommendations of the responsible officer are referred to the Medical Council which is the statutory disciplinary body according to the PSC Regulations.

Mr Baloomoody: I have a general question. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will see to it that in case of alleged medical negligence, at least the next of kin of the deceased get access to the medical file at the hospital so that if ever they want to take private action they can? Now, it is very difficult to get access and sometimes it is very costly.

Mr Gayan: Well, of course, there is a procedure for accessing the medical records of any patient and the procedure has to be followed. I understand that there is a fee also that has to be paid. Should there be a case in Court, the witnesses will come and they will depone on the medical records.

Madam Speaker: Last question on this issue, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Doing an internal enquiry by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, there is always an element of cover-up because it is doctors to doctors. This is the case. We know it we have been here, in Mauritius. Will the hon. Minister consider setting up an independent enquiry by independent persons, doctors to do the enquiry for this case and for other cases? The hon. Minister knows very well because there is a circular that he has circulated for senior doctors to do laparoscopy. In this case, it was done by a junior doctor. Will the hon. Minister set up an enquiry from an independent body?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I need to follow the rules and the rules say that after an enquiry is conducted in-house and there has been no cover-up because shortcomings have been listed and in the light of the shortcomings the matter has been referred to the Medical Council. This is the procedure that we need to follow. After the Medical Council has had another look at the records, it may decide to refer the case to the Medical Tribunal and if the Medical Tribunal comes to any conclusion, then the PSC will act on it. But, I do appreciate that the shortcomings do exist in this case.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

AUTO CYCLES & MOTORCYCLES – NOISE EMISSION

(No. B/223) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to loud noise emissions, he will state –

- (a) the number of contraventions booked and convictions secured in respect of auto cycles and motorcycles therefor over the past two years, and
- (b) if the sound level meters procured for the detection thereof are now operational and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training (Mr S. Callichurn): Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the number of contraventions established by Police in respect of loud noise emission by auto/motorcycles for the past two years up to end of March 2016 is as follows –

For the year 2014	784
For the year 2015	1281
For the year 2016 (up to end of March 2016)	262

Total	2327

The number of persons convicted for using auto cycles/motorcycles with modified silencers for the same period is 1846.

With regard to part (b) of the question, following several tests carried out with the Sound Level Meters, it was ascertained that the equipment could not be used to measure the noise emission for auto/motorcycles with modified silencers. Moreover, no proper reading could be obtained. Contraventions are being established based on excessive noise perceived by the ears of the officer establishing the contravention and upon verification of the exhaust pipe that is if the vehicle has been fitted with an extension or the silencer has been altered for causing excessive or greater noise.

I wish to inform the House that section 83(3) Use of Silencers of the Road Traffic Act (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations, 2010 provides that –

“No person shall –

- (a) fit on the exhaust pipe of a motor vehicle any extension or other device likely to cause excessive or unusual noise; or
- (b) alter the silencer in such a way that the noise caused by the escape of the exhaust gases is made greater by the alteration.”

The said legislation also provides that any person who contravenes this section of the law shall commit an offence and may on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs10,000.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, I know the hon. Minister is not the substantive Minister, so my comments are not directly to him, but if he could pass on the message to the substantive Minister when he comes back. This issue has been canvassed in this House on several occasions, Madam Speaker, and the last time I myself put this Parliamentary Question

was in February last year, that is, more than a year and in the reply, the previous Minister stated and I quote –

“Ene opération coup de poing will be undertaken by the six teams of Police de l’Environnement throughout the island for a period of two weeks.”

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, he himself was blown up in the Holi powder saga and there has never been any *opération coup de poing*.

Madam Speaker: What is your question? Ask your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: My question is to the fact that we just heard that the sound level meters cannot be used. This was the case since several years. Why is it that these sound level meters are not being replaced by proper sound level meters that can be admissible in Court?

Mr Callichurn: Madam Speaker, I am in a position to answer the question. I do know that the hon. Member himself has asked several questions on this particular issue in the past and as regards the *opération coup de poing*, I am informed that...

(Interruptions)

... seven teams of *Police de l’Environnement* carry out regular checks across the island to target motor vehicles causing excessive noise. An awareness campaign is also being done on a regular basis and I need to add that the strength of the *Police de l’Environnement* has been increased by 15 additional Police officers. Now, they have a total of 42 officers.

As regards the second issue raised by the hon. Member, the difficulties that are being encountered are - there are seven shortcomings which have been observed –

- (i) since the very start of December 2015, difficulties were encountered with the use of the sound level meters on auto/motorcycles on our roads for the enforcement with respect to that measure in decibel for vehicles with modified silencers;
- (i) the sound level meters could not give a proper result as some motorcycles and auto cycles with modified silencers are not fitted with RPM meter;

- (ii) even motorcycles fitted with RPM meter, the exhaust pipe of the motorcycles is so modified or altered and causing excessive noise that the sound level meter could not measure the noise level;
- (iv) the time taken for each test varies from 20 to 25 minutes which is considered to be time consuming and too lengthy for a road site test, and
- (v) the Enforcement Officer could not determine precisely whether auto cycle of motorcycle has a two-stroke or four-stroke engine which is necessary for the test.

Mr Mahomed: I did ask a question last year as well, B/786 on the subject matter. Now, in his reply again, from that *opération coup de poing*, the hon. Minister has explained a three-pronged approach –

- (i) purchasing equipment (noise meters) immediately;
- (ii) garages that do modifications of silencers will be warned severely, and
- (iii) he went to the extent of saying that motorcycles that do emit high level of sound will be ceased and confiscated and that, on the same date, he has sent a reminder to the Commissioner of Police.

May we know from the hon. Minister - whom I reckon is not the substantive Minister - what has become of these *démarches*?

Mr Callicurn: Well, the former Minister did make recommendation to the Commissioner of Police on 21 July 2015, with a view to amend the Road Traffic Act to address the issue the hon. Member just mentioned. We are awaiting the views of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport and a reminder has been sent recently. I have also been informed that a meeting will be held this Thursday to address those issues.

Mr Uteem: This question is addressed to the hon. Minister and he will be able to answer it because it concerns his Ministry. The hon. Minister referred to officers now listening to the noise. May I know whether his Ministry has been contacted to provide training to these officers and whether he has looked into the possibility of any occupational or health hazard in officers doing that?

Mr Callichurn: Unfortunately, I am not in a position to answer this particular question.

Mr Ameer Meea: The hon. Minister stated so many problems associated to the sound level meter. Can I ask the hon. Minister why not considering a ban on modified silencers importation?

Mr Callichurn: As I said earlier, those aspects are being looked into and there is a meeting on Thursday regarding this particular issue.

Mr Mohamed: Just to pick up from where hon. Uteem had left off. Could the hon. Minister consider the possibility of using very qualified staff at the level of his Ministry and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, who are in possession of equipment to measure noise levels and there are also regulations pertaining to that. I am sure this is what the hon. Uteem meant. There are regulations pertaining to noise at work that is already there and it is working very well, maybe he could use this experience to try to bring it to his colleague's attention.

Mr Callichurn: If it is possible, why not.

PORT LOUIS FIRE STATION - RELOCATION

(No. B/224) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to where matters stand as to the project for the –

- (a) upgrading of the Port Louis Fire Station, and
- (b) construction of a new fire station, headquarters and training academy at Riche Terre, indicating in both cases the expected start and completion dates thereof.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House, that it is not being envisaged to upgrade the existing Port Louis Fire Station. My Ministry is, instead, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport and the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services, exploring the possibility of relocating the Port Louis Fire Station at the Immigration Square in the context of Port Louis Redevelopment Project.

It is also being proposed that the Head Office of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services would be relocated thereat.

As a matter of fact, consultations have already started regarding this project and a meeting was held on 04 April 2016 at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, whereby the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services was requested to submit their detailed requirements.

I am informed by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services that it has already submitted the project details to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport on 11 April 2016 for consideration at its end.

As regards part (b) of the question, that is, the proposed construction of Riche Terre Fire Station, this project will be considered at a later stage, when necessary funding would have been identified.

As I mentioned before, given the massive investment required, that is, about half a billion rupees, this project will be implemented later as part of the overall development of the Jin Fei and the associated Port Development.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, in a past PQ dated March 2015, the hon. Minister stated and I quote –

“I am informed that a plot of land of the extent of 16 *arpents* and 30 *perches* at Riche Terre has been vested in my Ministry for the construction of a Fire Station”.

Now, we just heard the hon. Minister stating that it would be relocated in Immigration Square. So, may we know which is which because, according to last week’s reply, the hon. Minister also stated that the *marchands ambulants* will be relocated in Immigration Square? So, what are we going to do? What is the project and what is the time frame for this relocation?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I explained last time when I answered the same question that the Riche Terre Project is going to come later. It is not going to take care of Port Louis, it is for the whole Riche Terre, the Port and surrounding areas. Now, we are talking about the Port Louis, this one is for the Port Louis area. That is why there is a difference between the two.

Mr Mahomed: The Immigration Square is a very small place, in fact. May we know from the hon. Minister the extent that has been earmarked for the construction of this Fire Station that he is referring to?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, at Immigration Square, we have 10 acres of land and part of it ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, do not ask questions from a sitting position!

Dr. Husnoo: Anyway, just as I mentioned now, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services has submitted the details to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport just on 11 April. Just recently! So, we are still working on this.

Mr Mohamed: I would like to put a very simple question to the hon. Minister. Has a traffic impact assessment exercise been carried out with regard to the proposal of relocating the Fire Station at Immigration Square and, if it has been carried out, - because the avenues and the streets leading to it are quite narrow as he is well aware of - could he consider tabling that traffic impact assessment report?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, this subject about the exit for the fire lorries was discussed as well. They have decided that they are going to have dedicated exit for the fire lorries so that they can have easy access to the motorway.

Mr Ameer Meea: The hon. Minister just stated that the Immigration Square is 10 acres. May I ask him, if he is ready to table a site plan with the extent of the size land of these 10 acres that we are talking and even if he does not have it now, he can table it later?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, this is what I have been told by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport. I do not have the exact ...

(Interruptions)

We will think about it and we will decide later. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn, PQ B/232, PQ B/246 and PQ B/252. I suspend the sitting for one and half hours.

At 1.03 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair

TORRENTIAL RAIN/NATURAL CALAMITIES – EMPLOYEES - RELEASE

(No. B/225) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to torrential rainfalls, he will state if consideration will be given for proposed amendments to be introduced to the existing legislation with a view to provide for the obligation on employers to release the employees thereof in cases of warnings therefor issued by the Mauritius Meteorological Services and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mr Callichurn: Madam Speaker, a warning for torrential rain is issued by the Mauritius Meteorological Services when 100 mm of rain is registered in less than 12 hours and the rain is expected to continue.

Provision has now been made at section 16(2) of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act for the National Crisis Committee to address issues relating to natural calamities. The National Crisis Committee is empowered to take appropriate measures, including evacuation of persons at risk.

The National Risk Committee can, after consultation with the Prime Minister, make such orders to evacuate premises and protect persons.

Any person who contravenes any order issued under section 42 of this Act shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs100,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.

Madam Speaker, in view of the above, the need to legislate to provide for the release of employees on account of torrential rain is not felt.

I wish to assure the House that I shall hold meetings with social partners to sensitise them on the need to release employees in case of torrential rain and other natural calamities.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, the aim of this Parliamentary Question was due to the fact that some employers categorically refused to release their employees on Friday 10 February 2016 despite the appeal of Government and the Mauritius Employers' Federation. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister if he has received representations in this context?

Mr Callichurn: No representations have been made to my Ministry to that effect. But I would like to add that, subsequent to the last torrential rain on 10 February 2016, when officers had to be released from work as from 11 a.m. on that day, Government has decided that an appropriate protocol be devised for the public sector to cater for such situations. The Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms is formulating this protocol in consultation with stakeholders concerned. I am informed that this protocol will also apply for the private sector.

Mr Baloomoody: As matters stand now, when there is a cyclone class 2 warning, all employers have two hours to release the workers. Why can't we have this system in case of torrential rain, be it in the private and public sector?

Mr Callichurn: As I said, a protocol is being devised and the private sector will follow.

GOVERNMENT-MSPA AGREEMENT –LAND TRANSFER

(No. B/226) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Agreement signed between Government and the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association on 22 April 2008 for the transfer of 2000 acres of sugar lands to the State over a period of ten years, ending in 2017, he will state the extent of land acquired since September 2015 to date, indicating the –

- (a) use made thereof, and
- (b) names of the beneficiaries thereof.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that out of the 2,000 *arpents* of sugar cane lands earmarked for transfer to the State under the said Government-MSPA Agreement, 1,153 *arpents* would be released for agricultural development and 847 *arpents* for housing and other social infrastructure projects.

As at to date, 910 *arpents* have already been acquired, whilst procedures are now well engaged for acquisition of another lot of 694 *arpents*, which accounts for a total land area of 1,604 *arpents*, representing 80% of the total lot agreed upon by the two parties.

As regards land acquisition over period running from September 2015 to date, I am informed that 147 *arpents* were acquired, that is, 130 *arpents* for agriculture and 17 *arpents* for housing and other social infrastructure projects.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that land acquisition procedures were finalised for the 147 *arpents* in March and April 2016 and these lands will be released for the following purposes -

- (a) 66 *arpents* at Britannia for creation of an exclusive zone to promote food production under bio-farming systems;
- (b) 64 *arpents* at Camp Marcelin and Plaine Magnien for crop and livestock production under conventional farming systems;
- (c) 12 *arpents* at Goodlands, Argy and Souillac for social housing, and
- (d) 5 *arpents* at Chebel for construction of a SME park.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that proposals for agricultural projects from prospective applicants are being screened and would shortly be evaluated by the State Land Committee set up at the level of my Ministry for the selection of eventual beneficiaries.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, with regard to the lands which have already been transferred, can the hon. Minister confirm if they are fully in use as at to date?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, lands that are being leased are usually meant to be in operation, that is, under cultivation. They are given six months to start their activities, and I have given strict instructions that if ever lands are still abandoned, we are going to retrieve them and give them to those who are really willing to cultivate on those lands.

Mr Mahomed: Madam Speaker, insofar as social housing is concerned, the most important criterion is the location of a plot of land and insofar as agriculture is concerned, the most important criterion is the quality of the land. What measures are being taken at the level of the Ministry to ensure that the land that we obtained is not marginal land?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I believe one of the reasons why this took so long is - it has been nearly 10 years now since this agreement was signed between the MSPA and the Government - because of that issue of finding the appropriate land, be it for agriculture or for social and other infrastructural projects. So, the process of analysing whether it is good for agriculture or for housing projects is a lengthy procedure. That is why I believe it has taken so long in identifying the land, to make sure that whenever land is vested to the Government, be it at my Ministry or the Ministry of Housing and Lands, it is land appropriate for those particular projects earmarked for.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has been made aware that land given to individuals for agricultural purposes has been subleased? There is a sort of business going on. Initially it was marginal land, but then it has been converted for planting and given to individuals. Can the hon. Minister say whether there are cases where same are being subleased and whether he will make the proper inquiry?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, with regard to those 2,000 *arpents* land whereby those that have been vested to my Ministry to be given to growers, only cooperative societies are entitled to benefit from those lands, but it is true that other State lands were given to some individuals in the past, whereby they have sublet them, to what I call true planters, and I can

give an example about what happened in the region of Plaine Sophie whereby there was one Adviser to the former Minister of Agriculture who obtained a large plot of land and was subletting it to true planters at a higher fee, but we have already retrieved those lands and given them to those true planters.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has already worked out on the criteria to be used for SME, small investors? What will be the criteria for the granting of land?

Mr Seeruttun: With regard to SME projects, this is not under my purview. The land, like I said, within the 2,000 *arpents* that are to be vested to the Government, the plots that are for SME projects or housing projects are vested with the Ministry of Housing and Lands and from there on, depending on the projects which are to be adopted, the criteria are set by the Ministry concerned.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister give us the name of the Adviser who got the lease of that particular plot of land, what amount he paid to the Ministry and what amount he claimed for the sublease of that particular land, and whether this case can be referred to the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms?

Mr Seeruttun: The name of the Adviser is one Mr Rampal. I have not got the exact surface area of land that he had benefited, but probably I can come back to that at a later stage.

BARACHOIS - LEASES

(No. B/227) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the *Barachois*, he will state the number of leases thereof granted or renewed since January 2015 to date, indicating in the case of Mauricoast Ltd., the date of -

(a) application for the grant of a lease therefor, and

(b) issue of the lease therefor.

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I am replying to PQ B/227 and B/250 altogether.

With regard to part (a) of PQ B/227, I wish to inform the House that since January 2015, no lease has been granted or renewed by my Ministry in respect of any promoter. However, authorisation to carry out aquaculture activities has been given to four promoters at four *barachois* on the merits of project.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that, as such no lease or concession has been granted to Mauricoast Ltd. for the use of the existing *barachois* at Poudre D'Or. However authorisation to carry out aquaculture farming was given to Mauricoast Ltd. on 17 September 2015.

With regard to part (a) of PQ B/250, the application from Mauricoast Ltd. was received at my Ministry on 22 June 2015.

Regarding part (b) of PQ B/250, the *barachois* covers a total area of 52 hectares, including land area of six hectares.

Concerning part (c) of PQ B/250, Mauricoast Ltd. will carry out the culture of valuable aquaculture marine species, namely sea cucumber, oyster and crabs. The promoter has hired the services of a consultant, namely Dr. Dev Vaitilingon, Director of AADCO Projects Malaysia, to assist in the implementation of the project. Furthermore, the project will be closely monitored by officers of my Ministry.

With regard to part (c)(i) of PQ B/250, the project was discussed at the level of my Ministry, after which, Government was apprised of same.

Regarding part (c)(ii), Mauricoast Ltd. was authorised by my Ministry on 17 September 2015 to implement the project.

With regard to part (d), a set of conditions is attached to the authorisation as follows –

- i. the proposed project shall be carried out in the Grand Barachois (Bassin Humbert) at Poudre d'Or of an area of approximately 52 ha;
- ii. the project shall be undertaken on a pilot basis for an initial period of five years and may be renewed on mutual consent;
- iii. the Company shall apply to this Ministry for collection of oysters spats for the project;
- iv. the Company shall submit to this Ministry data on physico-chemical parameters and production on a monthly basis;

- v. the Company shall not make use of any chemicals for the culture;
- vi. the Company shall provide its own security services;
- vii. officers of the Ministry shall be given easy access to the facilities at sea or on land as and when required for monitoring the project;
- viii. the Company shall comply with directives that may be issued by the Ministry to safeguard and protect the marine environment, prior to and during the implementation of the project;
- ix. the Company shall comply to the Fisheries & Marine Resources Act 2007 (amended)
- x. the Company shall have its own quarantine facilities for imported oyster spats;
- xi. the above conditions may be amended and new conditions may be added at any time should a need arise;
- xii. the *barachois* shall remain the property of the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands, and
- xiii. Mauricoast Ltd. would have to seek all necessary clearances from relevant authorities.

Furthermore I wish to inform the House that since the project would be carried on a pilot basis, the *barachois* shall remain the property of my Ministry and there is no lease or concession involved and, as such, payment of fees does not arise.

Mr Mohamed: Initially, could the hon. Minister explain at what stage did his Ministry consider it appropriate or not to inform the business community or interested parties in Mauritius of the availability of that plot of ocean and land for concession purposes on a pilot basis, so that others also could have made proposals to his Ministry in order to be able to avail themselves of the possibility and the opportunity of carrying out such a trade? If he did not follow me, did he ever inform the members of the public?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, the *Barachois* are the property of the Government and we don't make publicity for that. Anybody interested in going in the aquaculture for any product is welcome.

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker, can the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to the number of employment this project is likely to generate and the amount of foreign investment that this project is anticipating to bring into our country?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, the Mauricoast project is supposed to be financing about Rs100 m. and, naturally, exactly we can't say how many jobs will be created, but it should be more than 20 jobs.

Moreover, I want to mention, for the benefit of the House, that we have got other promoters, even foreign promoters, who came recently and we signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a project sponsored by a South African company, and they are going to invest Rs1.4 billion, which will definitely create lots of jobs.

Apart from that, we have another company which is also interested and we are supposed to sign another MoU with the foreign country. They are supposed to invest more than Rs200 m. Apart from foreign countries we also have local companies such as Mauricoast Ltd and other companies from Mauritius, which are interested to launch into aquaculture. Many of them are waiting for clearances to be given by the Ministry.

Mr Bhagwan: I will come back to the question put by hon. Mohamed, when he asked the hon. Minister about the question of making known to the public that these *barachois* are there and whoever is interested, they can come with a project. I would like to know why, in that particular case, it has been left to anybody who is interested to come with a project. I think it should have been the duty of the Ministry to say where we have such and such types of *barachois* and if anybody wants to come with a project, as it is done as an Expression of Interest. Why such procedure has not been adopted?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, the companies I mentioned, are investing lots of money. It does not mean that we have closed the practice of aquaculture to other people, especially the fishermen. This is open for them also and I am negotiating with a bank so that we can get a blue loan also for this kind of activity.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't ask questions from a sitting position, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister mentioned that the promoter is prepared to invest over Rs100 m., up to Rs1.5 billion. Can the hon. Minister re-confirm to

the House that the visibility of the project is only on a five-year basis so that the promoter is prepared to invest over Rs1 billion with a visibility of only five years?

Mr Koonjoo: I just mentioned, Madam Speaker, that it is initially for five years and can be renewed if all conditions are met.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister just stated that the company is investing Rs100 m. and it has been given 52 hectares of water and land. Is it the practice at his Ministry that for such an investment and for five-year period, no fee is being charged by his Ministry for such a project? Because the company is investing Rs100 m., is surely expecting a return on this investment which should be in million. So, is it normal practice for his Ministry not to charge any fees on such a project?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, the practice, as at now, is what I said. In future, we might look as to whether people, especially foreigners, can be charged a sum of money. But I don't think we can make it equally for the small people, for the fishermen in Mauritius or any other person.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Picking up from the question of hon. Jhuboo, is the project 100% equity financed or is there any debt involved which will entail using the land, which I do understand is not leased as yet, as collateral?

Mr Koonjoo: As at now, I can't reply this question whether it is equity-based or anything like that, but if a company is coming and showing good faith and they have got money, we check and we give the permission for them to carry out their projects.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Yes. The hon. Minister mentioned Rs100 m. as investment, has there been a financial due diligence on that company with assets to take a loan from bank (proof of funds) or at the end of five years ...

(Interruptions)

- the same company has benefitted Rs20 m. or Rs25 m. and then close the shop and go, and it is the bank which loses the money?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, when five years are over, we will definitely look into that.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: The decision has been taken already to give something which the hon. Minister said 'is not a lease, but that can be renewed'. That is something which I fail to understand. But, however, can the hon. Minister tell us that prior to giving this - whatever it is called - land for free, this ocean for free to some members who are connected to his party and his constituency, could he explain that committee that studied the project under the application, did they, at any stage, look at a document which is called a proof of funds that comes to establish and prove that the Rs100 m. that they say they will invest, exists, and if he did look at that document, can he table this document now?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, I believe that my officers, when they look at a project like this, they definitely make a due diligence to see whether the person has got money or not. It is a project which is creating employment, which is bringing...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't make comments, I said, from a sitting position! If you have got a question, you stand up and ask the question!

(Interruptions)

But he is already replying to your question. Allow him to reply!

Mr Koonjoo: As I said, Madam Speaker, we are here to provide jobs, to create investment and to attract foreign investment as well as local investment. I don't think that we are going to find out any soft or any false pretext not to accept promoters coming to invest in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker: Do you have a question, hon. Bhagwan? Last question!

Mr Bhagwan: From what we have heard that this company has received a red carpet treatment,...

(Interruptions)

... can the hon. Minister confirm to the country, to the nation and to the taxpayers that this company has received such a treatment, *barachois* free of charge and other facilities because the promoter is a very close relative of one of the Members of Government, who is a PPS?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, there is no red carpet in my office to receive promoters either from Mauritius or from foreign countries.

(Interruptions)

I don't know whether the hon. Members have got red carpet reception or they have been receiving in the past.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't make comments, please!

Mr Koonjoo: I don't know about that. The hon. Member in front of me was a Minister, I don't know whether he was giving red carpet to foreign people or I don't know what.

(Interruptions)

As at now....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Mr Koonjoo: Every person....

(Interruptions)

I have said no cross talking, please!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Bhagwan, order please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Allow the hon. Minister to reply!

(Interruptions)

Would you continue with your comments or would you allow the hon. Minister to reply?

Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, I am talking to you!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah, you will start now!

(Interruptions)

Mr Koonjoo: Yes, Madam Speaker. We are determined to move ahead with our projects and I don't believe that we have got anything about Mr...

(Interruptions)

the person who was...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, it seems you do not take any heed to what I have said.

Mr Koonjoo: The person is Mr Boygah, not *madame* Boygah. Alright! And Mr Boygah has all the rights in this country to invest and create employment.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES – PESTICIDES

(No. B/228) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the fruits and vegetables, he will state the number of tests and surveys carried out to determine the level of pesticides contained therein with a view to ensure that they are fit for consumption on the local market and for export, indicating the standards that are applied therefor.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am advised that tests for the detection of pesticides residues in fruits and vegetables have been carried out by my Ministry since 1995. As from 2009, samples are being collected at farm gate level to ensure traceability for remedial measures.

The analysis is undertaken as per the guidelines of the Codex Alimentarius established by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Health

Organisation (WHO). The Maximum Residue Level (MRL) as set up by the FAO Codex Alimentarius is being used as reference standard for the monitoring of pesticide residues in local fruits and vegetables.

As from 2009 to date, 2903 samples covering some 60 different vegetables and fruits varieties have been collected and tested for pesticide residues. 4.6% of these samples were found to be above the Maximum Residue Level. On average, 416 samples of fruits and vegetables are being collected annually for testing.

Madam Speaker, as regards the determination of the level of pesticides on vegetables and fruits for export, I am informed that previously such tests were not being carried out. Following the alert received in June 2015 from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed of the European Union regarding the excessive use of ethephon, a fruit ripener on two consignments of pineapples exported to the Netherlands, I have given instructions to the Food Technology Laboratory for tests to be carried out to determine the level of ethephon on pineapples for export and also for local consumption. The Food Technology Laboratory has, in January 2016, with the assistance of experts from EDES developed the protocol for this test. Samples of pineapples are now being collected from both exporters and at farm date level for testing by the Food Technology Laboratory.

Madam Speaker, the Food Technology Laboratory is presently equipped with one Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometer (GCMS) and one Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometer (LCMS) which were donated in 2010 by the EU and the COMESA respectively. These two equipment are out of order since March 2016 and for the time being tests on pesticide residues cannot be carried out. Some samples have been sent to the Government Analyst Division of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life for analysis. Provision will be made in the next Budget for the acquisition of sophisticated equipment for the analysis of pesticide residue. In the meantime, my Ministry is contemplating the possibility of having recourse to private laboratories to increase the number of tests on pesticide residue level.

Madam Speaker, as the House is also aware, Government is promoting the production of bio foods which will necessitate less chemical inputs in vegetable and fruit cultivation. A number of fiscal and financial incentives are now being given to farmers engaged in bio farming activities under the SME Incentive Scheme. Moreover, my Ministry is working in

collaboration with the FAO on the setting up of the legal and institutional framework to facilitate the introduction of organic agriculture in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. In the recent past, as the hon. Minister must be aware, Madam Speaker, there have been studies carried out and sponsored by *l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD)* as well as well-known newspaper group on the level of pesticides and chemicals present in foods and vegetables. The hon. Minister has just talked about the pineapples that have been alerted at the entry of the European Union. At the same time, I have seen the Ministry of Agriculture's website that talks about tests having been carried out on pineapples following this precise alert from the European Union. How come the European Union found that, in batches of pineapple, the level of pesticides was alarming and, therefore, could not enter the European Union as opposed to that, the same laboratories in Mauritius, under the aegis of the Ministry of Agro-Industry, has never been able to find that pesticides are of an alarming level whenever they have tested for pineapples? There is a serious issue. I would like to have an explanation for that.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I have, in my reply, stated that the tests for ethephon on pineapples have just only started. Whatever carried out before and we had to set up a protocol to carry out the test and with the help of the people from the EDES, we have established the protocol and it's only in January 2016 that this test is possible at the level of our Ministry and ever since we are carrying out those tests.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In fact, in the Minister's reply to my question B/400 last year, on the two consignments of pineapples that were subsequently destroyed in the Netherlands, he did mention a few things, namely the protocol and I am glad it is being implemented as from January. But the hon. Minister also mentioned about MauriGAP in his reply Good Agriculture Practices which was published as MS 184-1. May we know from the hon. Minister the status on this?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am glad to inform the House that on Thursday we are going to launch the MauriGAP 1 Standard.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: May we know from the hon. Minister whether he has an idea about importation of pesticides? Has this gone up or down in the recent years?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, we have the Dangerous Chemicals Control Act that regulates all the chemicals that could be introduced in Mauritius and which falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. I have not got the data to say whether it has gone up or down, but, with regard to the use or abuse of chemicals in agriculture, we, being a Government responsible and concerned about the use of those chemicals in agriculture, that's why we are promoting and doing everything that we can to get farmers, growers to go more towards bio food production instead of keeping on injecting chemicals in the soil to produce food be it vegetables or fruits.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister just stated - and that is the real problem - that local planters put a lot of pesticides and they need to be educated. He has just mentioned that the Government is coming forward with measures, yet last week he, himself, replied that for SME there have been only 20 projects approved with less than Rs75 m. committed. So, may I know from the hon. Minister what concrete measures does his Ministry/this Government intend to take to subsidise the cultivation of clean bio products so that not only the foreigners, but also the locals don't absorb pesticides whenever they eat food?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, only last Friday, I went to get the approval of Cabinet with regard to incentives being given to producers to go towards bio farming. The list of incentives, be it for loan facilities, be it for that exemption, all these are measures that have been proposed to those who are going into that kind of agricultural practices.

It is something that is going to take time because changing habits of farmers is something which is difficult, but we are committed to that and we are doing our best. Since we have been in Government last year, we have been promoting that type of agricultural practices and we feel that people are now more conscious about the problems associated with pesticides, be it the consumers or the farmers. So, this is something that we are fully committed to make sure that in the future people are being provided with vegetables that are safe and sound for consumption.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister consider setting up legislative framework in order to sanction those who abuse the use of pesticides?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, in fact, we are coming up with some regulations with regard to the use of those chemicals in line with the Dangerous Chemicals Control Board Act. So, in the near future we are going to come up with those regulations to address that problem.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

VALUATION DEPARTMENT – PROPERTIES ASSESSMENT

(No. B/229) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the assessment of properties, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Councils, information as to the difficulties which the Valuation Department is encountering when conducting the exercises therefor with regard to the issue of ‘local rate’ and ‘general rate’, indicating if consideration will be given for the advisability of introducing amendments to the Local Government Act to remedy thereto.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, my Ministry has been informed by both the Municipal Councils and also the Valuation Department of the difficulties which they are encountering for the alteration and the maintenance of the valuation list in respect of the immovable properties and the calculation of the local rates payable accordingly.

The Attorney General’s Office has advised my Ministry that to address these difficulties, necessary amendments would have to be brought to the Local Government Act.

The House may wish to note that my Ministry has already issued drafting instructions to the Attorney General’s Office for the necessary amendments to be brought to the Local Government Act, which would be included in the forthcoming Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

The House may further wish to note that the Attorney General’s Office has further advised that the proposed amendments shall be made to have effect retrospectively so that local rate may be levied for unclaimed periods.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many cases, from different Local Authorities, have been unattended at the Valuation Office since 2011 to date because they cannot operate with the local rate?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, actually all those who were paying the rates before 2011 are still paying the rates. But, for those new buildings which came after 2011, they could not collect the rates. Since 2011, it has not been collected and that is why we are changing the law and we are including it in this forthcoming financial period.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Minister aware that cadastral values should have been determined before applying the local rate?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, it should have been, but unfortunately, it has not been done so far and that is why we are changing the law.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister state what formula is being applied now by Local Authorities to claim local tax on any new house or building?

Dr. Husnoo: In fact, we are using the same law as the 1989 law.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES - COMOROS ISLAND – PARTICIPATION

(No. B/230) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the next Indian Ocean Island Games, he will state if, as the host, Government has taken any initiative to ensure the participation of the Comoros Island thereto following the walk out effected by the representatives thereof from the last meeting of the *Conseil International des Jeux* and, if not, why not.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, the invitation to participate in the Indian Ocean Islands Games is made by the *Conseil International des Jeux (CIJ)*. According to the Charter

of the Games, participation in the games has to be confirmed one year prior to the holding of the games.

The hon. Member would, therefore, no doubt agree that, at this stage, the question does not arise. However, I would like to reassure the House that every member of the CIJ will do their utmost that all member islands be present *pour la grande fête des dixième jeux des îles de l'Océan Indien*.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister - I am sure he is aware that there has just been an election for a new President in the Comoros last week and there will be a new Government - therefore, the political dimension of this, if we are to have successful Indian Ocean games, that there must be a diplomatic move and that we should do that together with Madagascar and Seychelles to encourage the Comoros, one way or the other, to rejoin?

Mr Sawmynaden: I do totally agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Because this is the 10th Indian Ocean Island Games and the 40th anniversary of the Indian Ocean Island Games, we will make it a must that Comoros will participate. But, at the moment there is no sign from Comoros saying that they will not participate. So, let us keep fingers crossed that they will come.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, j'ai bien écouté la réponse du ministre mais nous savons tous comment et dans quelles conditions les membres de la délégation des Comores avaient quitté, en février dernier, la réunion du CIJ. Donc, le ministre peut-il nous dire, du fait que les Comores jusqu'à présent n'ont donné aucun signe, qu'ils allaient participer et qu'ils maintiennent que l'organisation des jeux de 2019 leur revienne. Vu cette situation, ne serait-il pas bon que le ministère des Sports à travers le ministre, à travers la COI et la CJSOI entame des démarches de façon à faire les Comores revenir à de meilleurs sentiments et nous assurer de leur participation en 2019 ?

Mr Sawmynaden: *As informed, Madam Speaker, at the moment* la question ne se pose pas parce que la confirmation de la participation vient une année avant. Concernant le *walk out* des Comores, ça a été le cas pendant les Jeux des Iles. Malgré cela ils ont participé à

l'Ile de la Réunion le 20 octobre. Le 20 octobre à l'Ile de la Réunion, ils ont effectué un deuxième *walk out* pour revenir à Maurice en février pour effectuer un troisième *walk out*.

(Interruptions)

Mais là on a essayé de prendre contact avec le président du CNO et ils ont dit qu'ils sont préoccupés avec les élections et on va voir après les élections. Maintenant je suis sûr que les Comores vont participer aux jeux.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: After having listened to the total lack of respect in the answer of the hon. Minister for a friendly country of the Indian Ocean, my question to him is as follows: could the hon. Minister inform the House how he intends to mend things with Comoros following his actual statement in this august Assembly and following the fact that Comoros representatives of Government coming to Mauritius had blamed him, the hon. Minister, for them wanting and having no other choice than to walk out because of his lack of respect towards that delegation?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I think this gentleman is going out ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't impute motives!

Mr Sawmynaden: I am just stating the facts of what happened. If the hon. Member does not understand English what can I do?

(Interruptions)

He is trying to do a political move out of it and I would not say what has been said on radio! I think this is not correct. I am sure that Comoros will participate in the games. So, we will have to wait! We cannot say in advance whether they will or will not participate!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Bérenger: From the tone that has just been used in the direction of our brothers and sisters from the Comoros, can I put it to the hon. Minister that it is not correct if we want

to bring them in and will he agree with me that, in fact, in Réunion *la Charte des Jeux fut violée par la France et la Réunion*, the Comoros people might have overreacted, but the basis of the problem is that *la Charte des Jeux a été violée par la France et la Réunion* and we have to get over that?

Mr Sawmynaden: *La Charte des Jeux* is governed by the CIJ. Actually, it is not the Government it is the CIJ who is the one who puts all the rules of the game. So, what can we do, what can we say? We are trying to pacify things, but everything depends on the CIJ and I am sure all the members of the CIJ want Comoros to participate.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister tell the House whether he will use all his best endeavours to open a line of talk with the Comoros and other interested islands in order to ensure and encourage Comoros to participate? I know the hon. Minister has got no control on a walk out or no walk out by the athletes, but at least to open the dialogue and take the lead.

Mr Sawmynaden: I am monitoring the situation very closely. I spoke to the CNO of Mauritius and they told me that Comoros answered to them that they are in full election campaign and after the elections they will come back to them. So, now that the elections are over, I think that things will be much better.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

BASKETBALL - FRENCH COACH

(No. B/231) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to basketball, he will state if the French Coach, C. T., is still in post as the Directeur Technique National thereof and, if not, indicate the reasons therefor.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, the French Coach, C. T., was employed as National Technical Director in basketball by my Ministry as from 11 May 2015 on an initial one year contract. His services were made available to the Mauritius Basketball Federation.

The contract of employment of Mr C.T., was terminated on 12 April 2016 as the Mauritius Basketball Federation informed my Ministry that its Managing Committee had decided that the services of Mr C.T. would not be required by the Federation.

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir si c'est le ministère de la jeunesse et des sports qui a recruté Monsieur Charles Tassin, le DTN?

Mr Sawmynaden: Yes, Madam Speaker. The Ministry has employed Mr Charles Tassin, as the DTN, to be put at the service of the Federation.

Mr Quirin: Donc, peut-on savoir, avec le non-renouvellement du contrat de M. Tassin, qu'advient-il du centre de formation de basket-ball, le projet que M. Tassin avait mis en place? Est-ce qu'il y aura un suivi? Est-ce que quelqu'un d'autre prendra la relève?

Mr Sawmynaden: Le projet continue et la fédération est en train de chercher un autre DTN.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, il y a un dénommé, Monsieur Christophe Saubestre, qui apparemment a été appelé à prendre la relève de Monsieur Tassin. Est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer cette information ?

Mr Sawmynaden: Monsieur Christophe Saubestre était en train d'épauler Monsieur Tassin dans sa tâche, à titre bénévole, et quand Monsieur Tassin est parti, il continue d'aider la fédération de basket mauricien jusqu'à ce que la Fédération recrute le nouveau DTN.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, une dernière question. Vu le niveau du basket-ball à Maurice et la raclée, que nos différentes sélections nationales, a prise à la Réunion lors des derniers Jeux des îles, le ministre peut-il nous dire si un plan de travail a été mis en place avec l'aide de la Fédération, bien sûr, en vue des jeux des îles de 2019 et, si tel est le cas, de nous donner plus de détails.

Mr Sawmynaden: C'est une des raisons pour laquelle le Centre National de Formation a été réouvert après avoir fermé ses portes pendant plusieurs années et on a déjà commencé le travail pour la relance et surtout avec l'objectif des 10^{ème} Jeux des îles qui arrive en 2019. Alors, le travail est en très bonne voie et on attend maintenant le nouveau DTN.

ZEP SCHOOLS – HOT MEALS

(No. B/232) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the implementation of the Hot Meals in the Zone d'Education Prioritaire schools Project, she will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

HIGH LEVEL ATHLETES - PROFESSIONAL REINSERTION

(No. B/233) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the after career high level

athletes, he will state if his Ministry has set up a programme to ensure the professional reinsertion thereof and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that in accordance with Finance and Audit, (Trust Fund For Excellence in Sports) Regulations 2001, the Trust Fund For Excellence in Sports (TFES) which operates under the purview of my Ministry, has, as one of its objectives, to design, finance and implement projects and schemes for the benefit of retired sportsmen and sportswomen who need support and financial assistance in order to embark on the other professional activities.

Of late, it has been noted that this objective has not been fulfilled by TFES which is only financing a handful of high level athletes in their studies at secondary and tertiary levels. Consequently, my Ministry is coming up with a new scheme for athletes, while training for the respective sports, will also embark on technical and vocational training as appropriate with a view to increase their employability and, at the same time, helping them to sustain their families once they retire as athletes. In this context, tertiary institutions as well as technical and vocational Institutions have already been approached with a request for offering scholarship to athletes to pursue career oriented studies.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, l'honorable ministre, dans sa réponse, vient de nous dire qu'il y a un projet en préparation. De ce fait, peut-il nous dire quel est le délai qu'il s'est imposé pour rendre public le contenu de ce projet, vu qu'il y a pas mal d'urgence et surtout du fait qu'il y a pas mal de projets qui ont été annoncés par le présent gouvernement, le ministre des sports lui-même, telle que l'académie de football? Peut-on savoir si ce sera un projet similaire et qu'on aura à attendre des mois et des mois?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, as mentioned in my answer, this project came in 2003 with the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports. Unfortunately, the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports did not take care of that aspect particularly. So, this is why today we are coming up to see how we can help these retired athletes or those coming to pursue a professional activity after their retirement.

Mr Aliphon: Est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire si le *Trust Fund* a déjà traité des cas similaires qu'on lui demande?

Mr Sawmynaden: As mentioned, the Trust Fund has not treated any case for retired athletes. They have been only looking after high-level athletes in their studies for secondary and tertiary levels. They stopped to that. They did not go further.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, je vais prendre un cas particulier, celui de Monsieur Bruno Julie, notre seul médaillé olympique à ce jour. L'honorable ministre peut-il

nous dire pourquoi - malgré les nombreuses sollicitations auprès de sa personne, même auprès de son ministère pour être embauché comme *Sports Coach*, vu qu'il a l'expérience voulue pour former les jeunes boxeurs - rien n'a été fait à ce jour?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, the case of Mr Bruno Julie falls into the case that should have been taken care of by the Trust Fund. Yes, I met Mr Bruno Julie several times. We asked him to submit his certificates so that he can train athletes and I have asked the Federation as well to do same. So far, we have not received any. We are still waiting. I have also told the Federation that they can employ him, in the meantime, but nothing yet.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House who is the Chairperson of the Trust Fund and since when? What are the conditions of work, salary, allowance and everything?

Mr Sawmynaden: There is a new Chairperson since 2015, but the CEO of the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports is Mr Michael Glover since 2003.

HERITAGE CITY - PROJECT VALUE

(No. B/234) 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 proposed construction of the Heritage City, he will state the –

- (a) project value thereof, and
- (b) how it will be financed.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I have given to the PNQ this morning.

Mr Uteem: This morning, the hon. Minister mentions in respect to the recruiting Stree Consulting of Dubai that there is going to be a USD4.3 m. and that is G-to-G through Government to Government with Dubai. So, may I know from the hon. Minister whether this sum of USD4.3 m. to be paid to the firm, is a grant that we will receive from Dubai?

Mr Bhadain: No, it will be paid by Heritage City Co. Ltd. out of the funds of Heritage City Co. Ltd.

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, a real estate project is commercially viable once the promoter has signed un *Contrat de Réservation Préliminaire (CRP)*. It is only then that the banking institutions give their *Garantie Future d'Achèvement (GFA)* and then give ...

Can the hon. Minister give the assurance to the House that Government will not go ahead with the New Parliament and the Ministries until and only until the commercialisation, the pre-selling of the real estate component is completed? From what I have given to

understand, through the PNQ, is that the sale and the proceeds of the villas and the commercial component will alleviate the burden of the 13 billion on the administrative parts?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member should come with a substantive question on that if he wishes to do so. I think he is confused between how Smart Cities are being developed and how Heritage City model is being developed. The hon. Member should know that because I believe there is Cap Tamarin which is being implemented by Mr Jhuboo, himself.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, this morning, the hon. Minister stated to the House that Rs10 billion will be financed by Saudi Arabia-India through redeemable preference shares and that this will be financed by the rental that Government will pay and the income that the company will generate will be used to finance the interest of the preference shares. Can I ask the hon. Minister - Rs10 billion - the capital amount at the end when it will be repaid to Saudi Arabia, to India, where will this money come from?

Mr Bhadain: Well, I believe the hon. Member is very confused as to what was said this morning. What I said this morning was that there are two foreign States which have basically been approached and there are agreements in principle in terms of the financing with regard to that. As I have said this morning, this is confidential. I cannot go into the details at this stage.

(Interruptions)

There is no need to laugh about it. It is true. However ...

(Interruptions)

I do! Wait!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, allow the hon. Minister to reply! Don't talk from a sitting position!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: *Ecouter! To presser!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please! You've asked your question. The hon. Minister has to reply. Allow him to reply!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: Well, I think he is confused by design. Madam Speaker ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, allow him to reply! Then, you will ask your question.

(Interruptions)

I think I have to rule. I won't allow anybody to make comments from a sitting position. If anybody has a comment to make, please stand up and say so.

Mr Bhadain: What has been explained this morning, Madam Speaker, is that when we are talking about the redeemable preference shares, it is going to be Heritage City Limited which is going to redeem those shares out of the money which flows into Heritage City Company Limited. And where does that come from? That comes, of course, from the rental income which is going to be paid by the Ministries and also in terms of the VEFA profits through the selling of the residential and commercial.

Now, if the hon. Member would actually think about it, he would soon realise that it is a cash flow over time, meaning that you don't have to wait at the end to repay Rs10 billion, as he is saying, because the shares will be redeemed as the money is flowing in, and this is the whole concept based on a cash flow forecast going forward. It is not like you are taking money, you are putting it here, you are going then to construct and then, at the end, you are taking money to repay after 10 years. It does not work like that.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has been going on and on that there is no guarantee, it won't come up into our public debt management figures. But isn't it the case that, for this project to work, the Government must undertake and commit to lease those offices for a period of time? So, we are in the same case like Betamax where the Government and the population had at the end of the day to guarantee payment to the promoters.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, when I say they don't understand, they get angry!

(Interruptions)

What does that have to do with Betamax? We all know what Betamax was. Betamax was not even in compliance with the Procurement Act. This is under section 3 of the Procurement Act. When we are looking at the concept of Heritage City, we said there are six Government buildings, the PMO and Parliament. Of course, Parliament will be occupied by people who are in Parliament, PMO by the Prime Minister and his staff, and Government buildings! Who is going to pay the rent? Of course, they will pay the rent! But you are paying it to Heritage City Company Limited, which is another pocket of Government which will be used to redeem the shares. It is a very innovative way of financing a project as a result of the situation that we are in, which is our national debt cannot be increased due to what the legacy of the Labour Party was.

Mr Mahomed: Madam Speaker, the Master Plan for Ebene was done by an Indian company, and they made up a total mess of Ebene, with cars being parked all over the place. Now, what guarantee will the hon. Minister provide to us today, with the USD 4.2 million that is going to be paid by the Heritage Company Limited, that this foreign consultant will not make an equal mess at Heritage City?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker ...

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Rutnah! Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah, do you want to go home?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, the Master Plan for the Ebene project ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Bhadain: The Master Plan for the Ebene project had nothing wrong with it, Madam Speaker. What was wrong is how the Labour Party has given land to their cronies in the Ebene Cyber City and then how money ...

(Interruptions)

This is speculation! This is *spéculation foncière*! This is where land, which was bought for Rs4-5 m. *arpent*, is now today being sold for Rs20 m. *arpent*, and this is where Mr Naugah has been giving all the land which belongs to the State to all the cronies of the Labour Party! I can give names if they want!

(Interruptions)

This is what is wrong! In this case, this is a very transparent project which is being done in a way whereby everything is visible, accountable. We have had three press conferences, Madam Speaker, where the designer, Mr Saeed Ahmed Saeed, was even brought to Mauritius, and basically the whole press was given the opportunity to question him as to how the project is being designed and in terms of the whole concept of the public-private thing. How much more transparency do you want? You can't compare that with all the corruption which has been going under the Labour regime!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, I don't understand the opacity around this project. For a Minister who boasts about good governance and transparency, is he ready to table this cash flow forecast for which he is telling us that only the rental money would be used to repay this Rs10 billion loan amount?

Mr Bhadain: Absolutely. Everything which is disclosable will be disclosed and will be tabled. However, ...

(Interruptions)

Let me tell you one thing.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order please! Order! Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Bhadain: When you are talking about opacity ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, I am addressing you! Order, please! Hon. Mohamed, you have a question?

Mr Bhadain: It is so easy. Madam Speaker, I just want to finish the answer.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, I have told you several times that you should not make comments from a sitting position. I have been very patient with you.

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, opacity means that ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! I have drawn your attention several times to the fact that you should not make comments as well.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, opacity means that you cannot see through. In this particular case, all the tables, all the figures, the cash flow forecast, everything has been disclosed when Mr Saeed Ahmed Saeed was invited to make a presentation to the whole press of Mauritius, and basically everything was explained. At that time, it was even broadcasted by the MBC and they were saying the MBC was basically broadcasting what should not be broadcasted. At least, if they had watched it, they would have seen!

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are talking about the financing of the Heritage Project. May I know from the hon. Minister whether he has factored in all the infrastructure cost that would be involved? Already, it is a nightmare travelling to Ebene. Now, we are going to have a new City next to Ebene, where we will have a new road. So, has that also been factored in that projection?

Mr Bhadain: Absolutely! Everything has been factored in. Let me reassure the hon. Member. There will be no parking problem in Heritage City as has been seen in the Ebene Cyber City, and this stands out of the fact that land which was earmarked for parking and for landscaping has been given to cronies of the Labour Party. Over there ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order, Madam Speaker! He cannot keep on imputing motives on Members of the Labour Party by throwing his hand in our direction! He should withdraw that!

(Interruptions)

He can't do that!

(Interruptions)

He has no right to do that!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, I have said several times ...

(Interruptions)

Order, please! I am on my feet! I have said several times that, to maintain the decorum and the dignity of this House, any hon. Member should not use offensive language to another Member. And this is my ruling.

Mr Mohamed: Will he withdraw it?

Madam Speaker: No, I have already given my ruling ...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed, please sit down! I am making an appeal to all Members of this House not to use offensive language to another Member. It is not good as you should uphold the dignity of this House.

Mr Bhadain: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In terms of the parking facilities which will be available in the Heritage City Project, there are underground parking for all the Government office buildings and also, of course, for the new Parliament, Madam Speaker, and then there will be also the ground parking which has all been earmarked as part of the infrastructural plan which is there.

Now, over and above, I mentioned this morning that there is a Pedestrian Spine as well and, of course, the Government parks. You will have also the new...

(Interruptions)

Absolutely, the new *jet d'eau*! It is going to be a dancing fountain, very much similar to the one in Dubai, probably not the same size, but it is going to be there; you will have the Heritage Square where Mauritians will be able to go and hang around and it is being designed into a 24-7 structure concept. In fact, this will be a place which will be visited not only by Mauritians, but also by tourists, Madam Speaker. All of that has been taken care of.

This development is coming through, it will happen in three years' time. This is the commitment that I have given to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and it will happen. Now, whether the Opposition likes it or don't like it - they have a grievance procedure agenda - we have a governing agenda.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Leopold!

LES SALINES - AUCTION FISH MARKET

(No. B/235) Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the auction fish market located at Fort Williams, Les Salines, in Port Louis, he will state where matters stand as to the operation thereof, indicating if the premises housing same are being used for the original purpose for which they were built and, if not, indicate the reasons therefor.

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, the Fish Auction Market, which was constructed in June 2011 and aimed to serve as a platform for the auctioning of fish and fish products, could not be operationalised despite two Expression of Interest (EOI) exercises launched by the then Ministry of Fisheries at both local and international levels in November 2011 and in May 2012 respectively.

In view of the lack of interest by operators to use the Fish Auction Market for its original purpose, and taking into consideration the repeated criticisms of the Director of Audit, last year my Ministry invited Requests for Proposals from operators for the lease of the building of the Fish Auction Market on an 'as is where is' basis to carry out activities related to the seafood sector.

Following an evaluation exercise, one of the four proposals received at my Ministry has been selected. The contract between my Ministry and the selected operator is being finalised at the level of the State Law Office.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

Mr Leopold: May I ask the hon. Minister whether with the promotion of Ocean Economy such structure will be needed in the Republic of Mauritius?

Mr Koonjoo: Necessarily, yes, Madam Speaker, we will need such auction market and maybe more than that.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Leopold!

RODRIGUES - FIBRE OPTIC CABLES

(No. B/236) **Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the proposed laying of fibre optic cables for the connection of Rodrigues Island, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, it was announced in the Budget Speech 2015/2016 that, I quote -

“(...) as our ICT sector moves up the value chain, Mauritius will have a third international gateway through the installation of a new submarine cable. This will connect both Mauritius and Rodrigues to the rest of the world.”

In this context, a Steering Committee was set up on 11 June 2015 at the level of my Ministry to oversee the implementation of the project. Following a decision of the Steering Committee on 16 July 2015, my Ministry launched an Expression of Interest on 08 October 2015 to gauge the interest of potential investors for the implementation of the new submarine cable. An evaluation was carried out in December 2015 and, in a report dated 31 December 2015, 11 local and international potential investors were identified.

In line with the announcement made in the Budget Speech 2015-2016 and the favourable interest expressed by potential investors in the project, and in order not to incur significant mobilisation cost twice, that is, once for the leg Mauritius-Rodrigues, and a second time to connect Mauritius to the rest of the world with a third submarine fibre optic cable, my Ministry is of the view that the project of having a third submarine cable linking Rodrigues and Mauritius to the rest of the world should be activated expeditiously and the leg Rodrigues-Mauritius be implemented as a priority, to the extent that this is technically and practically feasible. This approach will ensure that Rodrigues is connected to a new submarine fibre optic cable within the shortest possible timeframe.

Madam Speaker, I have, on Monday 28 March 2016, met five major telecommunications operators, namely Mauritius Telecom, Emtel, MTML, Axian Telm and BICS (Belgacom), with a view to confirming their interests to invest into the project and discuss on the future course of action. I have insisted on the need to expedite the implementation of the new submarine fibre optic cable with the leg Rodrigues-Mauritius being implemented in a first phase, to the extent, as I said, that this is technically and practically feasible.

On 01 April 2016, Government has decided to set up a Ministerial Committee to look into the various alternatives for implementation of the project.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Can I know whether there has been any reaction from the Mauritius Telecom and the other firms concerned? Have they said, yes, that they will put money in, what kind of money and is Government for its part investing in that project or leaving it completely to the telecoms companies?

Mr Sinatambou: As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, all five telecommunications operators have manifested a clear intention to invest into the fibre cable. It is still open to Government to be part of it. However, it will, of course, be subject to whether the whole sum for the fibre-optic cable being raised or not.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

Mr Leopold: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the hon. Minister may be aware that as an interim measure pending the laying of fibre-optic cables connecting Rodrigues, we have a bandwidth of 200 MB which is about to expire and in the Budget Speech there have been mentioned that there will be 500 MB of bandwidth given to us. So, I just want to know where matters stand in that respect.

Mr Sinatambou: Well, I am afraid I don't have the information here with me, but I will be happy to communicate to the hon. Member and give him the required information. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether the implementation of the project of fibre-optic cables is being contracted out, and, if so, is he aware that among the people doing the work we have got many '*braconniers*'?

Mr Sinatambou: Well, from the list of potential investors which have actually manifested themselves, the Bid Evaluation Committee actually selected 11 out of 13. I would strongly suspect that they would be wrong and they would have taken '*braconniers*' on board.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano!

QUATRE BORNES MARKET - COVERING

(No. B/237) **Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Quatre Bornes Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as where matters stand as to the proposed covering thereof.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes has decided to go ahead with the covering of part of the fair at St. Jean Road, Quatre Bornes with steel structure at the estimated cost of Rs15 m.

I am further informed that the bidding documents are under preparation and, once ready, they will be submitted to the Central Procurement Board for launching of the bidding exercise.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, ce marché est fréquenté par pas mal de touristes. Est-ce que je peux demander au ministre de s'assurer que l'infrastructure soit faite d'une façon correcte pour pouvoir être présentable aux touristes et aussi aux Mauriciens?

Dr. Husnoo: Sure, Madam Speaker, I am going to look into that.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: The hon. Minister has mentioned 'will be partly covered'. May we know why, because all the fair traders there should be treated equally?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, part of the land is the ex-railway track corridor which belongs to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, whereas another part is found on land from *Société Central Park*. That's why it is partly covered for the time being.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister made mention that the document is being finalised. Now, would the hon. Minister be in a position to confirm whether the roof structure caters for basic sustainable development building principles like natural ventilation, natural lighting and rain water harvesting, and if this is not the case, that he ensures that this be so?

Dr. Husnoo: I am sorry, I cannot answer this question. But I can try to find the reply later on. I will let the hon. Member have the reply later on.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to since how long Quatre Bornes Market has been in a dilapidated condition and that now he is undertaking to renovate it?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Husnoo: I have been in Quatre Bornes for the last 20 years and, as far as I know, it was in that state.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Is the hon. Minister aware that - he has been talking about 20 years - for almost 15 years now, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has been Member of Parliament for that Constituency, and that it is this very same Constituency that he is making reference to wherein the stadium is found?

Dr. Husnoo: This is not a question; this is a statement.

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, I don't think the question is appropriate. Look at the question! It says –

“(...) in regard to the Quatre Bornes Market, (...) obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to where matters stand (...)”.

He said where matters stand.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Therefore, Madam Speaker, may I rephrase it?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No.

Mr Mohamed: Therefore, in relation to the

(Interruptions)

Message là ine passé, to pas encore comprend même toi!

... stadium which was made reference to by hon. Rutnah, is he aware that there was a project thereon of maybe transferring the Quatre Bornes Market to that particular locus and that project was approved by the actual Deputy Prime Minister?

Madam Speaker: Again, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, the question relates to where matters stand as to the proposed covering thereof.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, may I please stand up with your permission?

Madam Speaker: Let me finish!

Mr Mohamed: Please, finish.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: So, you have to ask questions within this question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, the reason why I put the question - and that is something which has always been the practice in this august Assembly - is that it arises out of a question put by another hon. Member, answered by him. He has opened the door.

(Interruptions)

That is why I am entitled to put it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, this is my ruling. It is on the proposed covering, so if any question that you have on the proposed covering thereof, will be dealt with.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ramano, next question!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah, do you want to go home early?

(Interruptions)

QUATRE BORNES FIRE STATION - RELOCATION

(No. B/238) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Quatre Bornes Fire Station, he will state if he is aware of the inconveniences caused by the location thereof within the premises of the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the advisability of the relocation thereof.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I have been informed of the inconveniences which are being caused by the siting of the Quatre Bornes Fire Station within the premises of the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes.

In fact, my Ministry is working in joint collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Mauritius Fire Rescue Service for relocating the Quatre Bornes Fire Station to another site.

In fact, I can inform the House that the Ministry of Housing and Lands has, following joint site visits with the Mauritius Fire Rescue Service, identified a plot of land along Avenue Tulipes, Quatre Bornes for relocation of the Quatre Bornes Fire Station.

The proposed project "Relocation of Quatre Bornes Fire Station" was submitted to the Project Plan Committee (PPC) for consideration and I am glad to inform the House that this

project, estimated at Rs60 m. has already been recommended by the PPC and approved by the Government on 26 February 2016. The project would be included in the Public Sector Investment Programme for year 2017/2018.

The Mauritius Fire Rescue Service has accordingly informed the Ministry of Housing and Lands to make necessary arrangements for the acquisition of the identified plot of land along Avenue Tulipes.

Therefore, once the land is acquired and the fund identified or earmarked, the project would go ahead.

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, est-ce que je peux savoir dans quel délai que l'honorable ministre pense que ce projet aboutira?

Dr. Husnoo: As I mentioned, this project has been included in the Public Sector Investment Programme for 2017/2018 because there are lots of paperworks to be done, that's why.

Dr. Sorefan: The hon. Minister has mentioned a plot of land at Avenue Tulipes, that is, Tulipes, St Jean Road probably. Is the hon. Minister aware that this is a private land? Is the hon. Minister going to go through compulsory acquisition? Because this plot of land has already been walled by the proprietor. I don't see where the hon. Minister is heading for because I think this private owner is maintaining his land.

Dr. Husnoo: We have contacted the Ministry of Housing and Lands and they are going to do the necessary.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

SIR GUY ROZEMONT STADIUM - RENOVATION

(No. B/239) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Sir Guy Rozemont Stadium in Quatre Bornes, he will state if he is aware of the derelict state thereof and, if so, indicate if the renovation thereof is being envisaged.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that the Guy Rozemont Stadium in Quatre Bornes is not in a derelict state.

However, I am informed that there are some minor repairs to be effected to the toilet blocks and the gates, besides the reinstatement of a few concrete columns.

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, peut-être que l'honorable ministre pourra m'accompagner afin de faire un *site visit* ensemble. Il n'y a même pas de gradins, même pas de *fencing* là-bas et la situation est vraiment dans un *derelict state*. L'honorable ministre des sports peut-il le confirmer?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, obviously, I accept the invitation. We can do a site visit together with the Deputy Prime Minister when he comes and the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

MAURITIUS/RUSSIA - DOUBLE TAX AVOIDANCE AGREEMENT

(No. B/240) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Mauritius Embassy in Russia, he will state if the Ambassador thereof –

- (a) is renegotiating the Double Tax Avoidance Agreement signed between the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Russia, and
- (b) has informed his Ministry of the name of the company which is responsible for the promotion of tourism towards Mauritius.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, Mauritius is not ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo ...renegotiating the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement with the Russian Federation. It is recalled that this Agreement was signed on 24 August 1995 and Mauritius completed its ratification procedure the same year whereas the Russian Federation did not. Accordingly, the Agreement could not be brought into force.

On 28 December 2015, our Mission in Moscow informed that our Ambassador had called on the Deputy Director of the Federal Taxation Services of the Russian Federation to discuss Mauritius being classified as a jurisdiction that does not disclose information on offshore financial transactions, the so-called black list.

The Deputy Director informed as follows -

- (i) Mauritius does not have any agreement with the Russian Federation on taxation matters and ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: ... the OECD Agreement on Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information was not yet in force.

- (ii) Mauritius could be removed from the Russian list with immediate effect if it agrees to sign a Bilateral Agreement giving three years' retroactive effect to the OECD Agreement on Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information which I signed last year.

It is considered inappropriate to give retroactive effect to the OECD Agreement.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, I am told, appointed a consultancy firm known as Aviareps Russia as consultant for Public Relations Services in Russia on 31 July 2015, following an international tendering exercise.

Dr. Sorefan: Regarding the agency that is trying to promote Mauritius in Russia, can the hon. Minister inform the House how much is being paid for promotion? I would also like to know whether the hon. Minister is aware that the percentage of tourists from Russia has gone down recently to about 50%?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I would suggest that the hon. Member puts a substantive question to the Minister concerned.

Mr Mohamed: Could the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

...give, following his answers...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No interruptions, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Following the answers that have just been given by the hon. Minister that are very clear and concise, could he, at least, give the assurance to the House that since he has only recently said that he is the most honest, *plus droit qu'il y a dans ce gouvernement*, that no one else apart from him, will take care of this dossier?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Ask your question, hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Can he put the question again?

Mr Mohamed: The question is: can he give assurance to the House that since he has stated recently that he is the one who is the most honest...

Madam Speaker: Now, don't come and put in other things in your question. Come straight to your question!

Mr Mohamed: That is we are going straight to my question, that he will ensure that no one else, who is not as straight as him, will take care of this file? That's the question.

Madam Speaker: I don't think the question arises, hon. Shakeel Mohamed. Any other question, hon. Dr. Sorefan. Next question, hon. Uteem.

BAI CO. (MTIUS) - SPECIAL ADMINISTRATORS - FEES

(No. B/241) 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 BAI Co. (Mtius), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to the fees claimed by the special administrators and any consultants appointed therefor, indicating the aggregate amount thereof paid thereto as at to date.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I will refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ B/378 on 01 September 2015 in respect to the Special Administrators appointed...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, I have said! Don't lose the time of the House. Yes, hon. Bhadain, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ B/378 of 01 September 2015, in respect to the Special Administrators appointed by the FSC on 30 April 2015, namely Mr Mushtaq Oosman and Mr Yogeshrai Basgeet. In fact, what they had claimed as fees, Madam Speaker, as ex-Special Administrators, was Rs85,160,973 and what has been paid by the FSC is Rs27,600,000 because the FSC decided to cap the fees at Rs28 m.

Now, on top of that, I am also informed that they also claimed legal fees and disbursements for Rs51,754,410 which apparently I understand was to be paid to Clarel Benoît Chambers - Mr Clarel Benoît and Mr Rishi Pursem and the amount which has...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, last time I am drawing your attention.

Mr Bhadain: So, what was actually...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, you too.

Mr Bhadain: What was actually paid, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, it seems that you don't understand what I have just said. Are you trying to usurp the authority of the Chair?

Mr Bhadain: What was actually paid, Madam Speaker, was Rs8,962,260. So, out of the total figure of Rs136,915,383 claimed, what has been paid is Rs36,562,260.

With regard to the current Special Administrators, the agreed fees would be Rs12,075,000, that is, VAT inclusive. So, I guess it's Rs11 m. plus VAT and what has been paid to date, Madam Speaker, is Rs6,210,000 VAT inclusive.

I also understand that with regard to legal fees which have been paid to ENSafrica with Mr Thierry Koenig appearing in Court in the two cases, one is the case lodged by the

Special Administrator against Mauritius Union Assurance and I believe there is another case of hon. Shakeel Mohamed representing a particular client. The total fees...

(Interruptions)

Not him!

Madam Speaker: Now, is the hon. Member asking questions in this case? Do you want me to order the hon. Member out? This is the last warning I give the hon. Member.

Mr Bhadain: The total amount is Rs4,069,450 which is VAT inclusive. That's what has been claimed and paid to date.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister, with respect to the Special Administrators, has any amount been claimed for sub-contracting out the work to BDO?

Mr Bhadain: Not that I am aware of Madam Speaker. I have actually asked the FSC to provide me all the details and the details which have been provided are what I have stated to the House.

Mr Uteem: BDO has been appointed financial transaction adviser to the NIC. So, may I know from the hon. Minister what percentage will they receive on the sale of assets by NIC?

Mr Bhadain: No. For this, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member must come with a substantive question. Because when we are talking about Special Administrator, it's under the Insurance Act and the Special Administrator is appointed by the FSC and dealing with the National Property Fund Ltd. (NPFL). If there are any transactions regarding being a transaction adviser with a National Insurance Co. Ltd., then the hon. Member must come with a substantive question and I will answer.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: The hon. Minister has talked about a crazy number just now in terms of fees claimed by Chambers of a well-known Barrister in Mauritius – I don't want to take the name again. I don't think that is proper – and then it was capped at around Rs20 or so million at some stage by the Financial Services Commission, instead of Rs50 or so million that was being claimed or Rs80 or so million – God knows the crazy amount of money. Now, could the hon. Minister inform the House, Madam Speaker, whether the capping by the FSC was done before receiving the bill or was it done after receiving the bill?

Mr Bhadain: Well, as far as I am aware, Madam Speaker, the letter of engagement said that fees would be agreed from time to time. On that basis, the FSC has decided that money, which would eventually have gone to Super Cash Back Gold and Brahma asset investors, should not be wasted in paying unnecessary fees to professionals when basically the amounts which are being claimed are astronomical and on that basis the FSC has taken a decision to cap the fees at Rs28 m. and, as Minister, I fully endorse that.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: PQs Nos. B/257, B/258, B/203, B204, B/269. Am I being given more PQs which have been withdrawn? B/247, B/243 and B/244. 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 Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

PORT LOUIS – SQUATTERS

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity.

The House will recall that I made a statement on 01 September 2015 on squatters over the whole island wherein mention was made of the presence of 347 squatters in the region of Port Louis. The House will also recall that, in my reply to PQ B/537, I informed that a cut-off date of 01 July 2015 has been adopted so that the issue of squatting can be effectively monitored and addressed.

Out of the 347 squatters, 25 have not been considered for regularisation as they had vacated the site or constructed partly on private land and partly on the State land or started squatting after the cut-off date.

Madam Speaker, as at date there are 322 squatters as follows in these following regions -

- Monseigneur Leen
- Military Road, Vallée Pitot
- Alma Street, Vallée Pitot
- Vallée Pitot Block 1
- Tranquebar
- Camp Yoloff, Nicolay
- Motorway Reserves, Roches Bois
- La Cure - Sir Robert Scott Avenue
- La Cure - Jhelum Road
- La Cure - Marjolin Road
- Vallée des Prêtres

I wish to inform the House on the progress achieved regarding the regularisation of the 322 squatters in Port Louis. 77% of the number of squatters representing 247 squatters is being regularised. My Ministry is still awaiting documents from the remaining 75 squatters in order to proceed with their regularisations.

Out of the 322 squatters, 106 squatters are being regularised *in situ*, 24 are being relocated at Batterie Cassée, Roche Bois where there are 24 plots of State land. 10 are being relocated in a new parceling at Monseigneur Leen where 10 plots of State land are available. 182 are being relocated at Pointe aux Sables where 192 plots of State land are available.

Madam Speaker, I wish to reiterate the commitment of this Government to address the problem of squatting in an efficient and effective manner, while at the same time, providing the squatters security of tenure and rendering them eligible for loan facilities, thus empowering them.

With due consideration to the cut-off date of 01 July 2015, my Ministry has also decided to regularise, *in situ*, the situation of squatters who have constructed concrete houses on State land in order to avoid demolition of their buildings. In so doing, a number of variables have been accounted for, namely, the squatters' financial incapacity to build another house, availability of existing infrastructure in the region and social cost to Government in the event of demolition.

The relocation of some of the squatters has been found to be inevitable in view of the fact that some of the sites occupied such as Motorway Reserves, "*en bas la rivière*" and Cité la Cure constitute environmental risks for the safety and security of the families living thereat

and the sites occupied at Tranquebar and Monseigneur Leen are required for Government projects.

A delay of three months is being given to the squatters to move to their new location as from the issue of the letter of intent. The relevant Ministries in which the vacated sites are being vested are being requested to take possession of their respective sites as soon as these are vacated and ensure that necessary measures are taken to prevent further squatting.

Madam Speaker, a Drawing of Lots exercise was carried out on 30 November 2015 for the allocation of lots to the squatters in Tranquebar for their relocation to Pointe-aux-Sables. A second similar exercise was carried out on 15 April 2016 for all the other squatters in the region of Port Louis.

With a view to preventing speculation and ensuring an effective use of the housing facilities granted by Government and adhering to the concept of '*un toit pour tout un chacun*', the following additional conditions have been inserted in the Lease Agreement -

- (i) should the lessee be found to have sold or transferred or assigned his leasehold interests, the lessee shall not be eligible for any assistance or allocation for a lease over another portion of State land or a NHDC Unit, and
- (ii) the lessee shall not be entitled for the purchase of the State land within ten years as from the date of the signature of the present lease. The purchase may only be considered after the ten years period subject to compliance with provisions of legislations in force.

Madam Speaker, an appropriate mechanism to ensure transparency, equity and proper monitoring of the regularisations of squatters is being put in place at the level of my Ministry.

I want to reassure the House that I am dealing with the issue of squatting with all consideration that it warrants while at the same time being firm and resolute in our action to combat illegal occupation of State land.

With your permission, Madam Speaker, I am now tabling details on the 322 squatters in the region of Port Louis.

Thank you very much.

(4.17 p.m.)

MITD – ASSESSMENT/EXAMINATIONS - RESULTS

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madam Speaker, further to the point

raised by hon. Ameer Meea on the release of results by the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development in respect of the National Certification Level 3 in Electrical Installation Work, I wish to inform the House that I have taken up the matter with the MITD and have been advised that the final assessment has been conducted in December 2015 and results declared on 22 March 2016.

As for the National Certificate Level 4 in Electrical Installation Work, final assessment was held in June 2015 and results declared on 18 April 2016. All candidates are being informed accordingly.

I have impressed upon the MITD to henceforth arrange for the timely release of assessment/examinations results to candidates.

Second Reading

**THE NATIONAL AGENCY FOR THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF
SUBSTANCE ABUSERS (REPEAL) BILL**

(No. III of 2016)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers (Repeal) Bill (No. III of 2016).

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

(4.19 p.m.)

Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The repealing of the National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers Act 1996 amounts to the closing of the NATReSA. This agency was created at that time and it was under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Security.

The main objects of the agency have been stated last week by the hon. Minister, but I wish to remind the House about the main objects of that agency -

- (i) it was to coordinate and facilitate efforts at national level towards the implementation of programmes for the prevention of substance abuse and the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers;
- (ii) mobilise resources locally and overseas for the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers;

- (iii) set up and manage institutions for same as well as provide after-care services,
- (iv) advise, guide, help voluntary social organisations engaged in the prevention of substance abuse as well as treatment and rehabilitation.

NATReSA was controlled by a Board composed of a Chairperson and representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, the Commissioner of Police and the Commissioner of Prisons. Moreover, were also on the Board, members of the NGOs, trade unions and members of the public.

NATReSA was receiving funds from the Government and was reallocating same funds to NGOs involved in prevention of substance abuse as well as rehabilitation.

Under the umbrella of the NATReSA were functioning several institutions, some of which are very well-known, highly performing and have been *contre vents et marées* delivering different services to drug addicts. Among these institutions are -

- Centre de Solidarité Pour Une Nouvelle Vie in Rose Hill ;
- Dr Idrice Goomany Treatment Centre in Plaine Verte;
- Help Addiction Centre of the Hindu House;
- Amar Seva Sangam Centre in Vacoas;
- Centre d'Accueil de Terre Rouge;
- Etoile d'Espérance in Quatre Bornes;
- ACTRESA controlled by the Human Service Trust,
- Lacaz A, a drop in centre in St George Street, Port Louis;
- Chrysalide in Bambous;
- Groupe Renaissance in Mahebourg;
- CRAC and Centre d'Alcoologie in Rodrigues

All these institutions depend and are funded by the NATReSA.

Closing down NATReSA has several implications on the functioning of these organisations and, definitely, jeopardise their very existence. This is causing a lot of apprehension among their staff regarding their employment first and foremost.

Madam Speaker, since December 2014, the time when this Government came into power and hon. Minister Gayan took office, we fail to understand the whole drug policy and the strategy concerning treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts in our country.

There has been gross mismanagement and some decisions taken have been beyond any logic. The Methadone Programme implemented since 2006 has been abruptly stopped. This same programme has benefited thousands of drug addicts. Our country has been praised in a report from the UNAIDS in April 2015. Together with the Needle Exchange Programme, the success of the Methadone Programme in Mauritius is quoted as an example in Africa. This, in light of very good results obtained in management of drug addicts, as well as helping to reduce the dissemination of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C, which are two major threats to public health.

Madam Speaker, stopping the Methadone program and replacing it by Suboxone and Naltrexone is not the appropriate solution. These are all substitution therapies. In a developed country, the practitioners need all these tools to propose a tailor-made solution to each and every drug addict. Our stand, Madam Speaker, is that the Methadone Programme should not be stopped, it should be maintained alongside with the Suboxone and Naltrexon programme. These tools should be given as different possibilities to give better services and increase the rate of successful treatment and decrease the number of relapse after treatment.

Drug addicts who are willing to quit drugs are not second-class citizens. They should be treated with due respect and compassion. The attitude of the hon. Minister towards these drug addicts is highly condemnable as well as his attitude towards those involved in NGOs. This is causing big frustration and demotivation.

Madam Speaker, we need the NGOs working in the field of drug abuse. Some of these NGOs had recently, through the press, criticised the hon. Minister and asked him to step down on the ground of gross incompetency. We feel that in retaliation, the hon. Minister wants to control their voice. Closing down NATReSA will bring all its activities under the Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. The hon. Minister *en utilisant la carotte* – the Minister or those who will come later – *et le baton* will have absolute control over those NGOs, which I doubt will no longer be able to utter a single criticism against Government's action. We are fully conscious that all these NGOs are not fully 100% efficient and do not deliver uniformly, but there are ways and manners to deal with them. Exercising due diligence and better control on their activities before funding would have been a more intelligent way forward.

We are not saying that NATReSA was a perfect agency or was the ultimate response to the needs of our country as far as treatment and rehabilitation of substance abuse is

concerned, but it was there and had its track record especially in implementing educational programmes in schools and creating awareness in the population at large.

Madam Speaker, the questions today are these ones –

- is it better to close down NATReSA and bring its activities under the Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life?
- will this Unit do better?
- who will create awareness and lead educational programmes?
- is it a pure strategy of the Government to control the NGOs?

I have no doubt that any Government would want to reduce the proliferation of drugs, but let us think together. Don't we have a better solution? We all know that drug addicts and authorities do not go together. It is a question of incompatibility. So, how can we explain that methadone has been dispensed at some points in police stations? This has been the best deterrent for drug addicts towards quitting. It sends the wrong signal. It sends the wrong message.

Drug addiction is a global issue including law and order, criminality and public health. Mismanaging and choosing the wrong policies will have major negative impact on the future generations.

Madam Speaker, time has changed. The youth culture has changed as well. New drugs are on the market. The addiction pattern has changed. Even drug traffickers and dealers are changing their methods to import and distribute their drugs. We have to change our mindset as well. It is about high time to develop a new strategy whose main aim would be drug demand reduction, innovate new educational and prevention programme which would change behaviour and perception.

Madam Speaker, just closing down, NATReSA is not an appropriate solution. Moreover, since December 2014, this agency has been condemned to a slow death as all the technical key posts have been deliberately kept vacant in order to make it unoperational.

NATReSA has been delivering in the past when it was given all the means. It is also important to point out that in the previous report of the Director of Audit, it is spelt out that the finance and transactions have been fully compliant until now. We agree that the agency needs to be restructured and strategies re-engineered rather than winding up a complete

reorganisation towards result-orientated objectives taking into account new substitution techniques. More actual and penetrating means of communication needs to be implemented. We are also waiting in this context for the conclusion of the *Commission sur la Drogue* chaired by the former judge, Mr Paul Lam Shang Leen.

Madame la présidente, depuis l'avènement de ce nouveau gouvernement, toutes les décisions prises en matière de lutte contre la toxicomanie ont été irréfléchies et prises à la légère, sans tenir compte des risques et conséquences sur les dangers que représente la prolifération de la drogue sur la santé publique et la criminalité. Nous sommes en désaccord total sur ce sujet avec le gouvernement.

Before ending, Madam Speaker, I wish to appeal to the hon. Minister to make a special effort and do his best to give satisfaction to the former employees of NATReSA as far as their redeployment is concerned.

I also wish to recommend him to pay special attention to the new Harm Reduction Unit so that it becomes fully operational and be in a position to do a better job than the late NATReSA.

Thank you for your attention.

(4.29 p.m.)

Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Madam Speaker, NATReSa is the National Agency for the Treatment & Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers. But I have got questions about why we are repealing this law. My question is: why this law was crafted at the first place and the rationale behind? Why such an important law for the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers is being repealed? Is there a problem with the Board which governs NATReSA? Or is there a problem with the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers itself? If there is a problem somewhere, is it because of the act which governs NATReSA or is it just because those people who were at the very top of NATReSA did not have the required skills to set appropriate strategies in the attempt of making the Republic a drug free nation, and to those who are taking them, stopping using them and, in turn, be productive in the family, at work and in the society.

The NATReSA is meant to do just that. So, where is the problem? The problem is not with the law. I believe that the Government had waited for too many years to address the

managerial problems of NATReSA and now it is at its lowest point and the solution is to repeal the law, but to be replaced by what. Mauritius needs a national drug strategic framework to tackle all forms of drug abuse on all fronts.

It is the responsibility of the Government through the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to monitor the agency and to make sure that it is effective, come with proper guidelines and policies.

The principles of effective treatment of drug addicts are very complex. It affects the function of the brain and behaviour, therefore, the treatment has to address all the needs of the person who suffers from drug addiction, that is, not just his or her drug use.

When we are dealing with treatment programme, it is not ordinary treatment. Treatment involves teaching them steps that they can take to reduce infection like HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.

Repealing this law, Madam Speaker, will kill all the NGOs which are doing such an important job in the prevention and rehabilitation of substance abusers. Government alone will not be able to do such a big task.

As I have said earlier, the treatment of drugs abusers are very complex and it takes time; it is long term. The only way of dealing with drug addicts is that of a multi-disciplinary approach, with proper expert intervention in the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. We have to involve the civil society; the Government needs to go on the board and the employer as well. Now we are repealing this law and those NGOs which are doing a very good job in the field of drug addiction will not be properly funded, and people with drug problem will face great difficulty to integrate into society by rehabilitation.

It is the role of NGOs to help the Government with the rehabilitation of drug addicts and alcoholism, as at hospital level we cannot do rehab because it needs special settings and the treatment is long term, as I have said, and they need special attention. Just as other chronic diseases such as diabetes, it is an example of illness, which even after years of successful medical treatment carries risk of recurrence. In the same way, there will always be the possibility for people who suffer from addiction to relapse.

A solid rehabilitation programme is, therefore, of importance. It is proven that those who follow rehabilitation programmes are those who will achieve sobriety, have fewer run-in

with law, experience fewer relapses, enjoying better relation with family members, friends and colleagues, than those who do not participate in treatment.

I understand that there are many NGOs which are not doing their job properly in this field. But there are others which are doing ok, and they need the full support of the Government. Being a Member of the Rodrigues Anti-Drug Group myself, I know NATReSA very well, and I know that NATReSA was not setting their target properly.

Coming to Rodrigues, Madam Speaker, we have a very effective NGO, with years of experience, with expertise approach in the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers. I am myself a former President of the Crac Anti-Drug Group, the *Centre Alcoologie*, which is the only one looking after people with drug addiction and alcoholism. Till now, it is still doing such a very good job, with an extensive programme in rehabilitation, with the required facilities. NGOs which are effective should not be penalised with the repealing of this law. If NATReSA had failed to deliver, all that it has to do is to address the problem and set things right.

The Rodrigues Anti-Drug Group had proven to be effective over more than 20 years of experience in dealing with the management of drug addiction and alcoholism. The Rodrigues Anti-Drug Group is presently managing a 14-bedded treatment and rehabilitation centre, which is found at Mont Lubin, just next to the Mont Lubin Area Health Centre. They put that there strategically, so that if emergency treatment is needed, it is very close to the hospital.

Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, that 25% of our patients come from the main island Mauritius. They come to Rodrigues for three to four weeks for detox and most of them extend their stay, so as to allow themselves to follow the well-established rehabilitation programmes in place there. One of the other reasons why they prefer to do their detox in Rodrigues is that, during their treatment and withdrawal stage, they are more likely to maintain their abstinence, as those drugs that they are hooked on are not available in Rodrigues, therefore, giving them a better chance to kick out their bad habits.

With 80% occupancy in our *Centre Alcoologie*, we have a success rate of 72%. We do that evaluation every six months. Our rate of success is due to our so-called reinsertion programme. Such activities include cultivation of land, woodwork, rearing of animals, amongst others, in nature, as they can reintegrate in the society and become a better person.

One other thing which I want to point out is that most workers who have problems with alcohol in Rodrigues, when they are at the point to have problems at work due to absenteeism, for example, before drastic measures are taken by employers, they often refer those people to our centre for detoxification, giving them a chance. As you know, addiction is always associated with lots of underlying problems. So, they give them the chance to get rid of their addiction in the attempt to keep their job, preventing social problems, job losses, and the spread of family due to economic problem.

Madam Speaker, I am of strong opinion that the Ministry of Health sees to it that the required funds be granted to the only anti-drug groups which is doing such an excellent job on the island, so as to continue to set appropriate strategy to combat the usage of illicit drugs and alcoholism. The funds will also be used to promote and train people in special fields, so as to look after drug addiction and alcoholism.

Out of that Rs40 m., which is earmarked to prevent and treat drug abusers, I think that the fact that Rodrigues has proved to be working excellently in the field of the treatment of drugs and substance abusers, it needs to have a fair share based on its effectiveness in this Rs40 m.

I am now making a humble appeal to the Minister of Health and Quality of Life that his Ministry provides appropriate funds, so as to be able to keep the Crac Anti-Drug Group afloat. With the event of the autonomy in Rodrigues, we have a Commission for Health, and I can suggest that the funds be siphoned to the Commission for Health, so that we continue to have a better management of drug addicts and alcoholism in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, all we need is to keep our Anti-Drug Group functional, so as to be able to continue with our programme, and the end result will be to change the attitude of patients towards drugs through treatment, prevent them from relapsing, making them operate normally in society, thus reducing the risk of diseases, crimes and unemployment.

I thank you for your attention, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

(4.41 p.m.)

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, let me at the very outset pay tribute to all those public

officers, social workers and volunteers who have over the years spent their lifetime in the fight against substance abuse.

Since my intervention on this Bill will be based mostly on the fight against illicit and dangerous drugs, allow me, Madam Speaker, to pay tribute to all our citizens who are involved in the rehabilitation of drug addicts, fighting for a better preventive strategy, denouncing drug traffickers often at the risk and perils of their life and fighting the mafia responsible for the proliferation of dangerous drugs around the island. Among the long list of prominent personalities, we have our own sitting Prime Minister, Mr Ally Lazer, Mr Samioullah Lauthan and many, many others whose commitment and dedication have contributed at different times of our country's history to save our youth from this *fléau*.

The Bill in front of this House, Madam Speaker, aims at winding up the NATReSA and transferring its scope and responsibilities to the Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. There is no doubt that the hon. Minister is motivated with good intentions and I commend his commitment to –

Firstly, ensure that every cent spent in rehabilitation of substance abusers and prevention programmes bring the desired and expected results.

Secondly, that there is absolute transparency in the management of public funds.

Thirdly, that there is optimisation of resources and effective reallocation within his Ministry to promote a result-oriented approach.

Fourthly, show all the stakeholders involved in this whole process of prevention and rehabilitation of substance abuse that both his Ministry and this Government mean business.

Madam Speaker, there is growing concern among the population on the important issue relating to the consumption of synthetic drugs affecting our youth. Since the beginning of this year I have personally witnessed two suspected cases of death following consumption of synthetic drugs in the same region in my Constituency. Only yesterday, in Cap Malheureux, a young man in his early 20s got himself hanged and, according to information around, the main reason of his act was to be attributed to his inability to free himself from his addiction to synthetic drugs. We cannot remain insensible to the call of the increasing number of families who are suffering due to the proliferation of synthetic drugs in the country.

Madam Speaker, once again, the fight against drug trafficking, drug proliferation and substance abuse is a fight that is not the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life or the Government. It is a battle that will be won with the collaboration of the community at large, with the participation of the Government, the Police force, the NGOs, local authorities and every citizen of this country. There is a need for urgent action as it appears that during the last decade there has not been much progress and, in fact, an absolute disregard to this whole issue of *combat contre la drogue*.

May I remind the House that in as far as September 2004 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime collaborated in the preparation of a Master Plan on National Drug Control for the Republic of Mauritius and we can read the following in the report, and I quote

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“In mid-2000, there were a number of deaths attributed to Subutex overdose. According to drug abusers, a new substance has been introduced on the market during the past year. It is referred to as "*La Dame Blanche*" or "White Lady" and is being increasingly used by drug abusers.

Analysis of the said substance has shown that it contains a very low percentage of heroin coupled with a significant percentage of adulterants, such as paracetamol and caffeine.

Treatment Centres have noticed that the age of initiation to use and abuse of drugs has decreased to reach as low as 11 to 13 years old and that an increasing number of women are also using drugs.”

That was as far back as 2004 when already traces of synthetic drugs were apparent, but unfortunately, there have not been enough initiatives by the authorities during the last decade and the situation has deteriorated from bad to worse.

Madam Speaker, in the same report NATReSA was entrusted with a series of responsibilities eventually for the smooth implementation of a series of recommendations on prevention and rehabilitation and it is very unfortunate that it failed lamentably in addressing them. Worse, Madam Speaker, almost all of the recommendations found in that report, either preventive or repressive, have been totally ignored in spite of the fact that it contains a long list of valid measures against drug trafficking, control, prevention and rehabilitation.

I would suggest that a copy of the report be perused by the Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in view of implementing this series of valid recommendations contained therein.

Madam Speaker, there is also the need to understand the reasons for which an organisation like the NATReSA could not fulfil its mission. The hon. Minister mentioned that it had been given every support and the necessary resources to fulfil the objectives for which it was set up, but why is it that it failed? This country badly needs an appropriate structure, a structure that can successfully implement an appropriate strategy on prevention of substance abuse and rehabilitation.

I am convinced that the hon. Minister will ensure that the Harm Reduction Unit of his Ministry will be well structured with the right person at the top and a team of professionals who can deliver timely and with the commitment that the job requires.

Secondly, that there is availability of adequate resources in view of the growing demand for preventive measures and measures for rehabilitation.

Thirdly, that there is extensive collaboration with the community at large in view of assessing the requirements for intervention in the different parts of the country. In this context, a close collaboration of the local authorities is most welcoming.

I have to inform the House that in my own Constituency the elected Members have decided to set up a working committee in close collaboration with the District Council of Rivière du Rempart along with the various stakeholders, Police, the SILWF representatives, NGOs, youth organisations to define a strategy of prevention against the proliferation of synthetic drugs in some specific regions in the North. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life will be invited to participate in the initiative.

Fourthly, that it helps in the creation of a National Drugs Observatory that will help in providing vital information such as the type of synthetic drugs in the market, the common effects, the key ingredients it is made up of and which dose causes what effect. It is currently impossible to have such information timely and by the time they are available, Madam Speaker, the drug traffickers succeed in developing new versions that are more harmful than the previous ones.

Fifthly, that it collaborates with the Forensic Science Laboratory and ensures that there is regular analysis of the type of drugs in the market and the findings are made public.

Sixthly, that there is reliable information at all times on the list of NGOs involved in the Prevention of Substance Abusers and Rehabilitation, but also their scope of work and a regular evaluation of the results.

Seventh, better management of funds and collaboration with foreign organisations in view of procuring financial assistance available and support on training and empowerment for our resource persons.

Madam Speaker, this Bill is for the winding-up of an organisation that was mainly responsible to conduct the fight against substance abuse. I am sure that the Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life will require the support of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, to make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research. This House is well aware of her dedication to come up with a system of education that is transparent, accessible, non-discriminatory and feasible through the nine-year schooling. I propose that there is the creation of a separate unit both at the level of her Ministry and at the level of the PSSA in view of sensitising the children at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels on the effect of the different types of illicit drugs in the market.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), in a recent report confirmed that most illicit drugs used start in the teenagers. In the same report, examples of the different types of programmes that are available for students are also mentioned, and I quote -

“Caring School Community Programme (Formerly, Child Development Project).

This is a universal family-plus-school programme to reduce risk and strengthen protective factors among elementary school children. The programme focuses on strengthening students’ sense of community, or connection to school. Research has shown that this sense of community has been key to reducing drug use, violence, and mental health problems, while promoting academic motivation and achievement.”

Madam Speaker, I therefore, invite the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research to consider the inclusion of an

awareness programme for students from pre-primary to secondary and gradually at the level of Tertiary as well, on the whole issue of substance abuse starting with illicit drugs. These awareness programmes might take some time to design and implement in collaboration with foreign organisations having proven expertise in the field, but I am convinced that such initiatives will be highly beneficial in the fight against substance abuse in the long run.

Since my intervention is mainly based on illicit drugs and the social and economic consequences for a country, I have to say a few words on the ADSU and its responsibility as an agent for prevention against substance abuse.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, please don't go extensively into this. We are debating this Bill and I believe that you should go within the precincts of the Bill, don't go too much into the detail of ADSU.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, I will be concluding, but I was about to come on this issue of ADSU and prevention. This is the last part of my intervention.

I have had the opportunity to interact with some officers of ADSU for more than a year now, especially in my Constituency. I believe that in spite of regular complaints on their poor performance, there is a need for the community at large to understand that the fight against proliferation of illicit drugs is the responsibility of each and every citizen of this country. I make an appeal to the Commissioner of Police so that the ADSU is provided not only with adequate means in terms of manpower and equipment, but that every district has a well-equipped Drug Prevention and Monitoring Unit that will be working closely with the Local Authorities to encourage community participation in the fight against drug abuse and prevention.

With these few words, Madam Speaker, I thank you all for your attention.

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

At 4.55 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.30 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):

Thank you. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is always a pleasure and an honour to be able to rise and speak in your presence and I thank you for the opportunity.

(Interruptions)

And as you see, I understand the importance of the colour blue and I am dressed for the occasion.

Now, I have heard with much attention the address of the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life with regard to this National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers (Repeal) Bill. I have noted with concern and interest, how he chooses his words very carefully at the very outset of the presentation of this piece of legislation. He says, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that “it is not with *gaieté de cœur*”. He almost uses the words to try to convey the message that there is some sadness somewhere that he feels, that he expresses to us when he comes here to announce the death, the killing, the destruction of an organisation like NATReSA. And it is not always easy to sit - as people who have worked from the very beginning with an organisation of this nature - by idly and listen to someone who comes to say that for all those years this organisation that had a specific mandate has not functioned and lay the blame on the organisation itself.

I think it is unfortunate that the hon. Minister does not go into more detail and show intellectual honesty, because very often when one tries to show intellectual honesty as to the real reason why an organisation has not worked, it is not always politically correct to do so. If NATReSA has been created with specific functions, clearly it has been done so and been under the aegis for a long time of a specific Ministry. And what Ministry is that? It is the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

I belong to the Labour Party that was in Government once upon a time. People do not expect me, therefore, to stand up and say: “Well, the Labour Government is responsible and the Minister of Health and Quality of Life and all the Ministers of Health and Quality of Life of the Labour Government are responsible”. If there is responsibility to take, it should not fall at the feet and on the shoulders of the staff of NATReSA, if at all there is any responsibility for any fault or wrongdoing, it falls squarely on the shoulders of all Ministers of Health and Quality of Life who have come and gone, and who are still here.

That is the truth. If someone is functioning as a Minister of Health and if, under his control, his authority, his Ministry, there is an organisation that is not functioning, he is responsible.

When an organisation does not work allegedly, so we have the responsibility, therefore, to make it work. And, what the hon. Minister has chosen to do and, what not only the hon. Minister has chosen to do, but Government collectively has decided to do is to go forth with the elimination of an organisation in lieu of analysing what exactly is wrong, what exactly is not working, what exactly is lacking, what exactly could be done in order to improve the situation, how could we make things better. Oh, no! They have decided to come with the weapon of massive destruction and just obliterate the very existence of an organisation that has, let me say, done a very good work.

All organisations, all Governments, all institutions, at some point, have to reinvent themselves. That's undeniable. But it is easy for us, as politicians, to come and say that it is the organisation that has not done well. The organisation has not met its mandate. The organisation is to blame. The people at the organisation are responsible. As politicians, sometimes what we have to do is stop blaming the others and turn the mirror vis-à-vis us and see what we have done as politicians that was not enough or what we have not done.

It is all too often that civil servants or people and staff of NATReSA and other institutions alike are made the scapegoat for lacunas in Ministers administering those organisations. That calls upon those people to become frustrated. That calls upon other organisations to feel that frustration because, in lieu of sitting down with NGOs, listening to them and finding out what exactly is the problem, the hon. Minister has decided not to. He can come forward here, Mr Deputy Speaker, and say: "Well, you know, I have listened to people. I have opened my ears, I have opened my mind and I have listened to all other suggestions and proposals and in light of those suggestions and proposals, I have decided to shut down NATReSA." If he says that, then he will be the one who not necessarily I will believe. For sure, I will not believe him. I will not base myself on my opinion of what this whole scenario calls for, but I'll base myself on what I learn when I talk to other NGOs, when I read what NGOs talk about, their complaints, how they are very upset with the fact that all communications have broken down from the moment that the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life has taken office.

It is important for us to understand the background, what exactly has provoked this piece of legislation. *Par coincidence*, I have come across a piece of statement that was made

in public by one Ragini Rungen of Lacaz A. In that statement, she clearly says that each decision that is taken by the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life is done in the absence of consultation with NGOs.

The orator before me, on the Government side, is totally right when he said that this is not only the affair of one man, of one Government, but NGOs, civil society all together, we have to work towards eradicating this scourge. We have to work towards ensuring that people do not get infected even more, that HIV/AIDS does not increase that alternative to methadone. If there is anything better that they are implemented with a proper method. It is all our responsibility, but it cannot, therefore, be implemented, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we have representatives of NGOs coming forward and saying that everything that is decided, is decided by the Minister himself because, according to her, he is the one who knows everything. He does not lend them his ears; that is what they say. And, to add it all, she says that it is also done without any consultation with beneficiaries of those programmes, with people with HIV/AIDS and drugs users. Therefore, the very people concerned by those institutions, the very beneficiaries of those institutions are just cast aside. Their opinions do not count. It is not important to us to listen to them. It is only important, according to Ragini Rungen of Lacaz A, that the opinion of one hon. Minister, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life that matters and no one else. It goes even further, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the important background behind this bomb that is being thrown upon this institution by the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life. And what is it?

Nicolas Ritter! Who does not know what good work he does! Who does not respect him not only locally, but internationally, regionally! Who does not bow down to his courage! Who does not recognise that this is someone who does things, not in his own interest, but in the interest of the nation? And, it is good that we say it in this Assembly. Now, he says that the brutal reality is that the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life does not discuss with people who are concerned by those issues. He does not take the advice or opinions or *points de vue* of those organisations. He decides alone. Therefore, not one person, two people known for their dedication! Today, here, I would like to underline and to pay homage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to those people, those NGOs, who day in, day out, there is no time for them. They do not look at the time of day or the time of night, but they are ready to help and help voluntarily without expecting anything in return. But instead of recognising that, family enough when Ragini Rungen makes such a remark, such a criticism with such strength

against the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of life; the same Minister of Health and Quality of life and I will ask: is this a coincidence?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, go back to the Bill.

Mr Mohamed: I am coming to the Bill and the speech of the hon. Minister. I here refer to...

The Deputy Speaker: I fail to see how this is relevant.

Mr Mohamed: It is relevant. I'll explain myself. I am looking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the speech of the hon. Minister when he basically went as far as to say that it was important for him. I read from his speech - in this particular Bill, he says -

“It may be good for me to give the details of the grants and the bodies that receive the grants.”

And, one of them is: Lacaz A.

In other words, in my humble view, the way I read his speech, the way I listen to his speech, at no time does he recognise their good work, but he is trying to pass the message that they have not complied with their mission. He goes on to say that they will still be on board after things change, after the repeal of the Bill, but they will have to comply with certain conditions in order to show to it that there is value for money. Fair enough! He goes on to say in his discourse that there is here an amount of money that is spent monthly of Rs1,400,000 given to NGOs. This is what he says in his intervention for this Bill. He gives the impression that this is a lot of money that he has to bring under control in order to ensure that there is an alternative and solutions to drugs users, that there is rehabilitation, not only for drugs, but for alcohol or cigarette users as well.

Is this too much money, Rs1,400,000 or so? Is it too much money to spend Rs40 m. or so a year? Sorry to say, in my humble view, it is not enough! In my humble view, I do not believe Government is doing well quite enough financially with regard to helping drug addicts and all those who are victims of any sort of substance abuse. We have to do even more and he cannot, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, use this in his intervention and try to attribute one's way of judging how the methods are working and how the methods are not working, how to assess the efficiency of an organisation by simply reducing it to what? Facts and figures, money! There is no price, as a nation, for us to get together to help those that are suffering the scourge of addiction.

He goes on to justify the shutting down of NATReSA that they have not satisfied their mission and he says: if they had done their job, they would have known and been able to detect synthetic drugs earlier on. And he says: then there would have also been no need for there to be a commission of enquiry on drugs. But the hon. Minister seems to be totally unaware that in 2013 and 2014, I recall that there have been meetings organised by NATReSA together with the FSL, the ADSU and other institutions and the SLO where Mrs Green-Jokhoo, Counsel and other lawyers were present and Inspector Mohess of ADSU. We are talking as far back as almost two years back. And, what did they discuss during one of those meetings? Synthetic drugs!

They have a partnership agreement with the MITD for those following methadone. They have several partnership agreements, dialogues on lack or absence of situation, NATReSA's two training sessions - synthetic drugs and other types of drugs and FSL at Réduit. In spite of all of this and the Strategic Plan of 2014-2016 which gives a vision and a direction, the hon. Minister comes here and tells us that, in fact, they have done nothing! How can they, therefore, be said to have done nothing if no nominations and no resources are given to that organisation all along 2015? How come, therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are to believe that what the hon. Minister is suggesting is going to work? Why do we have to trust him that it is going to work?

When I read facts and figures of this nature, for the first time in 10 years the incidence rate of people who inject drugs increased by 12%. We are talking about figures of 2016 when the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life is responsible for those organisations to see to it *qu'il n'y a pas de recrudescence*, to see to it that there is no increase in the incidence of rate of people injecting drugs. How come for all those years it has gone down, when this God forsaken party known as the Labour Government together with the PMSD were in power, how come every time the figures for the incidence rate of people using drugs have gone down? How come when he has taken the helm of that Ministry, it has gone up?

We have, therefore, to believe him when he says things are going to get better when he has been at the helm of things, things have gotten worse. How come? This is also a figure which is important to note! We judge someone on his performance. We judge a Government on its performance and I think that those figures need not be hidden. I read here: 'it is to be noted that year 2015 saw an increase of 133% of female people who use intravenous drugs reached by needles and syringes programmes. 133% of female PWID increase in 2015! How

come, therefore, we are to believe that the solutions that they are giving this country in 2016, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will work when the fact is ever since they have been at the helm of those organisations, the figures and the statistics have proved that they have done *lamentablement*?

So, show me why should we believe that what the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life has proposed to Cabinet, approved by Cabinet, destroying this organisation instead of improving it, is going to work? So, therefore, my humble opinion is as follows: yes, if Government decides it is necessary to upgrade an institution, we are all for. If Government decides it is necessary in order to give more resources, specialised training to that organisation and to see to it that they can perform, we are all for. If we are to ensure that they can adapt with the times and get additional training which maybe they did not get in the past enough of that quality, we are all for.

But, what we are not for is because of the NGOs and the hon. Minister not getting on, because he has pinpointed those organisations in his address, he has mentioned their names and how much money they get and basically given the impression that they have done nothing good, because he does not get on with them and there is a breakdown in communication so much so that those NGOs have even had to write to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. They have even had to write to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and have asked them to mediate this situation because it is with your experience and help, they say - of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and the Rt. hon. Prime Minister - that they believe things could move forward. They have asked for experience. They have asked for people who are practical and they have recognised who is practical and who is not!

So, this is the situation today. Let me say something else. Even though, as the Rt. hon. Prime Minister always said: ‘well, you were in Government, then why did not you do things then?’ Fair enough! This is a fair criticism. But, let me say something: for all too long, even when he was in Government before me, even when he was Prime Minister when I was still a baby in arms, I was still a young man running around...

(Interruptions)

... those types of organisations have suffered from one important fault. What is it? That each and every time, we have to accept where we are wrong and we have to give solutions to those

problems and we have to say it openly without the fear of criticising oneself and looking at ourselves in the mirror once in a while.

The Labour Party has done a great deal in order to ensure that there is a drop in the level of HIV/AIDS, in order to ensure that the people in Mauritius, drug users get rehabilitation, in order to ensure that methadone is not only a programme, we are not only congratulated locally by NGOs for what the Labour Party did, but we are also congratulated internationally as well as the United Nations and the World Health Organisation. So, these are realities that we cannot ignore, but what we have to admit is that an organisation like NATReSA is not the only one, many of such organisations exist. Each and every Government has forgotten to do something important, including the Labour Party in the past, that we have always had the Minister responsible decide to make political nominations at the head of that organisation! We are not saying that the person who was nominated would not do a good job. But, he is a political nominee. Be it the MSM, be it the MMM, the PMSD or us, whoever it be, we should walk away from those political nominations. If this is what this Government is all about, we are all for.

Then, let me say I will not shirk away from accepting where we were wrong. I will come, together with my friends from this Labour Party, to propose solutions and we will give a helping hand if it is not to destroy an organisation. What we will condemn is the refusal of anyone to realise that we should not come to sort out a problem by blowing up an organisation when we can, in fact, ensure more rapidly that there is cohesion with NGOs because we need every one of us to work together, Government, Opposition, NGOs and all experts and let us put our minds together. I know they will say: 'well, we have got the majority in Parliament, we decide'. As the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life always says: 'Government decides' and Government does whatever it wants. But the final request that I have is: yes, you have majority. Yes, you do and you decide. Just do it right. That is all I ask for. Just to do it right.

Thank you very much.

(5.52 p.m.)

Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will today seek to persuade this House that the decision of the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life to repeal NATReSA is one of the best decisions that he has taken

in the interest of our country, in the interest of our youth and in the future interest of this country.

Let me start by this. Very often the Opposition parties ask about the *bilan* of *l'Alliance Lepep* or ask about the *bilan* of such and such Ministries. I hope the press will listen to this today.

(Interruptions)

He is the Health Minister who, since he came into power, built another Eye Hospital in the South. He is the Health Minister who provided a second Cardiac Centre in Mauritius. He is the Health Minister who

(Interruptions)

Let me talk about the *bilan*

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, let me decide!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let me talk about the *bilan*. He is the Health Minister who has been recruiting doctors. The doctors who are jobless today were students at the time when the former Labour Party was in power. When they returned with their medical degree - the former Labour Party was still in power - they were unemployed and the former Labour Party was still in power. This Government, through the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, is employing those doctors who have been unemployed. This is the *bilan* of the Minister of Health and Quality of Life.

Coming to the Bill now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Why is there justification to repeal this Bill? Why? Firstly, NATReSA, very clearly was not fulfilling most of its objectives as set out in section 4 of its parent's Act. That is why, secondly, its functioning was limited to the allocation of monthly grants to NGOs. This is what NATReSA was doing instead of NATReSA going down the streets of Mauritius where drug pedlars have been infesting our youths with all kind of drugs, including synthetic drugs. What NATReSA was supposed to do? NATReSA was supposed –

- (i) to coordinate and facilitate efforts at national level towards the implementation of programme for the prevention of substance abuse and the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers;

- (ii) to complement existing facilities for the prevention of substance abuse and the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers;
- (iii) mobilise resources locally and overseas for the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers;
- (iv) to set up and manage institutions for the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers;
- (v) provide after-care services for the rehabilitation of substance abusers, and
- (vi) finally, advise, guide and help voluntary social organisations engaged in the prevention of substance abuse and in the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers.

(Interruptions)

Exactly!

What NATReSA was doing? NATReSA was like a cow and it was simply allowing itself to be milked by a number of NGOs who were, in fact, incompetent. The incompetency started from the very apex of NATReSA coming down to the ground level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us just think for a moment about the amount of money involved. I heard very intently, my very good friend, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, who quoted that the budget involved is apparently only Rs1,410,000. But if you take it on a yearly basis ...

(Interruptions)

Exactly, this is what you fail to say. Rs14 m. a year and out of the Rs41,175,000 out of which Rs23,175,000 to meet the cost of the annual recurrent expenditure including fees payable to the Board and Rs18 m. allocated to 12 NGOs.

(Interruptions)

I know it hurts when we speak the truth.

(Interruptions)

I know it hurts.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, please address the Chair!

Mr Rutnah: The reason it hurts is because the alliance of Labour Party/MMM is still on. That is why it is hurting because for all intents and purposes, they are campaigning as if there is a general election tomorrow.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, let him speak, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I decide who speaks. I have decided to let hon. Rutnah speak. Let him speak!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Now, let me deal with some points that hon. Shakeel Mohamed has raised. I think I must deal with them. He says: 'there is some sadness somewhere to announce the death killing of an organisation like NATReSA'. I am grateful that the hon. Minister being diplomatic as he is, has taken time and has swiftly and gently dealt with this. Had I been in his place, I would have brutally dealt with this and thrown this away a long time ago. Why? Thankfully, we have the Rt. hon. Prime Minister who has given directives to everybody in the Government that wastage should be curbed because we do not want the legacy that was left by the Labour Party as we see in every sector of our economy. We do not want that.

The word intellectual dishonesty was being used. You call this intellectual dishonesty!

(Interruptions)

Exactly! Dishonesty to whom? Dishonesty to who? To the people of Mauritius, is that what was being suggested. No, this is a classic example of honesty, transparency, good governance and kick those who are incompetent out of their position and replace them by what we call the Harm Reduction Unit.

The Harm Reduction Unit, which is today leading the fight against what is happening insofar as drug abuse and substance abuse is concerned in our country.

My friend also said that all past Health Ministers are to be blamed for what has happened. Let me remind him that, when in 1996, NATReSA was introduced, it was not introduced by the Minister of Health then. It was introduced by the Minister of Social

Security and National Solidarity, and it was an agency that was working under the aegis of that Ministry; not the Ministry of Health. So, those who have been responsible of that Ministry in the past are to be blamed; not all the Ministers of Health.

Obviously, those who have taken over, who have come on board since 2008 and have paid lip service to what was going on with our youth in our country in relation to substance abuse, are to be blamed and are to be made accountable of the situation where we are today.

Had NATReSA been an effective organisation, had it been that effective organisation that it was supposed to do, we would not have had substance abusers walking around the streets everywhere. We would not have had those sagas in front of Dr. Idrice Goomany Centre. We would not have had people loitering around all the agencies that were providing a substance and drug alternative like methadone.

Now, what was happening when drug users were going to centres to obtain methadone? Everybody knows this, the population knows this. Some people were taking methadone and actually not treating themselves with that methadone. They were, in fact, selling it to others. They were introducing drugs to others. It is a known fact, and I know he knows it very well. Most of my friends who, today, sit on the other side from Constituency No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 are aware of these facts because Idrice Goomany is in Plaine Verte.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Rutnah: The Minister, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has been accused that he took decision without discussing with NGOs. Oh! Mr Nicolas Righter. I call him Righter. Mr Nicolas Righter who I call, but Ritter, so they say.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order! The hon. Member should have respect for the name of someone.

The Deputy Speaker: Sit down. I will take your point of order. Hon. Quirin, there is a point of order...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ameer Meea!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ameer Meea, I am warning you!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ameer Meea! Hon. Mohamed, please take your point of order.

Mr Mohamed: The point of order is very simple. I mean, he is talking about someone who is not in this august Assembly, and the minimum that we owe to anyone is not to deform and play around with his name as though it is a joke. That is the minimum. And now he cannot plead ignorance.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, it is true that it is not upholding the decorum of the House to name people in a negative way, but you have been the one introducing his name first. However, hon. Rutnah, I don't know if it is a slip of the tongue or otherwise, but please refrain from deforming the name of people. Consider this a warning.

Mr Rutnah: Thank you for your assistance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I apologise for calling him Righter instead of Ritter. My friend said the brutal reality is that the Minister does not discuss and take views. Now, let me remind him what the hon. Minister said in his discourse. He said this –

“Madam Speaker, shortly after I took office as the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, I initiated a cost benefit and cost effectiveness assessment of all parastatal bodies falling under my Ministry. NATReSA was one of them. In the course of the assessment, the following came to light (...)”

Then, the hon. Minister gave a number of failures and inadequacies of NATReSA. So, this was not a haphazard decision simply to close NATReSA; deal with it brutally. This was a decision that was taken by virtue of cost benefit analysis and by virtue of research, and a number of failures were identified. What do we do? Do we continue to inject money into NATReSA and wait when they are going to wake up from their dream in order to act on our streets? No! That would be intellectually dishonest. The intellectually honest thing to do is to stop it straightaway, and this is what the Minister is doing.

The percentage figure of 133% of intravenous drugs users that was quoted earlier on increased in 2015. How? From where? Where are these figures coming up from? These figures have been plucked out of somewhere simply to demonstrate that there has been an increase in substance abuse since this Government has come into power. This is the impression that was given in this House today, and that is plainly wrong. It is plainly wrong, because the increase in substance abuse has been going on for a while and the Labour Government that was in power since 2005 up to 2014 did pay lip service, did not pay attention, and did not deal with the problems of drugs. That is why there was degradation in our society, and that is why...

(Interruptions)

... when we were campaigning, the Prime Minister ...

(Interruptions)

... promised a Drugs Commission.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, are you taking a point of order?

Mr Mohamed: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Please don't talk from a sitting position.

Mr Rutnah: But I know ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, reality always hurts.

(Interruptions)

It does not matter; we have got thick skin, broad shoulders. They can criticise as much as they like, but nothing will stop this Government to continue in its fight against those drug peddlers, drug importers and drug users. We want a country...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Rutnah: ... free of drugs, and we want a country that is going to progress. On this note, I say, 'Rest in Peace NATReSA,' and the job will be done by the Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. François!

(Interruptions)

(6.12 p.m.)

Mr J. F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think it is a bit hard to take the floor after the stand of hon. Rutnah but, however, ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, allow the hon. Member to talk!

Mr François: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reality of Mauritius today, is that, there is a serious problem with regard to the challenging, dynamic and multiform of substance and illicit drug abuse in our society.

What is being done and needs to be done, are what shall govern our actions towards a healthy, clean, safe and drug free society.

Can we achieve this delicate mission, with the various numbers of illicit substance and drugs cases, and abusers reported in our society today? What is the real target to clean this social pollution?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand that the sole Government Institution at national level responsible for the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of Substance Abusers is the National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers (so-called NATReSA).

The main objectives of NATReSA as elaborated by the hon. Minister, stipulate clearly, what is expected from this Institution. Unfortunately, NATReSA, today, is subject to many criticisms for the weaknesses of its functionality to meet its objectives. What is truly needed is the establishment of a National Institution as the Apex Authority with all legal necessary powers with regard to Drugs Policies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with due respect to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life, I believe that the National Apex Institution should be set up at the level of the Prime Minister's Office, to give a national dimension to deal with this serious and sensible national matter.

This proposal applies to Rodrigues as well, hon. Baloomoody.

(Interruptions)

It is for the setting up of a Rodrigues Council On Drugs Abuse under the aegis of the Chief Commissioner's Office as the main coordinating, monitoring and evaluating body for the implementation of local drugs policies.

However, having said so, I will restrict my intervention on this Bill to mainly the cause of Rodrigues in consequence to the repeal of NATReSA in the same line of thought as hon. Leopold.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in light of this Bill, I had consultation with CRAC Anti-Drug Group, the sole NGO affiliated to NATReSA and engaged in the fight against substance abuse and drugs abuse in Rodrigues to have their views.

The vision and mission of the Rodrigues Regional Government and CRAC, with regard to substance and drugs abuse, is to promote a '*Drug Free Rodriguan Society*'.

En effet, M. le président, 'Nou Oule Enn Societé Rodriguaise Ki Dire Non à La Dépendance et L'Abus Des Drogues'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the CRAC Anti-Drug Group, was created by a group of young students from the Rodrigues College in 1987, amongst which, Dr. Henri Agathe (today Adviser to the Chief Commissioner on Economic matters) and I myself, are the Two-Co-Founder Members of CRAC Anti-Drug Group in Rodrigues, the sole NGO fighting against drugs abuse in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, courageously, we walked all around Rodrigues, without any logistics to inform the population about the consequences of drugs and substance abuse.

Our drive to fight drugs and substance abuse strengthened after a residential training in 1987 in Mauritius, organised by the valuable collaboration of the ex-Trust Fund, Mr Sam Lauthan, the then Chairman of Dr. Idrice Goomany Centre (Mr Lauthan who is actually Assessor on the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking in our Republic), the Group 'A'

de Cassis, the Centre de Rehabilitation de Terre-Rouge, Father Jean Maurice Labour from the Diocese of Port Louis, amongst others.

Today, CRAC, to realise its vision for “A drug Free Rodrigues”, has as objective, “*to mobilize and put together all resources, whether financial, infrastructural, technical and so on.*”

The philosophy of the group states that: “*Within any sufferer, there is a part of ourselves, thus giving a helping hand to him/her is helping ourselves.*” Beautiful!

Amongst its activities performed are: individual psychotherapy, Occupational therapy, Group therapy and Family therapy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, CRAC is accomplishing a fantastic job in Rodrigues and is today, a national reference, as also pointed out by my colleague, hon. Leopold, a former member of this organisation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister, however, in his speech pointed out, that ‘*apart from the allocation of grants to the two NGOs in Rodrigues, NATReSA has not carried out any prevention treatment and rehabilitation programmes for substance abusers in Rodrigues*’.

Indeed, NATReSA with regard to Rodrigues, has failed to play its role fully. The organisation has reported that they have never benefited from the funds voted by Government for the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Substance Abuse despite they submitted projects for NATReSA approval.

The local organisation also complained that Rodrigues has received no Continuous Progress Development Training for the last six years for their personnel to cope with the evolution of our society, despite several requests forwarded to NATReSA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, CRAC organisation, was very much worried in Rodrigues, despite the transitional provision of this Bill and was questioning, what will happen to them after the dissolution of NATReSA? Whether the Ministry will continue to support them?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has reassured the House that for the 12 NGOs, including CRAC, benefitting from a grant from the NATReSA, arrangements have been made for them to receive their monthly funding from his Ministry.

The NGO in Rodrigues, despite its remarkable results, NATReSA for the last 10 years has been discriminatorily offering them a meagre Rs70,000 per month for both, paying

salaries to 14 personnel working for the organisation and for expenditure, although the consequent increase in cost of living in Rodrigues for those dedicated workers.

You will also note that the organisation does not benefit any CSR directly for prevention purposes. And here, I also appeal for an increase of their grant and financial support as raised by hon. Leopold.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the organisation, CRAC Group, manages two centres namely at St Gabriel, where the centre is very active in the fight against drug by offering Day Care Services, Counselling and Rehabilitation to drug users and alcoholics.

The second centre of the Mt Lubin, Centre D'Alcoologie Paille En Queue, offers a residential treatment programme for alcoholics and drug addicts and outpatient facilities for alcohol and drug abusers, inpatient detoxification and relapse prevention programmes to alcoholics and drug abusers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as Rodrigues society aims totally for a 'drug-free society', I have to point out that we are not for the use of drug substitutes. We believe that any substance abuser shall be able to free himself or herself from drugs without any substitutes.

Rodrigues has proved that patients, especially those coming from Mauritius on treatment, are being rehabilitated, without any substitute. *“Enn mari joli sevrage sans enn lotte la drogue. Extraordinaire! Et, nou, à Rodrigues, nou oulé enn société Rodriguaise ki dire ‘non’ à la dépendance. »*

M. le président, je pense que ce modèle Rodriguais de la réinsertion et la réhabilitation qui est unique, peut être répliqué sur toute la République.

(Interruptions)

I didn't mention that, but I said it: “We do not want to use any drug substitute.” I think the message is clear!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming to the real situation in Rodrigues, there is an increase in prevalence of cannabis use, followed closely by alcohol abuse which is a gateway to drugs. However, an insignificant prevalence of hard drugs is around.

M. le président, soyez quand même rassuré que l'OPR, mon parti sous le *leadership* de Serge Clair, dans notre volonté politique, est engagé dans la lutte contre le trafic et l'usage des drogues illicites à Rodrigues, comme si bien écrit dans notre manifeste électoral.

L'OPR est contre toutes formes de drogues qui mettent en danger et qui font mal à l'homme et la femme rodriguais.

De plus, l'OPR, nous disons 'non' à la légalisation et la dépénalisation du gandia, contrairement à ce qui est écrit dans un quotidien cette semaine concernant la réclamation de la légalisation du gandia à Rodrigues, par un natif de l'île Maurice qui vit à Rodrigues suite à la visite à Rodrigues de la '*Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking*'.

D'ailleurs, il faut souligner que c'est l'OPR et le Chef Commissaire, Serge Clair, mon *Leader*, qui avait demandé à l'honorable Premier ministre pour que la Commission siège à Rodrigues. In that regard, I do hope that the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking had a fruitful mission from their public hearing in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have some statistics from the Police; I won't go into details, but it is quite interesting to note that there is a decrease in 2014 and 2015 in the number of cases for cultivation of cannabis, the number of persons arrested and others. But however, from information I gathered, it has been observed that there are known drug traffickers from Mauritius visiting Rodrigues regularly, I am not quite sure on what ground and for what purpose.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to say it here, loud and forceful: "*Nou napa oulé ki banne trafiquants la drogue bien connu dan Moris, vine sali (...).*"

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. François, Creole is not yet an official language. So, please refrain from using it!

Mr François: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think it is quite clear to put it like that: "*Pour venir salir et pourrir la société rodriguaise.*"

In that connection, I call for the vigilance of the Commissioner of Police, to enhance law enforcement and control of arrivals and departures of passengers both at the airport and the port in Rodrigues.

The Customs Department vigilance is required, as well, for the enhancement of the prevention, detection and repression of drug trafficking at the port and the airport.

I have to add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there should be regular national crack down operations, *incognito* missions and thorough investigation on alleged potential cases of ‘*blanchiment de l’argent*’ in Rodrigues.

On the other hand, I have to put on record the good work of the Police Community policing in Rodrigues, which is well appreciated by the population and it is a good platform in the fight against drug and prevention for the Rodriguan population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, illicit drugs and substance are abused by different segments of our population. In Rodrigues, it is worth to note that the Regional Government, in collaboration with CRAC Anti-Drug Group and the secondary school institutions have put in place two organisations, a Steering Committee for the Youth and a Monitoring Mechanism to control abuse of licit drugs such as tobacco and alcohol, which are the main substances of abuse amongst students and the youths.

It is also noted that there is not much new substance introduced on the market referred to as synthetic drugs and designer drugs. From statistics I have, in 2014, there were no cases on possession of synthetic drugs and in 2015, ADSU reported five cases pending FSL report.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can only hope that the objectives of NATReSA, will be now fully operational with a result-oriented strategy and all transitional provisions of the Bill are achieved by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life for a better drug policy and strategy with regard to prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. A better coordination is expected as well in the interest of the drugs and substance abusers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Rodrigues and the CRAC-Anti Drug Group, reiterate their commitment towards a drug-free Rodrigues Society and await a new mindset and that more resources and facilities are expected for the proper functioning of the NGOs with the signature of a new MoU between the institutions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude for now, I wish well, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the new institution to take over the responsibility of NATReSA and that Government, in its policies against illicit substance and drug control and abuse, continues to prioritise the fight for the treatment, rehabilitation of substance abusers and against abusers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is my contribution and I thank you for your kind attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissézon!

(6.29 p.m.)

Mr E. Boissézon (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): M. le président, merci de me permettre d'intervenir lors des débats relatifs au projet de loi *National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers (Repeal) Bill*.

J'étais présent dans cette auguste assemblée quand le projet de loi *National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers Bill* fut lu pour la deuxième fois en 1996. Tous les intervenants étaient optimistes. La nouvelle loi devrait remplacer le *Trust Fund for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts* de 1986. L'honorable ministre de la sécurité sociale d'alors, et non ministre de la santé, comme l'honorable Mohamed l'a dit, Mlle. Jocelyne Minerve devait dire, je cite –

“The new organisation will be required to act as an umbrella organisation to coordinate national efforts to fight substance abuse and provide informative back up and appropriate service.”

Vingt ans après l'histoire se répète. Nous sommes en présence d'un projet de loi qui conduira à la résiliation d'une loi existante. Dois-je dire que nous avons un *sad day* aujourd'hui ou adopter une position positive et se dire que nous avons pris une décision qui nous permettra de mieux préparer l'avenir?

M. le président, la fermeture de NATReSA était déjà écrite. En 2011, Madame la présidente, quand elle était alors ministre de la santé, avait émis des réserves sur le fonctionnement de cette institution. En juin 2011, à l'occasion d'une fonction relative à la journée internationale contre l'abus et le trafic de drogues, vous aviez fait remarquer qu'après un moment d'observation, qu'elle souhaiterait rendre la NATReSA et l'ONG...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissézon, please don't bring the Speaker into this debate.

Mr Boissézon: No, she was then the Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: I know, but she is now the Speaker.

Mr Boissézon: She was then the Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: But she is now the Speaker.

Mr Boissézon: Okay! Le Dr. Faysal Sulliman, ex-responsable du programme de méthadone du ministère de la santé, a été catégorique. Pour lui, la NATReSA n'avait plus sa raison d'être et ne servait plus à rien.

En 2013, monsieur Vishu Bundhun, alors directeur de la NATReSA, avait toutes les peines du monde pour répondre aux critiques formulées contre son organisation, prétextant un manque de ressource. Les critiques formulées sont les mêmes que celles émises par le ministre et les membres du gouvernement. Je ne prendrai pas le temps de la Chambre pour les manquements énumérés.

M. Danny Philippe, coordonnateur de l'ONG Leadership and Empowerment for Action and Development (LEAD): 'Le gouvernement doit aujourd'hui créer une agence digne de ce nom, qui puisse juguler le problème de la drogue à Maurice. La NATReSA a fauté parce qu'elle n'a pas pu s'adapter aux changements dans ce domaine. L'agence est restée statique alors que le monde de la drogue, la réhabilitation et la prévention ont grandement changé ces dernières années.'

Je citerai un article du Mauricien du 16 janvier 2016, le lendemain de la décision de fermer la NATReSA par le Conseil des ministres le 15 janvier. Je citerai monsieur Nicolas Ritter, champion de l'honorable Mohamed -

«Nicolas Ritter, directeur exécutif de l'ONG Prévention, Information et Lutte contre le Sida (PILS)»

Et je cite –

« A PILS nous n'avons pas travaillé directement avec la NATReSA mais il est certain que la dissolution de l'agence n'est qu'un aspect du problème de la toxicomanie à Maurice. Il est vrai que la NATReSA était devenue simplement une agence de décaissement de l'argent de l'État mais il faut maintenant, au ministère de la Santé, adopter une approche plus globale concernant ce problème. »

Les personnes que j'ai citées sont unanimes. La NATReSA a failli à sa mission. Elle était devenue simplement une agence de décaissement. En bref, le gouvernement a eu raison de dissoudre la NATReSA. Et, je noterai ici que quand le gouvernement a décidé de fermer la NATReSA, - contrairement à ce qu'a dit l'honorable Dr. Joomaye - il a décidé de préserver tous les droits des travailleurs. Et là, je cite la loi, la section 4(2)(b) –

“(b) Subject to paragraph (e), every person who at the commencement of this Act is employed on the permanent and pensionable establishment of the Agency shall be entitled to –

(i) to be transferred to the permanent and pensionable establishment of the Ministry on terms and conditions which shall be not less favourable than those of his previous employment;”

Si la NATReSA n'existe plus aujourd'hui, la mission, qui était sienne, n'a pas été accomplie et doit être atteinte. Aujourd'hui, débute une nouvelle ère. Le gouvernement effectue un *paradigm shift*. Pendant 30 ans, soit les 10 ans du *Trust Fund* et les 20 ans de la NATReSA pendant lesquels nous eûmes droit à une situation gouvernement financier, ONG exécutant. Aujourd'hui, nous sommes dans une situation où le ministère de la Santé est décideur, planificateur, exécutant.

M. le président, dans le plan stratégique préparé conjointement par le ministère de la Santé et la NATReSA en 2014, cette organisation s'était fixée comme vision *to make the Republic of Mauritius a drug free society* et comme mission *to create awareness on the harmful effects of licit and illicit drugs and promote healthy lifestyles through preventing programmes and to support drug users through effective treatment and rehabilitation*.

Est-ce que le ministère de la Santé est prêt à prendre ce *challenge* ? Je pense qu'il a les moyens et que le Harm Reduction Unit et le Substance Abuse Unit, qui seront créés, seront à la hauteur des tâches qu'on attend d'eux. Aujourd'hui que le ministère de la Santé prend les choses en main, il doit prendre en considération les points suivants –

- avoir une approche plus globale concernant le problème de la toxicomanie;
- être le maître d'œuvre dans le combat contre la drogue, la réhabilitation, la prévention et l'éducation des jeunes;
- créer une meilleure collaboration des différentes agences, notamment le ministère, la douane, la police, les organisations non-gouvernementales, les institutions scolaires.

M. le président, le rapport mondial sur les drogues 2015 de l'Office des Nations Unies contre la drogue et le crime est alarmant. La situation générale mondiale en matière de production et d'usage de drogue illicite et de leurs conséquences sanitaires a peu évolué. Les conséquences sanitaires de l'usage illicite de drogue restent un sujet de préoccupation

mondiale car une large majorité des usagers problématiques de drogue n'ont toujours pas accès à un traitement.

Le cannabis demeure la drogue de prédilection à l'échelle mondiale. Cultivé dans presque tous les pays du monde, on estime qu'entre 130 à 190 millions de personnes en fument au moins une fois par an. La hausse de la culture mondiale du pavot à opium et de la production d'opium jusqu'à des niveaux records devraient encore avoir des répercussions importantes sur le marché mondial des opiacés. Cela suscite des inquiétudes quant à l'ampleur du défi que présentent les groupes criminels organisés de plus en plus complexes et évolutifs pour les services de détection et de répression. On estime qu'un total de 246 millions de personnes, soit une personne sur 20, entre 15 et 64 ans, a consommé de la drogue illicite en 2013. Cela représente une hausse de 3 millions de personnes par rapport à l'année précédente. Mais du fait de l'accroissement de la population, l'usage de la drogue illicite est, en fait, resté stable. Alors qu'il y a une femme sur trois toxicomanes, seulement un sur cinq a accès au traitement.

Divers pays signalent que les nouvelles substances psychoactives continuent de proliférer sur le marché en termes de quantité comme de diversité. En décembre 2014, un total de 541 nouvelles substances psychoactives avaient été signalées par 95% de territoires au système d'alerte précoce de l'ONU DC. Les produits de synthèse continuent de représenter la majorité des nouvelles substances psychoactives signalées en 2014. Le nombre croissant de nouvelles substances psychoactives disponibles dans le monde entier montre que le marché des drogues de synthèse se diversifie de plus en plus.

Alors, M. le président, je suis en présence du plan stratégique 2014-2016 énoncé par l'honorable Mohamed. J'ai parcouru ce texte et il ne fait pas mention de drogue synthétique. Encore un échec de la NATReSA.

Ces quelques paragraphes du rapport apocalyptique précité ne devraient pas décourager les officiers du ministère de la Santé et de la qualité de la vie mais plutôt leur faire comprendre l'ampleur de la tâche qui les attend. Maurice ne sera pas épargné par les marchands de mort. Ils n'ont pas de conscience. Ils n'hésiteraient pas à injecter des doses de drogue à leurs propres enfants juste pour l'appât du gain financier facile. Le ministère devra se mettre à l'écoute du monde et de la société pour être au courant de l'évolution du trafic de la drogue, être prêt à s'adapter aux changements, ne pas se contenter de rester dans les bureaux et donner des directives.

Il est un fait indéniable que la drogue est un fléau mondial et qu'un État ne pourra lutter seul contre les prédateurs mondiaux. Maurice est membre de plusieurs organisations mondiales et régionales telles que l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé, la SADC, l'Office des Nations unies contre la drogue et le crime, la COMESA et la Commission de l'Océan Indien. Leur collaboration technique, échange de données, partage d'expériences et financières devraient être sollicités.

M. le président, que doit-on faire pour éradiquer l'usage de la drogue à Maurice ? Premièrement, l'extinction de l'approvisionnement et deuxièmement, l'extinction de la demande par le traitement. La première action est la réduction en empêchant la drogue d'entrer dans le pays. Ally Lazer, travailleur social se pose une question depuis plusieurs années et il n'a pas trouvé de réponse. Nous sommes un petit pays, nous avons un port et un aéroport, comment se fait-il qu'il n'y ait jamais de pénurie de drogue à Maurice et qu'on n'arrive pas à stopper leur arrivée?

Il est regrettable que nous n'ayons pas suffisamment de renseignements sur les agissements des trafiquants alors que le nombre de consommateurs augmente. J'ai été triste quant à l'attitude de certains ONG qui ont déposé devant la Commission d'enquête sur la drogue. Derrière chaque drogué il y a un trafiquant et ce trafiquant sera l'âme satanique qui sera présente pour faciliter la rechute du pauvre drogué sans suffisamment de volonté. Le ministère doit amener les ONGs à collaborer à sa base de données quant aux sources d'approvisionnement.

De temps en temps, nous apprenons avec sensation qu'une saisie de drogue a été effectuée dont les valeurs ne cessent d'augmenter. Au fond, ce n'est que le *tip de l'iceberg* et nous avons des frissons rien qu'en pensant à l'ampleur de la demande et de l'argent engagé dans cet enfer où la vie humaine n'a pas de prix. Deuxièmement, si nous voulons réaliser notre vision d'un *drug-free State*, le gouvernement devra élaborer un programme de traitement de drogués capable de les sortir de la dépendance vers l'indépendance.

M. le président, aucun drogué ou toxicomane ne pourra se sevrer seul. Certes, il doit y avoir quelques exceptions à la règle générale mais nous devons nous concentrer sur ceux qui veulent se soustraire des effets de la drogue mais qui ont besoin d'aide. Le sevrage ne consiste pas seulement à administrer des médicaments à un toxicomane ou drogué et le tour est joué. Pour l'héroïne ou la cocaïne, les signes sont surtout physiques avec des douleurs violentes et psychiques, angoisse, insomnie. C'est là que dans un premier temps la présence

d'un médecin est essentielle et permet de résoudre la plupart du temps ce passage difficile. Le personnel médical doit accompagner un sevrage en douceur tout en limitant ses effets, mais c'est aussi de tout mettre en œuvre pour prévenir une rechute.

Le toxicomane devra résister à la tentation de reprendre la drogue qui soulagera immédiatement tous les signes de sevrage. Pour la famille et l'entourage la tâche n'est pas aisée. Le drogué souffrira du manque aigu de drogue. Les parents doivent être formés pour soutenir sans culpabiliser, être présent sans être étouffant, aider sans conseiller outre mesure. D'autre part, il y a le traitement des maladies infectieuses telles que le VIH et l'hépatite C et les affres de surdose qui doivent être faits en parallèle.

M. le président, parallèlement au traitement psychologique, la consommation de la drogue n'est pas un vice comme l'on pourrait sommairement croire. La drogue est l'anesthésie dont la personne croit avoir besoin pour se soulager d'une douleur socio-affective telles le sentiment d'abandon, la difficulté de trouver un sens à sa vie en général, souhaité s'intégrer à un groupe, réduire les tensions psychiques, attirer l'attention des parents. Le travail psychologique...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissézon, sorry to interrupt. Can you come back to the subject and discussion, that is, to repeal on the Bill?

Mr Boissézon: Yes, but I think that the treatment forms part of the way to reduce drug consumption and I think that...

The Deputy Speaker: It does...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Boissézon...

(Interruptions)

Mr Boissézon: Autre point que nous devons considérer lors de la réinsertion des consommateurs de drogue est l'emploi. L'oisiveté est la mère de tous les vices. Nous devons préparer un plan de réinsertion des victimes de la drogue. Bien souvent, après leur sevrage les consommateurs de drogue recherchent une autonomie. Ils veulent une vie digne et satisfaisante et pour atteindre cet objectif ils doivent trouver un emploi afin d'avoir une

indépendance totale. Au départ, ils n'ont pas les mêmes chances que les autres postulants parce qu'ils n'ont pas de qualification, un manque d'éducation et une érosion d'aptitude suite à la prise des drogues.

M. le président, je crois que le ministère doit impérativement mettre un organisme capable de mobiliser certains employeurs afin de pouvoir canaliser les demandeurs d'emploi. Consulter les ministères concernés...

The Deputy Speaker : Hon. Boissézon...

Mr Boissézon : Oui, je termine.

The Deputy Speaker: Allow me to step in.

Mr Boissézon : Oui, je termine.

The Deputy Speaker: I have been very lenient in letting you go out of subject. The subject remains repealing this Bill. So, please come back to the subject.

Mr Boissézon: M. le président, nous sommes à la croisée des chemins. La répression sera plus apte après les conclusions de la commission d'enquête par le Juge Paul Lam Shang Leen. Le ministère de la Santé a revu sa stratégie concernant la lutte contre la drogue, les ONGs devront revoir leur rôle pour plus d'efficacité. Ainsi la vision pour un *drug-free State* pourra se concrétiser.

Merci.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, Madam Speaker will now resume her seat.

At this stage, Madam Speaker took the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

(6.53 p.m.)

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Madam Speaker, when I listened to a few of my hon. friends intervening before me, I had realised that this debate today could derail a little in some way. Today, in fact, *on ne fait pas le procès du ministre Gayan*. We are not only debating on the whole issue of substance abuse, what is the situation

in the world or in the country and the temptation to enlarge the debate, but I will, for my part, try to refrain from deviating from the issue which is before this House today, that is, whether the NATReSA Act should have been repealed or not. In fact, this is a repeal Act, Madam Speaker.

The Government is proposing to do away with this institution and this is on what, I think, we should pronounce ourselves. I will also try to refrain from what has been said before me because we are all aware now that when the NATReSA Bill was adopted in the House in 1996, it repeals the existing Treatment and Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts Trust Fund Act. The NATReSA was set up to replace the previous Trust Fund which has not been performing to the satisfaction of the stakeholders and the Government of the day. I think somebody said it before me; the Trust Fund was under constant attack in those days subject to severe criticisms from various quarters. But strangely, Madam Speaker, the reasons put forward to do away with the Trust Fund are quite similar to those advanced by the present Minister today, to do away with the NATReSA.

In fact, I was present in 1996 when the NATReSA was set up and when the Bill was adopted by the House. I even intervened, but I had to peruse the speech of the then Minister, Ms Minerve while she was introducing the Bill. She spelt out the reasons that the then Advisory Committee had put forward to justify the doing away of the Trust Fund, namely the failure of the Trust Fund in the implementation of effective prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes at the national level. She also mentioned the seriousness of the absence of an integrated approach resulting in the disorderly organisation of the various programmes. The then Ministerial Committee recommended that a new agency should be set up which will have a national mandate for dealing with substance abuse, prevention and treatment of substance abusers, hence, therefore, the setting up of the NATReSA in 1996.

When the hon. Minister was introducing the Bill last Tuesday, Madam Speaker, he gave several reasons to justify the repeal of this institution. He gave, I think, 10 reasons. He listed those reasons and I am just quoting one or two sentences used by the hon. Minister. I quote –

“I am sure that the whole House will agree with me that the NATReSA has been a major disappointment in the realm of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of substance abuse in the country.”

He also said and I quote –

“NATReSA has been focusing on prevention programmes which have not evolved over the years, and

NATReSA did not have its own treatment and rehabilitation programme.”

In fact, Madam Speaker, little did - those who proposed the setting up of NATReSA at that time after taking so much pain to spell out clearly in the Bill the objects of the Agency and taking so much pain to elaborate the powers of the Board - they know that NATReSA would one day be closed down for the very reasons that it was set up.

Madam Speaker, I have been personally involved in many debates and participated in many debates on the drug issues. Since 1991, when I was Attorney General and the Rt. hon. Prime Minister was then Prime Minister of the MMM/MSM Government, I contributed in amending the law in many ways. It was in those days, for example, that the first amendment came before this House to freeze drug assets as an asset of drug traffickers. I remember that we amended the Dangerous Drugs Act to disallow those convicted of those drugs offences to enjoy certain privileges which other convicted persons could enjoy. We amended the Constitution to prevent a convicted or charged for drug offence to be released on bail and this amendment to the Constitution was struck down as we all know before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. So, for a long time now, we have been involved with drug issues.

As I said today, I am not going to make the *procès* of the Minister. But I have to say that I have my own reservations and doubts on the advisability and soundness of winding up the NATReSA for several reasons, Madam Speaker.

Yes, in some way the NATReSA has been, as alleged by the hon. Minister, a disappointment, but we must delve into the reasons as to why the situation has evolved in the way that it has evolved. But let me say, firstly, the reasons why I do not agree with the reasoning of the Minister and Government.

NATReSA was set up to act as a broad based and multi-sectoral agency, which included representations of different Ministries – somebody has said it before me – Social Security, the Prime Minister’s Office, the Commissioner of Prisons, the Ministry of Health, four representatives of NGOs, representatives from the employers and representatives from

the trade unions. The underlying philosophy behind setting up this type of Agency and to quote the words of the previous Minister, Ms Minerve –

“To act as an umbrella organisation, to coordinate national efforts to fight substance abuse and provide information back up and service intervention.”

In other words, Madam Speaker, the Bill was introduced to foster the collaboration of all partners involved in substance abuse, prevention, in the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abuse.

In her speech, it was clear that the Bill would enable the new organisation to coordinate and monitor in a systematic manner programmes being implemented by the various Ministries, organisations and *Force Vives* and the NGOs. NATReSA was, therefore, set up to operate as an apex body with the objective of unifying, harmonising the different operations and activities of the Ministry and the NGOs. This was the essence, the *raison d'être* of the NATReSA. This is what obtains in several jurisdictions, Madam Speaker.

I heard hon. François saying: ‘we should have a body under the Prime Minister’s Office’. Okay, we do away with the NATReSA. So, the idea is to have a body which coordinates all the different Agencies or Ministries. In fact, I am sure the Rt. hon. Prime Minister would have forgotten that. In 1992 or 1993, I remember, as Attorney General, we came up with such a proposal and this apex body was set up under the Prime Minister’s Office, long years before the NATReSA saw the light of the day in 1996.

It was in 1992 or 1993. The Prime Minister’s Office was to steward, lead a multi-faceted body with those coordinating ambitions, in order to promote the fight against substance abuse.

Madam Speaker, when we say all this, what is the course of action that the Minister is proposing today after having signed the death warrant of NATReSA? The Minister is proposing the setting up of a comprehensive Substance Abuse Unit, which will - I grant him that, honestly - revamp the Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry of Health, that is, a recast, a revamped Harm Reduction Unit.

Nevertheless, whatever the unit the hon. Minister will set up, it will be a body comprising of only public officials working under the directives of the Minister or the

Permanent Secretary. This body or unit will be deprived of its broad-based and multi-sectoral dimensions which were the aim behind the setting up of the NATReSA.

Madam Speaker, the fight against drug abuse, as we have just heard, is a complex, is a national enterprise, requiring efforts from all the stakeholders on a national level. It cannot be the war waged by one unit comprising of only government officials. However well-motivated these public officials may be, the war against substance abuse has a multi-pronged dimension and must be based on a multi-pronged approach. The ingredients of this approach are sensibilisation, prevention, repression, treatment, rehabilitation, as we all know. Therefore, the conditions for a successful campaign and a successful war are multifarious, hence the reason why the war cannot be left in the sole hands of public officials or the executive.

If it is true that repression, for example, falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of the police and the judiciary, it goes without saying, Madam Speaker, that with regard to the treatment, rehabilitation dimension, this cannot and should not be left only in the hands of the executive, but on the contrary, as it is the norm in other jurisdiction, other stakeholders, the NGOs, the *force vives*, civil society, should have a word, should take an active part in these programmes. This is why technicians and social workers in the field of substance abuse refer to harm reduction, demand reduction, and supply reduction. Supply reduction refers to the part played by the police, the judiciary, the legislature, whilst demand reduction pertains to the field of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, and harm reduction refers to the dispensing of drug substitute like methadone and so on.

The Minister, today or last Tuesday, has also justified his decision to close down the NATReSA by highlighting the different ways this organisation failed, its inefficiencies, the extent to which it has been a burden to taxpayers. The Minister mentioned, in his speech, inherent weaknesses and dysfunctioning at all levels of the NATReSA.

I hold no brief for the NATReSA. I agree, I subscribe and endorse the view that the NATReSA was suffering from many inefficiencies, many flaws in many ways. The Minister even mentioned that a previous assessment on NATReSA was carried out by the officers of the Ministry under the previous Government in 2012 and this led to no major improvements, and that he himself in mid-2015 had another assessment carried out and, unfortunately, this assessment also yielded no result.

Madam Speaker, I cannot again, unfortunately, endorse the reasoning of the Minister and his Ministry. I say so, because if the NATReSA failed to fulfil its mission under the previous Government especially, I ask myself the question: who is to be blamed? Because when we look at the law, Madam Speaker, we see that section 15 of the Act reads as follows

“Powers of Minister

(1) The Minister may give such written directions of a general character to the Board, not inconsistent with this Act, as he considers necessary in the public interest, and the Board shall comply with those directions.”

To me, the ineffectiveness, the dysfunctioning, the injudicious use of public funds, alluded to by the hon. Minister, for these long, long years, was the result of the previous Minister under the past Government to exercise the powers conferred upon him by the law to monitor and to preserve the proper and effective functioning of the NATReSA.

To my mind, Madam Speaker, granted that the hon. Minister may have been right with regard to some of his criticisms concerning certain flaws in the functioning of the NATReSA, according to me, the hon. Minister should have remedied the situation by implementing corrective measures himself and directing his Ministry to exercise tighter and stricter financial control over the organisation.

I must say, again with regret, that, since January 2015, there has been no director appointed to lead the organisation, and this was confirmed by a question put in this House by hon. Quirin in September 2015. Since January 2015, there was no director at the head of this organisation. So, this is eliminating totally an agency which had been an effective tool during its golden days - and I will come to the golden days of the NATReSA very briefly. What the Minister is doing today, as they say in French, *c'est jeter le bébé avec l'eau du bain*, Madam Speaker.

According to my information, things have been different; from what the hon. Minister has told us. I have a different picture of what happened, in fact, during all these years, during these decades, and how the situation did evolve. I don't know if the hon. Minister was fed with the proper information, but in fact, from my information, the Ministry had systematically, over the years, failed to give its full support to enable the NATReSA to deliver and fulfil its mission. The NATReSA had only three technical staffs. It was

operating with 16 members of staff only when the number of posts on the establishment of NATReSA was 29. It was, therefore, never fully staffed. The agency has never been led by a director on its establishment, but a director recruited on contract.

The NATReSA had known more than six directors in the past years, on contract, and I have documents with me when, on two occasions, at least, the Board of NATReSA requested the Ministry - I am talking, of course, of the past Government - had requested the Ministry to have the MAB or the public sector governance to conduct inquiries, to set up investigation on the agency, but the Ministry then never responded, never took any decision in that direction. I have with me two letters dated July 2009 and October 2011, Madam Speaker. In those letters, the Chairman of the NATReSA pleaded to the Chief Executive of the Ministry then, and mentioned indecent wastage of public funds, forgery of logbooks, *détournement* of original objective of activities.

“The Board unanimously agreed that a letter be sent to you for the setting up of a full-fledged enquiry by the Management Audit Bureau or any appropriate authority so as to shed light on all these issues.”

But nothing was done. The Ministry never pursued the matter.

In 2011 also the same thing took place, the Board, the Chairman denouncing irresponsible officers.

“The Board, therefore, agrees that a full-fledged enquiry be carried out by the Office of the Public Sector Governance of the Prime Minister’s Office in order to help us to put an end to unacceptable abuses, malpractices and wastage of public funds.”

But again, there was nothing which came out of these requests of the Board of the NATReSA in those days. Therefore, Madam Speaker, even the assessment referred to by the hon. Minister of 2012 which dealt with the financial staff and administrative problems of the agency and it was up to the Ministry then, after the assessment was carried out, the responsibility devolved on the Ministry to monitor and implement those recommendations, but the then administration and the Ministry lacked the political will to do so and that is why no improvement took place.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, when we look at all these reasons and there is another fundamental reason also, the NATReSA - I use the word of the hon. Minister - migrated from one Ministry to another, from Social Security to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life

and each Minister taking office came up with his own idea, a new policy. So, I think it is unfair that the NATReSA is now made to bear the responsibility that no improvement has taken place, as we had heard from different Members on the other side of the House.

Madam Speaker, I talk of the golden days of the NATReSA. I think somebody mentioned this before me. Even with regard to the Master Plan of 2004-2009, this is what I can read in the preface signed by hon. Minister Lauthan who was the then Minister of Social Security, I quote:

“I commend the NATReSA and all the other agencies and NGOs for their inputs and unparalleled support from which this document has emerged.”

And when we look at the document, Madam Speaker, we see that the National Drug Control Master Plan was drafted by a core team consisting of the following members: Dr. Sulliman, Coordinator, Medical and Research Unit of the NATReSA. This document was reviewed by a Committee consisting of the following persons: the Chairman of the NATReSA, the Officer-in-Charge and so on and so forth. Even the Strategic Plan of 2012 and 2014; and on this issue, I was really shocked to hear what the hon. Minister had to say. This is what the hon. Minister said in his speech -

“The Harm Reduction Unit of my Ministry had worked out a strategic plan for NATReSA in 2014 (...)”

Which it has not implemented! In fact, it should have been NATReSA (National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers) working out the strategic plan for the Harm Reduction Unit. I have a copy of this document with me, Madam Speaker, and it was the Strategic Plan of 2014-2016 - I see that it was the NATReSA which drafted this document. Therefore, Madam Speaker, NATReSA had come up with several positive objectives in the past. In 2008, it was the NATReSA which proposed, for the first time, the setting up of an *Observatoire Régional de Vigilance* concerning illicit drugs and substance abuse.

So, when we take into account what had taken place, Madam Speaker, my point is that the hon. Minister, according to me, should have had a new look, should have recast, should have revamped this organisation, seen to it that his Ministry exercise stricter control to prevent any wastage of public funds. I think this body, which I mentioned in the beginning of my speech, which is a multisectoral body, should have continued to operate in order to help

the Ministry in its fight against drug abuse. I think there is another reason also, Madam Speaker, why the Ministry has been ill-advised to repeal the 1996 Act.

I come to the Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking which had been set up in July 2015, and as part of the Terms of Reference of the Commission of Inquiry presided by Mr Lam Shang Leen, we can see that this Commission of Inquiry has been tasked to enquire into the operational effectiveness of the various agencies involved in the fight against drug trafficking, into the need for fostering linkages and coordination among the various agencies and other local regional entities dealing with drug related matters for strategic directions. Since the Commission of Inquiry, therefore, would have enquired or is enquiring into the effectiveness of the various agencies, I think it would have been more proper to have allowed this Commission of Inquiry to conduct an enquiry into the performance of NATReSA and leave it to the Commission to decide upon the future agency. Why was the Commission of Inquiry deprived of this possibility of enquiring into NATReSA? I must inform the House also, I have had information that NATReSA has been summoned to appear before the Commission of Inquiry.

I have a copy of the summon with me, I can show it to the hon. Minister in case nobody has showed it to him –

‘Commissioner of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking in Mauritius Summons to Witness.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Commissioner appointed by the President to enquire into all aspects of drug trafficking (...),’

This letter is addressed to - I will not give the name - the Officer-in-Charge, NATReSA, Max City Building, Poudrière Street, Port Louis.

So, NATReSA was summoned as a witness and, from what I have been told, the Ministry did not allow this Officer-in-Charge to go and depone, and he never went to depone before the Commission of Inquiry. I think this is wrong. Even though Government had taken the decision in January of this year, I think, the Cabinet decision announced that NATReSA would be done away with, but even though this decision was taken in January - the law has not been passed yet, it is today that we are passing the law and, as I said, NATReSA will be done away with today, after the law would have been voted and signed by the President and so on. I think the Ministry or the hon. Minister should have allowed this representative of NATReSA to depone before the Commission of Inquiry. It would have given a chance to the Commission of Inquiry to pronounce itself upon the effectiveness of this agency and the

reasons why NATReSA has suffered from so much inefficiency, as we have been told by the hon. Minister.

Madam Speaker, I will end with what I have said at the beginning, on a point on the drug issue. Madam Speaker, I will make an appeal to the hon. Minister. I know this is not a debate on the drug issue. I am fully conscious of that and I don't want to embark upon a debate on the drug issue.

But I will just make an appeal to the hon. Minister because we know that since the Minister has taken office, his relationship with the NGOs has not been very conducive in terms of collaboration and dialogue. It is clear that with the winding up of the NATReSA, the NGOs will be sidelined, will be overpowered and will have less say now in the different programmes set up to fight against substance abuse.

Madame la présidente, les travailleurs sociaux sont au premier rang et sont témoins de l'impact des politiques publiques. Ils sont la source d'information d'une grande valeur pour les décideurs publics. Ils sont les témoins privilégiés des causes de problèmes mais aussi des failles dans l'implémentation des politiques publiques. Étant donné que l'argent investi à travers les ONGs, il nous faut tous nous assurer que l'État et ce secteur travaillent en complémentarité. Donc, c'est pourquoi je fais un appel à l'honorable ministre Gayan de ne pas rompre cette tradition de notre système de gouvernance qui est de travailler en étroite collaboration et en proximité avec les ONGs.

Sadly enough also, we have heard how the different NGOs have been appealing to the hon. Minister or to the Ministry urgently for a new Master Plan on prevention to be elaborated which will be an indispensable tool in their daily fight against drug abuse. There is no denying the fact, Madam Speaker, that with the input of the NGOs and other stakeholders, we would have a more holistic and comprehensive Master Plan. This is why I appeal to the hon. Minister to rope in all the NGOs and come up with this new Master Plan as urgently as possible because we all know, Madam Speaker, what is happening in the country today. I don't have to go as long as hon. Boissézon has gone on the situation.

(Interruptions)

Because in two words, we can say that with the flooding of the new drugs in our country, it is clear that we are entering into a new era in the struggle against drug abuse. I think all of us

read in '*Le Mauricien*' newspaper about this article on this young man called 'Ronaldo' which appeared this week.

In fact, the young face of drug addiction urges our country to develop new strategies to fight against a complex and multi-dimensional problem which is creating havoc among families, parents and social workers. I am sure we all, as MPs, know about this. In my Constituency, in all the *cités*, I am sure you have heard about that, Madam Speaker, what *ravage*, as we say, these synthetic drugs are doing. A lady, last week, told me - I won't mention the *cité* - she was going through the *cité*, she is a resident of the *cité*, and she saw a young man of about 13 to 14 years who was shooting another child of about 8 to 9 years old.

(Interruptions)

And I swear, Madam Speaker, this is what has been reported to me by a lady living in one of these *cités*. We can just imagine. This is not a political issue. The drug issue concerns all of us, Madam Speaker, and it would seem that the battle against the drug scourge is a lost one because in spite of all efforts that all past Governments have been doing with the help of other agencies, and this is the case for the world, that we are fighting the battle against substance abuse.

More than ever, Madam Speaker, we need actions which are based on a long term vision driven by honest evaluation and assessment of the measures taken in the past. To succeed in this endeavour, we need, Madam Speaker, this platform, call it NATReSA, call it any other name you want, but we need a platform which will regroup experts, social workers, psychologists, doctors and NGOs to solve such a complex societal ill. This is why, Madam Speaker, today to me it is a sad day for the thousands of *toxicomanes*. It is a sad day for all these thousands and thousands of *toxicomanes* who, unfortunately, are to be found in our country when the hon. Minister, by a stroke of a pen, is sending to the gallows an instrument which if properly reviewed, recast, revamped, could have provided solace to those innumerable drug abusers who are primarily sick people.

I have done, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

(7.27 p.m.)

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, allow me, first of all, to thank all the hon. Members who have participated in the debates pertaining to the Bill before the House. I would like to thank not only the hon. Members on this side of the House, but also the hon. Members on the other side of the House. I am very thankful to the hon. Members on this side of the House who have made my task very easy in summing up this Bill. They have, in fact, addressed the House and mentioned many of the things that I ought to have mentioned when I was going to sum up this Bill. So, that relieves me of that unnecessary task of coming again on issues that have already been addressed.

But, let me say, Madam Speaker, first of all, that this Bill is not the Bill of the Minister of Health and Quality of Life personally. This is a Bill which has come before the House as a result of repeated reports on the work and performance of NATReSA over the years. There have been reports prepared by established firms like Deloitte & Touche, Appavoo Associates, plus reports by my Ministry and it is not that I woke up in the morning and I said - as hon. Shakeel Mohamed said - "I am going to murder NATReSA".

(Interruptions)

That's not what happened.

In fact, it was something that ought to have happened some years back. But when I became Minister - and I said so in my speech on the Second Reading - I gave time to NATReSA to come up to speed and to fulfil the mission that it had under the NATReSA Act. We gave them time; we gave them resources and we entrusted them with the task of helping those who, unfortunately, have succumbed to this terrible scourge of dangerous drugs.

I had reports prepared not only by those who are in the Harm Reduction Unit, but I had reports prepared also by those who are not connected at all with the Harm Reduction Unit. It is only when I was satisfied that there was no other option than to murder NATReSA that this Bill came to the House.

(Interruptions)

In fact, Madam Speaker, I wish to reassure the House on a few things which have been mentioned. First of all, my dear friends from Rodrigues, the fact that NATReSA will no longer exist, does not mean that the funding to the NGOs will cease also. The funding will continue and arrangements have been made at the level of the Ministry that the funding will

continue under new arrangements made by the Ministry. So, this is not a fight between the Ministry and the NGOs. This is not a fight between the Minister and the NGOs.

In fact, Madam Speaker, when I became Minister, when we knew that the methadone situation was getting out of hand, we had to do something about it. And that something was a decentralisation. I had lots of consultations with all the NGOs. Several consultations! And it was agreed that we had to decentralise. Why did we choose the compounds of the Police stations? We went all round the country looking for places other than Police stations for the distribution of methadone. I went to Barkly because the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has a building in Barkly.

When we went there with my officers and the Police Officers, the people from Résidence Barkly came out protesting that we were going to put a site for the distribution of methadone there. It's not that I wanted to put methadone in the compound of the Police Stations. Never! But, we had no other option. It had become so critical with regard to anti-social behaviour that something had to be done and it had to be done fast. I will challenge anybody on the other side of the House to say that they want methadone to be distributed as it was being done in the past. I'll challenge anyone of them! Because it has worked, it is working. They keep saying that we have stopped the methadone treatment. Of course, not! The Press keeps saying that we have stopped the methadone treatment. It has never stopped! We still have about 5,000 people on a daily basis receiving their treatment. 5,000 Madam Speaker! We have read lots of things in the papers which are inaccurate.

Last Tuesday, I had the visit of Dr. Catherine Gaud who is the Head of Harm Reduction Unit in Reunion. She works very closely with PILS. She came to see me at the office. I asked her: what was the situation in Reunion? She was talking to me about all the harm reduction things. I had also asked Dr. Mété who had written lots of critical articles in the papers about our harm reduction and decentralisation. I asked Dr. Mété, in Reunion, when I was there: how many patients do you have on methadone in Reunion? 250, *Madame la présidente!* Here, we have 5,000 to manage on a daily basis. It's not the same situation at all. So, it is alright for the papers to write and for people to say all sorts of things, but the reality on the ground is different. This is why we had to do what we did. I, again, challenge anyone to say: 'Yes, go back to the old system.' No one will accept that.

Let me, Madam Speaker, address some of the issues which have been raised by the Members, on the other side. Hon. Shakeel Mohamed said that, with the programme of substance abuse being practised at the Ministry, the number of people with HIV has gone up. I have a report, Madam Speaker, on statistics, on HIV/AIDS, as at end of February 2016. I am going to table it because we do not come here to this House to mislead anyone or to engage in demagogy. We are responsible Ministers and we come here because we believe in what we are doing. This is what the report says –

“During the month of February 2016, 21 new cases of HIV/AIDS were registered among the Mauritian population by the Virology Laboratory Services of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. The monthly average of new cases were 46 in the year 2006-2010 compared to 26 in the year 2011-2015. For the first two months of 2016, the average stood at 22 cases.”

It is going down, Madam Speaker, despite all the campaign that is being waged. There are other statistics. I am going to table it so that no one will say that we are misleading the House for doing what we are doing. Next time, I will urge hon. Members, before brandishing figures and statistics in the House, to be careful; to be careful about what they say and the assurance with which they say what they say. So, I am tabling this in the House, Madam Speaker.

Let me also say, Madam Speaker, that I do not need to have quarrels with the NGOs. But I expect NGOs which are non-governmental bodies - the NGO means non-governmental organisation, we are Governmental organisations - to have a role to play and I am very, very satisfied about the role the NGOs play in Rodrigues. There, they are real NGOs.

(Interruptions)

They do not depend on funding from Government to do what they do. They go door-to-door and they do not have CSR. They generate their own funds to come to the rescue of those who happen to be involved in substance abuse.

Madam Speaker, it's very easy for people to say all sorts of things about Minister Gayan and the NGOs. I am going to table this as well, Madam Speaker. I have in my hands a letter from Dr. Idrice Goomany Centre, dated 13 March 2015, giving a list of clients for induction of the Methadone Substitution Therapy for BSH ward and Ste Croix. I have a list of 49 persons. I am going to table it because it is important that the House knows what goes on in the NGOs. The number of names that are mentioned twice is alarming. I am tabling this as well, Madam Speaker. It is important that we know all this because when the Minister of

Health says something, he says it on the basis of evidence and this is what I ask of the NGOs, like the problem we had with the Needle Exchange Programme, to be responsible and transparent.

You will recall, Madam Speaker, in the House, there were PQs. When the number they used, being used monthly, jumped from 10,000 to 35,000 and then jumped again to 65,000, I said I may have a big public health issue on my hands, and I need to know what's happening. When I asked questions, the Minister is bad, is wicked; he is trying to get into things that he does not need to get into. Ultimately, if something goes wrong with public health, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister will hold me responsible, as I needed to know what's going on. When the needles jumped from 10,000 to 65,000, there must be a reason. The hon. Members, on the other side, keep talking about the NGOs in glowing terms. The Government of Mauritius, the Ministry of Health, Madam Speaker, is doing much more than the NGOs with regard to substance abuse. We have more sites where we distribute needles than the NGOs. Not only that, we pay the NGOs to distribute needles. Rs50,000 a month. We need to know all this because they paint such a rosy picture about the NGOs. I don't fight the NGOs because I want to fight them, but I want them to be accountable, I want them to be responsible and I want them to show results, especially when public funds are involved.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, let me also add that hon. Ganoo, for all his experience - I am sorry, he is a good friend - said that the Minister or the Ministry had prevented NATReSA to go and depone before the Commission of Inquiry. How can any Minister, any person say to anyone who has got a summons not to attend? How can that be? From somebody who is a lawyer, how can he come and say that in the House? It is totally untrue! In fact, the NATReSA will appear at the end of April 2016 before the Commission of Inquiry.

(Interruptions)

No, they can still go and talk about their experience or whatever they have done.

But, to come and say that the Minister has decided to ask NATReSA to ignore a summons of the Commission of Enquiry, I will be committing an offence myself.

So, let us be very clear about all this. It is not a fight between the Minister and the NGOs. It is a fight for the soul of our youth. It is a fight to make Mauritius drug-free. At the very time that we are having this debate in this House, Madam Speaker, in New York at the

United Nations, there is a meeting going on drugs. A summit where all the major countries are represented and do you know what they are discussing there, Madam Speaker? It is important that we know all this because when I say that NATReSA has not lived up to its expectations, it is because drugs today is not only heroin, is not only the things that we hear about cannabis and all this. With the problems in the Middle East, Madam Speaker, in Syria - Syria used to be a great manufacturer of pharmaceutical products, but with the war in Syria, all the pharmaceutical factories have been turned into producers of drugs! And, many of the jihadists, the terrorists are taking what is called 'chemical courage' to fight in the war in Syria! And, the trade name, Madam Speaker, of that 'chemical courage' is Captagon. That drug masks pain, fear and hunger and it is believed that the Paris attackers last year were all taking Captagon.

So, when we speak of drugs, when we speak of dangerous drugs, of NATReSA, we expect a body that is being funded publicly to be at the forefront to show us the way and to tell us where the problem lies. We should not be the ones to be telling them what to do. Hon. Ganoo was right when he said it was going to be the apex body. But, it did not play the part of an apex body. When we come to the House to say that we need to repeal the NATReSA Act, it is because we are convinced that the Harm Reduction Unit of the Ministry which will be beefed up, which will be under new leadership, will be able to meet the challenges of the drug situation in the country.

Substance abuse is a big problem, Madam Speaker, and we need everybody. I agree with hon. Ganoo that this is not a fight that we alone can fight in Government. It is a fight where the NGOs must also fight. Madam Speaker, late last year, there was a team that came from UNAIDS to do a survey on the methadone distribution. I accompanied them at 6.00 in the morning to the distribution sites and the NGOs were supposed to be there. If the methadone has not worked, it is because the NGOs failed to provide the psychosocial support that they were supposed to give to all the drug addicts. And, I got the UNAIDS people to note that when they went to all the sites where the NGOs ought to have been, there was no one!

The NGOs must be part of the solution, but they cannot be part of the solution if they stay in their big office somewhere in Port Louis! They have to be *sur le terrain*. They have to be there where the action is. They have to be there where the targeted population is and this is what makes the NGO an NGO. An NGO cannot be bureaucratized. The Head of an NGO

cannot become a CEO. NGOs cannot only do advocacy. NGOs must get their feet on the ground and do the work that is expected of them.

This is why, Madam Speaker, we have come to the House with this Bill. Madam Speaker, hon. Ganoo spoke about the NGOs, we have set up a National Drug Observatory with all participants, with the NGOs and I am sad to have to say, Madam Speaker, that when the NGOs went before the Commission of Enquiry on Drugs, when they were asked to give information to the Commission so that it could do its work in the national interest, not a single person denounced anybody! I hope that the names given by the social worker, Mr Ally Lazer, will provide some light in the fight against drug trafficking.

Drug trafficking is bad. No one can say that he/she is immune from drugs. Anyone can be a victim and anyone's child can be a victim. This is why we all need to support the fight against drugs. The NGOs who are in touch with the people who are taking drugs must have information and they must share that information in the national interest and they don't do it! My fight, Madam Speaker, before I sit down, is not to fight the NGOs, my fight is to fight drug trafficking and to make Mauritius drug-free.

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

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life has stated in his speech that he is tabling a list of patients on methadone or substitution therapy from Dr. Idrice Goomany Centre. In my own judgement I do not think that I can accept this document in view of the fact that names should be kept confidential. I will therefore not accept the document and it would not be rendered public.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: But I wanted to make the point.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE*(Madam Speaker in the Chair)***THE NATIONAL AGENCY FOR THE TREATMENT AND
REHABILITATION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSERS (REPEAL) BILL****(NO. III OF 2016)**

The National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers (Repeal) Bill (No. III of 2016) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers (Repeal) Bill (No. III of 2016) was read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 26 April 2016 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 7.55 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 26 April 2016 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**STATE BANK - GOVERNMENT SHAREHOLDING**

(No. B/212) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd., he will state the –

- (a) present shareholding of Government therein, and
- (b) names of the representatives of Government serving on the Board thereof, indicating the –
 - (i) highest price per share thereof as traded on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius in 2014;
 - (ii) current price per share thereof as traded on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius, and
 - (iii) reasons for the percentage change in price per share between 2014 and to date.

Reply: As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that the Government has no shares in the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd. In fact, it is wholly owned by SBM Holdings Ltd.

Concerning part (b) of the question, Directors of the Bank are elected in their own name on a yearly basis by the shareholders at the Annual Meeting in accordance with the Bank's Constitution and therefore there is no representative of Government as such on the Board.

Concerning parts (c), (d) and (e) of the question, the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd is not a listed company and its shares are not traded on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius and therefore the question does not arise.

CUREPIPE & MIDLANDS – LARCENY – INQUIRIES

(No. B/215) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of larceny committed thereat since 2015 to date, indicating –

- (a) where matters stand as to the inquiries carried out thereinto, indicating the number of arrests effected in connection therewith, and
- (b) the measures taken or that will be taken to curb the incidence thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from the year 2015 to 14 April 2016, 743 cases of larceny have been reported to Police in Constituency No. 17.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that -

- (i) enquiry is ongoing in 500 cases;
- (ii) the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions has been sought in 11 cases;
- (iii) in 63 cases, the offenders have been fined or sentenced to Prison;
- (iv) 13 cases are still being prosecuted in Court;
- (v) 9 cases have been dismissed;
- (vi) 147 cases have been disposed by Police as offenders were unknown or could not be traced, and
- (vii) 185 persons have been arrested.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Police is doing its utmost to curb down the cases of larceny in the region. The measures taken include -

- the setting up of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and sensitisation of residents on home security, Target Hardening, Elimination of Opportunity Factors and reporting of suspicious persons and suspicious activities through Crime Stoppers Hotline Number 148;
- preventive mobile patrols by CID, ERS, SSU, bike patrol and other Units;
- organisation of fora with Community representatives;
- field counselling for targeted population at work, and
- aggressive stop and search operations targeting suspicious vehicles and persons loitering in the region.

Furthermore, as from 11 April 2016, with a view to reassuring the community and in addition to the current deployment, Police has launched an island-wide operation known as Operation “Knock & Roar”, involving various composite teams from Divisional Police, ADSU, SSU, CID, FIO, GIPM, NCG Commandos, Police Dog Unit and ERS on different days and at staggered times both by day and night. The aim of the operation is to keep Habitual Criminals and notorious persons frequently engaged in unlawful activities, under strict Police supervision with a view to ensuring safer neighbourhoods.

**CUREPIPE – CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION CAMERAS
SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM – INSTALLATION**

(No. B/216) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the proposed installation of Closed Circuit Television Cameras Surveillance System in the town centre of Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the project of installation of CCTV Street Surveillance System in Curepipe has been put on hold.

In fact, whilst there is no doubt that CCTV Surveillance System is an effective deterrent against crime, it has been noted that with the emergence of new technologies in the field of surveillance, offenders are also adopting new *modus operandi* to commit criminal activities. Police has thus decided to look into the whole concept of CCTV Surveillance System, afresh. The ensuing project will be implemented in a phased manner throughout the island.

MR H. R. & MRS F. R. – ARREST & BAIL

(No. B/217) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Mr H. R. and Mrs F. R., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the dates on which they were respectively arrested and released on bail, indicating the –
 - (i) charges lodged against them, and
 - (ii) bail conditions thereof, and
- (b) where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out in relation to the charges levelled against them by the complainant, indicating if the latter has withdrawn his complaint against them.

Reply: In regard to parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 02 February 2016, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Housing & Lands made a declaration to the CCID to the effect that Mr H. R and Mrs F. R

had posted information on Facebook which he believed was false and prejudicial to his person. Police initiated an enquiry in the course of which Mr H. R. and Mrs F.R. were arrested on 03 February 2016. A provisional charge of “Using telecommunication service for the purpose of causing inconvenience to a person” was lodged against both of them. They appeared before District Court on 04 February 2016, and were released on bail on the same day, upon furnishing a surety of Rs2,500 and recognisance of Rs25,000, each.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the complaint has not been withdrawn and the enquiry is ongoing. Upon completion thereof, the case file will be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

PRISONS SECURITY SQUAD

(No. B/218) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Prisons Security Squad, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to if the dismantling thereof is being envisaged and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that the dismantling of the Prisons Security Squad is not envisaged, as it plays an important role in maintaining security in the Prisons.

MINISTRIES & PARASTATAL BODIES – CONTRACTS – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/219) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Ministries and parastatal bodies, he will give a list of the contracts allocated by each one of them since December 2014 to date, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) value thereof;
- (b) name of the beneficiary thereof, and
- (c) date of allocation thereof.

Reply: In view of the enormous administrative cost involved in the exercise, I deem it inappropriate to have so much resources wasted.

If the hon. Member has any specific issue in mind, she may come up with a substantive question.

RADIO STATIONS (PRIVATE) – LICENSEES

(No. B/220) Mr M. Gobin (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the private radio stations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Independent Broadcasting Authority, a list of the licensees thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) shareholding thereof, and
- (b) directorship thereof.

Reply: I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

ST LOUIS & MORCELLEMENT GUIBIES – FOOTBALL GROUNDS

(No. B/221) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the projects for the installation by the National Development Unit of lighting systems respectively at the football grounds of St Louis and of Morcellement Guibies, in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the National Development Unit that the project for the lighting of the football ground at St Louis, Pailles is in the list of projects to be implemented during the next financial year in Constituency No. 1.

As regards the lighting of the football ground at Morcellement Guibies, Pailles, it is presumed that reference is being made to the football ground at Morcellement Raffray, Pailles. In this respect, I am informed that the NDU had already issued project brief to Consultants under the Framework Agreement for Consultancy Services on 12 February 2016.

The evaluation of proposals is presently in progress. The project is expected to be awarded to the selected Consultant by the end of April 2016.

REHABILITATION YOUTH CENTRES – WORKING CONDITIONS

(No. B/242) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions Whether, in regard to the Rehabilitation Youth Centres, she will state if she has been made aware of the protests made by the staff thereof regarding their working conditions thereat and, if so, indicate the actions that have been taken by her Ministry in relation thereto.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that no protests, *per se*, have been made by the staff members of the Rehabilitation Youth Centres. However, since my assuming of office as Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, I have effected several meetings with staff members posted there.

The RYC staff raised concern about the working conditions that prevail at the RYCs. During discussions held at the last meeting, I had with them on Wednesday 13 April 2016 at RYC (Girls), the RYC staff members raised concerns pertaining to their working conditions as follows -

- (i) difficulty to deal with girls having persistent negative attitude and aggressive behaviour;
- (ii) need for additional staff for the RYCs;
- (iii) possibility of continuous training programme and refresher courses for the staff;
- (iv) proposals for the enlistment of additional psychologists for counselling services;
- (v) possibility for priority access to medical treatment in Government hospitals for the RYC inmates in order to reduce waiting time;
- (vi) temporary separation of difficult cases to prevent any mass upsurge, and
- (vii) organisation of more frequent outdoor activities for the inmates including outings.

To address some of the problems raised, the following actions have either been or are being undertaken to improve the working conditions of the RYC Staff as well as the living environment of the inmates -

- (i) eight Trainee RYC Officers (4 Male and 4 Female) have been recruited in September 2015;
- (ii) inmates with difficult and aggressive disposition have been housed in a separate unit temporarily;

- (iii) outings, sports and other outdoor activities are being organized as often as possible;
- (iv) additional psychologists are being recruited to work on sessional basis, and
- (v) repair works for an amount of Rs532,180 have been effected last year to the building and to replace damaged items of furniture and equipment following an incident.

Furthermore, arrangements are being made to effect the following works -

- (i) the replacement of defective water pump and the water tank;
- (ii) replacement of all broken window panes;
- (iii) upgrading of toilet facilities;
- (iv) consolidation of flush doors and replacement of locks, and
- (v) painting of the building housing the RYC Girls.

With a view to enhancing the living conditions of the inmates, it is proposed to set up a multipurpose amenity on the 3rd floor of the RYC Girls Building to provide the inmates with adequate leisure and in-door recreational facilities. They will be able to enjoy reading, having access to computer facilities, having meditation, and prayer sessions.

I have reason to believe that the proposed arrangements will go towards creating a more conducive working environment for the staff as well as improving the living conditions of the inmates.

CEB - STAND-BY GENERATION CAPACITY CHARGE

(No. B/243) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Stand-by Generation Capacity Charge for grid connected solar photovoltaic and wind farm systems, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the reasons why the tariffs set out therefor in Schedule 1 to the General Notice No. 3011 of 2014 are no longer applicable.

(Withdrawn)

FLACQ – SUPER U – SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEM

(No. B/244) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Super U of Flacq, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the date on which it submitted its request to the Central Electricity

Board for the operation of a solar photovoltaic system for its own consumption and using the Central Electricity Board grid as back-up supply, indicating –

- (a) the date of approval thereof, and
- (b) if it is the first to benefit from the non-applicability of the tariffs set out therefor in Schedule 1 to the General Notice No. 3011 of 2014.

(Withdrawn)

RIVIERE DES ANGUILLES & SOUILLAC - MULTI-SPORTS COMPLEX

(No. B/245) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac, he will state if there is any project for the construction of a multi-sports complex thereat and, if so, indicate the expected start and completion dates thereof and, if not, if consideration will be given for the implementation of a project therefor.

Reply: I have to inform the House that, as at present, my Ministry does not have any project for the construction of a multi-sports complex in the Constituency No. 13.

I would like to invite the hon. Member to submit to my Ministry any proposal he has for such a project or smaller projects which can be implemented in Constituency No. 13.

MINISTRY OF FINANCIAL SERVICES, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS – OFFICE RENOVATION

(No. B/246) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the renovation of his Office at Ebène, he will state the –

- (a) name of the contractor thereof, and
- (b) cost thereof.

(Withdrawn)

BRITISH AMERICAN INVESTMENTS – ALLEGED PONZI SCHEME

(No. B/247) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the British American Investments which were presented by

Government on Friday 03 April 2015 as being a vast Ponzi scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if any complaint has ever been filed by policy holders thereof prior thereto for non-payment/non-reimbursement and, if so, indicate the number thereof.

(Withdrawn)

FIU – CHAIRPERSON - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/249) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Financial Intelligent Unit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if Mr K. T. has been appointed Chairperson of the Board thereof and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when and
- (b) his terms and conditions of appointment.

Reply: There is no such body known as the Financial Intelligent Unit. If the hon. Member is referring to the Financial Intelligence Unit, set up under the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2002, then under section 12(2) of the Act, the President of the Republic, acting on the recommendation of the Prime Minister made in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, appointed Mr K. T. as Chairperson of the FIU on 22 April 2015, for a period of three years, with an all-inclusive monthly fee of Rs54,600.

MAURICOAST LTD – EX-BARACHOIS - LEASE

(No. B/250) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mauricoast Ltd. represented by one Mr Y. B., he will state if a lease or concession has been granted thereto for the use of an *ex-Barachois* at Poudre d’Or and, if so, indicate -

- (a) when the application therefor was received at his Ministry;
- (b) the extent of land concerned therewith;
- (c) the description of the project to be implemented thereat, indicating
 - (i) if same was discussed at the level of Government, and
 - (ii) when approval therefor was obtained, and

- (d) the terms and conditions of the lease/concession agreement, including the amount payable to Government.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/227)

**CEB – TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION MANAGER -
APPOINTMENT**

(No. B/251) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the post of Transmission and Distribution Manager, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the –

- (a) qualifications requirement therefor, and
- (b) name of the incumbent thereof, indicating -
 - (i) his date of appointment thereto;
 - (ii) the qualifications held, and
 - (iii) if he had been subject to an inquiry in the past and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and the post he occupied at the material time.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by CEB that the holder of the post of Transmission and Distribution Manager should, as a minimum –

- (i) hold a Degree in Electrical or Electrical and Electronics or Power System Engineering,
- (ii) be registered with the Council of Registered Professional Engineers, and
- (iii) reckon at least eight years' relevant work experience at Middle Management level (scale 9 or higher).

With regard to part (b), the name of the present incumbent is Mr Chavansingh Dabeedin.

The latter has authorised CEB expressly to disclose to me and to the House all details of his personal data which are as follows –

In answer to part (b) (i) of the question, Mr Dabeedin is the Corporate Administration Manager of the CEB since 09 September 2008 but was requested by the Board, as an interim measure to occupy the post of Transmission and Distribution Manager as from 01 June 2015.

Mr Dabeedin is born on 09 September 1966.

In answer to part (b) (ii) of the question, Mr Dabeedin is registered with the Council of Registered Professional Engineers (CRPE). He holds a Bachelor in Technology with Honours in Mechanical Engineering 2nd. Class, 1st Division of the University of Mauritius.

He also holds a Masters in Business Administration in Marketing of the University of Mauritius.

The additional qualifications, namely -

- (a) MSc (with distinction) -Electrical Power Systems, Univ. of Bath ,U.K
 - (b) Member of the Institution of Electrical Technology, (MIET), U.K
 - (c) Member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, (MIEEE), USA
 - (d) Member of the Institute of Diesel and Gas Turbine Engineers, (MIDGTE), UK
- also appear in his records.

Mr Dabeedin joined CEB on 08 June 1995 as Cadet Engineer. He was appointed Junior Engineer on 24 August 1995. Since then he was promoted in progressively responsible position. He rose to the rank of Corporate Administration Manager, a post to which he was appointed on 09 September 2008.

On 21 November 2008, Mr. Dabeedin was appointed General Manager on two years contract.

In the wake of an enquiry into the procurement of 660,000 Compact Fluorescent Lamps, on 12 November 2010, Mr. Dabeedin made a request to step down from his position as General Manager to allow the Board of Enquiry to operate independently. The request was approved by the Board and he reverted to his substantive post of Corporate Administration Manager.

As regards part (b) (iii) of the question, on 10 February 2011, Mr. Dabeedin was suspended from duty. This was after an enquiry in the matter of the procurement of the 660,000 lamps.

Thereafter, disciplinary proceedings were held against Mr. Dabeedin. He was charged under four counts of gross negligence and/or gross misconduct in the discharge of his duties as General Manager. The disciplinary proceedings started on 14 March 2011. For that purpose, CEB had requested Late Judge Honourable S. Bhaukarally to hold these proceedings.

In the course of these proceedings, the charges were withdrawn and he was reinstated in his post of Corporate Administration Manager on 04 July 2012

CEB – METER READERS - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/252) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to

the last recruitment exercise for the posts of Meter Readers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

- (a) when the posts were advertised;
- (b) the number of applications received therefor;
- (c) if the candidates had to undergo any written test and, if so, when and, if not, why not;
- (d) when interviews were carried out, indicating the names of the members of the interviewing panel, and
- (e) number of persons recruited, indicating their -
 - (i) names;
 - (ii) addresses;
 - (iii) qualifications, and
 - (iv) respective posting.

(Withdrawn)

FISHERMEN INVESTMENT TRUST – BOARD MEETING

(No. B/253) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Fishermen Investment Trust, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) composition of the Board thereof;
- (b) date of the last Board Meeting thereof, and
- (c) total assets thereof.

Reply: The Fishermen Investment Trust Act provides for a Board constituted of 11 members. The current Board of the FIT, however, is composed of only five members for the following reasons -

- (a) the term of office of the three fishermen' representatives - two representatives from Mauritius and one from Rodrigues - who are elected for a term of two years on the board of the FIT expired in April, 2014 and the precarious financial situation of the FIT did not permit the organisation of fresh elections due to the high costs involved;
- (b) the Chairman resigned on 22 December, 2014;
- (c) the representative of the Outer Islands Development Corporation left his

employment and has not been replaced on the Board, and

- (d) one of the members who was nominated for his experience in financial matters, passed away in July 2015.

The five Board members of the FIT are -

- (a) one representative from my Ministry responsible for the subject of fisheries;
- (b) one representative from my Ministry responsible for the subject of shipping;
- (c) one representative from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and
- (d) two other members who have been nominated for their experience in administrative, economic, financial or commercial matters or in matters relating to the fishing industry.

For the information of the House, I would like to highlight that the FIT has been facing severe financial difficulties since 2014. A new business plan is currently being worked out for the FIT and a decision will be taken on its future in the context of the forthcoming budget preparations. Action will be taken for the reconstitution of the FIT Board accordingly.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the last meeting of the FIT Board was held on 17 October, 2014.

As regards the total assets of the FIT, these comprise of six floating fish cages at Grand River South East, two fishing boats, office furniture and fittings and other assets used for fish processing, the total estimated net book value of which amounts to around Rs5 million.

I am tabling the names of the members of the FIT Board and the details of the assets of the FIT.

FISHERY ADVISORY BOARD

(No. B/254) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Fishery Advisory Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) composition thereof, and
- (b) date of the last meeting thereof, indicating the decisions taken thereat.

Reply: I am informed that there is no such Board operating under the purview of my Ministry

STATE LANDS, ISLANDS & LAGOONS - LEASE

(No. B/255) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the State lands, islands and lagoons, he will give a list of the plots/extent thereof which have been leased out to individuals and companies since December 2014 to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) date of the lease;
- (b) names of the lessee/s thereof, and
- (c) derived/anticipated benefits thereof for the country.

Reply: The information requested for by the hon. Member with regard to State lands is being compiled by my Ministry and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to the lease of islands and lagoons, no lease has been drawn up over islands, islets and lagoons since December 2014.

CEB – POWER OUTAGES - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/256) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the power blackouts that have affected the country since 01 January 2015 to date, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, a list thereof, indicating –

- (a) in each case the causes thereof, and
- (b) the number of complaints received regarding the effect of power supply failures on domestic electrical installations.

Reply: It is not correct to refer to blackout which is a complete collapse of the power system.

However, in all electrical networks over the world, there are power outages caused by faults in the system.

I am informed by the Central Electricity Board, that there have been 237 faults in 2015, and 51 from January 2016 to date. These faults were due to -

1. trees and branches touching part of CEB's bare 22 kilo Volts network;
2. lightning on CEB's power system causing equipment failures such as transformers, insulators, terminations, cables and fuses;
3. short circuiting of CEB's network due to foreign objects such as dry branches, bats, magpies, monkeys;
4. accidents involving vehicles hitting electric poles, leading to outages;

5. felling of trees by third parties in close proximity to CEB's network;
6. other calamities such as bush fire and sugar cane fire;
7. natural calamities such as cyclones, and
8. overloading/saturation of CEB's transformers due to undeclared loads of existing customers.

It should be underlined that the frequency of outages in Mauritius is one of the lowest in Africa and is comparable to many developed nations, both in terms of numbers and duration.

I am tabling a detailed list of faults island-wide that have resulted into outages indicating the causes of these faults.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that from 01 January 2015 to date, it has received 705 complaints from domestic customers concerning damaged electrical appliances.

CEB has been found liable in 364 cases. It has in place an insurance cover to cater for such cases.

MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE - BAN

(No. B/257) Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to monosodium glutamate, he will state –

- (a) if the banning of the importation thereof has been recommended by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, indicating –
 - (i) if this measure has been extended to all imported food containing same, and
 - (ii) the number of countries where similar measures have been applied, and
- (b) if any complaint has been registered from any local consumer thereof in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE - CORONARY ANGIOPLASTY - STENTS

(No. B/258) Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the cardiac patients who underwent coronary angioplasty in 2015, he will state the number of -

- (a) drug-eluting stents used during that period, and
- (b) stents purchased by his Ministry over the same period.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL PRICE CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL – SETTING UP

(No. B/259) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to consumer protection, he will state the -

- (a) measures taken, if any, to inform consumers of the evolution of the retail prices of commodities since the publication of the last report of the Price Observatory Unit in August 2015, and
- (b) composition of the National Price Consultative Council, indicating the recommendations, if any, of the Council in relation thereto and in relation to the price of goods and, if not, why not.

Reply: Regarding part (a) of the question, the activities of the Price Observatory, which was set up in 2011, have consisted principally of collecting prices every month from some 20 outlets on around 75 items, for the publication of a monthly comparative chart of prices.

However, in 2015 after an evaluation, it was found that after four years of existence, the Price Observatory had the following weaknesses -

- (i) brand names, which are linked to the quality of goods, were not taken into account as only lowest prices were recorded;
- (ii) prices were collected towards the end of the month, when promotional sales usually take place, and thus did not reflect the real situation;
- (iii) prices were published some five days after the collection of prices and the outlets were not necessarily offering the same prices as those published in the price charts;
- (iv) brochures are published regularly by outlets, principally to inform consumers about prices, and
- (v) consumers find it more economical and practical to shop at outlets situated near their residence than to travel a long distance to access outlets where baskets of the 75 items were found to be cheaper by the Price Observatory.

As the Price Observatory was no longer serving its purpose, it was decided to come up with another mechanism that would better address the needs of consumers.

Consequently, the National Price Consultative Council was set up and held its first meeting in September 2015. It provides advice on the formulation and implementation of policies relating to consumer protection and any matter relating to the price of goods and services. The Council also ensures the cooperation and participation of consumers and consumer associations in matters which affect their interests.

The National Price Consultative Council, which comprises representatives from the public and private sectors and consumer associations, has a broader scope than the Price Observatory and does not limit itself to price collection.

I am tabling a copy of the composition of National Price Consultative Council.

The recommendations proposed by the National Price Consultative Council pertain mainly to campaigns on price affixing, sensitization of consumers to over-indebtedness, and factors which may influence prices.

In spite of existing laws, many traders fail to affix price labels on goods. Such practice is very recurrent in local vegetable markets/fairs where traders fail to display price tags. Over-indebtedness is a cause of national concern. Households are often unable to identify priorities in deciding over family expenses. Consumers have to be sensitised on factors which may influence prices so as to enable them to buy wisely and intelligently.

CONSUMER PROTECTION AND FAIR TRADING BILL - AMENDMENTS

(No. B/260) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)

asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to consumer protection, he will state -

- (a) where matters stand as to the proposed amendments to be introduced to the Consumer Protection Act, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the advisability of setting up an Office of Ombudsperson therefor and of a Grocery Supply Code of Practice for the retailers, as is the case in the United Kingdom.

Reply: Regarding part (a) of the question, a draft Consumer Protection and Fair Trading Bill had been prepared in 2015. It was found to be too cumbersome and would not address the Mauritian specificities and context and expectations of consumers. In September 2015, Government decided to set up a Ministerial Committee to review that draft. The Committee has, instead, recommended that a new simplified practical version of the legislation, which could be implemented more effectively, be drafted.

The Ministerial Committee has held a few meetings and set out guidelines for the drafting of the new Bill.

A Technical Committee, comprising officials of my Ministry and the State Law Office, has held working sessions to that effect.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Technical Committee has not yet finalised its recommendations. But I am advised that the Committee would propose a framework for the resolution of disputes and complaints which might take the form of an Ombudsperson Office or otherwise.

Regarding the Grocery Supply Code of Practice of U.K for the retailers, this would be dealt with separately, so that the consumer legislative framework remains consumer friendly.

However, we have to be considerate of suppliers who are the losers in the market chain and who are not protected by any legislation. We will need to carry out a survey of suppliers whose margin of profit is very narrow compared to that of large retailers with whom they work.

The introduction of a legislation to arbitrate disputes between retailers and suppliers will be dealt with separately and not in the Consumer Protection and Fair Trading Bill.

The ultimate objective is that the protection and welfare of consumers are enhanced.

NINE YEAR BASIC CONTINUOUS SCHOOLING PROGRAMME - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/261) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the implementation of the Nine Year Basic Continuous Schooling Programme, she will state the -

- (a) estimated number of students per zone that would be seeking admission to Grade 7 in the year 2018 and the estimated number of seats per zone that would be available, and
- (b) stand of the private aided and unaided secondary schools, including that of the *Bureau de l'Education Catholique* in relation thereto.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to highlight at the outset that the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform project provides for seamless schooling for a period of nine years during which learners are expected to acquire appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, life skills and values, develop their talents and unleash their potential.

With regard to the first cohort of pupils that will be taking the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) assessment in 2017, of which all pupils will be eligible for a seat in Grade 7 in January 2018, the estimated number of pupils, *as per official statistics*, and based on enrolment figures when this cohort of pupils was enrolled at Std IV level in 2015 (last year), is a total of 16,355 pupils for the four Zones.

On the other hand, based on data provided by the Zones and the PSSA, the supply of seats in secondary schools for admission to Form I (2016) totals 19,265 seats for the four Zones and this represents the estimated number of seats to be made available in Grade 7 (2018).

I am tabling the information on supply and demand of seats on a Zonal basis.

It is clear that the total number of seats that will be made available in the 135 Regional Secondary Schools (56 State and 79 Private aided), exceed the demand thereof by some 3,000 seats, and this in spite of the fact that all pupils of Grade 6 (first assessment at PSAC) in 2017 will transit to Grade 7 in January 2018.

In reply to part (b) of the question, as from May last year (2015), my Ministry had engaged in consultations with a wide cross-section of stakeholders of the Education sector on the policy orientations of this Reform Project and its eventual implementation.

There has been general consensus on the broad contours of the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education Project.

Several consultative sessions have been held under my Chair with the *Bureau de l'Education Catholique* (BEC) authorities, the Federation of Managers (FOM) and Rectors of secondary schools, and they have assured of their entire support to the Ministry in the implementation of this important project. The main points raised by them during the discussions have been clarified and taken on board.

I wish to highlight that the BEC had submitted its views on this reform project by way of a memorandum dated 30 September 2015 and had clearly stated that '*the Catholic education sector welcomes the reform proposal of the Ministry*'. It is even mentioned in the

memorandum that the BEC believes that the reform will better serve the children of the Republic and will allow for their integral development and equitable social and economic integration in society.

I wish to point out that my Ministry has a policy of constant dialogue, in a regular and structured manner, with our education stakeholders; and that this dialogue is being pursued further in the implementation process of the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education reform project.

CPE EXAMINATIONS – GRADE ACCELERATION

(No. B/262) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Certificate of Primary Education Examinations, she will state if there exists any policy that would allow the students currently in standard V to take part therein and, if so, indicate the criteria applicable therefor.

Reply: In the current educational system, the Certificate of Primary Education Examinations is normally taken at the end of six complete years of primary schooling, from Standard I to VI. This is clearly provided for in Regulation 14(1) of the Education Regulations which reads as follows -

“Except in the case of a pupil who repeats any class under regulation 11(1), the full course of study in a Government or aided primary school shall cover six complete school years, from Std I to VI inclusive, at the end of which the pupil may sit for the CPE examination.”

Although the above Regulation makes mention of Government and aided primary schools, the same principle is to be adopted normally in private fee-paying primary schools, which follow the same curriculum as the government and aided schools.

There is, as such, no broad and overarching policy that would allow pupils currently in Standard V to take part in the CPE examination.

Allow me to remind the House that 2016 is the last year of the CPE as a national end-of-cycle examination. With the introduction of the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education and the Primary School Achievement Certificate Assessment (PSAC) as from next year, admission to Grade 7 will be solely on a regional basis. The ‘*engouement*’ or the craze of some parents for their children to enter into the existing National Colleges may well motivate

them to seek grade acceleration and thus make a case for their children to sit for CPE this last year.

I have been informed that one private school has even set up of special classes to coach Standard V pupils for CPE examinations this year.

However, allowing this to take place across the board will certainly do more harm than good to the children. We are all aware of the excessive competition generated by the CPE: none of us would wish to see our children further overstretched at an early age.

There are levels of complexities to be hierarchically mastered in the learning process and it is never recommended for young learners to rush the fences, to "*brûler les étapes*".

If at all some pupils are ever to be allowed to seek grade acceleration to take part in the CPE exams, it will only be after careful scrutiny, or on a case to case basis upon provision of full justification.

GRNW, BELL VILLAGE, SOREZE - ROAD RESURFACING

(No. B/263) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the road resurfacing programme for Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state if he will consider the advisability of giving prior attention to the region of Soreze in view of the bad conditions of many roads thereat.

Reply: As the House may be aware, the RDA is responsible only for classified roads. I am informed by the Authority that the resurfacing works of classified roads in Constituency No. 1 of an extent of 400 metres were effected in March 2016 along A1 Road from Grand River Nord West to Bell Village for the amount of Rs2,521,256.

As regards other roads which are in the region of Sorèze, these are not classified roads and therefore do not fall under the purview of the RDA except for the Motorway M1 which is in good condition.

I am further informed by RDA that road resurfacing works along Rouget Avenue, La Perle Avenue, Sorèze and Pailles are included in the Programme of Works of the National Development Unit for the next financial year.

MORCELLEMENT RAFFRAY, PAILLES - RIVER - CLEANING

(No. B/264) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to Morcellement Raffray, in

Guibies, Pailles, he will state if urgent consideration will be given for the cleaning of the river running thereat with a view to avoid risks of flooding in the region thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the City Council of Port Louis that the river at Morcellement Raffray in Guibies, Pailles is in a general state of cleanliness and there is free flow of water thereat.

I am, however, been informed that there is at certain points, presence of aquatic plants and natural vegetation on its border which do not cause any flooding.

I am further informed that regular cleaning of the river is carried out throughout the year by the Council and any urgency that may arise is addressed immediately.

PAILLES - COMPULSORILY ACQUISITION

(No. B/265) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the plots of land situated in the vicinity of the State Secondary School, in Pailles, which were compulsorily acquired and presently lying idle, he will state -

- (a) the name of the previous owners thereof;
- (b) the reasons why same were compulsorily acquired;
- (c) the price at which they were compulsorily acquired, and
- (d) where matters stand as to the implementation of the project in consideration of which they were compulsorily acquired.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that, following a request from the then Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, 12 plots of land of an aggregate extent of about one *Arpent* situate in the vicinity of the State Secondary School in Pailles were compulsorily acquired by Government in October 2002 under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act. The said plots of land were vested in that Ministry in November 2002.

With regard to parts (a) and (c) of the question, I am tabling the names of the previous owners of the plots of land compulsorily acquired and the prices at which they were acquired.

As regards part (b) of the question, the compulsory acquisition was made for the public purpose of the extension of the State Secondary School in Guibies, Pailles.

With regard to part (d) of the question, I am informed that there is a public road known as Avenue Condé No.1 which separates the land acquired and the State Secondary

School. In order to implement the proposed extension of the school, provisions were made in year 2002 for the closure of the said road in accordance with the Roads Act. However, strong representations were received from the inhabitants of the locality against the closure of that road.

Consequently, in June 2010, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources informed my Ministry that, in order to avoid any public outcry, the project would be implemented within the existing school compound and accordingly that Ministry was releasing the acquired land for any other Government project.

In accordance with the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act, in case the land acquired is not used for a Government project, my Ministry should have envisaged a sale back option at market value to the initial owners of the acquired land. In the present case this procedure was not followed.

Part of the State land acquired of an approximate extent of 27 perches was approved for lease as from 17 June 2013 on a year to year basis to “UBS Transport Limited” for the parking of buses at an annual rental of Rs45,000 on the proviso that, should Government require the land for any purpose, the lessee would have to vacate the land within a period of one month without any claim for compensation.

Another part of the land of an approximate extent of nine perches is being illegally occupied. The remaining plot of an approximate extent of 64 perches is lying waste.

I have already instructed officers of my Ministry to carry out a thorough investigation and appropriate remedial measures will be taken accordingly.

BEAU BASSIN & PETITE RIVIERE - WATER PIPES - REPLACEMENT

(No. B/266) Mr A. Aliphon (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the project for the replacement of the old water pipes under the Building Mauritius Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, a list of the regions identified in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière therefor, indicating the timeframe set out for the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the following pipe replacement projects are being implemented under the Build Mauritius Fund in the regions of Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière -

- (i) the replacement of 28 km of pipeline in Rose Hill. Works are expected to start in October 2016;
- (ii) replacement of 13 km of pipeline in Beau Bassin. Works are expected to start in March 2017;
- (iii) replacement of six km of pipeline from Bosquet reservoir to Coromandel to improve water supply in the regions of Petite Riviere, La Tour Koenig and Coromandel. The contract has already been awarded. Works are scheduled to start this month, and
- (iv) the renewal of seven km of distribution mains in the regions of Canot and Gros Cailloux where works are scheduled to start in July 2016.

ALBION BRIDGE - EMBELLISHMENT & REHABILITATION

(No. B/267) Mr A. Aliphon (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Albion Bridge, he will state if consideration will be given for the –

- (a) widening and increase of the height thereof, and
- (b) embellishment and rehabilitation thereof, including replanting on the wetlands in the vicinity thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority that, the Albion Bridge is an old concrete bridge which is found along Albion Road (B78). It has a carriageway of width 6.3m which is fairly adequate for a two-way traffic.

The bridge is located in a wetland area and is prone to flooding during heavy rainfalls as was the case in March 2013 and February 2016.

As regards part (a) of the question, the widening and increase of the height is highly recommended both for the security of vehicles as well as for pedestrians. However, this may take some time as a survey has to be undertaken on site for eventual land acquisition.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security, that a survey of all wetlands found in the vicinity of the bridge will be

carried out by the National Parks and Conservation Service to assess the conservation value of these wetlands. A replanting programme will be worked out accordingly to preserve the wetlands ecosystems.

ALBION – BAKER BRIDGE – LIGHTING & REHABILITATION

(No. B/268) Mr A. Alphon (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the Baker Bridge near the Club Med Hotel, in Albion, he will state if consideration will be given for –

- (a) an upgrading of the lighting system thereat, and
- (b) embellishment and rehabilitation thereof, including replanting on the wetlands in the vicinity thereof.

Reply: I am informed that the Baker Bridge and its vicinity do not form part of the proclaimed Albion public beach.

However, a site visit carried out on 14 April 2016 revealed that lightings fixed on the handrails of the bridge were damaged. The Black River District Council has been requested to consider carrying out the necessary repairs and upgrading of the lighting system.

With regards to part (b) of the question, consideration will be given by my Ministry for the rehabilitation and embellishment in the vicinity of the Bridge.

In so far as replanting on the wetlands is concerned, the advice of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security would be sought as the area is already covered with heavy vegetation.

PLAZA THEATRE – EVENTS – NOISE POLLUTION

(No. B/269) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Plaza Theatre in Rose Hill, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill, information as to the number of events held in the courtyard thereof since December 2014 to date, and
- (b) state if his Ministry is aware of the inconveniences being caused by the holding of events in the courtyard thereof to the inhabitants living in the vicinity thereof and in the region of Montmartre in terms of noise pollution and, if so, indicate if appropriate measures will be taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

RESIDENCE VALLIJEE - NURSERY

(No. B/270) Mr P. Armance (First Member GRNW & Port Louis West) asked Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Nursery at Residence Vallijee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to –

- (a) since when it is closed, indicating the reasons therefor;
- (b) if consideration will be given for the re-opening thereof and, if not, why not, and
- (c) if the recruitment of a Nursery Officer therefor has been provided for or if consideration will be given for the matter to be referred to the National Empowerment Fund for necessary actions to be taken at their end therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the City Council of Port Louis that a request was received in April 2011 from the National Empowerment Foundation for the ground floor of the Dr. James Burty David Municipal Centre at Residence Vallijee which was unoccupied at that time, to be put at the disposal of the Foundation for the running of a Day Care Centre for babies.

The Council agreed to the request of the Foundation and on 03 June 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Council and NEF for a period of three years. Thereafter, on 21 October 2011, the NEF started the operation of the Day Care Centre. On 03 April 2014, NEF requested for a renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Council decided not to renew same as the Municipal Infant School found in a nearby old and decrepited municipal building would be transferred to the Dr. James Burty David Municipal Centre.

I am informed that on 01 April 2015, the NEF restituted the space to the Council and on 07 January 2016, the latter started running an infant school thereat.

With regard to the last part of the question, I am informed that the Council has no intention to run additional new nurseries besides the six nurseries already operational and therefore the question of re-opening the nursery at Residence Vallijee as well as the recruitment of nursery staff do not arise.

CAMP CHAPELON - FOOTBALL GROUND - CHANGING ROOM

(No. B/271) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the construction of a changing room attached to the football ground of Camp Chapelon, he will, for the benefit of the House,

obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to the name of the contractor therefor, indicating the -

- (a) contract value thereof;
- (b) contractual start and completion dates thereof, indicating the effective date when works started and the reasons why they have been put on hold, and
- (c) if the contractor has been paid the full contractual value thereof or any payment is outstanding for works not completed as at to date.

Reply: I am informed by the City Council of Port Louis that Kam Construction Ltd was awarded the contract for the construction of a changing room attached to the football ground at Camp Chapelon for the contract value of Rs2,240,374.80, inclusive of VAT.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the start date of the project was 28 August 2012 and the expected completion date was 23 February 2013.

I am informed that the contract was not put on hold by the Council, but instead the Contractor stopped the works without giving any valid reasons as at April 2013.

As far as part (c) of the question is concerned, I am informed that the contractor was not paid the full amount but only for the value of works carried out on site, i.e Rs776,239.99 which represented approximately 40% of the contract value.

POINTE AUX SABLES – SEWERAGE SYSTEM

(No. A/5) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Kensington, in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Waste Water Management Authority, information as to -

- (a) the number of times incidences of overflow of waste water thereat have been reported thereto since several years, and
- (b) if it is aware that it has now become a settlement of more than one hundred households and, if so, if consideration will be given for the implementation of an appropriate sewerage network system thereat.

Reply: With regard to part (a), I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that Kensington is not within any of its sewerage area and no incidence of overflow has been reported to it. However, it has received petitions from inhabitants requesting for connection to a wastewater network of the Wastewater Management Authority.

With regard to part (b), I am informed that the Wastewater Management Authority carried out a Pre-Feasibility Study for the Pointe Aux Sables Sewerage Project, which includes Kensington, Terrasson, Verger Mangue, Debarcadère and Petit Verger. The study showed that there are about 110 houses at Kensington.

Given the high investment for the implementation of a sewerage network in the region, estimated at about Rs2 billion, the WMA is considering the implementation of the project in phases, subject to availability of funds.