



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training
Hon. Purmanund Jhugroo	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Marie Cyril Eddy Boissézon	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Dharmendar Sesungkur	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 31 of 2019

Sitting of 17 September 2019

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

Office of the Speaker

The Third Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the First Session of the Sixth National Assembly. (In Original)

Prime Minister's Office

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills (In Original):

- (i) The Children's Bill (No. XXIX of 2019);
- (ii) The Road Traffic (Amendment No. 3) Bill (No. XXX of 2019).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

LIGHT RAIL PROJECT – LAUNCHING & OPERATIONS

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the launch and eventual start of the commercial operations of the Light Rail Project, he will state the –

- (a) respective dates thereof, and
- (b) arrangements made, as at to date, regarding, *inter alia* –
 - (i) safety;
 - (ii) maintenance of the light rail vehicles;
 - (iii) access through feeder buses, and
 - (iv) affected stakeholders, *viz*, the shopkeepers, the taxis and the bus industry workers.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I have, since the award of the contract for the implementation of the Light Rail Project, which is the most complex and prestigious infrastructural project undertaken in Mauritius, replied to no less than eight PNQs. I have had the opportunity to give the necessary explanations and clarifications on various aspects of the project, namely -

1. financial;
2. technical;
3. environmental;
4. safety;
5. relocation and displacement of utilities;
6. interface with traffic, amongst others.

I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for this question, which gives me the opportunity to indicate the substantial progress achieved so far. I am pleased, Madam Speaker, to inform that, as at to date, Phase one of the project, which comprises the stretch from Rose Hill to Port Louis, is around 95% completed.

Madam Speaker, the Metro Express Project is progressing towards substantial completion. All major infrastructural works have been completed - all fly-overs and bridges at Rose Hill, St Louis and Caudan are completed along with underpasses at Chebel, Montée S and Coromandel. The laying of rails between Rose Hill and Richelieu Depot are 100%

completed. Traction Power between Rose Hill and Richelieu is substantially completed. Rail laying between the Depot to Victoria are in advance stage of completion and is expected to be completed for trial runs. Traction Power Substations at Richelieu for Depot and mainline, Chebel, Signal Mountain, Rose Hill, Caudan are completed. Power charging is completed for three locations. Communication towers for radio communication to Rose Hill, Richelieu, Beau Bassin and St. Louis are installed and testing and commissioning is in progress.

The Electronic Ticketing Machines have been installed in four out of seven stations and installation in remaining stations is in progress, Madam Speaker. Communication and Monitoring equipment installation is completed in four out of seven stations. Testing and commissioning works in progress for various systems, including the Light Rail Vehicles at the Depot and in the mainline. The seven Light Rail Stations have already been put in place.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, the soft launch of the Metro is scheduled for the end of September 2019.

As from 01 October 2019, it is planned for trial runs to start, which will accommodate selected number of passengers and limited trips. These trial runs will increase in frequency progressively and accommodate more passengers as testing of all the systems and fine-tuning are in progress. Pre-commercial operation is an established practice in the train industry all around the world. The schedule of the trial runs is being prepared at the moment and same would be communicated shortly.

As already announced, passengers boarding and experiencing the Metro will enjoy; the trial runs will last until end of October.

As for customer service, it will start in November 2019 after all the systems have been fully tested for optimal reliability.

Madam Speaker, safety is of paramount importance in any rail project. With regard to part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed that all along the project cycle, safety has been a key factor throughout the design, development, implementation and thereafter commercial operation.

The design and development of the project has been developed using a fully integrated approach, recognising the different functional, statutory, regulatory requirements, local and international safety standards and planning approval conditions in existence in Mauritius.

Presently, each system is undergoing testing and the whole system integration to comply with the specified safety requirements in the project specifications will follow. For example, static and dynamic testing is ongoing on the LRVs, the vehicles, between Richelieu depot and Barkly. Yesterday, we had the tests, where we could go to the speed of 70 kms. Moreover, TMRSU in collaboration with the Police, RDA and Metro Express are currently doing a review exercise to ensure safety at all the intersections between the rail and the road system and along the network.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the commercial operation, Metro Express Ltd Operations and Maintenance staff are currently being trained by SMRT and getting ready to meet the requirements of being fully ready for operation. Metro Express Ltd with the help of the SMRT has launched the recruitment of the operations and maintenance team and this is progressing steadily. As at date, about all the critical positions have been filled and recruitment for other positions is ongoing.

Train Captains and Controllers are the safety critical positions in the operations division. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to have a dedicated and qualified team handling such operations. Madam Speaker, in this context, an experienced team comprising of six Train Captains and two Controllers has been appointed from our Consultant SMRT from Singapore to ensure the safe operation, in addition to our local 22 Train Captains. Concurrently, the local Train Captains are being provided with in-class training and also on-the-job training with the experienced Train Captains.

Moreover, Metro Express Ltd has already developed a series of safety policies and procedures such as a Safety Management System, Quality Management System, Standard Operating Procedures and Emergency procedures. These policies and procedures aim to cover all the processes and services involved in the safe operation and maintenance of the Light Rail System and meet the regulatory requirement such as the new Land Transport Authority Act, the Light Rail Act 2019, the Mauritius Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005 and Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service Act 2013.

Currently Metro Express Ltd is working very closely with the Police and Fire Services to manage crowd control at stations and ensuring safety and security along the whole network. Additionally, we are reinforcing security onboard the LRVs and the operation centre with additional 90 stations and customer support staff.

Metro Express Ltd, Madam Speaker, has launched an extensive sensitisation and education programme on safety for use and interaction with the LRT system and this will include broadcast of videos, leaflets, posters and radio campaigns.

With regard to part (b) (ii) of the question, I am informed that the needful has been done by Metro Express Ltd for the maintenance of the Light Rail System, which consists of two main parts, namely the maintenance of the vehicles and the maintenance of assets such as bridges, flyovers, rail stations, signals, Depot, and other amenities.

On 03 October 2018, the Metro Express Ltd signed the Operation Readiness Services Contract with Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) and its partner Singapore Mass Rapid Transit International Pte Ltd.

The Operation Readiness Plan and Services has been carried out during the Design and Build phase of the Metro Express Project and will continue during its transition into the revenue generation when operation of the Metro Express starts. The Operational Readiness System is to be delivered over a period of 24 months from the start of the assignment, which is due to end by September 2020.

Madam Speaker, furthermore, on 16 August 2019, Metro Express Ltd entered into a Maintenance Service Agreement with CAF, that is, the providers of the LRVs, for the maintenance of the LRVs and Additional Assets, namely equipment at the Depot for a period of five years. The Maintenance Contract mainly consists of Preventive and Corrective Maintenance, as is the standard practice in LRVs maintenance around the world.

The CAF Depot Manager and specialist staff are in Mauritius as from Sunday last week as part of the mobilisation in readiness for the operations and maintenance.

Procedures, processes, work instructions and manuals have been worked out. Final fine-tuning is in progress and will be in place by the end of September 2019.

Moreover, Metro Express Ltd being the owner and operator of the whole system, is in the process of insuring the whole system from the infrastructure, system and operations.

Madam Speaker, with a view to inducing a modal shift in public transport, the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) proposed the creation of feeder routes to ensure the first and last mile connectivity to commuters with the Light Rail Stations. Based on SCE's recommendations, 19 feeder routes have been identified, including two routes to connect commuters from Quatre Bornes to the Interchange at Rose Hill, to link passengers within a

distance of 5 to 10 kms from the Light Rail Station. The feeder routes will serve all the seven LRT Stations of the Metro Express for Phase 1. The underlying paradigm would be that the feeder service would be integrated, viable and sustainable.

In fact, to mitigate the incidence of the light rail on existing bus companies in terms of loss of ridership and revenue, the feeder routes are being allocated to the most affected bus companies which are currently providing service along the Metro Corridor from Rose Hill to Port Louis. Accordingly, the NLTA has approved the allocation of the 19 feeder routes as follows –

Rose Hill Transport - 10;

UBS - 5;

CNT - 3, and

TBS - 1.

Applications have been also received from the above bus companies for a variation of their road service licence in respect of 55 buses, with drivers and conductors, of length not more than 9m to operate along the feeder routes identified, as follows –

Rose Hill Transport – 23 buses;

UBS - 18 buses;

NTC - 11 buses, and

TBS - 3 buses.

It is planned that the buses would operate at 15 minutes' interval. The NLTA would assist the demand and ridership during the initial months of operation and would make adjustments to the feeder system.

I have also been told that we have upgrading works of infrastructure for the roads, bus stops and connecting the feeder system, the feeder routes.

The feeder bus would be free for all passengers that transfer to and from the Light Rail System. An Electronic Ticketing System (ETS) would be installed on all the feeder buses and which will be integrated with the ETS of the Metro Express. The contactless smart card of the Metro Express will be used on all the feeder buses. Revenue to the operators would accrue from the existing Free Travel Scheme, the additional financial support under the bus Companies Recovery Account (BCRA); fare paying passengers and a rebate scheme

currently being worked out by the bus operators. Consultations are underway by my Ministry with the various bus operators concerned, and I have scheduled a meeting with them next week to finalise all the pertinent details.

Madam Speaker, by having an integrated ticketing and infrastructural system, the journey from feeder buses to light rail and vice versa will be seamless for all passengers.

Similar to the Metro Express, the feeder bus service will also have a soft launch. Subsequently, the service will be fine-tuned and consequently improved together with the NLTA, Metro Express and the bus operators.

I would like to reassure bus operators that subsidies from the Free Travel Scheme and the Bus Companies Recovery Account would be maintained for the operation of the feeder routes. In addition, the bus operators would derive additional revenue from the fare paying passengers.

Ultimately, Madam Speaker, the feeder services would emerge as a modern, viable, and sustainable transport service fully integrated with the Metro system.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) (iv), the reduction of buses plying parallel to the Metro alignment would be gradual, starting from 30%. In addition to the implementation of feeder routes, the NTA would also re-engineer bus services in terms of the creation of new routes and supplementing services along existing routes.

As I have already stated in this House earlier, this Government would ensure that the operation of the Metro Express has minimal impact on the employment of bus employees. In fact, it is anticipated that the re-engineering of bus services and the integration of the bus system with the Metro system would offset any shortfall in revenue.

As I stated in my reply to the Private Notice Question on 24 October 2017, a Bus Re-engineering Strategy has been elaborated by the NLTA aiming at mitigating the possible impacts of the Metro Express on the bus industry. In this context, new routes, supplemented bus services along existing routes and feeder bus services to ensure the first and the last mile connectivity of commuters travelling by train have been identified to compensate any shortfall in revenue of bus operators that would result due to possible loss of ridership with the advent of the operation of the Metro.

As I also mentioned earlier, following concerns raised by the bus industry employees in respect for their job security and the apprehensions they expressed in regard to their terms

and conditions of employment in the wake of the coming into operation of the Metro, Government instituted a Ministerial Committee under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister to consider the impact of the implementation of the Metro on the bus industry and to make recommendations on the best way forward in order to ensure a seamless integration. This Committee has been meeting and is monitoring the situation very closely.

Madam Speaker, the Government wants that the Free Travel Scheme and the Bus Recovery Scheme be re-engineered so as to become more transparent, more sustainable and more accountable. Pricewaterhouse has recommended that with the re-engineering, a savings of 10 to 15% of the whole Rs2 billion budget can be obtained and this money will be re-injected in the bus industry.

Madam Speaker, I am also pleased to announce - and I would like to thank the Prime Minister for this - that the Chinese authorities have agreed to a special grant of Rs500 m. to finance the acquisition of 100 modern electric buses to serve the feeder routes. These would be allocated to all the companies which would have been impacted upon by the Metro, that is, UBS, CNT and Rose Hill, according to the gravity of the impact. So, if there is one company which is going to be affected today, it is going to be Rose Hill Bus Transport, tomorrow it is going to be UBS and CNT.

Madam Speaker, I intend to pursue consultations with the representatives of trade unions and all those who would be adversely impacted by the Metro to ensure an integrated public transport system where the interests of existing players will be duly safeguarded. The services of bus conductors would be maintained in the feeder buses. In our projection, 200 buses would be involved between Curepipe and Port Louis, 100 would be used as feeder buses and 100 would be allocated on new routes. No laying off of workers is envisaged. Furthermore, the Electronic Ticketing System would still provide for the conductor to be in the bus to ensure comfort and security of passengers.

Madam Speaker, I have to reassure the House that consultations with all stakeholders will be maintained to ensure that the Metro Express project is not carried out at the expense of the existing land transport system and a consensus is reached at the earliest.

Madam Speaker, Metro Express has also considered the businesses along the LRT corridor in its planning. There will be commercial spaces being delivered at the Rose Hill Central Station. Given the strategic location of these commercial spaces, Metro Express has also received interests from various businesses in the vicinity to rent these spaces.

Considering the effect of the Metro Express at Place Margéot at Rose Hill, the business owners affected by Metro Express will be given first priority, as I have said in the past, to consider and rent these commercial spaces. The Express of Interest for the renting of these commercial spaces at Rose Hill will be launched soon.

Moreover, all stations are equipped with interactive Passenger Information Kiosk which will display points of interest, which will include businesses within the vicinity of each station. The same information will also be available in the mobile app being developed by Metro Express. Signage and locality map will also be displayed at appropriate locations within the station to guide passengers.

In addition, Madam Speaker, Metro Express has also made provisions for the promotion of the affected businesses along its corridor with its integrated communication marketing campaign. These measures constitute Metro Express intent to cooperate with all stakeholders, which will include marketing for these businesses.

When the project is complete, there will be an uplift in the urban landscape, which will attract more opportunities for businesses in the Urban Terminals.

When it comes to taxi, the Ministry is considering to extend the Electronic Ticketing System of the Metro that is being implemented to the taxi system so that with the same card you could travel on the taxi, on the feeder and on the train, for those taxi people who are taxi owners who are willing to participate, to facilitate payment using the MCard and achieve better integration with the LRT.

I would like to inform the House that the number of existing taxi ranks at Place Margéot has not been affected as a result of the project. Moreover, there will be an additional four taxi ranks being constructed at Place Margéot as part of the project. Additional taxi ranks will also be made available at Beau Bassin, Coromandel, Port Louis Victoria to provide more opportunities to taxis and to facilitate transport integration.

Madam Speaker, with all these measures I have just mentioned regarding the safety, maintenance and arrangements regarding feeder buses, the House will reckon that the Government and the Metro Express Ltd have taken all measures to ensure that the commercial operations of the Metro service are done in the most conducive way without any safety hazards. In two weeks' time, people will have the opportunity to experience the most innovative, sustainable and reliable transport system.

Madam Speaker, this is a 30-year dream and it is coming true in less than 15 days.

Madam Speaker, we are endowing our country with the most modern mass transit system the country can afford. We have been acting responsibly in the best interest of the people and the country. History will recall that, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Minister has taken more than the allocated time. So, I will compensate this in terms of time allocated to you for questions.

Mr X. L. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker, you are very kind. Safety being obviously a key feature of this project, Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, he has not mentioned at all certification of the whole system and a certification also by overseas independent safety assessors. I understand that to date, within a few days of the so-called soft launch, this report has not yet been received from overseas.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I would assure the House and the public at large that if we do not have the international safety standards, we will not start the train system. This is what the Prime Minister has said and this is the system that we would like too.

Let me explain how the safety system works. In fact, there is a testing of each system, electronic system, the light rail system, the operation system. When each one has been tested, then we have the whole integration and this has to be assessed by an international independent safety assessor.

Mr X. L. Duval: When?

Mr Bodha: He is here!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: He is way here! Now, each system has...

(Interruptions)

He is here!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: So, each system is being verified by the supplier, that is, L & T, by CAF...

(Interruptions)

No, no listen! And each system is being now - the independent safety assessor, it is Ital certified; he is here. So they are already following the testing of each component and, as from the 25th, they will do the integration certify. If we do not have the certificate of the independent safety assessor, we will not stand up and launch the train. I would like to assure the House, and the international safety assessor is here. They are already working and they are supervising the testing of each system, but the whole system can only be certified as from the 25th.

Mr X. L. Duval: I wanted the Minister to make the point that, at present, there is no independent certification of the system and, as he said, himself, it will arrive on 25 September and it is on 25 September that we will know whether the system is safe for the soft launch.

I would like to ask the Minister now, Madam Speaker - this is clear to everyone. I would like him to provide only precise answers in view of the confusion around this whole project, even worse since yesterday's Metro Express Press conference. On 01 October, will the train run from Rose Hill to Caudan?

Mr Bodha: No. I would like to assure, because the safety issue is very crucial. Each system is being verified already, and the Ital is here since last week.

Now, they have already provided us with a draft safety assessment, but we need the final assessment, and we need the final certificate. I will not stand up, I will not go to Cabinet to ask for the soft launch if we do not have the certificate. So, Ital is working, but each system is being in place. Now, the hon. Leader of the Opposition asked me a question as regards the segment from Rose Hill to Caudan – yes, from Rose Hill to Caudan.

Mr X. L. Duval: So, Madam Speaker, we understand that the draft report is not yet available...

Mr Bodha: The report is available.

Mr X. L. Duval: ...and will be available at some time. Madam Speaker, according to the own Minutes of Metro Express, the draft report will be submitted on 23 September. Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... I would like to ask the hon. Minister about this so-called soft launch. Now, on 01 October, the trains will run, I understand, about 10% of the capacity in the first month of October.

Mr Bodha: I do not know what the hon. Leader of the Opposition means by capacity. The system in the train system is that you have to have the soft launch and the trial runs. So, you have to run empty in most cases, with some guests or selected passengers in other cases. So, we will have a trial run from Rose Hill to Port Louis, a normal trial run. They will test the braking. Yesterday, they tested the speed, for example, at 70km/h, 80km/h and the braking system. So, they will do the trial runs. Now the trial runs will be done. Normally, a trial run is a normal run without passengers or with selected passengers. This is the normal process, and we believe that we can have it for three weeks. By the end of the three weeks - let's say, we have 10 trips - you may have four, five trips with people and then the customer service. When everything is perfect, we have tested everything, because the experts will tell us yes, now you can run the transport system for the customer, and that will start on 01 November.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, if I understand well, the system will be tested - this is what he said at his management meeting yesterday. The system will be tested two or three weeks with employees from Metro Express, some civil servants. When will the public be able to queue up and enter into one of these trains?

Mr Bodha: 01 November. This is the customer service. But we need the trial run!

(Interruptions)

No, but we need the trial run!

(Interruptions)

Listen. I have to explain the stages, Madam Speaker. At the soft launch...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: Let me explain chronologically. On the 25th, we are going to have the certificate of the independent...

(Interruptions)

God willing - we already have the draft statement - we will have on the 25th.

Ourselves with Metro Express, with some other people, between the 25th to the 30th, we will do the trial runs. It is only then that we will tell the Prime Minister: you can do the soft launch. If everything goes well during that week. After the soft launch, we will have the trial runs. The trial runs is that they are going to run seven, eight times a day, everyday on the circuits, testing the stations, testing the ticketing system, the doors, the electronic system, and then we will have some selected guests. We are thinking of athletes, we are thinking of children, we are thinking of students, we are thinking of nearby schools, people from Barkly, university students to do the trial runs and, as soon as the experts tell us that the trial runs are fine, then we will have a proper - what we call - customer service.

Mr X. L. Duval: So, you will have testing for the first three weeks of October with some selected people, public people you do not like, so that you test the doors and the brakes, etc. Therefore, it will be only on 01 November that the public will be allowed to queue up, and we understand this.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister how long will be the soft launch? He said one month and he also mentioned that it would be a free service. Is the free service going to be only in October or is the free service going to extend to November, until the date of the election or whatever?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: Let me explain. You know, Madam Speaker, we are maybe used to the fact that the Prime Minister cuts a ribbon and we all take the bus and the next day the customers take the bus. This is a very complicated, complex system, with many systems. Five, six systems will then have to be integrated seamlessly. I am going to take...

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, you mentioned the time. The hon. Minister has already taken a long time to answer. It is a complicated issue. I understand that, but surely...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, be seated! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I said - and that's why I said it right at the beginning - that the hon. Minister has taken more than the allocated time, but I'll give you time for supplementary questions. And, in fact, I have given you more than the allocated time for supplementary questions.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, this is for the nation, and I want to be very clear. A rail system is not a bus system. I am going to take one example...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not interrupt him, hon. Leader of the Opposition! Allow him to finish! He has to explain.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am going to take an example, the Mecca-Medina high-speed rail. Every week, you had testers; tests on days. Listen! And 4,000 passengers were invited by the Saudi authorities for those trial runs. This is the practice. This is exactly what we are doing. We are not doing testing; we are doing running. I make a difference. The testing will stop as regards end of September. We will do the running and then the commercial service. The service is going to start on 01 November. And let me tell the House and the country at large, I talked to the Prime Minister this morning and he has, as Minister of Finance...

(Interruptions)

Please, listen to me!

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bodha: He has allowed us that the free metro, for whole month of November, will be available to the public in Mauritius - free. So, let me just sum up. International verifier, 25th, we will do some of the last testing and if everything is fine, the Prime Minister does the soft launch. We do the trial running for a month and then we have the customer service, but it is a free customer service for the whole of November and the paid customer service will come in December.

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, it is a bit clearer, thank you. I want to go now to a very important issue, which is the maintenance contract allocated to CAF. I understand that it is for five years. I understand also that the value of the contract is Rs1 billion. So, I would like to ask the hon. Minister what tender procedures, what safety procedures he has ensured before giving this huge Rs1 billion contract to CAF?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, CAF is a company which has been there for the last 120 years. It is one of the oldest, most sophisticated company, and the LRVs that we are getting are the latest generation of the bus generation. From the information I have, it is five years and it is Rs450 m. It is Rs90 m. per year. Now, how did we come to CAF? We had two

possibilities. Either CAF is providing the vehicles so that they do the maintenance or we have another company doing the maintenance. We analysed the system and together with Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, we came to the conclusion that it is better that it is done with CAF over five years. Now, there was a due diligence exercise which was done, and it was then on the account of this due diligence exercise that Cabinet took the decision that it would be a value for money exercise contract with CAF for the maintenance.

Mr X. L. Duval: This is something new for the hon. Minister, for me, for the Cabinet. So, how can the Cabinet decide on its own that Rs450 m. of indirectly taxpayers' money can be spent whereas you have not done any competitive exercise to find out whether, in fact, this is Rs450 m. well spent or should it be Rs100 m. or Rs200 m.?

Mr Bodha: We had the possibility of assessing what has been offered by CAF with Singapore Cooperation Enterprise first, then you had a due diligence exercise with their help as well to come to the conclusion that this was value for money.

Mr X. L. Duval: For many or for money?

Mr Bodha: For money.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am not sure, Madam Speaker. I am going to ask now about the feeder buses. Now, the feeder buses are going to be free for all the time, for anyone using the metro also. Is that correct?

Mr Bodha: The feeder buses will have four types of revenue. First of all, the feeder buses are already, today, on the main lines. So, they are already benefitting from the Free Travel Scheme and from the Bus Recovery Scheme. Now, the third revenue would be from those who are going to take the feeder buses but not taking the train. For example, they are going to the market or to the City. But the commuters who are taking the train, they will have a free ride, what we call the first mile and the last mile, and this will be subsidised by Government.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, this is an additional cost to Government. *Pas besoin de noyer le poisson.* This is an additional service that you are providing and this is an additional cost to the public purse, to the taxpayer. There is no doubt about it. So, I understand that it will cost something like Rs18 m. a month, just for the first leg of the Metro Express, Port Louis to Rose Hill. Now, that has not been included in the feasibility study of Metro Express. So, I presume that all this will come out of the Bus Recovery Account, the

Additional Student Subsidy, etc. But it is an additional cost of some Rs18 m. per month to Government, to the taxpayer.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, we know how the Free Travel Scheme works. It is not transparent, there is no accountability, and it is not sustainable. We are spending Rs2 billion without even knowing how we spend it. And we know all the problems and abuses of the Free Travel System. With the new electronic system where we are going to go Pay As You Go, PricewaterhouseCoopers has done a study and has recommended that we can have a saving of about 10-15% of this money. And as I mentioned earlier, this money is going to be re-injected in the travel system and whatever be the level of subsidy that we need to give over and above the free travel, the bus recovery and the customer paying, this is the top-up. The Leader of the Opposition is saying that it is Rs18 m. We are working on it. I do not think that it is going to be as much as Rs18 m., but we are working on this top-up so that the system of the feeder system is viable, is sustainable and is totally integrated with the rail.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, whether it comes from the bus recovery or any account, it is an additional service and it is an additional cost to the taxpayer, and it will come up to nearly Rs18 m. less any other money that can be recouped from other users. That is a fact, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, before we come out to other things - now, there was a lot of talk about Prime Minister Modi coming. Is he coming now on 01 October? Is he coming now or has he decided that he does not want to come at the end of the day? Is Prime Minister Modi, can the hon. Minister be precise because I am sure that he does not decide, like this Government, as from yesterday...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: Has he accepted? Has an invitation been sent? Has he accepted or has no invitation been sent at all?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, this is a question I cannot answer. It will be for Government to consider this possibility. I would like to say one thing, Madam Speaker. The hon. Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance; he was in the Government between 2006 and...

(Interruptions)

You know what was the Metro? Listen to your Metro! Listen to your Metro!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: Your Metro was costing Rs37 billion. You were closing...

(Interruptions)

Listen!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Not from a sitting position!

Mr Bodha: No, I have not finished, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(Interruptions)

No, I don't give you the floor!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

I give the floor only if it is a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr Boolell! This is the second time I am calling you to order!

Yes!

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, the other Metro was costing Rs37 billion.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order on this side, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: It was closing 60 bus routes. There was no allocation of feeder or whatever and there was no plan for workers. And it was a subsidy of Rs800 m. per year. This is a Metro!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, you no doubt heard of what David Cameron...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Now, listen to the Leader of the Opposition! Allow him to ask his question. I will give you two additional minutes.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay. You have no doubt heard of what David Cameron said recently about Boris Johnson: that he left the truth at home. This also applies because firstly, no Metro project was approved by me when I was in Government and I have no way...

(Interruptions)

And I have no way of checking what he was saying. Now, this is the truth. Madam Speaker, we know that Modi is not coming. I will now come to the...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, you gave me two minutes, but I hope he answers the question and does not go all over the place. Now, shopkeepers at Victoria Square, they are small shopkeepers, small shops. We know that their business has totally been destroyed these last few days with this construction going around, also linked to the Metro Express. What I am going to ask the hon. Minister, since it seems Rs100 m. everywhere going, why is not some decent compensation given to these *ti dimounes* who have small businesses around Victoria Square and probably the same to the taxi drivers and the other business holders who are affected by this huge development at Victoria?

Mr Bodha: As regards the taxi drivers, now they are near the bus and they are very near the Air Mauritius Terminal. As regards the shop owners around Victoria, in fact, I think that they have come to us with some requirements, for example, for delivery, but we are going to have a meeting with them and the first thing, I think, we can offer to them will be the opportunity to be in the terminal, where we believe...

(Interruptions)

No. You never believed in the terminal! You never ever believed in the terminal!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, please address the Chair!

Mr Bodha: Now, the works are coming. 80,000 people are going to be in the terminal every day. So, we are going to work with - just like I had promised my hon. colleague Bhagwan for Rose Hill...

(Interruptions)

No? And we are going to offer those opportunities to the shop owners in the vicinity.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Can you ask your last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition?

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay. I have so many other questions, Madam Speaker, but I will ask this one question.

Madam Speaker: You may come with your questions afterwards. Last question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Only on 02 July, the hon. Minister had promised this House, in a PNQ, for a footbridge between Caudan site and Victoria site. Where is the footbridge?

Mr Bodha: No, we had said temporary.

Mr X. L. Duval: Where is it?

Mr Bodha: Now, the piles have already been done. The piles have gone 20-30 metres in the ground. So, the piles are already there. We are working with the consortium as regards the temporary system, because the main system is going to be done, we will take a number of months. So, you will have, as I always mention, a temporary footbridge.

Mr X. L. Duval: When?

Mr Bodha: We are working on it.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay, finished! So, time is over! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

ATOL – CEO – QUALIFICATIONS & MISSIONS OVERSEAS

(No. B/815) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Mr J. G., Chief Executive Officer of Airport Terminal Operations Limited (ATOL), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from ATOL, information as to the –

- (a) qualifications held, and
- (b) missions attended since his appointment to date, giving details thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the Airport Terminal Operations Ltd is a private company incorporated in July 2008 for the construction and

operation of the new Passenger Terminal at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport and its related facilities. Its shareholders are Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd and Aéroport de Paris International S.A. (formerly Aéroport de Paris Management S.A).

As a company, Airport Terminal Operations Ltd is governed by the Companies Act and by its Constitution. Normally, information related to a private company, which has its own degree of autonomy, is not provided. However, I am exceptionally giving the information asked by the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by Airport Terminal Operations Ltd that since April 2015, the present Chief Executive Officer is seconded to Airport Terminal Operations Ltd by Aéroport de Paris International S.A, under the Technical Services Agreement signed between Airport Terminal Operations Ltd and Aéroport de Paris International S.A. The Technical Services Agreement was signed in December 2008 to provide for technical services for the construction and operation of the new Passenger Terminal at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport and related facilities such as the services of an expatriate as Chief Executive Officer.

The present Chief Executive Officer of Airport Terminal Operations Ltd holds an Engineering Master degree from *Ecole Centrale de Paris, France* and a Phd Doctorate in Process Engineering. Prior to joining Airport Terminal Operations Ltd, he has worked for 26 years within the Aéroport de Paris Group. He has a wide proven experience in various fields of airport management, including maintenance, security, operations and infrastructure development. He has also worked in many countries, namely China, Gabon, Egypt, Chili, Bahrain, Kenya, Georgia, Vietnam, Iraq and Niger.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, the information requested by the hon. Member is being tabled.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Henry!

MARE TABAC – FLOODING – MEASURES

(No. B/816) Mr T. Henry (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the flooding problem in Mare Tabac, he will state the measures taken by the National Development Unit in relation thereto, since 2017 to date.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Mare Tabac Village is located downstream residential and agricultural areas. Significant overland storm water flows are generated during downpours which converge through upstream sugarcane fields, crossing the village and draining to the River Tabac in the downstream side of the village.

Madam Speaker, following consultations hon. Mrs Boygah, the Parliamentary Private Secretary of the region had with hon. Hurreeram, the Government Chief Whip, and hon. Jhugroo, Minister of Housing and Lands, a proposal was made to carry out a consultancy and propose appropriate remedial measures.

Subsequently, Servansingh Jadav and Partners Consulting Engineers Ltd was appointed as Consultant by the NDU on 12 December 2017 to study the area and propose flood-mitigation measures.

The Consultant submitted a Preliminary Design Report in February 2018 to the NDU. Following approval of same by the NDU in April 2018, the Consultant submitted a Detailed Design Report in September 2018. Consultations were held with the Consultant and other stakeholders, and the report was finalised in April 2019.

The Consultant has identified three flood-prone areas which need to be addressed.

The first flood-prone area is located at the existing bridge at the junction of the New Grove Road with Mare Tabac. The river bed has a localised depression and negative slope downstream the bridge, which contribute to swelling of the river and its flooding. The construction of a few houses within the 16 metres reserve has aggravated the situation.

The second flood-prone area is School Lane, which lies on a natural flow path. Significant overland storm water flows from the upstream sugarcane field to converge towards the School Lane.

The third flood-prone area identified is Mandhub Lane near the bridge, upstream the B82 Road. This area is located between the sugarcane fields and the River Tabac.

Madam Speaker, to alleviate flooding problems in these areas, the Consultant has proposed, *inter alia* –

- (i) the refurbishment and lining of the existing bridge across New Grove B82 Road;
- (ii) dredging and desilting works along River Tabac over a stretch of about 255 metres;

- (iii) construction of a new reinforced concrete culvert across a track road;
- (iv) construction of a new reinforced concrete drain over a length of 415 metres and 420 metres along School Lane and Mandhub Lane, respectively, including reprofiling and resurfacing of the lanes, and
- (v) relocation of existing services along New Grove B82 Road, School Lane and Mandhub Lane.

Madam Speaker, the Mare Tabac Village being predominantly a residential area, the NDU had to seek way leaves from the CEB, the CWA, Mauritius Telecom, the Water Resources Unit, the RDA, the Forestry Department and acquire land from private land owners. The way leaves have been obtained from the Authorities concerned. As regards the acquisition of the acquired portions of land from the private land owners, the Ministry of Housing and Lands has already been requested to do the needful. Hon. Mrs Boygah, Parliamentary Private Secretary, hon. Hurreeram, the Government Chief Whip together with the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands are closely monitoring the project.

Once the land acquisition issues are sorted out, the NDU will proceed with the appointment of a contractor for the construction works.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Mr Henry: Merci, Madame la présidente. Est-ce que le Premier ministre est au courant que ce problème perdure depuis 2015 ? Tous les ans, depuis 2015, surtout à School Lane, pendant la saison des pluies, les enfants ont des difficultés à avoir accès à l'école. Est-ce que le Premier ministre peut accélérer les choses, vu que la saison des pluies arrive très bientôt, pour qu'au moins ces enfants puissent aller à l'école tranquillement ?

The Prime Minister: As I mentioned in my answer, Madam Speaker, it was in December 2017 that Servansingh Jadav and Partners Consulting Engineers was appointed and, since then, together with the elected Members of the Constituency and the PPS seen to it that the work progresses quite rapidly. Now, we have reached a stage where we shall have to clear the issue in regard to the acquisition of land. And I must say, I hope the hon. Member is aware that there is a procedure by which we have to abide with regard to the law, with regard to the acquisition of land. We cannot go quicker than what the law prescribes. Now, I must say also that there are a few private land owners with whom we have been talking, in a spirit of amicably trying to get their consent for them to sell their portion of land. If that is done, then, of course, we shall be able to move in a speedier manner.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Mr Henry: Merci, Madame la présidente. J'aimerais savoir du Premier ministre, en ce qu'il s'agit de Canal Pourri, est-ce que la NDU prévoit de faire des travaux là-bas ?

The Prime Minister: Quel canal?

Mr Henry: Canal Pourri à Mare Tabac.

The Prime Minister: I am not as familiar with the site as the hon. Member. I have an answer here, it says no. So, Canal Pourri is, maybe, another project. We shall have to look at it as another project.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: One of the causes of flooding identified by the Consultant is with regard to the River Tabac. Pending the finalisation of the acquisition of land, etc., can I request the hon. Prime Minister to, at least, consider the possibility of carrying out the dredging works on a temporary basis to prevent any further flooding?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, we have, I understand, taken a few measures in order to alleviate the problem. Now, there is the recommendation of the Consultant. What we have to do is to I rely on the technical people of the NDU, of the different other institutions, on the Ministry, to tell us whether there are other measures that we can take. But, as I understand today, we are going according to the recommendations of the Consultant, and I think it is also wise that we should not try to do something which, at the end of the day, would not be in order with regard to the whole project that has been recommended by the Consultant.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

MAURITIUS-SENEGAL - DOUBLE TAXATION AVOIDANCE AGREEMENT

(No. B/817) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement between Mauritius and Senegal, he will state the reasons for the termination thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with Senegal was signed in April 2002 and it entered into force in September 2004.

On 18 June 2019, the Government of Senegal conveyed to the Government of Mauritius its unilateral decision to terminate the DTAA, with effect from 01 July 2019. However, in accordance with Article 29 of the DTAA, the agreement will continue to apply, in Senegal, up to 31 December 2019, and, in Mauritius, up to 30 June 2020.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that, in the margins of the recent TICAD 7 Summit held in Japan in August last, I had a bilateral meeting with the President of Senegal. In my discussions with him, I raised the issue of the DTAA between our two countries and we agreed that we should reactivate discussions concerning the revision of the DTAA. To that effect, a technical team from Mauritius would be proceeding to Dakar from 04 to 08 November 2019 to pursue negotiations with the counterparts in Senegal.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the President of Senegal, Mr Macky Sall, on 19 June, stated that Senegal has lost more than 150 billion Franc CFA, around Rs250 m., and I quote –

“(...) in revenue losses, because of a Treaty with Mauritius.”

Now, the hon. Prime Minister said that he has just met the President of Senegal. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister what has he told the President to reassure him that using Mauritius would not end up in revenue losses for Senegal?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I think it would not be proper for me to make public my discussions with the President of Senegal, but I can reassure the hon. Member, and, as I said, that matter, amongst others, has been raised. But it was not the only issue that was raised. And I must say I am very happy that he has agreed. I have been able to convince him that we should look again at this DTAA, which is very important for the business relations between our two countries in the light of the development and the partnership that we are having with Senegal and he has agreed immediately. That is why we have been able to get the dates also, and the technical team will be meeting and they will be discussing.

Mr Uteem: The termination of the Treaty comes at a time where Mauritius is under serious attack by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, precisely because of allegations of Mauritius being used by investors to deprive African countries of much needed tax revenue. So, is the hon. Prime Minister satisfied that his Government is doing whatever is necessary to change the bad image and reputation which Mauritius has in the International Community and in particular among African countries?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I must say I am appalled by the frivolous attacks that are being made against Mauritius, and more appalled by some Mauritians, but I shall not mention from which quarters they are coming. They are also joining in the fray to attack our jurisdiction. I would call them very unpatriotic in this way. I hope I am not imputing motive on the hon. Member's question, but I wish to reassure the jurisdiction, the stakeholders and the country that we are, in fact, doing whatever is required to reply to those frivolous and unwarranted and unjustified attacks. And I tell the hon. Member to wait and see, and he will see the results that this Government, that this team will be having in the very near future. Just wait and see!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: May I ask one question to the hon. Prime Minister. He mentioned that in July of this year, the President of Senegal, Macky Sall, unilaterally decided to put an end to the Treaty. But can the hon. Prime Minister confirm also whether the Senegalese Authorities have, since one year before the resiliation of this Treaty, regularly drawn the attention of the Mauritian Authorities and have requested that the DTAA be renegotiated, as it was detrimental to the Senegalese economy, and since there was no concrete response from our side, this is why this decision was taken?

The Prime Minister: No. I do not want to go into the detail of what the hon. Member has said, but so that we are clear, let me state that it is not true to say that Mauritius has not been responsive to the request of Senegal; I shall just stop at that. But let me also say that Senegal's worry is that it is not a balanced Treaty. That is why they have decided to put a stop to the Treaty. But when I spoke to the President and I explained to him about a number of issues, I am happy to say that he has immediately agreed that we should start negotiations and review the Treaty. Now, let the technical teams work together, and I hope that we are able to come to a conclusion. And let me also say to this House that this is not the first time that a country is putting an end to a Treaty. It has happened before in the previous Government. It has happened when I had been in a Government, in MSM/MMM Government also, 2000-2005.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Prime Minister state if the case of Mauritius, as a clean, neat jurisdiction, has been raised and put across at the African Union to enlist support of all our friends in Africa?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Madam Speaker, I, myself, and I know my colleague, the Minister of Financial Services, and other colleagues, each time we have the opportunity in the international fora to make the point with regard to Mauritius being a clean and trusted jurisdiction, we do make that point. Let me also say that we shall see what happens, because we have now been in conformity with the criteria that have been laid down by the OECD. We have passed that test now, we are compliant. The European Union has put us on a grey list; they have drawn our attention in spite of the OECD being satisfied with the different changes that we have made to our regulations. The EU has drawn our attention to two things that they feel we should clarify, and we have been working together with them. They will be judging whether we are now compliant or not. Let me say, I pray that we become compliant. We shall see.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem, you have a last question?

Mr Uteem: Yes. Madam Speaker, the truth of the matter is that the Treaty with Senegal has been terminated; the Treaty with India has been renegotiated to our detriment; the Treaty with South Africa has been renegotiated to our detriment; the Treaty with Kenya is not yet implemented; the Treaty with Nigeria is not yet in force. So, would not the hon. Prime Minister agree that, ever since he took office in 2015, this Government has got only bad news to the Offshore Sector?

The Prime Minister: Oh, what a load of nonsense! I must say a load of nonsense, and I sk him to go and do some research because he is so well informed! In 2004, Indonesia put an end to our Treaty. Up to now, there has been no Treaty with Indonesia, and he is giving us lessons!

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Financial Services, Sushil Khushiram!

(Interruptions)

To mem pas koné!

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Li mem pas koné ti ena enn ministère Financial Services. Hopeless ! Enfin, pas fer nanye.*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Hurreeram!

**TRUST FUND FOR SPECIALISED MEDICAL CARE – DIRECTOR (FORMER) -
FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE**

(No. B/818) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Fact-Finding Committee set up in respect of the former Director of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care, Ms V. S.², he will state if consideration will now be given for the tabling of copy of the Report thereof and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as I stated in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/803 at the sitting of 16 October 2018, the Report of the Fact-Finding Committee has been referred to the Independent Commission against Corruption for further investigation as recommended by the Chairperson of the Committee himself.

I am informed that the inquiry at the ICAC is ongoing. As the Report of the Fact-Finding Committee is in the hands of the ICAC, I am advised that, by virtue of section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, any inquiry carried out by the ICAC is subject to confidentiality provisions.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, officers and Board Members of ICAC have a duty of confidentiality in respect to investigations carried out by ICAC. In fact, section 81(3) of the POCA provides that -

“81(3) Every member of the Board and every officer shall maintain confidentiality and secrecy of any matter, document, report and other information relating to the administration of this Act that becomes known to him, or comes in his possession or under his control.”

As a matter of fact, the rationale behind section 81 of the POCA is the protection of the integrity of ICAC investigations. The confidentiality aims at protecting the source of information or identity of informers so as to prevent any tampering with witnesses or with evidence so as to ensure the integrity of any investigation which the ICAC is carrying out.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: As stated by the hon. Prime Minister - and the public must know - this Report of the Fact-Finding Committee was forwarded to ICAC as far back March 2018, and we are nearly reaching two years. So, can the hon. Prime Minister, at least, agree that the ICAC is taking too much time to look into that particular case, the more so that it is a member of the Alliance MSM/ML who is involved in that particular case?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I have neither control over nor can I do anything with regard to ICAC. The matter is under investigation. I do not know the complexity of the investigation that is being carried out. So, I cannot impress upon or ask them to do anything. I am sure that when the investigation will be completed, it will be referred to DPP.

Mr Bhagwan: The way things are going, it is as if ICAC is becoming a white washing machine. So, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether he could send the Police to inquire whether ICAC has lost the key of the drawer where the file has been kept?

The Prime Minister: It does need any reply? But let me say one thing to the hon. Member. Because in the past, he has been insisting - and I am surprised that he is not insisting - why the Report is not being tabled and not made public...

(Interruptions)

Yes, you asked!

(Interruptions)

Ah, you are coming! But let me...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please! No crosstalking!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: As if I know what you are going to ask!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

The Prime Minister: So, put your question, then I will answer! Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, by now – last time, he said no, he refused. The Report of the Fact-Finding Committee must come public, the more so that public money has been spent to produce this Report, and we had the statement hon. Dr. Husnoo in the House.

The Prime Minister: As I stated, Madam Speaker, the matter has been referred to ICAC according to the recommendation of the Chairperson of the Fact-Finding Committee himself. Secondly, this is not the first time, again. Let me remind the hon. Member that in the past Government, there have been so many reports that have not been made public, and he has been part of the Government of 2000-2005. There have been two reports; two reports which have not been made public! Why is it that the same argument did not apply at that time? And it applies now?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

(Interruptions)

Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

IBA – DIRECTOR (FORMER) – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE - REPORT

(No. B/819) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Fact Finding Committee set up in respect of the former Director of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, Ms Y. C., he will state if consideration will now be given for the tabling of copy of the Report thereof and, if not, why.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the House will recall that in his reply to Parliamentary Question B/21 on 27 March 2018, the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation informed the House that the report of the Fact-Finding Committee on the former Director of the Independent Broadcasting Authority had been referred to the Independent Commission against Corruption for further investigation.

As a matter of fact, the Fact-Finding Committee has indicated that its findings may potentially invite an inquiry to be conducted so as to determine whether there has been any breach of any provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act. Hence, the referral of the matter to the Independent Commission of Corruption for further investigation.

The report of the Fact-Finding Committee is therefore in the hands of the ICAC and I am informed that the inquiry into the matter is ongoing. In this case also, I am advised that, by virtue of section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, any inquiry carried out by ICAC is subject to confidentiality provisions. As I stated in my reply to the immediately preceding PQ B/818, releasing the Report or divulging any information in relation thereto, would be prejudicial to the inquiry.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, the report was sent to ICAC in 2017. So, again, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether his attention, as Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, has been drawn to the fact that this person and his family are going to migrate to Canada? Can that information be verified, the more so that that person was presented as a candidate of the MSM? So, can the population at least deduce that, again, it is another instance where somebody of the Government side is involved in a case, where ICAC has lost the keys of its drawer?

The Prime Minister: Well, it is not correct to say that she has been a candidate of the MSM. But I am not aware about her future plans of migration to Canada.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Prime Minister verify whether she has already left the country while there is a case of inquiry at ICAC?

The Prime Minister: Of course, we shall check.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

MBC – DIRECTOR GENERAL (NEW) – APPOINTMENT & ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL (FORMER) - RESIGNATION

(No. B/820) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) date of appointment of the new Director General thereof, indicating his terms and conditions of appointment, and
- (b) reasons for the resignation of the former Acting Director General thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation is appointed under section 13(2) (a) of the MBC Act, which provides that, I quote –

“The Director General shall be appointed by the Minister, with the approval of the Prime Minister on such terms and conditions as he thinks fit.”

I have accordingly appointed the new Director General of the MBC on a contractual basis for a period of one year. The new Director General has assumed duty on 16 August 2019.

Madam Speaker, the new Director General is being paid the same salary as the former substantive Director General of the Corporation, that is, Rs225,000 per month. The other terms and conditions of his appointment, such as car benefits, travelling, leave, passage benefits and gratuity are as per the recommendations of the Pay Research Bureau.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the former Acting Director General of the MBC tendered his resignation for personal reasons.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether this new Director General was the former Chairperson who publicly declared his loyalty to the MSM and the Prime Minister - He gave that indication in an official function - and whether this Director is now working according to the provisions of the MBC Act with regard to neutrality of the MBC/TV, especially we are reaching the end of the mandate of this Government? We are nearly in an electoral campaign. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the MBC, under the leadership of this new Director General, is performing as per the provisions of the MBC Act?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware whether he has said that he is a supporter of the MSM. I have not seen that.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

The Prime Minister: Well, so many people who put *haar* on my *licou*.

(Interruptions)

But I can assure the hon. Member that, of course, the Director General will have to operate within the limits of the MBC Act.

Mr Bhagwan: Has the attention of the hon. Prime Minister been drawn to the fact that since the appointment of that person, that political agent, as far as I am concerned, *il y a une situation malsaine au niveau de la MBC qui perdure?* Whether the present Chairperson of the MBC has been made aware and has discussed the matter with the Prime Minister with regard to the *situation malsaine au niveau de la gestion des affaires depuis que Monsieur Ramdane a été* appointed Director General?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am not aware of any *situation malsaine*.

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/839 in regard to the Mega National Cleaning and Embellishment Campaign will be replied by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. PQ B/858 in regard to hawkers operating in Port Louis will be replied by the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. PQs B/829, B/842, B/843, B/867, B/868, B/869 and B/870 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Osman Mahomed!

CEB – PENSION FUNDS

(No. B/826) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Staff and the Manual Workers Pension Fund of the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if, since 01 July 2017 to date, an additional one per cent of the pensionable salaries of the members thereof is being deducted and retained, indicating if –

- (a) membership thereto allows certain members to contribute and some not to, and
- (b) all clearances from the regulatory authorities have been sought and obtained prior to the said deductions and retentions in a suspense account.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, two pension funds operate at the level of the Central Electricity Board. They are the Central Electricity Board Manual Workers Pension Fund and the Central Electricity Board Staff Pension Fund.

Prior to 01 September 2016, employees were governed by a Defined Benefit Scheme, that is, a scheme which was not a Defined Contribution Scheme.

I stand informed that, on 14 May and 28 June, 2019, the CEB signed Collective Agreements with the two recognised trade unions, that is, the Union of Employees of CEB and other Energy Sectors and second, the Central Electricity Board Staff Association respectively. Those agreements were for the implementation of new salaries and conditions of service with effect from 01 July 2017.

This collective agreement followed a report of the Salary Commissioner dated 29 December 2017.

When considering the possible impacts which proposed salary increases would have on the pension funds, the Salary Commissioner sought the views of the Funds' Actuary, that is, the Actuary of the two funds. I am informed that the Actuary forecast that the proposed salary increase would entail a deficit of about Rs39 m. per year in both funds and advised that remedial measures be taken.

The Salary Commissioner accordingly considered that, I quote –

“Financing the increase of Rs39 million annually mentioned by the Actuary would require an increase of around 3% in the aggregate pension contributions. As pension contribution is normally 2:1, between the employer and the employee, this would mean 2% for the CEB and 1% for the employee.

Consequently, CEB may consider that the proposed salary increase includes 1% increase to cover an enhancement of the employees' pension contribution and request employees to effect this additional contribution of 1%.”

The Salary Commissioner thus recommended that, and I quote –

“(i) the CEB to increase its contribution to the Defined Benefit scheme from 16% to 18.5%;

(ii) Employees under the Defined Benefit Scheme be required to contribute an additional 1% to their respective Pension Funds bringing their total contribution to 11%”.

In respect of employees starting employment after 01 September 2016, the CEB contemplated a Defined Contribution Scheme in which employees would be paid pension and retirement benefits on the basis of actual contributions. Under that scheme, employees would contribute only 6% of their monthly salary while CEB would contribute 15%.

In June 2018, the two Funds informed the Financial Services Commission that they were working on an amendment to the rules of the funds so as to cater for that new scheme.

I am also informed that the two trade unions have agreed that the CEB shall set up a tripartite committee including representatives of the unions and the Board of the two pension funds as well as CEB to examine the whole issue. The tripartite committee will start discussions on the matter shortly.

Pending the recommendations of the committee, the Board is retaining the 1% pension contribution, which is kept in a suspense account.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the 1% increase is applicable only to employees in employment prior to 01 September 2016. As regards employees joining CEB after 01 September 2016, it is a condition of their contract that 6% of their monthly salary, I quote: “will be retained by the CEB for eventual transfer to the CEB Defined Contribution Scheme which is yet to be set up by the Board.”

With regard to part (b) of the question, on 18 June 2018, the respective Pension Funds informed the Financial Services Commission that, in order to address pension deficits, CEB had made a one-off payment of Rs350 m. to the funds and the CEB’s contribution had been increased from 16% to 18.5% while employees contributions were to be increased from 10% to 11%.

I am informed that, at a meeting of 01 April 2019, the FSC advised the Pension Funds management that it should obtain the unanimous consent of the management committee of the Fund for the amendment of the rules of the funds. This will be sought after the conclusion of the works of the tripartite committee.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. There are many definitions of a suspense account and one is an account used temporarily or permanently to carry doubtful entries and discrepancies pending their analysis and permanent classification. A sort of black box to the workers who do not know what is going on.

Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, true enough, FSC has not given its green light, but, at least, basic legal clearances have been sought and obtained before 1% of hard earned money of the workers of the CEB being retained in that suspense account?

The Deputy Prime Minister: First of all, I do not want to go into definitions of suspense account. I have understood that what it means is that they have put it in an account which is suspended until a final determination is made.

Now, this 1% is not a sort of forcible taking of the money. It has been done, first of all, with the agreement of everybody and all employees are aware of it. It is put in the account pending because the unions are very responsible. They have said: let us sit down and work out how to use that money. They are acutely aware as in many other parastatal bodies and indeed private undertakings, pension deposits are a problem and this is a national issue, but for the CEB, they have all agreed to work out a settlement. In the meantime, CEB has increased its contributions to 18.5% and is going to make sure that those employees who are affected by the suspense account will be guaranteed whatever benefits in the event something untoward happens to them.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned just now that FSC has requested for the approval and consent of the governing bodies. Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether, at this moment in time, there is a reluctance from the governing bodies to give their green light on this because people sitting in the governing bodies are not agreeable to fund past deficits of the pension funds?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I understand that the matter is being kept in abeyance pending the outcome of the tripartite committee. This is my understanding. Of course, there must be differences, I am sure, as to the approach, but, at the CEB, history shows us that the trade unions and management always find a way to work together. Perhaps one of the reasons is because senior management is also part of the trade union. So, we will see what happens.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes. Can I refer the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to the official letter from the Financial Services Commission which appeared in the press, dating 10 December 2018 and to ask him whether this whole issue surrounding CEB pension funds - the two funds that I have mentioned in my question are the reasons why, as at to date, the audited financial statements and the statutory returns for the year ending December 2017 which is way back, have not been submitted as has been requested several times in meetings and correspondences by the Financial Services Commission. I would like to table this letter, Madam.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have a note here which tells me submitted. So, I assume that submitted means the accounts have been submitted.

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

At 1.01 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

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

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bodha is not here. He has informed me that he is taken up with an urgent meeting with the Prime Minister and to take his question out of turn. So, I will take the next question.

(Interruptions)

I am really sorry, hon. Bérenger, I am not protecting anyone. In fact, as soon as the bell has rung, hon. Bodha called me in my office and told me that he is taken up in an urgent meeting with the Prime Minister and to take his question out of turn. Next question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, when the Minister is back, we will take the question. Is that correct?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

CEB LTD – CORPORATE STRUCTURE

(No. B/828) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether in regard to the proposed corporatization of Central Electricity Board Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if it was the subject of a consultancy exercise and, if so -

- (a) indicate the -
 - (i) name of the consultant and cost of the exercise
 - (ii) terms of reference thereof, and
 - (iii) main recommendations and timelines thereof, and
- (b) table copy of the Inception Report in relation thereto.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member may wish to refer to my reply to PQ B/346 of 08 May 2018. That was a PQ made by hon. Dr. Boolell.

There has been general consensus since 2002 on the need to review the corporate structure of the Central Electricity Board which has been fulfilling both the roles of regulator and operator in the electricity sector.

This unsatisfactory state of affairs led to the Power Sector reform study of 2002. In 2004, the Utility Regulatory Authority Act was enacted. It was amended in 2008. In 2005, an Electricity Act was enacted.

In 2016, the Utility Regulatory Authority was established. It has presented its strategic plan and is actively working on licensing of operators in the sector. The URA will, in due course, become the *de jure* sole electricity regulator and the sole authority to grant licenses.

The CEB has, therefore, no choice but to adapt to the new regulatory environment as provided in the Electricity Act 2005.

This calls for a review of the CEB's governance, its operating structure and the CEB legislation.

Given the complexity of the exercise, the CEB approached the African Legal Support Facility of the African Development Bank for legal assistance.

With regard to part (a) (i), in May 2019, the African Legal Support Facility procured the services of a Consultant, CPCS Transcom Limited for the cost of US\$ 476,790.

With regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, the consultancy services are mainly to tender advice on the institutional and governance structure, including corporatisation of CEB, after consultations with all stakeholders, including employees. The advice provided by the Consultant will be submitted to Government.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether the Consultants met with the representative of the unions after the consultancy exercise has been granted to the cost of some Rs17.6 m? Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister what sense does he make of the fact that until today the union is strongly against the corporatisation of the CEB? I have spoken to one of them yesterday, the main one, notwithstanding the fact that for the last 15 years all corporatisation of the CEB have been aborted.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I do not know about abortion of the CEB corporatisation. I know that the union has expressed strong views, but what I see is that there seems to be a confusion between corporatisation and privatisation. That is not the case. In

any case, the study is being done. Of course, the hon. Member and the House and the population will recall that in 2002, there was unanimity, including from the then Opposition. When that then Opposition came into office in 2005, it became the Government and I have read in the Government Programme of 2005-2010 –

“There was a need to devise the appropriate instrument and create the necessary conditions for major structural reforms to be brought about in the Utility Sector. Legislations will be passed to allow for harmonisation of the utility services operations with the functions of the Utility Regulatory Body. The new framework will create the necessary environment for a free and fair interaction of market forces for the benefit of all stakeholders.”

Now, the *Maurice Ile Durable* strategy, which the hon. Member is extremely familiar - I have got a copy which is a very good document - it was stated that the Power Sector reform initiated in 2002 was going to be a quick win, and I quote –

“(...) a quick win that will improve both the transparency and efficiency of the Utility Sector.”

I am sure that when we get the reports of the Consultant, which will be disseminated after Government has gone through, there will be proper discussions with all stakeholders to see what is the way forward.

Mr Osman Mahomed: It is my good fortune that I have a copy of the report. Can I refer the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to paragraph 3.3 of that draft Inception Report which states the following –

“The change of CEB into a corporation under the Companies Act may also give CEB a share capital and therefore a shareholding. Such share capital enables the State of Mauritius, if any, to attract strategic or financial partners for the development of the CEB.”

The Deputy Prime Minister has just mentioned that we are not talking about privatisation, does that not tantamount to an endeavour which could make CEB something like the Mauritius Telecom tomorrow and which will escape the purview of the National Assembly?

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is always dangerous to read a part of the whole report. I do not have the report with me, but I know this paragraph. These are Consultants, what are they doing? They are looking at all possible avenues of legal possibilities and when

you are faced with one parastatal Body which you want to restructure, one of the avenues is to make it take a corporate form. That does not mean it is going to be like 'X', 'Y' or 'Z' company. It may take whatever form. Let us see what is going to happen to the consultancy work, their discussion with the stakeholders and then we will see.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Is the Deputy Prime Minister telling us firmly that there would not be any privatisation of the CEB?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am not saying anything of the sort. I am saying we only let the Consultants do their work, let them say what they want to say. Then, we will determine. I am not saying anything as to the options which are open.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: The idea behind corporatisation, Madam Speaker, is, I understand, that we cannot perpetuate that situation where the CEB acts as regulator as it is today and at the same time be responsible for the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity. But now that we have the Utility Regulatory Body which is functioning and operational, does the hon. Deputy Prime Minister still think that the need of corporatisation is still valid in view of the fact the Utility Regulatory Body is now in operation and can act as a regulator?

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is precisely because there is going to be a Utility Regulatory Authority. Surely, the hon. Member does remember what he, himself, wrote when he initiated the Power Sector Reform, that is, when you put the Utility Regulatory Authority, the CEB must be at par with everyone and this is what is being examined. Whatever I think is entirely irrelevant. It will be a matter of Government policy after we have received the views of everyone.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Adrien Duval!

MAURITIUS - MARINE PROTECTED AREAS - FLAT ISLAND

(No. B/829) Mr A. Duval (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the marine area surrounding Flat Island, he will state if consideration will be given for the inclusion thereof in the Marine Protected Areas of Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

FOREIGN INDUSTRIAL FISHING VESSELS - FISH PRODUCTION

(No. B/830) Mr A. Duval (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the measure taken to allow foreign industrial fishing companies to fish in our shallow water banks, as announced in the Budget Speech 2018-2019, he will state the number of foreign industrial fishing vessels having fished in our shallow water banks since July 2018 to date, indicating the total fish production and the amount thereof –

- (a) sold on the local market, and
- (b) exported.

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, I wish to - I am just talking about the same question which has been changed now, all right - I wish to inform the House that...

Madam Speaker: No. Hon. Koonjoo, please carry on! But the question has not been changed, it is as it is on the Agenda.

Mr Koonjoo: Okay, thank you.

...there is only one Mauritian owned foreign flagged industrial fishing vessel, namely “Diego Star 2”, which has been fishing in our shallow water banks since July 2018 to date.

Madam Speaker, the total fish production of the vessel for this period was 224.9 tons, which was entirely sold in the local market and therefore there is no export.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Therefore, if we understand correctly, what was announced in the Budget 2018/2019 by the Prime Minister that he will now allow foreign fishing vessels to fish in our coastal waters has not yet been implemented. May we know if Government is still going to go ahead with this?

Mr Koonjoo: It is being implemented, Madam. So, we will stick to that.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, can we know from the hon. Minister what are the safeguards that are going to be put in place to ensure that we control the species and quantity of fish that is fished in our coastal waters when he is implementing this policy to allow foreign vessels to come now to our coastal waters?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, everything is controlled by my Ministry and especially if my hon. friend is worried about whether there will be any problem concerning the alien fish in our country...

(Interruptions)

Yes.

Madam Speaker: Please, proceed with your reply. Don't take heed of what they say.

Mr Koonjoo: I must assure him that there is nothing of the sort. Everything has been taken into consideration. So, the foreign fish or any other fish which has got problem, and we are taking all precautions to correct everything.

Mr A. Duval: This is *en dehors du cadre*. Madam Speaker, it is an important question. I will make the point anyway even though if he does not want to answer. You have, in your National Export Strategy of your Ministry, underlined the importance in the short-term to come up with the proper assessment of all the fish species that we have, the stock level and these are commitments that you have given to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, as well, and the European Union, and you are announcing that you are going now to let foreign fishing vessels come and fish, and you cannot tell us what are the safeguards that have been put in place. Therefore, whatever you have said to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, whatever you have said in your strategic paper was just empty words. Is that what we should conclude?

Mr Koonjoo: No, Madam Speaker, it is not that. If we have given our word, we will keep our word. I don't know what my hon. friend has gathered from what we have spoken to the Tuna Fishing. We are maintaining. Just like the Prime Minister has given his word, we will maintain that.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, can I ask a last question? It would be completely contradictory to the commitments that have been given since 2015 by the Minister himself and this country to international organisations that we would limit the number, for example, of tuna fish, that we would reduce the number because the fish are endangered. So many questions have been answered to this House and we are going to allow foreign fishing vessels. What I want is for the Minister to backpedal on this. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can give a commitment to the House today that he will not go ahead with letting foreign fishing vessels fish in our coastal waters?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, there is no backpedalling, nothing. We will stick to our word and we will find to it that that we give our people in Mauritius who can fish in our water.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed, we will take the question of hon. Bodha now.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. PQ B/827.

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Madam. We had a meeting with the Prime Minister and the UNODC.

DECAEN FLYOVER – CRACKS – ENGINEERING REPORT

(No. B/827) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the cracks which appeared on the Decaen Flyover, he will table the latest Engineering Report available in relation thereto.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, if you allow me, I will answer this question.

In my reply to a Parliamentary Question B/786 on 13 August 2019, I informed the House that the structural integrity of the bridge is without question and that we are closely monitoring the cracks.

I am informed by the Road Development Authority that movement over the last week has been minimum. The contractor is carrying out a detailed and comprehensive investigation to confirm if the settlement has been stabilised. Nonetheless, the RDA and the contractor will continue to closely monitor the site. The contractor on its side has appointed an international recognised geotechnical expert, Mr Wolfgang Wear who will survey the site and submit his observations. In addition, Dr. Nicole Chang, Technical Director of Franki Piles is also expected to be in Mauritius shortly. The experts will carry out their visits and submit their observations.

Upon completion of the above as well as other investigations, the Engineering Report will be submitted by the contractor to the RDA for examination. Madam Speaker, the RDA is ensuring that the contractor fulfils its obligations as for the contract before final handing over is done for a defect free structure by the end of the defects notification period, the safeguards are that –

- (i) the project is on a design and build basis;
- (ii) it is still on the defects liability period, and
- (iii) the performance guarantee which was due to expire on 27 November 2019 has been extended until 26 November 2020 and retention money has not been released.

I am also tabling a copy of the latest observational report for the hon. Member and I think being an engineer, I would like, in fact, also to have his comments on this report.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: I will certainly take time to read the report with a lot of interest. In his reply to PQ B/786, the hon. Minister said that on that particular occasion the engineer recorded a movement of 2 cm which is about 20 mm. Well, engineers have been recording movement, every now and then they have gone to the site. Can I ask the hon. Minister what is the cumulative amount of movement that has been recorded, so far, before the patching up? Because when you go to the site, you would not say anything because it has been patched up. What is the total cumulative movement, so far, recorded on this site insofar as the cracks are concerned?

Mr Bodha: As you will see in the report, in June the width was 10 mm and you have another crack was 5 mm, that was in June. In August, it was 12 mm and 5 mm, that was when we were doing the piling of the Metro. In fact, we wanted to know whether there has an impact. Since then, it has been negligible. So, in fact, it stays stable and then it moves by one, two, a few millimetres, but the cumulative would be then by now it would be 12 plus 10.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I am so sorry, but you missed the 20 mm that you replied a month ago.

Mr Bodha: So, that was the 2, 12 plus 10. I said 10 plus 12 is 22.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Two centimetres is twenty millimetres.

Mr Bodha: Millimetres.

Mr Osman Mahomed: *Enfin* this is what I had in the reply, maybe it is a mistake here.

Madam Speaker: Do you have another supplementary?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, I have another question.

Can I ask the hon. Minister given that this site is well-known to be once upon a time the sea or the sea front, therefore not original soil because it was reclaimed, did the RDA or the Design and Build Contractor conduct a geotechnical study before embarking on this major project?

Mr Bodha: Yes, this was done and the piling has been done after from what I understand, 25 metres. This was done, but I think that there is a phenomenon of settlement of few millimetres.

Madam Speaker: Last question!

Mr Osman Mahomed: So, the hon. Minister is saying where the cracks are occurring, there was piling done there and yet there were cracks. Is that correct?

Mr Bodha: The piling was done for the project.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Adrien Duval!

NET FISHING - ILLEGAL - CASES

(No. B/831) **Mr A. Duval (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to illegal net fishing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the fisheries protection services, since January 2015 to date, the number of reported cases thereof, indicating the number of –

- (a) contraventions booked, and
- (b) nets seized.

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that with regard to the illegal net fishing, since January 2015, as per our record –

- (a) the number of reported cases is 770;
- (b) the number of contraventions booked is 55, and
- (c) the total length of nets seized amounts to 41,382 metres.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Minister must be aware that there is a flaw in the legislation. The figure says it all, 700 reported cases, 55 contraventions only and that it is difficult to

prosecute. The Minister has given again a commitment to this House since 2015 that he would come with the Fisheries Act so that we may remedy all these shortcomings.

Pas plus loin que l'année dernière, en 2018, pendant la PNQ, le ministre répétait le fait que le Bill allait être présenté au plus vite. May we know where this famous Fisheries Bill is?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, I do not decide about what Bill is coming first or second, it is the hon. Prime Minister who decides and he decides according to his importance and as such, I can tell the House that twice we have got ready about the Bill, but, unfortunately, something happened in our Ministry. Twice we lost our Permanent Secretary. Twice! So, everything was disturbed, but still we are already ready with the Bill, it depends now on the hon. Prime Minister, whenever he tells us, we will be going to the Parliament, no problem.

Mr A. Duval: I hope that he has found his Permanent Secretary back. With regard to the Bill, are we to understand that this commitment...

(Interruptions)

Mr Koonjoo: They have passed away.

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Okay, I didn't know, sorry.

(Interruptions)

I hope that the commitment then to bring it by the end of this mandate will still hold and that you will talk to the Prime Minister to make sure it is on the agenda because this, as the hon. Minister must know, is something that is very serious, not only can't we control and prosecute illegal net fishing in our local waters, but also we cannot do so for foreign fishing vessels that are depleting our Exclusive Economic Zone.

Madam Speaker: We have understood your question. Yes, hon. Minister. You don't have any reply?

Mr Koonjoo: I don't want to add anything.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Next question, hon. Adrien Duval!

LAGOONS - FISH - INVASIVE SPECIES

(No. B/832) **Mr A. Duval (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the invasive fish species in our lagoons and coastal waters, he will state the –

- (a) measures taken for same to be identified and surveyed, indicating the number thereof identified and the estimated population per species, and
- (b) remedial measures taken for the eradication thereof, since January 2015 to date.

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, I understand that the hon. Member refers to the alien species.

(Interruptions)

I say alien.

Madam Speaker: Don't engage in any conversation with the Members of the Opposition and I'll ask Members of the Opposition also to allow the Minister to reply, please.

Mr Koonjoo: Regarding part (a) of the question, the MOI and the Shipping Division of my Ministry exercise strict control over ballast water from vessels calling at the Port Louis harbour to prevent alien and invasive species from entering our waters.

Surveys carried out both in Port Louis and Port Mathurin have revealed that there are no alien/invasive species in our waters.

Furthermore, I am also informed that whenever there is a proliferation of a certain local species of fish due to climate change or climatic conditions and other reasons, arrangements are made by my Ministry, in collaboration with the NGOs and other departments to participate in removing such species.

Consequently, part (b) of the question does not arise.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: I am surprised that the hon. Minister says there are no invasive species. The Prime Minister, himself, in the Budget announced, I think, Rs5 m. to remove the crown-of-thorns starfish. May we know on that score so far how many have been captured in terms of quantity? I do not know how will you quantify in terms of tons or catch itself. If we can know?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, I just replied that, so far both in Mauritius and in Rodrigues, we have been constantly looking for any species entering our waters and it is very, very important because we have gone through many important meetings with foreigners to find out if we have got any ballast water, any foreign species coming in our waters. That is very important because it can give rise to anything.

So, we take all the precautions and I just said that we have never had, neither in Mauritius nor in Rodrigues because the Port is important, anything can enter in the waters especially if we have got things which can cause havoc to the health of the people. We take all the precautions. So far nothing has been found out in our waters.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, I must say I really do not trust the answer of the Minister.

Madam Speaker: No, you cannot say this. You cannot say that you do not trust the answer.

Mr A. Duval: Not trust, but I do not think this answer is very factual.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Now, you are not correcting, hon. Shakeel Mohamed.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, the question to the hon. Minister is: given that we do not have a proper monitoring procedure for ballast of ships that come to Mauritius, unless the Minister himself goes to physically dive in these...

Madam Speaker: Ask your question!

Mr A. Duval: ...*dans les cales des bateaux*.

Madam Speaker: What is your question?

Mr A. Duval: And this is one of the shortcomings that you have to remedy.

Madam Speaker: What is your question?

Mr A. Duval: The question is, Madam Speaker, again, given that in the Budget we recognised the need to get rid of invasive fish species, do you not have any quantifiable data to give report to this House today?

Mr Koonjoo: I just reported, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: There are none.

Mr Koonjoo: If the hon. Member doesn't want to listen, I can't tell him more than that. We know that both in Mauritius and in Rodrigues, there are lots of changes coming in the harbour, lots of things. Both harbours are developing very fast and if the Prime Minister has spoken about the precaution, of course, he has all the reasons to take precaution, but I am not saying that we have got species coming in our waters, in our harbour. This is not true at all, and if he does not believe me, then ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No.

Mr Koonjoo: I am just sorry for him.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, crown-of-thorns starfish have eaten away kilometres of corals in Australia and they are eating away in Mauritius. They have been found in Rodrigues, the Prime Minister has recognised that in his Budget.

Madam Speaker: Don't make a statement, hon. Adrien Duval. Ask your question!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, let me ask, with regard to the thousands of *ombrines* that have fled from the fishing nets in Mahebourg, that are alien fish, thousands of them, whether a survey has been done at the level of his Ministry since that PNQ to determine what impact it has had? I said that I do not trust his answer because by definition...

Madam Speaker: No, you are repeating this again. Please withdraw this!

Mr A. Duval: But Madam Speaker, he has to be careful of what he says.

Madam Speaker: No, but you cannot say! *Non, non, non*. If you say that you do not trust the answer, the reply given by the hon. Minister, then you have to come with a Motion to the House. I am sorry. Hon. Adrien Duval, please ask your question, he will give you the reply.

Mr A. Duval: Can we have an update on the thousands, many thousands, 15000, 20000, 30000, 40 000 fish that fled from the Mahebourg fish farm? An update as to if they are still in our lagoon in Mauritius? As to what the impact there has been? They are predatory species and whether or not...

Madam Speaker: One by one, please!

Mr A. Duval: they have taken over the lagoon yet or not, and what is being done to control?

Mr Koonjoo: I am sorry to say it, Madam Speaker, that people from my Ministry, have reported that they have not seen any.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay! Hon. Adrien Duval! Next question, hon. Henry! Hon. Henry! Hon. Henry! Next question is yours!

Mr Henry: It was so funny, Madam Speaker!

CITÉ BALANCE - PLAINE MAGNIEN – DRUG SEARCH

(No. B/833) Mr T. Henry (Fourth Member Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to a perquisition carried out at the residence of Mrs A. C. at Cité Balance, in Plaine Magnien, on 15 July 2019, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the outcome thereof.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 15 July 2019, following information received of the presence of dangerous drug, a search was carried out in a residence which formed part of a duplex.

At no point in time, the Police searched or entered the residence of Mrs A.C. who is owner of the other residence.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that on 16 July 2019, Mrs A.C. aged 52, no calling, residing at No. 97, EDC Balance, Plaine Magnien made a declaration at Plaine Magnien Police Station to the effect that on 15 July 2019, Police entered her house and misbehaved towards her husband and her two children.

Being given that the allegations therein were made against Police Officers who were performing their duties, the case has, on 18 July 2019, been forwarded to the Secretary of the Independent Police Complaints Commission for any action he may deemed appropriate at his end.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed by the Independent Police Complaints Commission that on 17 July 2019, Mrs A.C. made a complaint to the Commission regarding a search at her premises carried out by Police Officers on 15 July 2019. The complaint is still under enquiry.

Mr Henry: Merci, Madame la présidente. Et pourtant, le *Rt hon. Minister Mentor* nous dit que la police n'est pas entrée dans la maison et comme coïncidence cela a été sur la radio ici, cette plainte-là et que la police est entrée chez elle et l'accusait de protéger sa sœur qui était la voisine. Donc ils se sont trompés de maison, ils sont rentrés chez elle à 5 heures du matin. Est-ce que le *Rt hon. Minister Mentor* est au courant de cela ?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: This is not correct. Had it been so, I would have been informed about it. But I have been informed of what I have answered.

Mr Henry: Merci Madame la présidente. Ce genre de traumatisme a créé un désordre dans la famille là-bas à Plaine Magnien. Est-ce que l'honorable Ministre Mentor est au courant que ce jour-là, ils ont une fille qui composait la SC ? Avec tout ce qui s'est passé dans sa maison à cette heure-là, elle n'a pas pu aller composer ses examens à cause de la police qui s'est trompée de maison?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, *elle s'est trompée de quoi* - I do not know. But one thing I know that in such cases, because it is not the first one, in many cases in specific places, when Police go to do their job, other people intervene. They even threaten. Some use even force and here it was two sisters; one sister was caught. Therefore, she must be doing all sorts of inventions to help her sister.

Mr Henry: Madame la présidente, c'est triste d'entendre ces réponses là parce que la voisine en question n'est même pas parenté à elle. Ce n'est même pas sa sœur. La police qui a dit que c'était sa sœur. Mais la police s'est trompée de maison. Donc moi je vous dis, au lieu de créer des traumatismes chez des gens correctes qui doivent aller travailler, qui doivent aller composer, la police doit vérifier et on doit voir un système de compensation pour voir qu'est qu'on peut faire...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry! Hon. Henry, ask your question! Do not make statements. Ask your question!

Mr Henry: Je demande au ministre de bien revoir avec la police, de bien vérifier ses informations avant d'intervenir chez des personnes qui ne méritent pas cela. C'est tout ce que je demande. Parce que cette famille-là est traumatisée aujourd'hui l'honorable ministre.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I do not carry out any inquiry.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry, next question!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Shakeel Mohamed! From a sitting position do not make remarks! Okay.

MASA – COPYRIGHT FEES

(No. B/834) **Mr T. Henry (Forth Member Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the *droit des artistes* on the internet, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Society of Arts, information as to the procedure applicable for the collection of fees in respect thereof.

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, there is no Mauritius Society of Arts under my Ministry. But I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA).

Madam Speaker, online copyright infringement is a major problem for many countries. Internet piracy, and by extension non-payment of appropriate copyright fees to right-owners, is a worldwide challenge.

I am informed that, after the setting up of the new Board of the MASA in May 2018, an *ad hoc* sub-Committee was set up in September 2018 to review the 2008 copyright fees receivable from existing users of works and also to include new users.

The MASA has proposed, in the revised copyright fee structure, to address this issue by charging copyright fees to Internet Service Providers. The draft proposed copyright fees was received by my Ministry from MASA at the beginning of June 2019 and has been sent to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) on 12 June 2019 and since then, various meetings have been held between my Ministry, MOFED, the Officer-in-Charge as well as some Board members of the MASA.

The latest was held on 05 September 2019 and a meeting at the level of the MOFED is scheduled shortly to follow up on this issue.

Mr Henry: Merci, Madame la présidente. Donc d'après ce que je comprends du ministre, est-ce qu'en ce moment, il y a un système pour les protéger qui est déjà mis en place en attendant le nouveau rapport ?

Mr Roopun: In fact, this is a new measure which we wish to incorporate in the tariffs which have just been handed over to my Ministry by the MASA.

Mr Henry: Merci, Madame la présidente. Est-ce que la MASA peut avoir l'aide de la Sacem ou d'autres grandes sociétés comme cela pour l'aider à implémenter ce truc là parce

que c'est sûr que c'est un vrai problème mais peut-être avec l'aide des grosses sociétés comme la Sacem, elles peuvent nous aider ?

Mr Roopun: All avenues will be explored, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

MAHEBOURG MUSEUM - RENOVATION

(No.B/835) Mr T. Henry (Forth Member Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether in regard to the Mahebourg Museum, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed renovation thereof.

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ B/1223 on 22 December 2018, wherein I had informed the House that a tender exercise was ongoing.

However, on 04 April 2019, the Board of Mauritius Museums Council annulled the tender exercise as the bids received were not responsive.

Presently, the Project Manager of my Ministry together with technical officers of the MPI and the Director of the Museum are working on a new scope of work. The renovation works will also have to be integrated within Government decision to convert Mahebourg into a '*Village Touristique*'.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

HEARING AIDS – APPLICATIONS – 2014-2018

(No. B/836) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to hearing aids, he will state, for each of the years 2014 to 2018 and since January 2019 to date, the number of applications therefor received, indicating the number thereof distributed.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, in line with the mandate of my Ministry, hearing aids and other assisting devices are provided pursuant to the provisions of the Social Aid Regulations 1984.

Eligible applicants suffering from hearing impairment, as certified by a registered audiologist or speech therapist, are supplied with hearing aids free of charge. The eligibility criterion for the provision of hearing aids is based on the monthly household income of an

applicant. Until this Government came into office, only applicants whose household income did not exceed Rs12,500 per month qualified for hearing aids. In order to provide assistance to a greater number of our citizens, this Government has increased the eligibility threshold from household incomes of Rs12,500 per month to household incomes of up to Rs30,000 per month. This has allowed many more families to be eligible for such assistance.

It has to be highlighted, Madam Speaker, that this Government has increased the budgetary provisions in respect of hearing aid devices from Rs5.5 m. in the last financial year of the previous regime to Rs14.5 m. in financial year 2018/2019, representing an increase of more than 160%. This has certainly enabled my Ministry to increase the procurement of hearing aid devices to many more citizens of our country.

The information regarding the number of applications received and the number of hearing aids issued for years 2014 to 2018 and since January 2019 to date are currently being compiled and will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Minister aware that for a number of years, there have been people applying for these hearing aids and not receiving any because the contract for the supply of these hearing aids was terminated and a new contract was not awarded until very recently?

Mr Sinatambou: No, unfortunately, I believe the hon. Member is mistaken or misinformed. The contracts are allocated every year on a tender basis and what I know however is that, in one specific year, the tender had to be cancelled following objections from one of the tenderers.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: If this is the case, the hon. Minister would not have any problem telling the House who was awarded the contract for the supply of hearing aids and how many of the hearing aids were supplied in 2018, last year?

Mr Sinatambou: I do not have the figure. As I said, it is being compiled but this is official, those tendering processes are publicised and it is readily available.

Mr Uteem: Yes. Several people in my Constituency have complained that for the past 3 years, they have not received hearing aids because there is no hearing aids available in the Ministry.

Mr Sinatambou: That is not correct. I know for sure, I checked today, there are hundreds of hearing aids available at my Ministry. I would respectfully suggest that the hon. Member just give me the names of those constituents of his and I will try and see what the problem is and how it can be solved.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

WOMEN FOOTBALL - TRAINING & COMPETITIONS - EXPENDITURE

(No. B/837) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to Women Football, he will state, for each of the years 2014 to 2018 and since January 2019 to date, the expenditure incurred in relation.

Mr Toussaint: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to reply to both PQ B/837 and PQ B/856.

I am informed by the Mauritius Football Association that from 2014 to 2018, an amount of Rs6,854,031 has been disbursed for the training of women in football and their participation in competitions. From January to June 2019, the sum of Rs2,354,855 has been spend by the Mauritius Football Association for the same purpose.

Madam Speaker, the mandate of my Ministry is the development of sports and athletes. As regards the participation of women in sports, my Ministry is committed to promoting equality.

Women football has not the same success as male football. Therefore, my Ministry has come with policies to encourage more girls and women to practice football. Several *école de foot* have been setup across the island and we have, as at date, 660 girls in these schools. These trainees are offered support and guidance from qualified coaches.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, is the hon. Minister aware that in the COSAFA Women Championship in August of this year, Zambia beat Mauritius - the football club - 15-0. That is not rugby, we are talking about football. So, have this information been brought to the attention of the hon. Minister and what action has been taken in light on this humiliating defeat by our girls?

Mr Toussaint: *Madam Speaker, of course, I am aware of this result. As I have said in my reply, we have started formation à la base et c'est pour cela que j'ai dit dont nous avons*

plusieurs écoles de foot où nous avons fait de sorte à ce que les filles intègrent ces écoles de foot. Bien sûr, nous n'aurons pas les résultats aujourd'hui, ni demain, ni l'année prochaine. En plus, nous avons aussi l'académie de football de Liverpool qui a été lancée récemment et nous avons 80 filles qui ont participé aux *trials* qui ont été faits à travers l'île. Moi, en tout cas, je suis confiant que dans quelques années, on aura de très bons résultats avec la formation que nous sommes en train d'apporter.

Mr Uteem: Has the hon. Minister held discussions with the Mauritius Football Association to see whether the problem is one of coaching and whether more resources are needed from the Government to promote women football in Mauritius?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, de toutes les façons, tout ce que le Ministère fait c'est en étroite collaboration avec toutes les fédérations. Donc, les techniciens se sont assis ensemble pour voir quels sont les différents problèmes et comment on peut aider. Mais je peux rassurer l'honorable Membre et toute la population en général qu'au niveau de mon ministère, nous allons mettre tous les moyens possibles à la disposition du football féminin et je l'ai dit. Donc, je crois fermement que les écoles de foot et l'académie de football de Liverpool va nous donner des résultats dans quelques années.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if the women's football club receives a grant, just like the gents' club and if yes, what is the sum allocated?

Mr Toussaint: I do not have the information with me. I will find out and circulate it.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister just mentioned he is aware of the defeat 15-0 against Zambia and this has been the trend since years. So, may the hon. Minister give the confirmation in this House that the women's football club will be given full support and what kind of support have they been given when they came back from this match?

Mr Toussaint: Madame la présidente, le football féminin peine à monter et c'est aussi un fait dans de nombreux pays. A Maurice, on vient de démarrer un peu le football féminin de façon structurée. *There is no trend* parce que le football féminin vient de démarrer de façon structurée. Il y avait par-ci, par là des filles qui jouaient au football mais structurer le

football, donner des entraînements de façon professionnelle, c'est récent. C'est récent et je le redis, on n'a pas besoin d'être une femme pour défendre la cause de la femme. Moi je suis convaincu que le football féminin portera - nous allons très bientôt voir - les fruits du travail que nous avons démarré maintenant.

Madam Speaker: You have got another question on this?

Ms Sewocksingh: A last one.

Madam Speaker: Last question, yes.

Ms Sewocksingh: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister just said that it is not the trend, but let me say that since 2016, this team played against Botswana and they lost 7-0, 4-0 and this has been going on since that time, it is not a question of women fighting for women...

Madam Speaker: So, what is your question?

Ms Sewocksingh: So, I am asking the hon. Minister that since 2017, they have reactivated activities at the François Blaquart Technical Centre to coach football players. Will that include also the ladies who are playing this match?

Mr Toussaint: Le Centre de formation de François Blaquart, Madame la présidente, prend les jeunes qui viennent des écoles de foot. Donc, c'est tout un procédé pour arriver jusqu'au Centre technique national de Blaquart. Et comme je l'ai dit, structurer le football féminin, les filles, cela vient de démarrer et il faut, que dans quelques années, que les filles fassent leur preuve et qu'éventuellement elles puissent monter au niveau du centre de formation. Encore une fois, je le redis, nous sommes convaincu, notre gouvernement est convaincu qu'avec les mesures que nous sommes en train de prendre pour le sport en général et là, actuellement, pour le football, donc, dans quelque années nous aurons de très bons résultats.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhuboo!

MARE CHICOSE LANDFILL – OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

(No. B/838) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the Mare Chicose Landfill Station, he will state if an inquiry has been initiated at the level of his Ministry in relation to allegations of fraud and malpractices thereat in respect of fake transport fees.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, there have been no allegations of fraud and malpractices as such at the Mare Chicose Landfill in respect of fake transport fees. What happened is that on 20 February 2019, officers of my Ministry uncovered suspected fraudulent practices by one subcontractor at the Mare Chicose Landfill regarding quantities of leachates being carted away from the landfill for discharge at the Roche Bois Pumping Station of the Wastewater Management Authority. On the very next day, that is, 21 February 2019, my Ministry decided to put on hold all payments, amounting to a total of around Rs44 m. inclusive of VAT, which were due to the contractor with regard to the operation and maintenance of the Mare Chicose Landfill.

My Ministry initiated a preliminary analysis of records as well as a surveillance exercise at the weighbridge of the Mare Chicose Landfill. My Ministry also requested the consultant, the joint venture COWI A/S and Luxconsult (Mauritius) Ltd, which is responsible for the supervision of operations and maintenance at the Mare Chicose Landfill, to ensure strict control with regard to the number of trips effected by leachate carriers. In order to find out whether there were other cases of fraudulent practices with regard to leachate being carted away from the landfill for discharge at the Roche Bois pumping station of the Wastewater Management Authority, instructions were given at my Ministry on 11 March 2019, that a due diligence exercise be effected with regard to seven other subcontractors appointed by the main contractor to cart away leachates. The records on the Libra System at the weighbridge for all seven subcontractors were scrutinised, but no case of fraudulent practice was identified for these seven subcontractors. Other information and evidence regarding the suspected fraudulent practices were submitted by an internal investigation team of my Ministry on 27 March 2019. Advice from the State Law Office was sought on 01 April 2019 and the matter was referred to the Police on 05 April 2019. The Independent Commission against Corruption has also started an investigation.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are talking of a massive fraud, up to Rs80,000 per day, and this has been going on for years according to the report on suspected fraudulent practices by your officers. Can we know from the hon. Minister what is the magnitude of the fraud? Can we know what is the amount involved?

Mr Sinatambou: First of all, the figure of Rs80,000 per day appears to be exaggerated. Furthermore, the exercise which has been done by some of the officers is to extrapolate.

What was done is that there was a surveillance exercise for a period of seven days. Based on the surveillance exercise of seven days, they then decided to extrapolate over a five-year period, just inferring that because it happened during seven days, therefore it had been going on every seven days over a five-year period, which is logical but not necessarily true, which is why when a due diligence exercise was done for seven other subcontractors, it was found that there was no fraudulent exercise as such. So, I think it is far too early to state that there has been a massive fraud, which is why due diligence has been done, and the matter has been referred both to the Police and to ICAC.

Mr Jhuboo: Could the hon. Minister table this document? Because my information, and I quote the report, mention is made that: “It is estimated that several dozens of millions of rupees is likely to be involved...”

Madam Speaker: From which report are you quoting hon. Jhuboo?

Mr Jhuboo: The report, I am tabling, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Can I know from which report you are quoting? Can you say from which report you have been quoting?

Mr Jhuboo: Yes. The report on Suspected Fraudulent Practices at Mare Chicose Landfill.

Madam Speaker: Is that a report from the Ministry?

Mr Jhuboo: Yes, official and signed. So, Madam Speaker, this fraudulent business has been going on for five years undetected, and this is one small element of the waste management business because we are referring to toxic waters. So, my question to the hon. Minister is: I would like to know whether an inquiry to find out if there are other areas where fraudulent activities could have occurred in his Ministry.

Mr Sinatambou: First of all, I would like to point out that it is my Ministry which uncovered the suspected fraudulent practices. So, far from the hon. Member to come and give me lessons now nor from the person sitting by his side. Secondly...

(Interruptions)

Covered by whom? Covered by whom? By me?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Sinatambou: You know, I don't represent...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, I have several times asked you not to make comments from a sitting position. This is most irregular. Please! Yes!

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, I would also request that he withdraws what he said. He cannot say that I covered up anything.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, please!

Mr Mohamed: I am not withdrawing anything.

Madam Speaker: Please, sit down! I heard you saying. In fact, I heard you saying 'cover-up'. So, did you mean to say that the Minister has been covering up this, what you call 'massive fraud'?

Mr Mohamed: I said the Ministry is covering it up and I am not withdrawing it.

Madam Speaker: Did you say that the Ministry is covering it and you can substantiate that the Ministry is covering it?

Mr Mohamed: Of course, I can!

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, you will substantiate it when we come to light with it.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, when he used the word 'cover-up', I looked at him straight in the eyes, I said: 'By whom?' and he said: 'You'. So, I ask that he withdraws it. If he said 'You', I demand that he withdraws it.

Madam Speaker: I don't think we will lose precious time to go on this. I will come back on this after I have checked what has happened. Please proceed!

Mr Sinatambou: Incidentally, all those people who are making the disruptive provocations; well, my father did not act for traffickers in arms dealing. Let him know that.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Minister, I am sorry. I am really sorry that whatever you have said has nothing to do with the reply. This has nothing to do with your reply. Because I believe that this is acrimonious exchanges between Members, and you can do this outside, not here. This has nothing to do and I think hon. Minister that you should withdraw what you

said so that we clear with this. Please withdraw what you have just said. This has nothing to do with the question.

Mr Sinatambou: Every single aspect relating to this case has been brought before the House ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I don't want to hear any explanation. This is precious Question Time. Just withdraw what you have said. You will settle the matter. I will check whatever has been said by the hon. Member also and I will come back with a ruling. But, at this point in time, I will request you to withdraw what you have just said.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam, what am I supposed to withdraw, please? I don't know.

Madam Speaker: No! Look! Hon. Minister, don't argue with me! Don't argue with me! I have asked you to withdraw what you have just said. This is my ruling. So, I think you should.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister, I am addressing myself to you and I don't think that it is ethical, when I am addressing myself to you, that you address yourself to hon. Members. I have asked you to withdraw what you have just said, and I think you should withdraw what you have just said.

Mr Sinatambou: May I say, Madam, I am prepared to withdraw, but what I have said was part of a PNQ and a reply.

Madam Speaker: Unreservedly, withdraw what you have just said!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister, I am not going to argue with you. This is the last time I am giving my ruling on this matter. I have asked you to withdraw, so you withdraw it unreservedly.

Mr Sinatambou: I withdraw, Madam, as a matter of respect for you.

Madam Speaker: Okay, then proceed with your reply now.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam, all the necessary documents which relate to that case, which have been uncovered by my Ministry, have been remitted to the Police authorities. However, I don't know which document the gentleman from the other side is referring to. Before I can give a reply about it, I would need to consult it.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Yes, a last question, hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, could the hon. Minister enlighten the House. In spite of an official report, a damning report blaming the Landfill Contractor, can the hon. Minister confirm that the same Contractor has been granted contract on the operation and maintenance of transfer stations in La Chaumière, La Brasserie and, most probably, in La Laura? He, himself, auto-certifies his invoice and these payments...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo, are you providing information or are you asking for information? The whole object of Question Time is to fetch information from the Minister itself.

Mr Jhuboo: Does the hon. Minister think that this is in order?

Mr Sinatambou: I have no idea who granted tender at X, Y or Z. All I know, Madam Speaker, is that all those grant of contracts are the result of open bidding through public tenders which are advertised, and to which everyone can subscribe.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhuboo!

MORIS NOU ZOLI PEI CAMPAIGN

(No. B/839) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the Mega National Cleaning and Embellishment Campaign: *Moris Nou Zoli Pei*, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to maintain and sustain same.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Madam Speaker, this Government is fully committed to the protection of the environment, as such we have prioritised concrete measures....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:... for the cleaning and embellishment of the country. In line with this vision, the hon. Prime Minister launched the *Moris Nou Zoli Pei* Campaign in 2017 with the collaboration of Government institutions, the private sector and citizens. It is

estimated that around Rs700 m. will be spent on this project over three financial years under the National Environment Fund 2018/2019, 2019/2020, 2020/2021.

Furthermore, as an effort to ensure the continuity of the cleaning campaign, several measures were also announced in the Budget Speech 2019/2020. As part of these measures, a Centralised Cleaning Coordination Committee has been set up under the aegis of my Ministry to coordinate all cleaning activities in the different regions across the island.

The Committee has already organised a Mega National Cleaning and Embellishment Campaign from 12 to 14 July 2019 with the support and collaboration of Government institutions, private sector, civil society and the population. This Campaign was carried out across the island and each and every one was encouraged to join the Government in this initiative to clean and embellish our island.

The Mega Campaign was followed by focussed cleaning actions in priority areas. For each of these areas, there is a single agency responsible and accountable for proper cleaning. Moreover, the Clean-up the World 2019, which will be celebrated in the third week of September, will be a continuum of the Mega Clean-up Campaign.

The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development, in collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Local Authorities, civil society, and locally based international organisations is organising a series of activities.

It should be noted that the Local Authorities have the responsibility for daily cleaning of the country. Efforts have, therefore, been made to further empower them through the purchase of additional machinery and equipment, such as timber lorries, compacter lorries, pack hold lorries, dumpers and lorries mounted with cranes to ensure regular cleaning and maintenance of public roads, city centres, drains, canals and bridges.

The delivery of the machinery to the Local Authorities is expected as from November this year.

Mr Jhuboo: Je remercie la vice-première ministre pour sa réponse, qui était axée principalement sur le nettoyage et l'embellissement. Je voudrais savoir, moi, de la vice-première ministre, qu'est-ce qui est fait au niveau de son ministère et au niveau de ses collègues pour éduquer, pour sensibiliser et pour réprimander ? Qu'est-ce qui est fait concrètement ?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: First of all, Madam, I must say that ongoing cleaning and embellishment carried out at the level of all Local Authorities is regularly discussed at the level of my Ministry when we are having management meetings. This is a priority. We are very much committed to the protection of our environment. It should be noted also that major cleaning campaigns are carried out throughout the country for each major festival. This is a new measure. I must say that at the level of my Ministry we are having sensitisation campaigns in social and community centres to sensitise people about keeping the country clean.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister has made mention of the Centralised Cleaning Campaign Committee that meets at the level of her Ministry. How many times has this Committee met ever since the launch of the Campaign, and could she table the Minutes of Proceedings of all those meetings, provided she is sure that there has been a meeting in the recent past?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, Madam. Of course, there have been meetings at the level of my Ministry, because my Permanent Secretary is chairing the said meeting. I don't have the exact figure, I can let the hon. Member know on the next occasion, but I must say that the Committee is meeting on a regular basis.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether we can be provided with a figure with regard to that Campaign throughout the island? How much did it cost, not only to Local Authorities, but also to Government, because not a single day that we go to the Press we see illegal dumping? These are not fake news, as you can see with photographs, illegal dumping. So, what action does the hon. Vice-Prime Minister intend to take with the Local Authorities of the Central Ministry with regard to follow-up, and also of these cases of illegal dumping, which are reported nearly everyday in the Press?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, Madam Speaker, I don't have the exact figure of how much has been spent, but I can say that for the Mega National Cleaning and Embellishment Campaign, Rs10 m. were spent for the said campaign. We have spent Rs178,861,770 for the purchase of additional equipment. I must say that when we talk about cleaning and embellishment, it has a lot to do with a change in mindset also. So, we are

doing a lot of sensitisation campaigns across the country to sensitise the people, but it is not an easy task, Madam.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Lepoigneur!

INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS GAMES 2019 - ATHLETES - RELEASE

(No. B/840) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the deduction of salaries of some athletes by their respective employers in respect of leave taken to attend training locally and overseas to participate in the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2019, he will state if consideration will be given for the payment of compensation in respect thereof to the said athletes.

Mr Toussaint: Madam Speaker, according to Section 3(5) of the Sports Act 2016, any athlete in employment who has been selected to form part of the national team of a sport shall be granted release from his work without any deduction in salary or allowance or leave entitlement during the period of training for, and participation in, a competition.

My Ministry has always backed the application for leave of athletes to their employers with recommendation letters. A memorandum was transmitted to all Ministries for the release of public officers for the training in the context of the Indian Ocean Islands Games. For the private sector, recommendation letters were issued upon request of the National Sports Federations for the release of their athletes from their employment without any penalties. All employers should strictly abide to Section 3 Part 5 of the Sports Act 2016 when processing the application for leaves of athletes

I would advise any athlete whose employer has not complied with the Sports Act to register an official complaint at the Ombudsperson for Sports and the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training for redress.

Madam Speaker, as at date, my Ministry has received a complaint from the Mauritius Basketball Federation regarding the deduction of salary of its players. Same has been processed and the players have been compensated with an amount of Rs5,000 each. Also a judoka who has been penalised for attending training has been refunded an amount of Rs12,000. The Mauritius Volleyball Association has also transmitted a request for refund to my Ministry for two of its players and this is under process.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: C'est vrai que le *Sports Act* stipule que les employeurs n'ont pas le droit de déduire les salaires des athlètes qui participent aux événements internationaux. C'est aussi mentionné dans la Section 50 du *General Workers Bill*. Mais les athlètes qui participent...

Madam Speaker: What is your question?

Mr Lepoigneur: Je viens, je ne vais pas être long.

Madam Speaker: Put your question first!

Mr Lepoigneur: Est-ce que le ministre est au courant que ces athlètes qui forment partie de la sélection, depuis des années il y a des firmes qui ne remboursent pas les déductions des salaires ? Est-ce qu'il est au courant que ces athlètes sont pratiquement à temps partiel avec le gouvernement étant donné qu'ils investissent leur temps dans la sélection ? N'est-il pas plus plausible que ce soit le ministère qui paye ces manquements?

Mr Toussaint : Madame la présidente, comme je viens de répondre, dans le cadre des Jeux des Iles, il y a eu des demandes de la part de certains athlètes du Basketball, du judo et là on a eu une demande de la fédération de Volleyball. Et nous sommes en train d'essayer de compenser les pertes de revenus. Mais il est aussi important que les athlètes, eux-mêmes d'abord, fassent des plaintes officielles que ce soit comme j'ai dit au *Ombudsperson* ou bien au ministère du Travail pour des actions un peu plus poussées. Mais de toutes les façons toutes les demandes qui viennent vers le ministère de la part des fédérations sont judicieusement examinées et autant que possible nous essayons d'aider nos athlètes.

Mr Lepoigneur: Mais il y a certains athlètes qui ont fait des plaintes, qui ont envoyé des lettres au ministère et aussi à la fédération concernée. Je ne vais pas dévoiler les noms par respect aux employeurs, mais ils n'ont toujours pas eu de réponses par rapport à cela.

Mr Toussaint: C'est un peu vague. Donc, je demanderais à l'honorable Membre de me faire avoir les noms et je vais vérifier.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Quirin !

Mr Quirin : Merci, Madame la présidente. L'honorable ministre dans sa réponse a informé la Chambre que par rapport au Basketball, son ministère a compensé les joueurs dont les salaires avaient été déduits par leur employeur mais ils nous assurent aussi que les

entreprises, publiques et privées, doivent respecter la Section 3 du *Sports Act* à l'effet que si les joueurs ont besoin de congé, etc. pour participer à des compétitions, les employeurs doivent libérer ces joueurs, mais c'est bien que le ministère compense les....

Madam Speaker: Don't make a statement!

Mr Quirin : Voilà! C'est bien que le ministère compense les joueurs, mais comment se fait-il qu'il n'y ait pas eu d'enquête venant du ministère pour savoir quelles sont les entreprises en question qui ont pénalisé ces joueurs de Basket, que le ministère accepte de compenser les joueurs est une bonne chose, oui, mais dans le fond, rien n'est fait pour savoir d'où vient le problème, qui sont les fautifs, qui sont ces entreprises?

Madam Speaker: That is your question. We have understood, yes.

Mr Toussaint : Madame la présidente, comme je viens de le dire, il faut que l'athlète fasse une plainte officielle au ministère du Travail qui a aussi la responsabilité, qui a tout l'arsenal nécessaire pour faire les enquêtes plus approfondies ou sinon aussi l'athlète peut faire une plainte au niveau de l'*Ombudsperson*. A ce jour, il n'y a pas eu de plainte officielle. Il y a eu des demandes de la part des fédérations pour compenser les athlètes dans le cadre des Jeux des Iles mais à ce jour il n'y a pas eu de plainte officielle que ce soit au niveau de l'*Ombudsperson* ou au niveau du ministère du Travail.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/872 and B/873 have been withdrawn. Next question, hon. Uteem!

LAW REFORM COMMISSION - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/841) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Inter-Ministerial Committee set up to look into the recommendations made by the Law Reform Commission in its Opinion Paper "Mechanism for settlement of Land Disputes, including dispossession of land" as highlighted in the Report of the Truth and Justice Commission, she will state the work progress thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Madam Speaker, the Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up under my chairpersonship in February 2019 through a Cabinet decision with the mandate to look into

the recommendations made by the Law Reform Commission in its Opinion Paper “Mechanism for settlement of Land Disputes, including dispossession of land” as highlighted in the report of the Truth and Justice Commission. The Committee has met on six occasions. In June 2019, the Inter-Ministerial Committee made the following recommendations for –

- (a) the setting-up of a Land Division of the Supreme Court;
- (b) the setting-up of a Land Research and Monitoring Unit to take over and complete the work of the Mandary Commission in respect of the 340 cases as highlighted before the Truth and Justice Commission;
- (c) the creation of a special fund of not less than 50 m. to meet the expenses related to the work and functions of the Land Research and Monitoring Unit.

As the House will recall, it was announced in the Budget Speech 2019/2020 by the hon. Prime Minister that new legislations will be introduced to set up a Land Division of the Supreme Court.

Moreover, the Land Research and Monitoring Unit also announced in the Budget Speech 2019/2020, has already been set up at the Ministry of Housing and Lands since July 2019. Moreover, an amount of 50 m. has been provided in the 2019/2020 Estimates of the Ministry of Housing and Lands to meet expenses in connection with the land Research and Monitoring Unit. The Unit is operating on a full time basis and cases have started to be reexamined. Searches and verification are ongoing.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned that the Inter-Ministerial Committee submitted its recommendations in June of this year. So, three months later, can we know if the Government intends to bring the legislation to set up this Land Division of the Supreme Court before the end of its mandate?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Madam Speaker, I must say we took a commitment, we view it very seriously and as I have just mentioned, of course, there will be the setting up of the Land Division of the Supreme Court but to say about the completion of the setting up of the Land Division of the Supreme Court, now at the time being, I am not in a position to tell you the timeframe, but, as I have said, needful is being done at the level of the Attorney General’s Office.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, there was a hunger strike. The Government took a commitment to set up this Court. The Inter-Ministerial Committee has recommended the setting up of this Court. So, my question is very simple. There are only a few months left

before Parliament stand dissolved. So, my question is between now and December, does the Government intend to bring this legislation before Parliament?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, I have said we are working on it. So, it will come. You need to have patience. Madam, I can't do miracles. You yourself you are saying that decision has been taken in June 2019.

Madam Speaker: Address yourself to the Chair!

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: So, I have said that this is a matter of priority. We are taking it very seriously. Works have started. We have already set up the Land Research and Monitoring Unit. The fund is already there. So works have started. I reassure the hon. Member that needful is being done.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Vice Prime Minister is an attorney. She knows that there are many legal hurdles in front of victims who claim to have been fraudulently dispossessed of their land. So, may I know if the Interministerial Committee had also looked into the possibility of amending legislation such as the Civil Code and even perhaps the Constitution to enable victims to get back their land especially after the expiry of the prescription delay.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Madam Speaker, I must say that, at the level of the Land Research and Monitoring Committee, we have presently a Senior Survey Technician and also Management Support Officers. There is a Principal Surveyor who is overseeing the whole work, but I am aware that the services of an Attorney and three Surveyors will be retained by the said Unit and they will have to look into the whole issue.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: May I ask one question to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister. Does not the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, who was chairing this Committee, agree that, in fact, in all these issues, it is Government which is responsible for having introduced a confusion in the minds of all the stakeholders concerning the victims of the *depossession des terres*, in view of the fact that what was announced in the Budget was that new legislation will be introduced to set up a separate land division of the Supreme Court? Whereas by virtue of section 34 of the Courts Act, we are aware that the law says that the Supreme Court may sit publicly in more than one division at the same time for the dispatch of civil business. Is there any necessity to introduce legislation to set up a land division or as the law says clearly in the Courts Act, the Supreme Court, itself, may decide to sit as a separate land division or commercial division or family division as it has been the case recently without introducing any legislation?

Madam Speaker: I have understood, hon. Ganoo. Yes!

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Madam Speaker, as I have said, the attorney-general office is looking at the setting up of the land division. So, let his office work and then we will know what will be the procedure for the setting up of the Land Division of the Supreme Court.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano !

CÔTE D'OR - MULTI-SPORTS COMPLEX PROJECT

(No. B/842) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Multi-Sports Complex Project at Côte d'Or, in St Pierre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Multi-Sports Infrastructure Ltd., information as to where matters stand regarding completion thereof, including the football playground and other amenities.

(Withdrawn)

BUILDING AND LAND USE PERMIT – APPLICATIONS

(No. B/843) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Building and Land Use Permit, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of applications received and number of complaints received concerning the prescribed procedures, indicating the –

- (a) cost of application, and
- (b) recurrent cost incurred, since the coming into operation of the new legislation in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

MTPA – CHINESE TOURISTS - ARRIVALS

(No. B/844) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Chinese tourists, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to the outcome of the measures taken recently to increase the number of arrivals thereof in Mauritius.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) that China ranks among our top ten markets. A declining trend has been observed since year 2016 due to airlift constraints and lack of adequate air connectivity.

However, the China outbound market has been one of the fastest growing and represents a huge potential for Mauritius. This is why the China market remains key to our market diversification strategy.

In this connection, a high level workshop was held in April 2019 with the participation of all the major tourism stakeholders in the China market, including representatives of their respective China office, so as to address structural concerns which had been identified.

Madam Speaker, as the House is already aware, Government has taken bold measures by making an additional provision of Rs160m. in Financial Year 2019/20 to re-dynamise the Shanghai and Kenya routes, out of which, Rs125m. has been allocated for the Shanghai route.

In this regard, I chaired a meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, External Communications Division of the Prime Minister's Office, the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority as well as Air Mauritius and the Association des Hôteliers et Restaurateurs île Maurice (AHRIM) with a view to securing the commitment of all stakeholders to the strategy to be adopted. A high-level Task Force was set up under the chair of Mr Arnaud Martin, Member of the MTPA Board and also Senior Adviser, Communications and Marketing at Air Mauritius, and comprising all stakeholders to come up with recommendations accordingly.

The Task Force submitted its report on 15 of August 2019.

All the stakeholders, Madam Speaker, are committed to support the market and there is consensus on the growth objectives aiming at 75,000 Chinese tourists by the end of 2020 and 90,000 by 2021 with the potential, by then, to generate Rs4.9 Bn of tourism earnings.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been entered into among parties - Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Ministry of Tourism, Air Mauritius Limited, AHRIM and Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, with regard to the agreed milestones, such as -

- ☐ schedule integrity and flight frequency - Air Mauritius has committed to operate a minimum of two flights a week to Shanghai with the possibility of increasing the frequencies subject to market demand;

- ☐ reinforced marketing structure and product marketing strategy, including the appointment of a lifestyle PR by the MTPA, and
- ☐ adequate inventory and competitive room rate structure as well as product enhancement by hoteliers.

On the basis of the MoU, the financial support from the new budgetary provision allocated to the Shanghai route will be disbursed. My Ministry will closely monitor the agreed milestones to ensure that the growth objectives are met.

Madam Speaker, I, however, wish to point out that the slowdown of the Chinese economy mainly as a consequence of the trade war between US and China, and the weakness of its currency are impacting on the decision of Chinese travellers. Even other popular destinations in South East Asia are feeling the drop in the number of Chinese holidaymakers.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramano !

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, sur la question d'*air connectivity*, est-ce que je peux savoir de l'honorable ministre si la compagnie nationale envisage d'augmenter le nombre de désertes à la lumière des recommandations du comité présidé par monsieur Arnaud Martin ?

Mr Gayan : Madam Speaker, there used to be five flights by Air Mauritius to China a week. Now, we are back to two. Air Mauritius has pointed out that, without financial support, it will not be able to increase the number of flights. This is why we have this budget allocation to support Air Mauritius, at least, initially so that it builds the traffic again.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano!

HUMAN TISSUE (REMOVAL, PRESERVATION AND TRANSPLANT) ACT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/845) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Act, he will state the measures taken for the implementation of the provisions contained therein as at to date.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the first Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Act was enacted on 15 July 2006 to exercise control on donation and removal of tissue on medical ground.

However, the said Act was not proclaimed except for section 16 which made provision for the setting up of the Organ and Tissue Transplant Board. This was done to enable the Board amongst others, to come up with proposals for regulations for the removal, preservation and transplant of the human tissues for live donors locally. Transplant was restricted to relatives only.

Madam Speaker, over the years, with rapid development in the field of medicine, it has been felt necessary to update the legislations and thus, the Act 2006 was repealed and the new Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Act was passed in June 2018 to address the problem of potential donors and to allow for non-relatives or any other person so willing to donate their tissue either when they are alive or after death.

Madam Speaker, I wish to further inform the House that only Parts I and II, that is, sections 2 to 7 of the Act 2018 have been proclaimed on 22 January this year to enable the setting up of the Tissue Donation, Removal and Transplant Board. The Board has already been set up at the level of my Ministry and a Registrar has been appointed.

Madam Speaker, in order to enable my Ministry to proclaim other sections of the Act, the Board is working on all the administrative set-up and also on various Regulations which would be put in place to allow for the implementation of the other provisions of the Act.

In view of the complexity of the Regulations, my Ministry has sought the assistance of Dr. Benedict Lyle Phillips and Professor Nizam Fateh-Mamode, Transplant Surgeons at the Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust in UK in order to work out on the guidelines and the Regulations and all other administrative set-up. The experts are expected to be in Mauritius in November this year.

Madam Speaker: Next question, Mr Abbas Mamode!

MEDICAL & HEALTH OFFICERS/SENIOR MEDICAL & HEALTH OFFICERS – SPECIALISATION COURSES

(No. B/846) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers, he will give the list of those having been granted leave without pay to follow specialisation courses since May 2018 to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) field of specialisation, and

(b) University attended.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the hon. Member that the information requested for is being compiled and will be circulated in due course.

Mr Abbas Mamode: However, can the hon. Minister inform the House the number of Doctors who have applied concerning neonatologist since we have only one in service right now?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I would not be able to give the answer exactly how many have applied because it has not been compiled yet. So, when we compile it, we will circulate it.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Lepoigneur!

GEORGE V STADIUM - UPGRADING

(No. B/847) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the George V Stadium, he will state if he is now in presence of the Report of the Association for the Upgrading of the Indian Ocean Islands Games Infrastructure in relation to the water accumulation problem which occurred thereat during the holding of the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2019 and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the tabling of copy thereof.

Mr Toussaint: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the AUGI that an Interim Report has been submitted on 06 August, 2019. While further investigations are warranted, the Interim Report points out heavy rainfall before and during the week of the games as the main cause for the poor state of the football pitch.

This state of affairs was further aggravated by the fact that stadium is located on marshy land and that the topography of the site is low lying relative to the surrounding. Hence, the continuous rainfall meant that the water table which was located at only 0.8 millimetre below the lowest point was quick to rise.

Since this is only an interim report, it would not be appropriate to table same.

Mr Lepoigneur: There was a PQ B/763 on 06 August, 2018, where the hon. Minister announced that there is an enquiry being done on that issue nearly more than one month, how is it that the report is not yet ready for small problem like that?

Mr Toussaint: Madam Speaker, like I said, the Interim Report points out the heavy rainfall and we have asked AUGI to go further in their investigations so that they can either confirm that this is the main problem or there has been another problem.

Madam Speaker: Do you have a question, hon. Lepoigneur?

Mr Lepoigneur: Before the renovation of George V Stadium, we never had this kind of problem. It is due to the renovation that this issue arose. So, there must be a problem during the renovation.

Mr Toussaint: Absolutely and totally wrong, Madam Speaker. I have three dates here where matches have been postponed at new George V Stadium.

(Interruptions)

Yes! In 1989, Fire Brigade against St Louis, Seychelles was postponed because of again, heavy rainfall in Curepipe. In April 1993, Mauritius against Zambia, African Cup of Nations, again postponed because of very heavy rainfall in my home town, Curepipe. Mauritius against South Africa, COSAFA Cup, in January 2004, match postponed just before kickoff, again due to very heavy rainfall. This happened in the past and *malheureusement on ne peut rien faire si nous avons eu une pluviométrie, Madame la présidente, du 16 au 28 juillet, c'est-à-dire pendant les jeux dans la région de Mare aux Vacoas qui est juste à côté de la ville de Curepipe. Nous avons eu 411 millimètres de pluies. C'est exceptionnel en hiver, on dirait que ce sont des pluies d'été. Donc, dans la région de Grand Bassin, pour la même période, nous avons eu 480 millimètres de pluies.*

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, the problem dates back 30 years. The question is why was only Rs2 m. invested in the pitch and the draining system where it was only flushed and not upgraded when during these 30 years we know that when there is rainfall we cannot play on that pitch and we have decided to hold all the competition of the *Jeux des Iles* in George V. I mean obviously, logic would say to invest in the drainage system.

Mr Toussaint: Pour commencer, Madame la présidente, ce n'est pas tous les matchs de foot qui ont été joués au Stade George V. Cela se voit que l'honorable membre ne comprend rien au sport et puisque nous avons eu des matchs de football ...

Madam Speaker: Order !

Mr Toussaint: Nous avons eu des matchs de foot qui ont été joués au Stade Auguste Voltaire. Les matchs de Maurice et les demi-finales ont été joués au State George V. C'est

un problème, oui, et maintenant avec le problème climatique où en hiver nous commençons à avoir des grosses pluies comme en été, je peux assurer l'honorable membre et c'est pour cela que j'ai demandé à AUGI de poursuivre leur investigation et de nous proposer un plan pour revoir toute cette affaire parce que c'est vrai cela va être évident que plus tard on aura encore plus de pluies et qu'éventuellement on ne pourra pas utiliser le stade.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Lepoigneur!

SERGE ALFRED SWIMMING POOL

(No. B/848) Mr G. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Serge Alfred Swimming Pool, he will state if Lines 7 and 8 thereof have been attended, following the problems which occurred thereat in the course of the holding of the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2019.

Mr Toussaint: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that all swimming competitions during the Indian Ocean Island Games took place at the Aquatic Centre at Côte d'Or. Therefore, the question of alleged problem which occurred at Serge Alfred Swimming Pool during the games does not arise.

Mr Lepoigneur: Madame la présidente, au fait, il y a un problème à la piscine Serge Alfred. L'erreur vient d'ici, concernant le libellé. Ce n'est pas grave. Ma question est qu'actuellement ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: When you are on your feet and asking a question, whatever you say is recorded. So, please ask your question!

Mr Lepoigneur: Effectivement, il y a un problème à la piscine en ce moment-ci. Les lignes 7 et 8 ne peuvent pas être utilisées par rapport à un manquement au niveau de la rénovation. Est-ce que le ministre est au courant de ça ?

Mr Toussaint: Malheureusement, Madame la présidente, puisque la question a été posée par rapport aux jeux des îles, donc, je n'ai pas les informations nécessaires, mais je vais faire une petite enquête pour voir.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/860 and PQ B/862 have been withdrawn. Next question, hon. Baboo!

**POLICE OFFICERS – EXAMINATIONS & MARKING CENTRES -
ALLOWANCES**

(No. B/849) Mr S. Baboo (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Police Officers whose services were retained in the course of the holding of the Primary School Achievement Certificate, the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate Examinations 2018, respectively, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if allowances payable in respect thereof have been remitted thereto and, if not, why not.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the MES that following representations made by the union of Police Officers for the payment of an allowance to Police officers posted at MES examinations and marking centres for PSAC Assessment, SC and HSC examinations for the year 2018, the MES has initiated actions for the payment of the allowances.

Mr Baboo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House why the provision for payment of allowances was not made in the Budget of that year?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, for years Police Officers have been offering this service without any request for payment. The request for payment came last year and obviously the MES had to consult the Ministry of Defence and also the Ministry of Finance because it involves public funds.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Baboo!

PESTICIDES - OVERUSE

(No. B/850) Mr S. Baboo (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to pesticides, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the relevant authorities, information as to if cases of overuse thereof in the cultivation of vegetables have been detected over the past six months and, if so, indicate the measures taken in relation thereto and to avert the recurrence thereof.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am informed that from January to August, 2019, 477 samples have been collected at farm gate level, from markets, auction and supermarkets for pesticide residue analysis.

Out of these four samples have been found to contain pesticides above the permissible level as follows –

- (a) one sample of bean, collected in June 2019 from the Auction Market at Vacoas;
- (b) one sample of Chinese cabbage collected in July 2019 from a farm in Triolet, and
- (c) one sample of cauliflower and spring onion collected in July 2019 from the Flacq Auction Market.

As for the provisions of the Use of Pesticides Act 2018, the four growers concerned have been retraced and have been issued with applicable Improvement Notices.

I am informed that the extension officers of the FAREI are ensuring close follow-up on these cases. The planters are being initiated to good agricultural practices and have been trained on how to apply pesticides so as to be able to respect the recommended dosage, to follow the frequency of application and pre-harvest intervals.

Subsequent tests have been carried out in the crops they are growing and these have revealed that there is no abuse of pesticides.

In addition, the sensitisation campaign initiated by my Ministry on the judicious use of pesticides is ongoing. Most of the planters registered with my Ministry have already been sensitised and trained on proper handling and use of pesticides.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House if vegetables are randomly collected from the market for testing the level of pesticides?

Mr Seeruttun: Yes, Madam Speaker, they are, in fact, collected at random level, and as I said in my reply, from farm gate, supermarkets and auction markets, as well.

Mr Baboo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether any alternative measures are proposed to the vegetable growers to subsidise the prices to discourage the use of pesticides in Mauritius?

Mr Seeruttun: Well, as you are aware, Madam Speaker, we have since 2015 been promoting for farmers to shift from traditional agricultural practices, conventional ways of doing agriculture to organic and bio farming. We have, in fact, put in place a scheme which is a bio farming promotional scheme, which gives a series of incentives for farmers to shift in adopting those new agricultural practices.

Mr Baboo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether any study has been carried out to find out any direct relationship with the use of pesticides and the increase of different types of cancer?

Mr Seeruttun: I know that at the level of the Ministry of Health, there have been certain studies carried out and also I know at the level of the FAO, I think, there have been some studies carried out, although they find that there has not been conclusive report, whereby they can associate the pesticides with the cancer related diseases. But, as a responsible Government, as you are aware, we have been promoting the bio farming and organic farming for the last four years, because we feel that we have to provide safer foods to the consumers.

Ms Sewocksingh: Madam Speaker, may I know from the hon. Minister how many planters have been trained for this programme till date, and how many are on the wait list to be trained?

Mr Seeruttun: There are about 7,000 farmers and those who work with the spraying of pesticides have been trained by the FAREI. I know also that there are some 8,000 or so farmers that are registered with the small farmers who are reckoned as registered farmers, but they also include breeders, as well.

Mr Mohamed: We are a country with the highest level of use of pesticides on our vegetables that we grow in the world, and at the same time, we are the country with the most cases of cancer...

Madam Speaker: Just ask your question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed.

Mr Mohamed: I am going to the foundation.

Madam Speaker: Do not make a statement, please.

Mr Mohamed: No, this is the foundation.

Madam Speaker: Make your question eligible.

Mr Mohamed: I am getting to that, thank you. So, we are the country with the highest incidence of cancer in Mauritius and rising. Is the hon. Minister aware *l'Agence Française de Développement* has raised the alarm bell as it's being interrelated and that it has done so almost eight years back? And still, why is that the hon. Minister refuses to see the connection or at least to walk on safe ground in the interests of the health of people?

Mr Seeruttun: The hon. Member is referring to, probably, an article which states that Mauritius is the country with the highest use of pesticides and it refers to the period 2005 to 2009, that's one thing. The second thing is - now, because it is good to say that, Madam Speaker, that this is this Government that came up with the idea to promote organic farming and we have been doing that since 2015, with a series of measures to promote the shift from conventional agriculture to organic and bio farming. We have come up with an Act, the Use of Pesticides Act, to regulate the use and also to sensitise the farmers and those who operate with these pesticides have to make good use of those chemicals. We have been promoting bio fungicides and bio pesticides as alternative products to replace those chemical products. So, these are the measures and action that we have been taking since 2015. It is true that over the years we have been using intensively those products and we are doing away with it and it is going to be gradual. And coming here and say that we have not done anything, I think that's not very proper. Let me also say that, because we are a responsible Government that is why we are moving towards that direction. There has been report everywhere. I am not saying that there could be a relation, but I am saying that I know at the level of the Ministry of Health, there have been certain studies carried out. I know there have been some studies carried out elsewhere. But from I have read, so far, there has not been any direct relationship between pesticide and cancer related diseases. But, as a responsible Government, because I have been seeing that myself, that whatever you put in your body, definitely if it is something toxic, it is going to harm your health. So, that is why we are promoting the use of organic farming.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Perraud!

ECONOMIC GROWTH & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

(No. B/851) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the major social problems, she will state if an assessment of the impact of the erosion of human and family values on the occurrence thereof has been carried out, indicating the measures her Ministry proposes to take in respect thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Madam Speaker, the social well-being of the population is a priority for the Government. It is for this reason that since 2014, several measures have been taken to balance economic growth with social development.

These measures include the following –

- (a) increase in the basic Retirement Pension for all elderly persons;
- (b) introduction of negative income tax system, with effect from 01 July 2017, where, instead of paying taxes, employees deriving basic salary not exceeding Rs9,900 per month, receive financial support from Government;
- (c) introduction of a National Minimum Wage of approximately Rs8,140 per month, to all full time employees, since 01 January 2018, and
- (d) access to free tertiary education in public institutions, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), since early 2019.

Moreover, the following studies and surveys have been conducted by the Ministry –

- (a) A Quantitative Assessment of Intimate Partner Violence and Associated Economic Costs in Mauritius and a National Action Plan on Intimate Partner Violence, and
- (b) A Preliminary Study Report on Family Wellbeing.

The recommendations of the above named studies and surveys are being addressed through the implementation of a series of ongoing programmes carried out all across Mauritius, with a view to enhancing family wellbeing.

These programmes include –

- (a) Inter-Generation Relationship Programme:

The Programme aims at –

- (i) building a strong relationship between children, parents and grandparents through communication and sharing;
- (ii) promoting high value for family and traditions thereby creating a source of wisdom and stability, and
- (iii) supporting and encouraging members of the family to abstain from substance abuse and violence.

- (b) Strengthening Values for Family Life Programme:

The Programme aims at -

- (i) assisting married and engaged couples to lead a successful married life;
- (ii) building positive parenting and family bonding, and
- (iii) contributing to positive individual development, caring communities and a healthy nation.

- (c) Atelier Parents-Partage (APP)

The programme aims at -

- (i) enhancing the relationship between parents and children, in general;
- (ii) reducing intergenerational gaps which lead to conflicts between parents and children;
- (iii) improving the parenting skills of parents, particularly, those faring in deprived areas, and are in disadvantaged circumstances, and
- (iv) empowering parents with the capacity to manage and develop coping mechanism, in respect of family problems.

We are also having ongoing campaigns on family well-being across the island. Additionally, my Ministry makes use of the *Caravane de proximité* of the National Women's Council to reach people in remote areas also.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, my Ministry is in the process of reviewing the 2006 National Policy Paper on the Family. The collaboration of all stakeholders will be enlisted in view of the cross-cutting nature of this subject.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mrs Perraud: La vice-première ministre a mentionné plusieurs programmes visant à promouvoir les valeurs au sein de la famille, les valeurs au sein de la société. Est-ce que la vice-première ministre pourrait nous dire, pour un ou deux programmes –

- (a) Où est-ce que ces programmes sont dispensés, est-ce dans les centres des femmes/ les centres sociaux, et à quelle heure ?
- (b) Combien de personnes ont bénéficié de ces programmes ?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Madam Speaker, it is an ongoing process. I must say that we are using the social and community centres to reach people all over the island and the talks, the programmes are being carried out on different time, so it is not a fixed time. In fact, I must say that social issues, social ills are being viewed with seriousness not only by my Ministry and by the whole Government. I think a lot of work has to be done. It is the concern of everyone, it is not the concern of one Ministry, it is not your concern only, it is the concern of all people in fact, because here, we are talking of values, we are talking of moral behaviour, we are talking of good behaviour. The Government is concerned, education institutions are concerned and also the families have the responsibility to see to it that the children are grown up in a stable environment.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mrs Perraud: Je n'ai pas entendu le nombre de personnes qui ont été touchées, qui ont bénéficié de ces programmes. Est-ce qu'au niveau du ministère on veut départir de la façon traditionnelle de donner des cours, des formations, rendre les formations beaucoup plus attrayantes, beaucoup plus ludiques, par exemple, pour les enfants parce que cela ne marche plus de donner des cours les après-midis ou pendant la journée ? Donc, qu'est-ce que le ministère fait pour innover?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: With regard to the first issue raised, Madam, I must say that each and every time we are having talks at the level of the social and community centres, we try as much as possible to reach about 200 to 300 people at one go. As I have said, we are in the process of reviewing the policy paper on family and we will see to it what are the new measures that can be brought to address social ills?

Madam Speaker: Last question!

Mrs Perraud: Vu l'ampleur de la situation, parce que la situation est vraiment grave, est-ce que la vice-première ministre envisage de faire une campagne de sensibilisation au niveau national, une campagne qui serait continuelle et non pas ponctuelle?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Madam Speaker, as I have said, we are having sensitisation campaigns in community centres all around the island, so, we will continue our work.

Mrs Perraud: Je reformule ma question...

Madam Speaker: No! Excuse me, time is over. PQ B/863 and PQ B/864 have been withdrawn. Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Mr Roopun rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.28 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

BAGATELLE WATER TREATMENT PLANT PROJECT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish, with your permission, to inform the House that the Central Water Authority has carried out a soft launch of the Bagatelle Water Treatment plant on last Thursday.

The Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant Project consists of a rapid gravity sand filtration at Bagatelle dam, with a production capacity of 60,000 cubic metres and ancillary works. The cost of the Treatment Plant is around Rs890 m.

In May 2014, the Central Procurement Board approved the award of the contract to JV HWPC/First Bureau/HUDP, a Chinese company. However, works could not start due to challenges at the Independent Review Panel and the Supreme Court.

The construction started in February 2017 and has now been completed. The equipment in the different processes of the Treatment Plant have been tested and commissioned.

The release of treated water from the plant will be on a progressive basis. Initially, 22,000 cubic metres are being released to supply the regions of Lower Quatre Bornes, Belle Rose, Roches Brunes, Stanley, Mont Roches, Trèfles, Rose Hill and Beau Bassin, Coromandel, Pailles-Guibies, Soreze and Camp Chapelon.

The volume of water produced will increase gradually to reach full capacity by end of November, following the completion of the outstanding pipe laying works in Belle Rose.

With the coming into operation of the Plant, some 175,000 inhabitants of the above regions will receive 24/7 hours of supply. Consequently, water from Mare aux Vacoas, which is now supplied to these regions, will then be channelled to Tamarin, Rivière Noire, La Gaulette, Coteau Raffin and Le Morne, thus increasing hours of supply in the west as well.

Thank you.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the following Bills were read a first time –

- (i) The Children's Bill (No. XXIX of 2019)
- (ii) The Road Traffic (Amendment No. 3) Bill (No. XXX of 2019)

Second Reading

THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BILL

(NO. XXVII OF 2019)

Order for Second Reading read.

(5.31 p.m.)

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I move that the Skills Development Authority Bill (No. XXVII of 2019) be read a second time.

Madam Speaker, this Bill needs to be situated in its proper context. Today, there is universal recognition of the fact that the global economy is changing and changing fast, that in itself requires workers that they be at once innovative and flexible as well as adaptive. In this changing configuration, the mastery of skills becomes a prerequisite whether this be cognitive, socioemotional, digital or again technical.

Now that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is upon us, we all know that this spells dramatic change for the world of work. In fact, it gives rise to debates and dialogues on the very future of work. The unprecedented rate of automation is bringing wide ranging changes to jobs, staffs and skills required in various sectors. These primarily are in the form of robotics, artificial intelligence and other technologies. So, let us face it.

Globalisation and ageing workforce, skills shortages and mismatch, shrinking birth rates in different parts of the world have shown then a new era in the technical and vocational education, skills development and upliftment. In Mauritius like elsewhere there is an immediate need to rebrand and modernise the TVET ecosystem today to plan and deliver on future skills.

According to the 2019 World Economic Forum Report entitled ‘Strategies for the New Economy Skills’, shifting to a system where skills are the core currency of the labour market posits a number of benefits. For one thing, it has the potential to tackle existing inefficiencies in the job fit between employers and employees and for another, it helps to prepare us for the future that is likely to bring great volatility in the labour market. In short, it enhances opportunity, prosperity and equality for workers for greater employability. Of course, there are other implications as well. Our modern day technological disruption and the changing nature of work are giving rise to a changed world of learning and work. This

requires a move, away from traditional front-loaded accreditation and side-load certificates to a system of lifelong learning infused with the shared sets of skilled-based indicators at its core.

Madam Speaker, we, in Mauritius, are fully alive to these issues. This Government in its Vision 2030 has placed its sights quite high. We want to have Mauritius step up to a high income status economy and a smart island State through the development of a high skills ecosystem. Now that the foundation is strong and the national educational reform is at an advanced stage of implementation, the skills level of the Mauritian population must be further raised to improve job prospects, productivity and competitiveness, and also to support the deployment of its new economic pillars. Operationalising these new pillars necessitates proper planning for and capacity building of a skilled manpower and its professionalisation.

Today, we recognise the significance of skills as a major engine of development, as a vehicle for social equity, inclusion and sustainable development. We must admit that until now, TVET and skills development were not the favoured options for learners. Accordingly, one central feature of our educational and training system reform agenda is the rebranding of the TVET sector and its transformation into an attractive, modern one through massive investment in state-of-the-art infrastructure, simulation driven training equipment along with new models of industry immersion and workplace learning.

In that, Madam Speaker, others have, in fact, shown the way. Industrialised and emerging countries such as Singapore, Germany, South Korea and India have had to equally transform their quality ecosystems to facilitate the transition to an advanced technological and skilled-based economy. Thus, in 2015, the Government of India launched the flagship TVET campaign titled 'Skills India' with the aspiration to train 400 million young persons in 7 years as a means to drive economic gains, promote social mobility as well as trigger a productivity dividend for enterprises.

In 2016, Singapore, on the other hand, enacted the Skills Future Singapore Agency Act and as a new dedicated legislation to further reinforce its manpower planning and strengthen its skills base for the emerging sectors. Germany and South Korea have also infused a new dynamism and made significant investments to revamp their technical and vocational infrastructure. This, they have done through reengineering of their STEM Agenda so as to undertake the shift from mid to high end niche markets.

So, as you see, we are on the right track, Madam Speaker. In the wake of the reform initiatives and the adoption of a digital Mauritius, there has been a diversification from basic to mid to high technical and vocational education and training. MITD has been engaged initially in the provision of basic training to support the first level of our industrial development and is now called upon to transition to another level.

As regards Polytechnics Mauritius that has been set up, it has embarked on innovative and Cutting Edge Programmes such as Artificial Intelligence, FinTech, Internet of Things, green technologies, medical and paramedical areas and so on and so forth.

Madam Speaker, hon. Members would also wish to know that my Ministry has enlisted the support of our international partners, the European Union and the World Bank in the context of the reform agenda. Following consultancies on the institutional framework relating to skills development in Mauritius, a major recommendation related to the need to revisit the TVET landscape such that the roles and functions of relevant institutions be better geared towards skills development. It goes without saying that this spells a need to revitalise the quality assurance dimension in line with international trends.

As the House is aware, as per the Higher Education Act, the Quality Assurance Authority has been set up as a separate independent and autonomous body responsible for quality assurance while the Higher Education Commission focusses on registration of institutions and accreditation of programmes. Following the same principle, Madam Speaker, we are aligning this new policy orientation of the TVET sector by having a new institution that will address the quality assurance dimension of the sector.

Madam Speaker, our public institutions operating in the TVET sector have well defined statutory objects and functions, each fulfilling the roles ascribed to them. Whilst the HRDC is mainly responsible for the planning of the human capital development, the MQA, for its part, is tasked with the registration of training providers, accreditation of programmes and maintaining a national qualification framework, the main public training service-providers being the MITD and Polytechnics Mauritius.

That being said, in our training landscape, there is still felt an urgent need to succinctly and effectively address a number of issues, including quality assurance and the development of relevant skills framework. Such issues are best addressed through the setting up of proper regulatory bodies.

Madam Speaker, the Skills Development Authority Bill considers all the imperatives and constitutes an important piece of the transformation process. The Skills Development Authority will have one overarching mission in that it will act as a platform to foster constructive public/private dialogue and address future-oriented skills development in a sustained manner.

Madam Speaker, allow me now to introduce to the House the main provisions for the Skills Development Authority Bill. The Bill provides for the establishment of the Skills Development Authority, which shall be a body corporate operating under a Board of Directors. Clauses 4 and 5 of the Bill spell out the objects and functions of the Authority. The Authority will regulate the provision, delivery and quality of training according to the present and future skill needs of the economy. It will ensure quality assurance in the TVET sector through the conduct of independent quality audits. It will set in place a system to ensure quality at all levels of the provision of training, that is, right from the inception to the final evaluation.

Another important objective of the Authority pertains to the conferment of awarding powers to training institutions. This will be applicable to well-established institutions once they would have shown that they meet the requirements of the prescribed criteria.

The Bill, accordingly, provides for the establishment of criteria for institutions to have awarding powers. These include their performance over a given period of time and their credentials. Guidelines and rules about the governance of awarding bodies will be prescribed by the regulatory body. The process will involve a high level of scrutiny and assessment prior to the conferment of awarding powers.

Madam Speaker, another objective of the Bill is to provide for the development of a Skills Framework for the present and future occupations across the different economic areas. The establishment of the Skills framework will help to better guide the employees, the trainees and the training providers in matching skills development with the needs of business and industry. In addition, the skills framework will provide greater clarity on skills and career pathways. Further, it will create a common skills language for trainees, training providers and employers.

Madam Speaker, another objective of the Bill is to setup and maintain a Skills Development Fund. I shall be elaborating further on this Fund that is provided for at clause 21.

Let me now come to the quality assurance component of this Bill. The Skills Development Authority will put in place a quality assurance system both in the processers and their outputs. Such a system will enable the providers of training to address any gap on a continual basis and produce quality skilled outputs. On the one hand - sorry on the other hand, we all recognise the significance impact of quality assurance on ascertaining the employability of learners.

Further, ensuring relevance to the world of work and focusing on skills outcome will drive the positive perception and image of TVET especially bearing in mind that the Mauritian experience and expertise are being constantly thought in the region.

Madam Speaker, clause 5 part (f) relates to an important function of the Authority which is the setting up and maintenance of a register of skills and skilled persons. There is a dire need for trained persons with required qualifications, skills and expertise such that they operate according to standards and codes of practice that will ensure both quality and consistency. This will, in particular, guarantee that the elements of health and safety are also upheld. The Authority will range for the assessment of the different skills and maintain a register of those who satisfy the skills framework.

Clause 5 (i), Madam Speaker, provides for the Authority to foster international collaboration in skills development. The way forward, Madam Speaker, is and will always remain collaboration. Institutional collaboration and the promotion of the culture of sharing of whatever knowledge acquired is now the norm. The Skills Development Authority will see to it that gaps and skills are readily addressed through partnership with specialised institutions and multilateral organisations. This will provide greater scope for transfer of knowhow and new technologies.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, the world of TVET is one where technology is duplicitous and as an essential task of the Authority will be to engage in communicating judiciously in a connected world especially considering the necessity to provide meaningful and accurate information to the public with regard to TVET.

Madam Speaker, as in all legislations, clause 6 of the Bill is a general provision and powering the Authority to acquire, hold and dispose of assets and employed funds to defray expenses as per its functions.

As for clause 7 of the Bill, provision is made for the Authority to be administered and managed by Board as a main decision-making organ. It will comprise a Chairperson,

appointed by the Prime Minister and a Vice-chairperson from the private sector. Provision is also made for a fair and adequate representation of members both from the public and private sectors which include members who has experience in TVET, business and industry.

The TVET office of the Board of Directors will be for a period of 3 years with the possibility of renewal. The conduct of the meetings of the Board is provided at clause 8 while clause 9 deals with the disclosure of interest of members of the Board in line with the principles of good governance.

As for clause 10, it empowers the Board to setup committees for specific purposes to assist it in the performance of its duties.

Madam Speaker, provision is made at clause 11 for the appointment of a Director who will, *inter alia*, be responsible for the execution of the decisions of the Board, including projects and programme management and for the control and management of the Authority.

Clauses 12 to 16 are standard ones which provide for the delegation of Authority with regard to activities of the Authority; the appointment and condition of service of employees as well as protection from liability in the execution of duties done in good faith.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight the incorporation of provisions for the reinforcement of the regulatory powers of the Skills Development Authority. The Authority, being a regulator in the TVET sector while ensuring quality assurance at all levels, will need to have a strong inspection and enforcement arm. Hence, clause 17 and 18 provide for inspection and enforcement. The Authority will establish an inspectorate division and elaborate an inspection programme to carry out visits, both announced and unannounced with a view to monitor and ensure compliance with the provision of the regulation. This division will be manned by professionals in the sector and will operate within a set framework.

Madam Speaker, clause 19 of the Bill makes provision for the Authority to have the power to summon any person to appear before it so as to give information or produce any document relevant to any inspection, examination and investigation. Obviously, Madam Speaker, in all fairness, any person who feels aggrieved by any decision of the Authority should be invested with the right to make an appeal against it. This is taken care of in clause 20 of the Bill. The aggrieved person is expected to lodge a written notice of appeal together with grounds of the appeal. An independent Appeal Committee to be chaired by a barrister will be set up to advise on the subject matter of the appeal.

Madam Speaker, the Authority will need resources to finance its activities. In this context, clause 21 makes provision for the setting up of the Skills Development Fund and the money paid into it as well as for the disbursement of funds. It will finance the activities, programmes and projects that it would undertake to promote skills development including promotion of partnership and resources to consultancy services.

Clauses 23 to 28 relate to miscellaneous provisions of the Bill which include the need to comply with principles of good governance, the publication of annual reports of the FDA as well as the audited accounts at the end of each financial year.

The Bill equally makes provision at clause 29 for regulations to be made. This would relate to procedures, conditions and criteria in respect of quality assurance in the TVET sector, conferment of awarding powers to training institutions and the setting up of the skills framework.

With a view to ensuring that pension benefits are transferable to relevant employees and bodies of similar status as per the Pension Act, the Authority shall be an approved service. The FDA in addition will be a public body that shall be made to comply with the provision of the Public Procurement Act as per clause 30 subsection 1 of the Bill.

Madam Speaker, this Bill will be a landmark for our technical education landscape. It will fill in the existing gaps by synergising the regulation and the quality of provision of technical education effected by both public and private sectors and this for the very first time in our country. Through the enactment of this legislation, we are setting the scene for a new and improved regulatory framework, in complementarity and in consultation with existing stakeholders in the system. We are ensuring the enhancement and expansion of the quality dimension for the sector, but we are also looking ahead and making provision for future growth especially at a time where many of the new skills of tomorrow are not even here today. The bottom line is that the greater the boost given to the image of TVET, the higher its capability to attract learners for higher level of skills development.

Madam Speaker, let me now conclude my intervention. We all in this House sincerely believe that Mauritius is destined to have an ever brighter future and, as a forward looking Government, we are duty bound to provide the right guidepost so that Mauritius attains a vision that we have carved for it; a vision that secures the deep engagement of all stakeholders for higher productivity.

This Bill, Madam Speaker proposes to enhance the attractiveness of the TVET sector as an item upper most on our agenda.

What is equally noteworthy is that the Bill critically expands the availability of information and skills. This is particularly important at a time where the need of the economy and the skills needed for our workforce are constantly and dynamically evolving. I wish to emphasise that this Bill is future focussed and that it prepares the ground to leap from towards a set of high end skills within proper regulatory parameters. We are now effectively rebranding the TVET Sector by boosting its image and thus ensuring the provision of skilled human capital for the national development.

Madam Speaker, with these words I commend the Bill to the House and I thank you.

Mr Seeruttun rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud, can I know what the duration will be?

Mrs Perraud: More than 30 minutes.

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

At 4.54 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.27 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have in front of the House today the Skills Development Authority Bill. So, we are on the eve of the elections, at the end of this Government's mandate, *l'Alliance Lepep* or what is left of *l'Alliance Lepep*. We should ask ourselves why the establishment of this new authority? Is this new authority important? What are the changes that it will bring to improve the TVET Sector? So many questions that need to be answered.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us, first of all, have a look at the TVET Sector, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training. The term Technical and Vocational Education and Training was officiated at the world congress on TVET far back in 1999 in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

(Interruptions)

Ils ne sont pas intéressés avec ce projet de loi. TVET is defined by Wikipedia as being education and training which provides knowledge and skills for employment. TVET uses

formal, non-formal and informal learning. The purpose of Technical and Vocational Education and Training is to equip people with a technical and professional skills needed for socio-economic and industrial development of the country. A related role of TVET is continuing professional development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in today's world, there are rapid technological changes which demand that workers continuously update their knowledge and skills. The worker has to continually reinvent himself or herself. TVET also enables the reskilling of workers when they find themselves declared redundant and out of work so that they can go back to work.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the importance of technical and vocational educational and training in nation building cannot be overemphasised. It is a major agent for social progress for any country. The emphasis is on training people for self-employment. We have to acknowledge that TVET Sector can help in poverty alleviation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, TVET should provide a mixed knowledge and career focused hands-on and skills based education that is needed to run the productive sectors of the economy and build the nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having defined TVET and elaborated on its purpose and importance for the economic and social success for a country, let us now situate TVET in Mauritius. You will all recall that this sector started with the IVTB which was set up in 1988 as a partnership between the public and private sector. Then, we had in 1990 the Technical School Management Trust Fund which was set up to manage technical education and training. Then, on 16 November 2009, the MITD became operational, the MITD took the functions of the IVTB and the Technical School Management Trust Fund.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I read from a document of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research that the main provider of the TVET Programme is the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD), that the TVET Sector is regulated by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) which also develops and maintains the National Qualifications Framework.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the main object of this Bill is to provide for the establishment of the Skills Development Authority. We can read this in the Explanatory Memorandum in the Bill which shall act as an independent regulator and shall ensure quality assurance and confer awarding powers to training institutions in the TVET Sector and to provide for matters related thereto.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it should be noted that the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) already has a quality assurance framework for the TVET sector in Mauritius, and this was published only last year in July 2018. I will quote from this document at -

“2.2 Aim of the Quality Assurance Framework

The aim of the framework is to ensure that MQA and training institutions work together to achieve and enhance the quality of TVET and to have a single unified quality assurance process for the promotion of the sector.”

So, the question is: since MQA is already ensuring Quality Assurance, will that not be a duplication with what the Skills Development Authority intends to do? If the answer is no, then, what will be the purpose of MQAs Quality Assurance Framework? Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, MQA, as explained in its Quality Assurance Framework, performs quality audits in training institutions. The Skills Development Bill states in Regulations 2 –

“Regulations made under subsection (1) may provide –

(a) for the procedure, criteria and conditions for quality assurance in TVET sector.”

So, my question is: what will happen to MQAs Quality Assurance Framework, will this lapse or will we have two Quality Assurance Framework for the same sector?

Mr Deputy Speaker, we can see that this new Authority, the Skills Development Authority, will come up with an enforcement policy in cases where training institutions do not comply with the Act. However, it is MQA that renew approval of courses, training institutions and trainers. The Bill does not explain clearly how Skills Development Authority and MQA will ensure coordination. Mr Deputy Speaker, the MQA is already keeping a database of learning accounts of Mauritians. The proposed Skills Development Authority would set up and maintain a Register of skills and skilled persons as one of its functions. Is that, once again, a duplication? It is not clear what is the difference between the two.

One of the objects of the Authority is to, I quote –

“4 Objects of Authority

The Authority shall –

(c) confer awarding powers to training institutions.”

Does that include private institutions? This has not been mentioned and, therefore, remains unclear. There are approximately 500 private institutions that contribute to the skills and economic development of the country and they need to be included, provided they meet the set criterion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is also said that one of the proposed functions of the Authority shall be, I quote –

“5. Functions of Authority

(i) foster international collaboration in skills development;”

However, MQA is already looking at ensuring that local qualifications are comparable with international standards, allying the local MQF level with foreign ones and managing equivalence. What added value will Skills Development Authority bring in terms of fostering international collaborations? There may be 400 to 500 registered training institutions in the country. How much time would be required to conduct a Quality Assurance audit in all those 500 institutions? Does the Authority have such resources at its disposal to carry out its function effectively? Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Authority will need a wide range of skills set in order to properly ensure quality assurance in all training institutions, given that there is a very wide range of courses on offer. It is also presumed that the Authority will or may appoint external foreign auditors. Who will bear the cost of these auditors? If this is the function of the Authority, then why should the private training institutions bear the cost?

Mr Deputy Speaker, for conducting appeal, the selection criteria are the members of the Appeal Committee has been well defined, given that the Authority deals with highly technical skills. Along the same line of thought, would it not be important that the co-opt members meet a minimum criteria to be able to be appointed as Board members?

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is also said at section 16 –

“16. 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 respect of its activities, and the Board shall comply with those directions.”

Does that imply that the Minister can overrule the findings of the Inspectorate Division and the recommended enforcement policy, if yes, then, does that not defeat the whole purpose of the Authority?

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the second part of my speech I have given the comparison between the MQA and the Skills Development Authority? I described clearly the duplication of functions of the two. The people of this country will be interested to know that the functions of this Authority also overlap the functions of the MITD. So, just to have a look, I have read the MQA Act, I have also read the MITD Act, and, of course, I read the Bill which is in front of the House today, the Skills Development Authority Bill. I noticed that, for example, one of the functions of the MITD is to make provision of research and training facilities in technical and vocational education and training. And for this present Bill, one of the functions of the Authority is –

“5. Functions of Authority

(g) facilitate and undertake research for the development of TVET;”

We can also see that another function of that Authority is –

“(d) promote access to TVET;”

We can find the same function for MITD -

“(c) increase access to technical and vocational education and training through the setting up of training centres;”

So, there are many, many duplications between the MITD and the Skills Development Authority Bill. And also, I have made it clear earlier that there are also many duplications between the MQA and the Skills Development Authority. So, I think that when the hon. Minister will do her summing-up, she will be able to answer to all the questions that I have put. Mr Deputy Speaker, the questions at the beginning of my speech remain unanswered. Why the establishment of a new Authority, since we have already the MQA and the MITD which have almost the same powers and functions. The legal framework is already there - what changes does this new Authority bring to the TVET sector.

M. le président, ce secteur n’a pas besoin de changement dans la forme mais dans le fond. Le gouvernement veut prétendre apporter des solutions pour révolutionner ce secteur à travers la création d’une autre autorité. L’institution d’un autre *Board*, caser d’autres nominés politiques, huit au total, avant les élections, c’est tout ce que ce projet de loi représente. Mais, il est vrai que ce secteur a besoin d’une attention particulière. Il faut la volonté politique pour réellement faire bouger les choses. Nous avons constaté que ce sont les élèves de la *MITD* qui constituent majoritairement le secteur de l’enseignement et la formation

technique et professionnelle. Le MITD gère 15 *Vocational Training Centres* et 10 *Prevocational Training Centres*.

Lors de son discours, la ministre a mentionné que beaucoup est fait dans ce secteur et j'ai pris la peine aussi de lire le magazine du MITD. Donc, vraiment de belles paroles, de bonnes intentions mais qui, malheureusement, ne se traduisent pas dans la réalité. Il est vrai que ces derniers temps beaucoup ont été dit sur le *rebranding*, *massive investment*, mais quand nous regardons, nous constatons de visu ce n'est pas ce que nous voyons dans le secteur prévocationnel. Il n'y a pas assez d'investissement au niveau infrastructurel.

Je me suis fait un devoir d'aller visiter, de parler à beaucoup de personnes parce que je connais quand même très bien ce secteur, vu que je suis dans l'enseignement aussi et je me suis dit entre les paroles prononcées et les intentions et la réalité, il faut voir ce qu'il en est. Et aujourd'hui, M. le président, je suis devant cette Chambre pour démontrer qu'effectivement c'est un secteur qui est l'enfant pauvre du secteur de l'éducation après, bien sûr, comme je l'ai dit dans beaucoup de mes discours avant, après le secteur maternel.

(Interruptions)

Petite enfance. Merci pour le mot.

Alors je voudrais montrer - et je vais déposer les photos, M. le président - dans quel état les institutions prévocationnelles se trouvent. Alors il y a eu beaucoup d'écoles où j'ai été, par exemple, l'établissement Abercrombie, il y a l'établissement Colonel Maingard et il y a l'établissement de Vacoas. Donc, nous voyons bien, ici, que les fils électriques pendent au plafond, ce qui pose un problème de sécurité non seulement pour les élèves mais aussi pour le personnel, pour tous ceux qui se trouvent dans le bâtiment. Nous avons aussi des meubles dans de très, très mauvais état. Donc, ça c'est le dessus d'une table que les enfants utilisent et je vous assure que cela se passe dans plusieurs de vos centres prévocationnels, là où il y a un investissement massif, où il y a le *rebranding*, où on aura encore une autorité, encore un *Board*, encore de personnes qui seront payées. Donc, c'est la même photo. La photo d'une chaise. Donc, j'en ai plusieurs comme ça. Nous avons ici un commutateur où le fil électrique est à nu, donc, si les enfants utilisent ce commutateur dans la salle de classe, ils peuvent être électrocutés. Il y a même des élèves qui m'ont dit qu'ils ne peuvent pas - ils doivent se retenir - aller aux toilettes parce que les toilettes vraiment ne peuvent être utilisées parce que c'est un vieux bâtiment, on essaye de rénover mais cela ne marche pas et donc ils ne peuvent pas utiliser les toilettes. J'ai aussi la photo des toilettes. Donc, je vous passerais de cette photo-là.

Mais j'ai un article de presse qui démontre aussi que ce problème existe bel et bien. Ici, je vais lire un extrait de l'Express du 10 avril 2019, le titre c'est « MITD à Ébène, les étudiants travaillent pieds dans l'eau ». Je suis en train de lire un extrait –

« A en croire les 60 à 90 étudiants concernés, ce serait chose courante de travailler au beau milieu des flaques d'eau. »

Donc c'est un élève qui dit –

« Nous ne nous sentons pas en sécurité. A chaque grosse pluie, il y a des fuites d'eau près des circuits électriques que nous utilisons. Et le sol est glissant. Ce n'est pas facile d'apprendre et de travailler dans de telles conditions.

Ces étudiants déplorent, en outre, le manque d'hygiène. Ils avancent que les pigeons volent dans les salles de classe et salissent partout, même leurs travaux. Même les toilettes ne seraient pas utilisables, soutiennent les étudiants qui parlent de pénurie d'eau, d'absence de papier toilette, de plomberies cassées... Ils affirment avoir interpellé la direction à plusieurs reprises à ce sujet, en vain. »

Et dans cet article, le Directeur, M. Pradeep Joosery, déclare que le MITD a entamé un projet de rénovation et il dit –

« Je ne dis pas qu'ils ont entièrement tort. »

Donc, je pense que ce dont ce secteur a besoin, ce n'est que de belles paroles, ce n'est pas que de bonnes intentions, mais il y a des problèmes urgents, il y a des situations à régler pour le bien-être des élèves mais aussi du personnel. Donc, il n'y a pas que ce problème à régler dans ce secteur. Qu'en est-il des enseignants ? La ministre est bel et bien au courant puisqu'il y a des courriers qui ont été envoyés au ministère. C'est par rapport au problème qui prévaut dans ce secteur concernant les enseignants qui sont des instructeurs et aussi les enseignants qui sont les *training officers*.

Alors, j'ai même parlé à un *instructor* qui travaille au MITD depuis plus de 10 ans, qui a commencé comme *instructor* mais qui fait le travail de *training officer*, mais qui n'est pas rémunéré comme un *training officer* et pendant 10 ans que cela dure. Et les enseignants, malgré tous les problèmes qu'ils rencontrent, malgré la situation difficile dans laquelle ils travaillent, ils sont de bonne volonté, ils ont la vocation, ils aiment le travail, ils aiment travailler avec ces enfants et ils ont amélioré leurs qualifications. La personne à qui j'ai parlé, elle a maintenant un degré. Elle a commencé comme *instructor*, après 10 ans, elle est

toujours *instructor*, mais elle fait le travail de *training officer*, ce qui crée une grande frustration puisqu'un *instructor*, selon mes informations, commence avec un salaire de R 16,000 et un *training officer* commence avec un salaire de R 25,000. Donc, c'est un problème qui perdure depuis des années, mais jusqu'à maintenant aucune solution, je pourrais même dire - c'est ce qu'ils m'ont dit - qu'il n'y a aucune communication entre le ministère et le personnel par rapport à cette situation.

Et pour ceux qui travaillent dans les centres prévocationnels, ils ont besoin comme qualification d'un SC avec quatre *Credits* et à ce jour, il n'y a pas suffisamment de prof. On me dit que les profs, *they rotate* parce qu'il n'y a pas suffisamment de prof pour un établissement. Manque de personnel, manque de prof dans ces établissements, problème d'infrastructure, problème de sécurité. Donc ce n'est pas cette autorité qui va apporter des solutions au secteur TVET.

Et j'ai compris aussi que l'établissement d'Abercrombie à Plaine Verte vis-à-vis de la foire à Cité Martial, va être fermé dans deux ans et les élèves de ce centre seront envoyés à Goodlands en 2021. Donc, les enfants qui fréquentent cet établissement viennent des faubourgs de Port Louis, de ma circonscription, Cité La Cure, Ste Croix, Roche Bois, Plaine Verte, Vallée Pitot, etc. Donc, ces enfants auront à voyager à aller à Goodlands. J'aimerais, quand la ministre va faire son *summing-up*, confirmer si ce serait le cas.

Et c'est la même chose concernant les filles. Vu que les établissements de la Tour Koenig et de Cassis sont fermés, on a envoyé tous les enfants à Beau Bassin. Donc, c'est le même problème pour les filles de sortir de la région de Port Louis, de voyager pour aller à Beau Bassin. Donc, il manque des établissements prévocationnels dans la région de Port Louis et je crois que ça c'est urgent, ça c'est très important.

Donc, M. le président, je ne vais pas être longue. Je pense que j'ai fait mon point. Le plus important...

(Interruptions)

Vous venez d'arriver l'honorable Gayan. Alors, je crois que j'ai fait mon point. Le plus important pour moi c'est l'aspect humain, ce qui se passe à l'intérieur des établissements, donc c'est le fond et non pas la forme. Le plus important c'est ce qu'il y a dans le concret et non pas les belles paroles ni les bonnes intentions.

Merci beaucoup.

(5.53p.m.)

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill is not about the administration of individuals, training centres or individual schools providing training, the administration part of it. I can fully appreciate all the pictures that have been shown and everything that has been said that they could be true but have nothing to do in relation to this Bill. It is good to talk about this on a public platform outside when you are doing your public meetings. As hon. Member, herself, during the starting speech, has said that we are on the eve of a general election. So, we are at the eve of a general election and she will have ample opportunity to ventilate everything that she has said today in this House which was completely irrelevant insofar as this Bill is concerned.

Let us deal with the essential of the provisions of this law that are being proposed to this Assembly this evening. I listened intently to the hon. Minister who presented the Bill and amongst other things that she said was this Bill is about technicality modernising our skilled development in relation to robotics for example, InfoTech because, nowadays, we are living in a society where things should be met with speed and intelligence. So, we cannot have the similar type of training schools that we use to have in 1967. The hon. Member, who spoke before me, started her discourse by saying that vocational training started in the country as of 1988, since the coming into force of the 1988 Act. In fact, if I may go back to history just to put matters into perspective. Training about skills TVET, we can trace from our record pre-independence in 1967. In 1967, there was the setting up of the Industrial Training Centre. They used to call it ITTC in the past. Then in 1968, in the year of the Independence, we had the School of Industrial Technology of the University of Mauritius that was set up in order to provide technical education to our youth then. Then in 1971, there used to be formerly a Ministry dedicated for the purpose of economic planning and development. So, in 1971 the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development created the first hotel and catering school. In 1982, we witnessed the birth of *Lycée Polytechnique de Flacq*. In 1980, this is when the then Labour Government were to crumble. They actually passed a law in this august Assembly called the Central Training Office Act of 1980. Although the Bill was passed, voted, but it was never proclaimed; it was never used. It was put in a drawer and the key was lost somewhere. Then it was in 1984 that the Central Training Office Act came into existence anew. Thereafter, we had the 1988 Act which hon. Perraud referred to, the Industrial and

Vocational Training Act. Then we had the Technical School Management Trust Fund Act of 1990. Then we had the Industrial and Vocational Training Amendment Act of 1991 and then we had the last legislation presented by the then Minister Bunwaree, the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development Act of 2009.

Now, hon. Perraud is quite right when she spoke about the difficulties that instructors and training officers have been facing and she used these words. She said that the training officer was actually doing the job of an instructor and she went on to say that this *perdure depuis des années*.

Now, since 2009, all these issues that she had raised, they did not just suddenly cropped up when we took over an economically dilapidated country in 2015. She is right to say that it has been happening since years. Do you think the photographs she has presented in the House, this evening, are as a result of what happened in the last four and a half years or are they things that have been happening since years? But, now, we, as a responsible Government, are trying to do our best to fix these problems that have been happening since years which they failed to do. And, to reform a sector to transform a country, to transform a sector, you cannot do it within few years, it takes time.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, yes, we are at the eve of an election, but this does not mean that we should follow their example. We should not follow their example by shutting this Parliament for almost a year. Even up to the eve of the election, we owe a duty to this country, to the people that we have to show them, to demonstrate that we have worked for them so that we can tell the people of this country why they should vote for us. But what is their *bilan*? They have a *bilan*. We can go and say: 'Look this is what we have done until the closure of Parliament'. We did not close down Parliament for a year or so. The question is: why establishment of this new authority? The reason to establish this new authority is because we are facing new challenges. You see these days when you go to meet people on the street or when you go to the CAB Office, when you meet your mandates. Most of the time, people are coming to see a MP in the Constituency: *Fer mo zenfan gayne enn travay. Ki classe linn fer? Sixieme. Passer fail? Li finn passer dan trwa sujets. Ki travay li pe roder? Pour bilayer-balayer. Dan gouvernman? Pour fer-fer di thé dan gouvernman.*

This is how people tell you when you go to meet them or when they come to bureau CAB. I said it in creole, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so that those who are listening at home because these debates are televised live; so that those who...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Rutnah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, his party has been fighting most of the time outside: ‘amenn creole dan parleman’. Now, I have quoted a few words in creole, he is taking objection to it.

The Deputy Speaker: You are not allowed to do so, hon. Rutnah. Continue with your speech.

Mr Rutnah: I am just putting....

The Deputy Speaker: I said no cross talking, please.

(Interruptions)

Mr Rutnah: You see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the problem with hon. Adrien Duval and a few on the other side. When they speak, we extend the courtesy of listening to them – whatever critics. When hon. Mrs Perraud spoke, I was listening to her intently so that I can take part in the debate, so that I can enlighten my population of what is going on here, this evening. But whenever we are on our feet, in particular, I always get interrupted. They are supposed to set examples. Outside, they will say: “Ah, hon. Member.” And that I will get criticism, they will not because you know who is writing everyday. *L’Express*!

I was dealing about this issue, about reskilling. Out there, people think if their children have not succeeded *sixième* or have not succeeded the School Certificate or ‘O’ level, the only job that they can do is *balier*, *balier dans government* or *faire du thé dans gouvernement* or *alle travail dans District Council*, *leve saleté*. It is reality. But they do not realise if that child who has not succeeded Primary education - now we call it the 6th Grade - but if they would have gone to a vocational training centre, if they would have learned a vocation, they would not need to go and *balier*, *balier*, *faire du thé dans ministère*. They could become a self-employed person, running their own business and contributing towards the economic future of this country. They could themselves employ a few people to get themselves involved into economic activities to contribute towards this country.

Now, to answer hon. Mrs Perraud as to why establish new authority, firstly, it is because we are facing new challenges. Secondly, we are modernising this country, and to modernise we have to get modern institutions in place in order to meet the challenges with speed and intelligence and not at the intelligence of snail pace. Thirdly, because we owe a

duty to our children, we owe a duty to our people to ensure that they and their future are in good hands.

Now, the question is: what improvement will this Bill bring? This Bill is going to prepare the future of this country insofar as vocational and technical training is concerned. These days, we do not have cars that are running like the old engine of Morris Oxford or Singer Vogue. Now, we have Hybrid cars, we have electric cars, we have cars where we have got computerised and mechanised parts. So, we need trained mechanics to do these jobs. So, if we do not put a legal framework, if we do not set up the legal framework, then how are we going to produce these workers to meet the challenges of tomorrow?

Hon. Mrs Perraud also spoke about the Mauritius Qualifications Authority. Yes, the Mauritius Qualifications Authority will continue to exist. It will continue to exist independently whereas this law is providing for an independent regulator to ensure assurance and confer awards by the institutions which are going to set up their own courses and exams. So, I do not see why they cannot exist hand in hand together.

Now, very often, we tend to get criticism about the powers of the Minister. This is in reference to clause 16 of the present Bill. The question that hon. Mrs Perraud asked is whether the Minister can overrule the inspectorate. Let us look at the wording of the power –

“The Minister may give such written directions of a general character to the Board, not inconsistent with this Act (...).”

The operative words are “not inconsistent with this Act.”

“(...) as he considers necessary in respect of its activities and the Board shall comply with those directions.”

So, if the Minister is going to act inconsistently to what is provided in the Act, she will be against the law. Her decision can be challenged. It is important for me to point out. When hon. Mrs Perraud was a Minister in this Government in 2016, she brought the only legislation called the National Women’s Council Bill which became an Act in 2016.

(Interruptions)

How many?

The Deputy Speaker: I said no crosstalking, please!

Mr Rutnah: Okay, let us be fair to hon. Mrs Perraud.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, address the Chair!

Mr Rutnah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am so sorry. As a result of the comments from a sitting position of hon. Mrs Perraud, I will do justice to her, I will be fair to her. One of the Bills that she proposed in this House was the National Women's Council Bill which became an Act in 2016. In her own law she brought this to Parliament and we voted altogether when she was in Government. Look at section 17 of her powers that she had when she was Minister. I will read it -

“The Minister (...).”

(Interruptions)

They are trying to interrupt me.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry, please! Let the hon. Member make his speech!

(Interruptions)

Then go out if you are not listening to.

(Interruptions)

Did you challenge what I just said, hon. Henry? You cannot interrupt somebody who has the floor. If you want to talk, you put your name on the list and you take the floor and speak on the Bill.

(Interruptions)

Then, you go out if you do not want to listen to him.

(Interruptions)

You want to stay here. Then, keep quiet if you want to stay here.

(Interruptions)

Did you say something, hon. Bérenger?

(Interruptions)

Do you think you can interrupt somebody who is talking, who has the floor?

(Interruptions)

Yes, I am a Speaker and when somebody has the floor, he should be able to make his speech.

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Quel niveau!* Let me tell you *quel niveau*.

The Deputy Speaker: Order in the House, please!

Mr Rutnah: On this side, everybody is listening. Even when they are on their feet, we listen. And the *niveau* on the other side is what? Interruption, comments from a sitting position and interruption from whom generally? Those who do not even take part in the debate. That is the *niveau* from the Opposition. But our *niveau* is not like that. We have proper *niveau*. Let us go to the proper *niveau*. The power of the Minister in section 17 of the National Women's Council Act –

“The Minister may give such written directions of a general character to the Board, not inconsistent with this Act, as may be necessary in the public interest, and the Board shall comply with those directions.”

So, you see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is okay. I say the language used in this Parliament is a language that is okay to use on a *caisse savon* outside there during the electoral campaign. But it is intellectually dishonest to come and criticise us here when it is a standard way of drafting law and put these provisions because lawyers who draft these, those who are drafting, they know what they are writing and when they use the word ‘not inconsistent with this Act’ and if the Minister act inconsistently, means that the Minister’s decision could be challenged in a Court of Law. So, this is the point that I was trying to make through all these interruptions. I think I have made it abundantly clear.

And then, the other criticism that was levelled earlier on by hon. Mrs Perraud is that the Board which has been suggested in this legislation, this Board will give opportunity for *nominés politiques*, as if political nominees will be those who will be on the Board and they are not going to bring any changes because they are political nominees. And in her law, as well, it was the same thing in the National Women's Council Act, there was a Board, there was the function of the Board, meetings of the Council, the law is literally, similarly drafted. So, was it then all the cronies of the party on the Board of the Women's Council? Were they political nominees?

This is not fair criticism and I will invite those who are in the Opposition to go and look at the way laws are drafted, and time and again, these kinds of criticisms crop up in this Assembly. I anticipate that those who have listened carefully will understand the gist of my intervention today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I, firstly, wish to extend my gratitude to the hon. Minister who has presented this Bill in the House so as to give new opportunities to bring a new era of development in the education sector, in particular, the vocational education, the training education for the children of this country.

Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(6.15 p.m.)

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, UNESCO defines Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as: ‘The education or training process which involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills relating to occupations in various sectors of economic life and social life, that comprises formal – that is, organised programmes as part of the school system - and non-formal, those organised outside the school system.’

Before I start my speech, let me quote what Ms Akiko Sakamoto, who is the Skills and Development and Employability Specialist, at a recent conference in Bangkok in the context of the 100th Anniversary of the ILO. I quote –

“Along with the impact of technology and other megatrends such as climate change, ageing populations and globalisation, debates on the future of work often focus on what skills will be needed in the future, how those skills should be acquired and how training providers need to adjust. However, we need to pay greater attention to whether those skills are making a difference in achieving inclusive growth.”

Now, when it comes to our TVET sector, before I come to that new authority, let us see what we have today with regard to training system and human resources development. I won’t go as far back as hon. Rutnah. Let us see what we have operational today. We have the Mauritius Qualifications Authority which was established under section 3 of the MQA Act of 2001, and this authority acts as a regulator. Let me quote section 4 of the Objects of the Authority –

“The objects of the Authority shall be –

(a) to develop, implement and maintain a National Qualifications Framework;

- (b) to ensure compliance with provisions for registration and accreditation in this Act;
- (c) to ensure that standards and registered qualifications are internationally comparable.”

This is the MQA, the regulator.

Then, in 2003, we had the Human Resource Development Act which acts as a facilitator, and section 4 of the Act deals with the Objects of the Council –

“The objects of the Council shall be to –

- (a) promote human resource development in line with national economic and social objectives;
- (b) stimulate a culture of training and lifelong learning at the individual, organisational and national levels for employability and increasing productivity, and
- (c) provide the necessary human resource thrust for successful transformation of the economy of the country into a Knowledge Economy.”

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Can you switch off your phone, hon. Dayal, please!

Mr Baloomoody: And then, again, we have the third institution. So, the Human Resource Development Council acts as a facilitator, and then, we have in 2019, the MITD Act, which to cover the activities of the IVTB, acts as the provider of training. The objectives of the institute, the MITD, it is good to go on these, because we will see how this authority will duplicate the work of these intuitions.

“The objects of the Institute - that is, the MITD - shall be to –

- (a) promote excellence in technical and vocational education and training;
- (b) promote research and enhance knowledge in technical and vocational education and training;
- (c) increase access to technical and vocational education and training through the setting up of training centres;

- (d) promote exchange programmes and courses with other institutions in technical and vocational education and training;
- (e) assist in the apprenticeship of persons who are, or will be, employed in commercial, technical and vocational fields.”

So, we have, Mr Deputy Speaker, these three institutions which are supposed to look at the TVET sector and they have been around for nearly 15 years if we start with the MQA. But yet, again, after five years of this Government, hon. Rutnah is telling us that people are still coming to look for job *pou alle balyer dan buro*. So, there is some problem with these institutions. And still, among the youth, according to the ILO figures, we have 23.49% in March 2019, youth unemployment, those under 25.

This morning, the hon. Minister, in presenting the Bill, still mentioned the issue of mismatch in employment. So, we have, at least, three institutions for the last 15 years, we still have unemployment, we still have many youth who cannot find a quality job and many employers cannot find the right people to fill the existing jobs. What have these institutions done? Before coming with another Authority, we have to ask ourselves the first question: have these three institutions deliver on their respective objectives? We should have an institutional audit - not a financial audit - to determine the shortcomings of the present structure before introducing a new Bill, just creating another authority. This is what we should have done.

Now, we are going to have a fourth authority. In a country like Singapore, which has a population of nearly 5.6 million people, has only one TVET intuition with three branches, but only one umbrella, and they have three high tech training centres. And here, we are going to have a fourth authority. And when I listen – I will come to that later. Let me clear, the idea of having an independent authority to regulate TVET sector would have been a good one, had we made an audit of the three institutions we have. So, the question is: are we going in the right way? Are we not duplicating the works of the other three institutions I have just mentioned?

The Minister is shaking her head and says no. But when you look at the objective of this – when I will come with the objective and you see what these institutions are doing, this authority will go and do the same thing. And what is worse, there is no mention in the Bill how this authority we are creating today, will work with the other three authorities. There is nothing in the Bill which tells us whether that authority will take over some of the powers of

the MQA, the HRDC, or the MITD, as there is no consequential amendments to these three Acts creating those authorities. So, we already have three authorities who are regulator, supplier and feeder, now we are doing to have another authority with no mention in the law how they are going to collaborate, if any, with the three existing authorities, and even in her Second Reading, the hon. Minister did not mention...

(Interruptions)

You will have your time to sum up. Don't be nervous.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Baloomoody: First of all, one serious issue - I have done my homework before coming, I have met many people in this sector, there has been no consultation whatsoever, there has been no input in preparing that Bill from these three institutions. They were only informed...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Baloomoody: They were only informed that a Bill is coming and this is the Bill. And informed by whom? By the adviser of the Minister!

(Interruptions)

Did you tell me to shut up? Is the hon. Minister allowed to tell me to shut up when I am on my feet?

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not the language that I normally use, and I will ask the hon. Member to withdraw this word. I don't use such type of language.

(Interruptions)

Mr Baloomoody: Then, there has been no consultation whatsoever.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Are you raising a point of order? Yes?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Member say that the Minister has said ‘shut up’. I don’t use such type of language and I would ask him to withdraw what he said.

Mr Baloomoody: If you haven’t said it, then I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: That’s better.

The Deputy Speaker: You resume your speech now.

Mr Baloomoody: First of all, there has been no consultation and there has not even been a sort of roundtable inviting those responsible of the MITD, all these sectors to come and give in, have a contribution in the preparation of this Bill. They were just informed at the last minute that there has been a Bill which has been produced, they were showed a copy of that Bill and they were informed by the adviser of the Minister. This is according to what I have learned from the very same people. I won’t identity them, because I know how this Government works when it comes to reprimand and transfer. I am sure that the hon. Minister, if ever there has been any consultation, she will come and informs us the date and time and with whom she has been dealing in preparation of this Bill, be it at the MQA, be it at the MITD, be it at the HRDC.

Now let us look at Section 4 of the Bill. It deals with the objects of the authority. Section 4 (a) - ‘regulate TVET sector’. Under this Government, we have seen the TVET fragmented in many pieces. The MITD provides training and operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. We have a new body created by the same Ministry called the Polytechnic, replicated more or less the same programmes. We have the Fashion Design Institute providing training in Graphic and Design under the aegis of the Ministry of Commerce which was MITD centre and this year, this Fashion Design Institute took over the School of Jewellery from the MITD and yet, there is no representative of the Ministry of Commerce on the Board of the Skills Development Authority Board.

According to the latest report of the MITD, it is responsible for operation of 15 training centres and 10 prevocational training centres. Have there been an audit in these centres, tell us whether they are delivering the goods they were supposed to deliver, they were functioning according to law? This is the question we have to ask. Delivering courses, the MQA has approved these courses, but is the MITD going in the direction of the MQA? Has this been shown? We shall be in a situation today when people are still looking for work

and employer are still looking for worker and there is still that mismatch in our economy, in our labour sector.

Now, Section 4 (b) - 'ensure quality assurance in TVET sector'. But, this is done by the MQA. It is actually performed by the MQA. In July 2018, the MQA published a quality assurance framework for the TVET sector, and it is a fully comprehensive document. I won't take the time of the House, it is on the net. They have just published, they are doing that job today. They deal with quality assurance framework in Mauritius. They deal with quality audit, quality control, quality assessment, implementation; they have just published a document, and we are now going to create an authority to do exactly what the MQA has just done in July 2018.

Section 4 (c) – 'confer awarding powers to training institutions'. Does that mean any training institution, be it public or private will henceforth be allowed to award its own certification and conduct its own assessment which is in direct conflict with the MES? Are we to understand that this authority will act in parallel with the MES which will conduct all the assessment, exam for TVET sector? As this Bill is silent on that issue, I hope the hon. Minister in her summing-up will enlighten the House.

Now, Section 4 (d) - still on the 'Objects of the Authority - 'develop a skills framework'. But the HRDC is doing that today. It is the objectives of the HRDC in producing a human resource plan. One of the main objectives of the HRDC is to develop schemes for retraining and multi-skills. What about career counselling to our youth, career guidance? We all know that a skill framework should demonstrate a sound database on career pathways and occupation and job in emerging sector.

Now, maintaining the Skills Development Fund, this is very important. While dealing with that, I shall refer also to Section 21 of the Bill which concerns the creation of that Fund. Today, already companies are contributing to the fees levied to the HRDC. Now, is that authority going to take over that management of the fund, or companies will have to give further fund to that authority? Because now, it is the HRDC which is managing the training levy grant which, I think, is 2% from the salaries paid to the workers. So, these are questions which people are asking and, unfortunately, the Minister was silent and the law, the Bill as it is, is silent with regard to funding. Are we going to have two funds now, one with that authority and one with the HRDC?

Now, let's look at Section 5 of the Bill. If we look at the functions of the MITD and the functions of this Authority, they are more or less the same. I do not intend to quote all the functions, but they are more or less established the criteria required for training institution to be given empowering powers, you have it here: safeguard and market of the intellectual property rights of the institute; awards certificates and diplomas or any technical or vocational qualification. These are more or less the same functions. So are we not duplicating things? And again, like I said, there has been no amendment to the MITD Act. There is no mention of any amendment. As the law will be, there will be two institutions doing the same job.

Now, Section 7 (2) (d) –

“7. The Board

(2)(d) ensure that adequate human and financial resources are provided to the Authority for the proper discharge of its functions.”

Where will we get the adequate human resources? Are those now working at the MQA or the MITD will be transferred to that Authority? Are we going to recruit new professionals? And if so, are they not going to do the same job that they are doing actually at the MITD, at the MQA? If they are going to be employed by the new Authority, those who are working now, doing their assessments at the MITD or the MQA, on what conditions they are going to come to that Authority? Here again, it is not clear, because there are some concerns, especially at the MITD, that some may be transferred or lose their job or become redundant because if the MQA takes over these jobs, there will be problems. So, I hope that the hon. Minister will clarify again.

Now let me come to the powers of the Minister. I am sure they will tell us that it is in all the laws, in most of the Authorities the Minister does give instructions and the Authority has to abide. In this law, you have an Authority, it is supposed to be independent; the object of the Bill mentioned the word ‘independent’. But now, the Minister may give instruction not inconsistent with the law, okay, Mr X has applied for a permit to run a course

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister! Please!

Mr Baloomoody: Okay, put a condition so that he won't satisfy, put a condition in his application, knowing full well that he won't be able to satisfy, and the Board will have to

go according to the instruction of the Minister. I am not personalising things. I say these are situations that may happen. Now, the one who has applied, under Section 20 of the Bill, he can appeal. Very good! But when you look at Section 20 of the Bill dealing with Appeal, what do we see?

“20. Appeal

- (1) Any person aggrieved by any decision of the Authority under this Act may, within 14 days of the date of the decision, appeal to the Minister (...).”

So, the authority has taken a decision following instruction received by the Minister. Now, you are allowed to appeal. Appeal to a Minister! So, the Minister on receipt of this appeal will have an ad hoc Committee and then there will be an Appeal Committee.

And who sits on the Appeal Committee? At Section 20, it is said, I quote –

“(4) (a) The Appeal Committee shall consist of –

- “(i) a Chairperson, who shall be a barrister with at least 5 years’ experience, to be appointed by the Minister; and
- (ii) 2 other members, with at least 5 years’ experience in the field of education, to be appointed by the Minister.”

So, the Minister gave the instruction, you go on Appeal to the Minister and it is the Minister who sets the Appeal Committee!

Also, under that same Section 20, Appeal, it is said –

- “(8) The members of the Appeal Committee and its secretary shall be paid such fees and allowances as the Minister may determine.”

So, it is a mockery of the system, in breach of the basic principle of natural justice. It reminds me of the fake disciplinary committee we have every day when an employer wants to sack one of his staff, he just sets up a disciplinary committee appointed by him, chosen by him, paid by him, and then, the employer sacks. Is this what we are going to put into such an important law: Minister will apply, Minister can intervene, Minister appoints the Discipline Committee?

(Interruptions)

Full power!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that we are going in the wrong direction. We may have an umbrella authority, it would have been fine, but we have to know how it will function in the presence of the three Authorities. We have to know whether there will be no duplication. We have to know who is responsible at the end of the day. Is it the Authority like we have in Singapore who looks after the other one? We are just creating another Authority. As we say, the Bill is silent on many, many things. There is no mention of any consequential amendment to the other three Acts. So we want it to be clear from the Minister what this Authority will be, how it will function, and especially how it will collaborate with the existing institutions, - only time will tell - otherwise we are just creating another Authority, like we say, 'Jobs for the boys or for the girls'.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bholah!

(6.40 p.m.)

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Allow me to congratulate my colleague, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, on the introduction of the Skills Development Authority Bill in this House. The objective is to set up the Skills Development Authority which shall be the regulator of the Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET) sector in Mauritius. But before diving into the importance of regulating this sector, allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to situate the context of the need to lay emphasis on skills development.

Sustaining economic development growth is at the heart of Government's development plan. Our objective is to become a competitive high-income country grounded in a knowledge-based economy, recognising that we will succeed in these aspirations only if our labour force is highly educated and skilled. Government has made education and skills development a priority. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) highlights the crucial role of education through this statement, and I quote –

“Education, vocational training and lifelong learning are central pillars of employability, employment of workers and sustainable enterprise development.”

Government has embarked on a transformative journey to initiate major reforms in our education sector at various levels. Today, we are addressing the challenges faced by the TVET sector. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, technical and vocational education training is often seen as the silver bullet to the problem of youth employment. While many young people have

responded to the labour market prospects by continuing tertiary education and investing in the human capital, others have withdrawn from the academic educational system. TVET is frequently perceived as a solution to improving the opportunities of youth who lack the resources, skills or motivation to continue with higher education.

Moreover, TVET provides useful skills to prepare for youth entry into the labour force and improve their chances of a successful professional career, in particular, by aligning the initial education more closely to particular vocation and tasks demanded in the labour market. The problem of mismatch often seemed as a main source of the high degree of unemployment may be reduced.

Consequently, we are seeking an educational strategy beyond the basics that aims to fully use the potential of our skilled workers and prepare our workforce for the increasing competition of international markets, thus, the importance of revitalising our TVET system which emphasises on the need for high quality vocational education.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, technological advancement has speeded up the pace of change in economies and labour markets. The most recent technological advancement is digitalisation. Information, knowledge and creativity are the main raw materials of such a society as listed by the author, Frank Webster in his book entitled 'Theories of the Information Society'. Digitalisation affects the world of work, demanding more and better qualified workers, keeping pace with rapid change. In any case, technological advancement causes demands for reskilling the workforce accordingly.

As economies become increasingly globalised, TVET policies are required to be internationalised accordingly. Ensuring quality, relevance of outputs and outcomes to cater to labour market needs becomes mandatory. This is because we are interested in internationalising our skills based as well as raising the value of national qualifications on the international labour market. One example which comes to my mind is the training of our fellow citizens who are taking up employment on cruise ships or in the utilities sector abroad.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, given the numerous opportunities which the TVET sector unfolds, it is clear that there is an ever-growing market for training, with more and more institutions being setup. Whilst some providers may receive Government grants, many others are for profit enterprises which give them varying degrees of independence. It is no secret.

Training services can be highly competitive and often lucrative business. Being able to ascertain the validity, reliability, trustworthiness and cost benefit of training, offer is vital.

Unless the State provides the means to enable these providers to demonstrate that their services are accredited and quality assured, they tend to make use of diverse marketing tools to gain public trust. It is in the best interest of our citizens that the onus for accreditation and quality assurance rests with public authorities. This is why the introduction of the Skills Development Authority Bill should be applauded.

As a national regulator for the TVET, the Skills Development Authority will ensure that the sectors, quality and reputation are maintained through the effective regulation of training providers and accredited courses. As specified in clause 5 (b) of the Bill, the Skills Development Authority has been tasked to develop the criteria required for a training institution to be certified. It is also satisfying to note that the Skills Development Authority will not be limited to only accreditation of training institutions. Its functions are broad and encompass the development and implementation of a skills framework in line with strategic national initiatives as detailed in clauses 5 (c) and 5 (h).

As I go through the other functions of the Skills Development Authority, I understand that in its regulatory approach, the regulator will also aim to achieve a balance between the wider interest of Mauritian industry and employers and the specific interest of the technical and vocational education industry.

Mauritian enterprises need a skilled workforce. The Authority will ensure that registered training organisations are meeting the requirements of these industry developed training packages so that TVET graduates have the required skills and competencies for employment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, competing in today's global economy is complex. Countries not only need advanced technical and vocational skills but also a flexible workforce that can adjust to rapid shifts in demand. As we are all aware, the demand for job specific skills has been growing around the world. Globally, firms say that the quality and supply of skilled labour is a major roadblock to their growth. While most of us would agree on the importance of having the right skills, there is often disagreement over what types of skills are right and how they should be produced.

Matching demand and supply is critical for an effective skills development system and depends on close coordination between Government, the private sector and training providers. A close working level cooperation between these players is likely to lead to far fewer mismatches. This is what the Skills Development Authority will seek to achieve by

setting up a register of skills and skilled persons, providing necessary information and by raising public awareness on the TVET sector.

The regulator national vocational education and training system will set clear expectation for registered training organisations to take responsibility for the quality of the qualifications and services. In the spirit of applying the law, it is expected that most organisations will recognise the value of regulation and will have no choice than to comply with the requirements. As per enforcement powers conferred to the regulator as listed in clauses 17 and 18, breaches will be dealt with severity. I have no doubt that the Authority will apply its powers with proportion, rigour, fairness and consistency.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as Minister, I have in my purview the development of SMEs in the country. I can say that the reforms undertaken up to now by Government in the Education Sector aim to ensure that the system leads to a culture of lifelong learning and entrepreneurship in order to fit into a never changing world of work. Quality assurance is fundamental to qualifications. Trust and transparency in qualifications are a requisite for the comparability and recognition of qualifications at both the national and international levels.

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of qualifications and certificates, the qualification and certification process needs to be underpinned by a reliable institution; we can, according to law through which it has been established. I am sure that the TVET Sector, if well regulated, will help our citizens develop the skills they need for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship, promoting equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and supporting transition to green economies and environmental sustainability. The time is right to revise our policies. The time is right to revise our priorities with a view of optimising the impact of economic development on the standards of living of all citizens. In other words, we need to view economic growth through an employment length rather than the contrary. The important role of education in promoting more entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours is now widely recognised. High quality and accredited training will better equip an individual's ability to turn ideas into action and to more creative and self-confident in whatever he/she undertakes. TVET policies cover the preparation of tomorrow's workforce for competitive labour markets, most of which are dominated by SMEs. For instance, in our country, SMEs contribute to the tune of 55% of national employment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, innovation in SMEs is crucial to their success and sustainability. Enterprises characterised by innovation are more likely to survive in the

market than enterprises that do not innovate. Innovation should be the responsibility not only of entrepreneurs but of all employees, particularly in high-tech enterprises where many are typically TVET graduates. One of the challenges for educators and policy makers working in TVET is to assess the extent to which their programs are preparing students for the whole spectrum of working life. Currently most TVET programs are basically designed to prepare people for paid employment and many focus on employment in large enterprises. TVET is strongly linked to entrepreneurship culture. First, TVET is already utilising enterprises of all sizes to assist in training students and trainees. This real life experience helps to expose them to the reality of entrepreneurship and to see self-employment as starting up a business as a viable employment alternative. Second, many TVET programs and activities already include some of the main entrepreneurship skills such as working in teams, problem solving and thinking innovatively. TVET students with practical work experience are already familiar with a rule of preserving the work environment, that is, with occupational health and safety and a wider environment as well as having some awareness of the sustainability of work opportunities and the economy in general.

TVET, at all levels, including tertiary programs, should be a main contributor to entrepreneurship skills acquisition. So, for me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not view the Bill presented in this House as only a piece of paper with clauses. It sets out the principle in ensuring what we develop as TVET sector which is credible, transparent and full of opportunities for the emergence of a skilled and strong workforce, but which also aims at the emergence of new entrepreneurs in different fields.

Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(6.55 p.m.)

Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I consider this Bill to be a Bill of major importance. It has great significance, but, unfortunately, the hon. Minister of Education, who has delivered a good speech, has delivered a speech which is ill-fitted for Parliament. Her speech would have been a great speech in an international forum, and the concern expressed by the Opposition is deep-seated. The basic question, which is yet to be answered with respect to our concern, is overlapping, duplication of resources and the unfettered powers of the hon. Minister.

Knowing that this is a Bill of major importance because our objective, when you talk to any Mauritian, is to improve one's quality of life, to make the quantum leap and to reach the status of an upper middle-income country, to be a hub of the region. But, then, we need to look at our level of preparedness, at how skilled our workforce is. And in this day and age, when there is no preference, there are no trade preferences, we have no choice but to stay ahead of the curve, to be more competitive, to be more productive, and it's not given to us because it's not going to come from heaven, but we have to put in place a system which is well-structured. And the object of the Bill is 'to provide for the establishment of the Skills Development Authority which shall act as an independent regulator, and shall ensure quality assurance and confer awarding powers to training institutions in the TVET sector, and to provide for matters related thereto'.

And when we look at the functions of the Authority, our concern is justified because the arguments for overlapping and duplication are highlighted in the functions of the Authority –

- “(a) make necessary provision for promoting and enhancing quality assurance in TVET sector;
- (b) establish the criteria required for training institutions to be given to awarding powers;
- (c) develop quality assurance for the skills framework and ensure its implementation;”

A regulator, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, needs to have its *raison d'être* and its functions have to be clearly spelt out, and the perception or reality of overlapping or duplication should not exist. And that is why I will put a simple question to the hon. Minister. The Minister has to tell us whether the Skills Development Authority is a precursor to the setting up of a one-stop shop, that is, to rationalise the technical and vocational education and training ecosystem to avoid duplication and overlapping of resources. If the policy is to follow the trend set by Singapore, please say so. In Singapore, the one-stop shop is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and skills future is not a vain cliché. It is based on sound mixed policies, on quality framework which is clearly spelt out, on identifying societal needs and how to adapt to changing circumstances to meet those needs, to cross-border and to adapt quickly to the new economic and social landscape. And the Minister was right to point out

earlier that the world is changing as computer spreads into everyday objects, chips with everything or the Internet of Things.

But there is also, as I have stated, a clarion call for certainty. As matters stand, it appears that there is encroachment from the Skills Development Authority. We do not know, although the Minister stated earlier that she would give explanations later as to where funding will come. Will it come from the training levy? This has to be spelt out. I put the question as to what will happen to the national qualification framework. I am a bit surprised that there is no representation from the Human Resource Development Council, the MQA or the MITD on the Board and this, to me, Mr Deputy Speaker, conveys the wrong signals. I expect that, at least, they will be called upon to sit as and when specific committees are set up.

Now, will the new Authority serve the purpose? It will if the right person drives the process and, as I have stated, there is no overlapping. What is the concern expressed? Yet, another Authority, and we know for certain that over the last four years, the Authority has, among other things, provided jobs for the boys and the girls. I am not going to speak of contracts which have been allocated to favour X, Y or Z, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will refer to a reply given by the hon. Minister to a PQ put by hon. Ramful on skilled resources and mismatch status, which makes me understand fully what is the objective of the Minister and the reason that she is coming forward with the Bill to set up this one-stop shop.

And I quote –

“The MITD is implementing the recommendation of consultancy study carried out by IT Singapore. The recommendations covering the rationalisation of training centres, upgrading of training equipment, infrastructural development, capacity building of trainers and strengthening the quality assurance system have been taken on board in the projects implemented by MITD within transformation plan.”

So, it stands to reason that the trend has been set to have a one-stop shop and to rationalise and to restructure the service providers of the TVET. The Bill, as I say, has certain merits provided the shortcomings are addressed. Because it is the legitimate ambition of anybody to take the rung of the skills ladder, from apprenticeship to *chef d’entreprise*, and I agree, it means savings, efficiency, sound investment and widening the circle of opportunities. A work well accomplished largely due to training on the job is, indeed, human right. One cannot, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, entrust electrical wiring to any person simply because he or she has a certificate of attendance from an MQA institution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if well implemented, it will be in line with the democratisation process. Skills and ideas are interlocked for social mobility. And how often have we heard in the services sector, especially the tourism sector, that he or she started as a waiter and is today a Bar Manager or Manager of a hotel. There are many young persons, dedicated entrepreneurs who started from almost nothing and have learned to take up the rung of the ladder, and today, have become brand name. I am not going to give the name of any particular person, but these are facts. People want quality service, but, unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are too many random courses and the students are taken for a ride at times.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is true that Germany, Singapore, Korea are trendsetters and the mixed policies to harness human capital and to bring a skilled population into the mainstream of socio-economic development are, indeed, a model of success. Earlier, the Prime Minister of India was mentioned because he has started to emulate the success of Germany and the Asian tigers and hammered hard in his speeches on skills and 'Made in India'. The hon. Minister, in her Second Reading speech, stated what are the ambitions of India. And India being a country which is beset by so many problems, especially the problem of skilled unemployment, they have agreed that during the next 15 years, more than 250 million young people will join the Indian market as sustainable economic development and job creation from skilled labour is at the top of its political agenda. The Government, as I have said, has launched the initiatives 'Make in India' and 'Skill India' to support the training of up to 400 million people by year 2022.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the primary object of the Bill is to set up this Development Authority, but then, as has been asked by those who have intervened on the Opposition Bench, what would be the role of the MQA? It is already providing for this function as per the established Quality Assurance Framework. Am I to understand that MQA will not be a regulator? Will the Human Resource Developing Council act as a facilitator and MITD remain the provider to technical and vocational education training?

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are also grey areas on consistency in course contents and levels. For example, for a course in electricity or electronics, the course and syllabus is designed by MITD, that is, the same programme and the same skills. Under the Skills Development Authority, there is no uniformity, because the risk of different institutions running different programmes towards same certification is likely. I expect one programme to be run by different course providers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no justification to set up an Authority if there have been no proper consultations at the bar of public opinion. Since there is no shortage of skills development programme which caters for all the sectors of the economy, I would appreciate if the Minister informs the House of the policies that are going to be put in place to achieve the harmonious integration of the programme to adapt to societal needs, how to skill up our workforce to be responsive to a blue and green economy. Mauritius has to benchmark with the best to constantly move up the rung of the human development index. The operation of the regulatory body, unfortunately, is not clearly spelt out. Since close collaboration is established with TVET of Singapore, the Minister has to apprise us how the mechanism will be operational. Are we adopting the German model as India has done? All these issues have to be addressed. Unfortunately, our criticism is justified because there is no clear-cut strategy, and the approach is piecemeal and not comprehensive. If we believe in collective capitalism, we need to operate in an inclusive ecosystem. All aboard, as we say, and as of now, the views of the NGOs, the Business Mauritius, trade unions have not been expressed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have said it, and it is good to reinforce it, that the only factor that remains constant is change. We are all for constructive destruction because we are becoming a service oriented economy. And at all levels, we have to upgrade our skills and move from generic to subset of specialisation. So, that's why I make an appeal that if we have to hold hands of the unskilled and accompany them with tailor-made designed courses and groom them to move up the social and economic ladder, then the approach has to be comprehensive. We need to narrow the divide, and there is a call for good oversight and quality control. A skilled workforce is a dignified nation; a skilled person should cross-border, as I have stated earlier, and the skills have to be sought after to keep migration circular; a skilled person does away with taboo, discrimination and stigma, and a skilled person has a passport for life and ongoing training is a great lifeline.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have stated, the functions of the Skills Development Authority are relevant if there is fair representation at Board level. Then, the process will be structured to enable the Authority to act decisively. The point has been canvassed by hon. Baloomoody as to the unfettered powers that are extended to the Minister. I think this could have been addressed differently because the purpose is public governance and not to confer unfettered powers upon the Minister.

As I have stated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill has its *raison d'être* but unless and until the issues which we have raised are fully addressed: the issue relating to overlapping

and duplication of resources; the policies that have to be put in place to ensure that we make the leap, and the justification that SDA will deliver on promises made. These are issues that need to be spelt out clearly by the hon. Minister. My only regret is that this Bill is being brought on the eleventh hour, at a time when the countdown of this Government has started and they are in free fall.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to start with, let me state, as many hon. Members have been saying before me that this is a very important Bill for our country. I have to commend the Minister and her team, the officers of the Ministry, because if we look at what has happened in this Ministry during the last four and a half years, there has been a systematic approach that has been adopted. They started by bringing reforms in the primary and the secondary sectors and then they brought this Higher Education Commission Bill. They brought about reform in the Higher Education Sector. Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after the reform of the Higher Education Sector, the Ministry is coming forward with a regulator to regulate this TVET Sector which is a very important sector for our economy as I said earlier.

Going forward what we have to understand is that we have a lot of challenges and today what this Bill is trying to address are the challenges, the aspirations of this TVET Sector by putting in place a regulator and that regulator *est justement* this Skills Development Authority Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before coming to this Bill, I wanted to share something with the House. I was in Singapore last week and I met with the CEO of a company and I was discussing with him about the possibility of getting a representation of a product in the marine field and he told me that if I wanted the representation of this product, I needed to have trained people in my country to be able to handle what I am going to sell. Those were navigation and communication equipments. Since we are putting a lot of emphasis on this ocean economy, opportunities are wide. So, we were discussing about possibilities of bringing those very famous Japanese products. The company was based in Singapore. So, we had to discuss with them there. When I was back, I tried to investigate as to whether we would be in a possibility of getting those trained people, those who can handle, those who

have a basic knowledge on navigation and communication equipments that you can find in those fishing commercial vessels that visit Mauritius regularly.

You would be surprised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I phoned at the Marine Training School that we have here. I wanted to have some information as to where I can get people trained in this field or, at least, I can get some information as to where to get the trained personnel. There was no authority where I could go. This is one of the challenges, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is an example that I wanted to give only to explain to the House that with the challenges of our economy – we are talking of blue economy, we are talking of many of the sectors but to be able to meet the challenges of those sectors whether it is IT, we have been talking about AI, any other sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, those sectors upon which our economy would have to rely going forward, it would be important for us to ensure that we have a TVET Sector that can meet the aspirations of our economy. And this is what this Bill is addressing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,

So, in my speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wanted to come very briefly to four challenges and I have one observation and then I am going to conclude. Challenge No. 1 is the perception that we have among the youth, among the parents that the vocational and technical education is made for second-class citizens in our country. This is the wrong perception that today, unfortunately, we have in this country. Some of the hon. Members, I think, earlier mentioned this, but this is the perception that this Authority will have to fight. This regulator will have, together with the training institutions, with other bodies because if we have a look at the functions of the Authority at Clause 5, you will see that one of the functions is to promote public awareness and confidence in skills development. Now, this issue of confidence is extremely important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the population. As I was saying, there is a perception that those who cannot excel academically, they become suddenly second-class citizens in this country. It is very unfortunate. This is why I commend the Minister and her team because they have been very systematic in their approach until now. First challenge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is this issue of how do you go about fighting this perception that when you are in, for example, *Lycée Polytechnique* at Flacq or when you are at Hotel School in Ébène, you are not a second-class student, you are important for this economy. We need you and we'll need to ensure that it would be the responsibility of the Authority to ensure that we have such types of institutions like *École Hôtelière*, *Lycée Guy Forget*, even other polytechnics that we have set up will have to ensure that they bring

confidence in the population. This is what will be the role of this Authority going forward, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

We have to ask ourselves why today there are parents who have so much of difficulty to find a seat at *École Hôtelière*, even at *Lycée Guy Forget* in Flacq. They get lots of difficulties in finding a seat there because they know that once their daughter or their son has the possibility of securing a seat there, they will not have a problem going forward to secure a job in the private sector. That is challenge one that this Bill aims at meeting.

The second important challenge and aspiration that this Bill looks forward to meet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is this important issue of capacity building in the TVET Sector. I have not seen, I don't know, maybe the hon. Minister might explain. If in the function, if they have worked, I know in 2015, there have been several workshops, there have been exchanges and there have been lots of works that have been done by the Ministry. I don't think that they can miss this. I know that they know the importance of what capacity building is, what training means, but in their functions, I believe somewhere, I don't know, I have not seen it here, but I know there is this importance of laying a lot of emphasis on capacity building.

This is a real problem not only in Mauritius. In the TVET sector, whether it is in Mauritius or abroad in many countries, you have this problem and this is where I was reading a paper by, I think, the African Union. There is a Commission that looks after all issues of education. And also, there is the Agenda Aspirations 2063 which lays a lot of emphasis on empowerment of African people. So, I believe that there is a need, with this authority, to ensure that we have exchanges starting with the African region. We have got qualified people in that TVET sector. There is a lot that has been done in some African countries. With the support of the African Union, I am sure that we can work on this capacity building in Mauritius for the TVET sector and, of course, this is a second challenge that I am sure this particular important body that is being put in place is going to address.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the second issue this issue of capacity building which is, I am sure, as I said, collaboration in the region. Going forward, I am sure, we will have the support of countries in the region. Also, many other countries, for example, like Singapore is a country with which we are currently collaborating.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the next challenge is that of assuring quality. The hon. Minister mentioned the setting up of a Quality Assurance Board when the Higher Education

Bill was set up. I agree that we have to go on the same line. We need to have an independent authority that is going to assure quality. What is happening today? Who is evaluating the performance of those training institutions in the private sector? I agree that there are many institutions where, for example, you have got infrastructure problems, but this is what this authority would help into improving.

The quality of trainers for example, the quality of training institutions, the quality of courses, quality at all levels in the TVET sector – and what is commendable again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Look at the functions of the authority. In no less than three cases, it is mentioned that we have to ensure quality. You have to make necessary provisions for promoting and enhancing quality assurance in TVET sector. We have to develop quality assurance skill framework and ensure its implementation and then afterwards advise the Minister also on matters pertaining to quality assurance, regulation and friendly relation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this issue of quality assurance, we all agree, is so important for this sector and for our economy. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, this third challenge, as well, has been taken on board. Going forward, it will be for the authority to ensure that those clear procedures are properly implemented in order to ensure there is accountability, but, at the same time, sustainability in this field, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Now a final point is that of challenge. When you talk of challenge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a final point is in relation to the challenges and aspirations of the sector. This collaboration with the public sector is so essential, but also, Mr Deputy Speaker, collaboration with the private sector and with the civil society. Even if it is not there in the Bill, the collaboration with the civil society, it goes without saying that we will need the NGOs in this process. We should not forget that there are NGOs where you have got *la formation*. I have forgotten the name, but there is one in Beau Bassin which is offering training to handicapped. So, there is the contribution of the civil NGOs, but the collaboration of the private sector and in this Bill, in the Board the Deputy Chairman is from the private sector, the collaboration by Business Mauritius.

I wanted to mention something again as an example, Mr Deputy Speaker, of what is happening today. I'll take a case that I know of course where I am working today. We have been looking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for a driver for heavy goods for the last two months. Nowhere are we to find somebody who is ready to work for Rs20,000. a month. A driver of heavy goods – I am not saying to come and drive big trucks, 4 tonnes only. More than 2.5

tonnes, you cannot find. We have been looking for a painter for our paint factory. Two years we have applied. We are trying to find one from Bangladesh or from India, nowhere is to be found. We are trying to find mechanics for our garage, three mechanics plus one electrician since a couple of months. Nowhere are they to be found. This is the state upon which we are today. This is the problem of mismatch also that this authority will have to address, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So, it is a good initiative on the part of the Minister. Of course, it is not the perfect one, but it is a commendable achievement and I hope that gradually, we will have the structure in place. With the support of this authority, we can have this collaboration with the private sector. The private sector will have the collaboration of this authority in order to solve this problem of mismatch. That is the reason, sometimes somebody will tell you that you have thirty thousand youth who are unemployed, but, at the same time, in the newspapers, everyday, you have a long list of vacancies on and on. This is the reason that explains, Mr Deputy Speaker, this problem of mismatch.

An observation before I conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Hon. Dr. Boolell, earlier, spoke about the HRDC. I have a suggestion for the Minister, a proposal. I think the HRDC falls under the Prime Minister's Office now. When we talk of this levy today, the companies are contributing, but the levy – they spend on training. They have the possibility to recoup, I think, 70% or 75% of the levy from the HRDC. I can tell you from experience, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, most of these funds go into *la formation académique*. Sometimes, you have got professional training like courses on leadership, courses on customer care and marketing, but you will never hear companies encouraging their workers, their employees to go for training, for example - give training to a mechanic or a plumber; give training to an electrician. What I am proposing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that it should be mandatory to be eligible for a refund, I think you need to spend, at least, 30% of the training levy that you are eligible for, at least, 25% or 30% should be on TVET courses. This is what I am suggesting. Of course, it can come afterwards, but in order to promote this, I think, part of this fund that is today available at the level of HRDC, it should become mandatory for private companies to be able to recoup them. Part of it they can only recoup if they have spent part of these funds on TVET course.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these were the four challenges that I wanted to mention. But before resuming my seat, let me conclude. There was an interesting paper that I was reading that was presented during this G20 Summit in Osaka in Japan this year. On that

paper, as a conclusion, this is what Mrs Romina Bandura, Center for Strategic and International Studies and Paul Grainger of University College London had to say. They presented a paper on TVET and this is what they had to say as a conclusion –

“The UN predicts that there will be 3.3 billion people under the age of 25 by 2030, most living in Asia and Africa. Africa will double its population by 2050 and 60 percent of its citizens will be under the age of 25. This represents a demographic opportunity that could be wasted if economies do not create meaningful jobs and educate new generations appropriately for the future of work. In this regard, TVET should not be overlooked as a legitimate pathway to employment. This will require building strong coalitions among governments, the business community, and education institutions.”

I would like to thank the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Monty!

(7.35 p.m.)

Mrs M. C. J. Monty (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for allowing me to intervene on this Bill. May the hon. Minister be congratulated for bringing to the House this present Bill, which I must say comes at the right time to complete the big change in our educational system already in place and to fit in the train of reform in the well-defined educational sector of Mauritius.

This Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, comes to rehabilitate the vocational sector as being part and parcel of the whole educational system in Mauritius which has for long been marginalised as a low status track for poor academic achievers as also mentioned by the previous speaker. The general perception has always been one of a dead-end track, a second choice education and as in many other countries around the world, this sector is usually very lowly regarded by the population at large.

Dans cette tranche de l'éducation, M. le président, qui concerne les aptitudes autres que l'académique et qui est axée sur le développement des aptitudes et des talents, pouvant mener à une carrière relative à l'intelligence propre de la personne, ce projet de loi vient justement redonner aux formes multiples de l'intelligence leur place et leur valeur et aussi leur offrir une structure légale spécifique. Il faut bien le dire, M. le président, le secteur pré-vocationnel a fait ses preuves dans ses faiblesses comme dans ses nombreuses limites. Le

projet de loi est d'abord et avant tout une reconnaissance, un dû trop longtemps nié, un besoin trop longtemps ignoré.

At last, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are brought to understand that intelligence does not only lie in one's performance in academic subjects, but that it is a multi-faceted expression of one's talent and also expresses otherwise, for example, in creative works, in mechanics, electrical works, masonry and lately robotics amongst others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the steps towards this Vocational Skills Authority Bill are clearly stipulated and everyone going through it can understand how this will function but our analysis of the said Bill should go far beyond these intricacies and bring into light vocational education as part of a whole educational structure in our country. I have chosen, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not to dwell on the administrative aspect of the proposed Vocational Skills Authority nor the composition of the board and internal rules, but to go beyond these usual administrative intricacies and reflect on the necessity of our own society to step above the institution of this authority and to understand more and more that our own country does not only need academics but also professionals from other fields of service. This will require, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a shift in our mindset and will require us to start from accepting and welcoming that within our society lie also many other talents that may not necessarily emerge from what we usually call normal stream and which we should start by qualifying now as general education but from the less prestigious field of study that can also be subject of our pride.

Our youngsters, with less academic aptitude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are not children of a lesser God, they are not students of a lesser planner, of a lesser visionary, but they are inheritants of a man of justice and vision and of a dignified woman pedagogue-Minister who both do not want less for the children of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our aim at excellence and quality assurance is and remains our path. So to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the institutionalisation of the proposed authority comes to recalibrate this important sector of our whole education system meant to cater for one and all and to provide one all-inclusive education system and to have, as our Prime Minister often proclaims, no left outs, no left behinds. This is a proof of our sincere desire to cater for other needs in the educational field.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is however not a rare exception to this general tendency of having a less privileged place in the mind of the people for vocational training.

But with the coming of the Vocational Skills Authority, the right balance is aimed at because we believe, as Mahatma Gandhi rightly puts it, that “education is the art of drawing out full manhood of the children” we are training and those who are under training. It comes to highlight as well what Oscar Wilde says –

“Everyone may not be good, but there is something good in everyone. Never judge anyone shortly because every saint has a past and every sinner has a future.”

Our future authority, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will allow for regulations and control to ensure quality, effectiveness and efficiency. It brings to light the TVET Sector as a valued continuation of the core of general education and also provides opportunity to proceed along the line. As the regulatory body of Private Secondary Schools, the PSSA has been in existence since more than 40 years, it is with satisfaction that we should welcome this regulatory body for the TVET sector. The Vocational Skills Authority comes to bring to light the importance of vocational technical training in our country and confer to it its due respect and worth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, vocational streaming has become a choice, but needs much more reflection and research, and this new VSA is a stepping stone towards giving to this sector its due importance in relation to market research, needs and demands.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our youth has for long stagnated in the glue of mismatching and wrong *planification*. Our country is now giving a new wave to TVET sector which has for too long also been considered as an education for the misfits and people of low social economic backgrounds.

In the wake of change, technical and vocational education is called upon to take an important place and to open up to partnerships as proposed in section 6(e) of this present Bill. The VSA will open the doors for collaborators, trainers, employers and by extension will help in taking up the challenge.

I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, vocational education will evolve for us to be one of the alternative avenues to take towards a successful life. Our educational tapestry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a multi-coloured woven one and we want it to be made of tight threads. We want the knots of the wide net to hold all those who want to discontinue schooling in providing opportunities for all as we want no drop-outs. We have the chance to be a country which is doing very well in the academic field and this Bill comes to set it right that we are moving towards the rehabilitation of the vocational sector which is bound to evolve and we

should start to value more the vocational sector as being another avenue for the youth and nation of our country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is then important that we give our support to this Vocational Skills Authority so as it may provide the regulatory framework necessary to this field and its real responsibilities which will comprise of the registration of course providers as stipulated in section 5 of the Bill. It will also have the responsibility of conducting compliance audits, inspection and ensuring public awareness about the TVET sector, maintain and promote confidence across the sector and making provision to enhance quality, quality assurance, according to course providers, undertake research for the development of the sector, amongst others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our Government is committed to the vital role of vocational education and training plays in ensuring that Mauritius has the necessary workforce to bring about innovation and sustainable growth. We are moving towards a new era of development in growth whereby the quality of training, the quality of trainers and the quality of trainees is vital. The role of the authority will also be to ensure that quality teaching and training be provided in line with the needs and demands of our country, and that it responds to labour market demands.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our economic prosperity depends on the quality of our training and the ability of our trainees. The TVET sector's reputation and success is, therefore, most important for the successful and fruitful educational reform, our workforce and also our professional sector and other businesses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, vocational education provided in the framework of secondary schooling should be modernised and complemented with phases of practical work, practical work experience, such as internships or final year exam with an employer. Employers should also be consulted regarding the design of vocational schooling curricula which requires a systematic coordination with networks or associations of employers.

Furthermore, in order to avoid a negative perception of vocational education as a dead end option, transition to further education, including tertiary education should be facilitated. Opening an exposure to new technologies and occupational change should form part of our new endeavours. Raising potential for innovation is crucial, access to technical equipment and capital are the steps to be undertaken.

A juste titre, M. le président, un partenariat avec les entreprises est important, car ce domaine ne relève pas de la simulation des théories, mais prend tout son sens dans la pratique. Ce qui permet à l'apprenant d'acquérir de la pratique, de l'expérience, d'évoluer dans le monde du travail, de connaître l'atmosphère dans laquelle il sera appelé à travailler et à ajuster son comportement au niveau du travail, d'apprendre à vivre et à travailler avec les autres, à développer ses aptitudes, son sens de discipline, entre autres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our youth has for too long been trapped in the blinkers of past narrow-mindedness that has rooted for too long in our educational system. Fortunately, the wheel of change has stopped at the door of newness in the educational field and those *tristement étiquetés* children of the country called '*les recalés*' are now freed on the path of openness and opportunities for training, development and growth so as to meet the challenges of our fast changing society.

M. le président, un corps régisseur était un must, et je salue la décision de la ministre d'être venue avec ce projet de loi. Nous avons besoin de redonner à ce secteur ses lettres de noblesse en lui procurant une structure adéquate et légale. Ceci aidera à diminuer les préjugés face à ce secteur de formation et à se rappeler que chaque secteur est important.

M. le président, que fera le médecin sans le mécanicien? Que fera le dentiste ou le médecin orthopédique sans son prothésiste? Tout professionnel a col blanc qu'on puisse être, peut-on bâtir sa maison sans constructeur? Que vaut le plan de l'architecte sans constructeur? Que vaut le plus grand hôtel sans son chef?

Nous venons, donc, M. le président, donner maintenant sa vraie valeur à un secteur trop longtemps traité comme un deuxième grade. Les métiers méritent le plus grand respect. Donc, le corps régissant la formation dans ce secteur mérite notre support et notre reconnaissance. Donc, Madame la ministre, soyez félicitée et remerciée d'avoir ajusté votre regard sur ce besoin.

M. le président, la course privilégiant l'élite en laissant boitiller ceux qui ne peuvent suivre le pas est révolue. Bravo madame la ministre pour être venue donner de l'oxygène à un secteur trop longtemps étouffé dans la crasse agonisante de la routine, de l'hésitation, de l'indécision et du manque de vision, piétinant ainsi nos propres enfants en faisant voler les plus brillants et trotter les plus lents. Merci d'être venu mettre fin à cela. Merci madame la ministre pour ce projet de loi, merci pour cette ouverture et sur ce, M. le président, je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Selvon!

(Interruptions)

May I ask the hon. Chief Whip whether he has been informed by hon. Mrs Selvon that she will not take part in today's debate?

Hon. Members, I find this very serious and I am concerned with this type of behaviour and I hope also that Members from the Opposition side knows the role of the last speaker from their side. I believe that out of courtesy, any Member who has submitted his name to participate in a debate should ensure that either the Chief Whip or the Chair be made aware that he or she will not participate in the debate. Thank you.

Hon. Minister, you have the floor for the summing-up.

(7.55 p.m.)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am glad that this Bill has stimulated a debate on the TVET sector. I am glad that hon. Members from both sides of the House have made their contribution, though I must say that I am a bit saddened by the fact that some of the Members who had raised queries and whose queries I was to address are not here for the debate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know that for a long time, as many Members of the House have underlined, the TVET sector has been perceived as being the second choice, not the favoured option of students. But in our endeavour to rebrand the sector, we wanted to attract students, even high performers to that sector, and this is the idea why we have been stating for a number of years now, that the TVET sector needs to be rebranded and we want to give it the means to be rebranded and to attract the best students.

In Mauritius, we have the MITD which is a public body which delivers, which is a service supplier, a service giver for the TVET sector. It has been there, as mentioned by Members, since 1989, but we have also had new institutions that have dotted our TVET landscape, namely Polytechnics Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Mrs Perraud mentioned that we have been saying that there is massive investment in the TVET sector, that we are renovating and reviewing the infrastructure in the sector and that according to her this is not the case. I would like to draw the attention of the House that we have been talking about the rationalisation in the service, of the centres in the TVET area. Now, we have been putting up new blocks at the *École*

Hôtelière, we are coming up with a brand new TVET centre in Beau Vallon, we are renovating all our centres and, obviously, it is going to take time. I have seen some of the photographs shown in the Assembly and, as mentioned by my officers, these are old photographs. Changes are being brought and we have to be true to ourselves; things do not change overnight, changes are coming. And hon. Mrs Perraud, being herself the Chairman of the PAC, should be very much aware of the amount of money spent in the setting up of Polytechnics Mauritius. She has been querying a number of times in the PAC Committees that so much money is being invested in the Polytechnics. Are we going to have value for money? But I am glad to inform the House today that the number of students enrolled in Polytechnics Mauritius over the past one year has reached 900 students and will reach more by the end of this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, talking about the TVET sector, we have to realise that the TVET sector is the engine for growth and development. If we want to attain the high income status for Mauritius, we need to go and ensure that we have quality delivery in the TVET sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a lot has been said about the role of the Skills Development Authority, whether it is going to duplicate the functions of the MQA. Let me go over this point again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I had mentioned it in my Second Reading speech, but I am going to go over it again. In this TVET sector, we have got the MQA, the Mauritius Qualifications Authority, and then we have got the service providers, the MITD and Polytechnics Mauritius, plus a number of private operators and, obviously, we are coming up now with a Skills Development Authority.

The MQA, let us make it very clear, is responsible for accreditation of programmes and registering suppliers, operators, and it is responsible for the development and maintenance of the qualifications framework. Now, this is different from the skills framework. The qualification framework is related to certification and the qualification framework covers not only the TVET sector, but covers the whole sector, starting from lower to higher end courses. So, this is the role of the MQA.

When you talk about the HRDC, the HRDC is responsible for human capital development. It plans the human capital development for the country. Now, the Skills Development Authority is meant to act as a regulator for the TVET sector. It is meant to give more visibility to the TVET sector. It is responsible for the rebranding and, as mentioned by

hon. Rughoobur, to ensure that people become aware of what is being offered and it is going to market the TVET sector. It is responsible for the communication that has to be provided for that particular sector, but at the same time and what is more important, it is going to regulate the sector, it is going to be responsible for quality assurance in the sector.

Now, there is no duplication because the qualification authority has got another role. It is going to look for quality in the course, quality in the programme and is responsible for accreditation of programmes, whereas the Skills Development Authority will be responsible for quality at all levels in terms of infrastructure, in terms of training delivery, in terms of outputs. So, we need to have a proper regulator. We are saying that it is going to be an apex regulator for the sector, no duplication, and this is where, I think, hon. Members on the other side of the House, got confused. There is a difference in what we call a skills framework. We need to know what is the complexity in a particular field, and it is important not only for the provider of the course of the training but also for the trainee himself to be able to see what is the staircase, how does he proceed and how can he move from one level of complexity to the next. Very important.

This is also interesting because Members had mentioned about recognition of prior learning. Now, how do you ensure that you give credit to someone who has experience in a particular field? You need to know what is the level of skills that he has attained, and this is what is the skills framework.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I hope that I have cleared the doubts in the minds of my colleagues on the other side of the House because the skills framework provides a map of economic sectors, of activity using a staircase in skills sets to pave the way for a person to understand progressive complexity for high order jobs in the sector or even if there is a lateral movement that is possible. So, skills will bring greater value to the qualifications. Now, when very often people talk about mismatch, they are not looking for higher qualifications, they are looking for higher order of skills in their employees. So, we need to develop that, and to be able to ensure that this is being done, it requires a regulatory body.

Now, as I have said in my speech earlier, we are following the same principle, as is the trend around the world, the same principle that we have kept for the higher education sector; we need to have autonomous quality assurance regulators. Why? Because we do not want to have conflict of interest. The one that is giving accreditation to courses cannot be the one doing the quality assurance because otherwise if ever there is a problem noted, he might

feel a bit embarrassed to take action. This is what specifically happened in Mauritius in the case of the D.Y. Patil saga. The accreditation was provided by TEC and the quality assurance was expected to be done by TEC, and when they noted that there was a problem, they felt very embarrassed because they were the one who had given accreditation for the courses. So, we have learned from the mistakes done by others and we are trying to review what we need to do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is another point that was raised talking about MITD and talking about courses, training of trainers. We have to understand that service providers are responsible for ensuring that their trainers are qualified. The MQA has got a register of trainers and the MQA does that part. But the Skills Development Authority will have to ensure that whatever is being done at the level of each and every provider is being done according to the norms and standards set by the Skills Development Authority.

Hon. Mrs Perraud also mentioned that there are about 500 operators, how are we going to assess these operators. I need to stress that we do have a large number of operators, but there are only 53 award-giving courses. So, we need to consider all these. One more point that I would like to stress refers to whether the SDA will deal with both public and private institutions. This is exactly what it is supposed to do; to ensure that all institutions offer courses of a standard. Now, the idea that it is going to be different by different operators, I need to mention that this is what normally happens. If you go to the University of Mauritius or you go to UTM, or even to any other institutions and you do an engineering course, the Tertiary Education Commission ensures that the courses or programmes are of a proper standard. So, similarly for the TVET sector, we need to provide the same type of quality assurance. Research, obviously, there is no duplication, because at the level of the Skills Development Authority, the research will be of another order in different fields.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have already mentioned that there is a difference between the qualification framework and skills framework. And then, I have heard hon. Dr. Boolell, I think, mentioning that we need to have on the Board of the Skills Development Authority members from the MITD, etc. Now, for all regulatory bodies, it is not considered to be proper, or good governance, to have people that are going to be controlled, to be monitored to sit on that Board. And this has been one of the recommendations of the OPSG and of many other institutions trying to bring about good governance in our institutions. So, this would not be considered to be proper.

Now, another point raised by hon. Dr. Boolell was that we were moving towards a one-stop shop. This is not the case because even Singapore does not have a one-stop shop. Singapore has got its polytechnics, which are operators. It has got the ITE, which is the structure that controls the TVET part. Now, they are moving towards skills future so as to have a wider perspective and a regulatory body that will ensure that quality is being offered.

Now, talking about India, all the institutions that are operating, whether they are service providers, whether they are dealing with qualification framework, will need to be working with the other institutions. They were asking how will the Skills Development Authority work. I have mentioned earlier, the pattern is one of complementarity. So, whatever is being done by MQA and by the MITD will be regulated by the Skills Development Authority. Hon. Mrs Perraud mentioned the case of instructors at the MITD. Now, I know this is not linked to that particular Bill, but I will still address this point. If a person has been employed for 10 years in one position, nothing forbids or prevents that person to apply for another post in case there is a vacancy. I must stress that vacancies for training officers have come up and many of the instructors have applied and some have been recruited, provided obviously that they have the necessary qualifications.

Hon. Mrs Perraud also mentioned that officers at the MITD were unhappy, frustrated. I would like to draw the attention of the House that only a few weeks back, 84 officers of the MITD, who were on a month-to-month contract, have been on the establishment. So, far from being frustrated, I expect that this would bring joy to these people. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the rationale behind this Bill is to consolidate, modernise our TVET sector and to come up with institutional framework that would help it to grow and to enhance its delivery.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are at an advanced stage in the implementation of the educational reforms, and I must say that we started with the primary sector, we have moved on to the secondary and tertiary sectors, and now we have started the improvement and the reform in the TVET sector. I am confident that we will manage to attain our objectives and I would like to state that once we come up with a skills framework, we will provide for higher end skills for emerging industries, businesses which will cater for the needs of what we now call 'the dynamic economy'.

I would like also to stress that most of the people who have intervened have been talking mainly about MITD. MITD is one of the earliest providers of vocational and technical education and training, but we must not forget that we now have Polytechnics Mauritius

which is providing us with a high-end skills to ensure that we, in fact, get the skilled manpower required to bring us to the next level of development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I hope that I have cleared most of the points raised by Members of the Opposition and I would like, once again, to thank all those who have intervened from both sides of the House in the debate on this Bill.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

The Skills Development Authority Bill (No. XXVII of 2019) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair, the Deputy Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Skills Development Authority Bill (No. XXVII of 2019) be read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 24 September 2019 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Hon. Bhagwan!

MATTERS RAISED

CHEBEL - CREMATION GROUND - CLOSURE

(8.15 p.m.)

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Riviere): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am very happy that the hon. Minister is here this week. So, I will address myself to the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure with regard to - I won't say a mismanagement - a *mauvaise coordination entre la RDA et la municipalité de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill*.

It concerns the unilateral closure of a cremation ground at Chebel in the context of the road project from Petite Rivière to Chebel and this has caused a lot of inconveniences and also *beaucoup de colère*. My colleague hon. Quirin and myself had the opportunity to talk to the Chairperson of the RDA and the Major of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, whom I understand now has taken the decision to reopen the cremation ground, fortunately.

The purpose of my intervening is to ask the hon. Minister to, at least, see to it that there is proper coordination. The RDA should not have taken the decision to close the cremation ground until there is a new one. At least, they constructed in the vicinity, but also in consultation with all the religious authorities of Maingard and the other regions of Beau Bassin.

I know that the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill accepts, but *il y a certains qui font de la démagogie*. *Je n'ai pas de problème à le dire, mais j'espère que le ministre des Infrastructures publiques va faire le nécessaire auprès de la RDA. Il n'y pas seulement le cremation ground, il y a aussi un lieu* where was cremated the late Sir Kher Jagatsingh. I have been made to understand that the land is owned by Gamma Civic, but the Municipality has been taking care for years and years of that cremation ground. I think the Minister, at least, owes an explanation to the inhabitants of Maingard. I would like to say that this is bad planning and *mauvaise coordination entre la RDA et la municipalité*.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not going to talk about bad planning or *démagogie* or whatever. I would like to say that the hon. Member raised this matter to me a few days back. My colleague, the Chief Whip also was addressing this issue. The hon. Minister Gayan also talked to me. There was a meeting with the *forces vives*. In fact, I would like to explain...

(Interruptions)

Yes, the PPS Aliphon as well. Anyway, everybody is concerned and everybody wanted to find a solution.

The project consists of the construction of 2.7 kms of carriageway and it will link Black River Road to Gros Cailloux, Chebel and Port Louis, and also will further link to the A1/M1 bridge and come to Soreze.

In order to do this, there had to be a roundabout and it entailed the demolition of a boundary wall of the old crematorium and the demolition of one wood furnace. Now, we have sat down, everybody has been involved and, in fact, from what I understand, there was a decision of the Municipality and it followed a decision of Housing and Lands for the acquisition of that plot. A meeting has been held. One of the affected wood furnace will be reconstructed within the same premises of the crematorium, which means that the old crematorium, the traditional one will continue with the two piers and the site will be reinstated. The access to the crematorium will be enlarged and relocated on the lateral road by making use of land already acquired. I am also being told that special attention has been given to see to it that nothing happens to Sir Kher Jagatsingh tomb. It is also worth noting that the new crematorium will be untouched, which means that you will have the new one and the traditional one as well, and the new roundabout will be able not only to link A1/M1, as I said, but also the locality of Chebel. Access to these two crematoriums will be made more practical.

So, we have found a solution. I will see to it that this is done in the proper manner and that we will have a time frame for everything so that everybody can rest in peace.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have a list of 16 Members who wish to intervene. We have only 30 minutes allotted to this item.

Hon. Uteem!

VICTORIA BUS TERMINAL - CLOSURE

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have an issue addressed to the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and it relates to the chaotic situation prevailing in Port Louis following the closure of Victoria Bus Terminal. There is chaos everywhere. First, bus users do not know where to take the bus because Rose Hill Transport, UBS, CNT, private buses are all lumped

together along the street and they are having difficulties to unload and to have access to the Motorway.

Also the closure has caused a number of issues for other road users. Private cars departing from Port Louis, especially in the afternoon and the new bus lane also is contributing to create a traffic jam. So, there is an urgent need for the Government to better communicate. I know the Government has been meeting with the representatives of various bus companies to try to find a way to solve the matter.

My appeal to the Government is to better communicate so that users know where to take the bus and this should be done via appropriate sign posts and media communication.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody believed in that project. Nobody thought this could be done. It is 80,000 people taking the bus, 60 taxis, 600 buses with all the routes! We have been working for months on that, but the proof of it is only when it happens. I understand what has been said, but everybody is working and doing the fine-tuning. We are going to have desks - in fact, we have already prepared them - where information will be available, people can access to them. We will have flyers and billboards to explain where it is. We have one major issue, the third lane that we are using on the motorway, which is restricting the fact that there is going to be only two lanes going towards the south.

Two main decisions we have taken is to create a bus lane from la Rue Moka, John Kennedy and round the corner to the Motorway. We are now contemplating because now we know exactly what are the major issues. We are contemplating of having a contra lane, that is, taking one of the lanes coming into Port Louis to go South on that junction, we are taking all the measures. I can understand that there is a major problem of communication and the Police has been there, NTA is there. I would like to make an appeal. I can understand that it's a major disruption. You can't build but that station has been there for 50 years and nothing has changed. It was a parking for 600 buses every day. This is going to be an amazing project and I am going to make an appeal to everybody, all the users. I think it would need some fine-tuning. We are working on the different measures and I would like to thank the hon. Member for mentioning this because everybody is talking about it, but I think that we will have some fine-tuning to do. It will take us maybe another week so that things come back to normal because we have to live with this for at least 18 months.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(8.24 p.m.)

**DEBARCADERE, POINTE AUX SABLES PUBLIC BEACH – TOILET
FACILITIES**

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): My intervention is addressed to the hon. Minister of Tourism with regard to the beach at Débarcadère, Pointe aux Sables, the public beach, where, in fact, there is a fish landing and there is a request from the fishmongers and members of the public if a toilet can be...

(Interruptions)

The Beach Authority.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Sinatambou. He is listening. Good! There is a request by the fishmongers and the inhabitants of the region that a toilet be placed there, especially at the time when the fish are landing, *les bayans sont là*, members of the public are there. It creates some difficulties. So, if arrangements can be made for a toilet at this specific area.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter, but I must however inform the hon. Member that the Beach Authority looks after 127 public beaches. So, it is a question of priority and of budget. So, if the budget for this year has not already been exhausted, I will certainly put a sympathetic word to the Director of the Beach Authority.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

VUILLEMIN, BEAU BASSIN – LARCENY

Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci M. le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au Premier ministre mais comme il n'est pas là, je vais demander au Vice-Premier ministre de lui transmettre ma requête qui concerne en fait les nombreux cas de vol qui ont eu lieu ces derniers mois dans la région de Vuillemin à Beau Bassin dont le dernier en date a eu lieu la semaine dernière où une jeune fille handicapée de surcroît s'est fait voler son Laptop alors qu'elle était sortie pour quelques minutes. Donc, la

recrudescence de vol, M. le président, est dû, à mon avis, à la prolifération de drogues dans cette région depuis quelques temps. Les patrouilles de Police sont pratiquement inexistantes et cela occasionne à ces voleurs de commettre leur forfait.

Donc, je fais un pressant appel à la Vice-Premier ministre d'intervenir auprès de la force policière de leur demander à ce qu'il y ait des patrouilles régulières dans cette région afin justement de décourager ces voleurs et de rétablir la sécurité au niveau des résidents dans un quartier autrefois si paisible.

Merci.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will inform the hon. Prime Minister so he may address this issue urgently.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

VICTORIA SQUARE – ROADS CLOSURE – IMPACT ON BUSINESSES

Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you. The issue I am raising tonight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerns the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade regarding yet again Victoria Square, *actualité oblige* and, more specifically, problem facing the owner of buildings situated at Jummah and Jemmapes Streets at Victoria Square and tenants of shops of the said building which they are collectively facing since Saturday 14 September 2019 when all roads have been closed because of the construction of the Victoria Urban Terminal.

At the moment, the Minister is aware, everybody is aware that only specific buses have access to this area for passenger pick up and drop off. These people are not against development of the terminal. However in a petition that they have signed today addressed to the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure which I am going to table a copy just now, about 18 signatures, they would wish to request the Minister to ensure that access is granted to them for loading and unloading of their goods, otherwise their businesses, revenue and employment that they have created will suffer. So, I hope the Minister will look into the matter urgently because the situation is quite critical. I am tabling the copy of the petition.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr N. Bodha): I have the letter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, they have addressed the letter to me. Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus also mentioned this to me. We are going to have a meeting. Of course, there is the issue of whenever a road is closed, delivery has to be provided for. So, we will take care of that.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Hurreeram!

Mr Hurreeram: The matter has been taken already.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Hon. Rutnah!

MAURITIUS POST – IT ASSISTANTS

Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I may address my concern to the hon. Minister Sawmynaden regarding the Mauritius Post Office.

It has come to my attention that a number of assistants employed by the Mauritius Post since 2010, are still working on a contract basis. Perhaps their contract could be reviewed so that they become permanent employees of the Mauritius Postal Services.

RIVIERE DU REMPART & POUDRE D'OR HAMLET – POST OFFICES – REINSTATEMENT

And also Rivière du Rempart and Poudre d'Or Hamlet Post Offices, they are housed in very old railway ticket offices and I anticipate in the foreseeable future, the hon. Prime Minister and hon. Bodha will cut ribbons when they will extend the Metro to the north in Poudre d'Or Hamlet and Rivière du Rempart.

So, I will urge upon the hon. Minister to renovate and reinstate these old monumental little buildings but of significant cultural values if possible.

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Thank you, hon. Rutnah. Regarding the IT Assistants, I am very pleased to inform the hon. Member that this Government has found the solution and that the 185 persons working as IT Assistants for more than - some of them have been employed since 2006/2007 and have been on a contractual basis year on year off and they have never been employed and this Government has really found the way and we have committed ourselves and soon it will be announced that they will be employed on a permanent basis at the Mauritius Post.

(Interruptions)

So, we have more than 185 persons concerned directly.

And secondly, regarding Rivière du Rempart and Poudre d'Or Hamlet, actually, we have a number of Post Offices, not only in the North but practically all over the island, Rose-Hill Post Office is one example, I have two in my Constituency like in Quartier Militaire and Railway Square. Actually, yes, we are doing everything so that these structures remain same and be renovated accordingly. Now, with the revamping of the whole of the Mauritius Post Ltd definitely, the Mauritius Post will be asked in the future to offer more services to the public at large. So, definitely all these old buildings will be kept as they are and renovated accordingly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

BEAU BASSIN PRISON – SEWERAGE PROBLEM

Mr J. C. Lepoigneur (Fifth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Ma requête s'adresse au *Deputy Prime Minister*, qui n'est pas là. Assez souvent pendant ces cinq dernières années, il y a eu des débordements de tout-à-l'égout de la prison de Beau Bassin qui est déversé dans la rue Canne à Barkly. Malheureusement, à chaque fois on appelle et c'est remédié temporairement pendant quelques mois et là hier c'était vraiment beaucoup plus que d'habitude. Ça a déversé dans toute la rue de Chemin Canne et est même entré dans la cour de certaines personnes à Barkly qui cause beaucoup de problèmes au niveau d'odeur et inconvénients. Ce serait souhaitable d'avoir une solution parce que c'est assez souvent que ça arrive. On peut revoir le système de tout-à-l'égout à la prison de Beau Bassin.

Merci.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I will inform the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

ROCHE BOIS – TRANSFER STATION

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre de l'environnement. A un moment où on parle beaucoup de l'environnement, plantation, etc., ça fait plus de deux ans que j'avais adressé cette requête au ministre concernant le *transfer station* à Roches Bois.

Malheureusement, M. le président, nous avons une vingtaine de maisons qui sont à côté de la dite *transfer station*, et ces gens-là vivent non seulement dans une situation précaire mais également aux risques et périls de leur santé. Donc, je demanderai au ministre de remédier à la situation et d'en parler avec la ministre de *Local Government* qui est également responsable du site, à ce que les gens qui vivent dans l'environnement immédiat puissent vivre paisiblement.

Merci.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): M. le président, je demanderai à l'honorable membre de bien vouloir me rencontrer parce que j'ai fait effectuer des visites à cette station de transfert et nous avons exigé, à chaque fois, que toutes les normes environnementales soient respectées à la lettre. Donc, je souhaiterai que l'honorable membre me contacte, que nous ayons les coordonnées de ces personnes, que nous puissions effectuer une visite des lieux pour voir ce qui cloche.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

ST. HUBERT & ST. HILAIRE - AGRICULTURAL LAND - DISPOSSESSION

Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. The matter I am raising is addressed to the Minister of Agro-Industry. It is a case with regard to 19 women living in St. Hubert and St. Hilaire who have been dispossessed of their agricultural land, land which was allocated to them under the 2,000 *Arpents* Scheme. All the documents have been recovered from them. So, I would invite the

hon. Minister to look into the matter to enable them to recover the land that has been taken away from them.

Thank you.

The Minister of Agro-Security and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of what category of people we are talking about, whether it is with regard to those that were under a particular scheme under the Ministry of Social Integration. If that is the case, then, I think we have talked recently about that particular issue.

Dr. Boolell: If the hon. Minister will give way. I mentioned agricultural land which had been dispossessed and they want to recover the land. So, I would invite the hon. Minister to look into the matter. In fact, all the relevant documents have been taken away also from them and false promises were made.

Mr Seeruttun: Well, if it concerns agricultural land that has been taken back, surely it must be the case where people were given land to use for agricultural activities and if they have not been occupying the land, then, the Ministry has taken back that land to be offered to other people who are willing to occupy the land for that particular activity. If that is the case, then I won't be able to intervene.

(Interruptions)

Please!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

BLACK RIVER DISTRICT COUNCIL – BUILDING & LAND USE PERMIT

Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to make an appeal to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government.

Madam, on behalf of the inhabitants of Geoffroy Road, Bambous, many inhabitants of the region have applied to the Black River District Council for a Building and Land Use Permit in relation to the construction of their home or an extension of their existing home. But, unfortunately, the Black River District Council has systematically rejected their applications on the ground that the construction falls within a dust zone. In fact, the stone crushing plant operates within this residential settlement. So, if the hon. Minister could look

into this matter, since the inhabitants of this region are seriously penalised by the decision of the Black River District Council.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of this issue. In fact, there is a judgement. So, we are looking into it and I am sure that a decision will be taken shortly.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr Abbas Mamode!

AMBROISINE STREET, PLAINE VERTE - NDU PROJECT

Mr Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Mr Deputy Speaker, my issue is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister who is responsible for the National Development Unit. Unfortunately, he is absent. I hope that the hon. Vice-Prime Minister will pass on the message. It concerns Ambroisine Street in Plaine Verte, where the NDU is actually doing a project. There lies Belal Mosque where the inhabitants going there are having many difficulties to access. Il y a la poussière et tous les inconvénients qui accompagnent.

Je demanderai à l'honorable *Vice-Prime Minister* de transmettre la doléance pour qu'au moins, de temps en temps il y ait un nettoyage qui se fait, et en même temps d'accélérer, parce que c'est le même projet que j'ai évoqué la dernière fois *at Adjournment Time* en ce qui concerne une impasse. C'est juste à côté. Donc, cela crée beaucoup d'inconvénients aux fidèles. Donc, si on peut nettoyer et voir avec le contracteur pour que les travaux s'accélèrent.

Merci.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I understand the hon. Member correctly, there is a construction which is ongoing.

(Interruptions)

I will look into it and we will see in what way we can address this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

LAND DISPOSSESSION – *L'ASSOCIATION JUSTICE, RESTITUTION ET RÉPARATION*

Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): The problem I am raising is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister. My attention has been drawn by aggrieved persons who have been dispossessed of their land. An Inter-Ministerial Committee on Land Dispossession has proposed to introduce a Bill on the said matter and the hon. Prime Minister should inform the House. He has received a letter from *L'Association Justice, Restitution et Réparation* which requested an appointed on the same matter.

Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I will inform the hon. Prime Minister.

At 8.40 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 24 September 2019.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

BAI - DISPOSAL OF SHARES - COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

(No. B/821) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry set up to look into the sale of BAI shareholdings in Britam Kenya, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the inquiry has been completed and a Report submitted and, if so, indicate the conclusions and recommendations thereof.

Reply: On information received, the proceedings before the Commission of Inquiry on the Disposal of Shares of BAI Company (Mauritius) Ltd in Britam Holdings Ltd (Kenya) are ongoing.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 – ROAD PROJECTS

(No. B/822) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to road surfacing in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will give a list of projects earmarked for the years 2018 and 2019, indicating in each case the sum budgeted.

Reply: It is reminded that projects are identified for implementation on a Financial Year basis.

For Financial Year 2018/2019, 46 projects have been identified for implementation by the National Development Unit, the Road Development Authority and the Municipal City Council of Port Louis for a total estimated amount of Rs124 m. Out of these, 27 projects have been completed for a total sum of Rs79.4 m.

Furthermore, 16 projects are ongoing for an amount of Rs39.9 m. The remaining balance of Rs4.6 m. has been carried forward for implementation of road projects during Financial Year 2019/2020.

An additional provision of Rs58.6 m. has been made by the NDU and the other institutions for implementation of road projects in Constituency No. 1 during Financial Year 2019/2020. Consequently, there is a provision of Rs63.2 m. for road projects for Financial Year 2019/2020.

A list of these projects will, after compilation, be placed in the Library.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/823) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of the Freedom of Information Bill, he will state where matters stand, indicating if consultations with the relevant stakeholders have been held as at to date and the work progress thereof.

Reply: As explained previously in this House on several occasions, the Freedom of Information Bill does indeed raise complex and far-reaching issues, including constitutional and public interest issues, impact on public service delivery and important financial implications.

The in-depth exercise for the examination of all the issues and implications of this Bill is ongoing and has reached an advanced stage.

Sure it is that the ultimate objective of a Freedom of Information Act is to enhance transparency and accountability in public administration, particularly in contract allocations. This being so, it must be emphasised that, apart from the proposed Freedom of Information

Bill, this Government has already taken a number of important measures precisely to enhance transparency, accountability and greater openness in our public administration.

MR D. D. - DPS - DISCIPLINARY ACTION

(No. B/824) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Mr D. D., Deputy Permanent Secretary, he will state the actions taken against him, if any, in the light of the findings and comments of the Director of Audit in his Report for the year ending December 2011 and in the Report of the Public Accounts Committee dated 21 May 2013, respectively.

Reply: As ICAC, on information received, was investigating into the matter raised by the Director of Audit in his Report, no action was taken against Mr D. D., pending the outcome of the ICAC inquiry.

On further information received, the inquiry has been completed and the Director of Public Prosecutions has advised that disciplinary action be instituted against Mr D. D.

Disciplinary action is accordingly being instituted against Mr D. D. in line with PSC Regulations.

LANDSCOPE (MAURITIUS) LTD – LEGAL & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

(No. B/825) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, a list of the persons whose services have been retained for the provision of legal and professional services thereat, since January 2017 to date, indicating in each case the fees paid thereto.

Reply: Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd is a company which does not depend on Government finance for its operational expenditure and, as such, it would not be appropriate to give information relating to private contracts entered into by the company.

MARJOLAIN, CITE LA CURE - SQUATTERS

(No. B/853) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the site at Marjolain, in Cité La Cure, he will state the number of –

- (a) squatters thereof -
 - (i) having been relocated as at to date, indicating in each case where to, and
 - (ii) to be relocated, indicating the location identified therefor, and
- (b) new squatters having moved in.

Reply: The cut-off date for regularisation of squatters is 01 July 2015. I wish to inform the House that 62 pre-July 2015 squatters were identified at Marjolain Road, Cité La Cure.

With regard to part (a)(i) and (a)(ii) of the question, the status is as follows –

- 41 squatters have been relocated to Pointe aux Sables;
- 9 squatters have been relocated to Batterie Cassée. With regard to each case, the information is being compiled and will be tabled shortly;
- 3 squatters will be relocated at alternative sites as there has been encroachment on the sites earmarked at Batterie Cassée;
- 3 squatters have recently submitted their documents and subject to their eligibility, my Ministry will identify a suitable site for their relocation, and
- As for the remaining 6 pre-July 2015 squatters, the status is as follows –
 - (i) 3 squatters have left the site at Marjolain;
 - (ii) 1 squatter who has already been allocated a plot at Pointe aux Sables, is still in occupation of the site at Marjolain. Accordingly, appropriate action is being taken;
 - (iii) 1 squatter who has already been allocated a plot at Batterie Cassée, is still in occupation of the site at Marjolain. Accordingly, appropriate action is being taken, and
 - (iv) 1 squatter who has already been allocated a plot at Batterie Cassée has moved to Rodrigues and the offer has been cancelled.

With regard to part (b) of the question, 28 post July 2015 squatters have been identified and action will be initiated as per Section 22 of the State Lands Act.

CITE ROMA, RICHE TERRE - SEWERAGE CONNECTIONS

(No. B/854) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Cité Roma, in Riche Terre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Waste Water Management Authority, information as to if funding has been sought and obtained for the implementation of a Wastewater Connection Network thereat.

Reply: I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) that Cité Roma forms part of Baie du Tombeau Sewerage Project, Phase III, which covers the regions of Le Hochet, Terre Rouge, Bois Pignolet, Bois Marchand and Riche Terre.

I am informed by the WMA that according to a feasibility study report submitted in 2014, Baie du Tombeau Phase III consists of five pumping stations, 75.9 km of pipes and 4.5 km rising main and about 5,900 connections. The cost of the project, as estimated in 2014, is Rs2.3 billion.

I am further informed by the WMA that it intends to submit the project for funding in the next financial year.

In the meantime, the WMA has undertaken to empty the cesspits at Cité Roma, as and when required. In fact, following heavy rainfall on Tuesday 09 April 2019, the Wastewater Management Authority carried out pumping from Wednesday 10 April 2019 till Tuesday 16 April 2019.

NATIONAL WOMEN FOOTBALL TEAM – FACILITIES

(No. B/856) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the National Women Football Team, he will state the facilities granted by his Ministry for the training and participation thereof in international competitions.

(Vide reply to PQ B/837)

PLATANE TREES – FELLING – CLEARANCES

(No. B/857) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Platane trees on the Metro Express Track in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Forestry Division, information as to if it has issued clearances for the felling thereof, indicating if, alternatively, consideration will be given for the replanting thereof in the Curepipe Botanical Garden or any other appropriate location.

Reply: I am informed that the Platane tree is a decorative plant, introduced from temperate regions some decades ago, to embellish road sides of the Plaines Wilhems.

Clearance has been issued by the Forestry Service of my Ministry for the felling of different species of trees along the Metro Express track from Rose-Hill to Curepipe, out of which there are only 20 Platane trees.

The species is not a native one, neither is it classified as endangered, and because of the huge size it can attain, it is not in demand. Nevertheless, the species is being propagated in the nursery of the Forestry Service. Cuttings have already been collected and replanting would be envisaged in the humid regions of the Plaines Wilhems, including Curepipe Botanical Garden where there are a few mature trees, once the propagation is complete in about six months and in line with the current policy that three trees should be planted for each one felled.

METRO EXPRESS LIMITED - ADVERTISING

(No. B/859) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to advertising in connection with the Metro Express, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Limited, information as to if bids have been launched therefor and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) names of the bidders and of the successful bidder, and
- (b) contract value thereof.

Reply: I am informed that Metro Express Limited (MEL) has decided to outsource the Metro Express advertising business to an Advertising Agency/Partner. Outsourcing would enable MEL to focus on developing its core business as an operator of the Light Rail Service, while the Advertising Agency/Partner will bring its expertise and experience in the provision of high quality advertising service, which would constitute an additional source of revenue for MEL.

MEL launched a restricted bidding exercise on 08 August 2019 based on the recommendations of the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise. As at the closing date of 15 August 2019, MEL received three bids.

As at 29 October 2019, owing to the complexity of this bidding exercise, the evaluation is currently being finalised. As such, MEL is not in a position to disclose or furnish any further information at this point in time.

DANGEROUS DRUGS - SEIZURE - ARRESTS

(No. B/860) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, having regard to the quantity of prohibited dangerous drugs recently seized by the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of persons responsible for the financing of the importation thereof having been arrested as at to date, if any.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S COUNCIL – SHELTERS

(No. B/861) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the shelters, she will state if a policy decision has been taken for the privatization thereof and, if so, obtain from the National Children's Council, information as to if consultations have been held between the said Council and representatives of the workers thereof in relation thereto.

Reply: My Ministry has not taken any policy decision for the privatisation of Shelters.

In fact, the National Children's Council (NCC) a para-statal body operating under the aegis of my Ministry was entrusted with the responsibility to manage Shelter La Colombe and Shelter L'OASIS. However, following numerous complaints received against employees of NCC, decision was taken for the two shelters to be run by NGOs.

Last year, the Ministry launched an Expression of Interest for the Management of the Government-owned shelters, which was followed by a bidding exercise carried out in May 2019. The Ministry is in the process of awarding the Management Services Contract. Employees of the NCC who are presently serving the shelters will be posted to other Units of the Ministry and they will not be deprived of any of their benefits.

During a meeting held with the NCC on 28 August 2019, the representative of the employees was informed of the above.

**PRISONS OFFICERS - COMMISSIONER OF PRISONS'S RESIDENCE -
INQUIRY**

(No. B/862) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the recent declarations made by spokespersons of the Prison Officers Union to the effect that, on or about August 2019, some Prisons Officers who were scheduled for duty in the Prisons were, at the material time, on duty at the residence of the Commissioner of Prisons at Morcellement Pinewood, in Wooton, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the relevant authorities, information as to if an independent inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL - ACTIVE MAURITIUS -
COMPOSITION**

(No. B/863) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the launching of Active Mauritius by the Mauritius Sports Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the legal status thereof, if any, indicating the –

- (a) composition of the Managing Committee thereof;
- (b) source of funds and amount disbursed since the launching thereof, and
- (c) list of activities to be organized as at end 2019.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL – COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY

(No. B/864) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Sports Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if it has entered into a contract with any company in relation to communication matters, since 2015 to date and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the name of the company and the accompanying terms and conditions and names of the directors thereof;
- (b) the amount of money disbursed in each financial year, and
- (c) if a bid was launched prior to the award of the contract and, if so, give details thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ABERCROMBIE POLICE STATION - MR D.C.P - DETENTION

(No. B/865) Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the declaration made against one Mr D.C.H. by his sister C. P. at the Abercrombie Police Station, on or about 07 August 2019, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated thereinto.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 08 August 2019 at 16.53 hours, Mrs C.P. reported a case of Domestic Violence at Abercrombie Police Station against her brother, one Mr D.C.P, and not D.C.H. as mentioned by the hon. Member in his Parliamentary Question.

As Mr D.C.P. was on the run, he was arrested at Roche Bois on 12 September 2019. He is actually detained at Moka Detention Centre.

The case is still under enquiry.

CAMP CHAPELON FOOTBALL PITCH – CONSTRUCTION – NON-COMPLETION

(No. B/866) Mr J. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Camp Chapelon Football Pitch, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to the reasons for the non-completion of the construction of the cloakroom thereof, indicating the –

- (a) start date thereof;
- (b) name of contractor;
- (c) cost thereof, and
- (d) expected completion date thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that the project “Construction of Cloakroom, Fencing, Covered and Open Air Gradins at Camp Chapelon Football Ground” was not completed as the contractor had stopped works on the site on 30 April 2013 without any valid reason. The site of works was just left abandoned.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that the project had started on 28 August 2012.

The name of the Contractor was Kam Construction Ltd and the contract price was Rs2,240,374.80. However, only a total payment of Rs770,239.99 was made to the contractor for the part of works undertaken prior to the abandonment of the works.

The project was expected to be completed by 23 February 2013.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has, in this financial year, allocated Rs800,000 to the Municipal City Council of Port Louis to upgrade and complete the cloakroom of the Camp Chapelon Football Ground. Presently, the bidding documents are under preparation and bids will be floated by first week of October 2019. The project is expected to be completed by mid-March 2020.

PEREYBERE - 2 FUTURES – VILLAS - EIA

(No. B/867) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the project for the construction of villas by 2 Futures, along Pyndia Lane, at Pereybère, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Rivière du Rempart District Council, information as to if the terms and conditions of the Environment Impact Assessment Licence are being strictly complied with.

(Withdrawn)

PEREYBERE - JIN MEI CO. LTD - VILLAS - EIA

(No. B/868) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’ Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the project for the construction of villas by Jin Mei Co. Ltd., along Pyndia Lane, at Pereybère, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Rivière du Rempart District Council,

information as to if the terms and conditions of the Environment Impact Assessment Licence are being strictly complied with.

(Withdrawn)

RIVIERE DU REMPART DISTRICT COUNCIL – BULBS

PROCUREMENT –

(No. B/869) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the procurement of bulbs for the provision of lighting facilities in the villages in the North, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Rivière du Rempart District Council, information as to the quantity and value thereof procured over the past six months, indicating the –

- (a) name of the supplier, and
- (b) procurement method used.

(Withdrawn)

RIVIERE DU REMPART DISTRICT COUNCIL - SOCIAL ACTIVITIES - EXPENDITURE

(No. B/870) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Rivière du Rempart District Council, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the total expenditure incurred on catering for social activities organised over the past two years, including hotel charges and/or cost of *salle verte*.

(Withdrawn)

METRO EXPRESS PROJECT – FELLED TREES

(No. B/872) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Metro Express Project, he will state the total number of trees that have been felled and total number of green spaces that have been eradicated in the wake of the implementation thereof, indicating the number of trees that have been planted and number of green spaces that have been created as at to date in replacement thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS - FOREIGNERS - MEDICAL TREATMENT -
FEES**

(No. B/873) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to fees payable by foreigners married to Mauritians for medical treatment in public health institutions, he will state if consideration will be given for a waiver thereof pending the determination of their application for the acquisition of Mauritian citizenship.

(Withdrawn)