



**SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY**

**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**(UNREVISED)**

**FIRST SESSION**

**TUESDAY 07 MAY 2019**

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## THE CABINET

**(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth                        | Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development |
| Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC          | Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities  |
| Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC          | Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues  |
| Hon. 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  |
| Hon. Maneesh Gobin                                 | Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms   |
| Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint             | Minister of Youth and Sports  |

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

**PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS**

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|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Madam Speaker                    | Hanoomanjee, Hon. Mrs Santi Bai, GCSK |
| Deputy Speaker                   | Lesjongard, Georges Pierre            |
| Deputy Chairperson of Committees | Jahangeer, Hon. Ahmad Bashir          |
| Clerk of the National Assembly   | Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena               |
| Deputy Clerk                     | Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi            |
| Clerk Assistant                  | Gopall, Mr Navin                      |
| Clerk Assistant                  | Seetul, Ms Darshinee                  |
| Hansard Editor                   | Jankee, Mrs Chitra                    |
| Serjeant-at-Arms                 | Pannoo, Mr Vinod                      |

**MAURITIUS**

**Sixth National Assembly**

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**FIRST SESSION**

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**Debate No. 06 of 2019**

**Sitting of 07 May 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)*

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### HAND-HELD ELECTRONIC DEVICES – DISTURBANCES

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, recently, the House has witnessed a number of unfortunate cases of uses made of hand-held devices which have been causing serious disturbances and have greatly impaired the decorum of the House.

The House has, for some years now, agreed to the use in the Chamber of hand-held electronic devices based on the central principle that same cause no disturbance and are not used in such a way as to impair decorum.

Hon. Members are presumably aware that practice in other legislatures varies widely as to what is or is not permissible in terms of the use of hand-held devices.

It goes from a complete ban thereof to a gradual move towards easing of restrictions provided that discretion is exercised.

A number of respectable arguments have been advanced for the complete banning of use of electronic devices by Members in the Chamber and Committees in many Commonwealth and other legislatures, even to this date, such as, for example –

- Members present should focus their full attention on the business of the House and not undertake other activities;
- their use of electronic devices might distract others, either visually or audibly, and
- the sight of Members concentrating on hand-held devices rather than the business of the House creates a negative impression of the Assembly.

However, our Assembly has allowed the use of electronic devices because they are largely pragmatic, inasmuch as they enable Members, having to participate in the proceedings of the House, instantaneous access to newspapers, research materials, written notes and, especially, such relevant materials which may be available only in electronic form as, increasingly, materials are published in electronic form only, so that this may help them contribute in terms of more informed debates.

Besides, since some years now, Members have been receiving copies of parliamentary documents in electronic form on the Digital Tablets put at their disposal for this purpose, through a customised Application.

Unfortunately, it appears that some Members have only retained that they are allowed to use hand-held devices but been ignoring the central principle agreed by the House underlying same.

I have, therefore, as I had undertaken to do, prescribed a set of rules intended for the guidance of Members on behaviour expected of them in the Chamber and in Committees as far as the use of these devices is concerned.

While open to change, these rules are important to ensure that order prevails and that decorum be preserved during proceedings.

The Rules are as follows –

- (1) The House permits the use of electronic devices by Members in the Chamber and Committees, provided that the use thereof –
  - (a) does not interfere or distract other Members, either visually or audibly, and does not interfere with proceedings, in particular calls, message, alerts, alarm ringing, taking of pictures, playing videos or recording proceedings, whether or not the camera or recording device is part of the permitted device;
  - (b) is as unobtrusive as possible and is directly related to the Members' parliamentary duties, and
  - (c) generally, does not impair the decorum of the House.
- (2) It would be a matter for the occupant of the Chair to judge in specific circumstances when these rules have been breached and to take such measures, as appropriate, to put a stop to the disturbances and to restore the decorum of the House, in keeping with the general conventions on behaviour in the Chamber.

These Rules are prescribed under Standing Orders 77 and 78 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly (1995) and come into operation as from today.

Thank you.

**OBITUARY – MR ABDOOL MONAF FAKIRA**

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, it is with deep regret that we have learnt of the demise of Mr Abdool Monaf Fakira, on Thursday 25 April 2019, former Member of Parliament, at the age of 89.

Mr Fakira was born on 10 August 1929 at Port Louis. He started his political career with the PMSD during the pre-independence period and became its Secretary General under the leadership of Jules Koenig. At the Local Government elections held on 11 December 1960, Mr Fakira was elected to serve as Municipal Councillor for the Municipal Council of Port Louis. In 1962, he became the Deputy Mayor and in 1964, he acceded to the post of Mayor.

Mr Fakira contested the 1967 General Election in Constituency No. 1 – Grand River North West and Port Louis West, under the banner of the PMSD and was returned Second Member to serve the said Constituency. He also contested the 1976 General Election in Constituency No. 3 – Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, under the banner of PMSD, but was not elected.

In 1982, Mr Fakira stood as candidate for the General Election in Constituency No.2 – Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, under the banner of the PMSD. In 1987, he stood as candidate in the same Constituency, under the banner of the MSM-Labour Party Alliance. Mr Fakira was not returned in both elections.

Madam Speaker, as a parliamentarian, Mr Fakira held strong views on many problems, particularly the problem of unemployment affecting the youth. He regularly showed his concern regarding emigration, rights of workers, industrialisation and development.

Highly interested in sports, Mr Fakira was at one time the President of the Muslim Scouts Football Club.

Madam Speaker, may I request you to kindly direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval):** Madam Speaker, I associate myself to the tribute made by the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Monaf Fakira. Mr Monaf Fakira was a staunch member of the PMSD and in many ways right-hand man of Sir Gaëtan

Duval. On behalf of the Opposition, I would also request the Clerk to convey our condolences to the bereaved family.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to late Mr Abdool Monaf Fakira, former Member of Parliament, by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and I direct the Clerk to convey to the bereaved family the deep condolences of the Assembly.

### PAPERS LAID

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

**A. Office of the Speaker**

The Annual Report and Audited Accounts of the Independent Commission Against Corruption for the year 2017/2018.

**B. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities**

The Annual Report of the Wastewater Management Authority for the period ended 30 June 2017. (In Original)

### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

#### INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES – COST

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval)** (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the forthcoming Indian Ocean Island Games, he will state the estimated total cost –

- (a) of the –
  - (i) Côte d’Or Multi-sports Complex, inclusive of all amenities, and
  - (ii) upgrading and renovation of other sports amenities under Plan B, and
- (b) for the preparation of athletes, hospitality and organisation during the Games.

**The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr E. Boissézon):** Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that the Indian Ocean Island Games 2019 will comprise the following 14 disciplines, namely –

- (i) Athletics

- (ii) Badminton
- (iii) Basketball
- (iv) Boxing
- (v) Cycling
- (vi) Football
- (vii) Judo
- (viii) Rugby
- (ix) Swimming
- (x) Table Tennis
- (xi) Volley Ball
- (xii) Weightlifting
- (xiii) Yachting, and
- (xiv) Beach Volley

In addition, there would be sports events for aurally, mentally, physically and visually handicapped persons.

I would like to inform the House that the Games would be held in Mauritius as well as in Rodrigues, where the Semi Marathon of 21 kilometres would be held and the Judo Team Competition at Malabar.

Madam Speaker, in reply to the Private Notice Question of 22 June 2018, my colleague, the substantive Minister of Youth and Sports, informed the House that in the normal course of things, Mauritius would have been entrusted the organisation of the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the Indian Ocean Island Games. However, once the *Comité International des Jeux (CIJ)* decided to withdraw the organisation of the 10<sup>th</sup> edition from the Federal Republic of Comoros and entrust it to Mauritius, we were faced with an uphill battle in terms of construction and renovation of our sport infrastructure. Time being of the essence in the organisation of multisport games of such a magnitude, Government decided, in line with its vision to develop Mauritius as a sports destination –

- (i) to set up a state-of-the-art sports complex in Côte d'Or, St Pierre, and
- (ii) to upgrade and renovate existing sites.

Consequently, Government took the opportunity of the Bilateral Joint Commission between China and Mauritius in November 2016 to obtain financial assistance from the Chinese authorities amounting to RMB 350 m., that is, Rs1.9 billion, through a mix of grant and interest free loan for the financing of the construction of the complex.

The complex at Côte d'Or would comprise the following facilities –

- (i) an aquatic centre;
- (ii) a multi-purpose gym;
- (iii) a football stadium, and
- (iv) an athletic track.

All the facilities are of international standards and comply with the requirements of their respective international federations. The facilities will be homologated and will allow the country to host sports events of international standing.

As regards the total cost of the project, it has been capped at Rs4.692 billion, broken down as follows –

- (i) an aquatic centre – Rs1,057.8 m.;
- (ii) a multi-purpose gym – Rs738.3 m.;
- (iii) a football stadium and an athletic track – Rs1,973.8 m., and
- (iv) amenities, including offsite works and consultancy fees – Rs922.1 m.

The completion dates for the different packages to be used for the IOIG are as follows

-

1. Completion, testing and commissioning of swimming pool and timing system and LED screens for Multipurpose Gymnasium on 30 June 2019.
2. Gymnasium completed to host the Judo Competition on 30 June 2019.

Insofar as other facilities are concerned, the delivery and handing over dates would be as per contract.

In the reply to PNQ of 22 June 2018, my colleague, the substantive Minister informed the House that the total Project Value was estimated at Rs3.9 billion based on values at which contracts were awarded. However, following the recommendations from the Geotechnical Investigation Report, increase in costs amounting to Rs765 m. were due to changes in design, substantiated by additional piling works, changes in roof structure for all three main facilities

and mechanical, electrical and plumbing works. The changes in roof structure for the three facilities have been approved by the Chinese Authorities.

Madam Speaker, I need to stress that the Côte d'Or Complex should not be viewed in isolation and aggregated to the Indian Ocean Island Games only. It is a major component of the grand vision and strategy which the Government has in respect of the sports landscape in Mauritius. However, using its facilities during the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Games is the cherry on the cake.

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, I would like to inform the House that there was never any Plan B. Being given that there are 14 sports disciplines enlisted for the IOIG 2019, it was imperative to make use of the existing facilities. Most of the facilities had to be upgraded and renovated anew. The number of sites being renovated is 18 and the total estimated cost is Rs732 m., inclusive of VAT and Consultancy Fees.

The list is being tabled and includes the completion date for each site.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, I would like to inform the House that the preparation of athletes for the Games include the following -

1. training camps/competitions locally and abroad;
2. medical/paramedical support (physio/masseur, nutritionist and psychologist), vitamins/food supplement;
3. physical fitness tests;
4. equipment;
5. gym facilities at Private Fitness Centres;
6. transport;
7. meal, and
8. cameras for recording of training sessions.

Funds allocated are as follows -

|           |   |          |
|-----------|---|----------|
| 2016/2017 | - | Rs3.2 m. |
| 2017/2018 | - | Rs18 m.  |
| 2018/2019 | - | Rs60 m.  |
| 2019/2020 | - | Rs15 m.  |

Over and above funds allocated for preparation of athletes for the Indian Ocean Island Games, the budget allocated for financial year 2018/2019 to elite athletes of the Federations involved in the Games is Rs19.5 m. It is the first time ever that athletes have been provided with an allocation amounting to around Rs115 m. for their preparation and training prior to the Games.

Insofar as hospitality and organisation during the Games are concerned, the cost is estimated at Rs417.5 m. This include, among others, accommodation, transportation, protocol and hospitality.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has given a total cost of Rs6.1 billion for the Games. I would like to ask, firstly, with regard to Côte d'Or Stadium, and I must say, Madam Speaker, since the substantive Minister is not there, I will stick to some factual questions and I hope that the Minister will provide answers to these factual questions, with his colleagues behind him. The original feasibility study made by a firm called *Sprint Conseil* relies on a cost for the Côte d'Or Stadium of only, I must say, Rs2 billion. It is now going to cost, minimum, Rs4.8 billion. Can the hon. Minister tell us whether there has been a revised feasibility study to account for this huge increase and how, afterwards, Government is going to *rentabilise* the whole stadium?

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, comme je l'ai dit précédemment, au départ nous avons évalué un prix mais par la suite, suite à la préparation des *tenders*, nous avons eu à revoir nos prix.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Madam Speaker, I am asking whether the feasibility study was revised.

Hon. Minister, please ask your colleagues behind you, your civil servants! Was there a revised feasibility study to show how *on va rentabiliser le stade qui était supposé coûter deux milliards de roupies d'après Sprint Conseil, et aujourd'hui le stade va coûter près de cinq milliards de roupies* ? If it is no, it is no! If it is yes, it is yes!

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Silence, please!

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, un *business plan* et un *strategic plan* ont été commissionnés par *Horta Consulting Ltd* en décembre 2018.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** So, can I understand that you went ahead three times the cost without revising the feasibility study and it is only now, a few months ago, that - *l'enfant est né - maintenant* we are going to have a new feasibility study? What is this? Anyway! Can I ask the hon. Minister, with regard to the construction *sur pilotis*, wouldn't a proper soil test have told Government not to construct the stadium there, on the Terre Rouge-Verdun Road, which everybody knows is unreliable soil, and wouldn't a proper soil test have saved the taxpayer what the hon. Minister is saying, I think Rs800 m.?

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, dans une *PNQ* précédente, le leader de l'opposition avait posé la même question et il avait eu une réponse que, vu l'urgence de la construction des infrastructures à Côte d'Or, il y avait eu deux exercices simultanés : un exercice pour l'appel d'offres pour la construction des infrastructures, et une étude pour les pilotis. Par la suite, les chiffres ont été révisés pour prendre en considération la pose des pilotis.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** What was the urgency? The hon. Minister himself told us, Madam Speaker, that the stadium was not meant for the Indian Ocean Island Games. He just said in his reply that it is only coincidental, that it was not meant for that. So, what was the urgency, given that the stadium is not even going to be ready for the Indian Ocean Island Games? It is just wasted money.

*(Interruptions)*

Madam Speaker, we have talked about construction of nearly Rs5 billion. We all know that it has to be maintained. There are running costs associated with a gigantic facility of Rs5 billion. Is the hon. Minister aware that on conservative estimates, annual running costs and maintenance costs of that gigantic facility, *ce stade fantôme* in Côte d'Or will cost minimum Rs250 m. per year? Half the budget of the Ministry of Sports!

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, le leader de l'opposition parle d'une extrapolation. Mais dès que nous aurons ce bijou, pas un stade fantôme, dès que nous serons en possession de notre bijou, faites-nous confiance, nous allons rentabiliser ce bijou.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** No, Madam Speaker, I am saying that if you ask anyone about the repair, maintenance and running costs of a facility, any facility, especially sports facility, it is

about 5% of the project cost; Rs250 m., half the budget of the Ministry of Sports. This is why a feasibility study was important for you.

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, je ne comprends pas le leader de l'opposition. Nous voulons avoir un *state-of-the-art* stade à l'île Maurice. Alors, nous voulons avoir le beurre et l'argent du beurre ! Il faut prendre en considération qu'à chaque fois que ce gouvernement va de l'avant avec un projet moderne, l'opposition essaye de nous rétracter avec une politique de '*narien pas bon*'.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Madam Speaker, I am asking the question whether this Rs250 m. would not have been better used elsewhere to help our athletes to develop the sports instead of wasting the money every year *dans ce gouffre financier* which is at Côte d'Or. That is the question.

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, le *business plan and strategic plan* qui ont été préparés nous donnent un chiffre de R 95 millions. Si le leader de l'opposition a des chiffres pour venir prouver ces R 250 millions, qu'il nous soumette et ensuite je pourrai répondre. Il donne un chiffre de R 250 millions. Moi, j'ai un chiffre de R 95 millions, et je resterai sur ce chiffre de R 95 millions. Je donne la garantie que ce gouvernement, que le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports, et que les différentes fédérations qui occuperont ce complexe sportif feront le nécessaire pour rentabiliser ce complexe.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Madam Speaker, Rs95 m. is too much, but if you look at the state of our stadiums in Mauritius, you will understand the level of competence in terms of maintenance of the Ministry of Sports. Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, given this is going to be a sports hub, what is the next sports event apart from the myth that you are going to miss the Indian Ocean Island Games? Please tell us how many international sports events you will have at the stadium the rest of the year.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I do not think the hon. Minister will be in a position to reply to what will happen in the future because he will have to reply to what is there. I do not think it is fair.

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, je n'accepte pas ce que le leader de l'opposition a dit sur le niveau de maintenance des infrastructures sportives. Quand nous avons pris ce gouvernement, il fallait voir l'état des infrastructures sportives que nous avons. Peut-être que le leader de l'opposition en parle parce qu'il a été ministre des Finances à l'époque et il en sait quelque chose. Mais nous, nous pouvons dire que quand nous avons reçu

les infrastructures sportives, elles étaient dans un état déplorable, et aujourd'hui nous devons dépenser plus de R 400 millions pour la rénovation des infrastructures.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Madam Speaker, the question is clear. What are the other sports events planned over the next 24 months *pour rentabiliser* this *gouffre financier, ce stade fantôme à Côte d'Or*? The question is very clear.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Il ne pourra pas répondre.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I want to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that where that stadium is sited, where it is, there is no bus service; the nearest bus station is 2 kms away. I know it is meant for athletes, but are they going to run there? There is no bus service; it is sited in the middle of nowhere. Why?

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order on this side of the House, please!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Rutnah, do not obstruct the good and smooth running of the House!

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, je ne comprends pas le leader de l'opposition !

*(Interruptions)*

Il vient nous dire aujourd'hui - mais nous avons déjà prévu ! Lorsque nous avons préparé tout le projet de Côte d'Or, nous avons préparé un *Traffic Impact document*. Je peux vous dire aujourd'hui que pas plus tard que le 1<sup>er</sup> mai, dans la vision de ce gouvernement, nous pensons avoir...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Please, order!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Boissézon:** Nous prévoyons même d'emmener le métro léger à Côte d'Or.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Madam Speaker, if I understand the hon. Minister well, I asked for factual information, there are no sports events planned at the Côte d'Or Stadium at all although this is going to cost us a minimum of Rs250 m. a year. I maintain that figure,

Madam Speaker. Traffic impact assessment is different from the public bus service my friend! Can the hon. Minister tell us whether there will be a public bus service there?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, quand nous parlons de *traffic impact*, nous pensons qu'il y aura plusieurs véhicules. Du reste, nous avons pensé au nombre de véhicules. Si vous étiez en présence du plan, nous avons prévu un parking pour les véhicules. Comment prévoir un parking pour les véhicules si nous ne prévoyons pas des *bus stops* et un transport routier pour faciliter le travail ?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** *Bis pou passer labas! Kan?*

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Boissézon:** Je le dis et je le redis, nous avons prévu qu'il y aura une gare pour les bus dans ce complexe.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** The thing will open in a month's time. *Gouverner c'est prévoir!* At the moment, there is no bus stop, there is no bus service, there is nothing there at all, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he will confirm that neither the opening ceremony nor the closing ceremony can be held at the Côte d'Or stadium.

**Mr Boissézon:** Madame la présidente, gouverner c'est prévoir. Nous avons déjà prévu que la cérémonie d'ouverture et la cérémonie de clôture auront lieu sur le stade Anjalay. Et comme nous avons prévu, ce n'est pas pour le bon vouloir du leader de l'opposition que nous allons transférer cette cérémonie à Côte d'Or.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** This is the Plan B that we were talking about. Madam Speaker, I would like to ask something very serious to the hon. Minister. China is supposed to give us a grant of about Rs1 billion - the rest is a loan that the taxpayer has to repay - out of Rs5 billion. I understand that the Government of China has not yet paid a single cent on this project because the Government of China finds that our procurement procedures for the stadium are unacceptable.

**Mr Boissézon:** *Madame la présidente*, I think the Leader of the Opposition should come with a substantive question on that.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Madam Speaker, we are talking about the cost. The cost, Rs1 billion, is financed by the Government of China. If his Civil Servants cannot provide him with that answer, he should fire them!

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Please, hon. Leader of the Opposition, you cannot take to task the Civil Servants who are there. It is the hon. Minister who is answerable and not the Civil Servants.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I will ask a substantive question on this. The question is: Why has not the Government of China so far paid one single cent? Because apparently, it is not satisfied with the procurement procedures to appoint the contractor for the stadium.

**Mr Boissézon:** According to the answer I have, the State Law Office has already given clearance on 03 May following a request by the Chinese Authorities.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I can see the level of answer, Madam Speaker. I am asking whether they paid and I get an answer on the State Law Office, some clearance which I never asked for. I do not know what clearance the hon. Minister is talking about. Madam Speaker, we are talking about Rs6.1 billion spent on mostly infrastructure. The athletes are complaining, Madam Speaker, that they are not getting decent treatment. In particular, many athletes - I know personally - have not gone overseas because they have not been given *per diem*. They take leave without pay here, they go overseas, and although billions are being spent, the Ministry is not giving *per diem* to our poor athletes who have to travel overseas whilst not getting paid at their job in Mauritius. Can the hon. Minister look at this and correct this, please?

**Mr Boissézon:** Madam Speaker, as far as the question of *per diem* is concerned, I have a breakdown for the preparation of athletes, which amount to 6 billion and 80 million and I can table the breakdown of the figures.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** If I may ask the hon. Minister, the question is simple. It is very unfair. Most of these athletes are very poor people; they spend their time in sports and no other activities. They cannot afford to go overseas for free training if they are not given a *per diem*. They cannot take money out of their pocket except for the food that they are given in the hotels. Billions are being spent. I am asking the hon. Minister very seriously whether he would not nicely consider paying a *per diem*, even retrospectively, to all the athletes who have gone and are going to represent us so proudly in two months' time.

**Mr Boissézon:** Madam Speaker, I would like to make a correction. Before, I said Rs6 billion, but it is Rs60 m. that are offered to the athletes. I am informed that *per diem* is given to all athletes when they go abroad for training.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** They must have spoken to some ghost athletes. I would like the hon. Minister to check the information that he has given. I understand that no *per diem* is being paid to athletes going overseas. I can privately give the hon. Minister some names of athletes if he wants. I would like to ask the hon. Minister the same sort of question about athletes. Athletes are complaining that in the past Games, they were given an allowance. Because many take time off from work in the morning, in the afternoon and so they have a cut in pay to give us results in two months' time. I would like to ask hon. Minister why is it that athletes who are not high-level athletes - the others - are not getting any allowance for these Games to help them financially, although they go through terrible hardship to be able to represent us in a few months' time.

**Mr Boissézon:** As the Leader of the Opposition said, in fact, elite athletes benefit from a budget from their Federation. In fact, Federations have been advised to assist all the athletes who are not presently benefiting from elite funds.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I know the hon. Minister is not the substantive Minister. So, I will ask again whether he will not look at it in the name of decency, of human solidarity, that we should pay an allowance. The Ministry is funding the whole thing with billions of rupees, and we are talking about a few thousand rupees to our athletes, 150 athletes or so. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he will not ensure that henceforth the athletes, in the next two months, get a decent allowance, Rs10,000, Rs20,000 a month or more, to help them to prepare psychologically and financially for the Games?

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you have one more minute.

**Mr Boissézon:** I will pass on the hon. Leader of the Opposition's suggestion to the substantive Minister.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Madam Speaker, may I ask a final question - whether the hon. Minister will just answer this question. Public debt has risen by hundred billion rupees since this Government took over - official figures. Does he not think that it is the wrong priorities, total wastage of money that such a huge amount of money be spent on a stadium in the middle of nowhere at Côte d'Or, whilst a Plan B, costing Rs700 m., is also being spent for the

same Games; whether that money could not have been used to build more than 45 houses that NEF has provided, to some drains, to give water, etc.?

**Mr Boissézon:** Madam Speaker, I was expecting that question, and I can tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that it is the same question that was asked long ago, I remember. When the then Government wanted to construct what we call *chemin neuf*, everybody was saying ‘*Ah, ene semin dan caro cane, pou perdi l’argent*’. Today, we know how much that road has been useful and tomorrow, in 20 years’ time, in 50 years’ time, athletes of Mauritius will thank that Government for the decision that they have taken.

**Madam Speaker:** Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/276 in regard to the Reports of the Director of Audit for periods 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 will be replied by the hon. Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms.

PQ B/277 in regard to the Love Bridge Project will be replied by the hon. Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.

PQ B/278 in regard to the Inter-Ministerial Committee set up to look into the proposed setting up of the Land Court/Division/Tribunal 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/280 in regard to the issue of licenses for private television will be replied by the hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation.

PQ B/320 in regard to the proposed introduction of the Public Service Bill in the National Assembly will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting.

Hon. Bhagwan!

### **GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY - BOARD**

**(No. B/273) 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 Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) composition of the Board thereof, indicating the terms and conditions of appointment of the members and

- (b) number of sub-committees set-up and functional, indicating in each case, the purpose, composition and fees payable to the members thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, the members of the Gambling Regulatory Board are appointed in accordance with section 5 of the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act. I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member on the Gambling Regulatory Board as well as on its sub-committees, which are all functional and meet as and when required.

Madam Speaker, further, by virtue of section 5(4) of the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act, no person having had or having any direct or indirect interest in any activity regulated by the Act in the previous five years shall be appointed as a member. I am informed that all members of the Gambling Regulatory Board have signed a 'Declaration Form' in that respect.

**Mr Bhagwan:** I have a few supplementary questions. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether Mr Beekharry, Senior Adviser at the Prime Minister's Office is still a member of the Board?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware *qu'il y a une ingérence permanente de M. Beekharry dans les day to day matters de la GRA et donne même des instructions au General Manager?*

**The Prime Minister:** This is not true at all, Madam Speaker.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that Mr Beekaree has held meetings with jockey in his house on many occasions, whether he finds this normal and whether he will order an inquiry?

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, if this hon. Member was serious, he would have told this House, today, on which date, which jockey had come to the meeting. Just saying he has been having meetings like that! I can also say things on the hon. Member like that! Anyone can say or make any allegation. So, the hon. Member should not come to this House and just make general statements. Come with precision! If the hon. Member is serious, he should give information and tell me on which date there has been meeting and who has been attending meeting.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Madam Speaker, I am serious, I am paid by public funds to do my job. I do my job, whether the hon. Prime Minister likes it or does not like it.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan, then you take the whole responsibility for the statement that you have made.

**Mr Bhagwan:** I always assume my responsibility, Madam Speaker.

*(Interruptions)*

*Eta batchara, to pou de hors to meme do couyon!*

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Who said that?

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Gayan !

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Gayan !

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Gayan, I will remind you not to make provocations because this obstructs the smooth running of this House.

**Mr Bhagwan:** I am assuming my responsibility. The hon. Prime Minister has his own NSS. This Gambling Regulatory Authority is a very important institution and we all know the *magouille* which is happening at the horse racing activities. Is the hon. Prime Minister ready to ask his NSS or whatever Police he has to conduct an inquiry and then come back to the House, and even appoint a Commission of Inquiry on the GRA since the assumption of this new Government?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, we are...

*(Interruptions)*

*Ki kachiet! Ki mo ena pu kachiet!* What is he talking about?

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan, you are making provocations. Allow the hon. Prime Minister to reply!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Rutnah!

*(Interruptions)*

I will take both of you to task if you continue!

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, let me say that these are frivolous allegations. There is no justification or any investigation or setting up of any committee. In fact, let me say that I am satisfied of the work that is being done by the Authority, in fact, putting order in that sector, a number of decisions have been taken and we see what is happening, what has been the reaction of some operators in that sector. But the hon. Member and the House can rest assured that we are seeing to it that order is being put in that sector.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Boolell!

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Prime Minister state whether the composition of the Board has been deliberately set up to respond to the needs of one specific operator only?

**The Prime Minister:** Not at all, Madam Speaker. Let me remind the hon. Member, when he was in Government, who was chairing that Gambling Regulatory Authority, and *quel bal il était en train de faire là-bas!* He knows very well ! So, *j'espère qu'en votre âme et conscience vous allez vous interroger sur ce qui s'est passé auparavant.* I do not want to reveal things, Madam Speaker. I was also at one time in Government with the hon. Member and we shared certain opinion with regard to what was happening there. But I am not the type of person...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo!

**The Prime Minister:** I am not the type of person who will come to this House to reveal conversations that we have had.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Ramano!

**(No. B/274) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the news bulletin broadcasts, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if consideration will be given for the subtitling thereof to benefit viewers with hearing impairment.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that the Corporation currently provides the subtitling of headlines of news items for the *Journal Télévisé* of 1930 hrs on MBC 1.

In line with its policy to enhance the digital infrastructure to better engage with audiences, the Corporation is at present working out the modalities for the introduction of a News Automation System which will provide for the subtitling of all news bulletins for the benefit of viewers with hearing impairment.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed by the Officer-in-Charge that the Corporation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development and the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf, is already providing a 5-7 minute news bulletin in Mauritian Sign Language for broadcast every Saturday after the *Kreol News Bulletin* of 1900 hrs on MBC 2 with a repeat on Sunday.

With a view to better informing viewers with hearing impairment of major events taking place during the week, the MBC has already initiated action to increase the duration of the Mauritian Sign Language News Bulletin to around 13 minutes.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ramano!

**Mr Ramano:** Merci, Madame la présidente. La MBC donne à présent un résumé sélectif des informations en sous-titrage. Mon appel au Premier ministre, c'est de prendre en considération ce qui se passe aujourd'hui dans les chaînes internationales, où il y a une transcription instantanée des bulletins d'information, et cela se fait d'une façon instantanée à travers des technologies appropriées. Mon appel au Premier ministre, c'est de prendre la question avec l'administration de la MBC pour s'assurer que la transcription puisse se faire d'une façon instantanée et non pas sélective.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I also watch international news like CNN, BBC and others. What I see is a summary of the main news that is subtitled. I do not know

which *chaine* the hon. Member is talking about, which gives exactly the same translation in subtitling.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Since we are talking about the News Bulletin broadcast, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has received representations that the MBC is not giving news as per the provisions of the MBC Act, especially with regard to fair and equitable reporting?

**The Prime Minister:** This is not relevant to this question and I, myself, have not received representations.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Uteem!

#### MAURITIUS-AFRICA FUND – APPLICATIONS

**(No. B/275) 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 Mauritius Africa Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) number of applications for funding received thereunder, indicating the number of successful applications and in each case the –
  - (i) quantum granted, and
  - (ii) nature of project, and
- (b) country in which funds are to be invested.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, let me say, first of all, that in the light of this question, I will need to provide at least some information to the House, and if the House will bear with me with regard to my reply.

Madam Speaker, the Mauritius-Africa Fund was incorporated in February 2014. The original mandate of the Fund included participation in the capital of Mauritian enterprises investing in viable projects on the African continent, up to a maximum of 10% of their capital.

With regard to the number of applications received for funding, I am informed that in August 2014, the Mauritius-Africa Fund invited, through public advertisements, Mauritian

enterprises to express their interest in accessing the support and services of the Fund for investments in projects in Africa. In that connection, four prospective companies contacted the Fund to express interest, but they did not make any formal application for funding.

Madam Speaker, since we took office in December 2014, this Government has adopted a completely new approach to our Africa strategy, which aims at having bigger impact on facilitation of Mauritian private sector investment in Africa. The mandate of the Mauritius-Africa Fund was, therefore, substantially reviewed to focus on the development of integrated projects in Africa under Government to Government framework.

In the execution of this new mandate, the Mauritius-Africa Fund has successfully negotiated and signed five MoUs to develop Special Economic Zones (SEZs), namely in -

- (i) Senegal;
- (ii) Cote d'Ivoire;
- (iii) Ghana;
- (iv) Madagascar, and
- (v) Kenya.

In Senegal, the Mauritius-Africa Fund has invested fifty-one million Franc CFA, amounting to 3,733,200 Mauritian Rupees, for 51% of shares in *Société des Infrastructures d'Affaires Atlantic S.A.* (SIAA), incorporated in Senegal. The Special Purpose Vehicle will manage 53 hectares of land near Dakar.

More than 31,000 square metres of building facilities were constructed during Phase I on 13 hectares of land in the Industrial Park of Diamniadio.

Phase I became operational in early 2018 and achieved 100% occupancy within a three months' period. Phase II will entail the construction of facilities over 250,000 square metres on the remaining 40 hectares of land. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Mauritius-Africa Fund has successfully negotiated preferential access for Mauritian firms to invest in the construction of a Cyber Tower, twin administrative towers, a business hotel and an aqua park within the Technology Park in Grand Bassam.

In Ghana, the Mauritius-Africa Fund will invest 1,194,000 Ghanaian Cedis, amounting to around 9.8 million Mauritian Rupees, in the share capital of Ghana Smart City Ltd, a joint venture in which the Government of Mauritius holds 60% of shares and the Government of Ghana holding 40% of shares. The project will consist of the construction of a

Technology and Innovation Hub in Central Accra and the development of a Technology and Business Park in Dawa.

Madam Speaker, as I have previously said, where multilateral efforts are weak, bilateral arrangements can be a game-changer. That is why Mauritius is focusing on bilateral cooperation with key African countries. In this pursuit, my Government has intensified diplomatic relations with Mozambique, Madagascar and Kenya. Between January and March of this year, the Head of State of these three countries have effected State visits to Mauritius. In addition to nurturing further diplomatic ties, our talks have centred on cementing bilateral economic and business relations as well as creating the right framework for our economic operators to have a secured and conducive business environment to operate in these countries.

With Mozambique, I personally engaged into discussions with the President for the setting up of a regional value chain for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) that will comprise, firstly, strategic storage of LNG, secondly, making Mauritius a reliable regional supplier of services and thirdly, establishing Mauritius as a trading platform for such products. An MoU between the State Trading Corporation and Empresa Nacional de Hidrocarbonetos (ENH), the national oil and gas operator of Mozambique, will be signed shortly to provide the basis for collaboration in this venture. Furthermore, the bilateral talks also confirmed the commitment of the Mozambique Government to address business issues that our economic operators encounter on the ground.

With Madagascar, further to my talks with the President, the Malagasy Government has agreed to allocate an extent of 80 hectares of land for the development of a textile city in Moramanga, near Antananarivo, along the main economic corridor connecting the capital to the port of Toamasina. A technical delegation is presently there to pursue discussions on this project. The visit of the President of Madagascar has also resulted in increasing air connectivity through the operationalisation of a 7<sup>th</sup> flight by Air Mauritius to Madagascar on a weekly basis.

And with Kenya, the State visit of the President has permitted the signing of an MoU laying down the general framework of collaboration between Mauritius and Kenya for the development of an Industrial and Technology Park in Naivasha. Furthermore, the interaction that the President of Kenya and myself had with the business community has provided once again greater certainty and predictability to our economic operators. I am pleased to inform

the House that a number of our economic operators are expanding their activities in Kenya, namely in insurance, financial services, agro-industry and professional services.

All the above initiatives, Madam Speaker, clearly demonstrate the greater impetus and drive that I am personally giving to our Africa Strategy. Not only are we developing greater synergies and economic cooperation with these key African countries, but I am also engaged in strategic discussions to create better regional maritime connectivity. This in itself represents a solid backbone of our regional cooperation agenda. Intra-trade in Africa still remains low compared to the rest of the world and, therefore, I am personally favouring dialogues with friendly countries to see to it that the regional maritime service becomes a reality.

Madam Speaker, one of the major hurdles faced in investing in African countries is accessing cost-efficient financing on the scale required for projects on the continent. Cognizant of this significant challenge, the Mauritius-Africa Fund is in the process of building an ecosystem to facilitate access to project finance.

The Mauritius-Africa Fund is investing one million US Dollars to acquire 50% of the share capital in the Africa Infrastructure Investment Holdings Company Ltd, a joint venture with the SBM Holdings. The joint venture Holding Company will provide the seed capital in a new dedicated Fund with the aim of raising up to 200 million US Dollars, mainly for Mauritian companies to invest in infrastructural projects in Africa.

In addition, the Mauritius-Africa Fund, the State Bank of Mauritius, MAUBank Ltd and the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd have all signed Memoranda of Understanding with the “*Fonds Solidarité Africain (FSA)*” to provide funding at concessional rates to Mauritian firms to invest in Africa.

I am further informed that discussions between the Mauritius-Africa Fund and other multilateral institutions are at an advanced stage. The Mauritius-Africa Fund is in the process of entering into a strategic partnership with the Africa Finance Corporation, a Pan-African multilateral development financial institution established in 2007. The African Development Bank is working closely with the Mauritius-Africa Fund and the local banking institutions for syndication of its financing instruments for the benefit of Mauritian enterprises. The Afreximbank is a potential investor in the Africa Infrastructure and Industrialisation Fund. For the next fiscal year, the World Bank is allocating a budget for Technical Assistance that would enable the Bank to, as a starting point, provide Mauritius with advisory support on the

design of the business model and value proposition to investors around the Special Economic Zones.

Madam Speaker, my Government is committed to fulfilling its role as an enabler and as a facilitator for investment, business, and trade with countries on the African continent and in the Indian Ocean region.

In the furtherance of this commitment, the Mauritius-Africa Fund, together with the Economic Development Board, has, since 29 April 2019, launched a public invitation for Expression of Interest for Mauritian companies interested in implementing projects in six countries with which Mauritius has partnered to develop the Special Economic Zones and has established special bilateral relationships.

I am informed that the advertisement for the Expression of Interest exercise can be accessed online through the website of the Economic Development Board. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Madam Speaker, it has been five years since we have this Africa Fund. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, concretely, *concrètement*, in those five years, how much of private sector investment has gone to the Special Economic Zone that he has been talking about for the past ten minutes?

**The Prime Minister:** I have replied, Madam Speaker, that initially, the Mauritius-Africa Fund was designed to attain a set of objectives for implementation by providing capital for a number of Mauritian operators. But when we came into Government, we realised that it was a wrong strategy and we changed the whole concept of the Mauritius-Africa Fund. Now, we have to discuss with friendly countries we have partnered. I am not going to repeat everything that I have stated with all the different countries. Setting up of Special Economic Zone is not something that we can do by saying that today we agree on a matter of principle and that Special Economic Zone is set up tomorrow. Let me remind the hon. Member - he was not in Government at that time - that we wanted to develop our relationship with Mozambique. We had agreed - for so many years, after agreement - to develop Special Economic Zone, especially for agricultural sector. What has happened? Nothing has happened! Not a single Mauritian enterprise has invested in that special economic zone. So, we must learn from the past. What I am saying is that we must...

*(Interruptions)*

No, in the special economic zone! The hon. Member is mixing up issues!

**Madam Speaker:** Do not interrupt, hon. Dr. Boolell! Please!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Dr. Boolell, you have asked for the floor for a supplementary question. I will give you the floor.

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Member is mixing up issues, but, anyway, when he will ask the question, I will answer. Madam Speaker, I am not being critical of what has happened in the past. What I am saying is that we have to learn from the past; we have to learn from what we have tried to do, which has not been successful. This is why we believe - this Government - that we need to set up the proper infrastructure in collaboration with other countries, in order to then be able to make it attractive for Mauritian companies or Mauritian companies to team up with other foreign companies to have opportunities of investment in those countries. This is what we are doing. Therefore, I must say that the planning, the setting up, the discussion for agreements and so on do take time. If you can imagine, for setting up a project in Mauritius itself, how long does it take sometimes. Now, we are discussing with other countries. There are so many things that we have to look at and, after agreement, obviously, it needs to be implemented, and it does take time.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Madam Speaker, the then Minister of Finance, Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo, answered a Parliamentary Question, B/254, a few years ago, and this is what he said -

“How would private sector come in? Once the SPD has been set up, then it is the Board of Investment and the Mauritius Africa Fund, both organisations are going to rope in their efforts together to ensure that investors come in.”

When he said that, I remember, I stood up and said, “This is *bla bla bla*”. Three years later, it is still the same *bla bla bla*. This Government has done nothing to increase the number of private investment from Mauritians into Africa.

**The Prime Minister:** Well, this is what the hon. Member is saying. He talks about *bla bla bla*. It is not *bla bla bla*; we are serious. Maybe, it would be good for the other countries whose Presidents have been to Mauritius, where we have had very serious

discussions, where we have come to agreement in principle and some of them are already on paper, to hear that the hon. Member is saying *bla bla bla*. And, maybe, it is also good for me to tell them: “Look, this is what the Opposition, the MMM - not the other Opposition - is saying, *bla bla bla*”. But keep to your *bla bla bla*. I am interested in doing serious, concrete work. I do agree it takes time, Madam Speaker, because it is not something that is easily just said and done. It takes time, but people of Mauritius and people of those countries will appreciate that this is the first time - I must say that this is the first time - that a Government is not only talking, making beautiful speeches, we are walking the talk and we are making things happen. As I said, look at what has happened in Senegal. In Senegal, the first phase is already completed, 100% being occupied in terms of the infrastructure that has been developed. Now, this is concrete example of what is happening, what we are doing and the relationship that we are establishing. It is not only a question of relationship on the economic front. And I must say it; it has also to do with personal relationship that we are having at the highest level, with the Presidents and the Prime Ministers of those countries. I am happy to see that this also is paving the way for other issues of common interest to both Mauritius and those countries.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ganoo!

**Mr Ganoo:** In his last Budget, when commenting on our African strategy and cross-border investments in Africa, the hon. Prime Minister announced that a five-year tax holiday for Mauritian companies collaborating with the Mauritius-Africa Fund would be granted for the development of infrastructure in the special economic zones. Can he inform the House whether any companies have come forward for the grant of this five-year tax holiday?

**The Prime Minister:** I think the hon. Member is maybe confused or has not understood what I am saying. In Senegal, for example - I am taking an example - there is Phase 1 which has been completed. Phase 2 is in the pipeline. All of the other special economic zones have not already been set up. There have been discussions, agreements. We are also working on incentives to be given, like what the hon. Member said, to Mauritian companies also for them to have access to finance, which is a very important issue. So, as at now, I think we are on a path that we will set up the right condition and opportunities, and I hope - I cannot speak for the private sector, for the enterprises - that they will seize those opportunities that we are going to create and, of course, do commercial activities, industrial activities in those economic zones.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Boolell, you have the floor!

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I know the hon. Prime Minister is walking the talk, but he has to walk briskly without the cane. He knows very well that Africa is on the way to become a continent Free Trade Area. Can I impress upon him to see to it that a strategic paper is circulated? Because Africa is a continent of 54 countries and there is no one size fits all, so that we know once for all what is our strategy with respect to investment in many African countries.

**The Prime Minister:** Well, I am happy that the hon. Member recognises the fact that we are walking the talk. Because with regard to the FTA, I can assure the hon. Member that this is the vision that we have for Africa; this is the vision that we have for our entrepreneurs to be able to access to markets, and this is the vision that we have in order to make Mauritius become more attractive, because if we are limited by ourselves as a very, very, very small, and I must say, insignificant market, it will be extremely difficult to attract foreign investment in order to do industrial or economic activities. Therefore, this is the vision, and I can tell the hon. Member that I have been the one - not the only one, I am not trying to boast myself, but I have pushed a lot with regard to what I would call a major project for Africa for a Free Trade Area, because that will create, I would say, a proper environment to make our investors have huge access to such a market. I hope we are all agreeable on this vision to make Mauritius become a huge market through the FTA.

**Madam Speaker:** Since this question has taken much time, I will allow additional time for one last PQ to the hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. Mrs Selvon!

### **MBC - KREOL LANGUAGE - CHANNELS**

(No. B/279) **Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if consideration will be given for the advisability of increasing the number of channels thereof broadcasting in the kreol language.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, section 4(a)(i) of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation Act stipulates that the Corporation shall provide independent and impartial broadcasting services of information, education, culture and entertainment in Creole, Bhojpuri, French, English, Hindustani and such other languages spoken or taught in Mauritius as the Board may, with the approval of the Minister, determine.

I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge of the MBC that, in line with its mandate, the Corporation ensures that its broadcasting programmes cater for the aspirations, needs and taste of its audience.

Insofar as television channels are concerned, the *Senn Kreole* on MBC Channel 17 is solely dedicated to provide viewers with a variety of programmes in terms of entertainment and promotion of the Creole culture and language.

A daily Creole News Bulletin is broadcast on MBC 2 at 1900 hrs and simultaneously on *Senn Kreole*.

Moreover, with a view to reaching a broader audience, an appreciable percentage of air time is also allocated to a mix of Creole and other languages on the following TV channels, namely –

|       |                          |
|-------|--------------------------|
| (i)   | MBC 1                    |
| (ii)  | MBC 2                    |
| (iii) | MBC 3                    |
| (iv)  | Youth and Sports Channel |

I will not give the percentage of time that is being dedicated to Creole.

Madam Speaker, in regard to radio channels, I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge of the Corporation that 50% of air time on *Radio Maurice* and 65% of air time on *Kool FM* are dedicated to Creole language.

Madam Speaker, since many of the channels are already broadcasting in the Creole language, it is not advisable, at this stage, to increase the number of channels on radio and television for broadcasting in Creole language. However, the MBC is currently working on the revamping and rebranding of its TV Channels, including *Senn Kreole*, with a view to

providing innovative contents and an appropriate platform for Mauritian artists and those from the islands in the region to showcase their talents.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Selvon!

**Mrs Selvon:** Merci, M. le Premier ministre. Peut-il dire quel est le nombre total de chaînes en ce moment et le nombre pour chaque langue pratiquée à Maurice ?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, I have for Creole. As I said, apart from the *Senn Kreole* on MBC Channel 17, which is solely dedicated, that is, on a 24-hour/7-day basis to *la langue Créole*, we have other channels like MBC 1: 48%; MBC 2: 39%; MBC 3: 72%, and Youth and Sports Channel: 50%. But with regard to the other languages, of course, I need notice for that. I have been provided with a chart 'Percentage of air time allocated on TV Channels for each language'. I can table this information.

**Madam Speaker:** Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ A/2 in regard to the Corporate and Business Registration Department will be replied by the hon. Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives.

Hon. Osman Mahomed!

#### **WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY - TENDER PROCEDURES**

**(No. B/281) 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 Wastewater Management Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the tender procedures followed for the award of a contract for consultancy services proposed for the construction of a new building therefor at Curepipe, indicating the –

- (a) initial scope of services to be procured and fees quoted therefor, and
- (b) final scope of services to be procured and quantum of fees payable as approved by the Board and quantum thereof paid as at to date.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I stand informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that on 14 November 2017, it invited Expressions of Interest from local consultants, consultancy firms for extension and refurbishment works at its sub office at Jerningham Street, Curepipe. At the closing date on 14 December 2017, it received responses from two companies, namely Safety Construction Company Ltd and Pixel Creation

Ltd. A Bid Evaluation Committee shortlisted Pixel Creation Ltd, which was invited on 22 February 2018, to submit its technical and financial proposals.

With regard to part (a) on the recommendation of the Bid Evaluation Committee, the Authority awarded the contract on 01 March 2018 to Pixel Creation Ltd for an amount of Rs3 m., excluding VAT. The scope of services, including, among others, the following –

- assess the structural soundness of the existing building and its ability to sustain additional floors and indicate the number of typical office floors it can sustain, and
- replan the layout of the existing office space and design the second, third and fourth floor layouts to be used as additional floor spaces.

I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that on 23 March 2018, the consultant reported to the Wastewater Management Authority that several layouts have been prepared based on the area and triangular shape of the plot area. The consultant advised the Authority that the existing building, dating back to 1994, does not allow for more than one floor and cannot meet the Authority's requirements for three additional floors. It further advised that renovation is not recommended as the cost of renovating the whole structure to accommodate only one additional floor would be at least twice that of a new construction.

It also advised Wastewater Management Authority that a new ground plus three floors building would have the construction done. Consequently, the Board decided to proceed with the construction of a new building of 3,278 m<sup>2</sup>. In the light of all these circumstances, the Board decided to continue to retain the same consultant as the latter had already carried out the preliminary surveys and studies on the site and worked on the office space requirements of each Division of the WMA.

The scope of the services of the consultant includes the preparation of the preliminary architectural proposal, detailed design and production information, architectural and engineering, preparation of bidding documents, including bill of quantities, supervision of works and management of the construction contract. Up to now, the consultant has been paid Rs1,950,000, excluding Value Added Tax.

With regard to part (b), I am informed by the Authority that there has been no change in the quantum of fees payable. However, a request for revision of fees by the consultant is still under consideration at the WMA.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Madam Speaker, I have with me the original letter of invitation for the consultancy services for extension and refurbishment works and the purpose of the assignment, as defined in there, is totally different from what the hon. Minister has just listed in the House. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he finds it normal that the rule of the game is changed within the same contract, within the same architect while going initially for renovation to the design pulling down and construction of a totally new building, whether he finds it normal and acceptable that this is the case?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** I have looked, of course, into that aspect of the matter and I have found nothing untoward in what the Board did. As I have said in my reply, the original request was for refurbishment and then along the road, they found that it would be uneconomical to do this and that it was much better to construct a new building.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** I am going to table the original scope of work of the architect but that being the case, hon. Deputy Prime Minister, would you not find it more appropriate because the original tenderers for this contract based themselves on a particular scope of work that it is changed along the way drastically that the tender exercise be re-floated again so that we have everybody on the same level playing field quoting for the construction of apparently now going to become the new Wastewater Management Authority's headquarters?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** I am sure that the Board must have envisaged all those possibilities, but the Board must also have taken, I was not at the Board meeting, of course, I did not take part in the discussions, but I am sure the Board must have considered the time that had been spent, the money that had been allocated, the necessity to go at a certain speed considering the works being done at the level of the Metro. All this had to be considered. So, I am sure these were factors to be taken into consideration, these are decisions in the hand of the Board.

**Madam Speaker:** Last question!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the fees of structure of the architect, which initially were Rs3 m., will fluctuate and will now be based on a percentage of the final cost of the contract which is going to be way above the Rs3 m., and if he has the figure with him, can I ask him what is going to be the final estimated cost based on percentage which still I believe is totally wrong?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** What I know is that the consultant has put in a claim for additional fees, I will give the hon. Member the figures of course of four million

something, 4.2 or 4.9 – I am sorry, I don't have the exact figure with me, but the authority is considering that and is minded in not accepting that claim. That is what I know as matters stand now. I am told, I am advised that the fees are in accordance with the scale of fees by the Mauritius body looking after the fees of architects, I forget the name unfortunately. The hon. Member must know that much better than I do.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Osman Mahomed!

**QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITAL – MORTUARY DEPARTMENT**

**(No. B/282) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Mortuary House of the Queen Victoria Hospital, he will state if a Safety and Health inspection exercise has recently been conducted thereat and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when;
- (b) by whom, and
- (c) the discrepancies detected, if any, and, if so, indicate the implications thereof and the remedial actions required.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that a Safety and Health Officer from the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms carries out regular visits to the Queen Victoria Hospital to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, the last visit effected was in May 2018 by the Safety and Health Officer who was assigned to carry out the Inspection Exercise at the said Hospital.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the discrepancies noted relate mainly to the structure of the building, lack of storage facilities and health surveillance.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that, as and when discrepancies noted are submitted to the Hospital Administration, immediate remedial actions are initiated. For instance, maintenance works have been carried to the cracks noted in the ceilings, racks have been provided for storage facilities. Medical check-ups have been carried out in October 2018 for all Mortuary Attendants. Disinfection has been effected in the months of July and October

2018, and the Rose Hill Health Office has been requested to carry out monthly disinfection at the Mortuary Department. The last spraying has been done in May 2019.

Madam Speaker, I wish also to inform the House that, in November 2018, the Hospital Administration, irrespective of the Inspection Report, has, on its own initiative, undertaken some renovation and upgrading work, mainly painting of part of the buildings, wall cladding and improvement in the plumbing system. Moreover, a new motorised autopsy table has been procured in November 2018.

Furthermore, I am informed that this year, in January, the Safety and Health Officer has carried out a risk assessment and his report is still awaited.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Osman Mahomed!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Thank you. I have a copy of the 2018 Report which is quite worrisome when you look at it. Can we have a copy of the latest Report of the survey that has been done so that we can compare notes? Would the hon. Minister be willing to table it?

**Dr. Husnoo:** As I told the House, we are still waiting for the report. I have just mentioned that.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Okay. Can I ask the hon. Minister to confirm to the House whether mortuary facilities are only available at Victoria Hospital or are they available in other hospitals as well?

**Dr. Husnoo:** I mean, it is available at Jeetoo Hospital as well and that depending on the number of cases we have to do.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there is a Circular from his Ministry dated 14 January 2008 that advocated on request of the Commissioner of Police to go for a more decentralised approach with regard to mortuary services being dispensed in the country, like the one at Jeetoo Hospital. Is he aware of that request from the Commissioner of Police?

**Madam Speaker:** Did you say 2008?

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Yes.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Actually, that would depend on the service, the doctors; it does not depend on the Ministry of Health. I think I explained that last time. This depends on the

Police service; it's the Police Medical Officers. It is different. The Police Medical Officer does not fall under the Ministry of Health, so it's for them to decide where they are going to do the post-mortem.

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

*At 1.03 p.m., the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.36 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Osman Mahomed!

**DR. A. G. JEETOO HOSPITAL - POST-MORTEM EXAMINATIONS -  
POLICE MEDICAL OFFICERS**

**(No. B/283) Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to post-mortem examinations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if consideration will be given for the carrying out thereof by Police Medical Officers at the Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital between 1600 hrs and 2200 hrs.

**Sir Anerood Jugnauth:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a post-mortem examination is carried out in cases warranting Police investigation after the deceased has been identified and the pre-requisite authority has been obtained from the District Magistrate.

Madam Speaker, at present, post-mortem examinations are carried out at two mortuaries namely P.M.O.C, Victoria Hospital, Candos and Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, Port Louis. The mortuary at Victoria Hospital operates daily from 7 in the morning to 10 p.m. and until all post-mortem examinations are completed.

Madam Speaker, regarding Dr. A. G Jeetoo hospital, post-mortems cannot be carried thereto between 1600 hrs and 2200 hrs in view of the fact that supporting services, namely Histopathology, Pathology, Virology and Microbiology are not operational there beyond 1600 hours.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the existing two mortuaries are meeting the present needs of the Police in respect of post-mortem examinations which are as far as practicable carried out within 24 hours.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Madam Speaker, in 2008, as per circular issued, the Commissioner of Police requested that these facilities be carried out at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital between 4 p.m. and 2200 hours. But this service was interrupted because of the construction of the Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital. Here is a copy of the Memo which I am going to table. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor whether the old system - this is administrative - could be brought back? Because currently parents of deceased persons, especially those having to go for early burial are facing a lot of hardship because the situation as it is, meaning all go to Victoria Hospital after 4 p.m.

**Sir Anerood Jugnauth:** Madam Speaker, I have already answered. The work is being done. All post-mortems are being carried out on a daily basis in these two places and I have said why they cannot be transferred to one place, Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** The Rt. hon. Minister Mentor has put forward reasons why this is so. But is the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor aware that when people passed away after 4 p.m. in Port Louis, in the northern part of the island and in Flacq, a whole cohort of people have to accompany the corpses, meaning Police officers, other staff of the hospital and members of the bereaved families who are already in the state that they are and they have to find taxis and all to go and collect the bodies at Victoria Hospital?

**Sir Anerood Jugnauth:** And the work is being done. Mauritius is such a small place. I do not know what we are complaining about.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On Friday, I raised the issue during adjournment time. Is the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor aware that even during weekends, even before four o'clock, there is no autopsy carried out? So, I would like to know from the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor if there is a shortage today in doctors carrying out post-mortem examinations in the Police Force?

**Sir Anerood Jugnauth:** Well there is no shortage. I have said the work is being carried out to the satisfaction of everybody. Within 24 hours, all post-mortems are carried out.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Jahangeer!

**ROAD DECONGESTION PROGRAMME – SOUTHERN REGION –  
MASTER PLAN**

**(No. B/284) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Road Decongestion Programme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if consideration is being given for the construction of a bypass from La Flora bridge to the Sweet factory to ease traffic congestion thereat.

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that currently the main access to the south of the island is through the Savanne (A9) and Black River Savanne Coast road (B9). These roads pass through various residential areas such as Nouvelle France, La Flora, Britannia, Rivière des Anguilles, Surinam and Souillac.

The following problems have been identified in these regions –

- (i) The villages and residential areas are very scattered;
- (ii) The existing road network has been developed on existing sugarcane tracks without proper planning, and
- (iii) Houses and businesses have direct access onto main roads, and
- (iv) there is poor road geometry.

To address the above issue, the RDA has prepared a Master Plan for the southern region of Mauritius as part of the Road Decongestion Programme. The aim of this Master Plan is to:

- (i) provide a proper road network in the south;
- (ii) reduce travel time and enhance road safety for road users;

- (iii) provide a direct link from the south to strategic places, such as SSR International Airport, Port Louis via the M1 amongst others;
- (iv) promote future economic development such as hotels, IRS developments, smart cities and residential areas in the south, and
- (v) cater for additional traffic to be generated by future development.

Madam Speaker, as part of the southern Master Plan, the following projects are being envisaged –

- (a) a new motorway which will link motorway M1 near Balisson to the south. several new arterial roads to bypass villages will be constructed and connected to the proposed motorway. The new motorway will also act as a bypass between La Flora bridge and the Sweet Factory.

The other projects are –

- (b) Bois Cheri Bypass;
- (c) L'Escalier Bypass;
- (d) Surinam Bypass;
- (e) La Flora bypass, and
- (f) Souillac bypass.
- (g) upgrading of Gros Bois road B79;
- (h) L'Escalier - SSR link road;
- (i) Tyack-L'Escalier Link Road, and
- (j) upgrading of Chamouny Road B89.

The massive investment required is to the tune of Rs4 billion which will be required to implement the above projects in the years to come.

In view of the high investment involved, it is planned to implement the project in phases and my Ministry is proposing to proceed with the construction of the Bois Cherie bypass in its first stage and request has been made for funding for this coming financial year.

**Mr Jahangeer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In order to enhance the traffic fluidity at the entrance of La Flora, this bypass is a must. Therefore, will the hon. Minister inform us if there is a feasibility study going on for this bypass?

**Mr Bodha:** We have started, in fact, with the bypass for Bois Cherie and we are already in the process of acquisition of land. But I will give a particular attention to the request made by the hon. Member.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jahangeer!

### **FOREIGN NANNIES – WORK PERMITS**

(No. B/285) **Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the hiring of foreign nannies, he will state if consideration will be given for the advisability of granting work permits therefor.

**Mr Callichurn:** Madam Speaker, it has been the policy of my Ministry to consider requests for foreign nannies on a case to case basis and subject to there being no objection from the Prime Minister's Office for the grant of a residence permit, so far there are two valid work permits for nannies.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

### **QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITAL - CANCER PATIENTS - TREATMENT/SERVICES**

(No. B/286) **Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to cancer, he will state if consideration will be given for the decentralisation of the treatment/services presently available only at the Queen Victoria Hospital to the other regional hospitals, pending the coming into operation of the New Cancer Centre at Solferino and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the treatment and services for cancer patients, that is, the outpatient and chemotherapy services are already available at all our regional hospitals, except Flacq Hospital. The outpatient services at our

hospitals for cancer patients started in late 70's and chemotherapy services in our regional hospitals started as far back as 2012.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Minister whether radiotherapy is also available in the four regional hospitals? As you aware, radiotherapy is one of the main components for cancer treatment.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Madam Speaker, cancer treatment is a super specialist treatment and as such, we cannot put it in all the regional hospitals. For example, I will explain it, for radiotherapy you have Linacs and cobalt. For a small country like Mauritius, you cannot have five centres. You have only one centre and that is situated at Candos.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Madam Speaker, answering to a question in October 2018, the hon. Minister informed the House about the construction of a Day Care Unit as part of the proposed extension work at the Cancer Unit at Victoria. This was in October 2018. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether bids have already been received and whether any contractor has been selected for the work?

**Dr. Husnoo:** Yes, Madam Speaker. We went through the MPI, and the District Contractor, Tayelamay & Sons Enterprise Ltd under the Framework Agreement 2018/2019, has been selected and the contract sum for this work is Rs2,756,335, including VAT. Work has started on 10 December 2018 and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Madam Speaker, if I heard the hon. Minister well, the sum is Rs2 m. So, how come it will take one year for a budget of Rs2 m. for the work to be done? Is that correct?

**Dr. Husnoo:** Yes, that is what I have been given. It is Rs2 m. for two different projects. It is not one project and it is convalescent ward and day care centre.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Madam Speaker, a last one on this important issue. As the House is aware, there are more than 8,000 patients for cancer in Mauritius and most of them go to Victoria Hospital, and you can imagine how many people go to this service. Can I ask the hon. Minister to see to it that this service of the hospital for treatment for cancer, matters could be expedite quickly so that we have a day care waiting for the patients there? Because people are really suffering and the situation is terrible there.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Madam Speaker, I am aware of that. Despite the fact that we are opening a new Cancer Centre at Solferino, which is coming hopefully beginning of the year, despite this fact, at Victoria, I am building this new Day Care Centre. Even if it is for a short time, just for a few months, I am building this because I realise how important it is for the patients. Even for a few months, it does not matter, I am building it. So, I am aware of the problem. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Mrs Perraud!

### **ELDERLY PERSONS - HOMES - CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/287) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the Elderly, he will state if Government will consider coming up with a policy for the construction of Homes therefor.

**Mr Sinatambou:** Madam Speaker, ageing is the most prominent demographic event of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In Mauritius, the population aged 60 and above is becoming a fast growing segment of the general population. According to Statistics Mauritius in 1972, elderly persons, aged 60 and above, constituted about 6% of the total population.

In 2000, they accounted for 9%. In 2015, the percentage had attained 13% of the total population. As per Statistics Mauritius, this percentage is expected to increase to 20% by 2023 and to 33.8% by the year 2053. Another fact is that until the last decade over half of the elderly persons in Mauritius lived in extended and composite households, but over time, this type of living arrangement is gradually being eroded. I am informed that a majority of family units nowadays are based on the nuclear model consisting of the spouses and their children only and where both spouses are in paid employment.

It is to be noted also that life expectancy is on the rise in view of economic prosperity leading to a better quality of life and advances in health care and sanitation. In the face of these trends, elderly persons are now more likely to live either with their own spouse or alone following the death of one of the spouses. It is also a fact that our elders living alone are more vulnerable to social ills like theft, abuse and neglect. Although Government encourages the elderly to stay within the traditional family unit because the elderly person still has an important role in strengthening family ties and in transferring values to the younger generation, the demand for the provision of Residential Care Homes is increasing.

There are presently 27 charitable institutions and 39 private residential care homes operating in Mauritius. In fact, at paragraph 302 of his Budget Speech of 2017/2018, the hon. Prime Minister announced a measure, which speaks of this Government's caring and compassionate approach in supporting our elderly. Indeed, Government earmarked Rs50 m. to set up two additional homes to accommodate low-income elderly residents who are living alone. The homes will be equipped with all necessary facilities, amenities, safety, security and a harmonious environment where they can live an active and healthy life.

The two proposed homes would be constructed at Flic en Flac and Palmar. Land at Flic en Flac has already been vested in my Ministry and is presently being cleared. Land at Palmar is in the process of being vested. As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister has entrusted me with the task of improving the ways to cater for those elderly people, who for one reason or another, cannot live in the traditional family unit. In the light of the above, Government is considering coming up with a policy for the construction of homes for the elderly.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Perraud!

**Mrs Perraud:** Merci beaucoup. Effectivement, comme l'a mentionné le ministre, dans le budget 2017/2018 au paragraphe 302, donc, on a annoncé la construction de ces deux maisons de retraite. Le ministre a dit, donc, qu'il a déjà identifié le terrain. Est-ce que ce serait possible au ministre de dire à la Chambre quand est-ce que la construction va débuter?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Comme je viens de l'expliquer, Madame la présidente, les deux centres résidentiels seront respectivement à Flic en Flac et à Palmar. Dans le cas du terrain, qui se trouve à Flic en Flac, nous sommes en train de procéder au nettoyage; il nous faut enlever. Donc, c'était un terrain en friche. Nous opérons, en ce moment, au nettoyage du terrain. Et dans le cas du terrain de Palmar, le processus est en train d'être complété avec le ministère des Terres et du logement. Donc, ma collègue comprendra que ce ne sera probablement pas durant cette année financière-ci, puisque le processus est en cours, et nous savons tous que le système ne nous permettra pas de le faire durant cette année financière, mais je suis optimiste que ce sera durant la prochaine année financière.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Perraud!

**Mrs Perraud:** Quelle est la politique du gouvernement concernant les centres d'accueil de jour, qui est différent des maisons de retraite? Est-ce que le gouvernement a une politique par rapport à ces centres d'accueil de jour, c'est-à-dire, des structures capables

d'accueillir des personnes âgées durant un délai variable : une demi-journée, une journée, ou pendant la semaine ? Donc, est-ce qu'il y a une politique par rapport à ce type de structure ?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Well, if I may say, Madam Speaker, we are not within the realm of the residential care homes. However, from memory, I know that this year, when the hon. Prime Minister came to know that there was hardly any elderly day care centre in the west and in the south, he actually also made provision for the opening of two elderly day care centres, one in Bambous, one in Chemin Grenier. So, that is all I can say for now. But I also believe from memory that our elderly are allowed to go there at all times within working hours.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Adrien Duval!

**Mr A. Duval:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister, in view of the centralisation of CSR disbursement, now with the National CSR Foundation, and the fact that, for example, the Rose Belle Elderly Residential Care Home has been facing difficulties and have had to close down, what does he propose in terms of financing support to these elderly homes to ensure that the existing ones are going to survive financially and the new ones as well? What does he propose in terms of financing support?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Well, let us first of all realise that we must look at that in its whole context. The budget of my Ministry is more than 20% of the national budget, so we have to appreciate that already this Government is doing a lot for the vulnerable, including our elderly. In fact, the figures I have is that the budget of the Ministry for this year was more than Rs24.6 billion, representing 20.33% of the national budget compared to Rs13.9 billion in 2014/2015. So, we are nearly twice as much as compared to the previous Government. I don't think that we should somehow give the impression that Government is not helping recreational care homes.

For the problem raised by the hon. Member, one should know that Government already gives money to those residential care homes. However, I would suggest that if he would come with a substantive question, I will be in a better position to give a more substantive reply.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Leopold!

**Mr Leopold:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to ask the hon. Minister whether he has a mechanism set in place in his Ministry to look after the standard of both

nursing home and residential home so as to maintain a good standard throughout all the nursing homes and residential homes in the Republic of Mauritius?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Yes, the answer, Madam Speaker, is in the affirmative. In fact, this is governed by the Residential Care Homes Act of 2003 and the Residential Care Homes Regulations of 2005, which actually regulate the sector and the homes. There is under those two laws the Residential Care Home Board which actually oversees the whole process.

**Madam Speaker:** The question has been fully debated and satisfied. So, next question!

### **BASIC INVALIDITY PENSION – BENEFICIARIES**

**(No. B/288) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the Basic Invalidity Pension, he will state if beneficiaries thereof are regularly required to be examined by the Medical Board to ensure the eligibility thereof therefor.

**Mr Sinatambou:** Madam Speaker, since the coming into office of this Government, the Basic Invalidity Pension referred to as Invalid Basic Pension in the National Pensions Act of 1976 has been increased by Rs2,943 per month, that is, from Rs3,267 to Rs6,210 every month. This, Madam Speaker, represents an increase of more than 90%, to be precise 90.08% increase given by this Government, compared to the last Government.

According to Section (8), subsection (1) of the National Pensions Act of 1976, as subsequently amended, an applicant qualifies for the Basic Invalidity Pension if he is disabled and is likely to be so disabled for a period of at least 12 months and, secondly, if he is under the age of 60. Applications are made at the local Social Security Office with relevant supporting medical certificates. Applicants are examined by a Medical Board consisting of two doctors, instituted under Section 34, subsection (2) of the Act and the Board is held in Social Security Offices across the island.

It is to be noted that claimants who are so disabled or who are bedridden and who cannot attend the Medical Board at Social Security Offices are actually visited by one doctor at their domicile to assess their claim. The criteria are specified in the Sixth Schedule of the National Pensions Act and, in addition for consistency purposes, a Medical Guideline has been established in consultation with medical specialists from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

Depending on health conditions, there are cases which are recommended the Basic Invalidation Pension for more than one year. All cases are reviewed at the end of the period of incapacity by virtue of Section (8), subsection (2) paragraph (b) of the Act. There are, however, some medical conditions where the person is so disabled or bedridden that the Medical Board recommends the Basic Invalidation Pension to be paid on a permanent basis. Around 3,000 claimants are examined by the Medical Board monthly. As at date, there are 32,660 beneficiaries of Basic Invalidation Pension, inclusive of 3,353 with permanent disability.

**Mrs Perraud:** Madame la présidente, il y a des personnes qui souffrent de lourds handicaps ou qui sont gravement malades et qui doivent être portées vers les membres du *Board*. Des fois, ces personnes-là sont portées sur des civières ou alors elles encourent de lourds frais de transport pour aller devant le *Board*. Le ministère pourrait-il envisager que, au lieu que les personnes qui sont malades et handicapées se déplacent pour venir à Port Louis devant le *Board*, est-ce que les membres du *Board* pourraient se déplacer et aller visiter ces personnes chez elles ?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Well, I have stated in my reply, Madam Speaker, that usually the Medical Board examines patients across Social Security Offices all over the island, but there are instances where the claimants are so disabled or bedridden that they cannot attend the Medical Board at the Social Security Offices, and in those instances, it is already provided that a doctor does attend the examination at the domicile of the claimants - at least, so are the provisions which I have been told about.

**Mrs Perraud:** Je suis assez surprise par la réponse du ministre, mais nous connaissons tous des cas où vraiment il y a des personnes qui sont handicapées et malades qui sont portées vers le *Board*.

Ma deuxième question est : qu'en est-il, par exemple, pour les personnes autistes et qui doivent venir régulièrement devant le *Board* parce que, autant qu'on sache, une personne autiste ne va pas vraiment guérir ? Quelle est l'utilité pour ces personnes-là, non seulement les autistes mais aussi les personnes qui sont amputées ou handicapées d'un membre qui doivent revenir à chaque fois devant le *Board* ?

**Mr Sinatambou:** As I explained again in my reply, under Section (8), subsection (1), the Basic Invalidation Pension is actually granted if a person is disabled as defined by law and if that person is likely to be so disabled for a period of at least 12 months. So, it means that, if

ever that person is likely to be disabled for more than 12 months, the examining doctors are supposed to give or to recommend the payment of the pension for more than that period of 12 months. Now, of course, what our common sense dictates is that people who have been amputated will not get back their limp, so I presume that the doctors also have the same common sense like we do.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Perraud!

**Mrs Perraud:** Je suis vraiment, vraiment surprise par la réponse du ministre qui ne reflète pas du tout ce qui se passe en réalité. Moi-même, j'ai un neveu qui est autiste et c'est un traumatisme pour lui car à chaque fois il doit venir devant le *Board*. J'avais déjà mentionné cela lors d'un de mes discours et je sais que nous tous nous connaissons des personnes dans cette situation-là. Alors, je demanderai à M. le ministre de bien voir ce qui se passe au ministère parce que ce que vous dites en écrit n'est pas du tout la réalité de ce qui se passe dans votre ministère.

**Mr Sinatambou:** Madame la présidente, je pense que nous devrions faire les choses différemment. Ceux-ci sont les provisions qui sont contenues dans les règlements. S'il y a une quelconque entorse, je demanderai à ma collègue de bien vouloir me faire parvenir les noms des personnes lésées et je ferai le nécessaire.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Several similar cases have been raised in the past, including from myself, and the hon. Minister's predecessor had stated to the House that this will fall in place when the Disability Bill will be brought to Parliament. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is envisaged to bring Disability Bill in Parliament before the end of this mandate?

**Mr Sinatambou:** The answer is in the affirmative, Madam Speaker.

However, I don't see how the Disability Bill will actually cater for the problems raised. This is a matter to be raised by them personally.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Mrs Perraud!

### **PSAC ASSESSMENT - STUDENTS - TRANSFERS**

(No. B/289) **Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the last school allocation exercise carried out following the Primary School Achievement Certificate Examinations, she will state the

number of parents who were not satisfied therewith, indicating the number thereof who have requested for school transfers.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, in reply to PQ B/431 at our sitting of 22 May 2018, I had informed the House of the mechanism in place with regard to processing of requests for transfer by the MES and the Ministry following PSAC Assessment as well as the criteria for admission to Grade VII in accordance with the Education Regulations.

With regard to the PSAC Assessment 2018, all pupils having sat for the assessment were offered a seat in the general or extended programme at a regional school and there have been no no-school cases.

I am informed that in this regard some 15,882 seats were offered in the general and extended programme at Grade VII in December 2018. Madam Speaker, following the first exercise for the allocation of seats conducted by the MES, the Ministry issued, in December 2018, a Press advertisement inviting parents wishing to apply for the transfer of their wards. Subsequently, 1,922 requests have been received and processed at the level of the MES on the basis of the vacancies existing at the regional schools and the approved criteria for admission. 1,004 requests were favourably entertained and letters of transfer issued.

In addition, the Ministry considers requests for transfer with regard to changes in addresses, serious medical cases and admission of twins, amongst others. After examination of such requests, in accordance with the approved criteria for admission, 150 students have been favourably entertained.

**Mrs Perraud:** Est-ce que la ministre pourrait nous donner une liste de raisons pourquoi les parents ont demandé le transfert des enfants?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, when we carry out the exercise, when there is the filling up of forms, very often parents do not put the required number of schools, and in case they do not get the schools of their choice, instead of asking parents not to have a no-school case, the MES has decided to offer a seat to the students in case their parents did not fill up the form for the number of schools required.

**Mrs Perraud:** Est-ce que la ministre pourrait nous donner le chiffre combien d'enfants qui ont eu une école qui est très loin de chez eux?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, we have a mechanism for their admission in regional schools and it goes according to the educational zones, and students normally get schools within the zones. It is true that some of the zones are extremely large and you do have schools that might be a bit away from the dwelling of these students, but it is still within the educational zone.

**Mrs Perraud:** Est-ce que la ministre pourrait confirmer s'il y a eu un cas où un enfant résidant dans le nord a eu un collègue à Pailles?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madame la présidente, c'est vrai qu'il y a eu un cas d'un élève qui a eu un collègue à Pailles malgré le fait que l'enfant réside dans le nord, mais c'est parce que l'État a voulu offrir à l'enfant la possibilité d'avoir une place dans un collège régional d'État. Il y a toujours des places dans d'autres collèges de la région. Si l'enfant n'a pas trouvé correct l'école qui lui avait été allouée, dans ce cas-là l'enfant aurait pu, bien sûr, trouver une place dans d'autres écoles de la région, des collèges privés aussi.

**Mrs Perraud:** Est-ce que la ministre pourrait nous dire combien de cas où un enfant a demandé une matière et que l'enfant n'a pas reçu cette matière dans l'école qui lui a été allouée?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madame la présidente, tous les élèves qui passent en Grade VII suivent le même syllabus, le même curriculum à travers l'île, qui veut dire que tous les élèves auront les classes d'après le curriculum présenté par la MIE.

**Mrs Perraud:** Est-ce que c'est la même chose pour les langues orientales?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Pour les langues orientales, nous avons un mécanisme. Pour n'importe quel offre de sujets, il nous faut un minimum d'élèves. En principe, si je ne me trompe, c'est du nombre de 12. Si nous avons 12 élèves d'un collège dans une classe qui demande à faire un sujet, automatiquement l'État prévoit pour cela et envoie un professeur pour les élèves.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Mrs Perraud!

#### **BATTERIE CASSÉE – BASKETBALL GROUND**

**(No. B/290) Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** 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 basketball ground at Batterie Cassée, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to where matters stand as to the proposed

—

- (a) installation of lighting thereat;
- (b) upgrading thereof, and
- (c) resurfacing 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, I am informed by the City Council of Port Louis that the basketball ground at Batterie Cassée is equipped with four flood lights of 400 watts each, which are in good condition.

I am further informed that the basketball ground does not require for the time being any upgrading and/or resurfacing.

**Mrs Perraud:** Juste avant de poser cette question aujourd'hui, j'ai demandé aux habitants, donc, l'information que j'ai eue ne cadre pas avec la réponse de la ministre. La lumière qui est installée sur ce terrain de basketball ne convient pas à ce terrain, et toutes les lumières qui avaient été installées...

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Perraud, don't provide information, ask your question!

**Mrs Perraud:** Et aussi les habitants demandent justement à ce que ce terrain soit refait. Donc, je voudrai demander à la ministre de passer le message à la municipalité de Port Louis pour revoir les conditions de ce terrain.

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** Madam Speaker, I also I have done my homework. So, yesterday I have requested the officer to carry out a site visit at the said *locus*. So, a site visit was effected. It seems that everything is in order. I have pictures. So, if there is any problem, you just let me know. You are saying *refaire*, so, we need to have more details about what you want, because I have pictures that it is in good state. So, if there is any problem, you just let me know.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, yesterday.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

**ST FELIX – CLEAR OCEAN HOTEL & RESORTS PROJECT**

(No. B/291) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Clear Ocean Hotel and Resorts Project at St Félix, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, indicating if –

- (a) the lease of land and environmental clearances issues have now been cleared;
- (b) the Environmental Impact Assessment Report thereof has been amended;
- (c) environmental norms are being complied with, and
- (d) a new schedule of work has been submitted.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/291 and B/294 as both pertain to the same subject.

I wish to refer hon. Members to replies to previous PQs B/879 of November 2017 and B/689 of July 2018.

Madam Speaker, Clear Ocean Hotel and Resorts Limited holds a 60-year lease over a plot of State land of an extent of 30 *arpents* 32 perches at St Félix for period 03 November 2016 to 02 November 2076 for the setting up of a 5-Star Sheraton hotel.

According to Article 3 (a) of the lease agreement, Clear Ocean Hotel and Resorts Limited had to start construction as from 06 November 2017. On 18 October 2017, the company requested for an extension of the delay till 08 January 2018 to start construction. Following consultations with various stakeholders, the delay to start construction works has been extended up 30 June 2019, and Clear Ocean Hotel and Resorts Limited was accordingly informed on 12 September 2018. As at date, construction works have not yet started on site.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, as I have already stated, Clear Ocean Hotel and Resorts Limited holds a valid lease agreement on the issue of environmental clearances. Clear Ocean Hotel and Resorts Limited had an EIA licence for a project consisting, *inter alia*, of 583 rooms which was completely different from the project in its lease agreement.

Accordingly, on 12 September 2018, the company was requested to submit a new EIA licence. It is to be noted that the project in the lease agreement is for the setting up of a 5-Star Sheraton Hotel comprising, *inter alia*, 152 luxury hotel suites, 4 VIP villas, 11 beachfront villas, 42 two bedroom marina villas, 164 luxury condominium units, 15 tree house units, convenience centre and boutique shops, spa, ICT services, sports centre, youth club, kids crèche, club house, conference venue, hotel swimming pool and pavilion.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development that, as at 02 May 2019, Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Limited has not yet submitted an application for the new EIA Licence.

With regard to part (c) of the question, it is during construction phase that authorities concerned would ensure that environmental norms are being complied with.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (d) of the question, I am informed that my Ministry has not received a schedule of work for the said project. As I have already stated above, Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Limited has up to 31 June 2019 to start construction. It is up to the company to secure all clearances and permits prior to start construction.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Thank you Madam Speaker. From the reply of the Minister, we have been informed that, on three occasions, there has been extension for the start of works. Is the Minister aware that this promoter is facing charges in South Africa - corruption, *escroquerie*, etc.? Whether through the relevant Ministry, information has been taken because Government has given or is in the process of giving State land or *Pas Géométriques* for such a

big project and, in fact, from what we gather, the promoter is facing corruption charges and also there are rumours or information that they are in process of selling the project to other promoters.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Madam Speaker, I have just replied that Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Limited has up to 30 June 2019 to start this construction. Up to now, it should secure all clearances and permits prior to start construction and also the EIA licence.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I know from the hon. Minister whether this information that the promoter is facing charges is in the public domain? Has the Ministry gone through the Ministry of External Affairs to ask our Embassy/our representatives in South Africa, where the promoter resides, to inquire and let Government know because we have given prime land, worth millions, to the promoter?

**Mr Jhugroo:** I have taken note of the suggestion.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhuboo!

**Mr Jhuboo:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, Section 20 of the lease agreement between Government and Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Limited stipulates that if the company is put into liquidation, the lease shall be cancelled. Now, Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Limited is owned at 70% by Pelangi Resorts, an offshore company based in the Seychelles and 30% by a local company.

Madam Speaker, two petitions of winding up were launched against Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Limited respectively in 2017 and 2018, information gathered from the Registrar of Companies...

**Madam Speaker:** No. Hon. Jhuboo! Ask questions! I have said several times that the object of Question Time is to ask the Minister to furnish information which you do not have. So, ask your question instead of providing information.

**Mr Jhuboo:** I am tabling the following information Madam Speaker on the list of the companies under liquidation; Pelangi architects, Pelangi Youth, Pelangi Marketing, Pelangi Yacht Club, Pelangi Project Management, Pelangi, Pelangi - *la liste est longue comme ma main, Madame la présidente* and, more importantly, *Boutique Grande Surface*, the company that holds 30% of the lease...

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, what is your question, hon. Jhuboo? What is your question?

**Mr Jhuboo:** My question to hon. Minister is....

**Madam Speaker:** Whether he knows about Pelangi?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jhuboo:** My question to hon. Minister is: why is it that this company is under liquidation and the lease has not been cancelled yet?

**Mr Jhugroo:** I have just been made aware of what the hon. Member just informed the House, but we have to wait until the 30 June to see because, being given that there is a court case still on-going at the Supreme Court and also we have to wait until 30 June to see if he is going to start the construction or not. Because I have not been made aware about the liquidation processes at the level of my Ministry.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Jhuboo!

**Mr Jhuboo:** Madam Speaker, now that the Minister is being made aware that *Boutique Grande Surface*, the company that holds 30% of Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Limited, is under liquidation, and this is an official document from the Registrar of Companies which I am tabling, Madam Speaker. Will the Minister take actions in that respect?

**Mr Jhugroo:** If need be, we are going to take action.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** From what we have heard and from what we know, has the Minister requested the State Law Office to look into the whole *dossier* and then report to Government in order to retrieve Government land?

**Mr Jhugroo:** Madam Speaker, I have already answered. So, we are doing all needful that should be done.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ganoo!

**Mr Ganoo:** Will the hon. Minister therefore inform the House whether, in case construction work does not start by the end of June 2019, he will do the needful with the State Law Office to put an end to terminate that lease?

**Mr Jhugroo:** Yes, of course, we are going to go through the State Law Office. But let me mention one thing, Madam Speaker, with regard to land given to Midas Acropolis Co. Limited - c'est bon que l'Ile Maurice entende ce que je vais dire maintenant - derrière

l'application de la compagnie Midas Acropolis Co. Limited, il a une histoire rocambolesque sur les plantons de l'ancien Ministre travailliste, Devanand Virahsawmy, qui avaient fait la demande. En ce qui est extraordinaire Madame la présidente, le planton en question a déposé une copie de son *Statement of Account* dans les dossiers et la balance était de Rs5,000.

Madame la présidente, est-ce qu'on peut accepter que 30 arpents de Pas Géométriques valent Rs5,000 ? Alors je laisse à la population de tirer sa conclusion. C'était ça sous le régime travailliste...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** No. Now, it is not up to you. I am listening to his reply to decide as to whether he is giving the exact reply to the question which has been asked. It is not up to you to tell me what I have to do. Yes, hon. Minister! You have finished.

*(Interruptions)*

You have one last question?

**Mr Jhuboo:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, can the hon. Minister give the assurance to this House that if Clear Ocean Hotel and Resort Limited comes and asks again for an extension of time, he will simply cancel the lease and give Pomponette back to the public?

**Mr Jhugroo:** Madam Speaker, when this time is reached, we are going to consult the State Law Office before taking any action in the interest of this Government. We are not doing what the former Government had been doing in the past.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan, next question!

#### **METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - PLACE CARDINAL MARGÉOT - BUSINESSES - COMPLAINTS**

**(No. B/292) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the works being carried out at Place Cardinal Margéot, Rose Hill, in connection with the Metro Express Project, he will state if he has received copies of representations made on 23 August and 15 November 2018, respectively, addressed to the Honourable Prime Minister by Mrs E. H. and referred to him by letter dated 05 November 2018, indicating the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, in reply to PQ B/968, I mentioned that small businesses located along the Metro Express Alignment are facing accessibility concerns to their premises in view of the works. In this regard, Larsen and Toubro, the contractor, is providing tailor-made alternative accesses for all these businesses along the sites throughout the duration of the works taking into consideration the safety for users at all times. Any complaints from the businesses are taken up and duly addressed by L&T as well as by Metro Express Limited and necessary measures are implemented accordingly.

Metro Express Ltd is also using various communication platforms, including social media, amongst others, to inform people and businesses about the works being carried out and appropriate precautionary measures to be taken well in advance so as to minimise disturbances and their impact.

In relation to the specific case highlighted in the question, on 23 August 2018 and subsequently on 15 November 2018, Mrs E.H. addressed two letters to the Government raising concerns about her business.

The concerns raised by Mrs E.H. were considered collaboratively with Larsen and Toubro, Metro Express Ltd, the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill and my Ministry.

In this regard, Madam Speaker, a site visit was effected on 05 September 2018 at the premises of Mrs E.H. in her presence.

The following concerns were raised and they were addressed –

- Sanitary problems, whereby regular pest control have been carried out;
- Mud and dust issues, whereby regular flushing of the road in front of her business outlet has been carried out;
- Barricades, whereby it was explained to Mrs E.H. that L&T places barricades for safety and security of the public as well as the safety of its workers and these cannot be taken. However to mitigate the concern of Mrs E.H. L&T proposed courtesy marketing support;
- Safety of premises, whereby Mrs E.H. was informed that regular Police patrols were already in place at this location, and

- Safe pedestrian paths were available at the said location and temporary access for loading and unloading was provided.

Mrs E.H. also highlighted that the business was not generating sufficient income and it was proposed to consider potential relocation of Mrs E.H. business outlet in any other region in Rose Hill subject to availability in collaboration with the Municipality. Unfortunately, Mrs E.H. rejected the marketing support. Moreover, after consultation with the Municipality, it was found that there was no available commercial space to relocate the business of Mrs E.H. I wish also to inform the House, Madam Speaker, that adjacent shop owners and operators have not made any complaints and are operating as usual.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that on 25 April 2019, a meeting was held with the officers of Metro Express, Mrs E.H. and her son at the Metro Express Office in Ebène. I can assure the House that my officers and all concerned stakeholders are diligently doing their utmost to ease the situation for Mrs E.H.

Madam Speaker, the new development which will provide a much improved and business friendly environment given the prime proximity of Mrs E.H. premises to the Metro Express Station and the future Urban Terminal, it is expected that once operation will start in September 2019, there will be a higher volume of business in that area.

**Mr Bhagwan:** I thank the hon. Minister. Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. Minister has obtained his reply through his officers, even L&T and Metro Express. But the situation is not what has been reported to him. I will table all these documents, all these photos because I not only reside in Rose Hill, I move around and see the situation. There is a real situation of despair, not only Mrs E.H. but also the other shop owners. I will appeal, through the hon. Minister because the Deputy Prime Minister is an MP of the Constituency and the Vice-Prime Minister, to go there at a peak time. This is what I will be tabling, a whole set of documents because the situation is very bad. People are in despair and even some of them have got heart attack.

**Madam Speaker:** So, the hon. Member wants to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of that.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I ask the hon. Minister, at least, to take these requests personally because he may get reply from his officers but the situation on site is different? Can I appeal to the hon. Minister, at least, to have a site visit, to go through the documents and see what

can be done to help these people who have taken loans from banks, who are not paying their insurance and who have to survive with their families.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan, you have made your point.

**Mr Bodha:** My colleague has made a case on humanitarian ground. What I am proposing, in fact, together with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Vice-Prime Minister is to consider the case. But I have been told that out of 14 outlets, she is the only person not operating and she has closed her business for the last four months. I have been told about this. But I am going personally to look into the matter together with my colleagues, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Vice-Prime Minister.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** I have two other questions, Madam Speaker. Is the Minister aware that wastes coming from asbestos are being thrown there? So, can the Minister, at least, have a site visit with the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Health to see exactly this region concerning the dumping of wastes with asbestos materials which is very urgent?

**Mr Bodha:** If it raised to asbestos, Madam Speaker, I think something must be done urgently. I will see with the MPI officers and together with the Ministry of Environment what can be done with regard to housekeeping when the construction is being done.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Last time, when I asked a question when there was this question of wastewater along Sir Virgil Naz street, the Minister has replied that there was a scheme through Larsen and Toubro in the contract to give some compensation to shop owners not only of Sir Virgil Naz street but also to these persons so as they go to their solicitors. So, can I know from the Minister whether Larsen and Toubro is still ready to meet the solicitors of these shop owners? I am talking not only of Mr and Mrs E.H., I am making the plea on behalf of other shop owners, if Larsen and Toubro will still consider sort of compensation for lost of revenue?

**Mr Bodha:** I am informed, Madam Speaker, that there is a desk and each case is being addressed by the lawyers of the company. I will see what has happened in each and every case.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Boolell!

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Minister, unfortunately, is underestimating the gravity of the situation. None of the complaints has been addressed and in the meantime activities of daily living of those people have been totally disrupted. Can I ask the Minister whether the promoter has not made provision for a contingency budget to compensate all those victims?

**Mr Bodha:** This is what I have said, Madam Speaker. There is a desk and each case is being considered. In fact, they hired a lawyer to do that.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

### **HIGH COMMISSIONERS/AMBASSADORS - OVERSEAS MISSIONS**

**(No. B/293) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the High Commissioners/Ambassadors posted at the Mauritius Embassies abroad, he will give a list of overseas missions they have effected since July 2018 to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) countries visited and purposes thereof;
- (b) expenditure incurred in terms of air tickets and allowances, and
- (c) number of times they officially travelled to mainland Mauritius, indicating the duration thereof and expenditure incurred in terms of air tickets and allowances.

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, our High Commissioners and Ambassadors represent Mauritius in key international hubs where they promote the interest of the country and help in the interaction of our citizens with the population and the institutions of the different host countries. Madam Speaker, apart from the specific countries in which they are posted, they are accredited to represent Mauritius in a number of neighbouring countries where Mauritius does not have a diplomatic presence per se, as well as in a number of regional and international organisations.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the specific questions of the hon. Member, I am hereby tabling the information on the list of overseas missions effected by High

Commissioners/Ambassadors posted at the Mauritius Embassies abroad from July 2018 to 02 May 2019 including –

- (a) countries visited and purposes thereof;
- (b) the expenditure incurred in terms of air tickets and allowances, and
- (c) the number of time they officially travelled to mainland Mauritius, indicating the duration thereof and the expenditure incurred in terms of air tickets and allowances.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Jhuboo!

#### **ST FELIX - CLEAR OCEAN HOTEL RESORTS PROJECT**

(No. B/294) **Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the St Felix Clear Ocean Hotel Resorts Project at Pomponette, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

*(Vide reply to PQ B/291)*

#### **ALBION PETROLEUM HUB PROJECT**

(No. B/295) **Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the Albion Petroleum Hub Project, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof.

**Mr Gungah:** Madam Speaker, in my replies to previous PQs on the same subject matter last year, I informed the House that in September 2017, the Joint Working Group comprising the State Trading Corporation, the Indian Oil Corporation Ltd and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd had appointed Engineers India Ltd to carry out a detailed feasibility study to assess the viability of the project.

I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that EIL has on, 01 April 2019, submitted a report in 12 volumes consisting of some 3,000 pages. I am further informed that the Joint Working Group is still reviewing the draft report and has not yet approved it. We have to await the final report from EIL and the recommendations of the Joint Working Group regarding the implementation of the project.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhuboo!

**Mr Jhuboo:** Ma question au ministre est la suivante : le projet est le fruit d'un partenariat, comme il a indiqué, entre le gouvernement indien et le nôtre, notamment, la STC, Indian Oil Co. Ltd. et Mangalore, et ces derniers ont missionné des consultants pour les études, peut-on savoir du ministre quel montant qui a été engagé pour toutes ces études jusqu'aujourd'hui?

**Mr Gungah:** Je n'ai pas le chiffre, Madame la présidente, avec moi, maintenant.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Lepoigneur!

**Mr Lepoigneur:** Merci, Madame la présidente. Le 31 juillet 2017, j'avais posé une question semblable à celle-là, c'était le B/762. Le ministre avait dit qu'il y avait une étude qui était en train de se faire et que cela allait finir en fin d'année, c'est-à-dire, fin 2018, et qu'il allait rencontrer aussi les habitants d'Albion pour leur expliquer le projet, après que ce rapport est sorti. Est-ce que le rapport est prêt? Est-ce qu'il peut *table* le rapport en même temps ?

**Mr Gungah:** I have just replied to the question, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Ameer Meea!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Can I ask the hon. Minister how this project will be financed? Do we have an idea whether it will be financed totally by the Indian Companies or will it be a joint venture financed by Mauritius as well?

**Mr Gungah:** I replied to this same question some time back and I mentioned in my reply that the project will be financed by the three parties, a three Government-owned entities, the STC, the MRPL and Indian Oil. Moreover, there have been discussions between Government of Mauritius and Government of India to have a grant, especially to construct the jetty, but as long as we don't have the final report, we can't venture in financial aspect to the project.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhuboo!

**Mr Jhuboo:** Madame la présidente, nous avons appris récemment que le contrat d'approvisionnement avec Mangalore a été rompu par la STC. Ma question au ministre est la suivante : est-ce que cela remet-t-il en cause ce partenariat, et est-ce qu'un autre site a été identifié pour relocaliser le projet dans le port ?

**Mr Gungah:** *Il n'y a pas eu de relation - d'ailleurs, ce n'est pas une rupture de contrat. Le contrat va être expiré dans quelque temps et le gouvernement a décidé de lancer*

*des tenders, mais il n'y a pas de relation entre le lancement d'appel d'offres pour l'approvisionnement des produits pétroliers et le contrat de MRPL et la construction de ce port pétrolier. Maintenant,* regarding the re-localisation of the petrol terminal, if we may call it, I must say that I replied to that question as well some time back, because the port development is guided, in fact, by the recommendations of the Port Master Plans, and in all the studies that have been carried out, Albion was identified to be the ideal site for future bulk storage facilities for several reasons which I mentioned.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Armance!

**Mr Armance:** Does the hon. Minister know that there have been several groups, NGOs that are against the project of the Petroleum Pump at Albion? Has he started a consultation with them? Has he met the inhabitants of Albion, Pointe aux Sables, and all the surroundings, to explain about the project, the impact of this project on their daily life?

**Mr Gungah:** Madam Speaker, so long as we don't have the final report and the recommendations of the Joint Working Group on the feasibility of this project, it is premature to have discussions...

*(Interruptions)*

Of course, I replied previously as well, we are going to do it. We are going to do everything in transparency.

**Madam Speaker:** Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has been made aware of the issues concerning caves, *les caves* d'Albion, this question linked with the national heritage? Whether he has been made aware whether the National Heritage Trust Fund is involved and whether the consultant has been made aware and given documents submitted to Government in respect to all these issues?

**Mr Gungah:** I am not fully aware of caves, but I can assure my good friend that several studies have been carried out for this project like we have had onshore geotechnical investigation, offshore geophysical and geotechnical surveys, marine modelling and marketing, of course.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Baboo!

**(No. B/296) 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 School Certificate Examinations 2018, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to the number of students having obtained –

- (a) 3 credits
- (b) 4 credits, and
- (c) 5 or more credits, and
- (d) both distinctions and credits.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate that in regard to the School Certificate GCO Level Examinations 2018, 1,868 candidates have obtained only three credits, 1,471 candidates have obtained four credits and 5,627 candidates have obtained five or more credits.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (d) of the question, I am informed by the MES that the number of students having scored, at least, one distinction is 4,090.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Baboo!

**Mr Baboo:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House the measure she has taken to improve the results?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, every year after the results are proclaimed, there are reports that are obtained from the Cambridge Examinations Syndicate and the MES, along with representative from the Cambridge Examinations Syndicate, along with educators and heads of department to carry out workshop and analyse the results and try to work out how best they can improve the teaching/learning process.

**Mr Baboo:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many students will not be able to pursue HSC and how many students have been left out?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, this year, students, having obtained four credits, have been allowed to move on to HSC. If I go by the answer that I have just given, candidates who did not obtain the four credits, candidates with three credits, we have 1,868 who are being asked to repeat or to take another pathway.

**Mr Baboo:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there has been a close and proper study for the following up of those students?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, when students do not obtain the four credits, they are asked to go and sit for the exams again after one year. Students who still do not manage to meet the criteria to move on to Grade 11, these students can go to different pathways. We have the MITD, we have the Polytechnics, we have got a number of other institutions, Fashion & Design Institute and a number of others which can absorb the students.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Baboo!

### **POINTE AUX PIMENTS - MON CHOISY COAST ROAD (B38)**

(No. B/297) **Mr S. Baboo (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the reinstatement of the deproclaimed part of the Pointe aux Piments-Mon Choisy coast road (B38), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to where matters stand.

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that in April 2013, following a Cabinet decision, part of (B38) road was deproclaimed and placed by a new road section.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that the deproclaimed part over an extent of 1,455 m<sup>2</sup> has been leased with effect from 29 January 2014, for landscaping purposes to LVN Tourism Enterprises whose commercial name is Tarisa Resort Mauritius. The initial lease period was three years and has been renewed for a period of three years and will expire on 28 January 2020. That plot of land adjoins an extent of State land on which stands a hotel complex leased to LVN Tourism Enterprises as an industrial lease.

I am informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that it has issued planning clearance to the company in September 2017 for the landscaping proposal made. I am informed by the RDA that the deproclaimed part has been converted partly in a green space and the remaining is being used as an access to Tarisa Hotel and a public access to the beach.

**Madam Speaker:** You have a question?

**Mr Baboo:** So, now, we have known that this has been leased to a company, just what you mentioned, but as you know, it has been promised by *l'Alliance Lepep* that we will open the road to give access to the public.

**Mr Bodha:** In fact, the lease was renewed in 2017. So, this can be considered at the end of the lease in January 2020.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Uteem!

#### **STATE TRADING CORPORATION - COMMODITIES - DONATIONS**

**(No. B/298) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the commodities donated by the State Trading Corporation since 2014 to date on a yearly basis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, for each type thereof, information as to the –

- (a) number of beneficiaries thereof;
- (b) value thereof, and
- (c) purposes therefor.

**Mr Gungah:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation (STC) that it responds positively to requests for donations received on a regular basis from Registered Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Educational Institutions for fund raising activities; Religious and Cultural Associations on the occasion of religious and cultural activities such as Maha Shivarathree, Cavadee, Ganesh Chaturti, Ougadi, '40 heures', Père Laval and Ramadhan, and the Staff Welfare Associations of Ministries for the annual Civil Service Kermesse.

The STC has also donated more brown bread flour in line with its Healthy Eating Campaign, so as to encourage more people to eat healthily. The Corporation saw a rise in the number of requests for donations from all spheres of the society.

Besides, following a Government's decision in 2016, the STC donated 2,000 bags of rice to Madagascar.

In 2018, to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence of the country, a number of events were organised by the STC during which free distribution of rice and flour was carried out.

Madam Speaker, I am tabling information regarding the number of beneficiaries, value and purposes of the donations for the years 2014 to 2019.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. May we know from the hon. Minister whether there are any published guidelines regarding the criteria which the STC has to allocate these commodities, that is, rice and flour, whenever there is someone who makes a request for donation from the STC?

**Mr Gungah:** In fact, it has been the practice for years and years. The STC being a commercial organisation, it regularly receives demands for donation and, as I said, STC responds positively. I must say that for years this has been the practice but, of course, it's not like acceding to requests – I mean, if somebody has asked for 100 packets of rice, these should be considered, the volume and the value as well. I can say that the distribution is shared equally among all organisations and bodies.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Is there any unit within the STC which monitors the distribution to ensure that those NGOs and people who have requested the commodities do make use of these for the purpose for which the STC has donated them?

**Mr Gungah:** Yes, Madam Speaker, there is a unit that monitors all the distribution.

**Mr Uteem:** Has the hon. Minister's attention been brought to the fact that recently for some religious festivals there were Members of Parliament who have been going around distributing these products on behalf of STC - which shamefully draws the attention to the abuse made by certain Members of Parliament on the distribution of STC products?

**Mr Gungah:** Madam Speaker, I must say that, in fact, requests are also made by Members of both sides of the House to the STC, and STC does this on a social basis, and how certain Members distribute it to those organisations are out of my control and that of the STC.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Rutnah!

**Mr Rutnah:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since the hon. Minister has said that it has been a practice for years to donate, can he enlighten the House, prior to 2014, whether he has got the name of beneficiaries of those donations and the value thereof?

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order! Order! Hon. Baloomoody!

**Mr Gungah:** I don't have the list with me right now, but I can table it.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Uteem!

### **WORKFARE PROGRAMME – REGISTRATION**

**(No. B/299) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the Workfare Programme, he will state the number of workers registered thereunder since 2014 to date on a yearly basis, indicating the amount of funds –

- (a) disbursed in terms of Transition Unemployment Benefit thereunder, and
- (b) collected in terms of recycling fee.

**Mr Callichurn:** Madam Speaker, according to figures compiled at my Ministry, 28,536 workers...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ms Sewocksingh! No crosstalking, please!

**Mr Callichurn:** I repeat, according to the figures compiled at my Ministry, 28,536 workers have registered to join the Workfare Programme since 01 January 2014 to 30 April 2019.

With regard to part (a) of the question, Rs1,689,636 have been disbursed in terms of Transition Unemployment Benefit for the period of 01 January 2014 to 31 March 2019.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am informed that an amount of Rs63,722,629 have been collected in terms of recycling fee for period 01 January 2014 to 31 March 2019.

I am tabling the detail thereof.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** May I know from the hon. Minister, why is the amount of recycling fee so low compared to the amount which Government is disbursing on the Transition

Unemployment Benefit? Is there any reason why the employers are not contributing as they should be?

**Mr Callichurn:** Yes, it is with regard to the contribution made, Madam Speaker. For the Workfare Programme, I understand that a contribution to the tune of one per cent is made by the workers, and employers contribute 1.5 per cent in HRDC and 0.5 per cent in the Workfare Programme.

**Mr Uteem:** I think the hon. Minister is mistaken, I am talking about the recycling fee. Recycling fee is different from the contribution that he is mentioning.

**Mr Callichurn:** I know. Unfortunately, I don't have the figure that is contributed by the employer for the recycling fee with me.

**Mr Uteem:** The hon. Minister is aware that there is a discrimination against those workers who decide to appeal against their dismissal and retain the services of a counsel of their choice from the private sector. So, in the coming budget, would consideration be given to extend the Workfare Programme to all employees who lose their jobs, irrespective of whether they decide to sue their employers through private practitioners or through the Ministry?

**Mr Callichurn:** Madam Speaker, we have been looking at this problem for some time. I am addressing this particular issue in the forthcoming amendment to the Labour Legislations.

**Mr Uteem:** Answering to PQ B/781 on 14 November 2017, the hon. Minister mentioned that there was a delegation from the ILO Research Department who was going to assess the present system and to propose its recommendations with a view to minimising the processing time and enhance the system. So, may I know from the hon. Minister whether this ILO Research Department has carried out a report on the present Workfare Programme?

**Mr Callichurn:** Madam Speaker, I would be grateful if the hon. Member would come with a substantive question for me to be able to answer.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Baloomoody!

**Mr Baloomoody:** The hon. Minister, in his reply to the previous question of my learned friend, stated that he is examining the problem with regard to the workplace scheme and that he is coming forward with amendments in the Employment Rights Act and

Employment Relations Act. May I know from the hon. Minister when are we going to have that Bill before the House?

**Mr Callichurn:** Very soon, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The Table has been advised that PQ B/305 and B/314 have been withdrawn.

Next question, hon. Abbas Mamode!

#### **PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - PUBLIC BUILDINGS - ACCESS**

**(No. B/300) Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to persons with disabilities, he will state the measures taken to ease access thereof to public buildings and halls belonging to the local authorities since March 2018 to date.

**Mr Sinatambou:** Madam Speaker, Section 15A of the Building Control Act provides that any authority may, in respect of the building to which the public has access, impose such conditions as it thinks fit for the provision of suitable means of access to any part of the building, car park or curtilage for the use of the building and its facilities by disabled persons.

In addition, the Building Control, Accessibility and Gender Compliance and Buildings Regulations of 2017 have been promulgated and are in force since 01 November 2017 to provide for buildings to be constructed in such a manner as to ensure that persons with impaired mobility and communication can access and use buildings and facilities therein comfortably.

These regulations apply to new designated buildings or existing buildings which will undergo extensive alterations, additions, repairs or reconstruction and for which a permit will be required before commencing those building works.

Following the promulgation of these regulations, I am informed that the designs of all new buildings as well as those undergoing extensive refurbishment under the purview of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport are being made in conformity with the provisions of the said regulations.

Actually, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport is currently managing 69 construction projects where facilities of access for disabled people have been incorporated in the designs thereof. Those 69 projects are at different phases of completion; 22 are at construction stage; 21 are at tender stage, and 26 are at design stage. All these projects have been designed to be disabled- friendly. I am tabling a list of the 69 projects.

I am informed that local authorities have been issued with guidance on disabled-friendly accessibility requirements for all public buildings. I am advised that since March 2018 to date, measures have been taken to ease access for disabled persons at more than 40 buildings managed by or vested in the local authorities. These include village halls, libraries, multipurpose halls, recreational centres, social centres, market fairs and even a wellness centre and an incinerator.

**Mr Abbas Mamode:** Does the Ministry have an Enforcement Department concerning access to disabled? For example, *la salle des fêtes de Plaza qui vient d'être inaugurée par le Deputy Prime Minister*, there is no access for handicapped. *Le bureau de pension au bâtiment d'Astor Court* where disabled are supposed to go for medical examination; there is no access to disabled. So, does the Ministry of Social Security have an Enforcement Unit to see that the law is being enforced, because this is in the law?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Let me say that my hon. friend is mistaken about *la salle des fêtes du Plaza* because there has just been award of a contract, approved by the Council for access to disabled persons to the *salle des fêtes du Plaza*. The letter of award is actually being issued regarding access to the *salle des fêtes du Plaza* for disabled persons.

As regards the other building,...

*(Interruptions)*

Well, in so many years, you did nothing about it, so, please appreciate!

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

**Mr Sinatambou:** Madam Speaker, these are people who were for ten years nearly in power with the previous Government.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Sinatambou:** We are doing it and they have the guts of complaining! Since March...

*(Interruptions)*

Well, then I would be appreciative. If I did not do anything before, I would be appreciative if others are doing it. The point remains that since March 2018, 69 buildings are being acted upon by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and more than 40 buildings have been worked upon by local authorities. And as far as inspection is concerned, this is a matter for the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, if I am not mistaken.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Adrien Duval!

**Mr A. Duval:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, one must not look too far with regard to access to disabled people. This Parliament House itself, Government House, there is no disabled parking, there is no lift; one must go to the Deputy Prime Minister's Office to get a lift, which is not a public access. And, therefore, what is the Minister doing about the Temple of Democracy itself being out of bounds of disabled people and what kind of message in terms of non-discrimination are we sending when we are unable in this House itself and all the major infrastructures around Port Louis to even accommodate disabled people? With regard to blind people, what are you doing with regard to access to people who need the help of dogs to walk around? Is he bringing legislation with regard to that, public transport and all of this? What is he doing?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Well, the hon. Member is totally mistaken. From March 2018 to this day, works have been done on more than 100 buildings. So, I am flabbergasted at their stand. His own father was Minister of Finance and did nothing about it. And now he comes and tells us that we are doing wrong. I think he should remain quiet.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Sinatambou:** And look at his...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Sinatambou:** Regardez!

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Rutnah! Yes, please proceed!

**Mr A. Duval:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order!

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Resume your seat! Resume your seat! Hon. Adrien Duval, you have been in this House for four years now. Are you not aware of the Standing Orders that when I am on my feet you should resume your seat? Please proceed Minister, then I will take your point of order.

**Mr Sinatambou:** My point is: if since March 2018 to May 2019 we have progressed on 100 buildings.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, no one is perfect, we will improve. But let those that did not do anything not start crying out because *comme dit le dicton : “Regardez la poutre dans votre oeil avant de voir la paille dans l’oeil de l’autre. »*

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, tell me your point of order.

**Mr A. Duval:** My point of order is the Minister is misleading the House. Let me say why.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Please, be...

**Mr A. Duval:** Let me explain!

**Madam Speaker:** Please resume your seat! When a Minister misleads the House and if you mean it, then you should come with a Motion to this House to say that the Minister has misled the House and not come with a point of order.

**Mr A. Duval:** He is saying incorrect information, Madam Speaker because everyone knows in the country...

**Madam Speaker:** Even incorrect information...

**Mr A. Duval:** ...that it is thanks to Xavier Duval that semi low-floor buses can take wheelchairs in the bus and not thanks to you. So, therefore, instead of saying...

**Madam Speaker:** Please, hon. Adrien Duval, this question does not relate to low-floor buses, it relates to public buildings. Okay! Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question for the hon. Minister is, and I just hope that he will not use the easy way out by blaming previous regimes. Now, since he is in power for the past almost five years and since the hon. Minister believes that he belongs to a perfect regime, may I ask him, since hon. Adrien Duval has talked about this Parliament, what exactly is work that has been done by his Ministry, his officers that he can communicate to us as regards accessibility to this Parliament that we have lamentably failed to do in the past? What has he done ever since that his Government has been in power since 2015?

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Can I reply on this? This question falls within the jurisdiction of the Speaker and this question is not allowed.

**Mr Mohamed:** May I, therefore, ask the hon. Minister the same question? Let us delete Parliament, let us go to Government House since he belongs to a perfect regime, what has he done with regard to this Government House and accessibility to it? Not Parliament; let us exclude it. What has he done? And let us hear him blow his own trumpet.

**Mr Sinatambou:** I fail to understand why he should start by invectives. There is no question of blowing anyone's trumpet. *Cette conduite méprisable, il devrait se taire, Madame la présidente. Si méprisable comme conduite!*

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** I have said no provocations. Hon. Shakeel Mohamed please control yourself, no provocations and hon. Minister, please also reply to the question which has been asked and don't make any remarks which will create a chaotic situation within the House.

*(Interruptions)*

Order!

**Mr Sinatambou:** They should not start with by invectives.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order! Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, I am addressing myself to you please. From a sitting position, please don't make remarks. Yes, proceed!

**Mr Sinatambou:** What I would like to start by saying, Madam Speaker, is that no one here on this side regarding this question has blown any trumpet. I stated that one can always improve but I wanted the country to know is that, since March 2018 to May 2019, we have actually worked on more than 100 buildings. Now if you compare that to what existed for 10 years before which was virtually nothing. So I am saying: yes, there is room for improvement, we will improve...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Shakeel Mohamed! This is the last time I am addressing myself to you. This is the last time I am addressing myself to you.

*(Interruptions)*

Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, would you continue? This is the second warning I am giving you.

**Mr Sinatambou:** *As I hear, yes, mais à ce moment-là quand j'appartenais à l'ancien gouvernement je ferme ma bouche. Je me tais.*

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, anybody? Leave it to me. Hon. Abbas Mamode, leave it to me to say anything that I have to say to the hon. Minister. It's not for you to say anything.

**Mr Abbas Mamode:** This is a very serious issue concerning...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Please resume your seat, if you don't have a point of order you can't stand up and say, yes. Next question, hon. Abbas Mamode!

**DR. A. G. JEETOO HOSPITAL - CARDIAC UNIT WARD 3.3 - AIR  
CONDITIONING SYSTEM**

**(No. B/301) 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 Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, he will state if consideration will be given for the installation of air conditioners in the Cardiac Unit Ward 3.3 and other specialised units thereat.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that there is already provision for a central air conditioning system in units such as Accident and Emergency Department, Outpatient Department, Operating Theatres, Intensive Care Unit, Cath Lab, Coronary Care Unit, X-Ray Department and Lab at Jeetoo Hospital.

Furthermore, my Ministry is also considering the installation of central air conditioning system all over Jeetoo Hospital for the comfort of the patient as the current system is not effective in maintaining an appropriate temperature.

In addition to the above, my Ministry has increased the ceiling from Rs1000 to Rs500,000 for the procurement of goods which would include air conditioning units as well at the level of the regional hospital. Thus, air conditioners would be installed in the Cardiac Unit ward 3.3 and all the specialised units. Moreover, 95 fans have already been procured and are in use in wards and units of the hospital for the comfort of the patients as the current system is not effective.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Abbas Mamode!

**Mr Abbas Mamode:** Can the Minister give a timeframe to the House? Ward 3.3 is specialised for Cardiac and I have been in this ward. Somebody told me: I will not die because of being cardiac, I will die because of the temperature in Port Louis, especially we are having climate change. So, please can we have a timeframe?

**Dr. Husnoo:** As I said, we are going to hopefully introduce that in the budget – I hope to get the money so as to improve the whole facilities.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, you had a question, hon. Osman Mahomed?

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Yes, thank you. I just heard the Minister say that the whole of Jeetoo Hospital will be air conditioned? Is that correct? Can I ask him therefor whether it is being envisaged - because Jeetoo Hospital is a very big hospital - to connect to the DOA Project which is the Government's project for air conditioning of major governmental buildings in Port Louis? Will the Jeetoo Hospital be air conditioned by DOA or deep-water ocean water air conditioning or will it be the normal air conditioning?

**Dr. Husnoo:** I can't answer this question, I don't know whether it's going to be connected to DOA or not, I am sorry about it.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

#### **DR. IDRICE GOOMANY CENTRE - RENOVATION**

(No. B/302) **Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** 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 Multipurpose Complex at Plaine Verte (Idrice Goomany Centre), she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to

–

- (a) since when it is closed to the public, and
- (b) if any renovation works will be carried out thereat, and, if so, indicate the –
  - (i) scope of works thereof, and
  - (ii) expected start and completion dates 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):** I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that Dr. Idrice Goomany Centre of Plaine Verte has been closed to the public since mid-May 2018.

With regard to part (b) of the question, renovation works are being planned and the estimated cost of the project is Rs51,840,000. An amount of Rs50,600,000 has already been earmarked for the present financial year with additional funds earmarked in the next two financial years.

The scope of the renovation works would comprise the following *inter alia* upgrading of all flooring, lighting and electrical works in the whole building, overall plumbing works, electrical works, painting, repairs to openings, upgrading of toilets at the ground and first floor, water proofing works of the whole building, replacement of air extractors, fans etc.

I am also informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that it has already appointed a consultant, Pixel Creation Ltd. The latter has submitted the preliminary drawings and report on 14 February 2019 and same have been approved with some minor amendments by the Council at its meeting of 25 April 2019.

Subsequently, the consultant has been instructed to finalise the architectural drawings and prepare the draft set of bidding documents for submission to the Central Procurement Board for vetting prior to the invitation for bids. It is expected that the bids would be invited by July 2019 for the Central Procurement Board.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Yes. Madam Speaker, the Idrice Goomany Centre has been there for almost 40 years and it has been renovated several times and each time after renovation the same problem occurs there are water leakages and today Government is planning to invest Rs51 m. again in renovation. So, my question to the hon. Minister: will it not be more, I mean, value for money than to pull down the building and build a new one because I have been there several times; many of us have been there.

**Madam Speaker:** We understood your question.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I think we will all agree that renovation is not the solution.

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** Yes, good question Madam Speaker. So, there was the same request from hon. Dr. Husnoo. Following the said request, the Ministry of Finance was

approached and the Ministry of Finance asked MPI to carry out a survey. A report has been drafted with regard to the structural assessment of the said building. The conclusion of the report is that the main structural elements of the building are in good structural condition. The report has been signed by two engineers so we stand guided by the said report because, as I have said, hon. Dr. Husnoo also wanted the pulling down of the whole building and a new construction.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Yes, I agree with what the hon. Vice-Prime Minister just mentioned but it is just to state that, in a previous reply, the hon. Minister stated to the House that the building is presently in a dilapidated state. She has, herself, mentioned to the House in a PQ B/165. My question today to the hon. Minister is: when do we expect for the completion of the work. The work has not yet started so when are the works expected to be completed.

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** Madam Speaker, in the reply just mentioned, I had stated that the building is in a dilapidated state, but I am not an engineer. As I had said, the request came from hon. Dr. Husnoo. We also wanted to come forward with a new building but, unfortunately, the report is saying that the structural elements of the building are in good condition. So, we can't do otherwise. We stand guided. We do hope that the work will start soon and as per information received, in about 12 months it will be completed.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister the following: according to information and visits that Members of the Constituency have seen themselves, this building has been closed for the past two years or more and public have no access to all the facilities that they usually had at that particular building. Why has it taken such a long time, two years, for the building to be closed and then a consultant, now only in February, giving a report and then finally whether she would consider tabling that report of the consultant on the Table of the Assembly?

**Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo:** Madam Speaker, with regard to the activities, I can say that as per the information I have received, the activities are still ongoing. Badminton is being carried out at France Martin Stadium, Les Salines and karate and judo at Delange Building,

St George Street, Port Louis. It seems that the activities are being carried out and there is no disruption in these activities.

Now, with regard as to why it has taken so much time, as I have said, since there was a request for pulling down and reconstruction, letters have had to be sent to the Ministry of Finance, evaluation of the whole new building had to be done and then MPI had to prepare a report. It takes time. The hon. Member knows how administration is.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Armance!

**METRO EXPRESS PROJECT - CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 - COMPLETION  
DATE**

(No. B/303) **Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the works being carried out in connection with the Metro Express Project in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state the work progress thereof, indicating the expected completion date thereof.

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, the construction of the Metro started in September 2017 and as at date, more than 70% of the works of the Phase 1 have been completed. The project has progressed steadily as planned, and we are on time and on track. The contractor, Larsen and Toubro is working concurrently on 32 sites for Phase 1 of this national project.

With regard to works specific to Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, the project update is as follows -

- with respect to the new Grand River North West Railway Bridge, the alignment of the Metro Express Project, Phase 1, follows the old railway track, which crosses through the Grand River North West river, from Montée 'S' to Camp Chapelon passing under the A1 road, that is the Port Louis-St Jean road and the structure of the underpass under the A1 road at Montée 'S' is completed at 100% and will be opened to traffic shortly.
- The new Grand River North West Railway Bridge, consists of 50 piles, which have been completed. The piers structure, that is, the columns will be completed by June 2019. Girders installation are in progress and the overall works are expected to be completed by the end of July 2019.

- With respect to works in the region of Port Louis West, the alignment of the Metro Express Project follows the old railway track and works are proceeding satisfactory. Track works and the construction of Black River Station along with the depot buildings are in progress and all the works in that region are expected to be completed by mid-August.

**Mr Armance:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. If I understand well, the work that is going on at Richelieu, it is the Black River Station that is supposed to be completed in August this year. So, is the Minister aware that since the contractor is working there currently, the whole area is in a complete mess, all the roads are muddy, people do not have access to roads, the Richelieu branch road has been closed up for more than one year and people have to jump over the newly installed rail now to have access to their house. Is the hon. Minister aware of that? Is the hon. Minister aware how people are living there in Richelieu?

**Mr Bodha:** From the information which has been provided to me, Madam Speaker, there have been 20 complaints in that region and all the complaints have been addressed except one. Now, the hon. Member is mentioning a number of things as regards the mess in which the sites are. I have talked to hon. Minister Wong Yen Cheong who also organised a few meetings with some of the workers. Now...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Baloomoody, you will have the opportunity to ask your question.

**Mr Bodha:** The hon. Member is mentioning a number of serious problems. So, what I am proposing, Madam Speaker, we have a field team of about five to six people, officers who can go there. If he can give me the exact locations of the problems, I am going to send the squad there to see to it what are the problems which we have and whether they can be addressed as soon as possible.

**Mr Armance:** I will certainly do that. I would like also to mention in the region of La Butte where pilling are still going on, the hon. Minister mentioned that it is going to be completed in July, that is, in two months' time. I believe that the compaction work is still going on and they are working very long hours, preventing people to sleep properly at night. Two days ago, on the newspaper ...

*(Interruptions)*

Do not smile, Minister, it is very important! Only two days ago...

*(Interruptions)*

Of course, it is! People are not sleeping because of him! Only two days ago ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member is asking the hon. Minister whether he is aware of all this.

**Mr Armance:** I will ask him, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay, ask him whether he is aware.

**Mr Armance:** He likes smiling.

**Madam Speaker:** Do not provide lengthy information as if you are making a statement.

**Mr Armance:** Is the hon. Minister aware that works are still going on very late at night and this is causing disturbance to all the habitants? The compaction job they are doing right now is disturbing the habitants and what is the hon. Minister planning to do? Are they going to keep working 24/7 a week?

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, the stretch from Coromandel to Port Louis is one of the most challenging. You can see the works, it is massive and they are working on a number of sites. It is almost done. It is a question of two months now. I understand that there have been a number of issues which have been raised, a number of problems which have been raised. We have the Metro Express team together with L&T and they have done what they can do to communicate to the inhabitants. I know that there are some specific problems because I have heard that in one case, for example, the girders are very near one dwelling. I am considering that particular problem. Now, what we will do for the two months which are left? All the piles have already been done. You can see because everybody goes past that stretch, it is the most difficult stretch if we take it from Coromandel to come to Port Louis. So, I am going to give a special attention to the different sites. We have a special team who go on the terrain, there are five to six people. I would like to work with the hon. Member to see what are the specific sites where there are some difficulties so that for the next two months that are left, we can do the works in a proper manner.

**Madam Speaker:** Time is over!

**MOTION****SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

**The 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.

**The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

(4.24 p.m.)

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS****HOSPITALS - GENERAL WORKERS - NEGATIVE INCOME TAX**

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I wish to make the following Statement.

At Adjournment time on Tuesday 16 April, the hon. First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central drew my attention to the delay in the payment of Negative Income Tax to general workers in hospitals.

Madam Speaker, the National Minimum Wage Regulations 2017 provide for the payment to every worker, other than a part-time worker, and subject to the regulations of a minimum wage of Rs8,140 per month.

I am informed that the minimum wage plus salary compensation in respect of years 2018 and 2019 have been paid by Ministries and Departments to all public sector employees.

Under the Additional Remuneration and Other Allowances (2019) Act 2018, a special allowance up to a maximum of Rs500 to employees of non-export oriented enterprises and Rs860 for export oriented enterprises is payable by the Mauritius Revenue Authority with a view to bringing their earning to Rs9,000 for the period January to December 2018, and Rs9,400 as from January 2019.

Moreover, for employees taking up employment as from 01 January 2019, the monthly allowance payable is up to Rs100 for employees of non-export oriented enterprises and up to Rs460 for employees for export oriented enterprises.

I am further informed that for the period January 2018 to September 2018, the MRA was retrieving information in respect of all Government employees from the payroll database of the Central Information Systems Division. Hence, payment for the Special Allowance was effected every month up to the month of September 2018.

However, to enhance the control mechanism, the MRA has implemented a new reporting mechanism. This has caused some delay in the submission of the monthly National Saving Fund returns by Ministries to MRA. The new mechanism is now fully operational.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the MRA that payment of the Special Allowance to the General Workers of hospitals for the months of October 2018 to March 2019 has already been effected.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo!

(4.27 p.m.)

### **MARE GRAVIER, BEAU BASSIN – LAND DRAINAGE**

**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 wish to make a statement with regard to the matter raised by hon. Bhagwan pertaining to the land drainage at Tolaram Tulsidas Lane, Raoul Follereau Street, Mare Gravier, Beau Bassin.

I am informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill that the Prime Minister's Office, National Development Unit is planning to construct a drain at that particular site to attend to the inconvenience being caused to inhabitants at that region during heavy rainfall.

In this respect, the NDU has already appointed Lux Consult Mauritius Ltd. as consultant for this project on 07 September 2018 and the consultant has started the assignment on 10 September 2018. 12 weeks were allocated to the consultant to submit the design and draft set of bidding documents, the consultant has already submitted its proposal and same is presently being examined by the Road Development Authority, whereas the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill has already conveyed its clearance.

Once the clearance of the Road Development Authority is obtained, the design and bidding documents would be finalised and bid be invited. The estimated cost of the project is Rs30 m., inclusive of Rs2 m. for the collected drain which needs to be constructed along Tolaram Tulsidas Lane and same is being considered as a short-term measure to alleviate the

inconvenience being faced by the inhabitants of that region through the framework agreement, once approval of the Road Development Authority is obtained.

The implementation of the main project, that is, upgrading of the main drain along A1, St. Jean Road would take 10 to 12 months from the award of the contract. The works are expected to start at latest by October 2019.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

(4.29 p.m.)

### **POLYTECHNICS EDUCATION – IMPLEMENTATION**

**The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Madam Speaker, with your permission, I propose to make a statement on the implementation status of Polytechnics Education in Mauritius.

Following technical assistance from the World Bank for the establishment of the polytechnics sector within the training landscape of Mauritius, recommendations were made by a Singaporean Consultant on the development of Polytechnics Education and its legal and institutional framework. Accordingly, in August 2016, decision was taken for the setting up of Polytechnics in Mauritius.

Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd was subsequently established in 2017 under my Ministry with the mandate to address the emerging needs of Mauritius for a skilled and competent workforce at the middle professional level. Its vision “to innovate and craft a high-skills ecosystem” is fully in line with Vision 2030 of this Government to move Mauritius from a middle-income to a high-income economy status and to strengthen the Knowledge Hub.

Youth and graduate employment remains a priority concern of this Government and Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd purposefully aligns its programmes to the needs and demands of industry stakeholders through rigorous practice-based immersion that prepares students for the world of work. Industry stakeholders are brought into the discussion with institutions at the programme design stage to generate a relevant and fit-for-purpose curriculum that addresses skills gaps and builds future ready skill sets for increased employability.

Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd has started operations in three state-of-the-art campuses located at Pamplemousses, Réduit and Montagne Blanche which offer courses in their respective fields, namely, Nursing and Paramedical, Information Technology and Hotel and Tourism.

With a view to develop new and niche fields of study where skills gaps exist and where trainers are unavailable to service programmes, Polytechnics Mauritius has signed a number of MoUs with a number of well recognised institutions. These include La Trobe University and Murdoch University in Australia, Hotel and Tourism Management Institute in Switzerland, AMITY Institute of Higher Education and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life as well as the Mauritius Institute of Health.

Forthcoming ones will include renowned International Institutions in UK, the US and Malaysia. At all times, this collaboration also satisfies the predominating concern to ensure quality in the teaching and learning process.

Madam Speaker, right from the first cohort of 68 students in Nursing recruited in November 2017, Polytechnics Mauritius has been growing fast and has already increased its student body tenfold to cross the 700-student mark. The figure will definitely increase given the new opportunities being offered by this Government to students under the Free Higher Education Scheme. 50 members of staff, including 13 part time academics, have also been recruited in the last one and a half years. Today, Polytechnics Mauritius regroups 290 students at the Pamplemousses campus in Nursing and will shortly launch specialised nursing courses as well as allied health and paramedical programmes with Australian partners.

The Réduit campus, focusing on IT and emerging technologies, welcomes 193 students enrolled in a variety of programmes, including such cutting edge courses in Diploma in Big Data and Diploma in Internet of Things, in partnership with AMITY University and up skilling courses for industry-demand oriented Microsoft and Oracle certifications targeting working professionals as well as school leavers. Pathways and articulations also exist onto Bachelor programmes for those who wish to progress further. Forthcoming programmes will focus on game design, animation, data science and artificial intelligence and will also bridge the gap around cloud and open source programming.

Some 170 students are enrolled at the Montagne Blanche campus across tourism, hospitality and cruise management programmes. Programmes include Hotel Management with HTMi Switzerland as well as specialised short industry-ready courses on Golf, Spa and

Supervisory operations. Forthcoming programmes include landscaping, urban and community planning and sports management. In the near future, Montagne Blanche campus will also be home to the Engineering cluster to service light rail programmes for the Metro Express project as well as bunkering and other specialised programmes targeting the maritime sector.

The concept of Polytechnics education for high skills is new in Mauritius. Polytechnics Mauritius has oriented its cap on ‘real skills for the real world’ and aims to increase the level of sophistication with Industry to develop impactful collaborative projects. At the core, innovation will drive future offerings and new models of partnership, not limited to programme offering but as an “Innovation Hub” to explore exponential returns to Industry and Government through the Polytechnics and other sister institutions. Polytechnics Mauritius will sustain and refine its approach to competency-based learning and provide holistic education through an equal measure focus on technical aptitude and soft skills and character development.

We have no doubt that the education landscape has shifted according to the demands of the time, and so have our policies through our national education reform, and that is in a promising way, towards one with multiple pathways to success. Polytechnics Mauritius will certainly have an important role to play in this endeavour. Indeed, as per its Business Plan, Polytechnics Mauritius is targeting an enrolment of 2,000 students by the year 2020.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

## **PUBLIC BILLS**

### *Second Reading*

#### **THE MAURITIUS RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL BILL**

#### **(NO. IV OF 2019)**

(4.35 p.m.)

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill (No. IV of 2019).*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Gayan!

**The Minister of Tourism (Mr A. Gayan):** Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madame la présidente, j'aimerais commencer mon intervention en félicitant mon collègue, le ministre Yogida Sawmynaden, pour avoir présenté the *Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill*.

Je ne le félicite pas seulement parce que c'est un projet de loi très intéressant et très important pour le pays, mais je le félicite également parce que c'est la célébration de l'intellect à travers ce projet de loi. Le progrès d'un pays nécessairement passe, Madame la présidente, par la recherche et le développement. Les objectifs de ce projet de loi innovant sont –

- (i) remplacer le *Mauritius Research Council Act* qui date de 1992 et qui a été amendé en 2014 ;
- (ii) donner naissance à la *Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Act* et le *National Research Innovation Fund* ;
- (iii) promouvoir la recherche de haut niveau ;
- (iv) encourager l'innovation dans l'intérêt national ;
- (v) créer un environnement pour que le secteur privé participe pleinement dans les travaux de recherches, et, ce qui est plus important, et
- (vi) créer un cadre légal pour donner au créateur, à celui qui invente, le droit à la propriété intellectuelle.

Je crois que c'est une démarche très, très intéressante parce que cela valorise le travail qui a été fait par ceux qui inventent et qui font le travail de recherche. Pour cela, Madame la présidente, il faut qu'on ait une stratégie cohérente pour une économie axée sur la connaissance, les compétences et l'engagement pour une culture de recherche. Et là, je fais confiance à notre jeunesse, parce que cette jeunesse qui est plein d'idées, qui a toutes sortes de projets en tête, c'est une occasion en or pour eux de profiter de ce projet de loi pour que la République de Maurice s'engage dans une culture de recherche, y compris Rodrigues.

Madame la présidente, à chaque fois qu'on parle de changement, de recherche, il y a des craintes qui sont exprimées. Et j'aimerais dire que depuis que l'humanité existe, il y a eu des inventions et il y a eu des progrès qui ont été faits. On ne peut pas arrêter le progrès. Le progrès ne s'arrêtera jamais et d'ailleurs j'ai avec moi un texte qui parle de *20 Greatest Inventions of all time*. Je ne vais pas faire lecture de tout mais j'aimerais citer qu'une des inventions les plus importantes que l'humanité ait connue, c'est le feu et la maîtrise du feu. Il faut qu'on le dise, parce qu'il n'y avait pas de laboratoire, il n'y avait pas d'académicien, il

n'y avait rien à cette époque. C'est le feu, après il y a eu naturellement la roue, le compas, le *steam engine* et toutes les autres choses qui sont venues avec.

Madam Speaker, I would like to say that when we speak of research and development, we are thinking of research that is going to be, what I call research with a purpose, research that matters, not pure academic research without a purpose. Although there was a time when in academia, people used to conduct research and spend their whole life conducting research without seeing a finality to their research. So, I believe that this particular Bill is geared towards research with a purpose and research which really matters for the economic welfare and the quality of life of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, when we speak of research, I am reminded of some people who are afraid of research and development because they are afraid of losing jobs, and I am reminded of someone saying, "Please stop the world. I want to get out." because he is afraid of whatever changes will be happening. So, we need to be open to changes. And as I said, there have been great moments and I am sure that among our young people, and I hope that if they are listening to the debate on this particular Bill, they will fight with a commitment to do something great for the country.

Why can't we have great scientists, great researchers in our country just like other countries have? Why can't we have Nobel laureates as well? And, in fact, in the 2014 Act which amended the 1992 Act, there was mention of an advisory council with Nobel laureates; we never got them. But it is an idea and the time has come to build on ideas and to get those ideas to become actors in development. And I sure the House remembers Archimedes who leapt from his bath because he had found one of the formula for the principle of buoyancy. He was in his bath, he was naked and he ran through all the streets of his country. That is Archimedes and that has become a legend in research and development. The same for the apple, Sir Isaac Newton; when the apple fell, he developed the theory of gravity; the light bulb moment of Thomas Edison when he found electricity. And we go on like this and there are many others as well, but I would like to mention one, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar. He is best known for his work on the theoretical structure and evolution of stars. And that was the origin of the black hole. He died quite a number of years ago. We had until last year Stephen Hawking, one of the greatest scientists of our times. So, science is never frozen, science goes on.

Madam Speaker, when we speak of these famous names, we must not forget that in the laboratories all over the world, in universities, in schools, even privately there are many ancient heroes of research. And I think in the course of this debate we need to pay tribute to all those ancient heroes; they are never heard of, they are not rewarded, they are not recognised, but they are doing a great piece of work. Those who succeed, of course, they become famous and they become rich. But sometimes those who are doing the work to prevent, let's say, an epidemic, because the epidemic never happened, those people are not recognised. But they did the work and I think there must be a system where whoever contributes to the quality of life of people, they must be rewarded and they must be recognised. I think this is the least that we owe to the work of the mind. As you know, Madam Speaker, I have a great admiration for the intellect and for all intellectual pursuits and I believe that this particular Bill is going to help in that process.

Madam Speaker, when we talk of research and development, we cannot not talk about artificial intelligence. This is going to be the driving factor of any research that will be conducted. Madam Speaker, one of the areas where artificial intelligence is being used a lot is in the field of medicine and research in medicine is where Africa can lead. And in Mauritius, because we are a small country, because we are a multi-ethnic country, there are lots of laboratories and lots of researches all over the world who want to come and do research in Mauritius because they get a sense of all the communities within a small area and they are very interested in developing research capability in Mauritius. But then, the question arises: once they conduct a research, let's say, on HIV/AIDS, on diabetes, what happens to the data? Who controls the data? Do we have the means in Mauritius to control the data? And if at the end of their research in Mauritius they find something great, a remedy or a medicine, do they take all the benefits or there must be a mechanism where Mauritius also can share?

*(Interruptions)*

Sorry?

**Madam Speaker:** Please, do not interrupt the hon. Minister!

**Mr Gayan:** I am just saying that this is the beginning. In fact, when I was Minister of Health I happened to know of this because I had lots of such requests and I asked these questions. But we need to answer them. And this Council will have to answer and to address these issues because, at the end of the day, data, whether it is big data, no data or whatever, data is the modern oil. Data is value today, data is a big commodity, but the integrity of that

data is what we should look at. How we control the data, how we use it for the benefit of mankind but also how we use it for the benefit of the country. But in medicine, I was saying, Madam Speaker, medicine is moving very fast with regard to Artificial Intelligence.

There has been a book which has been published. It is called ‘Deep Medicine: How Artificial Intelligence Can Make Healthcare Human Again’. And I was looking at one of the titles of the article that I am going to refer to. The author was referring to AI, Artificial Intelligence, which is useful for repetitive error-prone tasks such as shifting images, scrutinising heart traces for abnormalities or transcribing Doctors words into patients’ records.

It will be able to harness masses of data to work out optimal treatments for both conditions and individuals and improve workflows in hospitals. In short, AI is set to save time, lives and money, but what is interesting is the title says – normally when you go to see a doctor, the nurse comes out and says: ‘the doctor will see you now.’ In this one, they say: ‘the AI will see you now; Artificial Intelligence will see you now.’ So, these are things which are happening and we must learn to live with all the developments that will be happening. But change is inevitable and change will come. This is why we have to make sure that this particular Bill, which is before the House, is used in the best interest of the country.

There was a time, Madam Speaker, when we used to say we have to think about what we need for the country. Then, this expression came ‘think inside the box’. Some started saying: ‘we have to think outside the box’ or ‘*hors du boîte*’, as somebody said.

*(Interruptions)*

But now the new expression is outthink; we have to outthink everybody. We have to think the unthinkable, do the undoable and imagine the unimaginable. This is what research and development is all about and this is why, Madam Speaker, I wish now to refer to the definition that has been given to “applied research” in the Bill.

In Clause 2 of the Bill, in the definition section, “applied research” means an original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge and directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective. Now, this is what I would call research with a purpose. It has to be an original investigation to acquire new knowledge and directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective. It is also important for the House to know that the innovation has been defined in very broad terms – Innovation means radical and incremental

changes to a product, process or service and includes the implementation of a new or significantly improved product, process or service. I like the word 'radical' because it disrupts. Unless we disrupt, there would be no progress. So, new technology will be disrupting. This is something which this Bill addresses and this is why, Madam Speaker, I believe that this Bill is so important for the future of the country. I believe the time has come for our young people not to go on thinking, that the only way to succeed is to get a job in the public service or in the parastatal bodies but to go to universities to study and to pursue their study so that they can become part of a whole infrastructure of research.

Madam Speaker, it is important to remember that we are not alone in thinking about research and development. The African Union is also considering getting into research and development because Africa today generates less than 1% of the world's research. Fifty four countries in Africa! Less than 1%! But that has to change and I am happy that the African Union has addressed this issue and they have now a unit at the level of the African Union to address this deficit in research in African countries.

Africa has a lot going for it, Africa has expertise, Africa has in a diaspora lots of people working all over the world. It may be helpful for the African Union to bring all their experts together to see how we can move the research agenda of Africa forward.

It is no surprise, Madam Speaker, that the country that spends most on research, science and development, is Israel. Israel is a No. 1 country in terms of research and development. When I was looking at the statistics of the World Bank, I was trying to figure out about Africa, looking for that particular African country that can really make a mark. Even South Africa was not there, but Algeria was there and Egypt was there, but a very small percentage of their GDP.

But if we want to move forward, we have to move forward nationally, but we also have to look at international collaboration with African countries with the regions and also with non-African countries because science knows no boundaries, research knows no boundaries and there has to be collaboration. There is no need in conducting a research which has already been conducted somewhere else, there is no need in duplicating research. Evidence is available, data is available, we can collaborate so that we can really make Mauritius a centre of excellence with regard to research and development.

With universities, the tertiary educations will have to come in, the Professors they have to act as mentors for the young ones so that they can be directed into the relevant piece of research and there are lots of areas where we can do research in Mauritius.

We talk a lot about the Ocean Economy. There is a lot of scope of research in the Ocean Economy. We talk of renewable energy, robotics, we have an aging population and we will have to think and talk more about robotics. We need to address the issue. I hope the researchers will address the issue on how to get our population to be stable after a while because as it is now, it is declining and within some years, there may be no Mauritians to talk about. But this has to be addressed. These are serious issues that the young people will have to look into and we have to see how it can reverse the trend of infertility.

So, robotics, Ocean Economy, Agriculture, Tourism, lots of sectors that need a new approach to problems, a new way of looking at things and a new way of finding solutions to existing problems. I am sure we have the competence, we have the skills and we have the expertise. We can do it, but we need that commitment on the part of the institutions and also the young people, because they are the future of the country.

And they need to be fired with that quest for knowledge. They need to become like Dr. Faustus, who sold his soul to acquire knowledge. Knowledge is everything; data is everything, Artificial Intelligence is everything. There are lots of things that we can do with Artificial Intelligence, but not everything is good with Artificial Intelligence. If we get machines to do all our works, people will say that jobs will be lost. But according to studies which have been conducted, jobs will be lost, but new jobs will be created as well.

If we go back to the days when there were no cars, when there were horse carriages, when the car came, people said that *les ferronniers*, all the people involved in horse carriages would disappear. Of course, they disappeared except for entertainment purposes but then we had new garages, we had mechanics, we had all sorts of other things associated with the car industry. So, we should think about all the potential that can happen with artificial intelligence, with research and development. This is why, Madam Speaker, I said at the beginning that the provision with regard to intellectual property is vital for this particular Bill to work.

I refer to Clause 16 which deals with that aspect of intellectual property and I quote –

- ‘(1) Unless otherwise agreed, the ownership of intellectual property and responsibility for its application shall vest in the person generating that intellectual property.’

In the old law, it used to be the intellectual property of the Council. Maybe that was the impediment that prevented research to boom in this country because the person, who spends hours, years, working on something finding the solution, finding the invention, must be able to own that property. This is why I think this particular section of the law will be the trigger for a new environment and a new adventure for research in Mauritius. So, the person who generates the intellectual property is vested with that property and he can do whatever he wants with it.

- ‘(2) Unless otherwise agreed, where a person uses the resources of the Council to create a product, process or service, the intellectual property rights of that product, process or service shall vest in that person.’

So, even if he makes use of the resources of the Council, of all the things that the Council has, the intellectual property right of his creation will vest in him. So, this is a great incentive for any person wishing to conduct research.

Sub clause 3, Madam Speaker, speaks of –

- ‘(3) Any intellectual property vested in, owned or controlled by, the Council in respect of any invention or improvement in any art, process, apparatus, machine, manufacture or composition of matter, may be licensed, sold or otherwise granted or made available to others, in return for royalties, fees and payments, to the Council, on such terms and conditions as it may determine.’

We are talking of research, there will have to be sponsors. The State or the universities will not be able to fund all the research, although there are international organisations that do fund researches. If the research project is valuable, lots and lots of sponsors who will come.

Sub clause 4 deals with what happens when there is a sponsor and it says –

- (4) Where any intellectual property belonging to the Council is devised or developed, wholly or partly, through the use of resources provided by a sponsor, the Council may assign the intellectual property to that sponsor on such terms and conditions as they may mutually agree in writing.’

I believe the sponsors will be mainly from the private sector, so there will have to be arrangements. If a sponsor is sponsoring the research and, of course, there will have to be an assignment of rights to that particular sponsor and this is only fair because what we want is to build knowledge. It is not through very stringent conditions that may kill the building of knowledge that we are going to succeed. So, we need to liberalise and give to all the sponsors also the right to have certain rights over the intellectual property.

Madam Speaker, with regard to this particular aspect, in my view, this is the trigger that will really make this Bill become very effective to foster research, innovation in the national interest and in related matters. Now, in the course of the debate, hon. Boolell mentioned that this Bill has come without a strategic framework for innovation and research. In fact, I am informed, Madam Speaker, that there has been a framework document published last year. It was on the website of the Ministry and people did comment. So, it is not something that has just come up like this but this is the beginning of a new venture which is important for the future of the country.

Now, for research to succeed, Mauritius, whether we like it or not, is a small country. We do not have all the major universities like major countries have but we need to have an apex body and this is what the Council will be. The apex body, which the Council will be, will advise Government on matters concerning applied research innovation and research development issues and that Council will also have the power to create strategic links between research and development, innovation, intellectual property and other components of the knowledge economy, and it will also have the power to engage in a process of internationalisation to access and make use of globally discussed knowledge and technology and to attract aspiring entrepreneurs globally. I am a firm believer in opening up to intellectual migrants, a bit like Singapore, people who come with their knowledge, with their expertise and they help in promoting the development of the country.

So, I believe that this is an area where we can attract start-ups, we can have young people starting small businesses and who knows, we may have great future giants of the technological work in Mauritius. Nothing is impossible because although we are small but, in terms of intellect, I think we can match and even outmatch any other country in the world, provided we set our minds to it, we do the work that has to be done and we really get committed to a culture of research. But I must also say, Madam Speaker, that when we speak of research, there are no quick fixes, there are no quick wins in research. Sometimes a person can do research all his life and not succeed but that should not be a discouragement. In fact,

that should be a spur for others to carry on what has been done but there must be that collaborative effort. I believe that if we are serious about getting into research and development for the welfare of the country in line with the strategy adopted by the African Union, we must build bridges between researchers in Mauritius and outside, between researchers in one institution and researchers in another institution, it will have to be an open sector.

Of course, as long as the intellectual property is vested in the creators whether it is a collaborative effort or otherwise, I think this is going to be a great plus for the future of Mauritius and this is why, Madam Speaker, I am very happy to be able to intervene on this Bill because it is something which is very important for the future of the country.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Rampertab!

(5.05 p.m.)

**Mr R. Rampertab (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil):** Madam Speaker, this Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill being presented today by the hon. Minister of Technology Communication and Innovation is of extreme importance for the future economic development of our country and it was indeed long overdue. I thank him for that.

Madam Speaker, one of the foundations of our country's social and economic development has been our ability to generate and eventually implement ideas, ideas which have forged the very fabric of our nation. The history of our country's progress has been shipped by our countrymen who have put their knowledge into practical use.

Madam Speaker, over the years, our country has been able successfully to ward off challenges by real destiny pushing the frontiers of knowledge to find new ways of implementing knowledge. Through this Bill, Madam Speaker, our aim is to ensure institutional continuity for the creation and implementation of the great knowledge and ideas of our countrymen.

Madam Speaker, the current Mauritius Research Council Act was passed in 1992 under the Prime Ministership of the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth. His foresight as a Prime Minister to set up a Body to generate pioneering research in Mauritius was a landmark decision. Since its setting up in 1992, the MRC has come a long way in promoting a

conducive environment for effective research and delivering the latest innovative strategies to promote social and economic progress of our country.

Madam Speaker, we have to pay tribute to the work conducted by the MRC Board and staff in fostering research and development within the future spheres of the activities of our economy. More importantly, they have been able to successfully promote the commercial adoption of research within key industries of our nation. However, Madam Speaker, after nearly 27 years of operation, we have to admit that the MRC will benefit from deep reforms being proposed by the hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation for which he deserves our thanks.

Madam Speaker, it is indeed a matter of great pride that after 27 years it is under the Prime Ministership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth that the new Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill is being presented. Under his leadership, the revamped institution will undeniably consolidate our country's solid path towards reaching the high-income status that our Government is aiming for.

Madam Speaker, our Government has been unflinching in promoting excellence in terms of research since 2014. In fact, we are left with a catastrophic legacy from the previous Government which will now be duly changed with the introduction of this Bill.

Madam Speaker, this august Assembly as well as the population must know that our nation's research and development expenditure as a percentage of the GDP has been relatively low for many years now. We have, unfortunately, been also lagging behind compared to our African counterparts. In fact, it is essential for the population to understand that since December 2014, our Government has been relentless in reversing this worrying trend of the low research and development national investment.

Madam Speaker, according to the World Bank statistics, in 2012, expenditure on research and development stood at an alarming 0.18% of GDP which shows the low priority of the research and development investment for the previous Government. Clearly, their priority was elsewhere, Madam Speaker. However, again as per the World Bank, the average research and development expenditure during the period 2000 to 2005 was 0.35%, which is nearly the double compared to the previous Government. This is the level of gross mismanagement our Government inherited in 2014, and through this Bill, Madam Speaker, our commitment to the population is that we will leave no stone unturned to try to reverse the

situation because our hon. Prime Minister understands the importance of investment in research and development for our children's future.

Madam Speaker, according to the theory of the famous Austrian Economist, Schumpeter, research and development is the main determinant of economic growth in the long term and this clearly substantiates our hon. Prime Minister's foresight and policy approach. Madam Speaker, this is the basic philosophy behind this Bill which is to ensure that the pillars of the future economic growth of our nation are nurtured through research and innovation.

Madam Speaker, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, about 10 countries are responsible for 80% of expenditure on research and development which has reached around today 1.7 trillion US Dollars. Of course, the big players include America, China and South Korea. However, this is another clear example of how research has proved to accelerate growth in more advanced countries. I would like to quote the ex-US President, Barack Obama, once referring to the space race investments, and I quote -

"(...) we unleashed a wave of innovation that created new industries and millions of new jobs."

Of course, Madam Speaker, we are not planning to exploit space soon as the Americans, but we have already proved that our countrymen are capable of building the MIR-SAT1, the first Mauritian Nano Satellite which is going to be launched very soon.

Hence, if we want our industries to have innovative practices that will ensure that they remain competitive, we need to invest in research and development in order to have quality products and services that will thicken inflow of FDI. This, Madam Speaker, will only be achieved through a revamped institutional framework which will support the creation and dissemination of research within our country.

Madam Speaker, I very much welcome the fact that one of the functions of the MRIC will be to establish national, regional and international linkages with similar institutions. In the same vein, I see an opportunity for the MRIC to become a regional centre of excellence and spearhead a new era of research and innovation partnership among similar institutions within the Sub-Saharan region.

Currently, Madam Speaker, the MRC is a member of the International Science Council Regional Office for Africa. Going forward, Madam Speaker, the MRIC would be in a position to play a more prominent role in the region. Our country should aim at attracting

international funding to promote more research initiatives but also, through the MRIC, become a key regional consultant which can be asked to help regional partners in generating research and innovation strategies.

Madam Speaker, through the MRIC, Mauritius will be able to give a new impetus to the research and development sector and spearhead a new era of research and development investment within the African Continent. In fact, according to the UNESCO, even if Africa makes up of around 15% of the world population and 5% of the world GDP, it sadly accounts only around 1.3% of the world research and development investment. In addition, Africa currently holds only around 0.1%, as pointed out by hon. Gayan, of the world patents which demonstrates a poor correlation between research and investment and its returns.

Madam Speaker, Africa needs a leader to lead its evolution in research and development, and I am proud to say that Mauritius, through the MRIC, will be a clear candidate to take up this challenge. Indeed, through its agenda 2063 which Mauritius adheres to, the African Union has set a target of 1% of GDP of the research and development investment. Some African counterparts have already taken up the challenge. For instance Ethiopia increases on research development investment by 150% between 2009 and 2013, and Kenya passed a legislation with a commitment of 2% of its GDP to be invested on research and development.

Madam Speaker, due to the last Government, the country has lagged behind in research and development initiatives and investments as the statistics demonstrate, but through the MRIC, a new dawn is rising for Mauritius. Madam Speaker, the MRIC will indeed also contribute to solving a longstanding issue in our research field. In fact, the gap between early research and the real market place is widening in Mauritius. Academics in Mauritius are actively involved in producing research species. However, the research topics may not always be relevant to the industry and the market place. Therefore, the academic research using public funds must be pursued further with the significant part of it on topics that are chosen efficiently.

Madam Speaker, we are often faced with the situation where universities have difficulty to choose the right problems to research and to spend public money, while industries do not have the manpower to perform fundamental innovation within the given time.

This Bill, Madam Speaker, aims at addressing this innovation gap. It promotes the proper articulation of the research among academics and industries. Through this Bill, Madam Speaker, this Government is fulfilling its role in this stipulating innovation. This framework is essential to encourage companies and individuals to engage in innovation research and development. It is creating the necessary conducive policy environment and providing support that will help to enlist the private sector to invest in innovation and research.

Madam Speaker, the debates around the MRIC today also gives us the opportunity to discuss what type of research and innovation our country needs, but more importantly, what research and innovation should it aim to achieve for our country. I firmly believe, Madam Speaker, that our research and innovation system should aim at bringing in new ideas and technologies to address the major complex challenges our country and the world faces, such as the climate change, cyber criminality and efficiency in public services. Our country equally needs cutting edge knowledge and tools to support our sustained economic growth by empowering our academia researchers and entrepreneurs.

Also, on one hand, our country needs research and innovation which will enhance our international business, attractiveness and competitiveness as well. On the other hand, empower our society to adapt to the rapidly changing cultural norms and become more resilient, healthier and open to change. Madam Speaker, to address these challenges, it is critical that our country's research and innovation body is institutionally agile and open to respond to current and emerging opportunities to search and deliver new knowledge and solutions across various disciplines and sectors.

Madam Speaker, what the MRIC will also endeavour is to create foundation for achieving excellence in research and innovation. Indeed, the MRIC will have the new impulse for the emergence of talents, which will be driving force of our research and innovation industry. Our country needs more educated and skilled individuals who are able to identify research sectors and deliver practical, but scalable solutions. Moreover, Madam Speaker, the MRIC will also inspire the research culture in our children from early years of education. The mindset to challenge the *status quo* and delve into finding solutions using new technologies will be actively promoted.

Madam Speaker, through the MRIC, the right environment to invest in the adequate infrastructure will be set up. Our research needs specialised equipment, facilities, such as

digital research labs. More importantly, Madam Speaker, through the MRIC, we will be able to tap into new funding sources through wider collaboration with local and international public and private partners, as hon. Gayan pointed out earlier.

Madam Speaker, I am also glad to note that the MRIC will submit its annual report to this August Assembly, and I think it is a very good idea. It is essential that MRIC operation be managed with the core values of openness and transparency. Publicly funded research should be made public to the population, but also research data should be made available in a legal, ethical and economic way.

Madam Speaker, it is with great satisfaction that the functions of the new MRIC are in line with the best international standards. Madam Speaker, we are here today following the footsteps of major economies by revamping the current MRC. For instance, the UK has also reengineered its framework for research and innovation by setting up a new body called 'UK Research and Innovation', that brings under its umbrella eight different Research Councils to better coordinate partnerships and generate a cohesive approach.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, I am grateful for the time given to me today to express my humble views on this legislation. Today marks the beginning of a new age for our country's innovation and research. It is a significant stride towards building a MRIC, which will be called upon to tackle a series of vital questions about how research and innovation can be supported in the most effective way to maximise the benefits of our fellow citizens.

I would like to congratulate the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation again for presenting this Bill and the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his blessings in providing the funding to our research and innovation sector with a brighter future of our children.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

*On resuming at 6.12 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please, be seated! Hon. Ganoo!

(6.12 p.m.)

**Mr A. Ganoo (First Member Savanne & Black River):** *M. le président*, in the wake of globalisation and the growing aspirations of the nation for better standards of living as well

as comforts, Mauritius cannot afford to ignore the benefits that can be derived for a resource-starved economy as ours through Applied Research and Innovation.

Innovation by definition suggests the process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that creates value to the economy and to the State and to society at large. *En effet, M. le président, il était temps plus que jamais qu'un effort soit fait pour la promotion et la commercialisation de la recherche, et qu'il y ait une politique plus agressive de la promotion et de la recherche.* This legislation that replaces the previous Mauritius Research Council Act and, therefore, enhances the scope of Research and Innovation, has, unfortunately, suffered some delay, which as a nation we need to catch up, and catch up fast for three main reasons –

1. The relative economic stagnation which the Government perhaps would consider as modest growth but for the ambitious patriot is nothing less than stagnation, given the average trend of growth of 3.5% per year for the decade. It is below both targeted rate and potential growth rate.
2. Bridge the social divide and infrastructure deficit, especially in the light of savage and haphazard development and organisation. The effects of which were recently felt during spells of adverse weather conditions at Fond du Sac, Roche Bois, Curepipe, Mont Gout, Bambous, Cité La Cure and other localities.
3. *M. le président*, to close the gap in technology and innovation; we conspicuously lag behind such islands economies as Singapore, Ireland, Hong Kong or Iceland which are comparable countries. Therefore, closing the gap in technology and innovation is the most appropriate avenue to sustain growth, modernise the economy, preserve the environment, and achieve economic efficiency and social justice.

I, therefore, fully endorse the objects set out in the legislation.

*M. le président*, j'ai bien écouté attentivement les discours des honorables membres de la majorité. J'ai comparé le projet de loi présenté devant la Chambre aujourd'hui et la loi qui sera abrogée et la première question qui me vient à l'esprit est : 'pourquoi est-ce que cette institution, qui a pour vocation de coordonner la recherche appliquée et l'innovation, demeure sous la férule du ministère des technologies et de la communication?

En 1992, c'était le Premier ministre d'alors, en occurrence, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, qui avait introduit le *Mauritius Research Council Act* et sous l'ancien gouvernement, cette même institution était passée sous la responsabilité du *Ministry of Tertiary Education, Sciences, Research and Technology* et en 2015, quand l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth assume les fonctions du ministre des technologies, de la communication et de l'innovation, le MRC fut transféré sous ce ministère. J'insiste sur ce point parce qu'à mon avis, cette institution est appelée à jouer le rôle d'un apex body qui aura comme tâche de coordonner la recherche et l'innovation. Pour moi, ce genre de coordination demande *a high level* coordination du niveau du *Prime Minister's Office, inasmuch as in its function, this Council is called upon to relate, with different and several or multiple bodies, stakeholders and partners such as international funders, the private sector, social actors or even academia and other institutions having similar objectives in line with those elaborated in the Bill.*

Donc, étant donné le niveau de coordination requis pour le bon fonctionnement de cette institution, comment explique-t-on que le ministère des technologies et de la communication, qui est un ministère spécialisé dans un domaine précis, ait cette lourde et importante responsabilité qui est de mener à bien une institution qui a pour but d'être le *driver* de l'innovation et de la prospérité économique.

Evidemment, ce que je dis, M. le président, ne constitue aucun *value judgement* à l'égard du ministre et de son ministère, mais rappelons-nous, dans tous les pays qui ont adopté des systèmes d'innovation efficace avec pour la Finlande, par exemple, la coordination du *Research and Innovation Council* tombe sous le leadership du Premier ministre. Et la constitution de ce comité technique est faite de représentants du secteur privé, du secteur de l'éducation et même des universitaires.

A Singapour, comme nous a rappelé la semaine dernière l'honorable Dr. Boolell, the *Research Innovation and Enterprise Council* is chaired by the Prime Minister of Singapore who appoints Members to two-year terms. It comprises distinguished local and foreign members from the business, science and technology communities. This is a high level Council which underscores the political commitment and important place on the national research and development agenda.

Ce qui est rationnel, M. le président, étant donné comme je viens de le dire que l'innovation est un outil puissant pour transformer l'économie et la société qui demande une coordination de plusieurs secteurs clés de notre économie et société.

Another point I wish to raise is: why was there any need for a new piece of legislation which gives the impression that a huge amount of work has been done? In fact, there was already an elaborate legislation, especially after the amendments brought in 2014 and much of what has been proposed today in this Bill could have been easily achieved through appropriate amendments as was done in 2014, but evidently this could not have served Government purpose for the dramatic effect would have been less but when one looks at the objects of the Council in both the 2014 amendments which were brought to the previous Act of 1992 and the present legislation, they are on all false; they resemble *comme deux gouttes d'eau*.

The five objects in both the two legal texts are the same; the definition of ‘innovation’ is the same; a similar comment can be made with regard to the functions of the Council, save for the fact that in this Bill before the House today, the novel proposal of creating and managing a research repository is proposed and I must admit also the novel proposal concerning the issue of intellectual property, the provisions regarding intellectual property which have been already commented upon by other hon. Members in the House. Even the so much praised National Research and Innovation Fund is not a new creature inasmuch as in the Mauritius Research Council (Amendment) Act of 2014 Section 13 (a) provides for this National Research and Innovation Fund.

Furthermore, when we look at clause 5 of this Bill dealing with functions of the Council, the first limb which reads as follows and which has again been referred to by many hon. Members to –

“develop, every 5 years, a national strategy for research and development and innovation, based on the scientific, technological, social and economic needs and challenges of the country.”

Except for two words, the words ‘scientific’ and ‘challenges’ are the same. The concept of commercialisation was already introduced in the 2014 amendment. Therefore, all the objects of the Council were implicitly or explicitly in operation and as such the legislation today brings little that is new or innovative. From this perspective, it is questionable whether the issue warranted a fresh legislation. The more so as the amendments already made in 2014 to the original MRC Act of 1992, were far-reaching and very wide.

En fin de compte, M. le président, on ne voit pas comment le *Mauritius Research and Innovation Council* est drastiquement différent du *Mauritius Research Council* sauf je dirais

sur la composition de ce *Council* et je me permets de m'attarder sur ce point. Donc, we have now to look at clause 7, Constitution of Council. I find it very, very strange that on that score, the provisions with regard to the composition of the Council proposed today differ so much to the provisions of the previous legislation, for example, clause 7 (1) (a) provides that the –

“The Council shall consist of a Chairperson, to be appointed by the Minister.”

Nothing is mentioned about the qualification and experience required to be appointed as Chairman. The law is blissfully silent on that matter. But in the 2014 amendment, it was specifically mentioned that the Chairman was required to have knowledge and wide experience in research and development, industry or science and technology.

I find it also very strange, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that no representatives of the Tertiary University sector have been included in the Council.

With regard to clause 7, subsection (1) whereby five persons shall be appointed by the Minister including two representatives of the private sector organisation, I also cannot understand in the case of the three other persons why the Bill is silent on the profile of those persons. We expect that the law would have defined the profile, the background, the experience required to qualify to be a member of such an important and high level Council. I would like, again, to remind the House that in the former legislation which is being presently repealed by the Bill, the Mauritius Research Council Act required the inclusion of two representatives of the Public Tertiary Education Institutions not below the rank of Professor. This is what is stated in the law - not below the rank of Professor. There was a purpose behind this requirement. No system of innovation can work without the generation of knowledge that we call primary research, that is, university and tertiary research. This primary research is generated by universities and research centres, they are then transformed from ideas and concept into applied research to later be commercialised. It's all a chain, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is an elementary phase of the innovation cycle and of any innovation systems.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by failing to make provisions from the appointment of Professors from the tertiary sector on the Council, this new institution runs the risk of being disconnected from primary public research and this is in stark contrast to what was provided for in the former legislation inasmuch as the Mauritius Research Council Act, which is being repealed, required that the two Members to be appointed by the Minister

where required to have wide experience in the field of science, technology and social sciences.

L'autre point qui m'interpelle, M. le président, dans ce projet de loi est le manque d'égards vis-à-vis de l'environnement et du développement durable. Innovation ne peut se faire en isolation de la demande et des besoins de la société et l'économie mauricienne. Dans le projet de loi présenté devant la Chambre, mention n'est pas faite de la nécessité d'aligner les recherches et l'innovation sur les besoins réels de la société mauricienne. Nous déplorons le manque de mention des besoins environnementaux de notre pays. Nous sommes tous conscients des problèmes qui découlent du changement climatique mais aussi des problèmes que l'homme créé à force de mettre la pression sur nos ressources naturelles. Nous sommes arrivés à un stade à Maurice, où il est important d'innover pour préserver la nature et tout futur développement ne peut se faire au détriment de la nature. We are now aware our country has been ranked 16<sup>th</sup> country with the highest disaster risk, 10<sup>th</sup> as the most exposed to natural hazards as per the 2018 World Risk Index. We face inherent environmental vulnerabilities associated with Small Island Developing States, including conflicting land uses, proneness to natural disasters, limited natural resources, sensitive eco-system and so on  
Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Erosion is shrinking the width of our beaches by as much as 10 meters over the past years. So, this is the question I wish to ask : *comment se fait-il qu'une institution sur l'innovation ne comporte aucune mention des besoins environnementaux et aucun représentant de ce ministère ne siège au sein de ce Council.*

A Bill purporting to enhance the scope of research and innovation would have had more effects from the perspective of sustainable development, as we are also aware of the export possibilities, in particular, of hydrogen fuel cells, substitution of fossil fuel by renewable energy sources or making new growth pillars such as the pharmaceutical industry or Nanotechnology. C'est pourquoi nous déplorons fortement que cette initiative pour commercialiser la recherche ne fait aucune mention d'une obligation de répondre aux besoins environnementaux de notre pays et de notre société.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I remarked earlier that much of what is being proposed today could have been easily achieved through appropriate amendments of the Mauritius Research Council Act as it was done in 2014. The House knows that, as far as the MRC is concerned, it has been promoting research and innovation for years, and providing for funds, although

there was no separate fund exclusively to finance innovation. MRC has been funding research for years, and has some good records especially in setting up of the Mauritian Oceanic Institute. The discussion from the Exclusive Economic Zone or the potential development of the Ocean Economy or the concept of the land based Ocean Park on which successive Governments have shied away when a whole plan needed implementation. Nothing was done. What could the explicit addition of the word innovation bring to development if our successive Governments paid a deaf ear to innovative ideas? Changing the name of the institution and making it longer is like putting old wine in new bottles. The main issue, in fact, is translating the research findings in positive measures and projects. How many valuable research reports have been produced at considerable expenses in construction, on construction materials, in social behaviour, on pattern of conception, on monopolistic trends, on transport planning, just to mention a few? Unfortunately, our leaders have paid lip service to each of them. Would setting up an innovation fund by adding the word innovation change the mind set of decision markers? This is the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Several times over years, representatives of MRC made presentations on the ocean economy to top Government officials and Ministers. Government Officials and the Director of the MRC, I understand, visited Nela Park in Hawaii with Governments of India and Australia supporting research and providing their technical expertise with the officials of Nela Park and Mackie consultants assisting Mauritius.

These would have been innovative ideas with export, wealth democratisation and job creation potentials that would have enhanced our growth prospects. More jobs could have been created had Governments paid purposeful attention and translated the ideas of MRC into concrete projects. Instead of moving to implement such innovative concepts and create wealth for the country and jobs for the unemployed, unfortunately our institutions started poaching on each territory, ending up eventually at the EDB.

This august House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has a right to know what has been the EDB's achievement in translating the innovative concepts the MRC has worked so strenuously upon with other researches particularly in the ocean economy. Ideas which were first mooted as far back as 1990 in a publication of the then Ministry of Industry and Industrial Technology, Mauritius at the Crossroads: the Industrial Challenges Ahead. When will our Governments trust their own institutions and officers? We must ensure that a brilliant idea which has been worked out in details should receive the support of Government of the

day to move to the implementation stage, otherwise the whole investment injected in research would have been futile and sterile.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a provision in the legislation for a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. Although similar committees existed in practice, today the legislation formalises it, which is a positive step. However, we can move one step further in the dissemination of information, a vital factor to strengthen both entrepreneurship and education. For instance, the legislation should have made provision and made it mandatory to post its monitoring and evaluation reports on its website for the benefits of users, and in the name of good governance and accountability. This would have also updated users' knowledge of progress achieved and the rate of achievement in applied research.

In the same breath, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it may be pertinent for the House to take stock of the extent of the commercial utilisation of the results of research funded by the MRC since it started its operation. What has been its impact on promoting a culture of entrepreneurship? How far was the MRC able to create and apply knowledge to drive innovation, improve the transfer and application of knowledge, supply research and knowledge to create commercial opportunities for Mauritian firms, connect effectively with businesses to realise these opportunities and build the global awareness to lift productivity and innovation. And the question we have to ask ourselves today: when this House is going to adopt this Bill, how much are we to expect from the MIRC? And this is what is, in fact, expected from the new MIRC. But for this to happen, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, stronger ties with the tertiary education have to be promoted with a view to shift the attitudes, to shift the culture, to shift the focus of the tertiary education sector. And this, if it is done, can be part of a new agenda to lift the country's innovation and economic performance in order to improve our income per capita.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will conclude by saying it is common knowledge that legislations have helped to create growth, job creation and investment. Many pieces of legislation, Bills that we have introduced in this House have, in fact, ushered in more growth, more job creation, more investment but the key factor to remember is that when we set up an institution, we have to make sure that the institution works and will use all its resources in the best interest of the whole nation; then, and only then, can institutions flourish and Mauritius prosper.

In the recent past, we have unfortunately witnessed the failure of several institutions and recent experience has shown a deviation of some of these institutions, whether in the real estate sector, in aviation, in agriculture and even in financial sectors. Our only wish today is that this present institution in the present Bill which will be voted in a few hours, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our only wish is that this institution which is going to be set up through the Bill is not transformed into such a type of institution but helps to propel our country forward and use its resources in the best interest of the whole nation.

Thank you. I have done.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Bodha!

(6.40 p.m.)

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very challenging topic. It is a very important issue and I have witnessed that throughout the country, over some time now, there has been a wide debate. A lot of people have been writing on it, a lot of people have been debating on the Bill, on the possibility of having a legislation which will promote research.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has a huge problem, it is how to get out of the middle-income cycle. We have been labouring through this for the last ten years; 4% of growth, low inflation, 6% to 7% of unemployment. But we are not the only one. We have at least 30 countries which are in the lower, middle/middle or upper middle income trap. It is very difficult to get out of it. There are only very few societies who have been able to do so and one of them is South Korea, the other one is Turkey, then you have Taiwan.

So, for Mauritius, this Bill shows the way of getting out of this middle income trap. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to commend my colleague for the introduction of this Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill. The Bill is a key requirement on this era of unprecedented transformation where change is the constant. We have to adapt and evolve to meet the emerging challenges as many of the speakers have said, an ever changing needs of industries and society.

In fact, we need a legal framework for innovation and research and today we can say that Government is sensitive to the key objective as set out in vision 2030 to transform Mauritius into an innovation based economy. We have to create a nation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of innovative entrepreneurs. However, we must bear in mind that innovation and research should not be an end in themselves but rather a means to build a competitive economy and to put our economic development on a solid foundation. We have about two

centuries of extraordinary history and progress based on sugar, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and one of the fundamental instruments for this transformation of what sugar has been in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was research. The Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute (MSIRI) over the years helped Mauritius to have a competitive edge. We developed species, we developed the special sugars, we were talking about fibre cane. And that was one area where the Mauritian genius, in fact, transformed itself in the field of research and innovation. But we have had two other industries which were pillars of our economy and which still are. One is tourism and the other one is textiles. But we have not had the same capacity building in terms of research and innovation in tourism and in textiles. It has been like this. We have had it as a pillar. We have tried to change a number of things today. For example, in textiles we are producing 1,200 different products. In tourism, we have done a lot to diversify markets, products but on research and innovation, in these two areas, we could have done it and it would have helped us maybe. But we are at the crossroad today and it is not too late and we can always continue to research in those areas, in those sectors and see to it that they help us to re-engineer these two new pillars of our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to cite a few examples about China, what China is doing today, what Singapore is doing and what the United States are doing. In 2015, China launched what they call 'Made in China 2025'. It is a 10-year strategic plan to achieve new levels of innovation in emerging sectors, setting specific performance targets for 10 key industries. This is what we should do. We should choose the areas. For example, we said that we want really the ocean economy to be a pillar in the next five, ten years and we can focus on research in that area. The goals of 'Made in China 2025' include increasing the Chinese domestic content of core materials by 40% by 2020 and 70% by year 2025.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Zhongguancun is known as China's Silicon Valley and it has seen the birth of Lenovo. And, in fact, when we were buying Lenovo computers, we never thought they came from China. And currently, it houses companies such as Motorola, IBM and Eriksson. China is already well on the way to become a superpower in the key areas of science and innovation with a budget of \$2 trillion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let us take Singapore, Singapore has created the Silicon Valley of Asia by positioning itself as the biggest hub for start-ups in the world with over 2,400 technical start-ups. And the start-up industry is estimated at USD11 billion. And in April, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Singapore hosted the Asian Innovators Summit 2019 which is the premiere platform bringing together family conglomerates, the public sector and various industry players.

What about the United States, the most powerful economy in the world? We know about the Silicon Valley, already it is almost about 30 to 40 years, and the role of innovation, we know, has been critical here.

Scientific and engineering advances have spurred new products and processes. An Economist has calculated that approximately 50% of US annual GDP growth is attributed to innovation. If we take the UK, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is 70 million out of 7 billion, it is about 1% of world population, but it accounts for about 25% of the world budget for research and innovation in a number of key areas.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to come back to the Bill the establishment of the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council paves the way to achieve this success that we have been trying to achieve. And the setting up of the National Research and Innovation Fund is designed to foster the proper conditions for innovation to flourish and would, therefore, support the development of the existing and the new pillars of our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill is aimed at ensuring a coherent, coordinated and rational approach in the whole issue of research. Hon. Ganoo was saying that so much has been done in the past, but it is being very disseminated. We should pull all them together, and I think he is right on this. The Bill provides that the ownership and the responsibility for the application of an intellectual property remain with the person who has generated the intellectual property, and intellectual property rights not only encourage innovation and creative ideas without fear of theft or without another party taking credit for it, but also allows creators to derive benefit from their work.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know that we have Mauritians who have done remarkably well in the field. There are two cases which have been mentioned to me. It is the case of Dr. Caussy and Dr. Oolun. For Dr. Krishna Oolun, he is credited to have invented a noise filter, which was later sold to Motorola, he is Mauritian. Dr. Ramesh Caussy is well known and has invented the robot called 'Diya' in Paris and he wishes to come to Mauritius to set up his laboratory. I want just to give you an example, which means that the Mauritian genius can flourish, not only in Mauritius but also elsewhere.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the complementary element which is the next Bill which is coming - and the Attorney General is not here, but we are working on it - is the Intellectual Industrial Property Bill, and this Bill has been around for the last 15 years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So, we have a draft now and we are coming with the Bill at the end of the months. This Bill provides that the ownership of Intellectual Property Rights would be in accordance with the Patents, Industrial Designs and Trademarks Act of 2002 which we are going to amend soon. There exists an intricate link between Innovation, Research, Development and Intellectual Property Rights, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Because as we move to provide a modern framework to promote research and development in innovation through this Bill, Government will introduce, as I said, we are introducing it hopefully end of May and we are going to have a wide debate. I would wish that in Mauritius, just like we have had a very wide debate in the papers and also elsewhere on this Bill, that we have a wide debate on the other Bill as well.

The scope of the Bill of 2002 is limited to the patents, industrial designs and trademarks. The new Industrial Property Bill will cover the whole gamut of elements of Industrial Property, namely patent ...

**Mr Baloomoody:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. This will be discussed when the Bill will come. The hon. Minister is debating a Bill which we are not aware; he said this Bill will have this, this Bill will have that. He should circulate the draft Bill then I will have the opportunity to reply to him.

**The Deputy Speaker:** May I? I have allowed hon. Bodha to say a few words because he has made us to understand that there is an interlink. May I now remind him to go back to the legislation that we are discussing?

**Mr Bodha:** But I was mentioning the Act of 2002 because many of the clauses of the Act have not been gazetted and they are not in force. So, I come back to what I was saying.

Together this Bill and the new Bill will provide a holistic framework and will promote innovation and research, through innovation and research, on the one hand, and protect intellectual property assets, on the other hand. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have already been talking about innovation and technology in the new Free Trade Agreements we are negotiating with some of our partners.

For example, with China, the new Free Trade Agreement will provide for public-private sector partnerships to develop innovative products and services and enhance competitiveness in the field of science and technology and together with India as well will have a section on research and development and similarly, with the European Union in the negotiation that we are having, we are going to have one section on this issue of innovation

and research. In the same vein, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government is collaborating with the United Nations to establish and host a platform which is called ‘The United Nations Technology Innovation Labs (UNTIL)’. The purpose of this Lab is to serve as a platform for practitioners, academia, Government, start-up companies, creative minds and established technical giants to promote the development of new and innovative technologies and this UNTIL will be designed here, we’ll have it based in Mauritius.

So, this initiative is in line with the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development to assist Member States. Mauritius is going to be a pilot State in the National Implementation Strategy. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my colleague mentioned in the field of education what is being done as regards to research and innovation. Let me now say a few words regarding the cooperation between French Universities and Mauritian Universities in this field of innovation and technology.

M. le président, l’université des Mascareignes, en partenariat avec l’université de Limoges et l’université de la Réunion, a lancé l’année dernière, en septembre, le Master en Efficacité Énergétique et Développement Durable. Ce même partenariat soutient le démarrage d’un laboratoire de développement durable et d’efficacité énergétique dans l’université. Maintenant, nous avons un Master en robotique et intelligence artificielle qui sera lancé à l’université des Mascareignes Bachelor en Fintech et Data Sciences démarrera en septembre 2019, résultant d’un partenariat entre L’université Paris Seine et l’université de Maurice.

Et enfin, M. le président, pour favoriser le développement de la recherche entre la France et Maurice, il y aura un accord intergouvernemental dénommé Partenariat Hubert Curien devant être prochainement signé et nous sommes en train d’en parler avec le *State Law Office* pour ensuite, bien sûr, que ça passe au niveau du Conseil des ministres pour favoriser l’émergence de partenariats de recherche entre laboratoires français et mauriciens et de développer des recherches conjointes. Vous devez être au courant, M. le président, que le laboratoire Mérieux, qui est un des plus grands laboratoires de recherche en France, est aussi basé à Maurice depuis quelques années. C’est pour dire que beaucoup d’éléments sont déjà là à Maurice pour qu’on puisse justement consolider tous ces éléments et les structurés pour en faire un pilier.

J’ai eu une belle conversation avec le professeur Joël de Rosnay qui était là, et qui a récemment donné une conférence, et il a parlé d’une nouvelle idée. Il parle de ce qu’il a

appelé ‘la recherche augmentée’ et je veux vous la décrire. La recherche augmentée consiste à faire de la recherche virtuelle avec l’intelligence artificielle sur des milliards d’informations qui existent déjà, qu’ils appellent le *big data*, des recherches déjà publiées et souvent réactualisées, venant de centaines de laboratoires mondiaux, publics et privés. Alors, quelle est l’importance pour Maurice ? C’est qu’avec l’intelligence artificielle, on peut faire de la recherche sur les milliards de publications déjà produites dans le monde concernant les sujets les plus divers, et grâce à ce processus, l’intelligence artificielle peut favoriser l’innovation. Cela veut dire il y a une recherche ‘A’, il y a une recherche ‘B’. Ce qu’à Maurice on pourrait faire, c’est trouver un nouveau lien entre les deux recherches pour les appliquer.

Récemment, M. le président, il y avait l’impression 3D d’un cœur en miniature avec des cellules d’une personne. Demain, avec cette formule-là, on pourrait recréer les organes avec les cellules de la personne, et c’est une application. On a parlé beaucoup de la médecine, l’application de l’intelligence artificielle dans ce domaine et ça c’est un domaine, où, effectivement, il y a l’imprimante 3D, qui est une invention, et l’utilisation des cellules de la personne pour arriver à un résultat en fin de compte innovant. Alors, il parle justement du nouveau système innovant entre des recherches connues et déjà répertoriées, mais c’est le lien qui est nouveau. De la même manière, il parle de ce qu’ils appellent les systèmes de coopération entre des piliers de recherche, et Maurice, tout en faisant de la recherche dans un certain nombre de domaines, pourrait justement arriver à marier avec des systèmes innovants des éléments de recherche connue dans un domaine par rapport à un autre. Alors, ça c’est quelque chose, que l’université, les experts et toute la structure universitaire et tertiaire qu’on est en train de mettre en place au niveau des institutions, pourraient travailler ensemble et forger à Maurice un pilier de recherche et d’innovation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before ending, I would like to say that the first miracle of Mauritius, which we call the economic miracle, was based, I would say, on a recipe which was known. It was labour-intensive, low capital-intensive, industrialisation in textile, in manufacturing, in a number of sectors where gradually Mauritius did well and, at one point a time, we had 90,000 people working in the textile industry. There was a boom in the tourism industry and we became the third world producer of knitwear. But the second miracle, if you want to get out of this middle-income trap, it would come by a recipe which is going to be totally Mauritian and one of the components of that recipe can be innovation and research. I wouldn’t say that we have lost time, but we have disseminated all our resources and time has come to pool down all these resources and to see that the Mauritian genius, le génie

mauricien puisse s'exprimer et s'il y a un domaine où ce génie mauricien puisse exprimer comme cela se doit, c'est dans le cadre de l'innovation et de la recherche.

Donc, je trouve que le projet de loi arrive à point et je tiens à féliciter mon collègue pour tout ce qui a été fait. J'espère que les structures qu'on va mettre en place vont donner les résultats escomptés et que Maurice ne va plus rester parmi ceux qui viennent après les 50 meilleurs pays en matière d'innovation et de recherche, mais qu'on va passer dans un rang qui va refléter l'image du génie mauricien. Il faut qu'on ait des échéances connues, il faut absolument qu'on ait des objectifs connus et qu'on travaille dans cette direction-là.

Merci, M. le président.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Fowdar!

(7.01 p.m.)

**Mr S. Fowdar (Third Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or):** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened carefully to all the previous orators and I must say that there have been very excellent speeches. It seems that they have all been prepared carefully and that innovation and research is a very favourite topic for Members of this Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, therefore, I do not propose to repeat, as far as possible, the same arguments put forward by the hon. Members. The danger that is looking at us is simple, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If Mauritius continues to offer the same goods and services that we are offering now, in the same format, within the same brand, there will be a time not far ahead that our products and services will no longer be required by our customers. Our customers will not be interested in our products and services. This is because they have better products; they have better services to buy. This is because our competitors are spending huge sums of money in research, development and innovation. They are spending a lot to improve their production processes to bring new products and to offer better and smarter services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Apple, the maker of iPhone, has spent in 2018, Rs350 billion only for research and development, which is two and a half time more than our annual budget. And Apple's competitor, Samsung, spent Rs525 billion in 2017. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these astronomical sums were spent to allow those two major companies to stay abreast of development and, more importantly, to enable them to remain the market leaders.

Today, in this House, I am sure most of us either have an iPhone or a Samsung. I hope you still remember, not far back, we all had a Nokia. Nokia was popular. Where has Nokia gone, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? They have not kept pace with innovation and research. Today, Nokia is not even in the list of popular mobile phones. So, this will teach us a lesson here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that Mauritius also needs to wake up with regard to research and innovation. There is a big race, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for research and innovation around the world and for all the sectors, and not only for mobile phones.

I was going to take the issue of tourism, but which has been raised by hon. Bodha already, so, I am not going to repeat on that. But there is one sector in Mauritius where we need some thinking, we need to innovate, if not, we are going to perish. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am talking of the offshore sector. We have got a problem with the offshore sector. With the new tax legislation in India, our offshore product is no more attractive and there is no possibility of regain round tripling and we are not going to have clients from India and, on top of that, we have got the OECD guidelines. The OECD is forcing us to follow their guidelines and which is making their offshore sector less attractive. So, what do we need to do here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The offshore sector is an important pillar of the economy. It is going to bring a lot of money and there is a lot of employment within the offshore sector. So, what we need to do here, we need to think of a new product, we need to innovate; we need to invent. The financial services sector which is a very dynamic sector, there are changes almost here and there and, quite often, we need to have a department within this sector only to think about products in relation to offshore. So, I believe that for tourism also, we need to think about bringing new products. We can't just keep Chamarel, Trou aux Cerfs and the seaside; we need to invent, we need to innovate. But, for all this, we need to have funds, and we need to put into practice this innovation culture. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am really happy that the Minister has brought this extremely important Bill in the House today.

Innovation and research has got a direct link with economic development; it has got a direct link with the GDP growth of the country; it has got a direct link with competitiveness. It is a matter of national importance. I consider this issue, that is, the issue of research and innovation, to be so important that we ought to have given the right signal to the public, to the people in Mauritius, and the Council that we are setting up, I would have wished to have it under the purview of the Prime Minister to give the right signal to the people, to the public, to the population that innovation is a matter of importance. Anyway, I must congratulate the

Minister because he has dared to bring the Bill before the end of our mandate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, research and innovation has a lot to do with productivity and competitiveness and the NPCC is equally responsible for productivity and competitiveness. So, I do hope that the NPCC and the Council that we are setting up, they would work together. They would work together because there is a lot of similarities and there is a lot of possible overlapping between those two organisations. So, we must not be wasting time and resources. We need to work together. We need to get a mechanism for the two organisations, the NPCC and the Research and Innovation Council to work together. And, possibly, why not? Ideally, we should have a member from the NPCC to sit on the Research and Innovation Council so that they each know what they are doing and they each can coordinate their work.

The other thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, innovation, research seems to be the business of the Government only. The private sector does not seem to be enthusiastic about research and innovation. Also, they are going to be the main beneficiaries of any benefit that we are going to reap from research and innovation. So, I would think that we have to do something to bring the private sector to participate in our programme of research and innovation. And presently, it seems that the Government is going to be the main contributor to the National Research and Innovation Fund.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have got two suggestions to make with regard to financing for research and innovation. I am sure it is not going to make everybody happy, but these are my suggestions.

Firstly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would think that ideally - this is done in other advanced countries - all companies must have a percentage of the budget allocation every year to research and innovation, and it has to be made mandatory, compulsory. All companies must put some money aside for research and development. It is not going to be only Government business. But then to make it attractive, maybe Government may come forward with tax incentives to them, give them some tax rebate, tax credit to make it attractive so that they put some money aside for research and development. Now, I am sure this is going to force a culture of research and innovation in every sphere of activities in our country. We will be forced to think, to create and to innovate.

Secondly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think innovation is going to be our survival. There is big competition out there, and with globalisation, it is amplifying, it is going to be very difficult if we do not innovate. So, secondly, I request Government, I think Government needs to give it a thinking, why not introduce an innovation levy? If at one time, we introduce a training levy because we felt that we had to train our people, which is an important resource of our country, why not today - innovation is an important thing that we need to do - introduce an innovation levy? I know this is not going to make everybody happy, but maybe Government will have to think about it. And this is going to provide funding for our research and innovation projects. And also we have got a lot of international organisations ready to fund innovation and I have been attending the ACP/EU Conference. I can say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the European Investment Bank is most willing to fund feasible research and innovation in Africa, and particularly in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the education side, I know my good friend, hon. Rughoobur is going to take the issue, we were talking earlier. On the education side, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a craze nowadays for students to do commercial subjects: Accounting, Economics and what not, and there is a shortage of Science and Technology, and we need students, we need graduates from Science and Technology to implement our research and innovation programme. So, I would urge and ask the Minister of Education to explore the possibility of encouraging the students and the parents on the importance of taking subjects in relation to Science and Technology.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the coming of globalisation and already we have started feeling the effects of globalisation and with the fall of barriers, with the elimination of quotas, with the elimination of protectionism, we are no longer the little brother or the little sister of the big economies. We have to stand on our own. There is no more protection given to our country, and we need to reinvent; we need to redefine; we need to relook our economic pattern so that we survive. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to innovate and we need to do a lot of research.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Rutnah!

(7.14 p.m.)

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

In a few hours, we are going to break into a new dawn, a new era, a new landscape with the novel attitude towards research, development and innovation because in a few hours, we are going to vote a Bill which has been presented today in this House by hon. Yogida Sawmynaden. He is the Satellite-man and he sits next to the Metro-man.

In Europe, when Metro was introduced, people used to buy tickets. From tickets, cards. From cards, to oyster cards, electronic cards. Now, from electronic cards, they can use their credit cards. It's all down to innovation, research, technological development. It's all down to the attitude that a society adopts as to where it wants to stand in the foreseeable future in order to secure the future of the children of that society. Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden's Ministry encouraged a few youngsters to embark into that MIR-SAT1. Today, we are proud to say that our local scientists together with scientists from abroad, from Japan, United Kingdom are going to put into orbit a satellite made in Mauritius.

If we look where it all started, it started from the 1992 legislation which today is being repealed, which is called the Mauritius Research Council Act. In 1992, it was an MMM-MSM Government that voted for the Bill and made it an Act. From its very inception, there were a number of institutions set up in order to embark Mauritius to prepare itself to be ready for the new millennium. Since 1992 up to now, we only had a minor amendment in 2014 and that amendment was limited to the introduction of the National Research and Innovative Advisory Committee. So, it took from 1992 to 2014 to bring an amendment to the law. Whereas our institutions that were supposed to be at the forefront of innovation, technological development, research were stagnant. Hon. Dr. Boolell is right to say, for example when he was commenting about the MSIRI, about FAREI. Let me tell you what the Leader of the Opposition in 1992 said about the Mauritius Research Council Act and at that time, the Leader of the Opposition was Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. On this side of the House, we are not quite clear whether the private industries will be funding part of the Research Council or will they have an input into it.

So, he knew back in 1992 when he was Leader of the Opposition, when the Labour Party was in Opposition, that there was a problem with funding, there was a problem with the private sector. There were difficulties with the private sector to actually get into it, to initiate so as to get involved in the development, innovation and research. He went on. I just hope that this is so because, for example, the MSIRI had a worldwide reputation because they had done a good work in the past on research. The then Leader of the Opposition and the Labour Party were well aware that the MSIRI was a world leading institution in Mauritius. But we

will come to MSIRI in a minute. Let's see why this new legislation, after 1992, now in 2019? This shows that today the people of Mauritius has to note that it is a Government with vision, a good leader of the county can actually change the landscape of the economy, of the social and the trend in which the country is going to live for the next, and next, and next generation.

In Government Programme 2015-2019, under the heading of Technology, Communication and Innovation, amongst other things, this is what we said, at paragraph 230

–

“In achieving meaningful change, technology, communication and innovation will constitute key drivers. In this respect, a National TCI Strategic Plan 2015-2020 will be formulated to pave the way for an Intelligent and Smart Mauritius.”

And then we go on to the subsequent paragraphs, but some people, especially the Opposition, think that overnight we can change everything in Mauritius.

Then we look at the Budget Speech of 2018-2019. There were seven pillars that were set in the last Budget and one of them which happened to be the second pathway is as follows

–

“Second, we will be even more driven by innovation. We will create new opportunities for private investment and job creation by accelerating the country's move to an age of digitisation through Artificial Intelligence (AI), blockchain technologies and Fintech.”

Then we have, at least, four paragraphs at page 10 of the Budget Speech dealing with moving Mauritius on the Fintech journey. And we talked about the Committee chaired by Lord Desai, National Regulatory Sandbox Licence Committee, Custodian of Digital Assets, Digital Asset Marketplace, a regulator, crypto currency, cyber-security, cyber-resilience polices and capabilities or capacities, etc.

We go on to page 29, Annex B.7. where we say Research and Innovation Schemes –

“The Mauritius Research Council will implement a number of Research and Innovation schemes including the Pole of Innovation, National SME Incubator and the Collaborative Research and Innovation Grant Scheme to usher the country on a higher growth trajectory.”

So, if you look at the policy and the philosophy set by this Government, we were bound to have such a Bill in this Assembly in order to shape the future of this nation insofar as

development, research, innovation is concerned. But let me take just one institution on which hon. Dr. Boolell had a lot to say during his discourse.

Let us take, for example, the MSIRI. It was in 2013, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the Labour Party was in power, they brought a reform process of the Sugarcane Industry. In doing so, they merged the MSIRI with other service providing institutions of that Industry thus removing the autonomy that MSIRI previously had to respond promptly to research and innovative projects. That is 2013. Once MSIRI was no more enjoying its autonomy, it had to be dependent on other institutions, but thankfully the current Minister of Agro-Industry is coming up with a Bill and the new MSIRI Bill will, as I understand it, be introduced in this House in the near foreseeable future in order to bring back the glorious days of MSIRI. But since 2015, what has MSIRI done under the aegis of the current Agro-Industry Minister?

I have done some research, there is a report called the LMC International Report. It is entitled "The Economic, Social and Environmental Impact on Mauritius of Abolition of Internal Quotas of Sugar in EU Market" of May 2015. It addressed all aspects pertaining to cane industry including research conducted by the Mauritius Sugarcane Industry Research Institute which operates under the aegis of the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority since September 2011. In 2015, the MSIRI Research and Development Committee discussed in-depth the comments made in that report and substantial reform was implemented for research and development to achieve rationalisation, research focus and effectiveness so as to raise productivity levels for a sustainable sugar and co-products Industry.

Again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2015, the MSIRI, through hard work, perseverance, devotion to duty towards the country and the people of this country, acquired the near-infrared NIR technology to improve the quality, quantity and speed of cane analysis for experimental cane sample and in monitoring the crop throughout the year. As a result, varieties could be rapidly analysed and selected compared to conventional analysis. Ten new sugarcane varieties have been released from 2015 to 2018 to cover the mosaic of our environment, offering growers a wider choice of varieties of their requirements in terms of adaptation, harvest dates, cultural practices and to replace outdated varieties.

MSIRI is pursuing its efforts to improve efficiency of selection to release improved varieties for increased productivity. There is also a crop improvement program. Why I say this? Why I am dealing with Sugarcane? Why with crop? Why with MSIRI? I come from a Constituency where there are small planters who grow sugarcane and we know Piton/Rivière

du Rempart, amongst other places, how sugarcane growers have been suffering for a number of years and the current Minister of Agriculture has done a lot to actually help them, but we ought not have come to the situation where the sugarcane industry is today on the brink of suicide.

If and only if for 10 years that the Labour Party was in power they had some foresight to allow MSIRI to function autonomously and to conduct research and allow other institutions at the same time to help those sugarcane planters, the crop improvement program is supported by biotechnological tools such as molecular markers to enhance the efficiency of selection with a view to reduce time for producing new varieties of finding rich varieties for early harvest. Gene editing is important in order to ensure that those planters know what they are planting and how the cultivation is going to develop to be able to address specific problems through precise and targeted modification in sugarcane genome.

Only two weeks ago, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security approved the purchase of a DNA sequencer costing some Rs3.5 m., which is an essential equipment to further enhance capacity of the MSIRI in this field. There has been a number of other significant research works carried out by the MSIRI despite the fact that the MSIRI's autonomy was taken over.

*(Interruptions)*

Now, I hear comments from the Opposition.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Do not take care of the comments.

*(Interruptions)*

Silence, please!

**Mr Rutnah:** I anticipate hon. Baloomoody is on the list of orators and he has to say anything about who is on the Committee and who is not on the Committee. He can address the people of Mauritius just like I am addressing in this House today and he can explain later on when it is his turn.

Now, let me speak a little bit about what is called biotechnology. In 2000 and 2005...

*(Interruptions)*

Now, I see hon. Baloomoody smiling because he knows I will be speaking about the next MMM/MSM Government, 2000-2005. In 1992, the MMM/MSM Government introduced the

Act which we are repealing today. The next MMM/MSM Government after 1992, that is 2000-2005 Government, set up the Mauritius Agricultural Biotechnology Institute, and do you know who was the Minister of Agro-Industry then? It is the current hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. A man of vision because he knew not very much is being done for biotechnology after 1992.

*(Interruptions)*

I take it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is out of subject.

**Mr Rutnah:** I take it, that's not a provocative comment.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resume your speech, hon. Rutnah!

**Mr Rutnah:** So, you see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whenever there has been landmark decision in this country, the MSM was in Government, and it is either Sir Anerood Jugnauth or Pravind Jugnauth. There was already an architectural plan made ready. Land was already identified. There was funding provided in the 2005/2006 Budget. But what happened thereafter? There was a new Government 2006. What happened to that paper? What happened to that project? Now, I see hon. Dr. Boolell laughing. You see, I aimed it from far, and I am always sure when I shoot, I will catch the pigeon.

*(Interruptions)*

So, it was down to hon. Dr. Boolell and to his leader, the then leader of the Labour Party.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Silence please!

**Mr Rutnah:** So, they freezed that project. They freezed it, and this is not because of good intention. It was simply because of political vendetta. Why should we go ahead with something that Pravind Jugnauth has stopped? Why? Put it in the shelf. But what happened to the country? What happened to the nation? What happened to the future generation? What happened to our children, education, insofar as biotechnology is concerned?

Ten years backward, ten years, and today, we are going to redress it, thanks to the current Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation.

So, you see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, time and time I say it here in the House, politics is about honesty, about the will to do good to the nation, to the people, to the country. If we don't have the right attitude to deal with what we are going to face in the foreseeable future, then as a country, as a nation, we are bound to be doomed. But if we apply the right attitude, the right mentality, irrespective of what political philosophy or ideology you belong to, it is only then that you will be able to shape the future of a nation. Time and time again, I hear many people talk about Singapore, but we should learn from Singapore. We will be able to learn from countries like Singapore, India, China, England, America, where there are lots of investment in innovation, research and technology.

When we talk about innovation, research, it is not only scientific research, research in the field of arts, in the field of humanities, in the field of economics, in the field of science, in the field of technology. It is those kinds of things that make people anticipate how to actually deal with the challenging world. Can you imagine for one minute if we did not have computers or can you imagine for one minute if we did not have this mobile phone, what was called this morning 'the hand-held device'? If we didn't have the hand-held device, no one would have been able to function as effective as we are functioning now in all spheres of activities. But why can we do it? It is because someone sat in a lab, someone sat in a library, someone was allocated with funds to go and develop, to innovate, make communication become effective, make the world become small.

I remember very well in the 80s when I was growing up in England when I had to make a phone call to Mauritius, I had to walk down the road to go to a public phone box and those who have been in England in those days or even in any European countries will remember. I had to walk down to the public phone box with pound coins, full of pound coins. I had to work for a whole month to save 10 pounds and take 10 pound coins to go to a phone box and to put 10 pound coins one after the other just for about 12 minutes of conversation with my parents and my brothers whoever. Now, I can sit in my house or even in the toilet and I can dial the number to England or to United States and make a conversation, make a video conference through WhatsApp like hon. Tarolah does.

*(Interruptions)*

If you want to say hon. Tarolah, there's no shame about it. Every time we talk about mobile phones in this House, there are comments from the Opposition about hon. Tarolah. Is there any shame? Is it only hon. Tarolah who uses WhatsApp or Viber? If I check hon. Dr.

Boolell's phone, he must have WhatsApp. Hon. Baloomoody has WhatsApp on his phone and he is shaking his head, he is nodding. Hon. Dayal also has like hon. Thierry Henry said he has.

So, you see, it's all down to innovation, it's all down to the skill that is developed once you give that person the opportunity and the drive and the right attitude to go and develop. It is high time in Mauritius that we give opportunities to our children. Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I stand here, I am proud, and I am going to tell the people of Mauritius something which many of us have not learned about. I happen to like Google something about research and guess what I come across. There is a journal called 'Medical News Today' and guess what I found –

“How plants from Mauritius could help fight cancer

A recent study concludes that medicinal herbs found in Mauritius contain chemical components that inhibit the propagation of cancer cells.”

“One such group includes scientists from Mauritius, the United Kingdom, and the Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU) in Vladivostok, Russia. Together, they have been testing medicinal herbs from the islands of Mauritius for their potential to treat cancer.”

So, we have got the potential.

Everybody, every child in this country has the potential to develop his skills, his ability to innovate, his ability to research, his ability to develop this country. But how are they going to do it, if we adopt the same attitude that the Labour-PMSD Government adopted insofar as research, innovation and development is concerned? It's only through meaningful change, the right attitude, the attitude to develop and the attitude to change that can make it possible.

Today, the hon. Minister for Technology is changing the landscape of development, research in all its sphere of activities by virtue of this Bill. I do not propose to go into detail of all the Clauses of this Bill, because those who have spoken before me, either from this side or the other side of the House, they have spoken about the Clauses of the Bill. But, it is paramount to now see how this Bill is going to encourage private sectors to be part of the team, to work together with Government's institutions, invest, develop and innovate. Today, we are sending satellite; tomorrow we might be sending rockets, the day after tomorrow we might be sending a child of this country to the moon, to Mars.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Rughoobur!

(7.49 p.m.)

**Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or):** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for this opportunity to intervene on this Bill. Actually, I had to the opportunity to listen to hon. Members on both sides of the House. Let me first of all congratulate the hon. Minister for giving me also the opportunity to intervene on a Bill that I consider to be one of the most important upon which, as an MP in this House, I am about to contribute.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a couple of weeks back, I had the opportunity to come across a very interesting book by the Ruler of Dubai, Al Maktoum, the first Sheikh, and who is also the Prime Minister of the UAE. He explained in his book about what happened to him in 2016. It's about one of the rare occasions when he couldn't take breakfast with his family, and the reason was, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because he had to chair a very important meeting with engineers and scientists of the UAE. They were deciding, in 2016, on the launch of their first satellite on orbit. And for those who have been following, last year the first satellite of the UAE was launched from a launch station in Japan. An exceptional achievement, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for a country which, when we got our independence in the 1960's, UAE was a mere desert. They were developing the creeks, and the Ruler of Dubai and that of Abu Dhabi went to the British to negotiate independence, but, before that, they were asking for permission to start their airport. And look at the airport of Dubai today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. At that time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during the early 60's, would you imagine the GDP per capita of South Korea was less than of that of Mauritius. The GDP per capita in the early 60's of South Korea was 198.37 USD whereas for Mauritius it was 205 USD, at the same time that of Taiwan was 211 USD and that of Mauritius was 205 USD, almost the same. For Singapore, it was a bit more, around 400 USD. In a span of 50 years and more, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, look at the phenomenal transformation of the economies of those countries that I have just mentioned, whether it is Singapore, South Korea or Taiwan. There is a common denominator, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that has enabled this phenomenal transformation of these economies and, that is their investment in research and technology, research and development and innovation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the early 60's, the GDP per capita of South Korea, as I just mentioned, was 189.37 USD. If we come to the statistics, today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the GDP per capita of South Korea is almost 26,000 USD, compared to Mauritius which is 10,000 USD; that of Taiwan is 25,000 USD GDP per capita and that of Singapore 55,000 USD.

On the first part of my intervention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wanted to dwell upon the importance of research and development and, of course, innovation, and what have been brought about when we compare countries which were almost at the level of development that we were in the 60's, and what they have achieved until now. If we talk of investment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for South Korea, the latest figure investment in research is 90 billion USD; 4.4% of GDP. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2006, the African Union approved the resolution, urging Member States to bring their level of investment in GDP to one per cent of GDP. And today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we take the case of Mauritius, - of course, it is not the Minister to be blamed, he is new - the latest statistics that is available, and if you go into the Strategy Paper of the Government 2018-2020, it is that of 2012.

Dr. A. Boolell and I think other hon. Members also referred to 0.18% of GDP. That is the statistics that is available and we have to ask ourselves, why is it that the latest statistics that is available on the percentage of GDP that we have invested in research and development in Mauritius is that of 2012. We are not going to play blame game, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are here to debate on a very important subject.

We have to dream of making of Mauritius a research, innovation and development hub in the 50 years to come. Later, I will come to this. Today, in Singapore, you have got small countries, their workforce in research and development is almost 50,000. Same as in South Africa, next door, total workforce of 50,000. Just imagine the potential, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! I have been mentioning a few economies as compared to Mauritius and these economies were almost at the level of development in the early sixties. They were at the same level. Taiwan, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has invested almost USD30 billion lately, 3.1% of GDP; Singapore: 2.2% of GDP, USD10 billion. This is one of the major factors that has contributed in the transformation of these economies. Next door, the two countries that are at the forefront of investment in research and development, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are Egypt and South Africa, but even then, unfortunately, they have not been able to achieve the rate of 1% of GDP.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, research has shown that a 1% of GDP investment in research and development has the corresponding effect of increasing your rate of real growth by 2.2%. This is what research has shown. That explains the reason why the African Union has been laying so much emphasis upon the need for member States to invest in research and development.

I had a Parliamentary Question for the hon. Minister of Education on the need for us to align ourselves with Agenda 2063 of the African Union that has as recommendation for African Schools to lay a lot of emphasis on science and technology, and she responded favourably. I know that the hon. Minister is looking at this particular issue with the seriousness it deserves.

That was about the importance of research and development for our country. I said earlier, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why I am privileged and happy that I had the opportunity to say a few words on this very important Bill for our country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now that I have dwelt upon the importance of the Bill, the second and last issue that I wanted to dwell upon is the signal factor that will allow us to meet the challenges of this research, development and innovation field. What is that signal factor?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this House is not going to learn anything new from me. If I say that, leadership at all levels is the ultimate factor that will allow us to meet those challenges that we want to meet, the challenges that we want to meet with this Bill, with the dream we have to make of Mauritius maybe a research and innovation hub in the 50 years to come, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we can only achieve leadership at all levels if we satisfy three components. And this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a sort of an operation model that we have in front of this House today, with its structures, with the functioning of the institution, this is an operational model. But what we require into leadership are three essential components: one is operational leadership but there are other issues upon which I will come later very briefly. But talking of operational leadership, how will this be possible with this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? If we talk of operational leadership, we will have to talk of a few issues in order to enable us to achieve the objectives of this Bill and, as I said earlier, to attain the objective of improving on the percentage of GDP that we have been investing in research and development.

And what are those important issues that we have to address when we talk of operational leadership, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. One is the issue of resources *et c'est le défi*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir; resources, human resources, where do we get those qualified people to head these institutions? That would be *le défi du ministre ; comment va-t-on faire pour pouvoir avoir ces gens qualifiés* who are going to head these important institutions? Where do we get those people who can collaborate with us to ensure that we meet, as I said earlier, the challenges? So, human resources is one. Second, in terms of resources, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the facility that we require.

Let me give you an example! This just came to my mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Our paint factory had to do a test for paints. We sent a sample to the Mauritius Standards Bureau and they quoted a price for a testing of that paint which was almost Rs500,000 to Rs600,000 for this testing. I was surprised. I was asking for a test, for certification purposes, we had to test paints. They quoted Rs600,000. You know what, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? They had to send that paint to the US because for certification purposes, they did not have the equipment at the MSB. And what did we do? We did some research work and found out that in the UAE - I mentioned about UAE earlier - we have got sufficient laboratories with international norms that they could do the testing. And we managed to get a laboratory that certified the product at less than half the price. Without criticising, only to tell you how important if we want to meet the challenges of this research and development, how important human resources, resources, in general, in terms of laboratories, we have to make an audit but it won't happen overnight. It is going to take us maybe five times 10 years but we need to have a vision to achieve what we want to achieve. Resources, funding is important. International organisations, private sector, the hon. Minister has been mentioning the private sector in his speech on several occasions because he is convinced and I agree with him that we will need the private sector to go along. Even if Business Mauritius is not there but I am happy that the hon. Minister is convinced that we require the private sector to come along in this mission to make of what we have as objective in the field of research and development to attain the goals that we have in this field.

So, one is the resources. Second, the role of institutions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Somebody mentioned the Economic Development Board, for example. The latest report of the Economic Development Board mentions nothing about research and development. And I said earlier that 1% of GDP on investment, on research and development has the corresponding effect of increasing the rate of real growth by 2.2%. So, it is important that the

Economic Development Board participates in this process of transforming our economy by collaborating with these research institutions that we have and try to see how we can attract from abroad, not only investors to come and invest in such and such fields, but also attracting professionals to come and give a helping hand in promoting research and development in our country.

It is not only investors to come and invest in such and such field, but also attracting professionals to come and give a helping hand in promoting research and development in our country; so, we have the role of institution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what are the other institutions that we can refer to apart from the Economic Development Board. We have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the role of Business Mauritius, the private sector is extremely important. Hon. Members have mentioned the role of tertiary institutions - the Higher Education Commission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When we are talking of operational leadership, the Higher Education Commission needs to contribute in its overall strategy of promoting research along with tertiary institutions in Mauritius. Even if we don't have a representative it's not a problem. What we require is that they contribute along with the new institution that is being put in place – the role of the Higher Education Commission and, as I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the private sector, Business Mauritius, all of them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, somebody mentioned this issue of applied research. Where do we stop today in the field of applied research? Where do we go? Does it stop at the level of publication today in Mauritius, this applied research? When we talk of transfer of technology, it is important for us to know where to stop today. Are we going further? At what level do we stop at the level of applied research?

Are we failing to implement simply because there is no adequate *encadrement*, there is no adequate funding, there is not a proper structure, a proper process that we can follow to test and implement those researches? We don't have also any serious statistics, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Where do we to find them? As I am saying, in my research work, the statistics that I got for investment in research and development is that of 2012 and that is also in the latest report of the Government on strategy; that report is there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to come back to this issue of operational leadership, I believe transfer of technology is extremely important, but, as I was saying earlier, all this can't be

done overnight. It's a long term strategy, we have to go gradually towards this but we need to know what are our priorities. We have to get our priorities right.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is also this issue of knowledge and expertise. Many hon. Members have been mentioning about the need for us to collaborate with foreign institutions, to get expertise from abroad, to get people with expertise from abroad, scientists from abroad with whom we can collaborate. I am sure that - well once the Bill is voted - the former Mauritius Research Council has been doing some work in this regard but we need to consolidate on this. For example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if Singapore itself has been able to achieve what it has achieved in the field of research, it was not through their people it was because they had a clear strategy on getting expatriates from abroad. If you go into one of the Universities, the University of Singapore, they've got a whole lot of modern hostels built only for expatriates.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one is operational leadership, if we are talking of leadership. What is that second essential component, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we are talking of leadership at all levels? That is strategic leadership. And we should think of those building blocks when we are talking of strategy in the field of research and development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have identified three building blocks which are essential because we need to know where we are going, we need to know our destination, we need to define a clear road map. What are those three building blocks that would form the basis of our strategy in the field of research and development? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the first building block is the emphasis that we have to put on the competitiveness of our nation, this is building block number one. How do we go about improving on productivity for example to ensure that our nation becomes more competitive? This is the first building block.

The second building block of our strategy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, should be the issue of security and safety, we've been talking about climatic changes, the issue of food security. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the second building block, security and safety of our citizens and the third building block, when we are talking of strategic leadership, is the issue of the improvement in the conditions of living of our population. When we are talking of the third building block - improvement in the living conditions of the population, I am thinking, for example, of research in aging population. Research on the aging population and how do we go about solving this issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been talking about leadership but I said there are three essential components I will come to the last one which is the most important one. I'll dwell upon it very briefly and that is people leadership. I spoke of operational leadership, of strategic leadership, but the third essential component which is the most important one is people leadership. All three should go together, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so that whatever objective we have defined with this Bill, we can achieve in the medium term, in the long term. So, people leadership means we have to ensure that we have the right men and women at the right place. We need to have the right people to be able to achieve the mission that we have to make of Mauritius a research and development hub, an innovation hub in the 50 years to come Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I won't go into a detailed lecture on people management, but let me before resuming my seat Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, quote what late Steve Jobs had to say on this issue of research. I quote –

“Innovation has nothing to do with how many R&D dollars you have. When Apple came up with the Mac, IBM was spending at least 100 times more on R&D. It's not about money. It's about the people you have, how you're led, and how much you get it.”

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Sinatambou!

(8.15 p.m.)

**The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am deeply honoured to express my views on the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill 2019 which will repeal the Mauritius Research Council Act of 1992 as amended by the Mauritius Research Council (Amendment) Act of 2014.

This new Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, provides for the establishment of the Mauritius Research and Innovative Council; promotes high quality applied research and foster innovation in the national interest and for related matters. Consistent with the more extensive objects of the Bill, new definitions like applied research, social innovation and vehicles of innovation have been introduced.

Here, I must say that when the previous speaker, my good colleague, hon. Rughoobur just quoted late Steve Jobs, I apprehended lest he might actually go and quote one of the quotations I also had from Steve Jobs. Indeed, late Steve Jobs, the former Chief Executive

and Co-founder of Apple said that innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower. I must say that I apprehend one thing this evening, whereas on this side of the House, we want our countrymen and countrywomen to be leaders and not followers, I apprehend that the behaviour of the other side of the House might, unfortunately, not go in that direction. Why am I saying that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is for the following reasons: I think that the syndrome to which I have often referred to in this House and outside this House is now well-known to the country. Indeed, however good you want to do, however good that you actually do, some unfortunately suffer from this syndrome for which we are still looking for the vaccine, the *narien pas bon* syndrome. But lately, it has occurred to me that they also suffer from another syndrome which, unfortunately, does not go in the right direction for this country. It is the *jamais assez* syndrome. Whatever you do, however well you do, whatever your good intentions, it is never enough.

This Bill, let alone anything else, is full of good intentions, wants to promote innovation in addition to research and development. What I suspect will happen is that there will be, as there has been, a number of criticisms which cannot affect the substance which is before this House but which will criticise the composition. It will be a matter of form and tenor, not of substance. I have heard, for example, before this House earlier, Members of the Opposition saying that this Council should not answer to the Minister whose portfolio is innovation, but should answer to the Prime Minister. Yes, we agree that the role of the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council is intended to be strengthened so that more focus is placed on applied and industrial research as well as under dissemination of research, development and innovation. Yes, it is intended to enhance private sector participation in research, development and innovation. Yes, the expanded mandate of the Bill obviously requires a new paradigm shift and wants to inculcate the culture of innovation amongst our stakeholders including universities, public and private sectors, in order to boost our economy through the welfare of society at large. But when you hear things like the Council set up under section 7 of the Bill should actually report to the Prime Minister as is the case in Sweden where the Chair of the Swedish National Innovation Council is the Prime Minister or in Japan where a number of Ministers sit on the Council or in the United Kingdom where the Council report to the Prime Minister, then we need to find out that when the law was first passed in 1992, Opposition Members were saying something else. In 1992, Opposition Members, first of all, when there was a majority of public - shall I say "Members" - Opposition Members stated that the Bill gives the impression that Government does not have

the confidence to leave things to others because they could differ justifiably from its own parochial views.

In a truly democratic country, Government would have left the formulation of research completely to independent minds, to people who are not influenced by narrow partisan feelings but by the concern to push further the frontiers of knowledge. They were saying in those days that you should not leave Research Council to Ministerial officers. They said that it is only by leaving the council out of the hands of political figures that we could harness our best talents to service the requirements of our society. Today, we will hear just the complete opposite. Well, we have heard it already because I heard hon. Ganoo earlier stating that it should have been in the hands of the hon. Prime Minister.

Let alone that this is totally in contradiction with what was stated in 1992, unfortunately, in 2014 when the law was amended, hon. Ganoo was also a Member. The Government which passed the law then called the Opposition, *opposition fantôme*. They were not even present to contribute.

*(Interruptions)*

He was working on it. But the point I want to make is that you will just hear things to oppose when, in fact, the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill is such an important piece of legislation for our country. We should not indulge in opposition just for the sake of opposing. If there were to be a justification, why it has to be the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation who should actually be the parent Minister, it is so obvious, he is the Minister of Innovation; surely the Council dealing with innovation should fall under him. Can you imagine when the Food and Agricultural Research Council Bill is passed we said it is so important that it has to be under the Prime Minister. This is the demagoguery that we keep hearing and I do sincerely hope that they stop.

In fact, I have also heard and I fear lest I will hear again that the composition of the Council does not comprise this Minister, that Minister, the other Minister. Well, in fact, if we were to put all Ministers concerned by research, development and innovation in that Council, I think probably 90% of the Cabinet should be in the Council and I am sure that this is not what we have in mind to be efficient, what we have in mind to be useful and constructive. If one holds such a view, one is totally mistaken, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because one would then be completely ignoring clause 9 of the Bill. Clause 9 (1) is clear –

“The Council may set up such committees as it may determine, including a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, to assist it in the performance of its functions.”

It does not need the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development to sit on the Council. We can have the Committee; the Council may set up a Committee for the right people, the right scientific and the right officials to see on a Committee where we shall deal with all the aspects of environment and sustainable development. I think any objection about the Council not comprising of Ministers completely misses the point about clause 9 (1).

What is also very important here is the fact that social innovation and vehicles of innovation have been added to section 2 of the Bill, and this in order to make it more responsive to the needs of today's era. It better structures the ownership and vesting of intellectual property and channels the benefits of research, development and innovation.

Coming back to this argument which I believe is misconceived on the composition of the Council. One should know that under section 6 of the Mauritius Research Council Act of 1994, there were 17 members. Under the preceding legislation of 1992, there were 16 members. Under the new Act, there will be nine members, and I believe that we are going in the right direction. Very often, I heard the saying that nine is committee, 10 is a crowd. I believe 16 might have been a market fair. So, I think it is opportune that we actually reduce, it might even require an authorisation through a gathering, but I think the point is stated that, and it is sufficiently stated, we are on the right path when we actually mention that nine is the fair figure, that there is no need to more Ministers, because this can be properly built with under clause 9 of the Bill relating to committees.

In this respect, I must say that I noticed with appreciation that hon. Dr. Boolell did not this time go on the concept on an ethics committee. In his earlier days, in 1992, he actually made a plea in favour of an ethics committee, which in his view was lacking in the Bill which was then to be passed. Indeed, there is no need at this stage, because there can be so many other committees that clause 9 of the 2019 Bill properly addresses the issue.

Now, this being said, I come to section 13 of the Bill which re-establishes the National Research and Innovation Fund on the same lines as the current Fund which exists under section 13A of the Council Act as amended. Indeed, this Fund will direct resources in areas of national importance to improve the quality of life of our fellow citizens by encouraging the development of innovative products, processes and services. It is expected

that it will also increase investment by the public and private sectors in research, development and innovation activities. And here, I will pause for a minute, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to actually refer to the French Philosopher Blaise Pascal who as far back as in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century spoke of man as follows. He said –

*“L’homme est un roseau, le plus faible de la nature, mais c’est un roseau pensant”.*

And why I am saying this is because I had the opportunity of going back to the debates of the 1992 legislation, and I must say I saw a very interesting statement by late Ramduth Jadoo, the then Minister of Manpower Resources.

*(Interruptions)*

No sorry, I beg your pardon.

*(Interruptions)*

At this late hour, I am getting mistaken.

So, the hon. Minister referred to Blaise Pascal and actually stated what the French Philosopher said about man in relation to his environment and he said that men in relation to his environment is like *un géant juché sur les épaules d’un nain*.

No, he said the opposite. He said that man is a dwarf *juché sur les épaules d’un géant*. That goes in line with what I just said about men as a *roseau pensant*, and that is because man is such a small creature compared to nature, and that shows why we have to really promote this Bill.

What has happened is that man with time has actually mastered the forces of nature, that he is no more a dwarf on the shoulders of a giant. He is now a giant on the shoulders of a dwarf. Now, that is important because, in fact, this is neither from me nor from hon. Jadoo. It is from Alain Peyrefitte, former French Minister, who actually tried to show how it is important that now that we have mastered nature, we cannot just do what we have been doing. We thought we had mastered, but, in fact, we are abusing, and such abuse that we may be driving it to its end. And that is why we have now to concentrate on research, development and innovation, because otherwise we might simply perish.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I should say a quick word about section 16 on Intellectual Property Rights, because I think this is a clear improvement from the former legislation to the extent that it gives full rights to the creator of the intellectual property.

However, I don't propose to say more on that because this has already been addressed by other orators.

I think we should, however, mention that public and private sector funding is undoubtedly the key to research, and Government has a clear view about how best to optimise the environment for both public and private sector research. The initiatives we expect will be implemented by the National Research and Innovation Fund set up on clause 13 of the Bill which is not too dissimilar from the existing clause.

I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one must recognise that important elements of the process of innovation tend to become transactional and global rather than national. Thus, the aim of innovation is to encourage research, and discover and realise new opportunities. Obviously, a world of new knowledge would be created, but it is of utmost importance that effective and transparent mechanisms are put in place to protect those creating new ideas and knowledge through transparent systems and procedures.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would say that innovation drives economic growth, raises the standard of living of populations and enriches societies. And this is what I would term as 'meaningful change' as encapsulated in the Government Programme 2015-2019.

In the words of Michael Porter, Professor at Harvard Business School, I quote –

“Innovation is the central issue in economic prosperity.”

And this Government will leave no stone unturned to achieve this objective.

With these remarks, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I wish to congratulate the hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation for coming forward with this Bill, which I hope will reinvigorate our country's drive for research, development and innovation whatever the Opposition might think about it.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I suspend the sitting for one hour.

*At 8.38 p.m., the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 9.52 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.*

**Madam Speaker:** Please, be seated! Hon. Baloomoody!

**Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we all agree that the key driver to an economic development is innovation based on research and development. Madam Speaker, where research and development has led to greater innovation, investment opportunities arise, especially from abroad, which allow a nation to develop at a greater pace and to position, to solve more of the social problems which affect the society at large.

Furthermore, there must be a strong synergy between academia and industry. Thus, for research and innovation to yield practical fruits, the results must enlighten and frame the socio-economic policies and be readily adaptable to the needs of society. That is, it must have a greater impact on re-launching the economic growth, creating job opportunities and improve our society's standard of living by addressing not only business and commercial issues, but also social issues, such as the problem of inequalities, drugs proliferation, law and order, climate change, etc. I will come to that when we look at the Bill in detail.

Madam Speaker, much have been said about the importance of research, development and innovation. I do not intend to repeat what has been their importance, as I agree fully with what have been said with regard to the importance of research and innovation when it comes to economic development. However, unfortunately, not much has been said on the Bill itself. They all have come, especially on the Government side, with various theories, lectures on the importance of research, development and innovation, at how we can help society and so on, but we have not addressed the real issue. Madam Speaker, the question we have to ask today is whether this Bill will address the main issue as to why we are lagging behind when it comes to research, development and innovation, and whether this Bill cures the defect with regard to the actual Mauritius Research Council. This is the issue we have to address ourselves.

Madam Speaker, it was in 1992, as rightly pointed out by hon. Rutnah, under the MMM-MSM Government that the Mauritius Research Council Bill was introduced. And do you know who introduced that Bill to show the importance that was attached to research and development? It was the then hon. Prime Minister himself, today the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor. So, what we are doing today? We are downgrading the status of such an important institution, research and development - I have nothing against him, of course he is my good friend - when we give it to a Minister. I will prove later that the research and development institution, when it comes to its main objective, it is to advise Government; and when we will

look later of the powers of the Minister, he can give instruction to that Council and the Council should abide. We will see how it will be in practice later.

Madam Speaker, before presenting that Bill in 1992 by the then Prime Minister, there was what was called – and may I refer to the speech at that time - the Preparatory Committee. So, you can see the importance that was attached to that institution. The President of the Republic then must have been, in 1992, Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo because Mr Uteem addressed the House at that time. So, it must be Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo. The Preparatory Committee was chaired by him for the excellent work performed by them. The Bill is essentially the product of the work of the Preparatory Committee presided by the President of the country. The hon. Minister did mention, when he introduced the Bill, that there has been consultation. Consultation with whom, we are in the dark? Consultation with which organisations? Consultation with which international organisations if you want to internationalise our institute?

In 1992, I quote –

“The Committee also benefited from technical assistance from the Commonwealth Book on Technology Management (...).”

They sent a team to Mauritius. We know today the OECD, the African Union and the European Union have much experience and they have prepared several papers. There have been international consultations on the setting up of such types of councils. Have there been consultations with these bodies? I doubt it when I look at the Bill. What are we doing today? Has there been an audit before coming with the Bill. We all agree and between the lines each Member of Government has said that the MRC has failed. Has there been an audit to find out why we have failed? Why there has been no such collaboration between other research institutes, the public universities, the MSIRI, the MGI, the MIE and the Open University?

When the Bill was presented in 1992, we were told that the MRC will act as an apex body and, today, again in this Bill, we are being told that this Council now will act as an apex body. But have we found out why the MRC has failed to act as an apex body? Is it that just by mentioning in a line that the Council will be an apex body, it will be an apex body? According to my information, the apex body has failed utterly because there was no collaboration - I will come to the then Executive Director later - between the academia and the researchers in the private sector as the academia wanted to keep their academic freedom. And we heard it from the hon. Minister of Education; we heard it from hon. Gayan; we heard

it from hon. Bodha that each university is doing its research, collaborating with foreign universities on its own. There is a question of duplication although on the previous MRC Council, there were representatives from universities. I will come to the presence when it comes to committees, how many committees they have attended.

So, before coming with a new Bill - in fact, it's not a new Bill. When you merge the 1992 Bill with the (Amendment) Bill of 2015, they are more or less the same. The only credit we can give to the hon. Minister, to Government is that when it comes to the legal rights, to the issue of research, it now goes to the researcher not to the Council. We have, in fact, paid lip service to research and development in spite of the lofty promises made during the 1992 debate for the MRC. Strong commitment has been lacking. We have, in fact and in truth failed to develop a culture of research and development in this country. That is a fact.

Now, let me refer to the last report of the MRC. They are guilty, they are illegal. They are supposed, according to law, to prepare the Annual Report. The last report which I managed to find is for 2015 and under the signature of the Executive Director - I won't mention his name, he is now occupying apparently -after having Air Mauritius crashed in the MRC rank, God knows, we will come to the ranking later, he is now at international level. I will not mention his name. Let me quote what he had to say in 2015 -

“The year 2016, we will see that Council embarking on research and innovation, that is, increasingly multi-disciplinary areas that will have significant impact on the Mauritian society such as internet of things, Nano-technology, big data and biotechnology. In so doing, Council is ensuring that investment is channelled towards developing the solution that will bring significant growth, prospect, the potential to enhance the socio-economic welfare for everybody, especially the youth.”

That was said in 2015. Have we seen any development since although money has been put there? They have the budget. This is the first paragraph of this looking forward document of the last report. ‘In 2015, the Council started to operate under newly created Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation. It is the first time in the Republic of Mauritius that the portfolio of innovation is assigned to a specific Ministry. This major step of the new Government clearly demonstrates that innovation will be one of the key drivers within the country to move from an upper middle class income to a high income in a country.’

That's when the Ministry was created, four and a half years ago and today, hon. Bodha is telling us that this Bill, which is being introduced in the House, will move us from an upper middle income to a high income country. Four and a half years, and threats were given, the creation of the National Innovation Fund which provides for a budget of Rs125 m. was a major step to enable innovation. Rs125 m. was given in 2016. We were supposed by then to move upwards. In fact, we are lagging behind. So, it is clear, Madam Speaker, that the MRC has failed, the MRC has not delivered and, unfortunately, what we are doing today, we are copying exactly, a sort of redrafting but the contents are the same without any analysis, without taking any action to remedy, to find the cause first as to why we are here today, and to remedy the situation.

Madam Speaker, let me refer to the memorandum and to the objects of the Council. When you look at what we had before and what we are having now, you will see, Madam Speaker, that they are more or less alike. The object of this Bill is to repeal the Mauritius Research Council Act, this is okay, and replace it by a new Act, what is that new Act? The new Act will do two things: provide for the establishment of a Mauritius Research and Innovation Council and the National Research and Innovation Fund, nothing new, changing a Board into a Council and the fund already exists, nothing new. Promote high quality research and foster innovation in the national interest, this is exactly what the MRC was supposed to do. So, the objective, there's nothing new.

Where are we today when it comes to research and development? In fact, since the coming of this Government, we had four Ministers responsible for IT and Innovation, there was the first, Roshi Bhadain, then hon. Etienne Sinatambou, then there was the hon. Prime Minister himself and now today we have hon. Sawmynaden. Four Ministers, so, this seriousness we are attaching, four ministers, they have been innovating *en place, bouge fixe*.

So, it is no surprise. It is no surprise that, under this Government, with four Ministers from 2014 to 2018, the Global Innovation Index, the G2 ranking from the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) which is an UN agency has dropped sharply from the 40<sup>th</sup> position to the 75<sup>th</sup> position. Are you proud of it? You said same Government, four Ministers in the same Government, is the Government proud of the position we are occupying today, after having invested so many millions in that institution whereas countries in the neighbour like South Africa has improved their ranking to 64<sup>th</sup> ? So, it's clear that this Government has paid lip service to applied and sustainable research, development and innovation. So what is worst? After having reached that ranking, one would expect a serious Government to have an

independent Committee to analyse why we have dropped so sharply when it comes to our international ranking. What did they do? They get the MRC itself to make an enquiry upon themselves. *Zot meme faner zot mem fer lenket*. The MRC makes an enquiry upon themselves and, I have not copied the whole report, they come with a Global Innovation Index Mauritius Report 2019 from the MRC. They come with all sorts of excuses. They are worth many gaps in the data being reported to various international situations, indicators were not supplied, whatever we are having in research, there were so many various gap in data collection, there is no focal point for collecting data, complete mess and this was supposed to be an apex body. We are supposed to create another apex body without giving any guidelines, statutory guidelines not internal guidelines, management guidelines, statutory guidelines as how we should conduct the affairs of the MRC.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, this Bill, as it stands today, is not only an inspired hollow legislation without any innovative clause, but what is worse, this legislation is a step backward when it comes to NRD. In certain cases, it is worse than the MRC we have today because this Bill, Madam Speaker, does not offer any tangible way forward to close that deficit, it does not respond to our deficit.

This Bill, Madam Speaker, seems to be the product of administrators, not experts. This is why I look forward; I will listen carefully to the summing up of the hon. Minister so that we know who are the experts who advised on this Bill, because this Bill is ignorant of the pace of technical and technological knowledge. So it's clear that we are missing a golden opportunity, not an opportunity to create another institution but an opportunity to get a strong institution and I use the words of my good friend hon. Rughoobur when he says with leadership; leadership in management level, leadership at all levels of that Committee.

Now before I go on the Bill itself, let me comment on the satellite project which the hon. Prime Minister referred to in the course of his speech whereby the first Mauritian satellite is expected to be launched by the end of this year. Of course, as a patriot, as a Mauritian, we welcome this project but the question we have to ask ourselves: do we have the knowledge, the human capital, the human resources for such a project?

Madam Speaker, when we look at Statistics Mauritius in the IT sector, listen clearly, only 547 jobs have been created in one year. This is according to the official statistics when, in fact, we were promised that thousands of jobs would be created.

I was looking at the *Mauricien* today, *par coïncidence*, there is an IMF Report there, let me quote –

“Indeed, Mauritius lags global peers in economic complexity, but the actual level is even lower than that predicted by its macro-structural characteristics. Improving sophistication requires building innovation capacity (notably through skill development, R & D, and improvement in the IT infrastructure) and better coordination between the public and private sectors to overcome the externalities.”

This is how we are being quoted today by the IMF. Furthermore, in the speech of the hon. Minister and I quote –

“MIR-SAT1 is also going to pave the way towards the establishment of a Space Agency in Mauritius in the long run.”

Good but these are just statements, what about the cost? Where are we with regard to the status of this project today? What is more shocking, Madam Speaker? After saying all these about the space project, not a single word with regard to our collaboration with Africa. Hon. Gayan mentioned a little bit about the African Union. In fact, in January this year, the African Union has taken the decision to have *une agence spatiale*.

Where does Mauritius stand with regard to that project? Are we part of the African Union Project? Are we working in collaboration with the African Union who will have an African Union Agency? Is Mauritius collaborating? Is Mauritius part of this project? If so, what is the cost? At what stage of collaboration we are? Because according to an article which hon. Bérenger draws my attention to, in ‘Le Monde’ of 27 April 2019, last week, you will see how Africa is doing when it comes to space activities, satellite.

In Kenya, *le pays a lancé son premier satellite en 2017*.

« *Les satellites d’observation sont utiles lors de catastrophes naturelles. En 2013, alors que l’Afrique du Sud était touchée par d’immenses inondations, la South African National Space Agency (l’agence spatiale sud-africaine) a fourni aux autorités des données cruciales qui lui ont permis d’apporter une réponse rapide aux populations.* »

So, things are moving very fast in Africa. I hope that the hon. Minister will tell us, when he comes to that space issue, where we are, how much were spent, how much we are going to

spend, whether we have human resources to man it, because it is mentioned in that article that Ghana has just *mis en orbite le premier satellite ghanéen*.

*« Des lancements de satellites rwandais et éthiopiens sont d'ailleurs prévus cette année et le Sénégal comme l'Ile Maurice projettent, eux aussi, de le faire. »*

'Le Monde' is mentioning that. So, we, as Mauritian citizens, we have to know what will be our contribution. So, I expect the hon. Minister to give us some details, especially as we always say loudly that we are African, we will work with Africa, we are all moving towards Africa, our business is with Africa, our future is with Africa. Please, tell us where we are with regard to the satellite issue.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the Bill itself. Like I said earlier, we have downgraded that institution by giving it to a Minister. It should have been the Prime Minister. Why do I say so? We know that this institution is not only for businessmen, for researchers, for commercial products. This institution, in many other countries especially in Africa and in the all eastern countries, has contributed massively on social issues and in one country on water crisis. Let us say, for example, tomorrow the law allows him to give instructions to that Council to decide, - and we know the water crisis we have in Mauritius 24/7 etc.- the Minister takes upon himself to give instructions to the Council to consider the developing urgent researches in the field of water supply, will our Vice-Prime Minister be happy, remain quiet when somebody is trespassing upon his Ministry? Will he be happy? If the Prime Minister gives the instruction, that is a different matter.

This is why in 1992 we said it should be the Prime Minister. If we have a crisis in the fire sector, will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister be happy if a Minister steps upon her Ministry and gives instructions to the Council to go and make an inquiry in the fire services sector? So, we have to be practical. Any Minister will not allow another Minister, especially junior one - with due respect to my learned friend of course - to trespass upon his Ministry. Whereas a Prime Minister can do it, a Prime Minister has the authority and the committee will abide.

Section 2, the question about innovation, today, in other countries, we are talking about sustainable innovation. In the OEDC Agenda, it is not mere innovation; it is sustainable innovation which includes social innovation. When we look our definition of social innovation in that Bill, it reads –

““social innovation” means new solutions such as products, services, models, markets or processes which simultaneously –

- (a) meet a social need more effectively than existing solutions; and
- (b) lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources;”

Where are the social issues which are hampering our economic development such as inequality, proliferation of drugs, violence among our youth in schools, climate change? So, there is no consideration for a larger picture? This is very important. The law as it is, is bias towards business and we know, Madam Speaker, business does not operate in a vacuum. There must be a stable socio- economic environment. The MRC with their actual duties, with their actual responsibilities, they do cover social and economic environment, but, unfortunately, it is only at the level of workshop.

There has been a workshop in November 2018. I do not know whether because the findings of the workshop embarrass Government that they prefer not to enlarge the definition of social, because there was a workshop. Let me quote! There was a workshop on corruptions organised by the MRC. I have the report, topic 3 – corruption. This is what the participants agreed. It is written *noir sur blanc* -

“Participants agree that corruption is on the rise in Mauritius and the collaboration and cooperation of everyone is required to combat corruption.”

The Research Council has found that corruption is on the rise in Mauritius. The participants also emphasise that the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) should be a completely independent body. Moreover, the Commissioner of Police should also be independent of the Government, as stated in the Constitution. This is what they have to say -

“Very often, there is a perception that different people are treated differently for the same offence, and there is no fairness. Protected people with high income backgrounds are often given community service instead of serving time in jail.”

So, the actual MRC do look at social issues. But, unfortunately, due to lack of leadership, due to lack of collaboration, these social issues do not come down. But, unfortunately, this Bill has sort of downgraded the social objective of the Council. Crime and violence - Larceny has become a real concern in Mauritius with the recent increase in larceny cases in both rural and urban regions. The main regions, as identified, include an increase in drug abuse and poverty. So, they do certain works, but unfortunately, it remains only at the level of workshop. If we want this Council to look at these social problems, social issues, we have a proper socio-economic state for development and growth, we should have given

specific power in a specific clause in the law that they should deal with the social issues, especially those which are hampering our development.

Now, let me come at section 5 of that Bill. I do not intend to look at each and every section because some have already been referred to. Functions of the Council, it is more or less the same, but I fail to understand 5(a). 5(a) says –

“The Council shall have such functions as are necessary to further its objects most effectively and shall, in particular –

- (a) develop, every 5 years, a national strategy for research and development and innovation, based on the scientific, technological, social and economic needs and challenges of the country;

Every five years for scientific and technological change? Well, this is why we lag behind. Technology is moving so fast today. You buy a mobile phone -which is interdicted by you, Madam Speaker in the House - you buy one today, tomorrow it is obsolete. In one week it is obsolete, another model is out.

In India, the National Innovation Act makes provision for the National Integrated Science Technology Plan to be presented in February every year, not every five years, not every three years. Every year you have to come and report progress. Here, we are talking about five years. Now, regarding the actual Board itself there will be an Executive Director. There is no mention of the qualification of the Director. First, there will be a Chairperson - I will come to that later - but then there, will it be a Director? But we know, first we should have, at least, prescribed his qualification. Secondly, and most importantly, he should be a Director who is devoted for research and development. Replying to a PQ by my good friend, here, hon. Bhagwan, on the ex-Director, terms and conditions and parastatal bodies that he sits - my goodness! - he is the Executive Director of the Council, he is the Chairman of the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency, he is a member of the Board of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute falling under the Ministry of Ocean Economy, he is the Chairperson of Air Mauritius, he also sits on all the subsidiaries of Mauritius, namely the Procurement Committee, Recruitment Committee, Audit Committee. But what time will he have to look at the MRC? Sitting on so many committees, what time will he have to sit on the MRC? And here again, there will be an Executive Director without any qualification, not mentioning whether he should be full-time at the Council, etc.

Now, when you look at the constitution of the Council itself, section 7 of the Bill, I am not saying that the list we had in the actual MRC is important but, at least, the hon. Minister should tell us why is it that a representative from the higher education authority is not there. Why have we removed people from the MSIRI? Why have we removed the professor from the Universities? Why have we removed the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry?

So, the Council today would be a weak one according to me. There will be representative of the Ministry, representative for Education, representative of the Ministry responsible for the subject of finance. And we all know, Madam Speaker, these preventatives, I do not know who the Minister will send, the least one from the ladder? Because previously, we used to have the Permanent Secretary. Now, it is only a representative. These representatives who work in Ministries, we all know, we are all professionals; once he is more concentrated in his full-time job than going to sit on a Board. This is why he explains their attendance when it comes to Board Meetings. I will refer to the MRC, the same report: Meeting of the Board, presence of the one from the Prime Minister's Office; on seven Board Meetings, only two he attended. Mr Boodhna from the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, on seven meetings, he attended only three. Economic Environment and Sustainable Development, on seven meetings, he attended only one. From the Ministry of Ocean Economy, from seven meetings, he attended, only one. And other colleagues attended zero. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius, from seven meetings, he attended only three. Mr Mohee, University of Mauritius, on three meetings, he attended only one. Ms Valère, from the Prime Minister's Office, on three meetings, she attended only zero - attended only zero, so attendance. Representative of the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation, that is the meeting of the Project Management Committee we are talking, it is a very important meeting; on three meetings, they attended only one. Prof. Mohee of the meeting of the Special Project Management Committee from the University of Mauritius, on two meetings, he attended zero. Representative from the Ministry of Technology, Prof. Teetoo, on two meetings, he attended only one.

So you see, those people who are supposed to attend meeting, their heart is not in it. They are not researchers, they are administrators. And we have removed all the researchers, professionals to be filled only by a Chairperson to be appointed by the Minister; no qualification, nothing mentioned. Concerning representatives, it does not say what grade he or she should be. And five persons, including two representatives from the private sector

organisation having knowledge and wide experience. What about the three? They do not need knowledge and experience? Then, if they need put five persons, all including, two will be from the Ministry. So it is clear that we are having, Madam Speaker, a very, very weak Council. Very, very weak, indeed! Thus, the Council will compose of only administrators at the Ministry level and political appointees. They will be appointed by the Minister, not this Minister; next Minister or the next Minister, but he will be appointed by the Minister. So, is that a Board which is responsive to a strong Council so that we can leap forward when we come to our *retard* with research and development?

Madam Speaker, in most of the developed countries, that is, UK, Denmark and the US, such Councils are composed mainly of expert researchers, usually from academia and industry. These are experts composed of Councils which have proved their work by showing that they can provide useful advice that actually has an impact. Will this Council that I have just mentioned, four administrators and three political appointees, can they advise Government? The other challenge of such a Council is addressing the needs of innovation governance relate to the demand for coordination and the ability to promote policy implementation. Where in that Bill do we have had that *coordination* with all the sectors, when we have learned from two/three Ministers that there are so many people doing research now, be it at the university level, private sector level? We have just seen Harel Mallac with the University of Mauritius, they are doing a joint venture research, but who will coordinate all this? Truly, Madam Speaker, do we believe that such a council will make us not only catch up when we know we are lagging behind, but also advise Government on challenging issues as artificial intelligence, climate change, transfer of technology and collaboration with other countries?

Now, let me refer to section 9 - Committees –

“(1) (a) The Council may set up such committees as it may determine, including a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, to assist it in the performance of its functions.”

This is an important committee, it should not be ‘may’, it should be mandatory. The Council should have a committee to monitor and evaluate project.

Section 13 - National Research and Innovation Fund, it exists already; we have seen it from the report of the ex-executive. I think they have been given Rs125 m. So, this is in the

law, nothing new; it was in the amendment Bill of 2014 and now we are just putting it in the Act. This section will not increase our performance with regard to research, development and innovation since that already exists as I have mentioned before.

Now Section 19 deals with audit. It talks about financial audit. But for such an important institution, it is not financial audit that we need, there should be a project report audit on each and every project to find out what project has been undertaken, how money has been spent and how this project can trigger down. So, audit is very important. If we are lagging behind today, it is because we have had no mechanism to evaluate the research undertaken, no mechanism to evaluate the collaboration between the old institutions, no evaluation body to see how that apex body is working and whether there is duplicity.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, unfortunately this Bill is just an academic document which fails to address the most important issues as to why we are lagging behind when it comes to research, development and innovation and how we shall go forward to *rattrape le temps perdu*. We are, in fact, downgrading such an important institution by making it a political tool in the hands of the Minister, pushing research only towards business and material gain, and leaving the most important social issues behind.

This Bill, Madam Speaker, has failed to address the most fundamental issues when it comes to research and development.

I am done thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation!

(10.41 p.m.)

**The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden):** Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank all Members from both sides of the House for their contribution to the debate on this extremely important Bill.

Madam Speaker, whenever there is a change for the better in this country, whenever the country is moving forward, whenever we are paving the way for the future of the youth of this country there is one common denominator, which is the MSM. In 1983, the whole country changed. In 2000, we came with the ICT Sector; In 2014, we are paving the way one more time, and this is the ADN of the MSM which is to move the country forward.

My good friend, hon. Etienne Sinatambou rightly said, the syndrome of *'nanién pas bon'* still exists in the Opposition. I think that my good friend, hon. Etienne Sinatambou, has pre-empted the whole speech of hon. Baloomoody because he has been sitting in the Opposition for more than 15 years, and now we know the song.

*(Interruptions)*

15 years he has been sitting there and he knows it very well, this is why.

*(Interruptions)*

*Kan tonn kozer monn ecouter. Ecouter!* This is called innovation.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Sawmynaden:** This is frustration. Madam Speaker, this country is moving forward. Today, the future of the youth of this country is bright. We all understand that the main purpose of the MRIC Bill is to strengthen and empower the Council to fully contribute to the transformation of Mauritius into a high income and inclusive country in line with Vision 2030 of this Government.

This new Bill will pave the way to a more dynamic innovation ecosystem and allow MRIC to reorient its resources and expertise towards building collaborative and fruitful partnerships between the public and the private sectors. This will give a new dimension to investment in applied research and innovation in Mauritius, poised on modernising its economy for the continuous improvement of the quality of life of our citizens.

Given the rapid pace of change worldwide in the applied research and innovation landscape, this Bill addresses the need for appropriate structures and mechanisms to ensure more effective coordination and added synergy in the field of applied research. The focus is on addressing priority areas and fostering increased participation of the private sector. The Bill will also empower the Council in the promotion of high quality applied research aimed at social and inclusive innovation.

Madam Speaker, the new set up will ensure that the Council can operate through a strengthened legal instrument for research, development and innovation in line with current policies and adaptable to forthcoming policies and strategies. It will also reinforce the role of

the Council to implement research and innovation programmes under the National Innovation Framework, which places major emphasis on the need to increase the efficiency of applied research and innovation, both at the level of Government and in the private sector. As such, the National Research and Innovation Schemes, but also encourages the development and commercialisation of innovative products and services, thereby promoting technological advancement of the public and private sectors.

Madam Speaker, allow me now to shed light upon some comments and reservations made by Members of the House whilst intervening on the MRIC Bill.

Concerning remarks of hon. Ms Sewocksingh and hon. Baloomoody on the ranking of Mauritius in the Global Innovation Index (GII), the Report highlights the strength of Mauritius under the Business Environment Sub-pillar, where the country is ranked 30<sup>th</sup> out of 126 countries. The Business Facilitation Act 2017 has contributed largely to this performance. It is also to be noted that this index is not only measure of Innovation. We need to take into account other indices, such as the innovation ranking of the Global Competitiveness Index Report of the World Economic Forum.

As a matter of fact, in this report, Mauritius has improved its innovation ranking from 76<sup>th</sup> to 62<sup>nd</sup> position on the same time period of 5 years. I, therefore, concur with hon. François who stated that Innovation has different meanings depending on the context and the location. For me, it is clear that we should focus on outcomes and impacts rather than on mere figures.

The main message from both reports is that there are specific factors that need to be addressed for Mauritius to improve its innovation performance. These include more University-Industry partnerships and, crucially, more private sector expenditure on Research and Development.

This is the normal evolution of a country from a middle income to a high-income innovation-driven economy. It explains the importance of having a new MRIC which caters for all these factors, especially with all Intellectual Property (IP) created being granted to inventors. This should definitely enhance private sector participation in research and development.

We anticipate that, with the introduction of the free tertiary education in public institutions since January 2019, the newly introduced Higher Education Act and the

availability of tax incentives following the Budget Speech of 2017/2018 to promote private sector expenditure on research and development, the innovation performance of the country will improve.

Madam Speaker, unlike other countries of the African continent, as mentioned by Members from the other side of the House, Mauritius has a small population and no natural resources. As such, it is important for our people, whether at individual level or where they work, be as innovative as possible. We need our population to be trained in doing more using less.

Hon. Dr. Boolell referred to the legacy of the previous regime. I hope that he is not referring to the myriad of “*universités marron*” which were present in the country under his Government *et qui a fait beaucoup de tort à notre jeunesse*.

The higher education landscape is much better with no trace of any bogus university. Also with the reform in the education system led by my colleague Minister, hon. Leela Devi Dookun for the excellent job that is being done today, especially we have also introduced coding at primary level school. I am therefore convinced that our young people will have all the skills and knowledge needed for them to be as innovative as possible.

Madam Speaker, let me now address a comment made by hon. Ms Sewocksingh about having a National Innovation Strategic Plan only every five years and same was addressed by hon. Baloomoody. The implication that five years is too long as technology changes so rapidly. In fact, almost all countries in the world which have developed a National Innovation Strategic Plan or an Innovation Policy Framework are basing themselves on the minimum period of five years. The reason is simple; it is because such a strategic plan lays down the vision of the country in terms of innovation and spell out its strategic thrusts in order to achieve this vision.

Five years is the time period considered by most countries including Singapore, South Africa, China and even international organisations such as the European Commission for such a strategic plan.

In the case of the Republic of Mauritius where the long-term vision should be to foster an innovation culture in all spheres of the society, I strongly believe that five years is the minimal realistic period that one needs to consider.

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that the Strategic Plan will make provision for the rapid adoption of technology as it evolves. In fact, this is clearly demonstrated in the National Innovation Framework 2018-2030 through the promotion of Industry 4.0.

The MRIC Bill has, as one of its more important functions of promotion of emerging sectors as per Clause 5(e) of the Bill, which provides for the Council to –

“Develop and manage research and development and innovation programs and schemes, in areas of national priorities, emerging sectors and social innovation.”

We need to understand that emerging sectors are set to expand rapidly over the next few years and include areas such as Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data and Data Science, Agri-Business, Ocean Economy, Artificial Intelligence, Automation and Robotic and, of course, Satellite Technology. The use of the term emerging sectors in the Bill is intentional so as not to restrict the MRIC in its scope of action.

Madam Speaker, pertaining to budget decrease as mentioned by hon. Members from the other side, let me reassure the House that since the introduction of the matching grant in 2015, the MRC is managing a portfolio of over 150 projects and initiatives to the tune of Rs358 m., of which more than Rs200 m., that is, 56%, is committed in cash and in kind by the private sector and other partners.

Let me remind the House that the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, announced in Budget Speech 2018/2019, the allocation of 50 scholarships on an annual basis to students willing to specialise in emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to mention that some Members from the opposite side mentioned that this Bill has not been subjected to wide consultations. Let me list the different steps that have led to this Bill –

- subsequent to the announcement made in the Budget Speech 2017/2018, a first draft of the MRIC Bill was prepared in November 2017;
- the draft Bill was circulated to different stakeholders for comments and suggestions over the period 18 December 2017 to 15 January 2018;
- a notice was published in newspapers and on the websites of the Council and my Ministry, requesting comments and suggestions from the public over the period 11 January to 12 February 2018, and
- in light of all the views and comments received, the Bill was reviewed.

As we can all judge, there has been adequate consultations with relevant stakeholders in the drafting of the legislation and also the benchmarking was carried out against other research council, namely Innovate UK, National Research Foundation South Africa, National Research Innovation Council of Singapore and of Finland. In light of the views, as we can all judge, there has been adequate consultations with all relevant stakeholders in the drafting of the legislation.

Madam Speaker, allow me now to speak of the younger generation and how the MRC has managed to introduce innovation in our schools. As Members of the House may recall, the MRC organised a Robotics Training Course in Mauritius in April, it started where we had only 300 students registered and a few months later, we had the second edition in November 2017, where a total of 1000 students were trained in three specific themes, namely –

- (i) Internet of Things (IoT) using the Raspberry Pi;
- (ii) Haptics controlled Robots, and
- (iii) Humanoid Robots using the Arduino.

My colleagues, hon. François and hon. Leopold will be delighted to hear that MRC also trained 85 young students in Rodrigues. MRC also trained seven secondary school teachers in ICT and eight ICT professionals from the Rodrigues Information Technology Association to become trainers.

Madam Speaker, you should have seen the faces of these kids when they were able to build their own robots. Naturally, our aim is to continue to support such initiatives and Rodrigues will continue to be an important destination for all our programmes. The MRC Rodrigues Office will be empowered in the MRIC to consolidate its partnerships with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and other partners in Rodrigues to attain the objects of the Bill.

Madam Speaker, hon. Dr. Boolell rightfully pinpointed the importance to collect real data to develop evidence-based policies in Mauritius.

The MRC has already embarked on a major program to collect relevant data in collaboration with a wide range of local stakeholders including Ministries, parastatal bodies, companies of the private sector and academia.

A major consultation was held by the MRC from November 2018 to January 2019 and data related to various innovation indices were collected.

A report of the major findings has been posted on the MRC website and shared with all Ministries. Our intent is to use this information to formulate relevant strategies.

Hon. Dr. Boolell mentioned the success of the Centre for Biomedical and Biomaterials Research of the University of Mauritius and its expansion into a Pole of Innovation in Health.

It is to be noted that the MRC, through its National Research Chair Program in Biomaterials and Drug Delivery from 2013 to 2018, contributed to build up the centre, both in terms of infrastructure and human capacity. I would also like to mention that one, Ms Rima Beesoo, working under the National Research Chair was awarded the International Recognition of Applied Biochemistry.

The MRC through the Pole of Innovation Grant Scheme is now contributing towards providing the Centre with the necessary framework to move towards commercialisation.

Moreover, Poles of Innovation in Biotechnology and Digital Humanities have also been set up by the Council in collaboration with other institutions and we anticipate that they will also be as successful.

Madam Speaker, the Government has given a lot of thoughts when preparing the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill.

For many years, the Mauritius Research Council was driven by Dr. Arjoon Suddhoo. His personal contribution to the creation and subsequent evolution of the Council was instrumental and today the MRC is a respected institution locally, regionally and internationally. A lot has been said about the Executive Director, Dr. Arjoon, who unfortunately left Mauritius to become the Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth, which is not good for us, but is good for the Commonwealth.

Madam Speaker, *c'est pour ça qu'on voit l'exode des Mauriciens à cause des remarques qui sont pas correctes.*

Without being an innovative country such as ours cannot aspire to become a high-income and inclusive country in line with Vision 2030 of the Government. We have walked the talk by coming with various projects and programmes, namely –

- (i) the Digital Youth Engagement Programme;
- (ii) the launching of innovation clubs at regional level;
- (iii) the ICT awareness campaign for citizens, and

(iv) the Infotech has become Innovtech.

Furthermore, my Ministry has supported the organisation of the World Ai Show and the World Blockchain Summit, two events which have acted as eye-openers to the population.

I can tell you that the presence of the Humanoid Sophia on our soil last year has made a great impact and has been useful in attracting the younger generation's interest.

Madam Speaker, let me now talk about the Board composition as mentioned by both Members. Madam Speaker, as mentioned, the Chairman will be appointed by the Minister or the Board Members. It is clear that all appointments need to go through Cabinet. It is clear today that this Government is working as a team. Definitely we are going to look for the best members to be part of the Board. We are not going to go and look for any political appointees. Today, the Chairperson of the Mauritius Research Council is Dr. Michael Atchia. I know that Dr. Michael Atchia is a professional, he is not a member of any party. This is how this Government works, and this Government works as a team. We don't need to put it on paper that we need a representative of this Ministry, of that Ministry. We cannot have 15 or 20 people sitting on a Board. We need the best sitting on a Board and we need a selective amount of persons, a very small amount of persons because we want to be decision takers and decision makers. We want things to happen. We don't want things to delay on a Board while taking decision and decision. We work in close collaboration with all the Ministries. Last month we opened the lab of 3-D printing at the SME of Coromandel, which was done in close collaboration with my colleague Minister, hon. Sunil Bholah.

So, this shows that this Government is working as a team and this Government wants to see results. Whether this Council falls under my Ministry or the PMO or any other Ministry what we want to see is results and results for this population, no one else. This is the vision of the Prime Minister. He was the first Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation and today we are moving on line with his vision.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius has transformed itself from a mono-crop economy to a diversified service-driven economy in less than 50 years. Who would have thought back in 1968 that our little island would be launching a satellite at the end of 2019?

I heard hon. Baloomoody asking how much will it cost. It's not a question of costs, it's a question of achievement. We have achieved something. We are such a small country. We are just a small satellite in the middle of the Indian Ocean and tomorrow we will be

launching a satellite to orbit space and our Mauritian people will be able to get data so that we can do research on it and work ahead. This is the aim of this country, this is the aim of this Government.

Madam Speaker, all this has been possible due to our capacity to adopt new trends in technology and our staunch belief in modernity. The advent of the Metro Express is another example of this Government pledge to modernise Mauritius.

Our Prime Minister is a man who believes in change, and most importantly, he works accordingly to make it possible.

Madam Speaker, I believe that the new MRIC Bill, with the invaluable contribution of all its staff, is the right kind of organisational structure we need in Mauritius in order to instil the crucial innovation mind-set at all levels of our society.

Before ending, I would like to thank all the staff of the MRC, of my Ministry, the State Law Office and also my previous Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries who have been posted to other Ministries and all people who have contributed to this Bill.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, and I now commend the Bill to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill read a second time and committed.*

## **COMMITTEE STAGE**

*(Madam Speaker in the Chair)*

### **THE MAURITIUS RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL BILL**

**(NO. IV OF 2019)**

*Clauses 1 to 23 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 24 (Savings and transitional provisions)*

*Motion made and question proposed: "that the clause stands part of the Bill."*

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendment -

In clause 24, in subclauses (4), (6)(a)(ii) and (7)(a)(ii)(B), by inserting, after the words "the Pensions Act or the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds Act," the words "or both,".

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Clause 24, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 25 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*The title and enacting clause were agreed to.*

*The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.*

*On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.*

### *Third Reading*

*On motion made and seconded, the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill (No. IV of 2019) was read a third time and passed.*

### *Second Reading*

## **THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL**

**(NO. V OF 2019)**

*Order for Second Reading read.*

(11.05 p.m.)

**The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr N. Bodha):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill be read a second time.

The House would agree with me that consumption of alcohol and other drugs in general is increasing globally and the impact of substance abuse is visible. There is, thus, an urgent need for concerted and coordinated actions to address the potential dangers of driving under the influence of a drug or an intoxicating substance. The risk factors associated with driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs such as illicit, prescriptive and over the counter are numerous. Poor judgement and impaired decision-making in a high-stakes situation could result in substantial damage to property, to the loss of lives and injury to other persons. When judgement is impaired while driving under the influence of a drug or intoxicating substance, key decisions must be taken by Government to eliminate the associated risks which may cause severe road casualties.

Madam Speaker, just like alcohol, the effect of drugs can be amplified in the case of two wheelers, as riding a motorcycle requires more balance, co-ordination and accuracy than

driving a car. The consumption of drugs, coupled with the consumption of alcohol, mainly by young people, during the weekend nights is a major concern warranting stringent actions.

Madam Speaker, as a general reflection on the number of fatalities in Mauritius, it is observed that the annual number of fatalities has been quite stable during the last 10 years, fluctuating in the range of 130 to 160. This corresponds to a fatality rate of 3-4 fatalities per 10,000 vehicles and about 12 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants.

The rate of fatality per 100,000 population for year 2018 was 11.7 as compared to 12.8 in 2017. Correspondingly the number of killed was 143 in 2018 against 157 the preceding year. The trend during this year till now is reducing and we hope that all our road safety efforts and tightening of the Road Traffic Act will bring even better results in the coming days.

From January 2019 to 01 May 2019, we have had 44 fatal accidents as compared to 59 last year for the same period and correspondingly 47 killed as compared to 66 last year for the same period.

The most vulnerable group of road users, Madam Speaker, still remain the motorcyclists constituting 40% of the casualties. Then comes the passengers constituting some 25% and pedestrians amounting to 16% of all casualties.

The age group mostly involved in road crashes lies in the bracket of 15 to 29 years of age.

Madam Speaker, concerning drugs, according to records available from the Forensic Science Laboratory, out of 151 cases of Fatal Road Accidents referred for toxicological tests for drug detection by the Police in the year 2018, it is found that as at now, 20% showed the presence of drugs in their body fluids, and for the year 2017, this figure was 36 %.

As a result, the rationale behind amending the Road Traffic Act is, therefore, to make drug driving an offence. Madam Speaker, this will make our roads safer for all road users and will prevent our close ones, our children and our families from being killed by impaired drivers who are driving under the influence of a drug or any other intoxicating substance. Substance abuse may affect the functioning of the brain and may lead to impaired driving such as delayed reaction time, reducing motor coordination and motor performance. It can also increase drowsiness, alter perception and reduce the time for information processing

which may ultimately increase the risks of a fatal crash. On the international level, there is a growing concern about drug use and road safety and countries like the UK, Australia, Spain, Sweden have come up with relevant drug driving legislations to address this issue.

Madam Speaker, in that respect, upon my invitation, Dr Mercier Guyon, a Forensic Medicine and Emergency Doctor and Head of a Licensed Training Centre of Haute Savoie in France, visited Mauritius and after consultations with stakeholders, has made recommendations on measures to be taken to detect and track drivers driving under the influence of drugs, including synthetic drugs. Accordingly, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill on drug driving has been elaborated by my Ministry in consultation with the State Law Office, the Police, the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, the Forensic Science Laboratory and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

Madam Speaker, the objectives of amending the Road Traffic Act is to provide that any person who, whilst being under the influence of a drug or an intoxicating substance –

- (a) rides a cycle on a road or any other public place;
- (b) drives, or attempts to drive, a motor vehicle on a road or any other public place;
- (c) drives, or attempts to drive, a vehicle which is involved in a road accident;
- (d) is in charge of a motor vehicle on a road or any other public place, or
- (e) occupies the front seat of a motor vehicle as a competent driver supervising a learner driver who is driving the motor vehicle on a road or any other public place, shall commit an offence as per section 123E of the proposed Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill.

Madam Speaker, the Bill provides severe penalties if a person under the influence of an illicit drug or therapeutic drug above the threshold limit or an intoxicating substance causes the death of another person by driving a motor vehicle on a road or public place without due care and attention. He will be liable to a fine of not less than Rs25,000 not more than Rs50,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.

Madam Speaker, provision has been made so that a person under the influence of drug, intoxicating substance or therapeutic drug above the threshold limit cannot ride a cycle

on a road or public place. In case he does, he will have on conviction by Court to pay a fine of not less than Rs5,000 and not more than Rs25,000. On a second or subsequent conviction, he will be liable to a fine of not less than Rs25,000 and not more than Rs50,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months.

With amendments to the Road Traffic Act for drug driving, a person commits an offence if he is under the influence of a drug and is driving or is in charge of a motor vehicle on a road or public place or if he is teaching a learner driver whilst being seated in the front seat. On conviction, he will have to pay a fine of not less than Rs20,000 nor more than Rs50,000 and he will be imprisoned for a term not exceeding 5 years upon conviction. On a second or subsequent conviction, he will be liable to a fine of not less than Rs50,000 and not more than Rs75,000 together with imprisonment for a term of not less than 12 months and not more than 8 years.

Madam Speaker, testing the presence of a drug in the body fluids ascertains whether a particular drug is present and in some cases the concentration thereof. The Bill, therefore, provides for the procedures and methods of detecting the presence of a drug or an intoxicating substance in a person's body fluids whilst he is driving or is in charge of a motor vehicle or is riding a cycle and is suspected of being under the influence of a drug or an intoxicating substance.

Accordingly, three tests are to be performed, namely the 'field impairment test', the 'preliminary drug test' and the 'blood laboratory test'.

Section 16(a) says that if a Police officer has reasonable ground to suspect that a person is under the influence of a drug, he will require the person to undergo a field impairment test, either at or near the place where the requirement is made or at the nearest Police station.

Section 16(b) The "field impairment test" is a test conducted by a Police officer on a person in order to assess, by observation, the person's physical state in terms of difficulty to keep balance, difficulty to stand properly, slurred speech and signs of over excitation, euphoria and apathy.

Section 16(c) says that in order to be systematic in his approach, the Police officer will, while conducting the field impairment test, fill in a "field impairment questionnaire" set out in the Thirteenth Schedule.

Section 16(d) says, Madam Speaker, that if the field impairment test is positive, that is, the person's physical state is impaired, a preliminary drug test will be carried out where the person will have to provide a specimen of saliva or urine.

Section 16(e) says that if the preliminary drug test is positive which indicates that a person is under the influence of a drug, a Police officer will require that person to provide, at a hospital, a specimen of blood for a laboratory test. This is the evidential test and the result of which will be produced in Court.

Madam Speaker, it should be noted that the provisions proposed in the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill to cover for Drug Driving offences will also be backed by provisions in the Dangerous Drugs Act, especially as regards to the illicit drugs and the abuse of therapeutic drugs.

In the proposed amendments to the Road Traffic Act, we have three different scenarios, namely, 'illicit drugs, 'intoxicating substance' and 'therapeutic drugs'. For certain drugs there will be a zero tolerance, as they are illicit drugs. They are namely, amphetamine, benzoylecgonine, cocaine, Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (cannabis), lysergic acid, Methylamphetamine, MDMA, heroin. The illicit drugs described in the First Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Act will also be covered under the Road Traffic Act through a special provision.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, if the police officer has reasonable ground to suspect that the person's physical state is impaired because he may be under the influence of an intoxicating substance and that a preliminary drug test with the saliva or urine does not indicate that the person is under the influence of a drug, the Police officer may still require that person to provide, at a hospital, a specimen of blood for a laboratory test. A Police officer will, on requiring any person to provide a specimen of blood or urine for a laboratory test, warn him that a failure, without reasonable excuse, to provide the specimen of blood may render him liable to prosecution and may be used against him as evidence.

Madam Speaker in addition to the above, an "intoxicating substance", means a dangerous drug specified in the First Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Act, other than a drug specified in Part I of the Twelfth Schedule, of the proposed Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill. These include Synthetic Cannabinoids (such as Black Mamba, simik, bat dans la tete and so on), Fentanyl Analogs, Bath Salts and New Psychoactive Substances amongst others. The definition of an 'intoxicating substance', Madam Speaker, also includes such other substance

as may be prescribed given that this is a highly evolving sector as new drug substances continue to flood the international market and they may easily find their way on the local market.

On top of that, Madam Speaker, the provisions of the Bill ensures that if a person is making an abuse of any therapeutic drug, a “specified limit”, has been inserted in relation to that drug mentioned in the Part II of the Twelfth Schedule, thereby making it an offence. The presence of the following therapeutic drugs up to a ‘specified limit’ in the blood may be accepted. These are Clonazepam, Diazepam, Flunitrazepam, Lorazepam, Methadone, Morphine and Temazepam.

If a Police officer has reasonable ground to suspect that a person is under the influence of a drug or intoxicating substance, he may arrest a person without warrant where that person refuses to undergo a field impairment test, a preliminary drug test and provide a specimen of blood or urine for a laboratory test.

Madam Speaker, as regards penalties, under section 123 JA, if a person is riding a cycle on a road or public place and who, without reasonable excuse, fails to undergo a field impairment test or provide a specimen of urine or saliva for the preliminary drug test, or a specimen of blood for laboratory test, he shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not less than Rs5,000 and not more than Rs25,000. In the case of a second or subsequent conviction, the offender shall be liable to a fine of not less than Rs25,000 and not more than Rs50,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months.

Madam Speaker, if a person is driving a motor vehicle on a road or a public place and he fails to submit himself to the above tests namely, to undergo a field impairment test, a preliminary drug test or provide a specimen of blood or urine for analysis, he shall commit an offence and will have to pay a fine of not less than Rs20,000 not more than Rs25,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years. On a second or subsequent conviction, the person will be liable to a fine of not less than Rs50,000 not more than Rs75,000 together with imprisonment for a term of not less than 12 months and not more than 8 years.

Madam Speaker, the Bill also makes provision for the Police to detain a person if following the preliminary test there is an indication that this person is under the influence of a drug. A person may also be detained upon a refusal to submit to a Field Impairment Test or a preliminary drug test where he is required to submit a sample of saliva or urine or to provide a specimen of blood at hospital.

Madam Speaker, provisions have also been made in the Bill for the disqualification and cancellation of a driving licence of a driver driving under the influence of drugs or intoxicating substance.

By the same token, arrangements are being made to bring clarity in all the sections in the Road Traffic Act which pertains to the procedures and methods of detecting whether a person driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle or riding a cycle is under the influence of alcohol. Madam Speaker, responsibilities of Government start with formulation, adoption and promulgation of policies, laws and regulations to ensure safety of its citizens. In the field of road safety, it is believed that there should be continued commitment and support from Government to prevent that action on drug and alcohol abuse whilst driving do not fade and lose focus. Such loss of focus is likely to cascade downward and result in a softening of acceptable standards and potential for accidents to return to previous levels. For this to happen, the sustained effort of enforcement by the Police will act as a guardian and key to determining the results concerning substance abuse and road accidents that affect the motoring skills and good judgement of the drivers.

I am informed here, that the number of contraventions established by the Police is 202,000 for year 2015; 228,000 for year 2016; 235,000 for year 2017; 239,000 for year 2018 and 51,000 up to the end of March 2019. It is expected that the number of contraventions will further increase with the forthcoming law on drug driving and that such cases will not go unnoticed. Defaulters are, therefore, cautioned to be on their guard.

Madam Speaker, without visible enforcement and swift penalties, a drug driving law has little chance of changing behaviour. My Ministry, on the other hand, will carry out a vigorous campaign prior to the readiness of the relevant authorities to act on the law. It is to be highlighted that in other countries, Police have specially trained drug recognition and evaluation officers who can detect whether or not a driver is drug impaired. In line with international practices, Police will be trained on carrying out Field Impairment Tests to assess the physical impairment in suspected cases of drug driving.

And in addition, Madam Speaker, following the procurement of the related equipment, namely, the roadside kit, further training will be imparted to the Police officers. On the other hand, the Forensic Science Laboratory is also in the process of acquiring the required laboratory testing equipment to detect the presence of dangerous and synthetic drugs in the human bodies.

With this framework in mind, Madam Speaker, I now commend the Bill to the House.

**Mr Roopun rose and seconded.**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Baboo!

(11.25 p.m.)

**Mr S. Baboo (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a fact that road accidents do not just happen, they are caused, and this Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, which is one of the many introduced by the Minister since 2015, is yet another move of the Government to show its commitment to bring to an end the havoc on our roads.

However, with all these amendments being brought and all the good intentions of the Minister, you will agree that the situation is not improving on our roads.

Madam Speaker, the driving culture is getting worst with all the strictness of the laws. The problem of the road accidents has become a public health issue in this country and there is a need for radical legislation and the whole Road Traffic Act to be reviewed.

Road accidents, Madam Speaker, have taken epidemic proportions for our small population and what is needed, are strong measures and updated legislation to curb this epidemic with the help of proper road experts to analyse the problem on our roads and the attitudes of our drivers. Not only has it become an epidemic, but it seems that nothing is working or only minor changes are happening in terms of campaigns, TV and radio spots.

Madam Speaker, speed and drunk-driving may be just two causes among other much more serious ones. We have seen that recently most of the accidents are caused by drivers who have been tested negative to alcohol test, and that over speeding was also not the main cause of these accidents. I am not condemning drunk-driving and other speeding, far from it, Madam Speaker. We are saying that the main causes are elsewhere. Let me give you, at this point, a few examples of the drawbacks of our system and which are likely to cause accidents. All the amendments being brought to the law will not majorly curb the problem, Madam Speaker. The poor state of our road infrastructure, the signet on roads, the lighting on roads at night, stray dogs on the road and the way driving licences are allocated. Madam Speaker, at some stage, we should do our own introspection. The allocation of driving licences and the aptitudes and abilities of our drivers are often below acceptable levels. How many times have we not heard of fraudsters at the Line Barracks. We hear of these when we

are caught, but how many literarily go through the loopholes of the system. Many of our laws are obsolete and, more often, we review them in a piecemeal way, either under pressure...

**Madam Speaker:** Can you resume your seat, hon. Member? I think that you are enlarging the debate. Please, come to the amendments which are being brought to the legislation.

**Mr Baboo:** Madam Speaker, when we try to be wise...

*(Interruptions)*

*Nou pou ale lakaz 4 heures du matin la, pa per toi !*

... after the events when disaster has already struck, which shows more of a fire-fighting Government bringing fire-fighting policies instead of working proactively for the safety of the population for the long-term. This Bill is not enough, Madam Speaker. A proper study is required to understand. Hon. Dr. Boolell...

*(Interruptions)*

The age of drivers causing accidents, whether they are not too young to be given a lifelong licence at the age of 18, though we should agree that at least this Bill, in some way, can be a way to sieve out the young drug consumers and discouraging them from taking the wheel. However, Madam Speaker, with the increase in the fines of traffic offenses of the last amendment to the Road Traffic Act, the situation on our roads does not have drastic improvement as expected. The question that is raised today, and which experts need to work on, is whether some youths of today are mature enough at 18 to be allowed to drive a car and carry passengers. We have all been 18 once; but, is that youth of today as mature as a young person of the same age 25 years ago? Can we establish a benchmark to assess the psychological status and state of mind of a young driver of a motorbike at the age of 18 or that of an auto cycle at the age of 16? I am sure most of us have experienced the impulsiveness of a hot-blooded young driver on the road and had asked ourselves how he had got his driving licence. We have also witnessed motorcycle rallies on certain roads at night when the visibility is at its worst. This Bill...

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, let me draw your attention to the fact that, if you look at the Explanatory Memorandum itself, it tells you that –

“The main object of the Bill is to provide for any person who, whilst being under the influence of a drug or an intoxicating substance (...).”

And this is the substance of the Bill. Please!

**Mr Baboo:** I am coming to that, Madam Speaker. I have a constituent who has been unfortunate enough to have been a victim to a hit-and-run road accident in Vacoas, in our constituency. On a Sunday morning, he was crossing the road at traffic lights when he was hit by a car over speeding dangerously through the red traffic lights. Till now, the defaulter has not been found, even though the cameras at the nearby shops ...

**Madam Speaker:** I understand he was under the influence of alcohol or was he a drug addict?

**Mr Baboo:** I am coming to that.

**Madam Speaker:** But, hon. Member, you are taking too much time to come to that.

**Mr Baboo:** I am just saying that whatever law is coming, still a lot has to be improved. Madam Speaker, the Minister mentioned in his speech on the last amendment brought to the Road Traffic Act about the fact that we have more than 150,000 motorcyclists on the road and that most of them riding with a Learner for more than 40 years. Do we realise that, at this time of development, a country which will shortly be having the Metro Express, we did not require a driving licence to ride a motorbike.

Madam Speaker, Section 6, subsection (2)(a) of the Bill says the following –

“6(2)(a) A person who commits an offence under subsection (1)(a) shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine of not less than 5,000 rupees nor more than 25,000 rupees.”

Laws, Madam Speaker, need to be drafted as simply as possible for the layman to understand and some terms need to be adapted to modern terminology. Moreover, Section 3, subsection (b) says –

“The offender under paragraph (a) shall, in the case of a second or subsequent conviction, be liable to a fine of not less than 50,000 rupees and not more than 75,000 rupees together with imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.”

The gap in terms of proportion to the offence is questionable, Madam Speaker. I am sure it will depend on the gravity of the offence, but are we not giving too much or a leeway to the Magistrate or to the defence lawyer to plead indulgence and leniency?

Road accidents are caused and we have to identify those causes and should instead stop giving the wrong medication to the wrong diseases. More laws, more repressions, more

and bigger fines have proved to be ineffective, otherwise the driving culture on our roads would have been improved drastically and we would not be having so many defaulters causing so many accidents on our roads. What are these causes then? Is it road rage, drugs as the Minister now seems to believe?

Madam Speaker, the campaign “*Ensam pa laisse coltar touye nu fami*” has failed miserably. We need a real survey, Madam Speaker, on the realities on our roads and where we have been failing. Action should start the moment that a driver is qualified licensed to drive. Proposals had been made in the past if a driving licence should be a lifelong document on drivers or drivers should be on probation for a couple of years. If they manage to keep a clean driving licence for the two years, they would have turned onto a better more cautious driving. The problem on our roads, our driving culture is a national problem, Madam Speaker, and I am afraid that we will repeat the same mistakes again. Too many legislations turn serious issues into academic ones while we feel having done our job, but this Bill, Madam Speaker, is not a job well done. It will be, as usual, an unfinished task.

I will end, Madam Speaker, on this note that heavy fines do not hurt anymore. Many of our people are well off and can afford to pay fines and repeat the same offences again and again. It all starts that little piece of paper, which is the driving licence. It should not be easy to obtain a learner’s licence and the Minister should not give in to pressure, every time an initiative to reduce accidents had barely started to work, otherwise I am afraid that we are doomed to face chaos on our roads year in, year out.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. François!

**Mr François:** Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

**Mr Roopun rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Debate adjourned accordingly.*

## **THE CURATELLE (AMENDMENT) BILL**

**(No. VI of 2019)**

The hon. Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms (Mr M. Gobin) gave notice of his intention not to move the Second Reading and the other stages of the Curatelle (Amendment) Bill (No. VI of 2019) today.

### **MOTION**

#### **NON-CITIZENS (EMPLOYMENT RESTRICTION) EXEMPTIONS**

#### **(AMENDMENT No. 3) REGULATIONS 2019 - DISALLOWANCE**

**Madam Speaker:** Since the mover of the Motion is not there, so the motion lapses.

*(Interruptions)*

I am sorry, the Motion lapses when he is not there.

### **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 14 May 2019 at 11.30 a.m.

**Mr Roopun rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Speaker:** The House stands adjourned.

### **MATTER RAISED**

(11.41 p.m.)

#### **MS JANE CONSTANCE – UNIVERSITY OF LANCASHIRE – FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

**Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes):** Madam Speaker, I would like to invite the Minister of Education to give a serious thought to a legitimate request made by the parents of Ms Jane Constance.

As you know, that young lady has been admitted to the University of Central Lancashire for studies and she has obtained a part bursary, but she needs support from Government and from the private sector to meet the fees that she has to pay for her studies.

I know the Minister is looking into the matter. I would impress upon the Minister to give serious thought to it and to give due consideration. I am going to go as far as to say that if a special treatment can be given in the case of this young lady who, after all, has been a great ambassador of Mauritius.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Madam Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating Ms Jane Constance for her very good performance at the level of School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

However, I must say that we have been following her *parcours* rather closely and I must say that her driven determination has allowed her to reach very far and she has proved that both in her studies and in her aptitude for music. I must say that we are very appreciative of her achievement and we believe that she has made us all proud. She has also turned out to become a model for her friends, schoolmates and contemporaries.

However, I must say that we have taken a large number of very proactive measures ensuring that students with disabilities can pursue their studies. Government has come up, since 2017, with a measure where five scholarships are provided to students with disabilities for them to pursue their tertiary studies. Yet, we do know that there are procedures that need to be followed and the best candidates are normally given the chance of scholarship.

However, I must say that in the case of Ms Jane Constance, we have a number of donor countries which come up with scholarships. We hope that she would apply for these and we will try to see, as the hon. Member has said, through other agencies whether she can be provided with some help. But Government has got strict procedures for scholarships.

*At 11.45 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 14 May 2019 at 11.30 a.m.*

## WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### DIRECTOR OF AUDIT REPORT – MEASURES

(No. B/276) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Reports of the Director of Audit for periods 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, respectively, he will state the remedial measures taken at central Government level, if any, in respect of the Ministries having been adversely reported therein, indicating if consultations have been held with the National Audit Office and the Ministers concerned to discuss the findings thereof.

**Reply (Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms):** As indicated by the hon. Prime Minister on 15 May 2018 in his reply to Parliamentary Question B/361, all the Ministers were requested to –

- (i) analyse all issues raised by the Director of Audit concerning their respective Ministries/Departments, and
- (ii) come up with an Action Plan proposing measures to address the weaknesses and shortcomings mentioned therein.

Moreover, the Office of Public Sector Governance falling under the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms was mandated to closely monitor and report on the implementation of the remedial measures.

In this regard, the Office of Public Sector Governance has done so by ensuring the setting up of Audit Committees in all the Ministries and Departments. The Audit Committees were required, *inter alia*, to come up with an Action Plan for the year 2018 for the remedial measures, including the timeframe for implementation thereof as well as key performance indicators.

The OPSG has since the last Financial Year been monitoring on a quarterly basis the performance of these Audit Committees and also examining the status reports submitted to establish the extent to which the recommendations of the National Audit Office have been implemented. Additionally, the OPSG has carried out fieldworks to ascertain the progress achieved in that respect and has made additional observations to the Audit Committees to enhance implementation of the Action Plans in a more effective manner. I am informed that only 38% of the recommendations made by the National Audit Office have so far been

achieved. This is due, *inter alia*, to the complexities pertaining to issues concerned in certain cases and lack of resources or expertise.

Apart from the officers of the OPSG, the Internal Control cadres posted by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in various Ministries have also been encouraged by the parent Ministry to assist the Accounting Officers in putting in place systems and processes to ensure follow-up on shortcomings highlighted by the Director of Audit Reports and report to the Office of Public Sector Governance on cases where Accounting Officers have not implemented recommendations of the Director of Audit and Public Accounts Committee and on failures of system.

Furthermore, for greater transparency, the Finance and Audit Act was amended last year to make it mandatory for Ministries/Departments to report on measures taken to address weaknesses identified by the Director of Audit, including wastage of public funds in their yearly Annual Report on Performance.

As regards the recommendations in the Report of the Director of Audit for Financial Year 2017-2018, on 29 March 2019, Government has approved the setting up of a committee under the chair of the Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms, and comprising representatives from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms to examine the Report, in consultation with Ministries/Departments and to propose measures to address the weaknesses and shortcomings mentioned therein.

I am informed that the Committee has already started its work and is compiling all required information. The Committee will be convening Accounting Officers of the Ministries concerned shortly. Reports will be issued Ministry-wise to ascertain that remedial actions are effected in a timely manner and also required policy decisions are taken where need be.

It is to be noted that to ensure better delivery of the various Audit Committees, the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms is coming up shortly with a revised Audit Committee Charter and a new Performance Contract as well as a Handbook on Audit Committee so as to enhance the capacity of the Audit Committee members and thereby allowing them to apply the principles of good governance in a more effective manner.

Moreover, I am informed that for this year's Budget consultations, the recommendations of the Director of Audit are being taken on board by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development while determining the allocation of resources to line ministries at the level of the Estimates Committee for the forthcoming budget exercise.

### INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE – MEETINGS

**(No. B/278) Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Inter-Ministerial Committee set up to look into the proposed setting up of the Land Court/Division/Tribunal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of meetings held as at to date.

**Reply (Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare):** The Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up, under my Chairpersonship, in February 2019 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 five occasions since the first meeting which was held on 05 March 2019.

### NHDC LTD – SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS

**(No. B/305) Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to social housing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the number of units thereof constructed in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, since January 2015 to date, indicating the number of –

- (a) applications for the allocation thereof received, and
- (b) units thereof allocated.

*(Withdrawn)*

### SMALL MEDIUM ENTERPRISE EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

**(No. B/314) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Small Medium Enterprise Employment Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from SME Mauritius Ltd., information as to the number of –

- (a) graduates registered thereunder and
- (b) employers registered thereunder, indicating the aggregate amount of funds disbursed thereto.

*(Withdrawn)*

**CORPORATE AND BUSINESS REGISTRATION DEPARTMENT –  
COMPANIES & INDIVIDUAL BUSINESSES**

(No. A/2) Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) 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 Corporate and Business Registration Department, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information, as to the number of –

- (a) registered companies which meet the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises criteria respectively, and
- (b) individual businesses registered therewith as at to date.

**Reply:** I am giving hereunder the information requested by the hon. Member.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the companies registered with the Corporate and Business Registration Department which meet the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises criteria are given in table below -

| <b>Category</b>   | <b>Turnover</b>  | <b>Number of Companies</b> |
|-------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Micro Enterprise  | Companies with annual turnover not more than Rs2,000,000             | 21,510                     |
| Small Enterprise  | Companies with annual turnover between Rs2,000,001 and Rs10,000,000  | 7,401                      |
| Medium Enterprise | Companies with annual turnover between Rs10,000,001 and R 50,000,000 | 3,436                      |

Regarding part (b) of the question, the number of individual businesses registered with the Corporate and Business Registration Department as at to date is 139,705.