

B/439 The Honourable First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central (Mr Uteem)

To ask the Honourable the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms –

Whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of a Sexual Offences Bill in the House, he will state where matters stand?

REPLY

Madam Speaker,

1. I wish to inform the House that there is no specific reference to the “Sexual Offences Bill” in the Government Programme 2015-2019. However, the House may wish to note that paragraphs 171 and 172 of the Government Programme 2015-2019 read as follows:

***“171. Government will make better provision for the rights and interests of victims and, in particular, provide in the law for representations by or on behalf of a victim to be taken into account at sentencing stage.*”**

172. Government will amend the Criminal Code to provide for a better legal framework for dealing with sexual offences and will enhance the procedural context in which such cases are dealt with.”

2. In the light of the above, it is not proposed to come up with a Bill titled “The Sexual Offences Bill.” However, the House will recall that during the debates in relation to the Judicial and Legal Provisions Bill, this year, I had stated that there will be other reforms to be brought in relation to the criminal justice system. It is in this context that it is intended to amend the Criminal Code in relation to sexual offences. Appropriate amendments will also be brought to the Criminal Procedure Act, District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act and other relevant legislation to ensure that alleged victims of sexual offences may give evidence in a better context than at present. The amendments will also bring about certain changes aiming at fairer criminal justice norms in line with our present day circumstances. To this end, I will be consulting the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Law Reform Commission and will examine the international best practices and come up with the amendments after they have been approved by Cabinet. It is anticipated that the amendments will be introduced towards the end of this year or at latest beginning of the legislative calendar 2019.