

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION-B/470

Sitting of Tuesday 18 June 2019

B/470 The Honourable Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien (Mr Ramful)

To ask the Honourable Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection –

Whether, in regard to the Consumer Price Index, he will state if consideration will be given for the advisability of (a) reviewing the Consumer Protection Act to provide for more effective supervision on the retail prices affixed and margin of profit made by importers and retail traders and (b) appointing an Ombudsperson for Consumer Protection to receive and investigate complaints from the consumers?

DRAFT REPLY

Madam Speaker,

The present Consumer Protection Act provides for authorized officers of the Consumer Affairs Unit of my Ministry to carry out regular checks on the local market to ensure that traders affix the retail prices of goods offered for sale. Thus, officers of the Consumer Affairs Unit carry out inspections to trade premises to that effect. For the period July 2018 to 31 May 2019, 6814 inspections have been carried out and 315 contraventions established, including 108 for non-affixing of prices.

Regarding the margin of profit made by importers and retail traders, I wish to point out that price control is currently exerted only on essential/basic commodities and a list of controlled items/goods. The Price Fixing Unit of my Ministry carries out such tasks. This allows consumers to access these basic and essential commodities and goods at reasonable prices and prevents traders from profiteering. There are

different price control regimes, namely Maximum Retail Price, Maximum Mark Up and Maximum Recommended Retail Price.

The Consumer Affairs Unit receives, investigates and clears complaints from consumers. The tasks of this Unit have been completely enhanced and facilitated with the putting up of the Citizen Support Portal in April 2017. Indeed, complaints are no longer dealt with manually but electronically.

For the period April 2017 to 13 June 2019, 5015 out of 5380 complaints have been addressed and resolved, i.e. 93.2%. The remaining 6.8% are being looked into and relate to cases which take a relatively longer time to be completed.

However, despite the above, I wish to point out that my Ministry is effecting a complete review of the Consumer Protection Act which dates back to 1991 so as to provide an improved framework for the protection of consumers altogether.

The question of appointing an Ombudsperson for Consumer Protection, therefore, does not arise.