

PQ B/500

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

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

To ask the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development –

Whether, in regard to the excise duty of Rs 2 per unit leviable on non-biodegradable disposable plastic containers, he will (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the amount of revenue collected to date in respect thereof and (b) state the reasons why some manufacturers and importers have been exempted from the payment thereof?

REPLY

Madam Speaker,

The introduction of an excise duty of Rs 2 per unit on non-biodegradable plastic containers, namely take-aways, plates, bowls, cups and trays was announced in the Budget Speech 2018-19. The measure became effective on the 2nd of May 2019, that is, ten months later to give ample

time for importers and manufacturers to shift from non-biodegradable disposable plastic containers to biodegradable containers.

I am informed that plastic wastes, which will take over 100 years to degrade, constitute about 14% of the total waste landfilled in Mauritius. The use of disposable plastic food containers, including containers used for take-aways, has widely increased in Mauritius with fast changing consumption patterns. During the recent flash floods, it has been established that plastic products were a major cause of obstruction of drains and waterways.

In view thereof, there is need to change the mindset of consumers, to shift from a throw-away society to an ecologically responsible one. The House will recall that this Government took the bold decision to ban non-biodegradable plastic bags as from 1st January 2016. The introduction of the excise duty on non-biodegradable plastic containers was another step in our waste management strategy to reduce generated waste.

Regarding part (a) of the Question, I am informed that an amount of Rs 3.4 million has been collected as excise duty for the period 2nd May to 27th June 2019.

Concerning part (b) of the Question, item 90 of Part IA of the First Schedule to the Excise Act, makes provision for importers and manufacturers to be exempted from payment of the excise duty where the plastic containers are used for the packing of products. The exempted packing containers are used by local manufacturers to pack and seal their products for wholesale or retail trade or export and, as such, are an input in the manufacturing process. In addition, the packing of uncooked vegetables, meat and fruits is also exempted.

However, disposable plastic containers, including take-aways, used for the packing of food products for immediate consumption, are not exempted. These are single use plastic containers and most of them end up as litter in drains and rivers.

PKJ