ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

BEAU BASSIN POLICE TRAINING SCHOOL – HEALTH & SAFETY INSPECTION

(No. B/582) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Beau Bassin Police Training School, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a Health and Safety Officer has recently carried out an inspection thereat and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Safety and Health Officers of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, as part of their normal duties, carry out regular inspection in all Government Departments including those of the Mauritius Police Force.

In this context, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that an inspection was carried out at Beau Bassin Police Training School on the 05 of April of this year. The inspection report with recommendations was submitted to the Commissioner of Police on the 12 of April of this year. The Police have already started implementation of the recommendations submitted in the report.

As for the kitchen, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, pending the construction of a new kitchen, it has been temporarily located in another building in the compound of the school. It is expected that the construction of this new kitchen will be completed in the course of next year.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he is aware of the very bad state of this complex and that, in fact, the report that has been done is very damning concerning the hygienic state of the kitchen as he just mentioned. Therefore, can I ask him what is the time frame that we are looking for to get things done?

The Prime Minister: There were twenty six recommendations, Mr Speaker, Sir. Twelve of them have been addressed so far, the rest are being addressed gradually as they are coming up, but I spoke of the time frame for the kitchen should be ready in the course of next year.
SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – NEW TERMINAL - OPERATION

(No. B/583) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the new terminal of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airports of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the –

(a) variation costs incurred therefor if any, giving details thereof;
(b) name of the consultant therefor;
(c) date of coming into operation thereof, and
(d) operations that will be carried out thereat.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Airport Terminal Operations Ltd, that is, ATOL that the contract for the construction of the new terminal at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport is a fixed sum contract amounting to USD 305.8 M, out of which USD 8.9 M is a provisional sum for items to be finalised in the course of construction.

I am also informed that, during the foundation works, adverse subsoil conditions were encountered, namely volcanic caves over a significant portion of the site, requiring additional piling works. The Contractor was granted 3 months extension of time as per the contract conditions.

Additional works have further extended the completion date of the contract to 31 May 2013. These include the construction of a new passenger boarding bridge to accommodate the A380 aircraft, additional commercial areas and two new passenger lounges.

The final provision of the sum as per the initial contract amounted to USD 6.1 M, which brings the initial contract amount to USD 303 M. However, additional works relating, among others, as I have said, to the improvement of the commercial areas; to the construction of one additional bridge for the A380 aircraft. This has cost USD 4.2 M. Consequently, the expected final cost for the terminal is USD 307.2 M. This represents an increase of only 0.5 percent.
In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that Aéroports de Paris Ingénierie (ADPI) was designated as Design Consultant, and following a bidding exercise Louis Berger Group was appointed as independent Engineer for the management of the project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed by ATOL that, since the end of May 2013, it has started the testing and trial operations with the participation of all the stakeholders as part of the operational readiness. The date of coming into operation of the new terminal is scheduled for early September 2013.

In regard to part (d) of the question, all existing passenger facilitation services will be transferred to the new terminal, including the processing of domestic flights and the border control activities. The existing terminal will be closed for refurbishment, and upon completion it will be integrated to the new Passenger Terminal. This would result – at the end we will have eight passenger boarding bridges.

I would also like to inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the new terminal project has been implemented over a period of three years and it has been completed without any cost overruns. Additional costs, as I have said, representing less than 0.5% of the total cost have been incurred following additional works that had to be undertaken.

Mr Bhagwan: Being given the massive investment which has been carried out and also the reputation of our country being given it is a high international airport, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether action is being taken, at least, in terms of additional training being given to the staff who would be operating at different levels of the new airport, at least, to keep a standard of the reputation of Mauritius which is at stake especially for our tourism and other industrial sectors?

The Prime Minister: We don’t want to repeat what has happened at Heathrow because they made a mess of it and I suppose that is what you are referring to. I understand that they are doing all these trainings.

Mr Bhagwan: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, our attention has been drawn by the authority there. It is recruiting staff for the operation of the new terminal. Can I have an assurance from the hon. Prime Minister, at least, the best choice to be made in terms of
recruitment purpose that anybody, be it a political agent or otherwise, the right person be chosen?

**The Prime Minister:** I am sure that’s the intention, but I think it has been advertised as well; it is an open advertisement.

**Mr Barbier:** From the answer given by the hon. Prime Minister, it is clear that there is an increase of not less than Rs1.5 billion from the initial cost of the project which is supposed to be a lump sum project. So, how can the hon. Prime Minister explain this increase? Why all these supplementary infrastructures which are supposed to be part of a project? Why were these additional infrastructures that the hon. Prime Minister just mentioned not part of the initial project? The hon. Prime Minister has to explain. These were supposed to be part of the initial project.

**The Prime Minister:** No, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me clarify perhaps for the hon. Member. For example, they could not predict that there would be volcano craters underneath - I think I mentioned it. In fact, they call it volcanic caves. That is when the work was being done, even though they did do the sampling of the soil. It is only when they were digging deep that they saw there were caves. So, these were additional. But let me tell you this. There was an extension of time, but not of cost. This was taken care of because it is in the contract. It did not cost additionally for them, but the time factor was involved; they had an extension of three months. As for the other expenses, in fact, it is following a visit, when I met the then President of France, Mr Sarkozy, we decided then that perhaps - we had discussed it - it would be a good idea because we must look far ahead, not just for today or tomorrow. That is why we decided that, for Mauritius, for keeping that reputation that we have for a high quality tourism, we should also take care of the fact that we might need to have A380 aircrafts in the future. In fact, I can tell the hon. Member that there will be an A380 - I understand - that will be serving the Mauritian route some time this year; I think towards the end of the year. So, this is something that we decided afterwards; that we should cater for all this. As you probably are aware - I am not sure whether you have travelled on an A380 yet…

*(Interruptions)*

…but, hopefully, some day you will - you have to have a different bridge. It is not the same. You have to have an additional bridge for the passengers who are on the top of the aircraft. So,
that was the additional work we decided we should have. ATOL decided that they will have to have some additional; it is not ATOL which is going to give this. I think that whoever is controlling the duty free will need some additional high quality, the high tourism sector, big shops that are well-known. These are going to put additional; I think four or five shops.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to improvement of passengers’ experience at the new terminal and with regard to the domestic Rodrigues-Mauritius route, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there will be a fast-track system with regard to immigration procedures?

The Prime Minister: That is part of the programme.

Mr Jugnauth: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of the complaints that have been made by the air traffic controllers that they do not get a clear view of the part where the aircrafts will be parked, and that they have been told that the provision will be made for them to view part of the aircrafts’ parking through a CCTV? Does the hon. Prime Minister consider that to be according to the practice of ICAO?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the study was done by the people who are involved, the engineering part of the Aéroports de Paris. They don’t agree with this. In any case, part of the programme is to have the construction of a new control tower. But they do not feel that it is a problem.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House how many runways will be available after the completion of this new terminal?

The Prime Minister: That is part of the programme because we decided that we will have an additional landing runway. In other words, that will save us time, that will save us costs and petrol as well. I hope you will come for the opening because I will be mentioning how much it will, in fact, save us. This was part also of our idea that we should have an additional runway for landing so that the aircrafts do not have to wait in the air.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister why a second company has been created to overview this project and to manage the terminal?

The Prime Minister: When you say second company, you mean which company?

(Interruptions)
No, ATOL was a long time ago. It has to be different. It cannot be the same company which will now overlook the construction and all those things. That cannot be right.

Mr Bhagwan: We are talking about the new airport which falls under Airports of Mauritius. Our attention has been drawn to the departure of the Chairperson of Airports of Mauritius. We have been told that he has been a victim of the tsunami. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he intends to appoint anybody in the near future, and what are the reasons for the departure of Mr Pazhany?

The Prime Minister: There have been statements, in fact. Let us not forget I am the one who appointed him as Chairperson. Then, he was not okay; now he seems to be okay. But let’s forget this. In fact, I am told, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, in spite of the reports and statements that we’ve heard in the local press and all those things, he has not been calling at the AML, at the airport for the past two years. That is one of the problems. Second problem, he and Mr…

(Interruptions)

…except when he is travelling. Second thing is that, as everybody knows, he and Mr Petit were not seeing eye to eye, for example. But we cannot have two people in a strategic position like this, where the Chairperson and the Director are not in speaking terms. That is not possible.

Mr Jugnauth: I heard the hon. Prime Minister saying in the reply that there is a plan to construct a new control tower. May I know why is it that this was not part of this project?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry; maybe I should have said it clearer. It was part of the project. We need to have a second control tower because - not now, but we think maybe later on - we will have to have another runway additional to what we have.

MBC – REVENUE COLLECTED

(No. B/584) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, for each of the years 2010 to date, information as to the amount of –

(a) revenue collected from –
(i) television licence fees, and

(ii) advertising and

(b) expenditure incurred.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member, as provided to me by the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. In fact, I will be giving figures write-up so that the hon. Member can analyse them properly. I will go from 1999. I will go further than he is asking.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, with the rise of 50% in licence fees, will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House how much is the MBC expecting to collect as from 01 July this year?

The Prime Minister: I don’t know exactly how much they will collect, but it will be proportionate to what they are collecting now.

Mr Ganoo: Since this decision to increase the licence fees was announced some two week ago, and since it has not yet been published in the Government Gazette yet, does the hon. Prime Minister, does Government still intend to go forward with this measure, or is the hon. Prime Minister thinking of leaving the measure for after next elections?

The Prime Minister: No. Elections or something else, we have to do what is right for the country. You probably realise that it is a very, very low fee at the moment. The last time it was increased was in 2002, that is, 11 years ago, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, we will be doing it.

Mr Obeegadoo: If the hon. Prime Minister could just clarify. This new measure, this increase was supposed to take effect as from the month of July. Is there any particular reason why it has not yet been officially gazetted?

The Prime Minister: There are some people who actually are not going to be affected by the increase at all. Some people are not going to be affected, I understand. They are working out these details. I believe they should be ready very soon.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the outcry in the population on this increase, will the hon. Prime Minister consider making the payment optional instead of mandatory, so that those who do not want to pay that increase do not have to pay? Then, the MBC just has to code
the programme, so that if you want to pay and get access, you pay and you get access, and if you
don’t want to watch MBC, you don’t pay the fee.

**The Prime Minister:** That’s a long debate that was decided by the former, former Prime
Minister at the time because there were all sorts of problems. That is why it was linked to that.

**Mr Baloomody:** Sir, on the same line, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that those who
have MyT are already paying for the three channels of the MBC and now they are being charged
again to pay through the CEB bill? Will he look into that matter so that those who already have
MyT do not have to pay the MBC fees because they are already paying same with MyT?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not sure that is the case, but I can transmit what the hon.
Member is saying to the MBC.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House how much money is owed
by companies for advertisement and what measures are being taken to recover this money?

**The Prime Minister:** For advertising sum, that was not in the question. If the hon.
Member asks me a substantial question, I will answer. I think I have actually answered part of it
in a question. But if the hon. Member asks me, I will answer it.

**Mr Bhagwan:** The Director of Audit, in his last report for the financial accounts of the
MBC/TV, has been very, very critical concerning the management of the fees coming from
advertisements, the commissions which were received and being paid to officers. Now that the
population is being asked to pay 50% - and we all know the *maja karo* and the *manze bwar* and
the *politique des petits copains*...

**Mr Speaker:** What is your question, hon. Member?

* (Interruptions) *

**Mr Bhagwan:** I am just coming to my question.

* (Interruptions) *

I am coming to my question!

* (Interruptions) *

We are all paying; you are paying as well, Sir.
Mr Speaker: Yes, but I am fully concerned with your question!

Mr Bhagwan: It is our money. We have to know how much of our money is being spent by Mr Hitler there! Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister, as the Minister responsible...

Mr Speaker: No!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan...

(Interruptions)

Silence!

(Interruptions)

I say silence!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, just rephrase your question!

Mr Bhagwan: We all know, Sir. I do not listen to all these people who are barking there!

Mr Speaker: Yes, you listen to me!

Mr Bhagwan: They are barking here! Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister as Minister responsible for the MBC/TV, what action does he intend to direct the Chairperson of the Board to see to it that the management of the financial accounts of the MBC is being done in a proper way?

The Prime Minister: First of all, I must reject this idea of petits copains. In fact, he is putting a lot of orders. Is the hon. Member saying that they are going to starve there? I am not sure that is the proposal!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

The Prime Minister: But I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the MBC is pursuing a restructuring programme and I should say that, for example, they are purchasing films, serials and football matches at a lower price. When everywhere else the prices are going up, they are
now purchasing at a lower price. They also have a lot of control on the administrating and operating expenses and that is why it is going down. They have terminated the outsourcing of transport, cleaning and security services. All this is being done now in-house. They are also reviewing the work processes, the rationalisation of manpower. I do not have the details of the figures that the hon. Member has asked me, but I know they are increasing the advertising revenue. So, all this is being done.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Issack!

(Interruptions)

Mr Issack: In fact, I have two questions for the hon. Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Only one!

Mr Issack: I can put the two in one!

(Interruptions)

Does the hon. Prime Minister have an idea about the number of households concerned with the TV licence and also does the MBC/TV have any new projects in the pipeline for the viewers?

The Prime Minister: They have increased the digital channels quite massively, as the hon. Member probably knows, not just here, but also in Rodrigues. At the moment, concerning the number of subscribers - I have the last figures for December of last year - those who are paying Rs20 per month is 23,591; those paying Rs100 per month is 284,991. The number of non-domestic subscribers paying Rs10,000 per month - we are talking about hotels, restaurants and private institutions - is 41 and the number of subscribers paying Rs100 per TV set is 117. This is the actual number. I do not think the hon. Member is asking me for Rodrigues, but it is 7.

Mr Speaker: Is there one question from hon. Fakeemeeah? The hon. Member raised his hand. Does he have a question? He has none! Hon. Soodhun!

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the person who is looking in the departmental commissions is not a qualified person. In fact, the person is a ‘she’ and she is not qualified.

(Interruptions)
Listen, man!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Soodhun!

(Interruptions)

Come on! Put your question!

Mr Soodhun: I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware…

Mr Speaker: Please, address the Chair!

Mr Soodhun: The Prime Minister will probably answer the question; he knows that.

Mr Speaker: Alright!

Mr Soodhun: That the person who is in charge of this department for the advertising fees…

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Stop it now!

Mr Soodhun: … is not a qualified person.

(Interruptions)

She is not being chosen where the necessary qualifications are required. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware?

The Prime Minister: I must ask for a clarification. She is not qualified to what?

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: For the post.

The Prime Minister: But to do what?
To get the advertising revenue! I am not aware of this, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I will certainly look into the matter.

Mr Jugnauth: Sir, on the one hand, the MBC increases the licence fee in order to get more revenue, but is the hon. Prime Minister aware that on the other hand, there are a number of advertising agencies that owe millions of rupees to the MBC? I will cite only two cases. One is Dream Solutions. In fact, there is a case of malpractice with regard to that company where they have been asked only a guarantee of Rs100,000.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should put his question!

Mr Jugnauth: But they have been given facilities of up to more than Rs1m. This, up to now, has not been paid to the MBC. And the case of …

Mr Speaker: I am waiting for your question, hon. Member!

Mr Jugnauth: Yes, I said two examples, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: No! Just put your question! You have said enough!

Mr Jugnauth: The question is that a number of advertising agencies owe millions of rupees to the MBC and the MBC is not doing anything to recover those sums!

The Prime Minister: In fact, this relates to a long time ago and it is not recent. I think I answered a question not so long ago about what the MBC is doing. There have been negotiations going on; they have not agreed to a price, because the advertising people are saying they were told that they can do this and that and all this. So, all this is being sorted out. I know there are negotiations. If they do not agree on negotiation, there will be a Court case; it will be taken to Court.

Mr Speaker: Last question for the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the increase of 50% which Government has announced to be effective as from 01 July and in view of the difficulties being faced by thousands and thousands of families in this present economic situation, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he could consider the advisability of postponing this measure. True it is that a filet de protection is granted to a number of our concitoyens but the number exempted is very small. I
think it applies to only those who consume some 30 CEB units. But in view of the difficulties faced by the Mauritian population at the moment, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister to seriously think about postponing this measure until later?

**The Prime Minister:** Let me tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition – but he was not involved in this – the first increase was not 50%, but 400%!

*(Interruptions)*

The first increase that was done by previous Government! So, 50% is not comparable to 400%!

The other problem that we have, as the Leader of the Opposition rightly said, is that we have some people who actually – when the consumers have consumed less than, I think, a total of 369 kilowatts hours of electricity, they only paid Rs20 per month. So, already this is being done and for non-domestic it is different. But in another case then it would be Rs100, otherwise it is Rs20. But I must also say, Mr Speaker, Sir - and I think the Opposition, hon. Bhagwan especially, has referred so many times to the financial situation of the MBC. That is one. Every time there is PRB increase - 2003, 2008, 2013 - they have to have this additional amount of money to pay for the workers. They cannot freeze the pay. It won’t be right as well. There has been substantial increase in the cost of electricity, fuel, spare parts and all this. We cannot allow them to go on increasing the deficit. That is why we have to address this issue because it is a financial issue, we cannot continue to allow it to accumulate.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I am left with one minute. So, I’ll allow hon. Soodhun a last question.

**MBC - FOREST SIDE & PORT LOUIS - OFFICE**

*(No. B/585) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)* asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to -

(a) if it occupies an office in the former premises thereof, in Forest Side and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor, and

(b) the use made of the office thereof, in Port Louis.
**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that following the relocation of the Corporation’s Headquarters to Moka, the lease held by the Corporation at Forest Side was rescinded on 17 July 2012 by the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

Since 09 August 2012, the land and the building at Forest Side are vested in the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology for the setting up of a University campus.

I am further informed by the Director General of the MBC that the Corporation is occupying only two ancillary buildings of the former premises of the Corporation at Forest Side and this only on a temporary basis. These buildings are currently being used by the Corporation as an outstation for the purpose of housing a technical unit responsible for the conduct of surveys on radio and television reception over the island.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that the Corporation is using the office space in Port Louis to accommodate a Marketing Unit and a Production Unit.

The Director General has indicated that the Marketing Unit operates in Port Louis because of the nature of its activities and this requires it to have an office in Port Louis.

A Production Unit in Port Louis is logistically and practically required to ensure that coverages of an urgent nature are promptly attended to in the Capital and the northern regions.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the fourth floor of the Cerne House is being used only for the officers who are considered *indésirables* or on the basis of punitive transfer? There are only six officers there and they are not doing anything. They have been put there just as a punitive transfer.

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Member means to say that they are not working and being paid then; they should be working.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Any supplementary question! Yes, hon. Bhagwan!
Mr Bhagwan: I’ll come to the same question that hon. Soodhun has asked. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to inquire seriously into the space which has been kept by the Director General of the MBC there at the old building as a Camp Nazi for people...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, you should not indulge in this kind of...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, I appeal to you to refrain from making this kind of allegations.

(Interruptions)

I have said!

The Prime Minister: I think it would be an exaggeration.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No. It is an abuse of it!

The Prime Minister: We should not exaggerate but, as I said, this is of a temporary nature.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Time is over! I will allow a last question to hon. Jugnauth.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. Prime Minister then circulate, probably not now, later on, the list of employees at the Forest Side office …

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Jugnauth: ... together with their responsibility and their remuneration?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I will certainly do that.

Mr Speaker: A last question!

Mr Jhugroo: Being given...

(Interruptions)
Mr Speaker: Silence! That is the last question.

Mr Jhugroo: ... that we have got a modern MBC building at Reduit, would the hon. Prime Minister consider to cut cost and to close these two offices at Cerne House and Forest Side?

The Prime Minister: I explained the Forest Side one is being closed. It is on a temporary basis because they are trying to get offices here. But at the Cerne House, they feel they need - because it is essential to have a quick response - to have a small office here.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/591 has been withdrawn. Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! PQ No. B/601!

SICOM – EBÈNE BUILDING

(No. B/601) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the State Insurance Company of Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if it has received any offer from one Mr R. G. for the sale of a building to be constructed at Ebène and, if so, indicate -

(a) the price offered therefor;
(b) if the sale has been concluded and, if so, when;
(c) how the construction of the said building is to be funded, and
(d) if the plot of land on which the said building will be constructed had previously been earmarked for a green space project.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to underline that the State Insurance Company of Mauritius Ltd (SICOM), being a public company incorporated in accordance with the Companies Act, it would not be proper to reveal matters pertaining to its business transactions. Responsibility for the management of the company rests with the Board of Directors. Furthermore, Government of Mauritius is not a direct shareholder in the company.

However, for the sake of transparency, I am providing to the hon. Member information which is at my disposal.
Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, in general, property asset class is an essential part of the investment portfolios of insurance companies. In line with its strategy, SICOM, in an attempt to diversify its portfolio of investment, was looking for new opportunities such as Real Estate Development Projects. In this respect, SICOM wanted to position itself in the Ebène area and had, accordingly, been exploring the possibility of purchasing strategically located buildings in this prime region. A first attempt was effected in 2008 to purchase a property in Ebène but this did not materialise.

Subsequently, in September 2010, SICOM considered the purchase of a building in Ebène near the Cyber Tower I which was being constructed by a company known as Arushi Development Ltd. The project was deeply analysed at the level of the Board of Directors of SICOM to secure the best deal for the company, in line of its procedures for such type of investment. Accordingly, the Board approved the purchase of the building and a Letter of Intent was issued to Arushi Development Ltd on 09 December 2010.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that an initial offer in the sum of Rs747 m. (excluding VAT) was made by Arushi Development Ltd for a building of 14,470 sq metres or 154,820 sq ft that is Rs4800 per sq ft. In the light of the due diligence carried out by SICOM consultants, the price was brought down to Rs591.6 m. that is Rs3800 per sq ft excluding VAT. A Vente en l’Etat Futur D’Achèvement was subsequently signed for the purchase of the said building after completion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that according to SICOM, the cost of the Ebène building, which has, as I have mentioned, been reduced from Rs4,800 to Rs3,800 per sq ft (excluding VAT) after tough negotiations is virtually identical to that of SICOM’s new building in Port Louis, on a comparable basis, although built property prices in Ebène are higher than in Port Louis.

As far as part (c) of the question is concerned, the construction of the building is not being financed by SICOM.

Concerning part (d) of the question, I am informed that the land is owned by Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd (BPML) I am not aware of this issue.
Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister confirm to the House whether there was a Consultant who recommended to SICOM to make such a deal and can we know the name of the Consultant?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am aware of is that SICOM did appoint Ong Seng Goburdhun who is a very well-known and respected Consultant to look at this whole issue. And, in fact, it is this new Consultant, Mr Speaker, Sir, who advised SICOM as to what would be a fair purchase price.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware that Ong Seng Goburdhun & Partners is also a consultant for that promoter?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say I am not aware of this at all, but I must say that all this happened prior to my joining the Ministry and I am sure, Mr Speaker, Sir, that everything was done according to what was fair and ethical, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Roopun: Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister say whether SICOM did make any request to be allotted any plot of land directly from the BPML before embarking on a purchase of property from a third party?

Mr Duval: I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. We heard from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister that SICOM which is an insurance company will now also go into real estate business with all the risk associated with that line of business. So, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether any authorisation was sought by SICOM and obtained from the Financial Services Commission to see whether that will in any way affect its solvency?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that every insurance company especially those dealing in long-term insurance business would be well-advised to buy property. It is normal, it is current and I am also advised by the FSC that SICOM is particularly highly liquid and, therefore, such an investment would be a good step on its part, Mr Speaker, Sir. Therefore, it is quite normal and natural for insurance companies dealing in long-term insurance business to purchase properties. Secondly, it is happening all the time and thirdly, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not the same as going into a real estate business as I mentioned, the rate of return calculated on this property is substantial.
Mr Jhugroo: Being given that SICOM has spent above Rs400 m. for the extension of the existing building in Port Louis; how do you justify hon. Vice-Prime Minister that a sum of Rs600 m. is being paid for a phantom building in Ebène?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been comparison of the cost of construction in Port Louis and the final cost that SICOM will pay for its building in Port Louis compared to the cost of purchase of the building from Arushi in Ebène and, I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the two prices are virtually identical although one would have expected that property prices in Ebène could actually command higher prices than property in Port Louis at this time.

Mr Seeruttun: Merci, M. le président. C’est un fait connu que le président du conseil d’administration de SICOM est un partenaire dans les affaires du promoteur Arushi Development. Donc, n’y a-t-il pas dans un cas pareil, un conflit d’intérêt quand ce promoteur fait une proposition à la SICOM?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, firstly, I think all this happened before the new Chairman joined SICOM. Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware at all of what the hon. Member is saying.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I heard the hon. Minister saying that the purpose of purchasing that building is that SICOM is very liquid and, therefore, because it has a lot of money, it has sought for a building which is costing as much as the unoccupied building that it has just built. Is this a criterion that is being used by pension funds and managers for purchasing building, on the cost of the building rather than on the rate of return? Is the hon. Minister aware that Infinity Building which has been lying idle for two years was not getting any rate of return, why should SICOM buy that building when it knows very well that there is an oversupply of office space in Ebène?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, firstly, I am not aware whether Infinity is empty or not, but what I would say is that there is obviously at any time some unoccupied office space which is available, but the very fact that promoters from the private sector continue to build new buildings must mean that there is expectation that demand will continue increasing for office buildings. The return - as I mentioned - that has been calculated on this particular building as the building in Port Louis is excellent, Mr Speaker, Sir, and higher than what SICOM would be able to command will place the money in deposit.
**Mr Jhugroo:** Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House who decided or recommended for this plot of land to be granted to Arushi Development when it was clearly earmarked for a green space?

**Mr Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not the Minister responsible for BPML.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister say whether there was an Inter-Ministerial Committee that looked into the malpractices at BPML and recommended for allocation of plots of land to be enquired by the Police? Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister say whether this plot of land has been the subject of such an enquiry?

**Mr Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would offer the same reply as previously.

**Mr Roopun:** Before negotiating with this particular promoter did the SICOM issue any expression of interest as regards owners or lease holders having plot of land or building in the region of Ebène?

**Mr Duval:** I understand not, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I understand also that has been the current practice. SICOM already owns properties around the island. It has never been the policy for it to issue tenders of that sort.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question!

**Mr Seeruttun:** M. le président, est-ce que l’honorable vice-Premier ministre peut nous dire si l’Investment Committee de la SICOM avait évalué ce projet et s’ils ont recommandé l’achat de ce bâtiment?

**Mr Duval:** I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, having looked at it, that SICOM took all the measures that would be expected of a reputable insurance company to ensure that itself and its shareholders got the best possible deal from this project. And, as you can see, the price which has been agreed is a reasonable one compared to what is ongoing because I did compare to what is actually the market rate and also, Mr Speaker, Sir, the price of the pudding is in the eating, it is the same price for construction as is being paid by SICOM on its building in Port Louis.

**Mr Speaker:** Since you are the author of the question, a last question for you.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Would the hon. Vice-Prime Minister consider asking SICOM not to go forward with this deal in the public interest?
Mr Duval: No, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Radegonde-Haines!

GRANDE RIVIÈRE NOIRE - ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

(No. B/602) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to alcohol consumption, he will state if he is aware of an increase thereof in Grande Rivière Noire, in Constituency No. 14, and, if so, indicate -

(a) if a study has been carried out to assess the -

(i) number of families adversely affected therewith, and

(ii) percentage of men, women, adolescents and children having drinking habits and if not, why not, and

(b) the actions, if any, that will be taken in relation thereto.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that no survey is done on the basis of a specific locality or village as any one locality is not representative of the whole population and as such, will not depict the national situation.

Consequently, no figures on alcohol consumption are available for the village of Grande Rivière Noire.

However, my Ministry carries out regular surveys on non-communicable diseases and its risk factors, of which one is alcohol consumption. The survey is done on a national basis in a scientific manner so as to obtain data which reflect the current national situation in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to recommendations made by the International Experts, surveys on non communicable diseases - that is, NCD Surveys - are, in principle, carried out almost every five years. In this respect, the three previous surveys were carried out in 1998, 2004 and 2009 respectively. I am tabling an extract of the NCD Survey 2009 relating to the findings on alcohol consumption.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the next NCD Survey which will include alcohol consumption is due to take place early in 2014.
Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, in the context of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme UN Habitat, it has been revealed by NGOs of the region of Rivière Noire that 97% of the inhabitants of this region consume alcohol. Can the hon. Minister tell us what activities - since he is talking island wise - have been carried out by his Ministry in Rivière Noire to contribute to more equal quality of life to all Mauritians, reduce the trends of alcohol consumption and persistent poverty in this region?

Mr Bundhoo: May I, Mr Speaker, Sir, assure the hon. Member that I will table a list of actions and sensitisation campaigns organised by NATReSA in the Black River District, and some activities that have also been carried out at Grande Rivière Noire. But I would wish to inform the House that, at present, we have already worked out for the first time a National Action Plan for the reduction of alcohol. It will be presented in Cabinet within the next 15 days and then it will be made public.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he could give us an idea of how many children get admitted under the influence of alcohol to the Government hospitals, let us say for the past year?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information sought is being tabled with regard to children abusing of alcohol and the age related to that is available. In any case, it is already a public document.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to the children, can the hon. Minister tell us whether he will expand the awareness raising campaigns to schools in the region and the vicinity?

Mr Bundhoo: I have to say that this is already done, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I said earlier, we are coming up for the first time with an Action Plan with regard to harmful use of alcohol. I am sure that when it will be made public, the hon. Member will have all the information with regard to how it is going to focus particularly to the issues raised by hon. Dr. S. Boolell concerning children and abuse of alcohol and those who have been admitted not only at the Brown Sequard Hospital but in other regional hospitals, irrespective of the ages for treatment with regard to abuse of alcohol.
Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Minister is aware of the Foetal Alcohol Syndrome as the world leading of many health problems. Can the hon. Minister tell us whether he has ever approached Etoile d’Esperance, a community-based NGO - since he talks about NATReSA - working towards the reduction of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome caused by women drinking during pregnancy in this region, and if not, why not?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to check whether this NGO, specifically mentioned by the hon. Member, is affiliated which NATReSA. But I can always liaise with NATReSA to take this specific NGO on board.

Mr Issack: As in the case of smoking, will the Ministry see into the possibility of having a programme or a clip on TV to show the ill-effects of alcohol on the individual as well as on society at large?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already launched the campaign with regard to cigarettes in Mauritius, and only a couple of months ago it was extended in Rodrigues, and same can be done for alcohol.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, given that we are talking about Mauritius at large, and the hon. Minister is very well aware of the alarming problem of alcohol in the region, can consideration be given to ban selling of alcohol to pregnant women and increase the legal age of drinking, to avoid future socioeconomic and health problems in Mauritius and in this region?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I understand, 18 years of age is about the right of vote and everything, and the right to buy all these things. Whether we are going to raise this age above 18 years of old is a matter for Government as a whole to decide; how much this is legal or illegal. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will have to apologise to my good friend, hon. Reza Issack. The programme on cessation of cigarettes is already on in Mauritius and has been extended to Rodrigues. With regard to …

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, we are speaking of alcohol!

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether I heard right that he said children were being admitted to Brown Sequard Hospital for alcoholic intoxication?
Mr Bundhoo: The question was asked about whether children are being admitted in hospitals for treatment with regard to abuse of alcohol. I took the precaution of saying that for adults and anybody suffering from abuse of alcohol, there is a policy where they are admitted in the Brown Sequard Hospital and all regional hospitals. This is what I said. I did not say that children for abuse of alcohol are being admitted in the Brown Sequard Hospital. I did not say that specifically.

BLACK RIVER – CIS HOUSES – TOILET FACILITIES

(No. B/603) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the project for the construction of toilets for twenty needy households in the region of Rivière Noire, in Constituency No.14, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the 2013 Budget there is a provision for an amount of Rs12 m. for the upgrading of CIS houses, which also includes the construction of toilet facilities.

In line with the implementation of this policy, I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation that a need assessment was carried out in the District of Black River, and some 18 households needing such facilities were identified. I am given to understand that, out of the 18 families, six have already constructed their own toilets. Two are in the process of completing the construction, and the remaining 10 families received the assistance of NEF and CSR companies. My information is that the construction works in respect to these 10 families have been completed.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned 18 households. I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to this assessment carried out in the region of…

Mr Speaker: This is not allowed. Put a question!

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Is the hon. Minister aware that as per the assessment carried out in Le Morne itself, since he talked about Rivière Noire, there is over 40 households without toilets, and will he look into the matter?

Mr Dayal: Definitely, I will look into the matter.
**Mrs Radegonde-Haines:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that in the Cité of Rivière Noire, there are asbestos houses where approximately four or more families are sharing one toilet and same to the Avenue Quatre Saisons, Boulodrome, Camp Robinet? There are more than four families sharing one toilet; sometimes there are 12 families sharing four toilets. Will he take immediate action to improve the conditions of living of the needy people of this region?

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the 18 vulnerable families which I have mentioned come from Camp Robinet, and this has been attended to. For the others, I will send my officers to see what the situation is. The needs assessment will be done, and the needful will be done accordingly.

**Mr Speaker:** This is a proper time to break. We will resume after one and a half hours.

*At 1.02 p.m the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.39 p.m. with Mr Deputy Speaker in the Chair*

**PORT LOUIS EASTERN POST OFFICE - UPGRADING**

(No. B/604) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the Port Louis Eastern Post Office, located at the Corner Nicolay and Magon Streets, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Post Limited, information as to if –

(a) there is a lack of space thereat, and

(b) the building housing same is in a bad state and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

**Mr Pillay Chedumbrum:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Post Ltd that the building housing the Port Louis Eastern Post Office covers a floor area of 211.32 square metres, that is, 693 sq ft, and the office space available is adequate to cater for the needs of the inhabitants of the region.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is worth pointing out that continuous upgrading and extension works have been carried out since 2008 which have resulted in the extension of the floor area.
from 104.20 sq metres (341 sq ft) to 211.32 sq metres, (693 sq ft) at present which is more than double.

Moreover, profilage shelter of 286 sq ft has been mounted and an additional lobby created to decongest the existing one which is of an area of 300 sq ft. Unfortunately, no further extension can be envisaged because of limited land surface area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that, although the present building has been constructed in the year 1978, it is not in a bad state as it is being maintained regularly. It is the policy of the Mauritius Post Limited to upgrade and maintain all Post Office buildings and uplifting works amounting to Rs685,000 have been undertaken at this office over the last five years.

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister to say again because I didn't hear it well? What about the square metre of the post that we are talking because, to my knowledge, it is only a very small room and very often what happens there is a long queue and the queue goes up to the street. I have been there so many times and it is, in fact, a very small room. This is why I have been asked by people from my Constituency to put that PQ. I would also like to invite the hon. Minister if his answer differs from what I am saying to pay a visit there and to look into the matter.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, when that portion of land with the building was vested to Mauritius Post Limited, it was in 2002. As my friend has rightly pointed out Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at first, there was only 341 sq ft, that is, 104.20 square metres. Now, it has been extended to 693 sq ft. As I said, there has been an additional lobby which has been created. Also, we have extended it to 300 sq ft. I have requested Mauritius Post Limited to communicate to me some pictures of the site. I can table it Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and you will see for yourself the amount of work that has been carried out and the amount of extension also that has been taken into account. Now it is no longer possible to increase more capacity to that existing building.

Mr Issack: Will the hon. Minister tell us how many post offices we have in Mauritius and in the District of Port Louis?
Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have around 120 post offices in Mauritius and in the region of Port Louis particularly we have five.

Mr Issack: Est-ce que l’honorable ministre peut nous dire si le ministère compte ouvrir d’autres bureaux de poste pour servir les citoyens du pays?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: M. le président, l’idéal aurait été que, dans chaque région, on a un bureau de poste, mais il n’est pas évident, ce n’est pas possible de le faire. Quand même, on peut dire que, on essaie dans la mesure du possible, de donner autant de services aux citoyens. Donc, je considère - ce que le Mauritius Posts Ltd m’a fait comprendre – que pour la région de Port Louis, nous avons déjà cinq bureaux de poste et que c’est suffisamment desservit.

Mr Ameer Meea: I know that, in fact, the land where the building is situated is a limited one; you cannot extend it because the land is small. My point is, maybe you should try to relocate the post, because where it is, it is found in a densely populated region. You said there are five posts, but five posts cover Port Louis in total, which constitute of five constituencies. So, would the hon. Minister see to it, if it is possible, to relocate the existing one? Because there was a proposition that it is being relocated in Cité Martial, but I don’t know what happened to this proposition?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to look into it with Mauritius Posts Ltd. As far as I have mentioned, this building now belongs to Mauritius Posts Ltd and they have incurred expenses to an amount of Rs685,000 to upgrade it. I don’t think that it will be possible for them to leave it and to move to another region, but anyway, I am going to look into it with the Mauritius Posts Ltd and we will apprise you accordingly.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister saying that Port Louis itself has around six post offices. I have several times requested him to look into the possibility of putting up a post office in Bassin. Bassin is densely populated, it has around 10,000 inhabitants. Can I ask the hon. Minister why he is not giving consideration to giving a post office in Bassin?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned before, l’idéal aurait été qu’on met des bureaux de poste un peu partout.

(Interruptions)
Je peux comprendre le predicament of the hon. Member, because now the services that have been offered at our post office, we have a variety of services which are being offered, and that’s why you want to have one post office in the region of Bassin.

As far as I can recollect, there was a PQ which the hon. Member has put to me some time ago and we have said that, actually we have one at la Louise which is catering for Bassin, but, anyway, we are going to look into it and see whether there is possibility to bring another post office in that vicinity.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has a time frame for this, because hon. Bachoo came for…

The Deputy Speaker: No, it’s OK.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: …the municipal elections and promised the inhabitants of Bassin a post office?

The Deputy Speaker: No! Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, your question was a straightforward question and let us have a straightforward answer from the Minister.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to take into account the financial situation of Mauritius Posts Ltd before engaging ourselves in extending the services that are being offered. It is good to note that in 2004, the financial situation of the Mauritius Posts Ltd cannot allow us to do so at present. If you look at the figure, in 2005, there was a loss, Mauritius Posts Ltd was incurring loss at Rs90,368,983. In the circumstances, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now we are incurring profits. This year, we have made Rs64,279,700. We cannot, at this stage, increase immediately the number of post offices.

MALAKOFF/ROBINSON ROAD & BEARD/PLAINE SOPHIE 1 – TRACK ROADS

(No. B/605) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney General whether, in regard to the project for the construction of track roads along the Malakoff/Robinson Road and the Beard/Plaine Sophie 1, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is implementing under the Food Security Fund, an Agriculture Infrastructural Development Programme which caters for the rehabilitation of drainage systems, repairs of existing damaged access roads, construction of
wheel tracks to facilitate access to farmers’ fields and the rehabilitation of existing irrigation and drainage networks as well as the provision of new irrigation facilities.

Under this programme, a number of projects are being implemented, including the construction of a 1.7 km long reinforced concrete wheel track from Henrietta to Robinson Link Road, Curepipe and a reinforced 1.3 km long concrete wheel track from La Marie to De Rauville/Plaine Sophie 1. With the implementation of these two projects, planters in the region will have easy access to their food crop plantations as the existing access roads have been severely damaged by the recent torrential rains.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the project for the construction of a wheel track from Henrietta to Robinson Link Road, Curepipe, I am informed that the contract for the construction works has already been awarded following a tendering exercise. The project is expected to be completed within 4 months from now.

As regards the other project for the construction of a wheel track from La Marie to De Rauville/Plaine Sophie 1, the bids for the construction works have already been received and are being evaluated by my Ministry.

**E-JUDICIARY – CONTRACT**

(No. B/606) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney General whether, in regard to E-Judiciary, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

(a) the name of the contractor therefor;

(b) the cost thereof;

(c) if any delay occurred in the implementation thereof and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor, and

(d) if the Mauritius Law Society has made representations for the freezing thereof, and if so, indicate the actions, if any, taken in relation thereto.

**Mr Faugoo**: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the aim of the e-filing and case management system, commonly referred to as the e-Judiciary, is an important feature relating to the modernisation of the Judiciary by availing itself of the full potentials that Information
Technology can bring for the optimisation of our Court cases management system, with a view to bring about an improvement in the quality and expeditiousness of the justice delivery system.

Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the e-filing and case management system enables attorneys to file, electronically, the pleadings required in various types of cases, and have cases put in shape and fixed for merits, instead of having to do so in person at a number of sittings before the Courts, as is generally the case.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that in regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, the information is as follows –

(a) the contractor for the e-Judiciary Project is Mauritius Network Services Ltd, in which the Government of Mauritius is a major shareholder;

(b) a total sum of USD3.6 m. has been earmarked with respect to the implementation of Phase 1 of the e-Judiciary project. The Investment Climate Facility of Africa and the Government of Mauritius will provide the 75% and 25% of the funding respectively.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a pilot e-Judiciary project is under way at the Commercial Division of the Supreme Court. I am informed by the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that it is intended to extend the project to all Civil Divisions of the Supreme Court, other than the Family Division and also the Criminal Division, I guess, once the pilot project is over. This pilot project, together with the said proposed extension constitutes Phase I of the e-Judiciary project. It is intended, as part of Phase II of the project, to extend it to all other civil and criminal Divisions of all Courts across Mauritius. I am informed by the Master and Registrar that Phase II of the project has not yet to be finalised.

Regarding part (c) of the question, I am informed by the Master and Registrar that delay has indeed occurred in the implementation of the project. The project was originally to be implemented within 18 months of the signature of the contract on 31 March 2010.

Several reasons, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, have been identified by an Implementation Team, comprised of members of the Judiciary, for the delay. Firstly, after a User Acceptance Test, devised by the Implementation Team, was carried out by the Judiciary in October of 2011, numerous suggestions were made to the contractor who agreed to accommodate these
suggestions which had a significant impact on the system designed, and which necessitated major changes to the different modules. Secondly, the contractor has experienced difficulty in retaining key personnel in connection with the project, and this has contributed to the delay in the delivery of the system. Thirdly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court has further informed that the system has been implemented on a pilot basis since 04 April 2013 and certain bugs were detected. These bugs are currently being fixed by the contractor’s technicians on site.

In regard to part (d) of the question, I am informed that representations were received from the Mauritius Law Society requesting that the system be frozen. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following a meeting between the hon. Chief Justice and the Executive Committee of the Mauritius Law Society in the beginning of June this year, the latter unanimously agreed that the e-Judiciary project be proceeded with. Following that meeting, free training sessions were conducted by the contractor on 3 occasions in the month of June this year so as to enable the users to familiarise themselves with the various functionalities of the system. All attorneys at law, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, were invited to the training sessions, and some 70 users, comprising Attorneys-at-law and Attorneys’ clerks have, so far, attended the training sessions. I am also informed that additional sessions may be organised on request.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that -

(a) a User’s Manual for Attorneys is under preparation and will be available for distribution at the end of the pilot phase, to which I previously referred to, and

(b) should there be additional representations made to the Judiciary in connection with the e-Judiciary system the latter will address same accordingly.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has the hon. Minister been informed that with the e-Judiciary an Attorney has to pay a one-off of Rs10,000 and a monthly subscription of Rs1,000 to put up an appearance before a Commercial Court besides the fact that the cost for a
document to be filed before the Commercial Court has increased from Rs250 to Rs350 for the first five pages and an additional Rs50 for each additional page? Is the hon. Minister aware that obviously the Attorneys will not bear the cost themselves and that these costs will be passed on to the consumers, that is, to the population? Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the population has been made aware that there is an increase in cost when they see an Attorney for a commercial case for Phase I of the project, let us forget about Phase II for the time being?

Mr Faugoo: Obviously, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the operational cost implication to Attorneys who are going to use the system. But this is provided by the law. It is not something decided by the Judiciary on their own. It is not one-sided. This is provided for under the First Schedule of the Courts Electronic Filing of Documents Rules 2012. This is prescribed under that particular regulation that they have to pay a one-off upfront sum of Rs10,000 and also a monthly subscription of Rs1000 and, as was said, a fee of Rs350 per document up to five pages and a fee of Rs10 per extra page uploaded from there on.

What the hon. Member is saying is whether this has a repercussion on the clients, litigants or the public. It depends on which angle you are looking at it from, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Supreme Court is not making a profit out of it. This is the operational cost which has to be passed on to people who are making use of the system. This is one of the processes in the modernisation of our Judiciary in this country. The Court fees have remained the same. We should not mix issues. The Court fees which are charged to lodge a case have been there for the past thirteen years. We have to bear this in mind. As I said, it depends on which angle you are looking from. Rs10,000 one-off upfront, this is not going to happen every year. It is nearly Rs800...

(Interruptions)

It is one-off...

(Interruptions)

One Attorney, one-off and then monthly it is going to be about Rs800. What I am saying is that one should understand – maybe my friends who are at the Bar should understand it better - if an Attorney lodges a case otherwise, not using the e-services, he has to go either in person or through his clerk to wait for the office to open. He has to go to do it personally. He has to go and
pay the fees required. For how long? Maybe for more than one year. He has to go so many times before the Magistrate or the Judge to have the case being shaped so that it is fixed for trial. How many man-hours are we saving for Rs800? We have to impress upon these Attorneys that they also have a moral duty towards their clients. Rs800 for one Attorney per month! This can be used anytime. From the beginning, they can lodge the case anytime, from anywhere until the case is in shape and is fixed for merits. This is a huge step forward, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We should all subscribe to it. All be it, there is a cost element which reflects maybe at the end of the day. But I am of the opinion that people who are using this system which is for the betterment of the Judiciary as a whole – we have already modernised our Judiciary. We have come up with a special court which is the Commercial Court. This is in the interest of litigants. This is in the interest of the business community in this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is a giant step forward and we should all be happy about it.

Mr Baloomoody: Is the Attorney General aware that on the website of the Investment Climate Facility (ICF) which has financed the project up to 75%, it is written that the project will simplify and automate the settlement process and reduce time and cost for commercial cases lodged at the Supreme Court? So the idea was to reduce cost when we apply for that financial contribution but, in fact, we are not reducing cost. Cost has increased not only for Attorneys as it is not only the Attorneys who have to pay the Rs10,000, but also for Barristers. I know many young Barristers, especially new Barristers, who are not being able to practice at the Commercial Court because they could not afford to pay that Rs10,000 fixed deposit.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it depends from which angle you are looking at the problem. As I said, this is going to save the Attorney a lot in financial terms. If the case is being lodged on-line, all the formal matters which sometimes, before the Supreme Court, take years, we all complain of delays in justice, we all complain of long, protracted procedures before the Supreme Court, this is something new, as I said, this is going to reduce the cost of the Attorney at the end of the day because of the man-hours that he used to put on the previous system compared to the one today with e-filing. This should reflect in the fees that they are going to charge to their clients if they are honest to themselves. I am not condemning anybody, I am not casting any aspersion on any professional, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but, what I am saying is that this is meant to reduce cost. Even the Consultants - what my friend is saying is right – this is what they have said and this is exactly what they are doing. They are trying to reduce the cost.
We have to wait for some time for the system to start functioning fully and then we will see the fruits out of this.

**Mr Uteem:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to declare my interest because I am a Barrister and Barristers also have to pay Rs10,000 and Rs1000 per month. It is not just this, we also have to buy a computer and subscribe on-line because if you are not on-line you do not...

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** What is your question hon. Uteem?

**Mr Uteem:** Is the hon. Attorney General aware that, today as a result of the e-Judiciary, there is even more time taken up by Lawyers, Barristers and Attorneys to check each time whether there has been a decision and there is a big confusion when it comes to fixing the date of trials or arguments because unlike formal matters where all parties are present and decisions are taken there and then, now we have to wait and see when the Judge has time he will let us know the dates?

**Mr Faugoo:** I am not claiming Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this system is hundred percent trouble-free, that it does not have any problem. As I have said this is a new system which has been put in place, it is still in its teething period, if there is any problem in practice, I think representations should be made to the judiciary, to the Chief Justice and, as I have said, he is going to look into it.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that there have been forceful representations by the law society, speaking on behalf of all Attorneys, pointing to the drawbacks of this e-judiciary initiative? Is he aware that there are even today practical problems where Attorneys are being asked to get a g-mail internet address because they cannot make use of the system as it is right now? Now being given that it is access to justice that must prevail over any other consideration, will the hon. Minister agree to convey the message to where it should be conveyed that, at least, we should have the two systems operating in parallel until all the teething problems have been addressed?

**Mr Faugoo:** I am a bit surprised Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I just said that there were complaints by the law society, there was a meeting which was convened by the Chief Justice, they were asking for the system to be frozen, to be put at a pause. After the meeting with the Chief Justice, they have agreed that the system can go on, they can continue with the system.
They have provided for training, they are coming up with a brochure, a manual on how to make use of the system second, third they are open to giving more sessions of training to the end users Attorneys, Attorneys Clerks, Barristers. I said that there was not a litigation, there were representations by the Council, but this has been sorted out, this is behind us. Now, if there is any practical problem, as I have said, if representations are made like hon. Obeegadoo is saying I will, of course, as the Attorney General pass on the message to the right quarters.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my main qualm is the cost which is passed on to the consumer, to the user. As at present a person is entitled to legal aid with an income of Rs10,000 or less provided he is not the owner of any property. Does the Minister think that a person with an income of Rs10,000, who owns a small house, will be able to file a case before the commercial court, that is, in the first phase or before a family court in phase two, if such high costs are claimed by Attorneys who pass on the cost to the population? Isn’t this a denial of access to justice, to these categories of people who need legal aid?

Mr Faugoo: It is the contrary of what the hon. Member is saying. This is opening access and making it easier for litigants, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If the Member has any quarrel, if she has any representations, any apprehensions on the practice by Solicitors, by Attorneys, I think the best thing would be for her to write to the law society, understand first the workings, the mechanism of the system which has been put in place and then write to them and say they should not be passing on because there is no extra cost. In the long run there is not going to be extra cost, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Roopun: I should first of all declare my interest, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, irrespective of the cost and in addition to what has been stated by hon. Members there is also another aspect which I think the hon. Minister should consider. It is the question that any party should have latitude to present his case to the best of his abilities and the fact that for each page you download in the system, additional cost is being paid, is unfair and it is denying justice to all litigants because there is a disincentive for them to file documents which may be in their favour. I think that the hon. Minister should convey to all those concerned that, at least, for the filing of documents which may help to deliver justice there should be no additional cost.

Mr Faugoo: I’ll pass on the message Mr Deputy Speaker.
Mr Baloomoody: The ICF is financing the 75% of the E-project in our commercial court. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether – because on the website of the IFC we find that the corporate partners of IFC are Anglo-American, Coca-Cola, SABMILLER, SASOL, Shelf Foundation, Standard Bank, UNI LOVER. Is it proper for these institutions to finance our Commercial Court when we know that our Court, at least, should have neutral finance - if I may use that word - because we are talking about our commercial court and they are the corporate institutions which are supporting the institution which is financing our e-project.

Mr Faugoo: I am not aware of the components of the sources of the funds and I have not been on the website.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether the e-judiciary has made any provision for law firms to register because I am given to understand that each Attorney has to register on his or her own individual name.

Mr Faugoo: I have to look into this.

BUILDING & CIVIL ENGINEERING CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION - REPORT

(No. B/607) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he has taken cognizance of a report commissioned by the Building and Civil Engineering Contractors Association highlighting the advantages of the Chinese contractors working in Mauritius as compared to the local contractors.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): With your permission, Sir, I will reply to this question.

During the consultation exercise carried out for Budget 2013, operators of the construction sector made representations with regard to alleged unfair advantage accruing to foreign contractors operating in Mauritius with respect to tenders particularly for large projects.

Accordingly, a Report commissioned by the Building and Civil Engineering Contractors Association was forwarded to my Ministry in October last year. The Report recommended that a preference be granted to local contractors for public contracts.
I thus proposed in my 2013 Budget Speech at paragraph 284, that our procurement rules would be amended to grant a 15% margin to companies employing at least 80% local manpower, when competing for public works contracts. In this respect, the Public Procurement Office has issued on 26 December 2012 a Directive pursuant to Section 7 of the Public Procurement Act.

Other proposals made in the Report including one relating to a reasonable minimum percentage level for all contractors for generating greater value added in the economy, is being dealt with in consultation with relevant stakeholders. In that respect, permits for importation of non specialised lorries by contractors for temporary use in Mauritius will now no longer be allowed.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether local enterprises can employ up to 30% of a foreign labour whereas those contractors are allowed 100% foreign labour?

**Mr Duval:** I presume they can, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think this is a question that should be addressed to the Minister of Labour rather than to myself.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Can the hon. Minister say whether it is not to the disadvantage of Mauritian contractors to have to contribute to the NSF, to the NPF or even to the HRDC when the other contractors do not have such contributions?

**Mr Duval:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member may have a point here. We are looking at this issue, it does look like they would have an unfair advantage by not paying, at least, for the first two years these amounts and we are trying to find a solution to this issue. Generally Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say that we are looking very sympathetically at this report, there are some valuable points that have been raised and that are being considered.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this report is, in fact, a plea for fairer competition between local contractors and foreign contractors. Does not the hon. Minister think - since he has told us himself that since October of last year he was aware of this report and its contents - that, in fact, many suggestions which have been made in this report are valuable suggestions, and his Ministry should have looked into each and every suggestion made in the report with regard to promoting a fairer level playing field so that discrimination against local contractors is addressed?
Mr Duval: Yes, there are obviously two issues. One is creating a level playing field. The other one, which is as important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not to destroy competition because competition would bring fairer prices to consumers and to the public sector, which is a major consumer of these public work contracts. Nevertheless, as I mentioned, it was received in October, a few weeks before the Budget Speech. Nevertheless, we included the major recommendation, which is enhance preference for local contractors employing at least 80% local labour. We did include that. There are other issues concerning the NPF, etc, which have side effects and which have to be looked at, and we are going to do that. But we will do it very seriously, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that, apart from foreign labour coming to Mauritius, these Chinese companies even import their lorries, every small thing, they don’t even buy from local market, and this is a disadvantage to Mauritius?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just dealt with that. I told the hon. Member that my colleague, the hon. Minister, will no longer issue permits for temporary importation of these trucks unless for specialised trucks. I just replied to that.

SPEED CAMERAS - PROGUARD LTD. - CONTRACT

(No. B/608) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the recent supply and installation of speed cameras, he will state -

(a) when the contract with Proguard Ltd. therefor was signed, indicating the duration thereof and the modalities for payment therefor;

(b) country of origin and name of the manufacturer of the -

(i) cameras, and

(ii) posts, and

(c) if the contractor had -

(i) provided copy of the audited accounts and annual turnover for the past three years and, if so, table copy thereof ;
(ii) provided a bank guarantee and, if not, why not, and

(iii) executed contracts for the supply and installation of speed cameras over the past five years.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that -

(a) The contract with Proguard-Truvelo was signed by Proguard Ltd, on behalf of the Joint Venture, on 09 October 2012 for a period of three years.

The modalities of payment are as follows –

(i) advance payment of 10% against a bank guarantee;

(ii) 50% of the amount quoted on delivery related to the items delivered;

(iii) 30% of the amount quoted after commissioning of the items installed and satisfactorily tested, and 80% of the amount earmarked in the contract for services related to the items installed;

(iv) 10% retention money payable after expiration of warranty period starting as from three years after successful commissioning of each set of equipment, and

(v) for services to be provided for operation and processing of violations, the contractor shall be paid 90% of the annual amount payable related to items of services as required for a period of three years.

(b) The country of origin of the speed camera is the Republic of South Africa, and the manufacturer of the speed camera is Truvelo Manufacturers (PTY) Ltd. As for the posts, they have been manufactured locally by Mootin Engineering Ltd on behalf of Proguard Ltd. I am informed that these posts have been tested to ascertain that they are responsive to the operational needs.

(c) With regard to part (c) (i) and (iii), the tender exercise does not fall under the purview of my Ministry. However, the contractor must have satisfied all the
requirements of the tender documents for its offer to have been retained by the Central Procurement Board.

As far as part (c) (ii) is concerned, the contractor has submitted a bank guarantee for 10% advance payment, on the basis of which the advance payment was initially made.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister table the contract between Proguard and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping?

**Mr Bachoo:** Of course, I am going to submit a copy of the contract. There is one contract which has been signed between Proguard and Truvelo, which is in my possession, and I am going to submit. Secondly, the contract which has been signed between Proguard - and that is the one who got the contract - and my Ministry, I have to find out. I am going to lay a copy on the Table of the House. I don’t have any problem on that.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Given that the new installed speed cameras did not work properly and had to be recalibrated, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give a guarantee to the House that the speed cameras which were installed previously have always been working properly and that no road users has been unjustly fined due to the malfunctioning of these cameras?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, there was a technical problem - which I have already mentioned and explained to the House earlier - and corrective measures have already been taken. Even with the previous cameras also - we had a few cameras - we had problems. I would inform the House that we had problems even with those cameras, and in order to repair those cameras, it has cost us a lot of money. But, as far as this...

*(Interruptions)*

Well, I am not the manufacturer of cameras, and those cameras...

*(Interruptions)*

If you don’t want to listen, I don’t have to answer!

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

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was answering the question. But the fact is that those cameras which were installed in the past belong to a different company, and there were
problems with those cameras. I don’t manufacture. These were procured through tender. Supposedly they were the best cameras which were fixed, but they had problems. Even for these cameras which have been set up, we have certain teething problems, technical problems, which are being looked into.

Mr Bhagwan: The whole country has watched and has witnessed this mismanagement, and I would say wrongly...

(Interruptions)

‘Ki mo bisin prend l’ordre ar toi pou pose question!’

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: *Prend ar toi pour empeche volère - volère lunette! Pe badiner do!* Transfuge! *Ferme la bouche ar moi do vendeur!*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Hossen!

(Interruptions)

I have got to remind hon. Members that they have got no right to make any remarks from a sitting position!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Hossen!

(Interruptions)

This is a reminder to you only! Hon. Hossen, you are not supposed to make any remarks from a sitting position! You understand, I am sure!

Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will start again. The whole country has witnessed the way this project has been wrongly managed. We had the project, investment, public money, there was a planning, and then, suddenly, the cameras went out of order and were not fully operational legally. Even amnesty was given to people who got contravention. Can I
know from the hon. Minister whether, in the light of what has happened, Government is considering asking the CPB or the State Law Office to advise Government into the contract itself? Does not Government consider, being given the problems we have had with the cameras, to, at least, cancel the contract with Proguard, going through the State Law Office?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have got a report from Truvelo, that is, the manufacturing company. They have already accepted. It appears that during the transition from setting the cameras from testing into active operation, some of the set-up parameters were omitted and incorrectly installed. Therefore, the responsibility lies on Truvelo and Proguard to see to it that things are rectified. In fact, they have already started, and I have already put up a due diligence committee in my Ministry to see to it that many of the responsibilities given to them are being taken out. We will try to see how we are going to get value for money. Secondly, according to law, the contractor has to pay the liquidated damages, and this is exactly what we are doing.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In ...

(Interuptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want some order, please!

(Interuptions)

Hon. Patrick Assirvaden!

(Interuptions)

Hon. Roopun!

(Interuptions)

I want some order, please!

(Interuptions)

I want some order, please! I want some order! Hon. Patrick Assirvaden! Hon. Roopun! No one is supposed to make any remark from a sitting position! There is no cross talking, please! Hon. Dr. Sorefan!
Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In preparing the pre-qualified bidding document, illegal issues have been introduced in the document, for example, access to NTA database by supplier and integrating back office of the Police to the new back office of the supplier. May we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister who is responsible for this maldonne?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no maldonne. The tender document, when it was prepared, was properly prepared and a committee was set up earlier under the aegis of Mauritius Standard Bureau comprising of Police, TRMSU, Civil Aviation and others also; at the same time, the committee decided that the Organisation Internationale de Métrologie Légale, specifications which were used internationally be adopted for speed measurement using the radar technology. Therefore, as far as the specifications are concerned, there is no problem.

As far as the back office is concerned, we have got a letter from the Data Protection Commissioner who has given us all clearances, but, at the same time, I would like to say when there were certain apprehensions, firstly the Police was not in a position to take over the whole lot because of the shortage of staff. They have written a letter to me and that is the reason why certain responsibilities were given over to the private sector, but under the supervision of the Police. Thereafter, we have taken over the entire administration under the Police itself. That is why I have maintained, we have put up a diligence committee to see to it whatever has to be removed from the contractor, we are going to remove, but I can assure the House that there was no problem as far as specifications were concerned.

Mr Baloomoody: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say I am very surprised and shocked by the way that this issue has been handled. We know that Proguard does not have any expertise in these cameras. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister wants us to believe that there has been a contract between Proguard and Truvelo when, in fact, there is no contract. This is only a resolution by the Board of Directors of Truvelo and I will read it –

“By resolution passed by the Board of Directors of Truvelo Manufacturers Ltd passed on 20 September 2011, Mr N. K. Purmessur of Proguard Ltd. (Mauritius) has been duly authorised to sign all documents in connection of this contract on behalf of Truvelo Manufacturers Ltd.”

So, there is no contract.
And nowhere is written what is the responsibility of Proguard and what is the responsibility of Truvelo.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is in fact a contract. Let me...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have got a paper in my hand.

“According to the Ministry the instruction for application dated 01 August 2011, an applicant maybe a natural person, private entity, Government-owned entity or any combination of them with a formal intent to enter into an agreement in the form of a joint venture. Furthermore, in the case of a joint venture (...).”

Let me answer!

“In the case of a joint venture, instructions clearly stipulated that a joint venture shall nominate a representative who shall have the authority to conduct all businesses for and on behalf of any and all parties of joint venture during the bidding process and in the event of the joint venture awarded the contract within contract execution. In conformity with clause 4(1) (b) (iii), on 20 September a resolution was passed (...).”

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, please!

Mr Bachoo:

“(…) whereby Proguard was duly authorised, through his representative, to sign all documents in connection with the prequalification exercise for the supply, installation, commissioning and operation of speed enforcement cameras.”

On top of this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the responsibility to know whether Proguard or any other company is genuine or not, falls entirely on the CPB, not within the jurisdiction of my Ministry.
**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

**Dr. Sorefan:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as per the tender document bidders should quote inclusive of VAT. Proguard did not quote inclusive of VAT. With the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House why tender was awarded to Proguard?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a matter which befalls the Central Procurement Board. It is an independent institution. My responsibility, as a Minister, the moment the award is made, then, the responsibility befalls on me to see to it that the work is done properly. But as far as the contract is concerned, I don’t have to right to poke my nose. At times, it might be giving information which is available to me.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister just informed the House that it has cost a lot to repair those cameras. Can I ask him how much this has cost the country to repair the cameras and also whether there were any warranty terms when purchasing those cameras?

**Mr Bachoo:** In fact, I answered to the questions of previous cameras. There were four cameras which were set up. If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I am going to give him the answer; how much we have spent, I don’t have the figure.

**Mr Uteem:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Proguard has cost a lot of money to taxpayers and we have lost revenue through all the amnesties given to those who have infringed speed limits. In these circumstances, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he will consider rescinding the contract with Proguard in the light of their lack of expertise in installation of speed cameras?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that it is a joint venture and liabilities will have to be borne by the contractor and at the same time, we are consulting the legal advisers, who are, of course, the State Law Office, and we are going to take action as required. But, as at now, the idea of cancelling the contract is not there. If we find that there is a problem, then, of course, we will have to take action.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as just mentioned by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister that the former speed cameras which have been installed formerly had problems, so can
we know why these drivers have been unjustly fined and can we know what action will be taken by this Government to refund these drivers for excess of speed?

Mr Bachoo: When I was talking about the previous cameras, they had problems. Those were the previous cameras. In fact, when there was a breakdown, they were not registering any offences. That was about the previous cameras. As far as this one is concerned, remission has already been granted and I would like to inform the House that not only in Mauritius, in many other countries where this set up has been put, there have been certain teething problems. I have got one information, I don’t have many, but one. In 2012, for example, in England, itself they had a problem where new variables speed limit enforcement cameras, when they were put in England, they had a problem regarding the fine-tuning. So, in many other countries, they have the problem. For example, in Fiji, they had the same problem. The teething problems were there. The technical problems were there. But now since we have already started setting up the cameras, I find that they are working very well and satisfactorily. Within a week or two, all cameras will be set up, that is, the first batch will be set up and if there is no problem, of course, the contractor will have to pay the liquidated damages according to law.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, dans les spécifications du contrat le chiffre d’affaire du soumissionnaire doit dépasser les R 40 millions et selon les returns qui ont été faites par la compagnie Proguard, la compagnie n’arrive même pas à R 10 millions ou R15 millions. Comment explique-t-il le fait qu’en l’absence d’un contrat entre Proguard avec la compagnie Truvelo qui peut justifier le fait que les chiffres d’affaires atteignent les R 40 millions?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact this question should be addressed to CPB, but en passant I would like ...

(Interruptions)

Don’t laugh! This is the truth and nothing but the truth! Normally, a Minister does not have the right to answer for any other institution.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, allow the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to answer the question!
Mr Bachoo: *En passant*, I would like to say this is a joint venture, an average turnover of the organisation fully satisfied the threshold of Rs40 m. annually. I would try to venture and speak on behalf of CPB.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in an earlier reply the hon. Vice-Prime Minister could not give the name of the independent laboratory which is supposed to do the calibration of those speed cameras. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give us the name of that independent laboratory as specified in the tender specification which is going to do the calibration of those speed cameras?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is SANAS. That is the name of the laboratory which has been provided to me.

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, est-ce que l’honorable Vice-Premier ministre peut nous dire si tous les employés de Proguard ont signé une clause de confidentialité et si c’est le cas est-ce qu’il peut déposer une copie de ce contrat à la bibliothèque?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the responsibility of the Police; they are looking after the security aspects. I have just mentioned that I am not going to answer questions regarding the contract which has been awarded by the Central Procurement Board.

Mr Bhagwan: This contract was tailormade for Proguard. Can we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister how much has been paid today to Proguard on the original contract, whether any retention money has been kept in case there are future breakdowns?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have just answered this question and secondly, being given the hon. Member is casting dirty aspersions, I am not going to answer the question.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun!

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the Minister inform the House whether there has been a survey before placing all these cameras? Will the hon. Minister agree with me that, in some places, the cameras are wrongly placed as for example in Paillotte? I hope hon. Assirvaden will agree with me.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at least, we don't have to play with the credibility of our experts and our technicians. The Traffic Management Unit together with the Police Division have conducted an exercise throughout the country and they were the ones who listed
thirty three darkest spots in the country and normally we are going by the advice tendered by the Police, by the Road Security Unit of the Prime Minister’s Office and by the TRMSU. The responsibility of locating dark spots rests on that independent organisation not on me.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The last part of the question has not been answered, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is aware that, as per the bidding document, all cameras supplied and delivered to the body concerned should have been delivered with a calibration certificate for each camera. Has this been done?

Mr Bachoo: Yes these have already been calibrated; certificates have already been obtained. I can assure the hon. Member.

HADJ 2013 – ORGANISATION

(No. B/609) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the organization of the Hadj 2013, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to the –

(a) total number of visas obtained therefor and

(b) criteria set for the issue of licences to the operators thereof.

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Islamic Cultural Centre that 1040 visas have been obtained for Hadj 2013.

(i) in March 2013, the Saudi Authorities informed that Mauritius will be entitled to 1300 visas for Hadj 2013 as per our official quota;

(ii) thereafter in June, the Saudi Authorities further informed about their decision to reduce visas by 30% for most countries including Arab and Muslim ones, in view of construction works in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that notwithstanding the above and thanks to our privileged relations, the Saudi Government has reduced our quota by only 20%.
Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Islamic Cultural Centre that two sets of criteria apply for the issue of licences to operators -

(i) criteria laid down by the Saudi Authorities namely -

a) Hadj Operators should be between 22 to 60 years of age, and

b) Every organiser shall provide a refundable bank guarantee of 250 SR per pilgrim to the Ministry of Hadj when finalising contracts with the Saudi authorities namely the Moasasas.

c) The organiser should not be on any banned list in Saudia Arabia.

(ii) Criteria rate laid down by the Islamic Cultural Centre under the guidance of the Ulemas -

a) Past performance;

b) Experience in Hadj Organisation;

c) Leadership skills in difficult situations (such as flood, sickness and transport);

d) Pricing structure for current and previous Hadj including -

(i) Accommodation in Makkah and Madinah;

(ii) Tannazul, that is, 1029 SR;

(iii) Special services (Tent in Mina plus food during five days of Hadj);

(iv) Qurbani, and

(v) Visit to other Holy sites.

e) Track record in relation to -

- complaints received from Hajjes;

- breaches committed by organisers with services offered as stipulated in individual contract with Hajjes;

- sanctions imposed by the Saudi Authorities as well as by the ICC, and
- collaboration with Hadj Mission in difficult times especially there is a problem, for example, delay in serving food during five days of Hadj or disruption in internal transport system in Saudi Arabia, and finally
- the overriding requirement that they have confirmed bookings of, at least, fifty Hajjes.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, answering to a Parliamentary Question a few weeks ago, the hon. Minister stated that we had confirmed 1300 visas and then he added and I quote that –

‘My good friend next to me, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, has his own network. He has his network to link with *le roi de* Saudi Arabia and I am sure he will come back with outcomes that will be of interest to Mauritius in favour of all Hajjes of Mauritius.’

Being given that following his statement our quota has been reduced from 1300 to 1040, may I know from the hon. Minister whether his colleague has used his contacts with the Saudi Arabian king to increase our visa or if the Prime Minister has done like what hon. Bérenger did when he was Prime Minister and wrote to the King and asked for an increase in the number of visas, which he obtained.

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my good hon. Friend, Shakeel Mohamed, has actually negotiated with the parties concerned there. He is expecting a reply, but, as far as the increase is concerned, I think we have to understand one thing. There is a serious problem in Saudi Arabia. There are two problems in that case: one is that we have a problem of infrastructure, works are on, and buildings are being pulled down to bring up new buildings which will accommodate more Hajjes. That is one and there is a letter that the Minister of Hajj, Dr. Bandar bin Mohammed Al-Hajjar, has written personally. He has been so apologetic concerning Mauritius. He has stated that he could have done more effort, but circumstances are beyond his control because of infrastructure works being undertaken. I can even quote some of the paragraphs from his letter telling us...

*(Interruptions)*
No, I can’t table a letter; I’ll quote from his letter. First: “these developments require us to keep you informed on the reality of the situation and the importance of understanding the current situation. In addition to sharing our responsibility towards the pilgrims to maintain their safety, comfort and security as well as to make every possible effort to achieve the reduction of the quota of the Republic of Mauritius by twenty per cent of the decided total number 1300 pilgrims bringing the total number of pilgrims coming from Mauritius this year 1434 to allow 1040 pilgrims. The Ministry also relies on the good efforts in this matter through the preparation of an awareness programme to explain the current situation of the Holy Mosque in Mecca regarding the expansion projects and, in particular, the Tawaf area and also to point out that the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provided facilities and cooperation to increase the decided quota for the Republic of Mauritius in the previous pilgrimage seasons whenever possible”. This is what he has written to us and now because of such circumstances, he cannot do more. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to add the second case is that of the virus that is prevalent in Saudi Arabia. We have got report from the World Health Organisation through the Ministry of Health where it is being mentioned that the number of cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-Cov) has increased in Saudi Arabia to sixty two cases out of which there have been forty-four deaths. That is the only country where we have such a high number of persons who have died because of the infection from that virus. So these are two reasons that bring down our quota. However, we still have the hope that it could be increased if everything is favourable.

Mr Uteem: What the hon. Minister has stated is very serious. He stated that there is a health risk to pilgrims going to Saudi Arabia and I hope he is going to table all the documentation, because Saudi Arabia has never said that this…

The Deputy Speaker: What is your question?

Mr Uteem: My question…

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Uteem!
Order! Order, please!

Mr Uteem: Answering to the PQ, the hon…. 

(The Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want silence in the House!

Mr Uteem: In his answer to the PQ last week, the hon. Minister, referring to the fire that broke out in a hotel where Hajjees were accommodated stated, and I quote -

“My Ministry has given instructions to the ICC to ensure that such operators do not get a licence in the future.”

The ICC has published a short list of Hajj operators and there are three Hajj operators whose pilgrims were staying in that hotel that caught fire. Is the hon. Ministry aware of this and why did ICC not follow his instructions not to give these Hajj operators a licence?

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first, I would like to inform the hon. Member, through this House, that Hajj being such a serious matter, Hajj being the fifth pillar of Islam, the Government will, in no circumstance, play with the matter. We take the matter too seriously we are not taking it easy as the hon. Member feels we are. We are serious. It is a serious Government. We deal with Government, it a G to G event that is taking place. The ICC has been there.

(The Interruptions)

Yes, G to G. It means Government to Government, if you don’t understand. The ICC has been there since 1989…

(The Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Choonee: It has been carrying out the activities for so many years. Year in, year out, we have been trying to improve the quality of service, improve as far as facilities are provided so that all our Hajjees get satisfaction. As far as the short list of operators is concerned, there has been a committee set up by ICC in which there are, for the first time ever, members of the ICC
Board and Ulemas sitting together. 15 members are sitting on that committee and that committee has taken a decision. They know why they are taking that decision. They have shortlisted and out of 34 applications, now we are having only 16 in the shortlist and they take all aspects into consideration. In my reply right now, I mentioned what are the criteria that they have to satisfy. They have satisfied the criteria. Whatever is being said right now is hearsay and there is nothing official on paper disqualifying those organisers. I don’t do politics through the Hajj organisation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister why the Hajj Mission did not go this year and when they did go last year, they were three days late to negotiate with the Hajj Committee in Saudi Arabia?

**Mr Choonee:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the pre-Hajj Mission that did not go this year. The pre-Hajj Mission did not go because they were not called for by the Saudi Authorities. Why they were not called? It is because, usually the pre-Hajj Mission goes to negotiate quota of Hajjees and to sign the contract. This year, the Saudi Authorities wanted to reduce, for the whole world, the number of Hajjees to be there to perform Hajj. The fact that they have reduced the number, there was no need for the pre-Hajj Mission to be there. However, the Hajj Mission will be there.

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Choonee:** The Hajj Mission will go.

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Issack! Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Issack:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister…

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!
Mr Issack: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if the Hajj operators in Mauritius still have to make a deposit of Rs500,000 or give a bank guarantee of that sum?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want order in the House! Allow the hon. Member to ask his question! Hon. Henry, can’t you afford to remain silent?

Mr Issack: Will the hon. Minister inform the House if Hajj operators this year will still have to make a deposit of Rs500,000 or give a bank guarantee of that amount?

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned there is a new condition imposed by the Saudi Authorities. That new condition for this particular year is that per Hajjee they have to give 250 Saudi Riyals to the Government of Saudi Arabia. This is something new that has been introduced. Further to that, all previous requirements have to be satisfied for them. This is something new that has been added. I would also like to mention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why there is the reduction in the number of Hajjees - this is something very important. 48,000 people were moving round per hour per session. This time they have reduced it to only 22,000. If it is only 22,000, how can they accommodate more people? So, that’s why there is a reduction. Hon. Members have to understand that we can’t play with words, there have been witnesses. I am sorry to say, hon. Uteem has been a beneficiary of facilities….

(Interruptions)

... being given by the Hajj Authorities.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

I want order in the House!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ameer Meea! Order now!

(Interruptions)

It’s enough, order now! Hon. Ameer Meea!
Mr Uteem: On a point of personal explanation. The Hajj that I performed was under the invitation.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want some order in the House! You are wasting the time of the House.

Mr Uteem: Can I raise a matter of personal explanation? Since the hon. Minister mentioned that I…

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, sit down! I want order in the House! We are wasting the time of the House!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister stated that this year there will be a deposit of 250 Saudi Riyals per Hajjee. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether this deposit will be a refundable deposit by the Saudi Authorities to the Hajjees directly, and to add up to what hon. Reza Issack just asked, whether also there will be a deposit paid by the operators to ICC as well as it used to be?

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,…

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. He wants to be …

(Interruptions)

...he wants to be enlightened on whether that 250 Saudi Riyals

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, allow the Minister to answer the question!

(Interruptions)
Mr Choonee: The hon. Member wants to know whether the 250 Saudi Riyals will be refunded. Yes, the 250 Saudi Riyals will be refunded. As far as the deposit is concerned, we are having a new committee for the first time with Ulemas and members of the Board of ICC. They have sat together...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

...please resume your seat. It was a simple straightforward question and a simple straightforward question demands a simple straightforward answer!

Mr Choonee: Yes for both!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Okay!

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will make an appeal that Hadj is a very sensitive issue and I think that hon. Members should take it very seriously.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Soodhun: I will just ask the hon. Minister, all the Ministers have received the invitation from the king to perform the Hadj, me also have got it.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No, hon. Soodhun please put your question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: Hon. Dr. Kasenally also has...

(Interruptions)

My question is....

(Interruptions)

My question is that the...
My question is very simple, the last answer given by the hon. Minister that there has been a scrupulous organiser and he has given instruction that the organiser – I know that they have been reduced, whatever the number – but the organiser is very important. If the hon. Minister is going to take responsibility and the undertaking in this House that the organiser that he mentioned last time will not be issued licence this year. As the hon. Minister has himself mentioned that there was a fire and so on, I think this is very important.

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is true that there was an organiser who was not really acting responsibly and the ICC is dealing with the issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: On the Hadj?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Next question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: But I have a supplementary question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the last question?

The Deputy Speaker: It is question B/610!

Mr Uteem: A last question since I moved for the first question?

The Deputy Speaker: Next question! Next question please!

(Interruptions)

Because it is of national importance I gave 20 minutes for that specific...

Mr Uteem: Yes, but the mover of the question usually gets the last question!

The Deputy Speaker: Please, move ahead with question number B/610!

PONZI SCHEMES –MEASURES

(No. B/610) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
whether, in regard to the recent financial scandals and Ponzi Schemes, he will, for the benefit of
the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to the –

(a) actions, if any, taken against the banks allegedly involved therein, and

(b) measures taken to prevent the recurrence thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, in the light of the recent financial
scandals and Ponzi Schemes, the Bank of Mauritius did conduct a number of examinations
regarding compliance of commercial banks in line with its Guidelines and Guidance Notes.
These examinations have revealed certain lapses in the internal control systems of certain
commercial banks and compliance with the Guidelines and Guidance Notes which is an offence
under the Bank of Mauritius Act and Banking Act.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Bank of Mauritius has sought the consent of
the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to compound any breaches and non-compliance with
the Guidelines and Guidance Notes issued by the Bank of Mauritius and to impose a penalty on
those banks which fail to comply. The DPP has concurred that penalties be imposed on three
banks.

Investigations are still ongoing and the Bank of Mauritius will consult the DPP for non-
compliance by any commercial banks with the Guidelines and Guidance Notes.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, the Bank of Mauritius has requested
commercial banks to reinforce their customer due diligence processes and to implement anti-
money laundering systems. Commercial banks have also been advised to lay more emphasis on
training of their staff so that they are able to identify suspicious transactions more effectively.

In addition, the assistance of the IMF and the Reserve Bank of India have been sought to
enhance the legal framework as well as to develop new parameters for generation of alerts for
such types of scandals. In this respect the IMF team was in Mauritius in April and May. The
team from the Reserve Bank of India is still presently in Mauritius and is carrying out the
relevant review exercise. Once the relevant reports are received they will be carefully studied
and where required, action will be taken.
Furthermore, the Bank of Mauritius and the Financial Services Commission have been asked to pursue their financial literacy programme which aims at enhancing public awareness on financial matters.

**Mr Uteem:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given that the Central Bank has a duty to ensure confidence in the banking sector in Mauritius, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the Central Bank conducted any onsite inspections to ensure that all banks in Mauritius comply with due diligence requirements?

**Mr Duval:** I need notice of that question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Yes. Hon. Li Kwong Wing!

**Mr Li Kwong Wing:** Is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware that the Bank of Mauritius Act has been amended lately to publish the names and the amount of fines administered to the Banks? In the name of transparency, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House which are those banks that have been administered fines and whether the matter has been referred to the DPP for compounding of the fines?

**Mr Duval:** On the issue of compounding I have just replied that this has been compounded with the agreement of the DPP for three banks. I just replied! Now for the names, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Banking Act now gives discretion to the Bank of Mauritius to publish the names. The Bank of Mauritius has not yet decided, as I understand, whether to give publicity to the names and I respect the decision of the Bank of Mauritius. I have no issue if the Bank of Mauritius deems fit to disclose the names, I should be very happy with that.

**Mr Jugnauth:** With regard to Sunkai, there have been two commercial banks which have declared a suspicion transaction. May I know if the Bank of Mauritius has carried out any enquiry into that matter and what has been the outcome, if ever there has been an enquiry?

**Mr Duval:** Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I missed the beginning of the question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Would you repeat your question hon. Jugnauth!

(Interruptions)

**Mr Jugnauth:** I am saying with reference to Sunkai,…

(Interruptions)
Well, they should keep quiet! With reference to Sunkai there are two commercial banks, at least, which have reported suspicious transactions in the past. May I know if then there has been an enquiry and, if so, what has been the outcome by the Bank of Mauritius?

Mr Duval: If they have reported they have complied with the guidelines, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If they have not reported or reported late or reported after, in fact, publicity has been given, this is where the Bank of Mauritius intervenes.

Mr Uteem: As the hon. Vice-Prime Minister is aware this scandal has cast doubt on the financial credibility of the banking sector. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether an in-depth enquiry has been conducted by the Central Bank in identifying whether any officer of these banks were in any way an accomplice to Je T’aime Marketing, Sunkai or Whitedot?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would presume that the Bank of Mauritius would, at least, see as far as the commercial banks are concerned whether they are complying with the anti-money laundering regulations etc. It is also for the Police to do the criminal enquiry as to what are the ramifications and the partners and who else is involved in this criminal activity. I presume the Bank of Mauritius has done its part of this work and also the Police, as you know, is taking this very seriously. We have even sought the advice of the State Law Office.

Mr Jugnauth: The question that I am putting is not that what action has been taken by the Central Bank against those banks. No. It is about what has been the action taken by the Central Bank with regard to whether an enquiry has been conducted? If yes, what has been the outcome of that enquiry?

Mr Duval: An enquiry has been conducted on whom? On Sunkai itself?

(Interruptions)

But the enquiry is being carried out by the CCID, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Ganoo: Since we are talking about the responsibility of the banks in the context of the Ponzi Scheme, is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister in a position to inform the House about the allegation made against a bank employee who has left the country with millions and millions of
proceeds of this Ponzi Scheme? From the information gathered, he is being looked for by Interpol.

**Mr Duval:** No, I don’t have any information concerning that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Labelle:** May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether there is a particular mechanism that has been set up to inform the victims of this Scheme of the status of the inquiry? There are so many rumours that some people have been refunded and others have not been refunded, and so on and so forth. So, is there any particular mechanism that has been set up to inform these victims?

**Mr Duval:** I take this point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I don’t think there has been any formal update given. People have suffered from this, and that may be a good suggestion. I think there is something like 2000 people or so who have reported that they should be advised as to what is happening.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Being given that there are five officers in the prevention and education section of the ICAC who have recently been suspended, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister for what reason another one, who is a Senior Investigation Officer of the same department of ICAC, one Mr S., who runs a double 4x4 red colour, has not been suspended?

**Mr Duval:** I have no clue. ICAC does not fall under my responsibility, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he has been made aware that the MRA has started enquiry with the Mauritius Turf Club concerning people linked with Ponzi Schemes with regard to importation of horses, with connection in banks, where foreign currencies have been transferred and so on?

**Mr Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the enquiries by the MRA are quite rightly confidential and are not dealt with by the Ministry. I am not at all aware. Whether what the hon. Member is saying is true or not true, I don’t know.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the Bank of Mauritius has worked on an estimated total amount of money involved in the different Schemes?
Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although it does not directly refer to that, I will provide the information. At the moment, it is estimated about Rs800 m.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given that the Central Bank was aware of the Schemes since December last, as they have declared themselves, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether his Ministry has conducted an enquiry to find out whether the Bank of Mauritius in this instance has fulfilled its duties of supervising the banks correctly?

Mr Duval: As I have mentioned when the Schemes came to light, we have reviewed the reactivity of all our institutions and, at the same time, we asked the IMF to come and do a more complete study. That has happened, and we are waiting for the report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, let’s wait for the report - I have my own views - to give us an independent view of what happened.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

(No. B/611) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the poor, he will state for the years 2007 and 2012, the number thereof, categorised into rural and urban inhabitants, indicating the -

(a) average monthly income per poor person, indicating the percentage thereof derived from social transfers, and

(b) reasons for the change in the Gini coefficient.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House may note, a commonly used poverty line has been set by the World Bank at $1.25 (i.e Rs37.50 per day or Rs1,125 a month) per head per day for least developed countries, and $2 (i.e. Rs60 per day or Rs 1,800 per month) per head for developing countries. These lines are used mainly for international comparison of extreme poverty. Calculated on the basis of income per head of US$2 - so we are taking the more stringent measure - per day, extreme poverty in Mauritius is negligible, being much less than 1% in 2012. In fact, it is estimated that extreme poverty affects around 0.2% in Mauritius compared with South Africa (14% in 2009), Brazil (6% in 2009), China (13% in 2008), and India (33% in 2010).
Statistics Mauritius uses a relative poverty line, as is commonly used by developed countries. The relative poverty line is defined as half the median income of monthly household per adult equivalent and is, therefore, a measure of income distribution and not of poverty. It adjusts for differences in household size and composition, as well as economies of scale. The relative poverty line was Rs3,821 per month for one-person household in 2006/07. Adjusted for inflation, the equivalent poverty line in 2012 is Rs5,080.

According to provisional estimates of Statistics Mauritius, the number of relatively poor people stood at 104,000 in 2006/07 - of which 37,200 were urban inhabitants and 71,500 rural inhabitants. The total number of such persons has dropped significantly to around 87,900 by 2012. This comprised of 25,600 urban inhabitants and 62,300 rural inhabitants. During the same period, the proportion of relatively poor people dropped from 8.5% to 6.9%.

For urban areas, the estimated proportion of relatively poor persons has declined from 6.3% in 2006/07 to 5% in 2012. It should be noted that from 2001 to 2006, urban poverty increased substantially from 5.3% to 6.3%.

For rural areas, the proportion of relatively poor has decreased from 10.1% in 2006/07 to 8.2% in 2012.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that from 2001/02 to 2006/07, the policies pursued by the former Government resulted in - we talked about urban; now we are talking about rural - an increase in rural poverty from 8.7% to 10.1%. In contrast, the policies of this Government have reduced rural poverty from 10.1% in 2006/07 to 8.2% in 2012.

As far as the average monthly household disposable income of poor households is concerned, this has increased from Rs5,700 in 2006/07 to Rs7,200 in 2012.

I am informed that, in 2012, social transfer comprised 29.2% of household disposable income compared to only 22.8% in 2006/07. For urban areas, the social transfer component amounted to 24.6% in 2006/07 compared to 33.3% in 2012, whereas for rural areas, social transfer amounted to only 23.2% in 2006/07 compared to 27.4% in 2012.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, more importantly, before we took office, the main form of assistance to the poor was social aid. This Government has not only increased the average amount paid under social aid per household by 50% between 2006/07 and 2012, but has also increased the support provided to the poor.
As regards part (b) of the question, the recent Household Budget Survey (HBS) 2012 indicates a Gini coefficient of 0.413 for Mauritius, up from 0.388 observed in 2006/2007. Gini coefficient is again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a measure of income distribution and not of poverty.

It is important to note that benefits to people in the low income group in terms of subsidisation of education, transport, or health care services are not taken into account in the Gini coefficient. Also, the Gini has limitations in that it is an aggregate and does not capture specific characteristics of household.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, the Gini coefficient and the calculation of relative poverty are measures of income distribution. In recent years, there has been a restructuring of the economy towards higher value-added services to maintain our competitive edge, which has increased the demand for skilled labour in sectors such as financial services, ICT, health care, and tourism in the process.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Based on the household budget survey, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister has quoted a lot of figures, but Statistics Mauritius is very clear about the number of poor households. In 2006, it was 104,200 and in 2012 it was 126,200. Since we have now 126,200 people living below the poverty line, that is, almost 10% of the population below the poverty line and poverty is therefore at its worst level since 20 years, will not the hon. Vice-Prime Minister agree that this result shows that the policies of the Prime Minister to Put People First and to democratise the economy has failed completely and has increased income inequality as proved by these figures of Statistics Mauritius?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is again trying to catch some headlines by quoting incorrect figures. The figures I have here come from Statistics Mauritius and they are very, very clear and they say that poverty, the number has decreased substantially during the two mandates of this Government and increased substantially in the mandate of the previous Government.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is making a common mistake. He is mistaking poverty which is the inability to buy goods and services. That is poverty; when I am poor, I cannot buy electricity, I cannot buy a car, this is poverty. Relative poverty is my positioning as opposed to very rich people. I may not be poor at all, but relatively poor because
others are much richer than I am and that is not a measure of poverty, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is a measure of where you sit in the income distribution of the country and that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whether deliberate, I am not saying deliberately, the hon. Member is making a mistake. He has not understood what is relative poverty and what is poverty and that is not surprising to me.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Obeegadoo!

(Interruptions)

I will come back to you afterwards! I’ll decide! Hon. Obeegadoo, put your question, please! I will go back to him later!

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let’s leave aside the party political points! Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister agree that on the basis of the latest Household Budget Survey in terms of income inequality, the situation has worsened; in terms of relative poverty, the situation has worsened and given the trends in terms of the nature of household expenditure and the level of indebtedness amongst the poorest sections, will he agree that there is an urgent need to revisit Government policies specifically targeting issues of relative poverty and income inequality?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I commend the hon. Member for putting aside cheap political points when we are talking about poverty. I wish all the hon. Members could do the same.

Now, so far as this issue is concerned, this is an issue which cuts across political lines because we cannot see the poor as being poor MMM or poor MSM or poor Labour or poor PMSD. That is not the issue. They are poor people and we have to deal with them. Now, I am quoting, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the latest figures that Statistics Mauritius have provided to me which will be published in November. So, I am quoting from these figures and that is why maybe there is some discrepancy between what I am saying and what the hon. Members have, but these are the figures I have. I have the table here and it quite clearly shows, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the number of relatively poor have fallen and I agree with the last orator that this is a measure of income distribution. It would be obviously our wish in this Government as demonstrated in the latest PRB Report that we would want the country to be more homogeneous in terms of the income distribution but as we know there are scarce resources, some people have
gone through a lot of trouble of getting a lot of higher education, have taken the trouble to work hard, etc.; these people nowadays are getting paid more and the mission of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and the Government is to ensure that more people get access to the training and to the job and that is what we are doing, but it is true that when there is scarce resources, when the economy is developing, you will have income inequality because some people are not yet on the ladder and, for instance, the Youth Employment Programme which has taken into account, which has now catered for 1,200 youths, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is putting the youth on the first rung of the ladder.

**Mr Li Kwong Wing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have here in front of me the latest results of Statistics Mauritius which say very clearly and have even collected the number of poor people from 122,400 poor persons to 126,200.

**The Deputy Speaker:** What is your question, hon. Member?

**Mr Li Kwong Wing:** The question is those who have never been in poverty will never understand what is poverty.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is not a question!

**Mr Li Kwong Wing:** How can the hon. Minister explain, therefore, that inequality has increased; by the gini coefficient, we have worsened to 0.413 which is the worst in the history of Mauritius? When the hon. Minister has been charged by the Prime Minister, how can...

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Ms Deerpalsing, please remain silent!

(Interruptions)

Put your question! We are running short of time, please! Put your question!

(Interruptions)

**Mr Li Kwong Wing:** I have to put my question!

(Interruptions)
How can inequality reach its worst level in the history of Mauritius when the hon. Minister has been tasked by the Prime Minister in charge of the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment to relieve poverty and to reduce inequality and we have this kind of result?

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! Hon. Ms Deerpalsing! Can’t you remain silent!

(Interruptions)

Mr Duval: She is supporting me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have the figures from Statistics Mauritius which are officially provided and I am sticking to these figures. These are the only figures that I am using.

As far as whatever the hon. Member is saying concerning income inequality, he is trying, as usual, to catch some attention and trying to be as they say the bridesmaid at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral. This is not what he should be trying to do. He should be trying to address the point. The point is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I repeat it, that according to Statistics Mauritius, income poverty, relative poverty has increased substantially under the MSM/MMM Government of 2000 to 2005, and what is worse, it has increased...

(Interruptions)

*Li pe faire politique, mo bizin réponn!*

(Interruptions)

He wants to play politics, I play politics. I have got no problem.

(Interruptions)

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I should...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me see what the answer says.

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Allow the hon. Minister to answer the question! Hon. Henry!
Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it should be noted, I repeat this bit, maybe he did not hear of it because when you are rich maybe you don’t hear figures of poverty.

(Interruptions)

It should be noted that from 2001 to 2006, urban poverty increased substantially from 5.3% to 6.3% in that period, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I take, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the rural poverty. The House may wish to note that from 2001 to 2006/07, the policies pursued by the former Government resulted in an increase in rural poverty from 8.7% to 10.1%.

These figures are, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, undisputable figures. Now, I can suggest one way for the hon. Member to reduce income inequality, but he may not be happy about it.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Time is up! Hon. Jhugroo!

The Table has been advised...

(Interruptions)

I want some order, please!

The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/621, B/622, B/629 and B/630 have been withdrawn.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.