ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MAURITIAN TERRITORY – SURVEILLANCE RADAR SYSTEM

(No. B/52) 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 Mauritian territory, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to -

(a) if the Surveillance Radar System covering same is fully operational and, if not, why not, and

(b) the number of ships seized on ground of illegal operation within same, over the past seven years.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Coastal Surveillance Radar System was commissioned on 15 April 2011, following a grant from the Government of the Republic of India. It consists of eight Radars and Automatic Identification System stations operating in mainland Mauritius and the Outer Islands at Agalega, St Brandon and Rodrigues. The system enables 24-hour monitoring of the seas around us, which include territorial waters, contiguous zone and parts of the Exclusive Economic Zone.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that out of the eight stations, six are fully operational.

One station in mainland of Mauritius and one in Agalega are not functioning properly due to technical problems. Action has already been initiated to have both systems repaired.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that over the last seven years, eight fishing vessels have been seized by the National Coast Guard for illegal operations in our waters four of which have been seized after the installation of the Radar System.

In three cases, the Masters of the Vessel were convicted by the Courts and fined, two cases have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice, two cases are still under enquiry and the Director of Public Prosecutions has advised no further action in one case.
Mr Speaker, Sir, a series of other measures are taken constantly and closely to monitor activities in our Exclusive Economic Zone to counter the various threats of piracy and illegal fishing, as well as armed robbery against ships and other illegal operations. These include –

(i) constant vigilance by the National Coast Guard, the Ships and Aircrafts through four to five surveillance sorties every week;

(ii) since 2009, joint anti-piracy operations and the EEZ surveillance are being undertaken on a regular basis in our waters by Indian Naval Ships and French Patrol Vessels, and

(iii) capacity-building of personnel of the National Coast Guard with the assistance of friendly countries such as India, the United States and France. In August 2009, a National Coast Guard Commando Team was set up with the assistance of the Indian Navy to undertake maritime security operations.

With a view to enhancing our naval capability and further reinforcing surveillance of our Exclusive Economic Zone, the Police is also considering the acquisition of additional state-of-the-art assets. An Offshore Patrol Vessel has already been acquired under a line of credit and the grant extended to Mauritius following my visit to India in October 2005. That vessel is expected to be delivered by September of next year. Besides, negotiations are currently being held with the Indian Authorities for the acquisition of two Water Jet Fast Attack Crafts, ten Fast Interceptor Boats, one new Dornier Aircraft. We are also looking at the possibility of acquiring a new sea plane, if it is found suitable for our sea conditions.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this Surveillance Radar System is adequate to cover the vast Mauritian territory in view of preventing foreign vessels to pilfer our resource marine?

The Prime Minister: I would have thought the hon. Member knows the extent of our Exclusive Economic Zone. It is a huge …

(Interruptions)

Well, we are not the United States of America, we are Mauritius. How do you think we will put a ship, in every ten feet? So, you should know the answer then.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir …
Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I asked the hon. Prime Minister - I don’t know why he is getting so emotional today - whether the Radar System is adequate to cover the vast Mauritian territory. I did not ask to put a ship in any nook or cranny of our territory. I asked whether it is adequate.

The Prime Minister: Well, the answer is, Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, he should have known. I mentioned at the very beginning, there was no such system until I decided, with the help of the Indian Government to set up this Radar System; there was none before. But we have a huge - that is what I am trying to say - Exclusive Economic Zone. So, obviously we cannot have enough but we are starting.

Mr Ameer Meea: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he is aware that there is a boat which is fishing near Agaléga and which is employing illegal workers from Cambodia? This has been in the press recently. Whether he is aware and what action has he taken?

The Prime Minister: There are so many places. If you ask the hon. Minister for Fisheries, he will tell you.

(Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: The Minister for Fisheries will tell you there are so many cases where action is taken. When we find we do take action.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

(No. B/53) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether he has taken cognizance of the World Press Freedom Index published recently by Reporters Without Borders and, if so, state the measures he proposes to take to enhance media freedom in Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken cognizance of the World Press Freedom Index 2013 published by Reporters Without Borders and would like to invite the attention of the hon. Member to the replies I made to PQ B/228 on 19 April 2011 and to PQ
B/317 on 17 May 2011 which relate to previous reports on Mauritius in relation to the freedom of the press. It is pertinent to note that several prominent democracies have slipped down in the World Press Freedom Index this year as compared to the Index for the previous year.

For example, Canada which, like Mauritius, has a vibrant press, was ranked 10th internationally last year and this year came down to 20th – a drop of 10 places. Japan, another large democracy, was 22nd in the 2012 Index and has been ranked 53rd in the 2013 Index, just a few ranks above Mauritius – a drop of 31 places. Major European Union countries like Greece have slid from 70th in 2012 to 84th in this year’s Index. Closer to us, Seychelles was ranked 73rd in 2012 and this year it ranks 93rd – a drop of 20 places.

*Interruptions*

Mr Speaker: Silence! Hon. Aimée!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this surely does not mean that press freedoms have gone down in all these well-known and renowned democracies.

Let me, Mr Speaker, Sir, reiterate that section 12 of our Constitution provides for the protection of the freedom of expression. Chapter II of our Constitution provides for the exercise of the fundamental rights and freedoms found under this Chapter, to be subject, of course, to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and laws made in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health and so on. Freedom of the press is an essential component – we all agree - of the right to freedom of expression as enjoyed under section 12 of our Constitution.

The local media has always enjoyed a tradition of freedom and pluralism and I would like to reaffirm the commitment of this Government to continue to promote the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens, including their freedom of expression. We should encourage responsible journalism – not propagation of false news, but responsible journalism. Rights go together with obligations and responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one should guard against reading the World Press Freedom Index 2013 published by Reporters without Borders in isolation and concluding that freedom of the press in Mauritius is at stake and therefore there is a tort.
We should also bear in mind other reports, such as the report published by Freedom House on Freedom in the World of 2013, same year, which ranks Mauritius as a free country and I quote, Mr Speaker, Sir, it says –

“Where there is open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media”.

Indeed, in its Global Press Freedom Ratings for 2012, Mauritius is among the five (5) countries which are considered to be free out of 49 in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr Speaker, Sir, freedom of expression is an essential underpinning of democracy. The Democracy Index 2012 Report from the Economic Intelligence Unit assessed 44 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa and reported as follows, I quote, out of the 44 countries, it says -

“Only one State in the region (out of the 44 assessed) remains a full democracy: the Indian Ocean Island of Mauritius, which has maintained a strong democratic tradition since the country gained independence in 1968”.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Democracy Index 2012 Report which is prepared by the Economic Intelligence Unit ranks Mauritius 18th out of 167 States. It is relevant to point out that only 25 countries out of 167 have been classified as full democracies and Mauritius is one of them. Indeed, Mauritius is the only country from the African Continent to be ranked among the 25 countries having full democracy. The Economic Intelligence Unit has also reported that Mauritius has maintained a democracy index of 8.04 out of 10 for each of the years 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2011. This democracy index has, in fact, risen for the year 2012 to 8.17, that is, out of 10.

As at today, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a total of 53 dailies/weeklies/fortnightlies/monthlies in addition to the several international broadcast news stations. There is unrestricted access to Internet. People now have increasing access to the media to express their views and have unrestricted exposure to different viewpoints. As I have stated on several occasions, I am the first to agree that the media has the right to criticise, but we should all accept the fact that those who are criticised are also entitled to an appropriate rebuttal. I also believe that the media has to act in a responsible, objective and balanced manner. At any rate, we have an independent Judiciary and aggrieved parties can always and do often seek redress before the Courts.
Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, five years ago in the same ranking Mauritius was 25th and now, it is 62nd of reporters sans frontières. Will the hon. Prime Minister, therefore, agree that under his Government there has been a serious deterioration in the freedom of liberty of the press?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: Obviously, the hon. Member did not listen to anything I said. In fact, what the hon. Member has quoted is wrong. The figure he is quoting is actually wrong. I don’t know where the hon. Member got the figures, but they are actually wrong. But, as I said...

(Interruptions)

But he has got the wrong figure. I don’t know how. He might have got it, but he is reading it wrongly because it was not what he is saying. There was a drop of eight places only, but...

(Interruptions)

Well, he has got it wrong. I am telling him. He wants me to answer the question or he knows the answer? He answers the question himself then, if he knows the answer. I am telling him this is wrong.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: Will the hon. Prime Minister agree that, in fact, it is the role of the MBC/TV and lack of independence of the Independent Broadcasting Authority who is primarily responsible for this downgrade in the ranking of Mauritius?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Why does he pick on the MBC; he must pick on all the media. We have to look what is happening on the radios. We see everyday what is happening; on the Internet what is happening. So, he should be fair himself, and not just pick on the MBC.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I won’t pick on the MBC. I want to hear the hon. Prime Minister’s answer. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of the damage wrought to our reputation in terms of this index by the decision of this Government to have all the institutions controlled by the State boycott, since a very long time, the main daily of this
country, and can he quote one single self-respecting democracy that adopts such shameful practices as the present Government in that regard?

*(Interruptions)*

**The Prime Minister:** I would remind the hon. Member to go and look back when the Leader of the MMM was Prime Minister what he actually said about the media then. He said they should be all locked up. Go and see what he said!

*(Interruptions)*

I suppose the hon. Member was not in Mauritius at that time. So, he does not know.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence!

**The Prime Minister:** In any case, Mr Speaker, Sir, this question about whether we should subsidise the media is a question that we are going to look at with the new media report that is coming out, as you know. We have to look also, whether those who are powerful and get a lot of publicity should be given more money. That also we have to look.

*(Interruptions)*

We should have looked at all the dailies, not just one or two that the hon. Member is picking on.

**Mr Ganoo:** The hon. Prime Minister has elaborated a lot in his answer on the example of which Mauritius is and in terms of democracy. Can I put it to him that there is always room to improve, *élargir l’espace démocratique*, and the aim of every Mauritian is to curtail *les pulsions anti-démocratiques de tout le monde*. Therefore, I put it to him that to measure democracy, there are several indicators; one of them is Government publicity to the press. Can I ask him to revisit the way in which this is being done today, because small, I mean, insignificant press which are very subservient to Government are provided with a lot of Government publicity?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence!

**The Prime Minister:** I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition. It was a good question and he is right, there is always room for improvement anywhere in the world, not just in Mauritius, but anywhere in the world, but we also have to look at fairness. That is
what we are looking at on the new media report that will be coming out soon; whether, we should actually encourage more newspapers or should we just restrict ourselves to two or three newspapers. That, we also have to look at.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister, in replying to the question referred to a question that I put to him sometime back, that is, B/317 on 17 May and, in his reply, he stated that the problem related to the local media is misreporting by the local media. Does the hon. Prime Minister consider the recent statement made by his Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development at Plaine Magnien where he stated that -

‘Navin Ramgoolam ine montré figir après alé!’

misreporting by the local media?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is precisely...

(Interruptions)

I am glad the hon. Member raised that because this is precisely...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, the hon. Member has put a question, he must allow the...

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member does not want to listen. This is precisely what I was saying. What was reported - and he has put communiqués after communiqués - was actually false.

(Interruptions)

But, one paper...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: ... misquoted on purpose and then, you made propaganda out of this! So, go and read these communiqués!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!
PERSONAL EXPLANATION

PLAINE MAGNIÉN – VICE-PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (MR X. L. DUVAL) - STATEMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of personal explanation, I wish to say that unless the hon. Member was there, he cannot say what I said and what I did not say, and I never said such a thing and I would never say such a thing.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Allow the...

(Interruptions)

Please!

Mr Bhagwan: ...about Government publicity, the hon. Prime Minister has spoken about fairness. I have asked many questions in the past. Can the hon. Prime Minister give an undertaking to the House that Government would not give undue favour to ‘Advance’?

The Prime Minister: In fact, no favour has been given to ‘Advance’, if you want to know.

(Interruptions)

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House on the number of arrests of journalists under his reign since 2005?

The Prime Minister: I know that the hon. Member is relatively young. He should have asked me how many journalists were arrested. I think 45 were arrested by the former, former Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, next question!
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 live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House, he will state when he proposes to introduce the motion for the setting up of a select committee to look thereinto and submit its report.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that, following a motion which I had tabled on 05 April 2011, a Select Committee on Live Broadcasting had been constituted on 12 April 2011.

In reply to PQ B/251 in June of last year, I explained that no report had been submitted by the Select Committee prior to the prorogation of Parliament in March 2012.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are conflicting views whether we should bring another motion or not. So, I intend to take up the matter with you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: This question has been raised rightly, as the hon. Prime Minister has stated, in June 2012 and March 2011. Being given that we are nearly three years with this new Government - the hon. Prime Minister has lost three years of his mandate, and there are only two years or less remaining for him as Prime Minister - can I ask him whether he will confirm to the House, the country and the nation that during these coming two years, at least, he will come up with this Select Committee and we will have a new Parliament with a new legislation?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the hon. Member that, in fact, the idea of having Parliament comes from the Labour Party. I don’t know whether the hon. Member knows. It comes from us. We are the one who put it in our programme. We are the one who want to do it because we like people to see what a futile Opposition we have in this country.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! I say silence!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Whatever be the opinion of the hon. Prime Minister, we are guided by the opinion of the public there, not the Prime Minister.
Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House, the country and the nation until when *la population va être bernée par la MBC*. Every Tuesday, we are being harassed by the MBC/TV and the Director-General is sitting here and doing propaganda for the Government.

Every Tuesday, it is a nightmare, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the MBC.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the hon. Member - he asked questions, he must expect the answers - if he says the MBC harasses him, what does the MBC show? Pictures of what they do here!

What they do here is what the MBC shows. The MBC does not make pictures.

It is what is happening here that the MBC shows! So, where is the problem?

**Mr Speaker:** Last question!

**Mr Bodha:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In view of the fact that the ..

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bodha:** …outgoing Select Committee…

**Mr Speaker:** Silence! I want to hear the question that the hon. Member has to ask.

Hon. Bhagwan! Please, allow the hon. Member to ask his question!

Hon. Bodha, proceed!
I say silence! Order!

Enough is enough! Please, stop! Hon. Member, proceed with your question!

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that the outgoing Select Committee has done a very good job with all the Members participating and a draft report could be finalised at the Clerk’s Office, I am asking the hon. Prime Minister whether that Select Committee could not be reconvened just to finish the whole process in a few sittings?

The Prime Minister: And the hon. Member as Chairperson?

Mr Bodha: Not necessarily.

The Prime Minister: Because in that Select Committee, he was the Chairperson! There are views, in fact, that is why I want to take up the matter with Mr Speaker - that might not be a need for a new, because the Minutes of Proceedings are there. Maybe we could do it that way. But if there is need, we will do.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister to review the way the MBC/TV is broadcasting the works of Parliamentarians as non-elected parties get more airtime than me and I have complained several times to him? Is this normal?

The Prime Minister: As far as I know, Mr Speaker, Sir, the MBC is not broadcasting everything. Hopefully, when there is a full coverage, then the hon. Member will get the coverage that need be. I hope the hon. Member will put more questions and participate more. I am sure the MBC will have to.

AGALEGA – MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT – STATEMENT

(No. B/55) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether he has taken cognizance of the state of affairs prevailing following a statement made by the hon. Minister of Local Government, with regard to the Roman Catholic authorities, if any, during his recent visit to Agalega and, if so, will he state the actions he proposes to take in relation thereto.
The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in his reply to PQ B/20 on 26 March 2013, the hon. Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands did explain very clearly in this House the content of the statement which he had made during his last visit to Agalega. He emphasised the fact that his comments had been misinterpreted, distorted and blown out of proportion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having said this, our priority remains that of continuing our efforts to improve the quality of life and well-being of the inhabitants of Agalega. The welfare of the Agaléens should remain our prime concern. The Government has a plan for our Outer Islands, as enunciated in the Government Programme 2012-2015, and this plan is already being implemented.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will appreciate that no other Government in the past has done as much as this Government has been doing for our fellow Agaléens. I am laying on the Table of the Assembly a list of projects which have been implemented in Agalega by this Government. These projects include, inter-alia -

- the construction of over 50 housing units for employees of the Corporation;
- the construction of a refugee centre on the North Island for use by the inhabitants in case of natural disasters as, for example, tsunamis and cyclones;

There was none and I thank the hon member, when he was looking after Agalega, he was not a Minister. He was the one who suggested that we have to take into consideration that there might be a tsunami one day and, therefore …

(Interruptions)

No, but I am telling them!

- the provision of electricity on a 24-hour basis through handset generators - prior to 2006, Mr Speaker, Sir, electricity was supplied only for a fixed period of time everyday, people should know all this;
- granting approval for the establishment of a mobile network to provide worldwide communications;

(Interruptions)
The question relates to his comments. He was saying what has been done for Agaléens. It is untrue to say that nothing has been done. I just told him that there was no electricity on a permanent basis.

- the extension of the TV and Radio services;
- the establishment of a lower secondary school, run by MEDCO; and
- the construction of a National Coast Guard building.

All this has been done, Mr Speaker, Sir. Anyway, they will see.

There is something else I need to point out because that also is a falsehood. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life since some time has been working – and is nearly ready from what I understand - on a project for a community hospital for emergencies and for the delivery of babies in Agalega. It is not done today. There is a whole process, as the hon. Vice-Prime Minister said, that we have to go through.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me re-affirm, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, our continued support to the development of Agalega and the well-being of its inhabitants. The last visit of the hon. Minister to the island, in fact, bears testimony to this commitment and we shall pursue this endeavour with the collaboration of all stakeholders.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he finds it proper for a Minister of this Republic to treat the people of the Catholic Church as the “couyons” and this was said in presence of Sister Olivia?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question was asked to the hon. Minister, he gave a full explanation. Is the hon. Member saying that there are some people that we can’t say anything about? We have a liberty of expression. He said what he felt, but he was misinterpreted. I say it again. He said it in Parliament.

(Interruptions)

You can criticise…

(Interruptions)

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir…

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No interruptions please!
The Prime Minister: Look at the racial and communal attack that he is making. Look at the racial and communal attack…

(Interruptions)

…these are the people who want to govern this modern country. It is a racist remark that he has made. The hon. Minister explained last time. He was asked the question and he explained.

(Interruptions)

Yes, you can go and make all the propaganda that you want because you are a communal and a racist…

(Interruptions)

…that is what you are good at and you can be what you are and I won’t give a shit about it, I am telling you what I have to tell.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir,

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ameer Meea: In relation to what the hon. Prime Minister said, he mentioned Question B/20, which was answered by hon. Minister Aimée and I will quote from Hansard what the hon. Mr Aimée said.

Mr Speaker: No, please put the question. Silence!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: I have to quote…

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Supplementary question!

Mr Ameer Meea: The hon. Minister stated that he doesn't say what had been reported in the press…

(Interruptions)

…today, I am tabling a copy of a CD of what he said.
Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, you came to see me about this issue…

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ameer Meea, I am speaking to you. Are you prepared to listen to me or not? I said you came to see me and I explained to you your rights and what you should do. So, this is not a proper time to take up this issue. You have the right to put a supplementary question. Put your supplementary question.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, please allow me to tell you that the hon. Minister has said that…

(Interruptions)

…it is in Hansard. He challenged me.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say no! Next question, hon. Fakeemeeah!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why I was not made aware of the recent trip of MPs of my Constituency to Agalega? Why is this discrimination always against me?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, just to answer to the previous question as well. He is putting a record, but I maintain what hon. Aimée said, because I have also listened to it and, in fact, he is right to say that he has been misinterpreted, distorted and whatever was brought, was out of proportion. What he was saying Mr Speaker, Sir, is fair for him to have said. Look at the developments we made, you cannot come and say that there is genocide in Agalega. This is absolutely untrue.

As far as hon. Cehl Fakeemeeah is concerned, my understanding is that he was contacted, but they could not be in touch with you. But I will make it a point.

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: It is your rightful duty. It is legitimate what you are saying. You should also have gone and I will make sure that you are allowed to go next time.
Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, independently of the comments made or not by the hon. Minister, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether it is not in the interest of this Government and of the country at large for him to impress upon all the Members of his party of the Alliance gouvernementale…

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon Minister of Health…

(Interruptions)

….hon. Minister of Health…

(Interruptions)

… Silence!

Mr Ganoo: And this applies to every Member of this House. Not to make any comment on any church or religion because this is the consequence now. Monseigneur Piat is saying that…

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ganoo: …he trusts Father Labour, the hon. Prime Minister is saying that he trusts his Minister. There is, therefore, tension and in view to dissipate that tension, may I ask the hon. Minister to prezant so excuses, to tender his apologies to the Church?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir,…

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is why I was getting upset with hon. Baloomoody, to be fair, because…

Mr Speaker: Hon. Aimée and others please allow the hon. Prime Minister to answer. You may answer hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: Can I guess that he has not listened to what he has said. That is why I was enumerating all the developments. This is what he was referring to, that all this has been done and you come and say that this is genocide. It is unfair.
Mr Speaker: Hon. Aimée!

The Prime Minister: If we have to start apologising then we have to start apologising on the démon de l’église. We have to start that.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Now, I have to announce that the Table has been advised that PQ B/59 has been withdrawn.

At 12.45 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.20 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions B/66, B/85, B/86, B/101 and B/106 have been withdrawn. Therefore we proceed with questions to Ministers.

LE MORNE & BEL OMBRE LAGOONS - SPEED LIMIT BUOYS

(No. B/67) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the broken speed limit buoys in the lagoons of Le Morne and Bel Ombre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to if they have now been replaced and, if not, why not.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has, on 26 March 2013, floated tender for maintenance and repairs of existing marker buoys at various locations, including Le Morne and Bel Ombre. During that exercise, all missing or broken buoys at Le Morne and Bel Ombre would be replaced. The deadline for submission of bids is 30 April 2013.

Furthermore, my Ministry is currently carrying out a study at national level to identify priority areas where swimming zones, speed limit zones, ski lanes and mooring areas are required before proceeding with placement of appropriate buoys. Tender for consultancy services has been launched on 02 April 2013 with deadline for submission of bids on 02 May 2013.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, from my understanding, it is now that works will start. My concern is that, over two years, precisely on 03 March 2011 up-to-date, the speed limit buoys were reported missing in the region.
In a reply to a PQ I asked the hon. Prime Minister, I quote: the Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure were requested to replace the speed limit buoys at the earliest for the proper monitoring of pleasure crafts plying in the region and to ensure their safety and security. Can the hon. Minister tell us why his Ministry failed to take some urgent action to address this problem? Is it a common practice to wait for fatal accidents to occur then action will be taken?

**Mr Yeung Sik Yuen:** Not really Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, the buoys were damaged. First of all, in November 2011, they were replaced some time after that and then we have got some complaints in 2012 to do the needful.

Of course, we have some priorities in terms of the most popular beaches around Mauritius. So, it is now that we are doing the needful and it is a question of weeks now that we will have the buoys at Bel Ombre and Le Morne.

**Mrs Radegonde:** Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to insist, legislation applying to speed limit zone at Bel Ombre…

**Mr Speaker:** No, no, I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. She should put her question.

**Mrs Radegonde:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that legislation applying to speed limit zone at Bel Ombre and Le Morne is the Tourism Authority Act 2006 as amended. Would the hon. Minister agree with me that for the security and safety of the watercraft and any other person that there should be regular maintenance and the budget for maintenance should include sufficient funds for stocking supplies of buoys line or chain for future use?

**Mr Yeung Sik Yuen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, speed limit buoys exist since 2007. As you know, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, needful is being done and I have to say that most of the popular beaches will have speed limit buoys and swimming zones.

**SAVANNE & BLACK RIVER - PRE-VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS**

(No. B/68) **Mrs J. Radegonde** (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the new strategy for pre-vocational schools, he will state the –
(a) number of public and private secondary schools in Zones 3 and 4, located in Constituency No.14, Savanne and Black River, which have the capacity to accommodate same;

(b) number of teachers recruited therefor, indicating

(i) the eligibility criteria therefor, and

(ii) if they possess the required training therefor

(c) curriculum and time table set therefor, and

(d) monitoring and evaluation procedure put in place therefor.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has, as from January 2012, embarked on a new strategy for prevocational education (PVE) in collaboration with the MITD and with the support of the MIE.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that in Constituency No. 14, there are 5 State Secondary Schools (M. Sangeelee SSS, La Gaulette SSS, Bambous SSS, S. Sivananda SSS and Palma SSS) and 2 Private Secondary Schools [Keats College (Boys & Girls) and College du St. Esprit Rivière Noire (Boys & Girls)] running prevocational classes.

I wish to inform the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there could be students from Constituency No. 14 attending other schools in Zones 3 and 4 which may be outside Constituency No. 14.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b), it must be noted that recruitment of teachers is not effected on a constituency basis. However, there are, at present, 57 Teachers posted in the 5 State Secondary Schools and 2 Private Secondary Schools running prevocational classes in that Constituency. As at now, existing available resources are being used and 11 redundant pre-vocational teachers have been redeployed in the pre-voc stream of State Secondary Schools in Constituency No. 14. Moreover, for better coordination and monitoring, each school has appointed a Head of Department for the pre-voc stream.

Mr Speaker, Sir, pre-voc teachers are recruited in accordance with the criteria laid down in the prescribed Scheme of Service for the post. I wish to inform the House that the MIE has conducted training workshops to empower pre-voc educators to deliver the new curriculum.
As far as the curriculum is concerned, the MIE, in consultation with the MITD, has worked out a new programme aligned on the new National Curriculum Framework – Secondary, based on 4 key domains of learning for the prevocational stream, namely:

1. Communication Skills
2. Numeracy and Problem-Solving Skills
3. Life Skills
4. Livelihood and Trade Skills with ICT cross-cutting the different domains.

During in-service courses conducted by the MIE, all Educators and Heads of Schools were provided a CD of the new Curriculum. This MIE training programme which started in December 2012 is still being pursued.

New resource materials have been introduced along with a new pedagogy, shifting from the traditional subject teaching to domain teaching. Emphasis is laid on activity-based teaching and learning, team-work and other innovative pedagogical approaches with a view to engaging fully the students and enriching their learning experiences.

The time table for the pre-voc Years III and IV has been adjusted in line with the mixed mode of attendance with students following the course at both their school and a MITD Training Centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (d) of the question, I wish to inform the House that contrary to previous years where prevocational students did not receive any formal established qualification, the 4th year of the pre-vocational education will now lead to a formal recognized certification pitched at Level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework. The new course materials contain a built-in system of continuous assessment that would contribute towards the award of the final PVE certification.

The Quality Assurance and Inspection Division of my Ministry together with the Pre-voc Inspectors and the MIE are monitoring the implementation of the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning in the Pre-vocational stream. Two Prevocational Coordinators have been newly appointed, and will also be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum. They are presently attending briefing sessions at the MIE on the delivery and implementation of the curriculum.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand the hon. Minister made a very impressive presentation on the curriculum and syllabus prepared by the MIE. In the light of
what he has just said, can the hon. Minister tell us about the implementation of the curriculum at the public and private schools in zones 3 and 4 he has just mentioned? Is there a proper monitoring system in place to ensure that same is being delivered, and that respectively both teachers and children have a portfolio as evidence of what is being done at school?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I did mention the monitoring work in my reply. I have been explicit on that. I must say that this is a new programme. It has started only this year. We are, in fact, having a first assessment - I think it is tomorrow. The Monitoring Unit is meeting under my chairmanship to see whatever difficulties there could be, as is always the case when we start programmes like that.

**Mrs Labelle:** The hon. Minister has mentioned the different subjects being taught, and he has even mentioned this Livelihood and Trade Skills. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the practical side of this curriculum is not being implemented? For example, for agriculture, it is only theory, woodwork is theory, ICT is theory because the pupils of Prevoc do not have access to ICT labs or any other labs, and in so many of these schools there is not even a small garden. How are we going to implement this syllabus, when we do not give access to such facilities to these students?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is a problem of the past. In fact, this is what we are correcting. We have just started this programme in the month of January, and there are teething problems, as I said. Of course, all this will be taken care of. If the hon. Member is patient, she will see the changes that are going to come out of this new system soon.

**Mrs Radegonde:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the first attempt of the CPE failures, the philosophy of ‘no child left behind’ is becoming irrelevant. Can the hon. Minister tell us what are the odds of the CPE failures to succeed a second time in front of a compiled syllabus, if I understood very well, of Maths and ICT only, including basic Standard 3(iv) Part Year I, Standard 4(v) Part II and Standard 6 Year Part III, whereas languages, Science, History and Geography are not covered by the proposed syllabus, and being delivered by untrained retired supply teachers within a timeframe of one year only? In some cases, the manual given to complete the syllabus is not even accessible to the children. Therefore, they are being compelled to use the previous CPE books. Should he agree with me that the so-called…

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. This is a speech! You are making a speech!
Dr. Bunwaree: Many questions in one question. All these are being taken care of. In fact, we have held an important forum, where all this was discussed, and we are in the process of implementing a few changes. But I will take on board whatever the hon. Member has said. There are some points which are interesting, and which have already been taken at the level of the forum.

**IN VITRO FERTILIZATION – LEGISLATION**

(No. B/69) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of legislation in relation to *In Vitro fertilization*, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a first draft Bill has already been prepared. Given the sensitive and delicate nature of the subject, my Ministry enlisted the support of experts under the African-Caribbean Pacific- Multilateral Trading System (ACP-MTS) through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to review and consolidate the draft Bill.

In this connection, a seminar was organised on 21 September, 2012 whereat our local gynaecologists discussed the draft legislation with the foreign experts, and then it was circulated. It is proposed to hold a workshop by the end of May 2013 to study the proposed amendments, and then to bring the law forward in this august Assembly.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that, since 2006, seven years back, the support of the East, Central and Southern African Health Community was sought to provide some technical support? May I ask him whether there has been any response following that contact since seven years back?

Mr Bundhoo: May I, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, read this again. In this connection, a seminar was organised on 21 September, 2012 with regard to the draft Bill, and what was said by the experts of the ACP/MTS through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and I must say here, through works initiated by previous Ministers of Health.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that female sterility has not been considered as a disease in our government hospitals, and that consequently *In Vitro fertilization* is not conducted, may I ask the hon. Minister whether his new legislation will take on board *In Vitro fertilization* both in the private sector and the public sector, so as to make it a disease which is treatable in our government hospitals?
Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to exactly the same question he put some time back, to which a reply was given by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. I refer him to this reply given by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order! I put a question to the hon. Minister. If he cannot answer, he does not answer; not refer to hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee!

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the hon. Member that he has put exactly the same question. I am, therefore, referring him to the answer given by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet! Hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Silence! Hon. Minister of Health, this is Question Time. To a question - it is elementary - there must be an answer. Do you have an answer to the question?

Mr Bundhoo: I have exactly the same answer hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee delivered to him when she was Minister.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, since it is an issue which has been raised in this very House several times, and we have heard that the Bill is under preparation and so on and so forth, may I ask the hon. Minister whether, this time, he is in a position to give a timeframe for the presentation of this Bill?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to read that again. If I may, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me repeat what I said. It is proposed to hold a workshop at the end of May 2012 to study the proposed amendment. I must here say something to hon. Dr. S. Boolell, who is a doctor by profession, hon. Mrs Labelle and hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. We have canvassed this in this House. We all agree that it is a piece of legislation that will raise passion. It is delicate, it is sensitive, and that’s why it must be debated fully with all the experts concerned before we bring it into the House. In certain countries, it has taken years to bring these amendments, and Mauritius is no exception. It will take some years, but I can assure the House that all efforts are being done to bring this piece of legislation to the House.
MINISTRY OF GENDER EQUALITY, CHILD DEVELOPMENT & FAMILY WELFARE - PLANNING & RESEARCH SECTION

(No. B/70) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the women, the children and the family, she will state the researches carried out by the Planning and Research Section of her Ministry, over the past three years, indicating the outcome thereof, in each case.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Planning and Research Unit set up in 1989 (PRU) acts primarily as a coordination and support unit, which provides technical back-up to other units of the Ministry. It designs policies, action plans and programmes geared towards the promotion of gender equality, empowerment of women, protection and development of children, safeguarding of family ties, and enhancement of the wellbeing of the community.

It is also responsible for the preparation and implementation of multilateral and bilateral projects, and the preparation of reports that have to be forwarded on a regular basis to regional and international organisations.

One of the responsibilities of the Unit is to initiate research and situation analysis on children, family and women. However, the Unit faces human resources constraints. In 2010 the scheme of service for Research Officer has been prescribed, but due to resource constraints so far no funding has been provided to fill in this post.

However, the project write-ups and Terms of Reference for consultancy services for studies have been prepared by the Planning and Research Unit for implementation in 2013, *inter alia*, on -

1. Balancing Work and Family Life Programme;
2. Audit of the Child Development Unit;
3. Impact Assessment on Strengthening Values for Family Life Programme;
4. Situation Analysis on Family Values in Mauritius;
5. Impact assessment of Men as Partners Programme, and
6. Development of a National Child Protection Strategy

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether these researches have already been initiated or has she said that she is facing human resources problem and it will be done in future?
Mrs Martin: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, what I have said is that we have elaborated project write-ups and Terms of Reference prepared for implementation in 2013. So, we have not yet started those projects and research, it is going to be outsourced.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether she is aware that in her report the Ombudsperson for children had observed that there was a complete breakdown of communication between the main Units of the Ministry and the different branches of the Ministry, and the Ombudsperson for Children had recommended the review of the whole system of Family Support Bureaux? Can the hon. Minister say what concrete action has been taken by the planning section of the Ministry to address this issue?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have, at the level of the Ministry and the Planning Research Unit, devised project write-ups and Terms of Reference for an audit of the Child Development Unit, as recommended by the Ombudsperson and as I announced in my Budget Speech last year. The tender has been launched already on one occasion, but the bid was non-responsive and we will be launching a new tender for regional and international bidders as from 15 April.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the planning and research section of her Ministry has carried any research on such important issues as street children, child prostitution and suicide among the youths?

Mrs Martin: As I have indicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Planning and Research Unit suffers from a lack of human resources and one of the problems that we have is the recruitment of one Research Officer for whom we have devised a scheme of service, but due to financial constraints, no funding has been provided for this post.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether - we know that her Ministry is facing human resource constraints and financial constraints - we should understand that such important researches are never going to be carried out?

Mrs Martin: The hon. Member is pre-empting on the future; I cannot do that. But, as at now, I can say that we have only three Officers of the technical cadre who work within the Planning and Research Unit (PRU), one Head, one Coordinator and one Family Welfare Protection Officer, which is clearly not enough for us to conduct our studies and surveys as such. However, we are outsourcing our different projects as indicated in my answer.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister who just mentioned that she is outsourcing research projects, whether among the research projects that
she intends to get started this year, - as she mentioned earlier, would include research work on street children and child prostitution?

**Mrs Martin**: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already indicated a list of six subjects which are going to be launched this year.

**Mr Jugnauth**: Can the hon. Minister in the meantime agree to table the project write-ups and the Terms of References for those researches that are going to be carried out?

**Mrs Martin**: I can examine the possibility, I do not see why not.

**Mr Speaker**: One last question to hon. Mrs Ribot!

**Mrs Ribot**: According to the list which the hon. Minister gave us about the projects that are going to be carried out this year, - in the near future - I do not think we heard anything about those subjects that we addressed, that is, street children, child prostitution and suicide among the youths.

**Mrs Martin**: If the hon. Member was attentive enough she would have listened...

*(Interruptions)*

...she would have listened...

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me answer…

*(Interruptions)*

She asked a question and I can answer.

*(Interruptions)*

If she was attentive enough...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mrs Ribot**: Mr Speaker, Sir,…

*(Interruptions)*

**Mrs Martin**: No, I am not. I am not giving way...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker**: Please! I am on my feet! The hon. Member is on a point of order.
(Interruptions)

She is on a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes!

Mrs Ribot: I asked a question to the hon. Minister, I am not expecting any comment on her part. I am just expecting an answer!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Martin: Is that a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir?

(Interruptions)

I am not imputing motives.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, hon. Ms Deerpalsing, I am the Speaker!

(Interruptions)

And I decide! The question has been put to the hon. Minister and she has to answer the question and not to make comments, please!

Mrs Martin: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, I would expect the same from the other Member who is asking questions...

(Interruptions)

Non, I would expect the same treatment, Mr Speaker, Sir, because she...

(Interruptions)

No, she is going a bit off limit. Mr Speaker, Sir, what I said in my answer...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Sorry, is the hon. Minister answering the question?

Mrs Martin: Yes, I am answering now, Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you. I have mentioned in my answer that...
...among the project write-ups by Planning and Research Unit, we also have the development of a National Child Protection Strategy which would imply that such subjects would also be taken on board.

**Mr Speaker**: Last question to hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee!

**Mrs Hanoomanjee**: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has said clearly that she has human resources problem in this particular Unit. Why hasn’t she, up to now, set up a platform with competent people...

**Mr Speaker**: Silence!

**Mrs Hanoomanjee**: ...from the University of Mauritius, the Mauritius Research Council, the National Women’s Council so as to set up a platform in the absence of the human resource that she has for this Unit?

**Mrs Martin**: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is about the researches that have been carried out by the Planning and Research Unit of the Ministry. In fact, what I am answering is that we do have constraints in terms of human resources. It is not that we did not ask for them, we have asked for them, but we have not yet had them. We have also asked for the post of a Lead Analyst which, I believe, will come from the Ministry of Finance. This is going to help us also in devising our strategies.

**Mr Speaker**: Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, next question!

**DIALYSIS - PATIENTS**

*(No. B/71)* Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to dialysis, he will state the number of patients who have attended sessions therefor, over the past two years, indicating the number of –

(a) private clinics offering dialysis sessions on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, and

(b) patients who have passed away during dialysis sessions.
Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, patients suffering from renal failure are provided with free dialysis facilities both in the public hospitals and in private clinics. The number of patients who have attended dialysis sessions over the past two years is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of patients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning part (a) of the question, there are seven private clinics which are offering dialysis services on behalf of my Ministry.

With regard to part (b) of the question, there were 23 deaths for each of the years 2011 and 2012, which represent 1.7% of the total number of patients on dialysis.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether for these deaths which have occurred during dialysis any enquiry has been carried out?

Mr Bundhoo: I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I have asked the questions. Enquiry has been carried out and in most of the cases it can be summarised into three –

(i) it was due mainly to heart attack and stroke;
(ii) congestive heart failure, and
(iii) septicemia.

I am not saying these are the only three causes, there might be other causes but these are the three main causes.

Dr. S. Boolell: Considering that there have been complaints from many sectors in regards to the quality of the service provided by the dialysis centres, has the hon. Minister been monitoring the quality of care and been standardising the quality of care given to the dialysis patients in all the private clinics and in the hospitals?

Mr Bundhoo: I have to say one thing, here, to the hon. Member that we have now introduced the service of a RMO at all dialysis centres, which were not there before. They are there on a permanent basis. We have one in Flacq, which is not in the same compound, so, we have one there posted on a permanent basis whereas all the other centres are connected to the main hospital and we have regular visits of the Registered Medical Officer (RMO) to ensure that supervision is carried out all the times.
Secondly, only three or four weeks ago, I personally had meetings with the Association of Dialysis Patients and we are reviewing the facilities that are presently being given in order to update it, and as the hon. Member rightly said to standardise it.

**Mr Baloomoody:** One of the main problems faced by these patients having renal failure is that even if they have an appropriate donor, there is no law here with regard to transplant of kidney and they have to go abroad and those who cannot afford cannot go abroad. So, can I ask the hon. Minister what action is being taken on this side?

**Mr Bundhoo:** I am very sensitive to the question put by the hon. Member, but I am afraid that this is not to the main question asked to me. If the hon. Member comes with a question, I will surely answer that. But I have to assure the House - this is very sensitive - at present, my Ministry is working on the protocol, with regard to organs transplants for the private and the public altogether.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question to hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee!

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** In view of the number of deaths which have occurred during dialysis sessions, doesn’t the hon. Minister think that it is high time for qualified nephrologists to supervise those dialysis sessions?

**Mr Bundhoo:** I think that I have made a mistake. This is what I meant earlier. In fact, we have recruited nephrologists. One is posted at SSRN Hospital, and he is also covering A. G. Jeetoo Hospital. One is posted at Victoria Hospital and Dr. Gaya - if I am not mistaken - is at Rose Belle Hospital. We have one who is a RMO, with specialist qualification in nephrology at the Flacq Hospital. I do agree that there is not enough specialist nephrologists in Mauritius. We are trying every effort possible to recruit them, but, unfortunately, we do not have them in Mauritius, and we shall continue to make all efforts to have the services of nephrologists. But I must assure the House that my Ministry has taken the necessary steps to cover all five regional hospitals where dialysis services are being offered for the services of nephrologists.

**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY, NATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND REFORM INSTITUTIONS - CHILD ALLOWANCE**

(No. B/72) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Florean) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the allowance of Rs750 per child per month of families earning less than Rs6,200 per month,
she will state, since the introduction thereof to date, the number of applications received therefor and beneficiaries thereof.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware in the Budget Speech 2013, it was announced that the Government would provide a minimum support of Rs750 per child per month for children in all families earning less than Rs6,200 per month. After consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in January 2013, it was agreed that the criteria to be applied for this measure, would be as follows -

(i) the child allowance would be limited to three children per family;

(ii) the families have to be registered under the Social Registrar of Mauritius;

(iii) the children should have, at least, 90% school attendance rate for two months running, whereas the minimum school attendance rate for children with disabilities would be 75%, and

(iv) the measure would apply to students between 3 and 23 years attending pre-primary, primary, secondary, pre-vocational, vocational, special needs schools and tertiary institutions.

At date, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has registered 12,916 applications, that is, 11,983 for Mauritius and 933 for Rodrigues. As for the number of eligible beneficiaries, my Ministry is presently processing these applications received to determine eligibility of the students, which is a quite lengthy and time-consuming exercise, including processes such as calling for applications, which were done in mid-January through a communiqué in the press and the MBC radio and TV. The registration of applications, which took place from 21 January to 02 February 2013 were extended for one more week. Also, there is the collection and verification of data as per application received at the different local Social Security Offices and site visits to establish the socio-economic profile of applicants. Then the development of protocols with relevant stakeholders, namely, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and the Tertiary Education Commission for the timely submission of attendance returns to my Ministry, and finally, the development of the appropriate software for the processing of applications by the State Informatics Ltd.

These processes, Mr Speaker, Sir, have reached the final stage with the view to meeting the objectives for effective payment as from the month of May. The House may wish to note that the public was informed through a press conference, which I held myself on 08 January 2013 and that the time frame for implementation has been set for the month of
May and the first payment will be effected in May 2013 with retrospective effect as from January 2013.

**Ms Anquetil**: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that it has been reported that there was a lack of staff during the registration process, can the hon. Minister inform the House what necessary measures have been taken to face the problem?

**Mrs Bappoo**: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very beginning, that measure needed additional human resources, so we had consultation with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has agreed to disburse necessary funds for the filling of all existing vacancies of Social Security Officers, and, in addition, some ten trainees, under the Service to Mauritius programme, have also been attached to my Ministry for the collection of data.

**Mrs Radegonde**: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the last day of registration was a big chaos in my Constituency? I have myself, in collaboration with the Police and the officers …

**Mr Speaker**: The hon. Member should put her question, please!

**Mrs Radegonde**: This is my question. I ask if the hon. Minister is aware that the last day of registration was a big chaos in my Constituency. Myself, in collaboration with the Police, I have - as there was only one officer – filled in the form at the Social Security Office of Bambous in Constituency No. 14. I have recorded the names and the phone numbers of applicants on a sheet of paper and same has been done at the Social Security Office of Chemin Grenier to ensure social order. Can the hon. Minister tell us when these applicants will be called for registration and whether they will receive arrears from January, and if not, why not?

**Mrs Bappoo**: Mr Speaker, Sir, I need first to thank the hon. Member for having helped on that chaotic day. Secondly, the last day for such programme - for applications to be received - is always chaotic because it is always *les retardataires qui arrivent le dernier jour*. Being a Saturday it becomes very difficult. That is why we extended a few more days. But I want to assure the hon. Member that all the applications will be taken on board under the SRM Project and the various processes will be done so that the eligibility of the application can be defined for payment to be assured.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee**: Will the hon. Minister concede that the implementation of this project has not been sufficiently prepared as many of these people who are really poor people
have had to pay several times travelling expenses. They have come, they have had to go back and come, at least, twice or thrice before their case be taken, although, they had all their papers and documents with them?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the communiqué that was given, it was well stipulated what are the various documents and papers that the applicants need to come with. Many of them don’t come with all the requirements; they have to go and come back again. But this exercise has now been completed and all the applications are undergoing through the processes of the Social Register Programme for the Proxy Means Test, and all the applications will be taken on board to work out for the eligibility. No one will be kept excluded.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the revenue of the family of Rs6,200 is inclusive or exclusive of overtime earnings by the family?

Mrs Bappoo: Overtime is always taken on board as the monthly revenue of the families.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, lots of people who are concerned by this measure are illiterate and don’t have access to information and education. In these circumstances, will the hon. Minister consider liaising with the National Empowerment Foundation and other agencies which have already a database on people living in absolute poverty and go towards these people, because lots of people, even in my Constituency, were not aware, despite all the information being published in the press?

Mrs Bappoo: We always have the same problem, but I want to assure the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this measure is dynamic. At any time they can come and make their registration and it will be taken on board. I, myself, I have explained in detail this new measure. Officers have gone in the various media and all explanations have been given. That is why we have had some 12,000 applications, which means the message has gone to these families with revenue of Rs6,200. But the Social Security Offices have not been closed to anybody. Anyone can come at any time of the year and the application will be processed.

Mr Speaker: Do you have a question, hon. Obeegadoo?

Mr Obeegadoo: Yes, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Yours will be the last question. Let us have the question of Mrs Ribot.
Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the sum that the beneficiaries are entitled to is Rs750 or plus Rs257 that they are supposed to get through the income support?

Mrs Bappoo: It is over and above. The income support is maintained over and above to what they will have as Rs750.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Minister is aware that the number of one-parent families has risen dramatically since the year 2000. Being given that the phenomenon of child poverty is a real problem in our society, will she agree to review this point she just made to in answer to hon. Dr. Boolell whereby the amount of Rs6,200 is inclusive of overtime? I am sure the hon. Minister gets the point that a single mother who is trying to feed her children and is working overtime should not be penalised for that fact?

Mrs Bappoo: As per regulations, I think, the 1984 one has been included in the computation of the monthly earning. And since then, overtime is included, it is not excluded. But it is a matter of policy and we will think about it in further discussions with the Ministry of Finance at the time of Budget consultation.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS - ACTS OF VIOLENCE

(No. B/73) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to acts of violence in public primary and secondary schools, he will state if a survey in relation thereto has been carried out by his Ministry, over the past five years, and if so, give details thereof and if not, why not.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr. Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has already established a mechanism for reporting of acts of indiscipline and violence for follow-up and monitoring. Statistical information regarding acts of violence and incidents involving among others, physical aggression/assault, fight among students, bullying, verbal abuse, corporal punishment, damages to Government property is recorded at the school and zonal directorate levels for remedial and follow up purposes.

Information regarding all such cases over the past five years in the public primary and secondary schools in the four zones is being compiled.

However, actions have been initiated in respect of these cases in line with the school Management Manual and rules and regulations governing discipline. Moreover, cases of criminal offences are referred to the Police while those requiring counseling and
psychological back-up are referred to the National Education and Counselling Service. Other cases are also referred to the Child Development Unit or Brigade Pour la Protection des Mineurs.

My Ministry has already a networking arrangement with the Police Authorities, Probation and After Care Service, Trade Unions, Heads of Schools, PTAs, Students Council, etc.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition, a number of concrete measures have been taken to curb indiscipline and violence in schools. These include -

(i) installation of CCTV Cameras to enable proper monitoring and reinforcement of security in schools throughout the day. Our objective is to cover all schools by July 2013 - very soon. To date, 21 schools have already been covered;

(ii) Police patrolling to enhance surveillance and vigilance in the vicinity of schools. The Police Department has been provided with a list of high risk schools;

(iii) SMS service to parents (E-Register) with a view to curtailing unexcused absences and truancy among students;

(iv) Disciplined School Environment to instil positive and disciplined behaviour among students, sensitisation campaigns are carried out by Heads of schools with the participation of the school community at large (PTAs, Student Council and Educators);

(v) setting up of a Student Care and Counselling Desk to provide necessary support to students facing emotional, family, stress-related and other psychological problems with a view to promoting positive behaviour through listening and supporting students;

(vi) Pastoral Care Committee to deal with problems that secondary students might encounter at school or at home, and

(vii) Disciplinary Committees to take sanctions against students who are involved in case of violence, which may also lead to their rustication from schools for a period of time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to further reinforce security on school premises, my Ministry will soon be recruiting private security guards to service high risk schools during the day.
Tendering procedures have been initiated for implementation on a pilot basis in some 13 schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue of violence at schools is a complex one. However, I am confident that with the support and contribution of each and everyone and, in particular, the engagement of parents, the problem of violence will surely be more effectively addressed.

Ms Anquetil: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that school violence is a serious problem, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry will come forward with regulations for safety measures in all public and secondary schools? Par exemple, un School Safety Response hotline pour permettre aux élèves, victimes de violence, de dénoncer?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes. This is an interesting suggestion already being considered at the Ministry. As I said, a desk has already been set up in each of the secondary schools for all these matters to be taken up.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned a list of measures, and I am sure he knows that this is not working.

(Interruptions)

I know all the measures that he has mentioned. This is why I will ask the hon. Minister whether he has taken cognizance of the report published by the National Economic Social Council - it is the Commission on social affairs of the NESC - and the recommendations made? Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to support by only one example. He has mentioned the Student Council. Is he aware that the Student Council, in most schools, is not active as mentioned in this report? What measures, for example, will he take to reactivate, to promote the Student Council to help in the issue of violence in our schools?

Dr. Bunwaree: Insofar as the Student Council is concerned, in some schools it is working very well and in others it is not working well. This, I do agree, but we are reviewing. I am personally looking at the question of Student Council in the colleges.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the Roots of Empathy Program in Canada has been globally renowned to dramatically reduce dramatically school violence as a programme, proven to work, and is he then proposing to learn from that programme? If my memory serves me right, the Roots of Empathy Programme was in the last Government Programme? Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry will go for a type of Roots of Empathy Programme as is proven to work in Canada?
Dr. Bunwaree: But you see in the programme it works, it is still, but what I have mentioned, I have lots of projects that are ongoing and some have just started. This is why, probably, the hon. Members of the Opposition are not aware and, in fact, they are not giving results immediately. We have to wait a bit. But, when all these are in place, then the roots of empathy programme will have its raison d’être plus que jamais.

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. We know that bullying can have very severe consequences, but in view of the fact that the hon. Minister mentioned that on a pilot scheme we are going to have the security guards in high risk schools - I think the number was 13 - may I ask the hon. Minister how many schools fall under the category of high risk schools throughout the island?

Dr. Bunwaree: Well, we have a number of schools and, as and when another school enters the list, one gets out of it. So, we have chosen these 13 schools because we have seen important problems in those schools. In other schools, they are manageable. This is why we have chosen these 13 schools on a pilot basis, but the idea is to extend the programme after that.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Ribot!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the NESC report pointed out the lack of psychologists and social workers employed by the Ministry and pointed out that the Ministry was currently in the process of recruiting more psychologists and educational social workers? I would like also to ask him where matters stand as far as that recruitment is concerned.

Dr. Bunwaree: The question was put last year. The number was 12 and now it is 18. We have done an important work, but it is a question of finance also. I would like to have more.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has been very explicit regarding disciplinary measures. May I ask him what about disciplinary approaches and will the hon. Minister consider that educators be better equipped, because this is a very accepted view that our educators is not equipped? So, will the hon. Minister consider equipping our educators and maybe we can consider e-learning because we have a lot of teachers to be trained? Will he consider e-learning so that we can equip our educators for disciplinary approaches?
Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, I am quite aware of that. E-learning has just started and it is going to take more and more importance in the weeks and months to come.

Mr Speaker: I will allow the author a further question.

Ms Anquetil: Merci, M. le président. Est-ce que le ministre aurait à sa portée les chiffres concernant le nombre d’élèves suspendus ou expulsés des écoles?

Dr. Bunwaree: Expulsé des écoles. As far as I remember, depuis que je suis ministre, il y a un seul et ça a été fait un an ou un an et demi de cela. Pour le reste j’ai dit que we are compiling the figures and we will let you be aware of it.

Mr Speaker: Next question hon. Mrs Ribot.

CHILDREN’S BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/74) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of a Children’s Bill, she will state where matters stand.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the proposed introduction of a Children’s Bill, there have been wide consultations with different stakeholders through 12 workshops conducted from November 2010 to April 2012. A preliminary draft has been subsequently prepared by the Attorney General’s Office in May 2012 based on the various recommendations emanating from the workshops. A revised draft following observations from Officers of my Ministry was submitted on October 2012.

I chaired five meetings as from 15th January 2013 to 06th February 2013 to examine and discuss the various provisions of this revised draft as well as recommendations emanating from the workshops with Officers of the Attorney General’s Office and Officers of my Ministry.

Issues pertaining to different Ministries have been compiled and views on the proposed provisions and recommendations are being sought from Ministries concerned to enable finalisation of the draft Bill.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know, first of all, from the hon. Minister if she could justify the delay related to the preparation of the Children’s Bill announced since 2010.
**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not really understand what the hon. Member means by delay. In fact, as I have explained, the 12 workshops have been conducted since November 2010 to April 2012. As from there, the Attorney General’s Office submitted a preliminary draft in May and its revised draft was in October and as from there we also had discussions with officers of the Attorney General’s office and officers from my Ministry. We are still going on with the discussions.

**Mrs Ribot:** Mr Speaker, Sir, among the Ministries which had been consulted in the meetings for the preparation of the Bill, I find many Ministries, but the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure and the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment do not seem to have been consulted. I would like to know from the hon. Minister, why?

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, from the list that I have, the 12 workshops did include the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment and the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the aspect of the sexual abuse of children will be addressed in this Bill?

**Mrs Martin:** Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, what we are trying to do is make it very comprehensive to harmonise all the existing legislations and be in conformity with the convention on the rights of the child.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether she will liaise with the Attorney General to take on board certain clauses in the Sexual Offences Act which were meant at that time to protect children victims of sexual abuse? It came before this House some time back and was referred to a Select Committee, but unfortunately because the House was prorogued the report was never published.

**Mrs Martin:** I welcome this proposition from the hon. Leader of the Opposition because, indeed, we are working towards improving the law with regard to children and I am sure with the Attorney General’s help, this is going to be taken on board.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question!

**Mrs Ribot:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether we could expect the issues of child prostitution and street children to be included in the Bill?
Mrs Martin: As I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, the protection of children and the different mechanisms which involve the protection of children are going to be taken on board and, therefore, this subject as well, I believe, will have its place there.

**NATIONAL CHILDREN’S COMMITTEE – SET UP**

(No. B/75) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the National Children’s Committee, she will state if it has been set up and, if so, indicate the *modus operandi* thereof and, if not, why not.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, in accordance with the National Children’s Council Act 2003, the National Children’s Committee has been set up in March 2011 for a period of three years.

The main objectives of the National Children's Committee are -

(i) to create a National Interactive Children’s Forum;

(ii) to encourage children to express their views on all issues concerning children;

(iii) to empower children to better understand child rights and development;

(iv) to encourage children's participation, and

(v) to enable them to acquire values such as citizenship, solidarity and social justice.

The National Children’s Committee comprises a President and a Vice President who are elected by the members and there are 13 other members all aged between 15 to 18 years. The Secretary of the National Children’s Committee is a staff of the National Children’s Council and is appointed by the National Children’s Council Board. As per the provision of the National Children’s Council Act, meeting of the National Children’s Committee is to be held at least once every three months.

Since its setting up, eight meetings of the National Children’s Committee have been held. Various activities have been organised such as a workshop on child participation and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, theatre-debate on family values, celebration of music day, slam show and visits to Residential Care Institutions.
However, since July 2011, the National Children’s Committee has been encountering difficulties to continue with its activities and meetings as most of the children are students of School Certificate and Higher School Certificate. They were taken up with their studies and examinations. Furthermore, they have indicated that the term of office of three years is too long for them.

The last meeting was held on 21 June 2011, and only three members turned up. In October 2011, the NCC Board decided to review and revamp the whole Act in view of certain anomalies which had been pointed out during the consultations on the Children’s Bill.

After a workshop on statutory bodies, it was decided that the exercise to review and revamp the NCC Act would be finalised only after the enactment of the Children’s Bill, so as to harmonise these two legislations on children.

Given the circumstances, the NCC Board agreed on 07 October 2011 to keep this project in abeyance.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister if I have understood well when she said that the National Children’s Committee has not been meeting since June 2011. So, can we say rightly that that National Children’s Committee has not been operational since June 2011?

Mrs Martin: That is correct, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether she would not consider converting the National Children’s Committee from a Government NGO to one which is rather independent, taking on board not the staff of the Ministry but people of good standing in the community, so that we can actually take care of children?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that members of the National Children’s Committee and members of the National Children’s Council are persons of good repute as well. But, what I was going to say to the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the children who form part and are members of the committee are children who have been selected through a selection exercise. They do not form part of the National Children’s Council as staff or members of the Board.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I as the hon. Minister whether she would confirm that students above the age of 18 were also included in the National Children’s Committee? Because usually a child is defined as somebody up to the age of 18.
Mrs Martin: I have the list with me, Mr Speaker, Sir. The time of the installation of the Committee, the children were not 18 years old. As I have indicated, the term of three years is one of the anomalies which have been pointed out. Since they started at 15 years of age, it would mean that after three years they would have been 18. That is one of the anomalies that have been pointed out.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether she can give us an idea of the criteria used for the selection of these children, and whether the age was taken into consideration? The fact is that the mandate is three years. If we take someone at 17, this person will be over 18 during the mandate. So, is the age criteria taken into consideration?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the criteria for selection were as follows: academic qualifications, knowledge on children’s issues, general knowledge, fluency of language and communication skills, and personality. As regards the National Children’s Council Act, in section 13(1), it is stated that the age is between 16 to 18 years, and in section 13(1) (b), it was indicated that the term of office was to be for three years. That’s one of the anomalies which I have pointed out, and this is one of the reasons why we have to keep this project in abeyance.

Mr Speaker: Last question to hon. Mrs Ribot!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the selection, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is un appel à candidatures to those children, where does it appear; whether in the newspapers, in schools. It is not very clear.

Mrs Martin: To set up a National Children’s Committee, Mr Speaker, Sir, invitations by way of letter were addressed to all children of all children’s clubs, education institutions, NGOs and children associations. I am informed that the selection team set up by the National Children’s Council Board carried out the selection exercise, and the election of the President and the Vice President of the National Children’s Council was held by the National Children’s Council’s Children Committee itself.

Mr Speaker: Hon, Quirin!

SPORTS BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/76) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of a new Sports Bill, he will state the time frame set therefor.
Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that my Ministry had targeted the introduction of the draft Sports Amendment Bill in the National Assembly during the current session.

However, the International Olympic Committee submitted new proposals for amendments at the end of November last. These proposals have been examined, and the valid ones have been incorporated in the draft legislation which is being vetted by the State Law Office. I am now expecting to introduce the Bill in the next session of the National Assembly.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l’honorable ministre, dans sa réponse, vient nous dire qu’il a reçu des propositions du Comité international olympique. Est-ce qu’il pourrait dire à la Chambre quelles sont ces propositions, et s’il compte les prendre en considération par rapport aux futurs amendements à la loi?

Mr Ritoo: This is of a confidential nature. The hon. Member will have the opportunity to come with proposals when the Bill is circulated.

Mr Quirin: Je ne vois pas où est la confidentialité, M. le président. Mais, néanmoins, je ne vais pas polémiquer avec l’honorable ministre. Je sais aussi qu’il a reçu à son bureau, vendredi dernier, deux émissaires du Comité international olympique, notamment Messieurs Poivey et Berraf. Peut-il nous dire, effectivement, si les amendements qui sont à venir ont fait partie des discussions, et quels sont les engagements qu’il a pris avec ces émissaires ?

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, avant tout, je tiens à souligner que la demande pour une rencontre avec moi avait été faite par les deux envoyés du Comité international olympique, c’est-à-dire, Monsieur Jérôme Poivey et Monsieur Mustapha Berraf. Une demande à laquelle j’ai agréé, vu les excellentes relations que nous avons avec le Comité international olympique. Deuxièmement, il a été convenu entre nous que cette rencontre devait se dérouler entre Monsieur Jérôme Poivey, bien sûr, quelques uns des mes officiers, un membre du State Law Office et moi-même. Troisièmement - et cela est très essentiel - il a été décidé entre nous que les discussions devraient rester sous le sceau de la confidentialité. Donc, il serait impoli de ma part, et je manquerais surtout à ma parole si je vous en disais davantage.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister is hauntedly unfit to answer this question presently. I am withdrawing this question to show respect to those who lost their lives in the recent flooding.
Mr Speaker: I don’t understand.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: I am withdrawing this question with due respect to the people who lost their lives.

(Interruptions)
NTA FITNESS CENTRE - PRIVATISATION

(No. B/77) 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 project for the privatization of the Fitness Centre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to –

(a) the names of the bidders therefor, indicating the name of the successful bidder;
(b) if all the procedures have been followed therefor, and
(c) the financial negotiations held and the implications thereof.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Lesjongard!

CEB – RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

(No. B/78) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to renewable energy, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, a list of the projects above 5MW submitted thereto, indicating in each case, the –

(a) names of the promoters thereof;
(b) date of submission;
(c) if discussions with the promoters thereof have started for the signature of a PPA;
(d) cost of KWh to be purchased by the Board, and
(e) subsidy to be distributed per KWh.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that four renewable energy projects are being considered for implementation as follows -

(i) A 29.4 MW Wind Farm
   (a) Name of promoter: Consortium Suzlon-Padgreen (selected following a bidding exercise)
   (b) Date of submission: 27 April 2011
   (c) Status: The Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement (ESPA) has been signed on 03 August 2012.
(ii) A 9 MW Wind Farm
(a) Name of promoter: Aerowatt France & Mr Cyril Oudin
(b) Date of submission: 10 March 2010 (initial proposal was for a Wind Farm of 18 MW and later revised to 9 MW)
(c) Status: The Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement is being negotiated.

(iii) A 15 MW Solar PV Farm
(a) Name of promoter: SARAKO PVP Co. Ltd, represented by Messrs Shyam Seetaram and a German Company TS Almeria
(b) Date of submission: 12 July 2012
(c) Status: The Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement is being discussed.

(iv) A 10 MW Solar PV Farm
(a) Details of project: Tender launched with unit size between 1 MW and 2 MW
(b) Date of submission: 14 September 2012
(c) Status: Letter of Interest has been sent to the preferred bidder, Messrs Harel Mallac, to start discussions on the Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards parts (d) and (e) of the question, I am informed by the CEB that each of the projects has a specific commissioning date and that the level of subsidy required per kWh is the difference between the price per kWh to be purchased and the marginal cost to the CEB. The forecast cost per kWh to be purchased ranges from Rs6.27 to Rs6.69 per kWh, and the subsidy required ranges from Rs1.51 to Rs1.88.

Mr Lesjongard: In a reply to a Question put to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister sometime back, that is, on 18 October 2011, with regard to solar photovoltaic projects, he had stated that there were…

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the Member. You said “he”. “He” means whom?

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Minister.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister! Say the hon. Minister.

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister stated that there were three projects which have been submitted to his Ministry since 2010. One is Alutec, two is Aqua Energy
and three is Abhijeet Group and, today, he has informed the House that discussions are ongoing with regard to a new project called SARAKO, which was submitted on 12 July 2012 and the promoters of this project are relatives close to the Minister of Small and Medium enterprises. May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister why, after having launched an Expression of Interest for an open procurement process and after having put aside three projects which have been submitted earlier, now CEB is negotiating with promoters …

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Member. You have to put your question.

Mr Lesjongard: I am putting my question.

Mr Speaker: I have told the hon. Member not to make a statement. You are making a lengthy statement. Put the question.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister why he said that now discussions are ongoing with a promoter who has submitted a project hardly six or seven months back?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are always numerous project requests that come to the CEB on renewable energy and these are looked into. But, only project proposals with technical and financial submissions are considered under the Public Procurement 2008 Regulations.

I would ask the hon. Member, if he has any interest in any of the previous ones to declare it and I would also ask him to send me details of anything that he has in mind.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is: why is it that there is an ongoing open procurement process where the selected bidder has not even started discussions with the Central Electricity Board, but for an unsolicited bid which has been submitted about six months ago, discussions are ongoing, and is on the point of being finalised? Pourquoi deux poids, deux mesures?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I repeat again, those that have come with technical and financial proposals are considered - according to the Public Procurement Regulations of 2008. And for the others they only have to submit and we will look at them.

Mr Lesjongard: One last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. My point is: we have a very transparent process for procurement in this country, we have voted legislation. Why is it that we do not use the proper channel to procure goods and services and we go ahead with
unsolicited proposals, where such proposals have been submitted by promoters who are close to a Minister in the Government?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will repeat what I have said: we are using the 2008 Regulations to look at proposals. I have asked the hon. Member and I will ask him again, if he has any interest in the previous ones to declare them.

(Interruptions)

**Mr Speaker:** Silence!

**Mr Jugnauth:** Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister say whether the CEB has already issued a Letter of Intent to that company, SARAKO PVP Co. Ltd?

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** I have not heard the question.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister say whether the CEB has to date already issued a letter of intent to the company SARAKO PVP Co. Ltd?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** The Letter of Intent was issued on 01 March 2013 with several conditions. Of course, in the end, the bottom line is to get an EIA License for the project; amongst others, there is a security of Rs15 m. to be provided and the obtention of land for the project.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr Ganoo:** I refer to the same company which has just been referred to. Is there a component of lease of land which is also in negotiation?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** The rule for the lease of land is applicable to all the three projects.

**Mr Ganoo:** Where is the land situated, please?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Land identified at Bambous but is subject, as I said, to the obtaining of an EIA licence like for all the other projects.

**Mr Jugnauth:** The hon. Deputy Prime Minister is saying that with regard to the lease of land it applies to the other companies. Will he then confirm that the other companies are being given the same facilities, that is, Government land is being given on lease to the other companies which had bid in?
The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, I confirm this.

Mr Uteem: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether the extent of the land that is being leased to those families and the amount paid as lease rental?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Let me give all of them. The first one is 40 hectares for Consortium Suzlon-Padgreen. The second one is 25 hectares to Aerowatt, the third one is 36 hectares Farm and the others for the 15 MW Solar PV Farm.

Mr Bhagwan: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister - without being personal - whether the families of the promoters or the promoter himself, has close relationship with one Minister in Government? If yes, whether the Minister has declared his interest to Government, to the Prime Minister while this file is being processed?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Emphatically yes.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Lesjongard!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Before I put my question, on a Point of Order, I confirm that I don't have any interest with regard to any of the companies which have submitted offers at the Central Electricity Board.

I would request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to withdraw what he has stated because it tantamounts to imputing motives, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Prime Minister: May I?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let me listen to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have not made any allegation. All I am saying is, state your position; you have stated it and I accept it.

Mr Jugnauth: For transparency sake, Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Deputy Prime Minister then table to the House the Letters that will afford the same facilities that he said in this House to the other companies, if he can table these facilities?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I would like to know, when the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said ‘Emphatically yes’, whether he is confirming that one Minister of Government, family or the
Deputy Prime Minister himself is party to that business, and whether that company has obtained 20 *arpents* at Bambous - crown land.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am saying is that he has declared his interest. Emphatically yes, he has declared his interest all along and has not been party to any discussion.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question, hon. Lesjongard!

**Mr Lesjongard:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. With regard to the price of purchase of kilowatt hour by the Central Electricity Board, can we know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister what will be the cost of kilowatt-hour being sold by SARAKO PVP Co. Ltd to the CEB and how does that compare with the lowest bidder with regard to the request of proposal that has been submitted recently to the Central Electricity Board?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Curepipe Point Project which has been allocated is at …

*(Interruptions)*

No, it has not been finalised yet. But, let me reply to part of your question. So far, the SARAKO purchase price is the lowest that we have at the market at the moment.

**Mr Speaker:** Now last question hon. Bhagwan in the name of public interest.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Would the Deputy Prime Minister agree or confirm to the House that the special favour given to that Sarako PVP Co. Ltd is part of the deal, of the conditions of the Minister concerned to cross the floor from the Opposition to Government.

**Mr Speaker:** Come on! This question is not in order.

*(Interruptions)*

Well I don’t know if the hon. Deputy Prime Minister does not want to answer, he may. Hon. Bhagwan, this is a joke.

**Mr Bhagwan:** The public wants to know.

**Mr Speaker:** No, no, no. Next question hon. Lesjongard!
CEB - SMART METERING - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/79) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the project for the implementation of smart metering, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to where matters stand, indicating if same will be extended to all electricity consumers.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that the smart metering project started in 2010 targeting the big industrial and commercial customers. As at February 2013, 3,400 meters have already been installed.

The CEB has already placed an order for an additional 5,000 meters which is expected to be delivered by April/May 2013. This will be followed by the procurement of an additional 1,000 meters.

The smart meters cost around five times more than the conventional meters. Presently, CEB has 412,000 customers including domestic, industrial and commercial. The CEB is targeting, in the first instance, the 45,000 big industrial and commercial customers who contribute to around 65% of its total revenue.

The installation of around 10,000 smart meters at the biggest customers will represent around 50% of CEB’s total revenue base.

It is not contemplated, at present, to extend this facility to all domestic customers in view of the high investment cost in terms of the smart meters, and installation of the associated communication system, including the cost of software licences.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, with regard to the announcement made by the Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech, that some 10,000 such smart metres will be installed this year. Are we on target hon. Deputy Prime Minister?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the problems has been the availability of SIM card in the transmission system. I don’t think we can absorb that many in a short time but it will be done as fast as we can accommodate them.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister again with regard to smart metering but this time prepaid electricity meters for vulnerable families. May I know where we stand with regard to this project because it was announced that some 400 needy families will be supplied with such meters?
The Deputy Prime Minister: It is expected, Mr Speaker, Sir, that they will be installed before the end of June or July of this year. The problem has been with the technical side in getting the transmission and information system. This has been the main difficulty.

Mr Lesjongard: One last question because this was announced as a mesure phare M. le président pour aider les plus démunis de notre société and a memorandum of understanding was signed on the 07 of September 2012; with Mauritius Telecom and it has taken us more than six months to allow those families to benefit from those prepaid meters. This was a measure, like I said, announced by the Finance Minister. Do we have a problem between Ministries or maybe the Finance Minister is not getting proper care from the Government?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already replied to part of this question. I have informed the House of the technical difficulties arising from setting it up from the IT aspect; but they are being addressed and the IT system is now ready. Also, we have surveyed families. It’s not all families who would like this system.

HAJJ PILGRIMAGE 2013 - ORGANISATION

(No. B/80) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Hajj pilgrimage 2013, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to if preparations for the organisation thereof have started.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, further to a correspondence dated 28 February 2013 from the Islamic Cultural Centre regarding the organisation of Hajj 2013, I instructed the latter to initiate proper action. I have subsequently been informed by the ICC that actions have already been initiated to ensure that we are within the timeframe for Hajj 2013.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether this year the ICC will be responsible for the organisation of Hajj and also whether any private agencies will be also responsible for the organisation and to deliver visas.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, as in the past years, this year again, ICC will be responsible for the organisation of Hajj. For sure, there are no other private agencies that have been authorised from any quarters to organise Hajj and have the arrangement for visas - nobody else other than ICC.
Mr Ameer Meea: Can I make an appeal to the hon. Minister to see to it that the 700 persons that did not have a visa last year be placed on a priority list this year to make justice to them so that this year they perform their Hajj. We all know what happened last year; they were not granted a visa due to unforeseen circumstances.

Mr Choonee: As the hon. Member states, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was due to unforeseen circumstances that 700 of those who got registered couldn’t go for Hajj. So this decision has already been taken. There are already on the priority list.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask of the hon. Minister, relating to these 700 persons who did not have a visa, there was a Fact-Finding Committee that was chaired by Mr Ravin Chetty. Can I ask the hon. Minister where matters stand to this Fact-Finding Committee? Has the report been tabled yet?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of this Fact-Finding Committee.

Mr Ameer Meea: It is in the papers and even the Chairman of ICC gave a…

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, you have got an answer; I have no control on the answer. Next question!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, I have not yet finished. I am very surprised that he is not aware of the Fact-Finding Committee, but can I ask him if he is aware that a report was prepared by hon. Reza Issack and where matters stand in relation to that report? Has it been signed by the ICC and have any recommendations been put in place?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, it’s true that a report has been prepared by hon. Reza Issack, after the recommendations came from a Ministerial Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. The report was prepared, but we have two co-chairpersons for that particular Committee: Dr. Farhad Aumeer, the Chairman of ICC and hon. Reza Issack were to co-chair the committee. The report was prepared by hon. Issack but it was not signed by the Chairman of ICC. Ultimately, a notice was served to our good friend, hon. Reza Issack from the Chairman of ICC and following that notice, nothing evolved from there; nothing happened. It’s status quo. I can’t pre-empt what will happen, but I wish to inform the House that the organisation of Hajj is a very serious and complex matter.

Mr Speaker: Let us hear the question from hon. Soodhun.
Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister enlighten the House that the ICC will be the sole organiser for organising the Hajj?

Mr Choonee: The ICC Act says it and that’s what the law says, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Soodhun: I think the hon. Minister can look at it again, because, according to the Minister, we have no more private Hajj organiser. This is what he wanted to say.

(Interjections)

Mr Choonee: As per the Act, it is the ICC that is the main body which organises Hajj as in the past years. So, it will go on the same way, except that we have a backlog that we are giving priority.

Mr Speaker: No, the question is about the exclusivity of the ICC to organise Hajj. This is the whole question.

Mr Choonee: ICC gives permission to Hajj organisers. They come in at a later stage, but ICC is the organisation that looks after visas, the pre-Hajj mission and all arrangements being made in Saudi Arabia, and then only we proceed further.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether, up to now, the Islamic Cultural Centre has launched any tenders for carriers and whether this would be an international tender or limited to airlines operating currently in Mauritius?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, this will definitely be done, but it is too early to talk about carriers now.

Mr Jugnauth: Is the hon. Minister happy with the situation that he has just described that exists when hon. Reza Issack chaired that meeting and came up with a report co-chaired by Dr. Aumeer? Is he still happy with the state of affairs and, if he is not, what measures he intends to take in order to improve this situation?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, do I give an opinion of mine, or I don’t know. Is the hon. Member asking for an opinion?

Mr Speaker: The question is: are you happy with the present state of affairs?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am happy, but we maintain that we always have room for improvement.

Mr Speaker: All right! Last question!
Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister…

(Interruptions)

If I can catch the attention of the hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ameer Meea: Can we have an idea on the number of visas that would be put to the people who are planning to go to Hajj? Will it be in line with past years or will it be like last year’s figure?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a firm commitment from the Saudi authorities that 1,300 Mauritians will be provided with visas to participate in Hajj and it goes on like that, it is 1,300. It is good that I inform the House that Dr. Abu Kasenally, the Minister of Housing and Lands and who is also the Minister responsible for Hajj matters yesterday submitted a letter from the Saudi authorities confirming that Mauritius will be authorised 1,300 visas for Hajj participation this year.

MAURITIUS-INDIA DOUBLE TAXATION AVOIDANCE - INVESTMENTS

(No. B/81) 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 Mauritius-India Double Taxation Avoidance (DTA), he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the –

(i) Board of Investment, information as to the cumulative amount of investments made in India from Mauritius, since 1983 to December 2012, indicating the percentage of the total foreign investments made over that period, and

(ii) Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the amount of corporate tax and registration duty paid respectively by global business entities in 2011 and 2012, indicating their respective share of the total income tax revenues and registration duties, and

(b) state where matters stand in relation to the Mauritius-India DT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a)(i) of the question, the authoritative agency
to provide information on cross border investments made into India from Mauritius is the Bank of Mauritius (BOM) rather than the Board of Investment.

I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) data by geographical detail are available for 1990 onwards only. According to the Bank of Mauritius the cumulative FDI flows into India by entities, other than global business entities, between 1990 and 2012 amounted to Rs1.9 billion, representing 8.6% of cumulative total direct investments made overseas over that period. Concerning Global Business Companies (GBCs), data on their geographical investments are not maintained by the Bank of Mauritius.

However, according to official figures reported by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India, the cumulative FDI equity inflows into India from Mauritius for the period April 2000 to January 2013 amounted to USD 72 billion. This represents 38% of the cumulative amount of FDI equity inflows into India over that period.

Concerning part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that the amount of corporate tax received from global business companies is Rs2.3 billion for 2011 and Rs2.9 billion for 2012. The corporate tax from global business companies as a percentage of total income tax revenues, that is, both personal and corporate income tax, works out at 17% for 2011 and 20% for 2012, and as a percentage of total corporate tax revenues is 30% and 35% for 2011 and 2012 respectively.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Registrar-General that the Department does not maintain information by types of companies. As such, information on the amount of registration duty paid by Global Business Companies is not readily available. The Registrar-General has, however, informed that -

(a) GBCs normally pay registration duty on the registration of loans and pledges documents, and

(b) It is estimated that GBCs pay on average Rs3 m. per annum, representing 1.7% of the total annual registration duty collected by the Registrar- General’s Department.

Regarding part (b) of the question, as the House is aware Mauritius signed the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention with India in August 1982 and the agreement came into force in June 1985. The Double Taxation Avoidance Convention is currently in force and effective.
Discussions to review certain aspects of the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention are however ongoing at the level of the Indo-Mauritius Joint Working Group (JWG). The Joint Working Group met in December 2011 in Mauritius, during which India proposed certain changes to the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention. Mauritius examined the Indian proposals and subsequently submitted counter-proposals thereon to India. The Mauritius counter-proposals were discussed during another meeting of the Joint Working Group held in August 2012 in Mauritius. At that meeting, agreement was reached on a text on tax information exchange, in replacement to the existing article on exchange of information in the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention.

Further discussions on the proposed changes to the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention took place in New Delhi on 04 and 05 April 2013. Discussions are still ongoing and another meeting of the Joint Working Group will be scheduled soon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given the highly sensitive nature of the discussions on the DTAC, it would not be appropriate to disclose further details on this issue. However, we will ensure that at all times our interests are preserved and we are confident that we will be able to reach a win-win solution.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: We regularly find reports from India and Indian authorities of abuses of Double Taxation Treaty, especially abuses of round-tripping. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many specific cases of round-tripping have been reported by Indian authorities to local authorities and which of these cases have been proven in our Courts?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would not venture any information on that, I am not sure. There have been cases mentioned, but to my recollection, no case has actually been proven in our Courts here, in Mauritius. Mr Speaker, Sir, furthermore, I would also inform the hon. Member that we have agreed a text on Tax Information Exchange Agreement with India and this text is ready, and is waiting for signature at the next convenient moment. As the Members are aware, we are one of the few countries that accept an Indian Revenue Authority Officer stationed here in order to insure transparency in our offshore financial services.
At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

GOVERNMENT PORTAL - CONTRACT

(No. B/82) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the upgrading of the Government portal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Government Online Centre, information as to the -

(a) procurement method used for the award of the contract therefor;
(b) name of the contractor therefor, and
(c) contract value thereof.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the National Computer Board, that pursuant to Section 14(2) of the Public Procurement Act of 2006, an Open Advertised Bidding was launched on 09 March 2011 for the supply, installation, testing, and commissioning of a portal technology and infrastructure solution for the Government of Mauritius. The closing date was 04 May 2011.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the recommendations of the Bid Evaluation Committee, the contract was awarded to the successful bidder, ‘Formation, Recrutement et Conseil en Informatique’ (FRCI) on 03 October 2011.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that the contract value is Rs49,990,643 inclusive of VAT.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister, out of this sum of Rs49 m., what is the portion which relates to licence fees payable to Microsoft and what is the fees payable for acquisition of hardware?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can give the hon. Member a breakdown of the cost of how we arrived at that figure. Is this what the hon. Member wants?

(Interruptions)

For hardware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we spent an amount of Rs8,985,660, for portal solution Rs9,818,964, for training Rs960,000, support Rs4,104,000, installation cost Rs19,601,500, and the sub total makes a total of Rs43,470,000. Now, with VAT inclusive it comes to Rs49,990,643.
Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister, being given the high amount being paid for portal solution for the software, was there any recommendation made by his officers that we use open source codes which are free instead of Microsoft SharePoint?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the tender document for the implementation of the new Government portal was technologically neutral, that is, it did not favour one technology at the expense of the other like open source software, which our friend has just mentioned. Any bidder had also the possibility to propose the solution based on open source software. However, the most technical responsive and lowest evaluated bidder, that is, the FRCI proposed Microsoft SharePoint as solution and it is to be noted that as per Gartner, an international firm of benchmark repute, Microsoft SharePoint was considered to be the top most product, well ahead of open source software alternative. It is to be noted that open source costs nothing, but when urgent premium support is needed, it is not available or rarely available. Even if support may be available, it works out to be very expensive. *Finalement, bon marché coûte cher!*

Mr Seeruttun: *M. le président, est ce que l’honorable ministre peut confirmer si ce nouveau portail est compatible avec les smartphones et tablettes sachant très bien qu’aujourd’hui on a beaucoup plus de gens qui ont des tablettes et smartphones que des PC ou laptops?*

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that, in fact, all the necessary has been done to make it compatible with all devices that we may use.

Mr Ameer Meea: May I ask the hon. Minister whether this agreement was signed by his Ministry to Microsoft or was it signed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development as in the case of the agreement that was signed between Microsoft and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for an amount of Rs223 m. for supply and Windows and so on?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: When the successful bidder himself proposed Microsoft SharePoint as solution - it is not the Government - we have said that the implementation of the new Government portal was technologically neutral. It was that successful bidder who proposed that solution and one thing that we have to bear in mind is what is most important, what is best for the country. As I have just mentioned, Gartner considers it to be the top most
product. So, we must be happy. He was the lowest bidder with Rs49,990,000 while the second one which comes after is around Rs110,000,000!

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can also cite many reports on the Internet criticising Microsoft SharePoint, but may I know from the hon. Minister whether the Rs50 m. include also maintenance and upgrade and the duration of these upgrades?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre pourrait confirmer si tous les moteurs de recherche seront adaptés à ce nouveau portail ou bien est-ce que c’est limité à quelques moteurs de recherche?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Non. The National Computer Board has the responsibility to monitor the situation; the GOC has taken all appropriate steps to meet all requirements that may be needed.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister who owns the domain name “gov.mu”?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: This is another issue which has nothing to do with that. If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question then we are going to answer it.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

LES SALINES WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/83) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Les Salines Waterfront Development Project (Neotown), he will state where matters stand as to the implementation of the different components thereof, indicating if any –

(a) revised implementation plan thereof has been submitted and, if so, when, and

(b) plot of land allocated therefor has been subleased by the promoter thereof.
Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my previous replies to Parliamentary Questions on this subject, I have already informed that the waterfront development project, due to its scope and magnitude, will be implemented in phases.

A recent site visit effected by the officers of my Ministry has revealed that the lessee, namely, Les Salines Development Limited, is presently undertaking the infrastructural and landscaping works on the site. However, it has been observed that the works have slowed down.

The promoter has already been requested to expedite matters and to submit a project implementation schedule. I wish to point out that the project is being monitored by a Joint Monitoring Committee comprising representatives of my Ministry and other relevant authorities. Moreover, Government will not hesitate to apply the provisions of the Lease Agreement in case of breach of the conditions by the lessee.

As regards part (b) of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Article 7 of the Lease Agreement does not allow the promoter to transfer its rights in the lease unless it has the written approval of my Ministry and in compliance with the provisions of the Code Civil, Article 1778-5. To date, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no such application has been received from Les Salines Development Limited for the sublease of the land.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in his reply to PQ No. B/653 on 30 October 2012, the hon. Minister informed us that a site visit had revealed that on-site infrastructural works were progressing. I effected a visit a few days afterwards. The hon. Minister has just informed us that another site visit has been effected recently, and it appears that the work has slowed down. Would the hon. Minister be surprised that these on-site works are a faire-semblant? In fact, there is nothing happening there. They have only put hoardings just to show that they exist. In fact, this Neotown project est un projet fantôme.

Dr. Kasenally: I will not adopt such a pessimistic view. As the hon. Member may know the world is undergoing a downward dip concerning the financial and economic situations. There has been a total slow down, not only, in the United States, but also, in Europe. We know what has happened to Cyprus, but also, in the BRICS. Recently, they had a summit. You know what BRICS is? I think you know it; Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. But, even there, they would not be able to come up to some very positive. They were supposed to have an Investment Bank, but this has been put under Court. So, we have to be a bit cautious, but however, my Ministry is watching it and we will not let that happen.
Mr Bhagwan: I know that the hon. Minister is closely monitoring the situation. Would the hon. Minister be surprised that when there was a PNQ, we drew the attention of Government that these Patel investors, were in fact - I measure what I am saying - international crooks, if I can say so. They informed Government that they have invested here and there, in Dubai, but in fact, they do not exist anywhere. They are corrupt people. So, will Government, in the light of what is happening - we can call it projet fantôme - consider retrieving the patrimoine national, that is, the precious lands which are worth millions in the port, but which have been given as jackpot to these Patel promoters.

Mr Bhagwan: I know that the hon. Minister is closely monitoring the situation. Would the hon. Minister be surprised that when there was a PNQ, we drew the attention of Government that these Patel investors, were in fact - I measure what I am saying - international crooks, if I can say so. They informed Government that they have invested here and there, in Dubai, but in fact, they do not exist anywhere. They are corrupt people. So, will Government, in the light of what is happening – we can call it projet fantôme - consider retrieving the patrimoine national, that is, the precious lands which are worth millions in the port, but which have been given as jackpot to these Patel promoters.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the word ‘international crook’ is a bit hard. I will ask my hon. colleague to measure a bit his statement. I wish to inform the hon. Member that I have also checked and monitored it on the internet that they are having a fair number of projects, not only, in India, but also, in Africa. So, we are keeping a tab. We are opened to investment, but we will not let anybody take us for a ride. The hon. Member can rest assured.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether – by virtue of the contract – a time frame has been given to those promoters? In what conditions can the land be retrieved from them?

Dr. Kasenally: There is a time frame, but recently, they also have been complaining. We have had problems about the harbour bridge, which has slowed down, but there is enough leeway and we shall not be waiting indefinitely. When the time comes, we will take the action that we need to take.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. Minister say how much in monetary terms the promoters had invested so far in the infrastructural works that the hon. Minister has just mentioned?
Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have not got the figures, but I will have to check it.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister how much these promoters have paid to Government so far and whether they are acting within the law with their terms of payment which are supposed to be paid to the Ministry and to Government?

Dr. Kasenally: They have paid all their lease. It runs about Rs3 m. or something like that, but I will have to check it and give the exact figure.

Mr Roopun: I heard the hon. Minister stating there is a Joint Monitoring Committee. Can I know at what frequency the Joint Monitoring Committee meets? Who are the members? And when it last met?

Dr. Kasenally: In fact, we requested for a Joint Monitoring Committee at the beginning of this year, but they have asked for some delay because they have to get their team here. The members involved are the Prime Minister’s Office, the Ministry of Finance, the BOI and my Ministry.

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Minister just mentioned that his Ministry and other authorities are following the works done there. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the RDA is involved in the digging which has been done because, according to my information, in the course of the recent flood, the work done was one of the cause of flooding in that region of Les Salines?

Dr. Kasenally: I have not got the last part of your question.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you like the hon. Member to repeat his question, hon. Minister?

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Minister mentioned that his Ministry and other authorities are following constantly the works done there. I am asking the hon. Minister whether people from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure are also following the works because, according to my information, following the recent flood, the digging which has been done there and left as it is, has been one of the additional cause of flooding in that region of Les Salines?

Dr. Kasenally: The Minister of Public Infrastructure is, in fact, involved with the Dream Bridge going over Les Salines. In this way, we have been involved in the acquisition – as you probably know – of properties in the region of your constituency. However, what the
RDA has been done, they are not responsible to me. I am not capable, nor I think we can be sure that the work they undertake has been a cause or whatsoever. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are so many experts in people giving so many ideas. That is why we are waiting for the true experts to give us the reasons of why these floods actually happened.

Mr Barbier: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the promoters have asked for some damages to be paid to them, due to some alteration in the project caused by the Dream Bridge Project?

Dr. Kasenally: No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the local representatives of these Patel investors have taken money *en vendant des rêves* - luxurious condominium complex, tourist village and other marine garden - and if the local representatives have been involved in the selling of these *projets de rêve aux mauriciens* and whether the hon. Minister will conduct an inquiry at his level?

Dr. Kasenally: No, it is not to my knowledge or that of the Ministry or the Government or any local agents involved in the selling of properties to be built.

**TOLL ROAD NETWORK PROJECT**

*(No. B/84)* Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the implementation of the Toll Road Network Project, he will state where matters stand, indicating the -

(a) scope of works therefor;

(b) length of road involved;

(c) total cost thereof;

(d) share of private investment therein;

(e) procurement method used therefor, and

(f) toll rates required for the cost effectiveness thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to clarify at the very outset that there is no Toll Road Network *per se*. Tolling
is one of the revenue streams for the Public and Private Partnership Project for the Design, Construction, Financing, Operation and Maintenance of a Road Decongestion Programme for the Road Development Authority of the Government of Mauritius. In accordance with the procedures laid down in the PPP manual, the project is still in the procurement phase, whereby a preferred bidder and a reserve bidder have been selected. As provided for, negotiations are underway between the preferred bidder and the Road Development Authority with a view to finalise the PPP Agreement. Thereafter, on the approval of the procedure require PPP Committee, the Central Procurement Board and Cabinet for an award to be made.

(a) The scope of works as regards tolling before the private party in the PPP project to set up the necessary physical infrastructure and administrative process to collect tolls at various locations on a defined road network. The tolls collected will go towards part financing of the operation and maintenance of the roads within the network by the private party as well as repayment of debt during a concession period of 33 years after the signature of the Agreement.

(b) 62 kilometres of dual carriageway are involved in sparring between Terre Rouge and Valentina.

(c) The total capital investment to be incurred by the private party, covering the design and construction of the aforementioned road infrastructure and the provision of tolling infrastructure, will be around Rs30 billion.

(d) The private party will provide 20% of the investment through their own equity funding and the remaining 80% will be provided through a Lending Special Purpose Vehicle set up by Government (Debt Funding).

(e) The project is being procured under the Public Private Partnership Act 2004 and relevant provisions of the Public Procurement Act 2006.
The average toll rate as per feasibility study is Rs2.60 per kilometre. As an agreement is yet to be finalised to the preferred bidder, the rate proposed by the bidder cannot be disclosed at this stage.

**Mr Li Kwong Wing:** The Minister said that the total cost of the project will be Rs30 billion, of which the private investor will contribute 20%. The private investor is, in fact, Colas/Bouygues, who is the preferred bidder, and we already know that in the case of Terre Rouge/Verdun project, Colas/Bouygues has asked for a claim of Rs709 m. on a project of Rs2.2 billion, that is, for a cost overrun of 30%. Given that this is a project of Rs30 billion and Colas has a track record to claim for lost overrun of 30%, while it is contributing only 20%, is it not a case where Colas will not be putting any money?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that Colas, for the Terre Rouge-Verdun, has made a very excessive claim – the sky high appears to be the limit. But, in fact, let me inform the hon. Member that we have not accepted the claim of Colas up till now. The consultants as well as my engineers are working on that. That is one issue. But if a separate question is asked to me on that issue, I am definitely going to answer as to how much of money RDA is willing to pay. But, here also, since the award has not been made, I would request the hon. Member, at least, to bear with us because I don’t have any control over who is going to get the award. That is very difficult for me at this stage to say.

**Mr Ganoo:** The question is who is going to get the contract although the preferred bidder has not been chosen as yet. In a PPP project, the promoters or the private sector come with their money; then they start building, and afterwards they rent the construction for a period of 20 or 25 years. But, in this case, doesn’t the Minister agree that this defies the whole concept of PPP, when private sector is chipping in only 20% and Government is putting 80%? Can the hon. Minister tell us who came up with this montage financier with the promoters bringing in only 20%?

**Mr Bachoo:** In fact, this was the decision taken by the Government. At least, they are providing 20% of the investment with their own funds, but at the same time we are providing them the remaining 80% through lending special purpose vehicle, that is, definitely we are taking from the market and we are supposed to be lending to them at a rate which they are bound to pay to us, and this has been done with a view to facilitate such a project. If they had gone on their own, probably they would not have received that much of money. Keeping
that in mind, probably a few years back decision was taken by the Government that we have
to come forward with this lending business.

**Mr Ganoo:** Is it also the case that they will collect the toll afterwards?

**Mr Bachoo:** No, the collection of the toll will be their responsibility, but Government
will definitely have a supervisory power over that.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just informed the House
that there was a preferred bidder. Can I ask the hon. Minister how this bidder was preferred?

**Mr Bachoo:** I don’t want to go into the intricacy because this is a PPP project. To be
very honest, I am not involved in the selection of the preferred bidder, but I am told there is a
preferred bidder, there is a reserve bidder, and negotiations are on. This question of
negotiation between the different groups who are involved into that has taken almost two
years. Once the award is made, I will be in a position, and then Cabinet will have to take a
decision on that. We have not yet taken a decision.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Last question hon. Li Kwong Wing. Last question! Time is
up!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Li Kwong Wing:** But it is an important subject, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Time is up since three minutes now. Hon. Li Kwong Wing,
please!

**Mr Li Kwong Wing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since Government is contributing 80%
of the Rs30 billion, that is, Rs24 m., what is the expected rate of return that Government is
estimating from this project? Therefore, based on this estimated rate of return, what will be
the toll rate that is going to be charged to the public and, if that toll revenue will not be able
to yield that rate of return, will Government be giving a sovereign guarantee for the toll
revenues that will guarantee that rate of return?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a project of national importance. We are
not telling that Government is going to contribute 80%. I have just mentioned that
Government is going to advance them loan to the tune of 80%, that is, the loan which we are
giving to them. Secondly, with regard to the issue of the toll, this has been calculated by the
consultants. I would only request the hon. Member to bear with us. Let the award be made,
and I will be in a position to state.
The Deputy Speaker: I’ll allow a final question to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister indicate to the House whether, in this very case, the other bidder has appealed to the Independent Review Panel against Colas, and the RDA, which has been made a party before the IRP, has refused to submit itself to the jurisdiction of Independent Review Panel because the law has been changed last year to enable the RDA not to be answerable to the IRP?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would sincerely expect the hon. Member to come with a substantive question to provide all the detailed answer.

(Interruptions)

Having said that, I would say the reason why the IRP rejected the request of the other bidder. The reason is simple: according to our law - the law has not been changed - …

(Interruptions)

Let me complete! According to the law, the award has to be made. When the award is made, then you are given so many days to appeal to the IRP. But what have they done? Before the award was made - the award had not yet been made; negotiations were still on - they went to IRP. Hence, the RDA rightly had to object because we have not given the offer; we have not gone to the Policy Planning Office; we have not gone to Cabinet, and award has not been made. All of a sudden, they have already started challenging. I can’t read the mind of IRP, but I know IRP rejected it. So, once the award is made, they have got the full right to go to IRP, and then IRP will have to take a decision.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs No. B/91, No. B/93 and No. B/94 have been withdrawn. Time is up!

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.