On resuming at 2.24 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE – PERMIT

(No. B/15) Mr Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Fisheries whether, in regard to our Exclusive Economic Zone, he will state –

(a) since 2005 to date, on a yearly basis, the –
   (i) number of permits issued, indicating the nationality of the permit holders;
   (ii) quantum of monies collected, and
   (iii) tonnage caught and

(b) the terms and conditions under discussion for the proposed Fishing Partnership Agreement to be signed between the European Union and the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Von-Mally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information relating to part (a) of the question is being tabled. It is quite long unless the hon. Member wants me to read the whole list ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No crosstalking, please. Answer the question!

Mr Von-Mally: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to PQ No. B/602 of 23 October 2012 when I informed the House that a new Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) and Protocol were concluded and initialled by Mauritius and the European Commission in February 2012 in Mauritius.

Discussions on the terms and conditions have already been held in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and other rules of international law and practices prior to initialising the Agreement and its Protocol.

Following the initialising process of the Agreement and Protocol, both parties initiated action and completed the necessary internal procedures for the Protocol to enter into force. The new Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Protocol were signed by both parties in Brussels on 21 December 2012.
Furthermore, in view of completing administrative procedures, Mauritius notified the European Union in January this year for the adoption of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Protocol. I am made to understand that the EU would incessantly notify Mauritius once consent of the EU Parliament is obtained. It is with effect from the date of the reciprocal notification that the Agreement and the Protocol will enter into force for a period of three years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given that the Agreement contains several terms and conditions, I am, therefore, tabling a copy of the signed Agreement.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House whether the agreement pertains to the exploitation of 2.4 million square kilometres of our exclusive zone for 86 foreign vessels and for which the Government of Mauritius will be collecting only 660,000 Euros, that is, Rs26 m. Is this not a braderie of our precious maritime resources to foreigners and should not this agreement, therefore, be renegotiated or cancelled?

Mr Von-Mally: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not the first time that we are signing such a protocol. The last one spanned on a period of 17 years. Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that our waters in the Indian Ocean are the poorest in terms of tuna. In fact, the EU fish in the north of Agalega; they do not fish near our island. The protocol has been signed to allow them, when they are fishing in the waters of Madagascar, Mozambique, Comoros, being given that tuna is a migratory fish - they fish normally skipjack - when the tuna are in our territory, in the north of Agalega, to continue fishing. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the reference tonnage is 5,500 tonnes, but they are fishing on an average of 1,800 tonnes, that is, Mauritius is winning. Without investing a cent, we are receiving more than Rs26 m.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that we are getting only Rs26 m., which he thinks is a gift to the Government of Mauritius, but which is not enough to buy even an Aston Martin for the Prime Minister? Is this amount sufficient as a trade-off for the unlimited fishing and pillage of our fish resources given the fact that we are getting only Rs2.60 per kilo for the fish when Mauritian local fishermen are not able to get any fish after the over fishing done by the foreigners and local consumers are paying a market price of more than Rs200 per kg.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, I shall draw your attention to the fact that when you put a question, try to be relevant and not drag in extraneous matter.
Mr Von Mally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we must be patriotic.

Mr Speaker: Answer the question, please!

Mr Von Mally: The seafood hub is an important pillar of our economy. We know that Europeans are investing in our seafood hub which is a pillar of our economy. In the seafood hub, we have about 1600 people earning a living directly or indirectly from fishing. We must not play with that. It is not true that they are paying Rs2 etc. for these. They are fishing less than 1800 tonnes. But you have a logbook, the hon. Member can check and crosscheck.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister should address the Chair when he answers. Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: We have just extended our continental shelf and have a greater economic zone. Can I know from the hon. Minister what measures is his Ministry taking in order to encourage more licensees to apply to be able to explore this industry?

Mr Von Mally: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that we have the problem of piracy in the Northern or Western part of the Indian Ocean, I think more fishing vessels are welcomed in our seas. Actually, we have quite many fishing vessels fishing in our EZ. I think it is o.k, we must not have too many also.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there is any quantum collected from the Japanese permit holders and if the monies are being earmarked for any specific purpose with regard to fishers community and what are they, if any?

Mr Von Mally: Yes, from the Japanese and the European. There are bilateral agreements between Japan and Mauritius and, of course, likewise with the European, Rodrigues is also benefiting from that. We have, for example, beacon lights being installed, outboard motors to Rodriguan fishermen, you have the Jugo Rodriguez that has been repaired etc.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just stated that, in fact, they are fishing less than they are supposed to fish. Can I know from the hon. Minister what measures
does he have at his Ministry - the figure that is being reported by the books, as the Minister said of the ships that undertake the campaign for the fishing - to verify the exact figure that is being reported and also whether any audit or any methodology has been designed and what has been the outcome up to now?

**Mr Von Mally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we have serious officers working in the Ministry and we have the IOTC also working on that.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, Mauritius is chairing the IOTC. So, we are not going to shoot in our own foot.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all aware of the attempts of the UK to create a Marine Protected Area and of the stand of Mauritius in that regard. So, may I know from the Minister how this Partnership Agreement relates to the waters of the Chagos Archipelago?

**Mr Von Mally:** Well, regarding the waters of the Chagos Archipelago, the hon. Member knows that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is dealing with that and he knows quite well what is happening with the Chagos waters.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Well I am just expecting an answer. Do I understand from the hon. Minister that he does not know how this Partnership Agreement relates to the dispute over the waters of the Chagos Archipelago?

**Mr Von Mally:** We have everything in the report. There are so many terms and conditions that have been put in that.

**Mr Li Kwong Wing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House what are the surveillance equipment and vessels available at his Ministry or available by Government to ascertain that the catch is really 5500 tonnes and can he ensure that the amount which is being negotiated as a deal in the agreement of the EU would be used to finance the surveillance of our ocean which is being pilfered by the following vessels?

**Mr Von Mally:** Big words, Mr Speaker, Sir! In fact, all the countries in the Indian Ocean are working closely, they are monitoring all this. We have the National Coast Guard, we have the Dornier, our helicopters and recently we have the SAMSA where you have officers from Mauritius, from Comoros from the different countries. We work together to combat illegal
fishing and as I have said according to the logbook we can make sure that the amount that is fished tallies with the agreement.

Mr Ganoo: M. le président, le ministre doit savoir qu’il y avait une coalition qui regroupait les associations des pécheurs, les mouvements écologistes, les associations des consommateurs et les syndicats qui avaient organisé plusieurs rencontres et ils avaient demandé au ministre et au gouvernement, je crois officiellement, la mise sur pied d’une National Marine Audit Commission pour vérifier, pour auditer ce qui se passe en vérité, s’il y a ou non surexploitation. Est-ce que le ministre à l’époque avait réagi ou il y a une opinion sur cette demande ? Est-ce qu’il peut dire à la Chambre ce qu’il pense ?

Mr Von Mally: M. le président, nous avons rencontré effectivement ces gens au ministère et je peux dire qu’avant la signature de cet accord, les représentants des pécheurs étaient là. Ils étaient d’accord. Je peux vous le dire. Mais on continue à discuter. S’il faut faire un audit on va le faire.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand from the official communiqué released by the EU that the new protocol includes elements of conditionality relating to the implementation of sectoral policy. Could the Minister tell us what are these elements of conditionality?

Mr Von Mally: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have all these in the report and if the hon. Member is agreeable, I am willing to read, but there are so many.

(Interruptions)

I can read. How Mauritius makes satisfactory use of the amount earmarked for targeted measures. For example, we have the building of a fish landing station, dredging of channels, creation of boat passages, construction of slipways for fishermen, equipment for fisheries protection service, radio/telephone network, building of fisheries post and all these.

Mr Ameer Meea: Finally, can I ask the hon. Minister if he is satisfied with the way things are going, that is how it is being assessed on the tonnage of fish that are being caught, is he satisfied with the whole process and whether he will sign the agreement?

Mr Von Mally: The agreement has already been signed. The hon. Member is asking for my opinion. Well, we can always improve. My friend, hon. Obeegadoo, has been Minister of Fisheries, he knows very well what I mean.
Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that in the Chagos Archipelago area, which the British call BIOT, the British Government is allocating a certain number of permits for fishing?

Mr Von Mally: Mr Speaker, Sir, we know that this is before the International Court. I prefer not to comment on that.

UNESCO - LOCAL CULTURE - PROMOTION

(No. B/16) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the local culture industry, he will state if he has received the visit of two experts from the UNESCO, in September 2012, in relation to the promotion thereof as part of our economic sector and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, two experts from UNESCO visited Mauritius in the context of the development of a strategy for the promotion of cultural industries locally. The mission was in Mauritius from June to September 2012.

Technical assistance missions of UNESCO are meant to support the beneficiaries in their efforts to -

(i) establish legal, regulatory and/or institutional frameworks necessary;

(ii) develop their cultural sector in their country, and

(iii) introduce policies that address the role of culture in social and economic development, particularly through the fostering of cultural industries.

The objective of this mission was to come up with an Action Plan with clear objectives and targets, with emphasis on actions/policies that would assist in, amongst others -

(i) professionalising the services offered by the Ministry;

(ii) encouraging cultural entrepreneurship;

(iii) improving the quality of cultural products;

(iv) improving the status of artists, and

(v) developing a database on cultural industries.
Mr Speaker, Sir, the experts submitted their report to my Ministry in September 2012. Their recommendations fell short of our expectations. They did not propose any work plan and implementation schedule as per their terms of reference. As for the proposals they made, no distinction was made between those measures that could be implemented in the short term, medium term and long term respectively, as discussed with the experts at several meetings held at the Ministry.

Furthermore, instead of proposing measures on how to improve the working capacity of the Ministry, the experts merely suggested the setting up of a Cultural Industries Development Agency. My Ministry was previously working on the creation of a National Arts Council with a mandate similar to that of the proposed Agency. However, this project did not work out as there was overlapping with other agencies in Mauritius. In fact, during the working sessions held with the experts, the difficulty in setting up an agency was explained to them. Yet they simply reiterated the same proposal.

Regarding improvement of the status of artists, the two experts only mentioned that legislation has to be passed to that end, while in fact, they should have proposed a draft legislation as per their terms of reference.

My Ministry went back to its stakeholders to clarify the findings of the experts, and submitted its comments on the report to UNESCO on 07 February 2013.

On 08 February 2013, UNESCO informed that it was assessing the situation, and that it would reply in greater length later.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will appreciate that my Ministry is still awaiting the reply from UNESCO, and in view of the fact that the report was commissioned by it, we have to await its decision before considering any action.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not understand why the expectation of the hon. Minister fell short from the visit of the two experts. The UNESCO and the Ministry of Arts and Culture have commissioned a first study. Can I know from the hon. Minister if the first study did not have any recommendations, and if it does, what has been implemented so far, and provide examples thereof?
Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start by commenting on the falling short of the recommendations from the experts. Actually, they did not refer to the terms of reference proper, which means they just slipped away from what was expected from them. Secondly, we have had two reports earlier. Those reports recommended the creation of the cultural industries, and the experts who were here between June and September last year referred to the same reports and gave the same recommendations, which means that there was no new input from the new experts who were here last year. Some of the recommendations of the previous reports concern cultural industries, and one vivid example is the setting up of the film framework and 30% grant. The Ministry of Finance, the Minister in particular, has looked into the matter personally, and now we are coming ahead with the creation of cultural industries, the first being support to producers. It is working well, and we are giving support to those who want to make films in Mauritius, whether they are foreigners or locals. We have already started implementing it. This is one example. Another one is the support that we give at the Ministry to artists. The sum being given up to last year was only Rs15,000. We doubled it to make it Rs30,000; an increase of 100%!

Another scheme is that of participation by our artists in international fora. We have a grant scheme which goes up to Rs250,000 for local artists to participate in competitions and activities being held abroad. Similarly, we have so many new things that we have added up. Further to that, we expected that the experts would come up with new innovative proposals. But they were not up to the level, and they did not give us the expected recommendations.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, all this is for the television. I would like to know if the hon. Minister is...

(Interruptions)

I mean all this is...

(Interruptions)

All what the hon. Minister said was just for the television. What I want to know is what recommendation we have.

(Interruptions)

The recommendation was about effective copyright. If we do not have an effective Copyright Act, how would you expect to develop the cultural industry? My question to the hon. Minister is
whether he is really aware that the creative industry is a major drive for growth in our fragile economy, and this is being done across all small islands for the cultural industry. Why has the hon. Minister not still strengthened the copyright legislation, which is long awaited by the local artists, to obtain the intellectual, moral and economic rights? What about the White Paper?

(Interruptions)

When is the White Paper due? Now the hon. Minister is talking about Action Plan. We are still waiting for the Copyright Act, the White Paper, and now the Action Plan. Which is which?

(Interruptions)

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member started by a question pertaining to the two experts from UNESCO. I gave the reply for the House and not for the Mauritius Broadcasting Television. But, anyway, if they do cover it, it is a plus point, and it is good.

Coming to copyright, for years together we have been discussing about copyright issues. You know what the problem is better than me, and you know where MASA stands today. You know where the artists stand today. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are almost ready with a new Copyright Bill, and I would like to inform the House that this time the Copyright Bill is not being considered in isolation. There is a Ministerial Committee chaired by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, wherein...

(Interruptions)

…we have the Attorney General, hon. Varma, the Minister of Industry. At least six Ministers and technicians have been working on copyright because...

(Interruptions)

…Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to understand that copyright does not concern only artists. There is patenting, agriculture copyright, and there are so many other issues that come in. That is why a committee chaired by the Foreign Affairs Minister has been set up, and recommendations are ready. The Attorney General is coming with the Bill in the very near future.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister would have this Assembly believe that the experts from UNESCO did not come up to his standards. Is it not true that in fact these experts
gave up on their mission because on the one hand, they said that the State agencies deemed responsible for implementation and strategic leadership lacked the will and/or capacity to act...

(Interruptions)

And, on the other hand, when they tried to consult the stakeholders, the stakeholders refused, the stakeholders had given up on all meaningful dialogue with the Ministry to such an extent that the experts concluded: “Il n’y a aucune possibilité de developer des industries culturelles, durables et viables si la situation persiste”.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the report submitted by the experts is supposed to be confidential. That report came to the Ministry. Let me confirm that whatever consultation that was needed to be accommodated when they were here was done, we facilitated every aspect of their visit, we gave them all the support, but the mindset of the experts was such, they did not find much to write positive about the country. They consulted about 200 persons in Mauritius, and yet, whatever the hon. Member is referring to is a copy from an article from the press. I can’t go by the press; I am telling you the truth and I am telling you that at the Ministry we wrote to the UNESCO and put forward our comments and we are waiting for UNESCO to react.

BUSES – LOW FLOOR

(No. B/17) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the bus industry, he will state if Government will consider taking measures with a view to encouraging the replacement of the conventional buses by low floor ones to improve the lighting and alighting thereof, especially to render them accessible to the elderly and the disabled.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 2010, makes provision for low floor buses.

However, because of the high cost of those buses and the increasing operating costs, bus companies cannot afford to purchase this type of buses.

I am informed by the National Transport Authority that the United Bus Service is already operating two low floor buses. I have requested the National Transport Corporation to
consider purchasing two such buses to be operated on a pilot basis. If the experience proves successful, bus companies will be encouraged, if not urged, to buy such buses when renewing their fleet.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the bus modernisation programme, including fleet renewal and improved buses, will be given a new boost in the context of the introduction of the Light Rail Transit.

Ms Anquetil: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether consideration will be given or could be given to operate the low floor buses on selected routes to link hospitals?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that the cost is too high and that is the reason. For example, a low floor bus ranges from Rs5.5 m. to Rs8 m. and that is the reason which has not allowed bus companies to procure such buses. There are two semi low floor buses that I have mentioned and I have requested the National Transport Corporation to, at least, import two such buses on a pilot basis and if the buses are imported I will see to it that they are utilised in those regions where patients can have access to those buses.

Ms Deerpalsing: In view of the reply given by the hon. Minister about the cost of these buses, would he consider making representations to the hon. Minister of Finance in order that in the next budget there are measures that are taken so that these buses are privileged?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, to be very honest, the Ministry of Finance has made provision of Rs250 m. earlier in 2008 and with the idea of at least supporting those bus companies and individual bus operators by providing them Rs500,000; but, that was too little a sum compared to at least Rs2 m. which additionally they needed. So, I am going to make a request to my hon. friend if he can have a look at it afresh.

Ms Anquetil: Being given that it is a discrimination against disabled if they don’t have access to public service vehicles, can the hon. Minister inform the House if provision could be made for wheelchair to board the semi low floor buses?

Mr Bachoo: As far as the semi low buses are concerned we will have a look at it but, as far as ordinary buses are concerned, it is very difficult to provide that type of facility to them. So,
I would humbly request the hon. Member to bear with me because, in fact, we are importing two low floor buses and we will have a trial with those buses.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS - FORM IV STUDENTS - PC TABLETS

(No. B/18) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the proposed provision of one PC tablet to each student of Form IV in the secondary schools, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I am going to reply to both PQ No. B/18 and PQ No. B/46 together as they relate to the same issue.

The proposal to distribute a PC tablet to each student of Form IV was announced in the last budget speech and, to that effect, a sum of Rs150 m. for the procurement of tablets has been provided for in my Ministry’s budget.

Immediately after the budget, on 19 November 2012, a Steering Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of the Acting Director, Central Informatics Bureau and comprising representatives of my Ministry, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Central Informatics Bureau and the Mauritius Institute of Education.

The Steering Committee has since met nine times and had numerous exchanges electronically. The project framework has been worked upon by the Steering Committee and involves seven major components which I would like to highlight -

a) Procurement of 23,110 PC tablets
b) Connectivity of fibre Optic to 153 schools
c) Recurrent charges (live rental of fibre optics)
d) Wi-Fi hotspots in all schools
e) Upgrading of Network for the Government Online Centre (GOC)
f) Recurrent Charge for GOC (Internet Link)g) Support to MIE for the production of pedagogical content
Mr Speaker, Sir, given the use of new technology, and the novelty of such a high-tech project, a market sounding exercise was carried out on 10 January with closing date of 31 January 2013.

The aim was to –

a) inform interested parties and service providers about the project proposal;
b) invite interested parties for comments on the project, and
c) use the comments and feedback received to further refine the project’s key aspects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the above market sounding exercise was carried out by my Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. Some 32 companies have responded. In light of the information obtained, the specifications are currently under finalisation. Once these are finalised and approved - I hope in the coming days - the bid documents will be prepared and tenders launched.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking here about schools. I have heard the hon. Minister – I am quite astounded! - speak about all the technical dimension but nothing about the pedagogical software, nothing about the human wear, that is, the training of teachers. Are we to understand that there is no pedagogical project on which the provision of PC tablets will rest?

Dr. Bunwaree: He wanted to hear what he wanted to - (g) Support to MIE for the production of pedagogical content.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Ms Deerpalsing: The hon. Minister has talked about all the different aspects that have to be looked into and one of them is preparing Wi-Fi hotspots and all that. Would the Ministry consider tablets which don’t necessitate a Wi-Fi connection, that is, a tablet that connects with each other within one room? For example you already have Bluetooth technology where tablets can connect with each other without an external Wi-Fi hotspot.

(Interruptions)

I can tell you what you can do with that!
**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is an interesting suggestion. I’ll ask the Steering Committee whether they have taken that on Board because there have been discussions as I have said. I have to check, I don’t know whether they have taken it on board or not.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he thinks that by the end of this year he will be in a position to supply these tablets to form IV students?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** End of this year? Well, I hope it is going to come as early as possible. We are going to launch the tenders in the weeks to come. I am seeing to it that we don’t take too much time. I must thank you for this question because there seems to be some hurdles in the other aspects, apart from the tablets. So, if there are these difficulties, then we will give the tablets to the children and then, the second part will follow after because the MIE has already trained teachers for certain specific subjects to use tablets, especially for Secondary Schools.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** May I know specifically for what part of the Form IV curriculum these tablets will be used, how and when, and how many teachers are being trained?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I cannot answer this question offhand, but I can tell the hon. Member that everything is being done for the core subjects in Secondary Schools for Form IV.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Can I ask the hon. Minister why a measure that has been announced three years back - three years back during the last electoral campaign - that it is now that the tenders are being launched?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** It is because the Minister of Finance has changed.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence, please!

*(Interruptions)*

I say enough, now! Silence!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether these tablets will also be supplied to the Pre-Voc. Form IV students?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Could the hon. Member speak up because there is so much noise?
Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I ask the hon. Minister whether the tablets would also be supplied to the Pre-Voc. students of Form IV.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, all of them; all students of Form IV.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle!

AGALEGA - INSTITUT CARDINAL JEAN MARGÉOT REPORT

(No. B/19) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether he has taken cognizance of a report on Agalega prepared by the Department of Applied Pedagogy of the Institut Cardinal Jean Margéot and, if so, will he state if Government proposes to consider the proposals contained therein.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Report of the Institut Cardinal Jean Margéot on Agalega was addressed to the hon. Prime Minister and copied to -

(i) Hon. Paul Bérenger, Leader of the Opposition;
(ii) Father Jean Maurice Labour;
(iii) Father/Dr. Jean Claude Veder;
(iv) Mr Jean François Battour, Chairperson, Outer Islands Development Corporation;
(v) Members of the Agalega Island Council, and
(vi) Mr Laval Soopramanien.

The Report was not addressed nor copied to me by the author in my capacity as Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands. A copy was, however, made available to me by the Prime Minister’s Office on 08 January 2013, requesting me to take necessary actions on the points raised in the Report that falls under my purview.

The Report, Mr Speaker, Sir, does not raise any new issue. All that is said in the Report is known to me and which, I have addressed both in my capacity as former Chairman of the Outer Islands Development Corporation and lately, in my capacity as Minister responsible for the portfolio of Outer Islands.
I would like, Mr Speaker, Sir, in order not to take the time of the House uselessly, to refer only to two issues raised in the Report, just to show that the Report does not bring forward any new matter deserving further attention.

First, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the issue of children and minors on board, I had, since I was Chairman of the OIDC, taken the decision to recruit a Social Worker whose duties would be *inter alia* to provide assistance to children and minors. The officer was recruited in since 2010 and one of her duties is to provide support to children and minors during their stay in Mauritius and also during their travel to and from Agalega.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the issue of food policy, I had, as Chairman of the OIDC, taken the decision since 2008 to recruit an Agricultural Development Officer to be responsible for the implementation of the food policy in Agalega. The officer has undergone training at AREU and is now supervising the production of bio foodstuffs. The ultimate aim is to give 30 tonnes of such food produced every year.

As you can see, Mr Speaker, Sir, these two examples illustrate the statement I have put forward earlier on, i.e., the Report does not bring forward any new issue but only those which are very much well-known to me and which, I have addressed sufficiently both in my capacity as Chairman of the OIDC and subsequently, as Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to table the other issues raised in the Report and action taken on the Table of the Assembly.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very surprised to hear that the hon. Minister mentioned he has received the Report from the office of the PMO. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has not requested a copy of the Report from the author through a mail to which the author responded explaining why the Report was not sent to him, presenting his apologies because he did not respond to his first mail? This was the reason why it was not circulated and he presented his apologies and the author did send him a report as well as his adviser. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling a copy of the mails exchanged between the hon. Minister and the author of this Report.

*(Interruptions)*
So, these are the copies of the mail between the hon. Minister and the author of the Report. Will the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mrs Labelle: May I be allowed to put my question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you. So, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there was this exchange of mails between him and the author and whether a copy has been sent to him on 09 January? Thank you.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, no. I have not received any Report from the Cardinal Margéot.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Labelle: This mail has been addressed to the hon. Hervé Louis Aimée. So, you will see, Mr Speaker, Sir, who is not telling the truth.

My second question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is: is the hon. Minister aware that the OIDC, who has received a copy of the Report, has already initiated some actions. As far as I know, OIDC is under the Ministry of hon. Aimée. Is the hon. Minister aware that the OIDC has already initiated some actions by sending the corresponding excerpt of the Report to different Ministries and institutions concerned namely; the Police, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Education and Human Resources as well as Ombudsperson for Children. And some of these institutions have already responded asking for a full Report. So, I would say that the OIDC has already initiated some actions. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of this initiative of the OIDC?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned in my reply I had a copy of the Report from the Prime Minister’s Office and I mentioned here, we have the issue raised on the Report that I have tabled in the Assembly where mention is made of all the steps taken via OIDC and via my Ministry also.
Mrs Labelle: Since several stakeholders are concerned, will the hon. Minister consider setting up a coordinating committee for the implementation of the actions which he is talking about?

Mr Aimée: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, because we have got the OIDC Board and officers from my Ministry sit on that Board. There are also other officers from different Ministries. We have got the Agalega Island Council which is an Advisory Council. I think we have enough institutions to discuss the issue of Agalega. There is no need to put one more institution to deal with it.

Mr Ganoo: I have got one last supplementary. Mr Speaker, Sir, what I find strange in the answer of the hon. Minister is that he used the adjective ‘useless’ and he said that the report of the Institut Cardinal Jean Margéot needed no further attention because his Ministry was already dealing with the problems of Agalega. Can I ask the hon. Minister, over and above the fact that even last week, Jack Bizlall and other well-wishers were organising public press conferences denouncing the situation in Agalega, that the Agaleans have not received their foodstuffs, is he also aware that after, as he said, he received the report from the hon. Prime Minister - I am not asking the question whether there were emails and so on, I go by what he was saying - beginning of January, there were still petitions circulées and sent to him? I have in my hand one of these petitions: “Premier ministre, l’honorable Ramgoolam, ministre des îles, l’honorable Hervé Aimée” and so on. In this petition of several pages, the people of Agalega are still complaining about basic problems like in this case, not only the jetty, but their foodstuffs are not arriving on time.

For example, it is said -

“fodé enn travailleur mort lerla pou gagne alarme. Pareille couma générater, fodé enn générater endommagé lerla ki pou alle rode enn lotte.”

Simple problems, Mr Speaker, Sir! I am asking the hon. Minister why, therefore, if had been able to solve all the problems and there was no need to go into the report of Cardinal Jean Margéot, petitions are still circulating complaining about the terrible situation in which these Mauritians à part entière are still living? Why do they regularly complain about so many problems?
Mr Aimée: M. le président, cela va faire 7 ans que je travaille avec les Agaléens en tant que Chairperson de l’OIDC et aussi comme ministre des îles.

(Interrusions)

M. le président, concernant la dernière pétition que le Leader de l’opposition a cité, on a adressé certains problèmes dans le rapport de l’Institut Cardinal Margéot. Mais il y a certaines choses qui sont indépendamment de notre volonté. Par exemple, il a parlé du générateur. Mais j’aimerais autant vous dire, M. le président, que c’est après un sit-in que j’ai été à Agaléga. Pourquoi il y a eu ce sit-in ? C’est parce qu’il avait un cyclone et je dois, malheureusement, dire que l’opérateur du générateur a laissé ouvert les portes et les fenêtres du bâtiment where the generator is housed. That is why there was a court-circuit and the generator was broken down. Agaléga est à 1000 km de Maurice. Il nous faut trouver des moyens pour envoyer d’autres générateurs. Il y avait un spare générateur. Mais ce générateur ne pouvait fonctionner qu’entre 6.00 heures du soir et 6.00 heures le lendemain. Mais pendant le jour il ne peut pas fonctionner. On n’a pas eu d’électricité pendant 24 heures. Ce n’est pas parce qu’on a pas prévu. Il y avait un stand-by generator. So, what was the next step, Mr Speaker, Sir ? Je suis allé à l’ambassade de France pour qu’on ait le Transall pour pouvoir transporter deux générateurs à Agalega. Malheureusement, l’armée de l’air était pris au Mali. Alors, il a fallu que j’aile vers l’ambassade de l’Inde. Ils ont dépêché un bateau pour transporter deux générateurs qu’on avait acheté et qui devaient être acheminés. C’est là qu’on a pu débloquer la situation.

(Interrusions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, quand j’ai parlé de useless issues, vous verrez dans la liste que toutes les doléances, après ce qui s’est passé le 10 février, ont été adressées. Mais il y a beaucoup des initiatives qui ont été prises pendant 7 ans. J’aimerais autant vous dire que même dans certaines circonstances, les Agaléens bénéficient plus que les Mauriciens.

(Interrusions)

Mr Bhagwan: From what we hear from the hon. Minister, are we to understand that as at to date there are no problems at Agalega, the hon. Minister has solved everything, that everything is on target, that these people are lying, Mr Bizlall is lying, the Police are lying and only hon. Aimée is right ? Can the hon. Minister give an assurance to the country…
Mr Speaker: The hon. Member would better not use the word ‘lying’, but instead ‘not telling the truth’.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister is not telling the truth or distorting facts. Can the hon. Minister at least give assurance to the House that he is doing everything he can to solve the problems of these poor people there?

Mr Aimée: M. le président, je n’ai jamais dit qu’il n’y a pas de problèmes à Agaléga. Nous avons encore des problèmes. There is the remoteness if the island - 1000 kms away. Nous avons, par exemple, le problème de airstrip. D’ailleurs, c’est la clef du problème à Agalega. Une fois que le airstrip va être fait, tout va rentrer dans l’ordre au niveau de la santé. On a des problèmes du côté de la santé. Il nous faut envoyer les mamans ici pour accoucher. Mais il n’y a pas d’autres solutions. On ne peut pas garder une dame qui est au cinquième ou sixième mois de grossesse à Agalega et subir des complications alors qu’Agalega se trouve à 1000 kms où il n’y a pas de communication.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that among the 17 proposals made in this report there are only 2 which deserve further attention. I heard the hon. Minister said that there is nothing new, nothing which deserves further attention. May I ask the hon. Minister whether in this report there is mention of a protocol for children and minors on board - for example, this has been taken care of - the question of legal framework for the protection of rare and endemic species has to be extended to Agalega which exists in Mauritius? We know that there is a big problem of the killing of the tortoises over there. May we know if the land cultivation programme has been established or maybe this does not deserve further attention? I was not going to mention all these proposals. I have chosen only three, regarding a protocol for minors while travelling, the endemic plants and protection species and the land cultivation programme. Do these items not need further consideration? I am not going to mention all these proposals, I have chosen only three regarding a protocol for minors while travelling; regarding the endemic plants and protection of species there, and I have talked about the land cultivation programme; how these items do not need further consideration.
**Mr Aimée:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given a list of the situation in Agaléga; of what we have attended to. I am going through the list now. Concernant l’embarcation de Aureline Perrine Terminal Mauritius, a request had been made to the Commissioner of Police for strict custom search and control at Terminal. The Mauritius Shipping Corporation Limited has been requested to ensure that all the containers going on board the Mauritius Pride be controlled before embarkation of passengers. I have already mentioned for minors. I am going now to hazardous disembarkation at Agaléga Port St. James. The Mauritius Shipping Corporation Limited had been requested to look into the issue of acquiring a beach vessel for the Mauritius-Agaléga Maritime Travel. Security norms at St. James: a proper luggage control system will be established at the level of the Corporation both at Port-Louis and Agaléga; right to be born on one’s motherland. At present, the mother is transferred to Mauritius for prenatal treatment as such facility does not exist in Agaléga. The Resident Medical Officer posted at Agaléga advised that transfer to Mauritius. There are so many that I’ll lay the list on the Table.

(Interruptions)

**Mr Speaker:** Please no crosstalking! There is a fundamental principle that we have to apply. When a question is put, the answer must be relevant and related to the question. I am saying it for the guidance of Members. This subject matter has been aired sufficiently and adequately. However, in view of its importance, I will allow two more questions and those who have raised their hand since long are hon. Ameer Meea and hon. Jhugroo. Hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister where matters stand regarding the construction of the airstrip in Agaléga and whether any studies have been carried out to have a port development there, in Agaléga?

**Mr Aimée:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2011, in 2012 and also in 2013, an amount of Rs120 m was provided in the Budget for the construction of the airstrip in Agaléga. Tenders were invited and the tender price received from the only two companies was around Rs440 m. Being given that the bid prices exceed by far the estimate costs, no construction was given for the bid evaluation. In the meantime, my Ministry was under an obligation to request the firm to extend the validity of the bid on five subsequent instances. It is important to note that out of the two bidders; only one has recently renewed the validity of its offer. This being so, there is only one bidder for the exercise and the procedure will require that the present bidding exercise be
cancelled and a new one to start afresh. The question of construction of the airstrip is still under consideration at the level of my colleague in Cabinet and in Government. An alternative mode of construction is actively under study. No decision has yet been taken in this regard.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Baloomoody?

**Mr Baloomoody:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has laid a paper on the Table explaining what action is supposed to have been taken. Looking at the document, as a fact, - I will refer only to two or three issues where supposedly action has been taken - can he inform the House, with regard to embarkation at Aureline Perrine Terminal Mauritius where he said a request has been made to the Commissioner of Police for strict custom search and control at the Terminal, what is the strict control search which has been initiated by the Commissioner of Police? I refer to the item - children and minors on board. He said that the Commissioner of Police has been invited to establish, apply and reinforce a code of conduct for members of the Police Force who travel to Agaléga especially when they are posted there. Can the hon. Minister inform the House today what is that code of conduct? I’ll take a last one because it seems that the Minister just passes the buck to other institutions and doesn’t take action. With regard to educators: he said that provision for education facilities in Agaléga rest with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources. That Ministry is best placed to assess the requirements and deployment of necessary staff. Can the Minister inform the House as a fact what action has been taken regarding the educators. On these three issues, can the hon. Minister enlighten the House?

**Mr Aimée:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned at the very beginning of this parliamentary question, I said I have been working for the people of Agaléga and I have done my best, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir…

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan, you withdraw the word. Please, you stand up and withdraw the word.

**Mr Aimée:** The hon. Members of the Opposition want to know why I have requested the Commissioner of Police…

(Interruptions)
Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, I have still to repeat what I said earlier. When a question is put, listen carefully to the question and the answer should be relevant.

Mr Aimée: I said in my reply why I have requested the Commissioner of Police to have a tight search on the ship while embarkation at Aureline Perrine Terminal Mauritius. There is one reason for that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Do you know, Mr Speaker, Sir…

Mr Speaker: Please, Minister, I don’t want to know. Please answer the question.

(Interruptions)

Order! I have said that this subject matter has been sufficiently aired, but, in view of its importance, I allowed only two questions. Let us try to be brief because there are other questions to be answered.

Mr Aimée: I’ll reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, they have asked the question.

Mr Speaker: Yes, reply.

Mr Aimée: Yes. I have requested the Commissioner of Police because since 2011 there was a report from the inhabitants of Agaléga. They are not all complaining what is going on in Agaléga. It has been reported to my office that they are planting gandia there. In that particular letter, they said to me that gandia is coming in the fish to Mauritius. So what should I do?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

Mr Aimée: So, what should I do, Mr Speaker, Sir?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Allow the Minister to answer!

Mr Aimée: I wrote to the Commissioner of Police informing him what’s going on in Agalega. Then, he recalled all the policemen that were there, putting new ones there, a team of Mobile Force, they searched and they got 14 plants of gandia.
Mr Speaker, Sir, that was in 2011. I left five months later in 2012. I tried again to have 13 Agaleans. Also there, in 2012, we got gandia planting there. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, that’s why I said, from the very beginning, I have always worked in the interests of the Agaleans. Nobody reported that, not the Cardinal Margéot Institute, not anyone reported that there was search and got gandia in Agalega.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, next question!

MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OUTER ISLANDS - AGALEGA VISIT

(No. B/20) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to his last visit to the Agalega Island, he will state the –

(a) date and duration thereof;
(b) composition of the delegation, and
(c) outcome thereof.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir,...

Mr Speaker: Silence! Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, now I know there are so many people laughing, which means many people are happy here.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, please, answer the question! Carry on!

Silence! I say, order!

I say enough noise now!
Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my last visit to Agalega took place on 10 February 2013. The Dornier aircraft left Mauritius at around 6.30 a.m., departed from Agalega around 3.00 p.m. on the same day.

The visit was originally scheduled to be conducted by myself and my colleague, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment. However, the latter could unfortunately not join in.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Please, no interruption!

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that my visit to Agalega took place at a time when there was unrest, frustration as well as a sit-in on the island. My visit aimed at restoring calm, peace and serenity amongst the population.

The purpose of my visit was therefore to bring comfort to the population whose difficult situation had been further worsened by the passage of cyclone Dumile. I told them that Government was fully aware of their difficulties, accentuated by the remoteness of the island and communication constraints. I conveyed to them the full support of Government and its commitment to continue mobilising resources to improve life and quality of life on the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that I will continue to maintain close contacts with the population of Agalega and liaise with the various Ministries/Departments in Mauritius to contribute to the improvement of life and quality of life in Agalega.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, en relation avec la visite du ministre Aimée à Agaléga, est-ce que le ministre serait d’accord que le discours qu’il a fait à Agaléga, ne cadrait pas du tout avec la raison officielle de sa visite à Agaléga et surtout l’attaque injustifiée qu’il a faite contre l’église Catholique?

Mr Aimée: M. le président, de nos jours, il est trop facile d’interpréter ce qu’on voit sur les journaux pour venir même amener cela, ici, sans justification. Je demande à l’honorable membre de voir qui a enregistré ce que j’ai dit à Agaléga et il n’a qu’à produire l’enregistrement ici. A ce moment-là, je répondrai de mon maldonne ou du problème qu’il y a eu. Si vous avez l’enregistrement amenez-le ici et produez-le à l’Assemblée.
Mr Lesjongard: M. le président, toujours suite à la visite du ministre et concernant ses commentaires à propos de l’église Catholique qui est restée silencieuse sur la cultivation du gandia à Agaléga, est-ce que le ministre ne trouve pas ses propos insultants et inacceptables à l’égard de l’église Catholique qui jouit d’une très bonne réputation dans ce pays depuis des années ? C’est la première fois qu’un ministre de la république de ce pays tient de tels propos vis-à-vis de l’église Catholique. Est-ce que le ministre est prêt, aujourd’hui, à présenter ses plates excuses à l’église Catholique et retirer ses propos, M. le président ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Aimée: M. le président, je vais répéter ce que j’ai dit…

Mr Speaker: The Minister is going to answer. The question has been put, give him the opportunity to answer.

Mr Aimée:..dans les journaux que vous avez appris ça et là je dis…

(Interruptions)

C’est vrai ce que j’ai dit. Tout ce que j’ai dit, ce n’était pas contre l’église, M. le président, c’était contre M. Labour.

(Interruptions)

Et je répète, M. Labour.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is a point of order.

Dr. A. Boolell: The hon. Member has used an unparliamentary word, he has to withdraw the word ‘bourrique’.

(Interruptions)

He has or otherwise he goes out.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I say, order! Hon. Mrs Labelle!
I am speaking to hon. Mrs Labelle. Have you uttered this unparliamentary word?

**Mrs Labelle:** No.

**Mr Speaker:** My question is simple: have you…

**Mrs Labelle:** No.

**Mr Speaker:** You have not uttered the unparliamentary word?

**Mrs Labelle:** No. my colleague has said *‘bourrique’* and I said: ‘he is acting like a *bourrique*’.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, even then, you will have to withdraw the word.

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Mrs Labelle, I have asked a question: have you uttered the unparliamentary word?

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with due respect, though I did not say he is a *bourrique*, I said: ‘he is acting like a *bourrique*’, he is acting like a stubborn person, because he is repeating that the Church is supporting the plantation of gandia and as a Christian it is very difficult for me to bear such a statement.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Labelle, withdraw the word!

*(Interruptions)*

Silence! I am speaking to hon. Mrs Labelle.

**Mrs Labelle:** To abide by your ruling, Mr Speaker, Sir, I withdraw the word.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you very much.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order.

**Mr Speaker:** On a point of order, yes. Let us listen to that point of order.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Labelle, in a standing position, in reply to your query, mentioned that it is hon. Lesjongard who said *“bourrique”* and she used that word. Are you going to accept that hon. Lesjongard mentioned the word *“bourrique”*?

*(Interruptions)*
Mr Speaker: I expect some respect and decorum from hon. Members. It is a matter of integrity. If someone has uttered the unparliamentary word, he must, as a hon. Member, have the courage to say ‘yes, I did it’. I have asked the question to Mrs …

(Interruptions)

May I complete my sentence, please!

I have asked hon. Labelle whether she uttered that unparliamentary word. She admitted and she withdrew. This is the end of the matter. The hon. Minister may proceed.

(Interruptions)

Only one Member at a time!

Dr. Bunwaree: On a point of order. Hon. Labelle, in a standing position, replying to your query whether she had mentioned that, said - and it is in Hansard -that it is not she but hon. Lesjongard who said the word “bourrique”. So, if this is the fact, hon. Lesjongard should withdraw that word.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, j’ai entendu l’honorable Lesjongard traiter le ministre de «bourrique».

Mr Speaker: I put the question to hon. Lesjongard. Have you uttered this unparliamentary word?

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I maintain what I said.

Mr Speaker: What did you say?

Mr Lesjongard: «Bourrique». And I did not …

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Lesjongard, you withdraw the word “bourrique”.

(Interruptions)
Mr Lesjongard: I maintain, and I withdraw the word.

Mr Speaker: You maintained you have said it, and you withdraw the word.

Mr Aimée: M. le président, maintenant que les choses sont rétablies, répondant à la question de l’honorable Lesjongard à propos que j’ai dit que l’Église est associée au gandia, non, j’ai dit que l’Église n’a jamais rapporté ces faits. Mais par contre, l’Église …

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute! Don’t interrupt the hon. Minister. He has the right to reply.

Mr Aimée: J’ai dit …

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute! I am on my feet. The hon. Member will be given the right to reply on a matter of personal explanation, however. The Minister is saying something. Let us listen to him.

Mr Aimée: J’ai dit l’Église est silencieuse là-dessus.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member should not impute motives to me. I have never said that l’Église is associated to that.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am not going to accept any interruption. This morning I said that I am not going to give any warning. Let the Minister explain his position.

Mr Aimée: M. le président, effectivement j’ai mentionné tout cela dans la presse pour dire que l’Église n’a jamais fait mention du problème de la drogue à Agaléga. Cela ne veut pas dire que j’ai dit que l’Église était associée au problème de la drogue à Agaléga. Ils peuvent interpréter cela comme ils le veulent. Encore une fois, je demande, M. le président, premièrement, qu’on ait l’enregistrement de ma visite à Agaléga, pour être sûr et certain de ce qu’on dit, parce que moi je peux rassurer la Chambre que j’étais dans mon droit. J’ai parlé, bien
sûr, avec un peu d’ardeur parce que je n’étais pas content. Il y a autre chose que les honorables membres ne savent pas. M. le président ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute! Let us clear this issue first. The hon. Minister has given his explanation, and I have listened to it. Hon. Lesjongard has a right to explain what he said exactly, as a matter of personal explanation, of course.

Mr Lesjongard: Merci, M. le président, de me donner la parole. Dans ma question, j’avais répété les propos du ministre, c’est-à-dire que l’Église est restée silencieuse sur la cultivation du gandia à Agaléga. Le ministre vient de confirmer ces propos, notamment que l’Église Catholique de Maurice cautionne la cultivation du gandia à Agaléga.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Just a minute! Hon. Lesjongard, I have to make it very clear. I have not heard the Minister saying that “l’Eglise cautionne”. I have not heard this sentence at all.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don’t understand why we are losing precious time of the House on such a word like “bourrique”.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, I would not tolerate this attitude. I have ruled that this word is unparliamentary. So, you are not allowed to use it again. You withdraw the word, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: I withdraw. M. le président, maintenant qu’on réalise le tort immense qui a été causé aux Agaléens, peut-on demander au ministre s’il envisage une prochaine visite à Agaléga et ce qu’il compte faire pour rétablir les ponts pour faire avancer la cause agaléenne ?

Mr Aimée: M. le président, tout en exprimant ce que j’ai dit dans mes propos à Agaléga et sur les journaux, je suis conscient en tant que ministre responsable des Outer Islands que le pont dont l’honorable membre a fait mention est là ; il n’a jamais été détruit.

Mr Speaker: We move to the next question. Hon. Mrs Labelle!

MANGALKHAN - STATE LAND – GREEN SPACE
(No. B/21) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to a plot of State land located next to the Reverend Espitalier Noël Government School, in Mangalkhan, he will state if same has been allocated, and if so, the purpose therefor, and if not, if consideration will be given for the vesting thereof to the appropriate authority for the creation of a green space thereat.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the plot of State land located next to the Reverend Espitalier Noël Government School in Mangalkhan was formerly used as a treatment plant by the Wastewater Management Authority. The latter has stopped its activities on this site in June 2009 and, therefore, the land has been retrieved.

I am proposing to vest the said plot of land in the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands, which is eventually to be put at the disposal of the Municipal Council of Curepipe for the creation of a green space.

ZONE D’ÉDUCATION PRIORITAIRE SCHOOL FEEDING PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/22) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Zone d’Éducation Prioritaire School Feeding Project, he will state if, prior to the implementation thereof, a committee was set up to examine all the aspects thereof and, if so, indicate the -

(a) composition thereof, and

(b) number of meetings held and table copy of the minutes thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Primary School Feeding Programme was implemented in ZEP schools for the past 10 years with a view to improving learning through better child nutrition, and to encouraging pupils of lower social groups to attend school regularly, thus reducing the absenteeism rate.

In November 2012, in a bid to further strengthen its support to pupils of ZEP schools and to combat absenteeism, Government announced the provision of a daily hot meal to each child attending ZEP schools in the Budget Speech 2013.

With regard to part (a) of the question, a Technical Committee was set up at the level of my Ministry in early December 2012 to look into the implementation of the budgetary measure,
examine its implications, and work out the modalities for its implementation. The project was scheduled to start on the day of resumption of studies in schools i.e 14 January, 2013.

The Technical Committee was chaired by the Chief Technical Officer of my Ministry and comprised the following Senior Officials -

- Assistant Director (Primary);
- Principal Assistant Secretary (School Management);
- Principal Assistant Secretary (Procurement, Stores and Pre-primary);
- Manager, Financial Operations, and
- ZEP Project Manager

The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life was consulted with regard to food safety guidelines, menu to be served and inspection visits to be conducted. Guidelines and menu were subsequently provided by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

A meeting was moreover held with the Head Masters of all the ZEP schools in the presence of ZEP Cluster Coordinators to explain the modalities for the implementation of the project as well as the need to ensure strict compliance with relevant norms and standards.

In reply to part (b) of the question, I am informed that two formal meetings were held prior to the start of the project and I am tabling a copy of the minutes of proceeding of the two meetings dated 07 December 2012 and 04 January 2013.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand from the hon. Minister that the Ministry of Health did not form part of that technical committee at the level of his Ministry to sort out all aspects of the project. Can the hon. Minister say whether all places where food was to be prepared were visited equally by members of a technical team comprising Education and Health at the same time to ascertain that these places were according to safety norms?

Dr. Bunwaree: I put the question when the problem arose and I was made to understand that all the places had been visited - not everywhere - by officials of the Ministry of Education but, at least, by the Ministry of Health and their inspectors.

Dr. S. Boolell: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the project is still on course and whether the same Technical Committee which had proved to produce the results that we
know in Bambous will be the same people who will actually decide again on the same guidelines or whether there is any change.

**Dr. Bunwaree**: We had a meeting chaired by my colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development with all those stakeholders involved and we have not done away with the project. In fact, I must admit that there are flaws. It was not easy for us to monitor everything that was happening from the beginning to the end. In fact, hon. Obeegadoo was Minister then and he also tried – he is not responsible, of course – but he must know the difficulties that exist in such cases. I can report on many cases that took place in those days. But the thing is that we have decided to review and some decisions have already been taken. We may go on pilot scheme. We have chosen a few schools and, of course, the monitoring will be stricter and will include all those who need to be included to see that such problems do not recur. But, it is not an easy thing, Mr Speaker, Sir. I must tell you that we have had cases where excess of e-coli have been seen in food, but that has been proved only microscopically. We did not find any sign of infection or whatever, but it is through microscopic examination that this could have been detected and that takes time. So, at the same time, the food can go to the children, but we have to be very, very careful about that, especially insofar as hot meals are concerned. However, we have put in place another system where food is being served but not hot meals for the time being.

**Mr Ganoo**: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question that I want to ask the hon. Minister concerns the Bambous Government School where food poisoning took place on an important scale. Is the hon. Minister aware if the Ministry of Education has taken follow-up actions with regard to these children as some of them are still suffering from this *traumatisme* of this food poisoning, and whether special attention should be given to them on the part of the Ministry so that they can recuperate, and even thinking in terms of monetary compensation to these children or their parents?

**Dr. Bunwaree**: Definitely, the first and most important concern for us was the situation with the children since the incident occurred. The monitoring is still going on and it is being done by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources. Insofar as compensation is concerned, we will look into the matter if ever there is any need. Of course, there are some problems but these have occurred in cases where problems
already existed with the children who, for example, were asthmatic and allergic. It does not mean that it is the result only of what happened on that day at school.

Mr Jugnauth: In fact, the hon. Minister has just admitted that there are flaws with regard to this project. Can he tell the House what are all the flaws that he has found out?

Dr. Bunwaree: I can mention a few, but then I have already mentioned the most important one just now. It has been difficult for us to control the food from the place it is prepared to the place it is being distributed and whatever happens on the transport. The control has to take place at many points and I must say that I was not satisfied with the fact that we could not follow everything that was happening from the beginning to the end.

Mr Obeegadoo: If the hon. Minister is to be believed that there was a committee that met in anticipation of the project, how does he explain that the Head Teachers - to whom the Ministry entrusted the responsibility to take charge and manage both the procurement and the delivery of the hot meals - should have come up with a public statement to the effect, and I quote –

"Tout a été fait dans la précipitation et sans planification (...)."

Dr. Bunwaree: This is not really exact, but it could have happened in one or two cases. It was not the Head Teacher alone; it was the Head Teacher with the Parent Teachers’ Association (PTA) and also in close collaboration with the Zone which was responsible for the schools which existed in the Zone. I must also add that we had already experienced even hot food supplied to children through what we call the Summer Schools and the Winter Schools and it worked marvelously well. Maybe we have been taken by surprise afterwards, but it worked marvelously well. We used that same system when it came to the supply of hot food to schools but one thing did happen. And, as I said, hon. Obeegadoo himself had experienced things like that in the past. What is important is for us to see where the problem lies and we address it as it should.

Mr Seeruttun: Est-ce que l’honorable ministre peut confirmer si dans ces écoles ZEP les élèves ont été servis des repas comme mine frit, des frites et même des burgers alors qu’on sait que dans des écoles normales ce sont des repas interdits?

Dr. Bunwaree: Normalement, cela ne devait pas être le cas. Si l’honorable membre a connaissance de tels cas, je lui recommanderais de m’informer …
S’il a eu des complaintes dans ce sens ! Ce que je peux dire et assurer la Chambre - et je l’ai dit dans ma réponse - c’est que les menus étaient proposés par le ministère de la Santé d’après des experts et tout allait dans ce sens. Mais il n’est pas impossible, et je ne dis pas le contraire que dans un cas il y a eu un problème quelconque.

C’est à nous de savoir. Mais venir dire comme cela, sans avancer des choses plus solides, je ne peux pas agir. Mais, à ma connaissance, il n’y a pas eu de tels cas.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. Minister say whether, after the incident at Bambous, there were checks at different places by Health Officers and also if e-coli were discovered in a number of cases?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, e-coli were discovered in a number of cases. I said that publicly and it was then that we decided to stop it altogether.

Mr Speaker: Last question hon. Obeegadoo!

Mr Obeegadoo: Can the hon. Minister explain to us why it took the poisoning of so many little innocent children at Bambous for the Ministry to realise that you cannot have one caterer who is not a professional caterer for more than 600 children?

Dr. Bunwaree: Là je suis vraiment flabbergasted. L’honorable membre, quand il était ministre, à son époque, il y a eu un seul caterer pour l’ensemble du pays.

Et il y a eu des problèmes …. 

De nombreux problèmes ont existé.

Mr Speaker: Silence!
**Dr. Bunwaree:** Au moment où il fallait décider, on s’est inspiré de cela au contraire pour ne pas répéter cette erreur. C’est pour cela qu’on a décentralisé pour essayer de faire de façon que cela ne se reproduise pas. Maintenant lui il vient me dire cela, c’est incroyable!

**Mr Speaker:** Well, I have said the last question, but, nevertheless, being given the interest of Members, I’ll allow a few more questions.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, for such an important project where millions of rupees are involved, doesn’t the hon. Minister think that if right from the beginning the Committee which was set up would have roped in not only the Ministry of Health but also some of the PTA’s for whom the catering service was given? Does not the hon. Minister think that the flaws which have risen would not have and that these issues would have been addressed at the level of the Committee before the implementation of that project?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Whether we ought to do it together, but I said that a meeting was moreover held with all the head masters who were involved in the project and all the PTA’s.

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

**Mr Ganoo:** One of the advantages that Government was flagging with regard to this project was that providing *repas chaud* to these children of the ZEP school would discourage absenteeism and would favour more attendance at school. But now that this project has been done away with, can the hon. Minister tell us what the situation is? What is being done now to promote more attendance in these schools?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I said that we have not done away with the project, we are going to come again with it but we are going to take all precautions and learn from the bad experiences of the past.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, le *hot meal* a été remplacé par du pain et du beurre. Est-ce que le ministre est au courant qu’on est en train d’avoir du beurre *gâté* et même fondu.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Du beurre?

**Mr Jhugroo:** Gâté et même fondu!

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Je ne suis pas au courant de cela.

**RING ROAD, HARBOUR BRIDGE & A1-M1 BRIDGE - BIDDERS**
(No. B/23) 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 Ring Road, the Harbour Bridge and the A1-M1 Bridge Projects, he will state the names of the bidders who were selected through restricted bidding for the provision of services for geotechnical investigations therefor, in each case, indicating the -

(a) name of the contractor therefor;
(b) contract value thereof, and
(c) cost of variations works, if any, indicating if there has been any investigation in relation thereto and if so, table the report thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that bids for the provision of services for geotechnical investigations for the Ring Road, Harbour Bridge and A1-M1 Bridge projects were invited by the Road Development Authority through restricted bidding on 01 September 2010. The project was divided into three distinct lots as follows -

- Lot 1 – Harbour Bridge
- Lot 2 – Ring Road
- Lot 3 – A1-M1 Bridge

On 13 October 2010, bids were received from the three suppliers, namely -

1. Géoconsul Ltée
2. Water Research Co. Ltd, and
3. Sotravic Ltée

Regarding parts (a) and (b) of the question, the contract for Lot 1 and Lot 3 was awarded to Géoconsul Ltée for the total sum of Rs7,721,284.00, and for Lot 2, the contract was awarded to Sotravic Ltée for the sum of Rs17,870,174.30.

As for part (c) of the question, there were no variation works and the final sums paid to the contractors were as follows -

- Géoconsul Ltée – Rs7,715,881.30
• Sotravic Ltée – Rs16,679,590.80

It is to be pointed out that the amounts paid are within the contract price.

When the need arose for geotechnical investigations in the sea, the RDA solicited a quotation from Water Research Co. Ltd, which is the only firm equipped with sophisticated drilling equipment and sea barge to carry out marine investigations. On 02 May 2011, the RDA awarded the contract to the company for the sum of Rs4,650,059.50 after conducting the technical and financial evaluation of the quotation received. There were no variation works and the final sum paid was Rs4,311,522.50, again within the contract price.

As regards part (d), since there were no variation works, the question does not arise.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I heard the hon. Minister rightly that on 13 October 2010, there were three bidders: Géoconsul Ltée, Water Research Co. Ltd and Sotravic Ltée, but how come that the award to set in section was awarded to Géoconsul Ltée who has not submitted its bid.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would remind the Member when I was reading the answer, I have mentioned – “On 13 October 2010 bids were received from three suppliers.” The first name I used Géoconsul Ltée. So, Géoconsul Ltée was there, Water Research Co. Ltd was there and Sotravic Ltée was there. I have mentioned already.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have got an executive summary for this lot. I am going to table it. There is no mention of Géoconsul Ltée which has submitted its bid but it has been awarded. I am tabling this document.

Mr Speaker: No. Has it been signed?

Dr. Sorefan: I am going to sign it!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute! Hon. Jhugroo! You don’t make any comment! You will be in trouble yourself. The document the hon. Member is going to table, is it signed? My question is simple. Is it a signed document?

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, this comes from the internet…

(Interruptions)
Mr Speaker: Not allowed. Next question! Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: I have got a supplementary question. Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that after having handed over the ring road to the RDA by the contractor and after the flooding, the heavy rains in February, there has been major works done at the roundabout going to Grewals and the roundabout Vivekananda, in between there were retaining walls. Is the hon. Minister aware?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact the question is regarding consultants who were going to undertake the feasibility and consultative work. That has nothing to do with construction road. The hon. Member can come forward with a question and I will answer.

Mr Speaker: Does the hon. Minister need notice of the question?

Mr Bachoo: I could not get you, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Do you need notice of the question?

Mr Bachoo: No, there is no question of notice; that does not form part of this question.

Mr Speaker: Question is allowed!

(Interruptions)

If you don’t have the information, you can well say that you take notice of the question.

Mr Bachoo: If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question on this, I am going to answer.

Mr Speaker: Yes, that’s correct. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister saying that it was the RDA who chose the most preferred bidders?

Mr Bachoo: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Does the hon. Member have a supplementary question?

Dr. Sorefan: Yes. Regarding the major works, I am going to table a photograph that has been taken on the second...

(Interruptions)
Mr Speaker: No, please, wait a minute! This photograph, does it come from you, hon. Member?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, wait a minute! I would not tolerate laughing when I am putting a question to a hon. Member. Does it come from you, were you the person who handled the apparatus?

Dr. Sorefan: I took it myself, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: You do it yourself.

(Interruptions)

Wait a minute, please! There is no question of laughing here.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I took it myself and I am going to table it.

Mr Speaker: Yes, produce it!

Dr. Sorefan: I have another question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister aware that, at the reservoir on that site, there is more or less landslide and there is no retaining wall? This is a danger in the near future that will cause the landslide because of no retaining wall and I am going to table pictures for the hon. Members to see how dangerous it will be in the near future. I took the photograph myself. I am going to table it. Is the hon. Minister aware?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I mention again, this question deals with consultants who are appointed in order to prepare works. That is it! It had nothing to do with the retaining walls and whatever problems. If the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will provide the answer.

Mr Speaker: Let us move to the next question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

TOLL SYSTEM – PPP PROJECT

(No. B/24) 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 PPP Toll Roads Project, he will state the name of the contractor who carried out the feasibility study in relation thereto, indicating the -
(a) contract value thereof, and

(b) additional works, if any, indicating -

(i) the cost thereof, and

(ii) who decided and awarded the additional works.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I would invite the hon. Member to refer to my reply to the Private Notice Question on 08 June 2012, where most of the information being sought has been provided.

As regards the variation works in part (b) of the question, there have been three and the amount involved is USD 523,508. This was due to the undertaking of tasks which were outside the original scope of the contract as follows –

1. micro simulation of traffic in the Caudan to Place d’Armes region and within Port Louis to complement insufficient available traffic information;
2. scope change to incorporate the Road Decongestion Programme to provide a holistic solution to decongestion relief on the M1 and M2; and
3. preparation of ‘Best And Final Offer’ Documentation and evaluation of BAFO Bids.

Furthermore, four additional assignments directly related to the PPP project, but outside the scope of the initial contract have been awarded to SPP Project Solutions by direct procurement under Section 25(2)(f) of the Public Procurement Act 2006 which authorises a public body to procure consultancy services from a single source without competition where continuity of consultancy services is essential to meet the objectives of the consultancy assignment. These are as follows -

1. Loan Structuring Contract - USD 782,555
2. Additional Technical Solutions and Interactive Sessions – USD 792,598.50
Those assignments were required to ensure that -

1. all necessary mechanisms for a successful PPP as envisaged in the Feasibility Study approved by the PPP Committee would be in place;
2. the concerns of the PPP bidders and the Road Development Authority were addressed, and
3. maximum relevant information would be provided to bidders in order to limit uncertainties and get competitive bids.

All the above have been decided by the RDA and approved by the RDA Board which comprises, amongst others, representatives of my Ministry, the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The decisions have been backed by legal advice as appropriate and financial clearance from MOFED where required.

Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to seize this opportunity to inform the House that the project which is currently materialising is a PPP project and a first of its kind in Mauritius. Although it has been and is a learning experience for everyone, the RDA with the support of my Ministry and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has acted with due diligence and care to ensure that no aspect of the project is neglected and this in order to guarantee the success of the project both in terms of providing a value for money proposition and an effective long-term decongestion solution. This explains why complementary assignments have been entrusted to the Transaction Advisor as and when the study has unfolded. This approach has ensured consistency in the development of the project.

It is to be noted that when the project was floated in 2008, the capital cost of the project components was quoted as Rs 7.3 billion excluding VAT in the Request for Proposals Documents. The cost of the consultancy as a percentage was 0.6% of the estimated capital expenditure. As the project stands now, the estimated cost is Rs 26 billion excluding VAT. As at date, the cost of the consultancy, including project management as a percentage of the capital
cost is still 0.6% of the estimated capital expenditure, which to all intents and purposes is considered fair and reasonable and it compares favourably with established international norms.

**Mr Li Kwong Wing**: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned about the Minister of Finance acting for due diligence on the feasibility contract. Can he inform the House whether the contractor has found the project of toll roads feasible, and if it is feasible, what kind of rate of return is it going to earn the economy?

**Mr Bachoo**: Mr Speaker, Sir, the matter is still being discussed at the level of the RDA and the CPB also because the award has not been official. So, I am not in a position to reveal to the House all the detailed contents of the toll system.

**BROWN SEQUARD HOSPITAL – CHILDREN - ADMISSION**

(No. B/25) *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 children who have been transferred from the shelters to the Brown Sequard Hospital, since 2005 to date, she will state the -

(a) name of the shelters from which they have been transferred
(b) number and age of the children transferred, indicating -

(i) in each case, the date of admission to the said hospital and discharge therefrom, and

(ii) the number and age of the children who are still at the said hospital as at to date.

**Mrs Martin**: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that children under Court Orders, placed in shelters, are not transferred from the shelters to the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre. They are, in fact, admitted to the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre for treatment upon medical advice.

In regard to part (a) of the question, since 2005 to date, children from the following shelters have been referred to the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre -

(i) La Colombe
(ii) L’Oiseau du Paradis
(iii) Centre D’Education et de Developpement pour les Enfants Mauriciens
(iv) Women and Children in Distress Trust Fund
(v) Vedic Social Organisation
(vi) Association d’Hebergement pour les Personnes Inadaptées
(vii) SOS Children’s Village
(viii) Foyer Monseigneur Leen, and
(ix) Fondation pour L’Enfance Terre de Paix.

As regards part (b) (i) of the question, 58 children have been admitted at the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre. The number and age of the children indicating dates of admission and dates of discharge is being tabled.

As regards part (b) (ii), as at 24 March 2013, there was no child under Court Order at the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am referring to the five last cases of children who had been transferred or sent to Brown Sequard Hospital. I would like to know from the hon. Minister when she has been made aware of those cases and why she has not initiated any action to take those children out of BSH even if she considers the said hospital to be the best place ever for them?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that since I assumed office in August 2011, I have been trying to find a solution that is in the best interest of all the children. I have to say this to the hon. Member.

As regards the six children mentioned, most of them were following treatment at the BSH. They were coming in and out. So, there is no child that has been staying on a one go. But right now, the children who have been staying for more than a year only amount to two.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, in his last report which was published in September last year, the Ombudsperson for Children mentioned the case of these children. May I know from the hon. Minister whether she has taken cognizance of this report and what action was initiated, if any, following the recommendation of the Ombudsperson for Children which clearly stated that the hospital should not be used as a respite centre for children with behavioural problem?
She even added that there was a case of children who did not suffer from any mental impairment, but were there. The kid was discharged and the state of health of the child was confirmed by the treating doctor according to the report of the Ombudsperson for Children? May I ask the hon. Minister whether she did take cognizance of this and what action was initiated following the publication of this report?

**Mrs Martin**: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, indeed, I have taken cognizance of the Ombudsperson’s report but, I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that some children who are admitted at the BSH are children who have been admitted mostly by relatives and, therefore, once their treatment is over, they go back home. The children whom we are concerned with, are especially children under Court Orders, and the children under Court Orders also undergo treatment at the BSH, and when their treatment is over they go back to the different shelters where they have been placed. The only problem that we have been having with two particular children is that the shelters where they had been admitted before refused to take them, but we have been multiplying letters and requests for the shelters to take them without success and to no avail. But I am very glad the inter-ministerial committee which was set up has found a solution with regard to the children and they have now been placed in the shelters under some conditions, of course,

**Mrs Ribot**: I would like to know if the hon. Minister is in presence of a report from the psychiatrist recommending that those six last children be kept at BSH because, according to our information, they were there only because they had slight behavioural problems.

**Mrs Martin**: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of such a report, but I am in possession of the medical reports of the doctors which clearly state that these children have behavioural disorders and, at the same time, they also have mental retardation. If they have to be placed, this should be done in specialised centres which we do not have at the moment.

**Mrs Ribot**: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether she is aware that when those children were at BSH, they were in a ward separate from the others, that is, from those suffering from a severe mental handicap or those with severe behavioural problems? I would also like to know from the hon. Minister when the CDU has been aware of the discharge of those children and why they had not left hospital then?
Mrs Martin: As I was saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the CDU has been made aware of the proposed discharge of these children, we have multiplied requests to the different shelters in order to accommodate those children, but it was to no avail.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Hanoomanjee!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just said that these children have now been placed in shelters. *Est-ce que l’honorable ministre peut nous dire si ces enfants sont complètement guéris?* Because these children, now, are mingling with other children in the shelters and if there is a problem - if they are still under medication - does the hon. Minister think that the personnel of these shelters are sufficiently trained to take care of these children? And if there is a problem because in one of those shelters - I won’t mention the name - there has been a case where one of the children *a mordu un membre du personnel! L’honorable ministre doit être au courant de cela.* Can the hon. Minister say who will take the responsibility because the personnel of these shelters are not qualified and are not sufficiently trained?

Mrs Martin: Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that is the main problem why the shelters who had accommodated the children before were refusing to take those children because they were not only a threat to themselves, but also to the whole environment as well as the carers there. But, at the level of the inter-ministerial committee, the Chairperson has liaised with the Ministry of Finance and they have, on humanitarian basis and urgency, agreed to look into the possibility of supporting those shelters that are accommodating those children in terms of funding and capacity building.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether she is aware that there are two types of students there? She mentioned herself that there were some who were sent by the court to the Brown Sequard Hospital and others who were there because of slight mental retardation. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether she visited them, whether she was aware that these children were locked up in certain areas of the hospital and whether, as she mentioned right now, the children who are being sent to the shelters will have the proper care that should have been given to them?
Mrs Martin: As regards the third part of the question, I must say that the shelters which are accommodating the children have made a list of the requirements available to us. And, very shortly, I am going to submit that list to the Ministry of Finance to see in what way we can help them out because I think it is very important that we strengthen the capacity of these shelters to accommodate the children, in the meantime, until a proper and long term solution is found with regard to this problem.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ribot!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether she is aware that when those six children were at BSH, they were locked up and were not entitled to any visit during the visiting hours and we have seen the order from the Brown Sequard Mental Healthcare Centre whereas no visit was authorised to these children for the sake of safeguarding and confidentiality and those children could be visited only if they have a written permission from the concerned institutions among which was the CDU which falls under the aegis of the Ministry?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, normally the children who have been referred to BSH by their parents or relatives are allowed regular visits by their relatives, that is something normal at the BSH and I think no hospital would prevent a parent from visiting his children. As regards children under court order, Mr Speaker, Sir, they are, in fact, referred to us because they are in a situation of distress and danger. That is the reason why any visit has to be supervised because, if that was not so, then the aggressor, himself, could go to the hospital and visit the child. We have to be very, very careful as regards the people who have access to children under court order. It is normally the practice in the shelters. The same thing applies to shelters and hospitals are also described as a place of safety as other shelters where we place our children.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jugnauth!

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Minister has just said that since assuming office, that is, since August 2011, she has been trying to find a solution. We are now in 2013 and the solution has not yet been found. May I know what concrete action she has taken in order to try to find a solution?
Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said that since I assumed office I was trying to find the best solution for all the children involved and under the responsibility of my Ministry.

(Interruptions)

Can I please finish?

Mr Speaker: Allow the hon. Minister to finish!

Mrs Martin: Thank you. However, successive Ministers have been confronted with the same problem, Mr Speaker, Sir and I am very happy that we have put together and I have requested Cabinet to help us and set up this inter-ministerial committee because this a multi-pronged problem.

(Interruptions)

When we talk about children with mental retardation, psychological problems and psychiatric disorders, these do not involve my Ministry only, but the Ministry of Social Security as well as the Ministry of Health. I am glad that together with the different Ministers in this committee, we are finding solutions. I must say also, Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a Cabinet decision in 2011 when the then Minister of Health was appraised that there should be a specialised facility which would be constructed to house those children. That has been done before. If that had been sorted before, then we would not have faced this problem right now.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have had the opportunity to visit these children. Je m’appuie sur la déclaration faite par l’honorable ministre de la santé, publiquement, une déclaration que j’avais lue dans un quotidien when he said –

“Rightly so, these children shouldn’t have been kept at the BHS”

The question which I am asking the hon. Minister is the following - she kept on saying that these children are being admitted, will be admitted or have been admitted on medical advice or their parents are leaving them there. But if this is not the place for children even suffering from some légers behavioural problems, are they not children who need psychiatric treatment? So, the solution is when will these half-way houses or mid-way houses be created for these type of children? We should not perhaps allow them to be mixed with other children in the shelters,
but nor should they have been kept in a mental hospital. So, the mid-way home, the half-way home is perhaps the environment which the hon. Minister referred to in her answer at the beginning. When are these structures going to be put in place to accommodate these children? Secondly, has the Minister thought seriously of recruiting child psychiatrists to look after these children suffering from some behavioural disorder? We have no child psychiatrist at the BSH or in any hospital in the country. If we have, they must be very, very rare.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his question because it pertains to a very delicate problem indeed. We do not have as yet specialised facilities to be able to cater for these children correctly. I must here correct the hon. Leader of the Opposition. These are not children with a slight mental retardation or slight psychological problems. They are children with psychiatric, psychotic problems and behavioural disorders necessitating psychiatric help and specialised care.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am speaking with regard to children as mentioned here by this question that has been put to me, that is, the children under court orders, but I agree that we have to find a specialised medical facility that will enable the proper treatment of these children. However, we are confronted also with realities such as the difficulty of finding pedopsychiatrists. As you have mentioned, it is a very rare commodity and we cannot find them, but we want to really improve the situation of these children and I am happy to note that the Minister of Health has said that already he is taking immediate measures to improve the situation at BSH and then we are going together to find ways and measures which will help to improve the situation of those children.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! However, I will allow a question by the author of the question and a note of personal explanation from hon. Hanoomanjee. Time is over since long but I have allowed seven minutes in view of the importance of the subject matter.

Mrs Ribot: Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir. Last question: I would like to ask the hon. Minister. We have heard her over and over again saying that she has been trying to find a solution; to find a place to put those children. I would like to ask the hon. Minister what about that shelter at Grand River North West which is not operational and which has been completed since June 2012. I would like the hon. Minister to answer to me without any sigh on her part.
Mrs Martin: What does she mean by sigh I wonder? Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

If one is not allowed to breathe in this hon. Assembly, I don’t know what we have to do. I have to answer Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me answer honestly to the hon. Member. She has been asking questions...

Mr Speaker: Answer the question.

Mrs Martin: On the centre at Grand River North West and I must remind her that this centre was designed for sexually abused children. We have been trying, through tender exercise, to find people for the management of this shelter and I am glad to inform the hon. Member that we have found a conducive organisation to manage the shelter which will be done soon.

Mr Speaker: Yes. Hon. Hanoomanjee, you are raising on a point of personal explanation.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Yes. On a point of personal explanation, I think I heard the hon. Minister saying that, when I was Minister of Health, the problem was there but I didn’t do anything. Allow me to tell the hon. Minister - and I am glad I have the opportunity to say this to the House - that I had already initiated action for a midway home. That was already on. The terms of reference were already worked out and I think the Minister of Health can say that this has been advertised. I don’t know what has been the outcome when I left, but I did it and the midway home should have been there.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: The last word to the Minister. Please be short!

Mrs Martin: This was when the hon. Member was the Minister of Health. I am not responsible for the subject of health.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

(Interruptions)

Some silence! The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/26, B/27, B/28, B/30, B/31, B/33, B/34, B/35, B/36, B/38, B/39, B/47 and we go back to B/29 have been withdrawn.
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 hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

First Reading

On motion made and seconded The National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office Bill (No. I of 2013) was read a first time.

At 4.36 p.m. the sitting was suspended.