

## POLICE QUARTERS – LOCATION

(No. B/614) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Police Quarters, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the respective location thereof, indicating the number thereof which –

- (a) are presently
  - (i) occupied and
  - (ii) unoccupied
- (b) have been converted into offices, and
- (c) have been recommended for demolition, indicating the project earmarked for implementation on the site thereof, if any, in each case.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are 812 Police Quarters, including seven in Rodrigues.

As regards parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

As regards part (c) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to PQ No. B/519 wherein I stated that 39 Police Quarters which are situated at Abercrombie, Vacoas, are vacant and in a bad state. As recommended by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, they will be pulled down.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Madam Speaker, is the hon. Ag. Prime Minister aware that many unoccupied Police Quarters have been left in abandoned state and whether a survey will be carried out in order to implement new project on these lands?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am submitting a full list and the hon. Member will see where, in fact, the Police consider that major renovation works are required, but I must say that there is no money in the current Budget for this and so we would have to wait for the next financial year.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Madam Speaker, since 2011, I asked a question and the same reply is going on for the next five years. With regard to a specific case, Police Quarters situated at Piton, will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister state if Government is envisaging to pull them down,

being given the old age and bad state, and to construct a new modern Police Division for Headquarters on that land?

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, this is a specific question!

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, but your question is of a general nature and this is a specific question for which I understand the Ag. Prime Minister does not have the information. Do you wish to reply?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I am submitting it, but I can read it for the hon. Member - Piton (Lower Land): there are 9 Police Quarters, 5 are occupied and 4 have been converted into offices.

Piton (Upper Land): for the 11 Police Quarters, 4 are unoccupied and requiring major renovation works and 3 have been converted into an office.

I can submit this and the hon. Member can see.

**Madam Speaker:** Next Question, hon. Rutnah!

**Mr Rutnah:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Parliamentary Question No. B/615, subject to correction of typographical error.

#### **DISTRICT COURTS – BAIL APPLICATIONS - HEARING**

**(No. B/615) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to bail, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Master and Registrar, information as to since when District Courts have ceased to hear applications submitted by provisionally charged accused for the granting thereof, indicating the –

(a) reasons therefor, and

(b) number of applications therefor heard by the Bail and Remand Court on a daily basis, since then.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, in reply to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that the Bail and Remand Court first came into operation in the year 2000 under the Bail Act 1999 in order to allow easier

access to justice to applicants under provisional charges and who are moving to be released on bail before their main cases are lodged.

I am also informed that the Bail and Remand Court, located at New Court House, Port Louis, has centralised all services in respect of bail and remand applications, inasmuch as Chambers of all legal professionals, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Attorney General's Office, as well as Police Headquarters are all located in Port Louis. Furthermore, video-conferencing facilities introduced since November 2000, have expedited bail hearings and resulted in improvement of security in all Courts since detainees no longer have to be taken from Remand Centres to Court and back. Such video-conferencing facilities are available at Beau Bassin Central and New Wing Prisons, Grand River North West Prison, Eastern High Security Prison and Women Prison.

Madam Speaker, the centralisation of all bail matters at the Bail and Remand Court has also reduced the risk of inconsistency in bail conditions, as used to be the case in the past when such matters were being dealt with by different Courts across the island.

I am informed that as far as practicable, bail applications are fixed for hearing within a week of the motion being made depending on the calendar of the Court. In order to meet the heavy workload at the Bail and Remand Court, the service is provided during weekends and public holidays since 2012, and there is more than one Magistrate sitting thereat. In most cases, Rulings are delivered on the same day. This was not the case when all bail applications under provisional charges were entertained by District Courts across the island.

I am informed by the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that District Courts have not formally ceased to hear bail applications and therefore still retain their jurisdiction in such matters, although the Bail and Remand Court now hears most matters pertaining to bail. Madam Speaker, I understand that there have been complaints from certain quarters relating to the delay in the hearings. However, this is a matter which falls under the Judiciary. If need be, once the Judiciary has adequate infrastructural facilities across the island, to accommodate all Court personnel including Magistrates, it may consider the possibility of having more than one Bail and Remand Courtroom. In the meantime, the Attorney General will initiate discussions so as to bring further improvements, as approved by the Judiciary. Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Master and Registrar that an average of 12 to 14 bail applications are dealt with on a daily basis by the Bail and Remand Court.

**Mr Rutnah:** Is the hon. Ag. Prime Minister aware that as a result of a circular that has been sent to District Courts, Magistrates tend not to hear any bail hearing at all in any District Courts in Mauritius and this is contrary to the very spirit and intendment of Section 3 and Section 5 of the Constitution that deal with the liberty of citizens of this country?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am aware that there is a Ministerial decision for District Courts not to hear bail applications; as for the rest, Madam Speaker, whatever is the situation.

**Mr Ramful:** Madam Speaker, given that we are dealing with the right of liberty of the individual, for the time being, at present, we have only one courtroom and one Magistrate sitting at a time to hear various bail applications. Now, would the Ag. Prime Minister consider the possibility of having, at least, two or three courtrooms for hearing bail applications?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker, we are, obviously, as a Government, concerned with civil liberties and the right to freedom as anybody else and the Attorney General has begun discussions with the Judiciary in order to have at least two courtrooms available.

**Mr Ganoo:** My question will have been on the same line, Madam Speaker. Although much progress has been made as regards the release of prisoners and detainees since the setting-up of this Court, yet, there are many complaints from Barristers in view of the backlog of cases since there is only one Court sitting and there are two Magistrates for the BRC, but, I think, in view of the logistics prevailing at the moment, lack of infrastructure and so on, may I appeal to the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to use his good offices so that the two Magistrates might sit at two different Courts at the same time at the new Court House?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, the Attorney General has agreed to look into the matter without hampering in any way the independence of the Judiciary.

**Mr Rutnah:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister, as a result of what we know about the bail situation, use his best endeavour to actually get rid of the whole system of provisional charge so that this matter comes into control?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** This does not arise from this question, Madam.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

## PMO - PROFESSOR A. S. – SERVICES

(No. B/616) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Professor A. S., he will state the capacity in which Government retained the services thereof over the period July 2005 to December 2014, indicating in each case the –

- (a) amount of fees/salaries and allowances paid out thereto, and
- (b) number of visits he effected to Mauritius in connection therewith, further indicating -
  - (i) the dates thereof;
  - (ii) the purposes therefor;
  - (iii) the expenditure incurred in terms of air tickets, accommodation and other facilities, if any, and
  - (iv) if Government car facilities had been provided thereto.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, Professor A. S. was employed on contract at the Prime Minister's Office as part-time Senior Adviser on Economic Matters. He was, in fact, employed with effect from 16 March 2006 on a one year contract which was successively renewed. His duty, according to his contract, was to advise the then Prime Minister on Strategic International and Economic issues. He resigned on 14 December 2014.

As regards part (a) of the question, Professor A. S. was being paid a fee of 16,000 pound sterling per annum for his services, payable in two equal instalments. The total fees paid to him for the period March 2006 to November 2014 amounted to 142,667 pound sterling. Professor A. S. was also provided with air tickets and accommodation for a maximum of three visits to Mauritius per year, including tickets and accommodation for his spouse and his three children for one trip only.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that as from 16 March 2006 to 14 November 2014, Professor A. S. has, in all, effected 44 visits to Mauritius. The expenditure incurred by Government on air tickets ...

*(Interruptions)*

The expenditure incurred by Government on air tickets and accommodation were as follows -

Air tickets	:	Rs4,144,634
Accommodation	:	Rs1,128,825

I am not in a position to provide information on the expenses on air tickets for the years 2006 and 2007 and on accommodation for the years 2006 and 2011, as I am informed that such records are not available at the Private Office of the Prime Minister's Office.

A chauffeur-driven car was also put at the disposal of Professor A. S. during each of his visits to Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, I am tabling the information available in regard to expenditure incurred in terms of fees, air tickets and accommodation, together with the dates of the visits of Professor A. S.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House on what criteria the former Prime Minister has selected Professor A. S. to serve as his personal Economic Adviser, a foreign Economist paying fat foreign currency when he had so many local Economic Advisers like Dr. Rama Sithanen, Mr Rajiv Servansingh and Mr Rajah Ramdaursing.

**Madam Speaker:** Please, don't mention names!

*(Interruptions)*

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** The then Prime Minister never discussed the matter with me, Madam Speaker.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister state whether in addition to payment of a *gros pactole* from Government funds, Professor A. S. was also paid fees and allowances by State-related enterprises like SBM where he was paid Rs110,000 daily ...

**Madam Speaker:** Don't provide information, hon. Member; you should ask for information.

**Mr Jhugroo:** ...for each sitting and free air tickets from Air Mauritius and enjoyed privileges like travelling to India and Myanmar at the invitation of the former Chairman of SBM.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, just to draw your attention, allow the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to reply!

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** What I can confirm, Madam Speaker, is that he was a member of the Board of the State Bank of Mauritius; I don't have details of his remuneration.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether at the invitation of the former Prime Minister, Professor A. S. was also paid first class ticket on Emirates with a stipend of 2,000 pound sterling which comes around Rs110,000 per day for holidays at Le Paradis Hotel in Le Morne with one of his girlfriends Ms D.M.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. Hon. Jhugroo!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jhugroo:** ...twice a year by the SBM.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo, please! Ask your question!

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I am not aware of that particular episode.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Last question on this, hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Jhugroo:** Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether Professor A. S. had submitted any report or recommendation to the Government on the Budget or economic issues like hoarding foreign currencies in unused notes in private safes kept at home?

*(Interruptions)*

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** On a serious note, Madam Speaker, we have not been able to trace any written reports by Professor A. S.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, one last question!

**Mr Mohamed:** Madam Speaker, I thank you for that. Since the hon. Chief Whip has rightly put very interesting questions about the specific period of time and he is talking about public funds as though there was such a crime that has been committed, could the hon. Ag.

Prime Minister just confirm that, at that time in question, those responsible for the finances of the country happen to be himself and hon. Jugnauth?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, my friend was Minister of Labour for some time.

*(Interruptions)*

And he ought to know that a budget is allocated for each Ministry at the beginning of the year, a global budget which is item-wise, including consultants, and that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development does not intervene in every cent that is spent. I am surprised that the hon. Member does not know that.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo, next question!

#### **PRIME MINISTER (FORMER) - FOREIGN CURRENCY - SEIZURE**

**(No. B/617) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the foreign currency notes seized at the residence of the former Prime Minister, in February 2015, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the inquiry carried out thereinto has revealed the sources thereof and, if not, why not.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the investigation in the case of foreign currency notes seized at the residence of the former Prime Minister in February last is ongoing, and the sources thereof are yet to be established.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether the US Dollar currency notes seized were crispy, consecutively numbered, brand new ones and had never been in circulation within the monetary system?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, this is a Police enquiry. I don't have any information.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister say whether he has any information about how the new dollar notes which were apparently sent from the US to Europe have landed in the safe of the former Prime Minister in Riverwalk, Vacoas?

*(Interruptions)*

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Again, Madam Speaker, I am not aware.

**Madam Speaker:** Last question!

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether these US Dollar notes have been declared to Customs when they were physically brought to Mauritius?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I pass again, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Ramano!

### **QUATRE BORNES - PROSTITUTION - ARRESTS**

**(No. B/618) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Quatre Bornes, in the vicinity of the St Jean Road, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of arrests effected thereat in connection with prostitution related offences since January 2015 to date, indicating the additional measures, if any, that will be taken to curb the proliferation thereof.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from January to 01 October 2015, 3 cases of prostitution related offences have been established by the Police in the vicinity of St Jean Road, and three persons have been arrested. Two of them have been fined and the third one is awaiting Court decision.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that with a view to preventing and detecting offences related to prostitution in that region adequate measures are already in place. These are as follows -

- crack down and /or joint operations with the assistance of the Special Support Unit and the Special Mobile Force;
- regular patrols;
- making use of the 39 CCTV cameras which are operational in the region of Quatre Bornes - which I installed myself, and

- developing intelligence for targeted operations.

The Police has now intensified control by effecting more patrols.

Moreover, the Police regularly conducts sensitisation programmes for the public, more particularly the youth, with the support of the Police Crime Prevention Unit, the Police Family Protection Unit and the *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*, on the different types of sexual offences, including prostitution. I am informed that as from January to 01 October 2015, 2,325 persons in the region which includes Quatre Bornes and Sodnac have been sensitised by the Police.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare that officers of the Ministry are called upon to attend to cases related to prostitution in its six Family Support Bureaux across the country, to provide appropriate psychological counselling and legal advice.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ramano!

**Mr Ramano:** Madame la présidente, le problème de la prostitution est flagrante dans cette région qui est à quelques mètres de la station de police. Est-ce que le ministre, qui est aussi le député, est d'accord pour vérifier qu'il n'existe pas un sentiment de complaisance de certains policiers face à ce problème de prostitution sur la route royale de St. Jean?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I am not able to obviously comment on *complaisance*, but I must say, looking at the figures submitted by the Police Department, that the number of crackdown operations which were, for instance, 37 in 2012, 21 in 2013, have been reduced to four in 2014 and three up to now in 2015. Same sort of trend, Madam Speaker, as far as arrests are concerned; so, there is a point and I will raise that to the Commissioner of Police.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ramano!

**Mr Ramano:** La presse de ce matin fait mention de l'arrestation de quelques personnes relatif à ce problème de prostitution dans le Morcellement St. Jean, plus précisément à l'Avenue Trianon. Est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer que parmi ceux arrêtés il y a aussi des policiers ou bien ex-policiers, ce qui explique cette impression de complaisance des habitants de Quatre Bornes vis-à-vis des policiers?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I will raise the matter with the Commissioner of Police, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

**Dr. Sorefan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Ag. Prime Minister mentioned CCTV camera. Is he aware that most of them are not functional because I heard it from the Police Officers' mouth? The region where I work, they are not functional.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, the CCTV cameras were installed some time ago. I am not aware that they are not working. If the hon. Member informs me so, I will check and see what is the problem.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ganoo!

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister - especially as he is the MP for the area - give a reason to the House why Quatre Bornes is the most preferred town for these sex workers?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Because it is by far the best town in Mauritius, Madam Speaker, that is why. But, as I mentioned quite seriously - it has the best MPs also - Madam Speaker, it is apparent, and I thank the hon. Member for the question, that the amount of crackdown operations - maybe since the closure of Ti Vegas the matter has dropped down in terms of priority, but I will raise that - is far less than it used to be and so are the number of arrests. So, I will raise it quite seriously with the Commissioner of Police.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Baloomoody!

#### **INDEPENDENT POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION - SETTING UP**

**(No. B/619) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of an Independent Police Complaints Commission, as mentioned in the Presidential Address on the Government Programme, he will state where matters stand.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that on 11 June 2015, drafting instructions were given to the Attorney General's Office to review the existing legislations with a view to converting the Police Complaints Division of the National Human Rights Commission into a full-fledged Independent Police Complaints Commission.

As already enunciated in the Government Programme 2015–2019 and the Budget Speech 2015, the Independent Police Complaints Commission will be presided by a former Judge of the Supreme Court.

The Commission will be a body corporate separate from the National Human Rights Commission, and no serving Police Officer will form part of the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that the preparation of the relevant Bill is in progress and it is intended to introduce same in the House in the near future.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

### **ROAD ACCIDENTS - HIT & RUN CASES**

**(No. B/620) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to road accidents, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of hit and run over the past two years, indicating -

- (a) the number thereof in respect of which the vehicle drivers/cyclists have not been identified as at to date, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for a toughening of the penalties in relation thereto.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, in regard to road accidents, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 01 January 2013 to 30 September 2015, 294 hit and run cases causing injury or death were reported to the Police, as follows -

- 109 cases, including 4 causing death, in the year 2014;
- 111 cases, including 8 causing death, this year as at 30 September.

In regard to part (a) of the question, in-depth enquiries have been carried out in all cases, but in 195 cases the drivers/cyclists involved in the accidents have remained unidentified. However, these cases have not been closed definitely and any new clues may enable the Police to investigate further into these cases with a view to tracing out the drivers.

Madam Speaker, with a view to reducing road traffic violations which are closely linked to the number of road accidents and casualties, the Police has taken the following additional measures to increase its visibility on the roads -

- (i) deployment of more riders of the Traffic Branch on the motorways and major roads across the country to deter such violations, and
- (ii) more frequent targeted operations are carried out during weekends in regions where there are high level of nightlife activities.

Furthermore, new measures being envisaged by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, and which will include, where necessary, legal amendments, are as follows -

- (i) the time delay to report an accident is being reduced from 4 hours to 2 hours;
- (ii) in certain instances of reckless driving, the offence might be qualified as motor manslaughter;
- (iii) stiffening of the laws for hit and run, including provision for longer term of imprisonment;
- (iv) driving under the influence of intoxicating liquor and drugs to be categorized as an arrestable offence;
- (v) provisional suspension of licenses for serious violations;
- (vi) studies are being carried out to relocate speed cameras in dark spots, and to use modern technology to detect effectively zone-speeding over a certain distance;
- (vii) a focus on education of drivers and road users;
- (viii) a National Road Safety Strategy 2015-25 is being developed to reduce the rate of fatal and serious injury accidents, based on the United Nations Safe System approach, and
- (ix) establishment of a National Road Safety Commission chaired by the Prime Minister.

The Commission will address the following three issues -

- (a) infrastructure and state of roads;
- (b) state of vehicles, and
- (c) focus on education, discipline, enforcement of laws and punishment.

The Commission will also look into policy issues in relation to any review of penalties for road traffic offences.

Madam Speaker, in the 2014 budgetary measures, I had announced the establishment of the Insurance Industry Compensation Fund for, *inter alia*, the payment of compensation, subject to set criteria, to persons suffering from personal injury in traffic accidents where the tortfeasor or the vehicle which caused the injury is untraceable. The relevant Regulations have been worked out and are being finalised by the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In many cases of hit and run, one of the problems is that the registration plates of vehicles are not clearly identified, that is, the registration plates are sometimes modified so that people or policemen cannot catch the registration plates. Therefore, my question to the Ag. Prime Minister is to ensure that the Police carry regular checks to ensure that plates of vehicles, especially modified ones, are being checked?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am sure hon. Members of the House would have noted that the Police presence especially on weekends have been stepped up considerably and very seriously. During the Police checks, obviously, the licence of the driver is checked, insurance of the vehicle is checked and also the state of the driver, whether he has consumed alcohol or drugs is verified and if necessary, he is asked to use appropriate equipment. I will also raise this matter of the licence plates.

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

**Mr Bérenger:** I have just heard that 195 cases where those guilty of hit and run offences have not been identified and daily we see - these days - cases of hit and run. We have been informed that the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure with the State Law Office is actively preparing a law.

Can I insist that that law should also include people who take part in a cover-up, repairing the car *en catimini* and so on, that this should be taken care of as well?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, we have noted the point.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ganoo!

**Mr Ganoo:** I heard the hon. Ag. Prime Minister saying that Government is preparing legislation to set up an authority or a fund in order to compensate the victims of hit and run accidents. Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether the Association of Motor Insurers has been taken on board and whether that authority will be funded only by State fund or will also the insurers contribute in that fund?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, this dates back to my last Budget. In fact, yes, everybody has been taken on board and *il y a un barème* in terms of compensation and, as far as I remember, Madam Speaker, there is a contribution. If someone takes an insurance policy, there is a small contribution made to that fund as well as a seed fund paid by Government at the start.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Baloomoody!

**Mr Baloomoody:** I raised the issue before. The hon. Ag. Prime Minister just mentioned that there are more riders on the road. It is true, we see more riders during the day, but at night apparently, my information is that they do not have a shift at night. Most of the hit and run cases occur at night. Can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister to ask the Commissioner of Police to review the scheme of duty of these riders?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I think this is a major national issue. I have raised the matter on many occasions with the Police and I only hope that they take on board Government's concern and this House's concern as to the seriousness, dynamism and energy that need to be put in terms of controlling; it is not an impossible task. It just needs energy and dynamism and the Commissioner of Police is well aware of the wishes of Government in that respect. The Minister of Public Infrastructure and myself, we have had many meetings and we can only hope that not only during the day - as we can see now more and more - but also right through the early hours of the morning that the Police are active and vigilant.

**Madam Speaker:** Time is over. Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/642 in regard to all inclusive packages proposed to the tourists by tour operators addressed to the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport will now be replied by the hon. Ag. Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications. The Table has further been advised that PQ B/635 and B/650 have been withdrawn. Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

## **BAI LTD - SUPER CASH BACK GOLD - REFUND**

(No. B/624) **Dr R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the policy holders of the Super Cash Back Gold Plan of the former British American Insurance Co. (Mtius) Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Property Fund Ltd., information as to-

- (a) the number thereof who have not yet been refunded, indicating where matters stand as to the policies which are assigned in favour of other financial institutions, and
- (b) when the debentures certificates will be issued.

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the National Property Fund Ltd that, as at date, out of 14,590 policyholders concerned, 1,554 policyholders have not yet benefitted from a refund as follows –

- (i) 771 of these policyholders have taken loans from banks, financial institutions and other organisations and have pledged their insurance policies accordingly;
- (ii) 773 policyholders have either not registered with NPFL, have not submitted complete documentation or are the subject to further due diligence work being conducted by NPFL and the Special Administrator;
- (iii) 55 policyholders are companies which do not meet the eligibility criteria for repayment, and
- (iv) Five policyholders' properties are subject to a freezing order from the Supreme Court of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, in respect of policies which have been assigned in favour of banks, financial institutions and other organisations, this category includes 1,023 policies out of 25,071 policies which are held by 771 policyholders. I am informed that the National Property Fund Ltd is having consultations with the relevant banks, financial institutions and other organisations which have granted loans to these policyholders who have pledged their Super Cash Back Gold Policies, with a view to finding an appropriate and acceptable solution for each case.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the National Property Fund Ltd that a Press Communiqué will be issued in due course to inform the public of the dates on which the debentures certificates will be issued. Meanwhile, the Special Administrator and NPFL, National Insurance Company Limited, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and my Ministry are working on possible solutions to enable earlier redemption, so that the sufferings of the victims of the BAI Ponzi scheme are further alleviated.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister mentioned some 1,500 who have not been paid. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether letters have been sent to each of them informing them of the status of their refund, why they have not been refunded, that is, on a personal basis rather than a communiqué?

**Mr Bhadain:** No, Madam Speaker, letters have not been sent individually to these policyholders, as far as I am aware, but I do know that many of these policyholders have either been in touch by phone or have actually turned up physically to the offices of NPFL. This issue is being looked at, as I have stated, and the Committee will soon find an answer to the problem.

**Mr Mohamed:** Madam Speaker, could the hon. Minister confirm - according to information that I hold and has been circulating around in Mauritius until recently - that all the policyholders of the former British American Insurance Company (Mauritius) Limited were made to sign a document before the entering into play of the National Insurance Company? In that document, there are two paragraphs where all the advantages and all the benefits of the policy are literally transferred to the National Property Fund Ltd. One of the paragraphs of that document which all policyholders were made to sign, failing which they would not be allowed to receive any money, reads that -

“From the effective date, the policyholders and beneficiaries shall have no further rights against and obligations under the policy. Whenever and whoever arising, all of which shall vest with the National Property Fund Ltd. and the policyholders and beneficiaries shall accordingly be released from obligations - and worst - shall cease to enjoy any rights under that policy.”

Is it the case that, as it stands, in order to go through the operation, which the hon. Minister describes as having had to be done, today, as we speak, in view of all the forms that those people have been made to sign, they cease to hold any rights thereupon and their

beneficiaries also have no rights whatsoever? Because they were made to give all those rights to the National Property Fund, as clearly stipulated in that document which they were made to sign.

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, it is perfectly normal that when Government decides to repay the victims of the fraud, whose money has been stolen, when they come and claim the amount which Government has decided to repay in the light of the financial crisis or social crisis which could unfold, this person has to surrender the policy. It is very normal. In this case, it is like a thief going into somebody's house, stealing the money and the person asking the Government to refund the money and, when Government is refunding the money, then you want to keep the loot as well.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Madam Speaker, regarding debentures, as the hon. Minister is aware, I am sure, we have many Mauritians abroad who have their money in this Super Cash Back Gold. Can the hon. Minister consider that those people who are abroad be informed on a personal basis? Because they do not get real access to communicate that the Minister is contemplating to go through it.

**Mr Bhadain:** I believe, Madam Speaker, that the NPFL has also issued the communiqué on the worldwide net, on the internet, and this is one way, probably, for people who are not in Mauritius to be informed of these issues. I am sure, Madam Speaker, that the NPFL is doing their utmost best to get all these people having their money back because we understand how they have been suffering out of this fraud.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister just informed us that there are about 700 or so policies that have not been returned because they were pledged by financial institutions. My question is why is it that, with regard to the new debentures that are being issued, these people cannot pledge these debentures in turn to financial institutions.

**Mr Bhadain:** There are two aspects to this, Madam Speaker. Firstly, in terms of people who have pledged their insurance policies with banks and financial institutions. What these people have, in fact, done, is that when they put their money into that insurance policy, they took that policy and went to the bank saying: "Can I have a loan out of this?" So, they got money and then they went and spent the money invested and they repaid on a monthly basis. When they are coming back to Government after what has happened with Super Cash Back Gold and are saying: "Give us our policy money back", the issue is whether this has to be repaid to the bank or it has to be repaid to the person or whether part of the loan has been

repaid and partly the insurance policy has got some value left, for which that person has to be repaid. So, this is the exercise which NPFL is currently doing and it is taking the time that it is taking now. Now, with respect to debentures, I have stated before that we are trying to find solutions to even have an early redemption system, so that we can repay people even before the five years that we have said that the debentures would be redeemable at zero coupon for five years, 20% each year. We are trying to find those solutions, and we want the BAI problem to go away as much as anybody else.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Joomaye, last question on this!

**Dr. Joomaye:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether, for policyholders pledge in favour of the ex-Bramer Bank, these would be considered for refund at this moment.

**Mr Bhadain:** Again, it is the same situation. What BAI has done is that they have taken the money and given the policies and then they told the people: “Go to Bramer Bank and you’ll have the money back via a loan.” So, now, we have to look at the loan and look at the insurance. Then, there are issues regarding interests. Of course, there will be an offset procedure, I believe, but I leave that in the capable hands of NPFL.

#### **PORT LOUIS – ROAD DECONGESTION PROGRAMME**

(No. B/625) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the city of Port Louis, he will state if a decongestion plan has been developed therefor and, if so, give details thereof.

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, as Members of the House are aware, Government will embark on a vast Road Decongestion Programme as from July 2016. Some of the components of the programme will address the problem of congestion in Port Louis given that there will be multiple entrances into Port Louis as follows –

- a tunnel at the level of Volcy Pougnet in line with Ring Road Phase 2 and 3;
- an entrance into Port Louis at De Caen through a Grade Separator, and
- a review of the bus stations at Victoria Square and Immigration Square.

Moreover, the Road Decongestion Programme for the City of Port Louis will comprise several other components, namely –

the Traffic Management Scheme;

the relocation of hawkers;

the relocation of the administrative centre;

the delocalisation of public offices to Highlands City, and

the conversion of certain streets in the City centre into pedestrian ones.

The implementation of these projects will reduce significantly the volume of traffic in Port Louis and thereby impacting on the congestion.

**Dr. Sorefan:** May we know from the hon. Minister what is the role of Mr Gaëtan Siew in this Port Louis roads redevelopment?

**Mr Bodha:** This is the Road Decongestion Programme. From what I understand, Mr Gaëtan Siew is working on the project of Port Louis 2030, which includes the whole Master Plan with the Port area. We are interested, in fact, with the traffic component of this 2030 plan.

**Dr. Sorefan:** In a news article, there is mention that there will be connection of the Caudan Flyover through De Chartres Street to A1, next to Line Barracks. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether ...

**Mr Bodha:** The most important thing, Madam Speaker, is that about 10,000 cars enter Port Louis at the Port area in front of the Government House. So, from the traffic point of view, what we are trying to do is that the traffic coming from the South enter Port Louis further up, that is, at the level of Caudan and De Caen and the traffic coming from the North would enter Port Louis at the level of Immigration Square, thereby the traffic would be fluid at the level of the Port.

#### **GOVERNMENT OFFICE MANAGEMENT UNIT - SETTING UP**

**(No. B/626) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a General Office Management Unit, he will state where matters.

**Mr Bodha:** Madam Speaker, with a view to rationalising the use of office space for public services, Government decided then to set up the Government Office Management Unit under the aegis of my Ministry.

The functions of the Government Office Management Unit are as follows -

- (i) To formulate policies and strategies regarding office accommodation for both owned and leased buildings;
- (ii) To develop and issue guidelines in respect of space requirements for various grades of officers;
- (iii) To issue a standard lease agreement containing standard compulsory clauses together with provisions for (12.52.10) optional clauses;
- (iv) To formulate norms and standards of office buildings;
- (v) To give final approval for the leasing of office accommodation;
- (vi) To build up and maintain a database containing relevant details of all rented and owned buildings by Government;
- (vii) To build up and maintain a database of all potential landlords willing to lease their buildings to Government, and
- (viii) To deal with all requests relating to office accommodation received from Ministries and Departments.

Madam Speaker, several meetings were held with different stakeholders in order to decide on the appropriate structure and other requirements to this Unit to become operational. However, this Unit could not be set up as the staffing and other resource requirements were not provided to the Ministry.

In spite of the above, Madam Speaker, my Ministry is already carrying out some of the functions of the Government Office Management Unit. For instance -

- (i) a Model Lease Agreement has been developed in consultation with the State Law Office and incorporated in the Standard Bidding Documents for renting of office space issued by the Procurement Policy Office;
- (ii) the final approval for leasing of office space is given to by my Ministry after ascertaining that the building is structurally safe and sound and fit for renting;
- (iii) a software has been developed to build up and maintain a database of all rented and Government-owned buildings. The software is actually being finalised by the Central Information Systems Division, and
- (iv) dealing with all requests relating to office accommodation in rented buildings.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that efforts were made to build up and maintain a database of all potential landlords willing to lease their buildings to Government. However, this did not materialise as there were poor response from the landlords.

Furthermore, my Ministry has also prepared draft guidelines on office accommodation on rental premises. Discussions thereon are being held with all stakeholders before their finalisation.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has not replied - if I heard him right – as to when the Ministry is going to set up the General Office Management Unit. Is there a time frame?

**Mr Bodha:** From the answer I have given, Madam Speaker, in fact, the idea came in 2000. It was in 2004 that some of the Units purposes were started to be implemented by my Ministry. In fact, the Unit does not exist as such. So, maybe in line with what is being done with the Highlands Administrative City, we can think of setting up such a Unit so that we can monitor all the issues relating to accomodation by Ministries and Departments.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Is the hon. Minister aware that the total expenditure incurred since 2010 is around Rs2.9 billion and which is likely to increase in the near future? What steps have been taken to minimise the rental, especially when in the city we pay about Rs380 m. for year 2014 to some 50 privately-owned buildings? And to my information, the decision was taken by the then Government to rent about 10 floors from the Citadel Mall located very near HERE. Is the hon. Minister aware if this is true and what action will be taken by this Government?

**Mr Bodha:** The figures given by the hon. Member are correct. In fact, we are spending around Rs600 m. on rent payment for office buildings in Port Louis and elsewhere. I think the answer to all this is the Highlands Administrative City.

#### **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – VISA ENTRY**

**(No. B/627) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the United Arab Emirates, he will state where matters stand as to the talks engaged with the Government thereof to exempt the Mauritian nationals from the requirement of a visa entry therefor, indicating if they have -

- (a) been requested to reciprocate the visa exemption granted to their nationals when entering Mauritius, and
- (b) requested for an increase in the number of direct flights between our two countries.

**Mr Sinatambou:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for his question and I am pleased, once again, to inform the House that Mauritius is one of the few countries in the world whose nationals do not require a visa prior to travelling to no less than 106 countries. However, it is to be noted that, out of those 106 countries, Mauritian nationals travel totally visa free to 81 countries and for the remaining 25 countries, visa is granted on arrival.

As regards part (a) of the question, I wish to confirm to the House that the United Arab Emirates Authorities have indeed been requested to reciprocate the visa exemption granted to their nationals entering Mauritius.

On 10 March 2015, while replying to Parliamentary Question No. B/182 from the First Member of Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, I actually informed the House that, in the context of his presence in Mauritius during our National Day Celebrations, I had met with the UAE Ambassador, H.E. Essa Abdullah Al Basha Al Nuaimi, and had raised the issue of visa exemption with him. I even impressed upon him for an early conclusion of the visa exemption agreement.

I can state to the House that on 17 February 2015, the Embassy of the UAE in Cairo informed our Embassy in Cairo that the draft Visa Exemption Agreement was still under consideration and that the competent authorities would inform us of any development in due course.

On 22 of April of this year, our Mission in Cairo informed my Ministry that a reminder had been sent to the UAE Embassy in Cairo.

On 28 June 2015, our Embassy in Cairo informed my Ministry that another reminder dated 22 June 2015 had been sent to the UAE Authorities by our Mission.

On 06 July 2015, the Embassy of the UAE in Cairo informed our Embassy that the draft Visa Exemption Agreement is still under study, I quote, “*by the concerned authorities in the United Arab Emirates*” and that a reply will be provided in due course.

I wish to inform the House that at the beginning of this month I have personally written to H.E. Sheik Abdulla Bin Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of UAE, requesting him to expedite matters for an early conclusion of a reciprocal Visa Exemption Agreement.

As regards part (b) of the question, I did inform the House that Air Access Policy falls under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office and that Government is currently reviewing its national Air Access Policy. In that respect, the National Advisory Council has already set up a Task Force under the chairmanship of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service which is looking into the whole matter.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Madam Speaker, in reply to Parliamentary Question B/182, as the hon. Minister just stated, he mentioned that the draft visa exemption submitted to UAE dates back as far as 05 February 2014, where the exemption agreement has been submitted there. Since then, there have been so many reminders and the hon. Minister himself just stated to the House that he met the Ambassador in his Office on 09 March of this year, that is, more than six months have now been elapsed. Until now, we have not seen anything substantial from UAE.

My point is that the UAE, more specifically the Emirates Airline which is a hundred percent control Airline Company by the UAE, when they came to Mauritius there were only three flights per week.

**Madam Speaker:** What is the question of the hon. Member?

**Mr Ameer Meea:** My question is now we have more than three flights per day. One of the arguments is that we have given so many in terms of landing rights to the United Arab Emirates, if this can be used as an argument so that we can have our Mauritian national when going to Dubai being exempted for visa.

**Mr Sinatambou:** Madam Speaker, of course, all relevant points are being and will be taken with the authorities of the United Arab Emirates, but I think the House ought to know that the citizens of the United Arab Emirates have been waived from any visa requirement since 1993. So, for the last 22 years, they have been coming here without visa. We have started and initiated some discussions. I think we should give enough time for matters to progress.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes. Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** It seems as though with regard to the Arab States, I mean, if I understand correctly, could the hon. Minister just confirm that ever since he has been in office, there have been at least five reminders which is at least consistent and good work, at least we are reminding them. So, five reminders have gone and also with regard to Saudi

Arabia, another Arab country, a lot of reminders are going and nothing seems to be coming concrete, positive, structured, solutions are coming out apart from numerous reminders that keep on increasing. So, could he please tell us when would the reminders stop and when could we get reassured with positive results? It is clear that the reminders don't seem to be working. Maybe hon. Soodhun could help.

**Mr Sinatambou:** I am afraid the hon. Member is totally mistaken, Madam Speaker. Let me just remind the House that about Saudi Arabia we had a question about the opening of the Embassy and part of the supplementary questions which arose is that the former Government, to which the gentleman belonged, actually wanted, did express in 2010 that they were going to open an Embassy, but they themselves three years later said that they would not open it. So, it is very easy to now come and say that, you know, reminders and reminders, and on the issue of Saudi Arabia...

*(Interruptions)*

I think the hon. Member should allow me to finish.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mohamed, please! Allow him! You have asked your question. Allow him!

*(Interruptions)*

Would the hon. Member allow the hon. Minister to reply, please?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Yes, and I hope that the hon. Member will stop interrupting, Madam Speaker. Let us say again! When the issue about Saudi Arabia which he has just raised is not an issue of reminder, already, we have informed the House last week that a general cooperation agreement has been signed at the United Nations...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Sorefan! Next question!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Sinatambou:** I am not being allowed by the hon. Member to reply, Madam Speaker. Now, he just mentioned himself that we are speaking of reminders and he referred to last week's question on Saudi Arabia.

**Madam Speaker:** Indeed.

**Mr Sinatambou:** And I am just reminding the House that last week we did explain that there is indeed what I term a diplomatic itinerary. Now, I believe that this had to go through the general framework agreement on cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Mauritius which has been signed less than two weeks ago. Now, coming back...

*(Interruptions)*

Coming back to the United Arab Emirates...

*(Interruptions)*

Will he stop interrupting, Madam Speaker?

Coming back to the UAE, the reminders are six reminders in 10 months. For 22 years, they have done nothing. So, who are they to speak!

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

*(Interruptions)*

Would you allow hon. Dr. Sorefan to ask his question, please!

**Dr. Sorefan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. May we know from the hon. Minister whether he will confirm as per newspaper article that hon. Showkutally Soodhun will travel to Dubai in October to meet the Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline & Group, Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum to look in the abolition of visa for stay of less than 15 days? If this is so, there won't be a problem of reminders. Hon. Soodhun will do it.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Sinatambou:** I am not aware, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea! Last question!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Yes. Madam Speaker, now that Emirates and UAE is dealing with this Government, we are talking now; Emirates has just requested from Government to increase their flights for December and January. They already have three daily flights. They also requested to increase the number of flights. Now, we are talking of this Government, this can be put on hold until we, Mauritians, get visa exemption from Emirates.

**Mr Sinatambou:** I think we should start realising that we are not *le nombril du monde*.

**Madam Speaker:** I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours!

*At 1.07 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.43 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/651, B/652 and B/653 have been withdrawn. Hon. Jhugroo!

### **FACEBOOK SOCIAL MEDIA - FAKE PROFILES**

**(No. B/628) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the facebook social media, he will state the measures that have been/will be initiated for the timely identification of the owners of fake profiles thereon in the light of the number of anonymous negative and communal and/or comments recently posted thereat and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, in light of a number of anonymous harmful and racist comments recently posted on the Facebook social media, my Ministry has had working sessions with the ICT Authority (ICTA), the National Computer Board, the Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius (CERT-MU) and the Cybercrime Unit of the Police Force to look into ways and means to prevent misuse of social media that tends to propagate harmful and unlawful contents that could disrupt the social harmony of our country.

I am informed that procedures have been put in place for –

- (i) identification of the owner of the fake profiles and postings of harmful and racist comments, and

- (ii) prompt notification to CERT-MU for the removal of the harmful and racist comments.

My Ministry is, in consultation with the Attorney General's Office and the ICT Authority, in the process of making Regulations under the ICT Act, with a view to enhancing existing legal provisions on ways and means to tackle the curtailing of harmful and unlawful contents on the Internet and social networking websites in a comprehensive manner.

A committee has also been set up within my Ministry with the assistance of the SLO for Mauritius to seek Mutual Legal Assistance from the State of California, so that in cases where there are harmful and illegal contents on Facebook in Mauritius, not only those contents may be deleted, but the author of those contents will also be identified and evidence could also be gathered to prosecute the author, promptly.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Will the hon. Minister state whether there is any agreement or contract signed between the Facebook media operator and the Government of Mauritius whenever there is any inquiry going on?

**Mr Bhadain:** As I have stated, Madam Speaker, there is no agreement which has been signed, but there are initiatives which have been started with the State Law Office to seek mutual legal assistance with the State of California and therefore, we will be able to achieve the objectives which we are setting ourselves to achieve.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ganoo!

**Mr Ganoo:** Madam Speaker, although I know that in view of the Standing Orders I cannot ask for a legal opinion, but can I ask the hon. Minister if making a false Facebook profile is illegal in itself or is the user only violating the terms of service so that a false Facebook depends, in fact, on the action, the utilisation made and the intention and it is not by itself illegal?

**Mr Bhadain:** We are working on a Regulation to that effect, Madam Speaker, but just to inform the hon. Member, section 18 (1) of the ICT Act 2001 as amended, states that one of the functions of the ICTA is to-

“(...) take steps to regulate or curtail the harmful and illegal content on Internet and other information and communication services”

So, that would fall under that section.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Hurreeram!

**Mr Hurreeram:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether the agreement which is supposed to have with Facebook in order for them to provide the identification of the fake profile user, whether either the Police or the ICTA will be empowered to ask for that information so that eventually it is admissible in Court?

**Mr Bhadain:** As I have answered before, there is a committee which is looking into that, and it is not only ICTA, it is ICTA, CERT-MU, the National Computer Board and also the Police Cybercrime Unit. So, that committee is actually addressing those issues and we are going to come up with a proper regulation under that section of the ICTA Act to basically address this issue, shortly.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Jhugroo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Is the hon. Minister aware that there are many countries like France who have signed contract with the Facebook operator just to safeguard the interest of the country?

**Mr Bhadain:** Yes, I am aware.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Ramano.

### **EBENE - CULTURE HOUSE - CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/629) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a Culture House at Ebene, he will state –

- (a) if a site has been identified therefor;
- (b) the amount of funds earmarked therefor, and
- (c) the Mauritian cultural sectors concerned with the proposed Culture House.

**Mr Baboo:** Madam Speaker, I wish to reply to parts (a) and (c) together. A portion of land of an extent of 3.5 acres was identified and vested in my Ministry for the construction of the Culture House. The land is located at Réduit Triangle, Moka behind the Apollo Bramwell Hospital.

In November 2014, a team of Chinese experts comprising *inter alia* engineers and architects, visited Mauritius for a preliminary investigation of the site and concluded that the site was not appropriate.

An alternative site consisting of two plots of land of 1.5 acres each, adjacent to the above land was considered more suitable by the Chinese experts for the project. However, these plots have been leased to the Hindi and the Urdu Speaking Unions.

During a site visit held in November 2014, the Chairpersons of both Unions stated that they were agreeable to the proposal of the Ministry for the swapping of the land leased to them against the portion vested in my Ministry.

However, it is to be noted that the project started since 1999 and over the years, there have been various proposals on what should constitute the Culture House project, that is, which institutions will be housed there and at the same time provide facilities to artists.

My Ministry is currently reviewing the Culture House project, in consultation with all stakeholders, with regard to the institutions to be accommodated therein.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development that the Chinese Authorities were approached for financing of the project. During the visit of the Chinese delegation in November 2014, discussions were held with the Chinese experts on the total cost estimate and the mode of financing of the project. No consensus has yet been reached.

For the financial year 2015-2016, an amount of Rs1 m. has been earmarked to carry out preliminary studies on the Culture House project.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ramano!

**Mr Ramano:** Madame la présidente, nous avons célébré cette année le Bicentenaire des Archives Nationales qui se trouve dans le centre industriel de Coromandel. Les Archives Nationales se trouvent dans un état déplorable, et là nous parlons de l'histoire du pays. Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre quelles sont les mesures urgentes qu'il compte entreprendre pour préserver l'histoire même du pays ?

**Mr Baboo:** Well, I do agree with the hon. Member. We have got several sessions of work with the Ministry of Environment and, at our level, we are waiting for the report in

order to go ahead so that our main objective will be that we will put the Archives at Ebène in case the report is good.

**Mr Baloomoody:** Can I know from the hon. Minister whether, as from now on, this Culture House will be financed by the Mauritian Government itself and there will be no finance by the Chinese authorities?.

**Mr Baboo:** Well, so far, I don't have the answer because we are waiting for the report. Once we've got it, then we will go back to the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr Ramano:** Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre s'il y a eu des consultations avec les artistes du pays dans l'élaboration du projet ?

**Mr Baboo:** Yes, we did have a work session with the artists regarding the Culture House at Ebène.

**Mr Bhadain:** Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/632 and PQ B/633 have been withdrawn. Next question, hon. Mohamed!

#### **MBC – EMPLOYEES – TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

**(No. B/630) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to since December 2014 to date, the number of employees

- (a) whose contract of employment have been terminated, and
- (b) who have taken employment thereat.

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that since December 2014 to date, the contract of employment of 10 employees were terminated. This includes the then Director General, Mr V. K. Pritam Parmessur.

I am tabling a list submitted by the MBC of those 10 ex-employees, including names, position held and employment category.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, I am informed that the only person who has been employed by the MBC since December 2014 to date was Mr V. K. Pritam Parmessur, whose services were no longer required as from 24 August 2015.

Therefore, excluding Mr Purmessur, the number of persons who has taken up employment at the MBC is zero.

The MBC has, since 27 August 2015, advertised for nine positions, including Director General, Deputy Director General and Director of News. These posts will be filled in the coming weeks, if not days.

**Mr Mohamed:** If the list has been tabled, maybe, I could have a look at it before I put my next question. Thank you.

So, in my question which I have asked the hon. Minister, I would like to find out with regard to the list of those whose contracts have been terminated ever since December 2014, whether all of them have been communicated reasons for termination and, if so, what are the reasons?

**Mr Bhadain:** Well, I do not have the specific information, Madam Speaker, but I am sure that if somebody had his/her employment terminated, then that person must have been told why.

**Mr Mohamed:** I have in my hand a letter which was addressed to Ms Hemowtee Salaye of 04 August 2015 and, basing myself on the last answer just given by the hon. Minister, where he is sure that had someone's employment been terminated, the reason would have been specified. In that particular letter, the Board of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, after having put her on the roster, just a day before, she is sent a letter where her employment is terminated and no reason whatsoever is stipulated therein. Now, how does the hon. Minister reconcile his previous answer where reasons most probably would have been given when we see in this letter, no reasons are given.

**Mr Bhadain:** Well, Madam Speaker, I don't have a copy of the letter.

**Mr Mohamed:** I give it to him, before he answers, he could look at it.

**Mr Bhadain:** Yes. Please do!

**Madam Speaker:** Meanwhile, hon. Ameer Meea!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** May I ask the hon. Minister what are the reasons why the Director General's contract has been terminated?

**Mr Bhadain:** His services were no longer required.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Minister state whether the MBC has been overstaffed due to the fact that the previous regime has recruited persons without proper mode of recruitment and qualifications, sometimes recruiting *des petits copains, petites copines* and earning high salaries?

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, I informed the House on the last occasion when a PQ was asked about the MBC that the MBC currently has 898 employees, that the MBC has run into debt of Rs1.2 billion and all the licence fees which are being paid by all the subscribers in Mauritius are not sufficient to pay only the salaries of the amount of people who have been thrust into the MBC by the previous Government. This Government has not, since December 2014 until now, until this Government is in power, not one single person has been recruited, except for the Director General who has had his services terminated, which was the different approach which is being taken to streamline the MBC and to put those new procedures and methodologies in place and also to advertise for posts like Director General, Deputy Director General, Director of News, Human Resource and so on and so forth. I mean this is in line with good governance.

**Mr Bhagwan:** In line with the reply which the hon. Minister has just given, can he inform the House when, at last, a full-fledged Board of the MBC will be appointed with all the representatives, as stipulated by the MBC Act?

**Mr Bhadain:** Very soon, Madam Speaker.

**Mr Rutnah:** Can the hon. Minister confirm whether, as at to date, the way the Board of the MBC is constituted, does actually the Board itself take the decision of whether to terminate or not to terminate a contract and not the Ministry directly?

**Mr Bhadain:** Of course, there is a Board which is there, but having said that, just to go back on the letter of hon. Mohamed, I can read out the letter. It says –

“I am directed to inform you that the MBC Board has, at its meeting of 03 August 2015, decided to terminate your services forthwith. You will be paid 3 months’ wages in lieu of notice, accrued benefits, as well as compensation as provided for by law.”

If it is by law, it is by law, Madam Speaker, and it is being paid, probably.

**Mr Mahomed:** I would like to ask the hon. Minister who is at the head of the MBC right now?

**Mr Bhadain:** The Ag. Officer-in-Charge is Mrs Cheong, who is doing a very good job.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, one last question!

**Mr Mohamed:** The hon. Minister has done something which we've all done, Madam Speaker, which is read a letter and I am happy to see that he can read the letter very well and we have got the same information. I also know the Standing Orders which say that I cannot insist on obtaining an answer from an hon. Minister who can give the answer he wishes, I bow to that.

**Madam Speaker:** Ask your question.

**Mr Mohamed:** But my question is: could the hon. Minister, please, answer the question and say: why is it that therein, in this particular letter - when he said that normally he would expect them to provide a reason for having put someone out – no reason is provided? Does he agree that this goes against his own statement when he was giving his answer?

**Mr Bhadain:** I can see my hon. friend is being very theatrical again. Now, it is very simple.

*(Interruptions)*

It is very simple. I do not go to such clubs...

*(Interruptions)*

But it is very simple. The services of the person, by reading the letter, it is very clear, Madam Speaker...

*(Interruptions)*

It is coming.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, it is up to the Minister to reply. Okay!

*(Interruptions)*

You cannot insist.

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, the answer is that the letter shows that the services of that person was no longer required and by law that person has been paid. Now this was done by the then Director General and he himself had his services terminated afterwards.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Shakeel Mohamed.

### **DOMAINE LES PAILLES - EMPLOYEES – TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

**(No. B/631) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the *Domaine Les Pailles Ltd.*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation, information as to the number of employees thereof whose contract of employment have been terminated since December 2014 to date, indicating the reasons therefor in each case.

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Madam Speaker, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ No. B/435 of 08 September 2015, where I, *inter alia*, highlighted the precarious financial situation at *Domaine Les Pailles*, which has been making losses for years. In fact, its total losses had reached Rs443 m. by July 2015. The company was unable to generate enough revenue to cover even its operating costs and had become a heavy financial burden on the SIC.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the employees were offered the options of staying in post or taking voluntary leave against payment of a compensation. After consultations with all employees and their Union, all parties agreed to a compensation amounting to two months salary for each year of service. Thus, in July 2015, all 142 employees opted for voluntary leave.

**Mr Mohamed:** I thank the hon. Minister for his very clear answer. It seems as though that the reason for termination - if I read between the lines - is for economic reasons, since the precarious situation of the *Domaine Les Pailles*. Could the hon. Minister inform the House whether, with regard to the relevant sections of the law in the Employment Rights Act, which talks about 'last in first out' and necessary consultation prior to the decision of terminating the agreement for economic reasons, there was prior consultation with the unions to discuss all the possibilities and then the last possibility being to terminate the agreement under the principle of 'last in first out'? Have those conditions, which are statutorily imposed conditions, been adhered to? And if they have been adhered to, could the hon. Minister please give the House the dates of all those meetings and table the Minutes of Proceedings of those meetings to show that, indeed, to terminate their employment, the law was adhered to?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Madam Speaker, there was no termination of contract. It was a voluntary scheme and all the 142 employees opted for the proposal of SIC. They received two months of salary for each year of service. So, there was no firing; no one was fired. It was just a voluntary scheme and all accepted the scheme.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Madam Speaker, can the hon. Minister of Finance confirm to the House whether the Casino of *Domaine Les Pailles* started making losses since the previous Government came to power and, if so, can we know why?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** The ambit question does not relate but, anyway, if hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will answer it.

**Mr Rutnah:** Madam Speaker, can the hon. Minister confirm whether the action taken by *Domaine Les Pailles* was motivated because this place was heavily overstaffed, thus contributing significantly to sustain losses and that it does, in fact, make business sense to actually provide the voluntary retirement scheme to those employees?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Well, we forget about the type of personnel who was recruited there. Once again, it was like the Casino of Mauritius. Most of them were political recruits, but that was not the reason why we acted this way. When I say that we lost Rs443 m, it is public funds. I put the question to the House. Can we continue using public funds to bail out sick companies?

**Mr Mohamed:** I have one question for the hon. Minister. We have heard, in his answer that he had communicated to the House only recently, about a new investor coming from China to pick up this company. In those circumstances, I am sure that there must be - and we all hope that there must be - some development agenda; something would be prepared, some beautiful project there. Could the hon. Minister, together with his colleague from the Ministry of Labour, consider that possibility of imposing upon or asking and requesting, but in a firm way - as he is used to and he has experience in that matter - the new promoters or the new company that will come up that, if ever they are to - I am sure they will - recruit new personnel for this new operation, they would give priority to those people who have been retrenched either voluntarily or otherwise, but who had no choice, but at least who collaborated with the idea of being retrenched and did not pose any difficulty?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Madam Speaker, this will be done.

## **SUBOXONE - IMPORTERS**

**(No. B/632) Mr S. Mohamed ( First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to Suboxone, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pharmacy Board, a list of the importers thereof, indicating if any loss thereof has been reported thereto.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **HALAAL FOOD - REGULATIONS**

**(No. B/633) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to halaal food, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed amendments to be brought to the Food Act and the regulations made in relation thereto, indicating when the regulations that had been finalized last year would come into operation.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **MERS VIRUS – MAURITIAN PILGRIMS – SCREEN & FOLLOW-UP**

**(No. B/634) Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the emergence of the virus causing MERS in Saudi Arabia which has recently caused several deaths, he will state -

- (a) if adequate information have been given to the Mauritian pilgrims accomplishing the Hajj 2015 in relation thereto, and
- (b) the measures that have been taken to screen and follow-up the pilgrims on their arrival.

**The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr P. Roopun):** Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a viral respiratory disease caused by a novel corona virus (MERS- CoV) that was first identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012. Corona viruses are a large family of viruses that can cause diseases ranging from common cold to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Since the virus was first identified, a protocol has been established for the screening of Hajj pilgrims. As for the years 2013 and 2014, 296 and 87 specimens respectively have been tested and all of them have been found to be negative. For this year, as at 27 September, 53 specimens have been tested and all of them have been found to be negative.

Since September 2012 to 30 September 2015, the World Health Organisation has been notified of 1,589 laboratory confirmed cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome infection, out of which 567 related deaths have been noted globally.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that all pilgrims proceeding for Hajj 2015 have been offered free medical check-ups at our hospitals and health centres during which they have been sensitized on the MERS Corona Virus disease.

Furthermore, the Ministry has forwarded 1,200 pamphlets to the Islamic Cultural Centre for distribution to all Hajjis prior to their departure. This pamphlet gives information on the precautionary measures to be taken by those visiting and returning from the Middle East countries. These include, *inter alia* -

- hand hygiene;
- avoiding direct contact with patients suffering from influenza, and
- covering of mouth and nose while sneezing or coughing.

The travellers are also informed of the disease and its symptoms, which include -

- fever;
- cough, and
- respiratory distress.

Details of hot lines for emergencies have also been included in the pamphlet. A copy of the pamphlet is being tabled.

In addition, all passengers travelling to affected countries in the Middle East are being informed by the International Vaccination Centre about the precautionary measures to be taken during their travel. I am tabling a list of those countries.

Madam, Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, at the outset, I would like to inform the House that all Hajj pilgrims will benefit from a fast track service without neglecting public health issues in view of the traumatic experience they encountered during the stampede in Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, I would like to inform the House that, during a meeting chaired by the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. S. Soodhun, yesterday, where, *inter alia*, it has been decided that psychological support will be provided to the pilgrims in need of such care by the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions.

I am further informed that -

- i. the Virology Department of the Central Health Laboratory at Victoria Hospital has the necessary expertise to test for MERS Corona virus. They have been provided with the necessary reagents to detect the virus;
- ii. furthermore, information on MERS Corona Virus was sent to the Private Medical Practitioners Association and the Private Clinics Association for circulation among their members to increase vigilance;
- iii. all Hajj pilgrims on their arrival at the airport will be screened by Medical and Health Officers and nursing staff of the Ministry. For this purpose, there is a thermal scanner at the airport which detects any incoming passenger with fever;
- iv. counselling will be provided by Principal Public Health and Food and Safety Inspectors about the symptoms of the disease and measures to be taken in case of illness;
- v. all pilgrims will be closely monitored for a period of 14 days from their date of arrival by Principal Public Health and Food and Safety Inspectors of the respective regional health offices;

Provision has already been made for isolating, if any, those infected with the virus in special wards at Souillac Hospital.

**Dr. Joomaye:** Madam Speaker, I would like the hon. Minister to confirm whether the thermo scan at the airport is present and really functional.

**Mr Roopun:** Yes, I am so informed.

**Mr Leopold:** I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether there is any known vaccine for its prevention or if there is any treatment for the disease?

**Mr Roopun:** I believe there is none.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

#### **PARIS - EMBASSY OF MAURITIUS - MR L.O. - APPOINTMENT**

**(No. B/635) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to Mr L. O., he will state the capacity in which the Embassy of Mauritius in Paris retained the services thereof, indicating the -

(a) period thereof;

- (b) terms and conditions of appointment thereof, including the salaries and other fringe benefits drawn, and
- (c) official missions he undertook during his term of office, including the total amount
- (d) of money paid out thereto in terms of air tickets, *per diem* allowances and other facilities extended thereto.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **EBENE CYBER CITY - LESSEES**

**(No. B/636) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the Ebene Cyber City, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the number of plots of land thereat which have not yet been developed, indicating in each case the -

- (a) name of the lessee thereof;
- (b) date of allocation thereof;
- (c) project submitted therefor, and
- (d) quantum of money deposited therefor.

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that, as at date, 12 plots of land at Ebene Cyber City have not been developed yet. I am hereby tabling all the information requested for by the hon. Member.

The list of companies/entities are –

- Mauritius Post Ltd.
- Cell Plus
- Mauritius Telecom
- Burford Investments
- State Bank of Mauritius
- Kingsgate Holding Ltd.
- Centreview Investment Ltd.
- Ebene Car Park Ltd.
- Cyberplex Ltd.
- B & S Park Ltd
- Indian High Commission

- IBIZA Investment Ltd.
- Centreview Development Ltd (GAMMA).

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In reply to Parliamentary Question B/90 of 24 February 2015, I drew the attention of the then Minister to the chaotic situation within the cyber city area on these State lands with regard to illegal parking and hawking, and the then Minister stated that he was going to follow up and take immediate action. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what is the situation presently? What action has been taken, because this chaotic situation is still prevailing at the Ebene Cyber City?

**Mr Bhadain:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I do agree with the hon. Member that there is a parking problem in the Cyber City and there is a Committee which has been set up which I chaired myself with the representatives of BPML and other organisations to address this issue. So, one of the issues which is being looked at is whether BPML can come up with a parking tower which is going to sort out the problem in the long-term. But, in the meantime, there are alternative solutions which are being worked on. I will inform the House accordingly as soon as these are implemented.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** To pick up from the last question which was put by hon. Bhagwan, there is a parking problem indeed and I am happy the hon. Minister himself recognises that. If memory serves me correctly, only recently a company was allotted a plot of land there and the previous regime had approved that a parking problem is real and the issue was to put up a parking tower at their cost in order to satisfy those urgent requirements of proper parking facilities, in order for pavements to be set free and for pedestrians to walk around in a more secure manner. What has happened to that particular issue? Is that project going to go ahead soon, if the hon. Minister could please clarify matters?

**Mr Bhadain:** Well, Madam Speaker, I don't have all the details, but I can say on the list that there is a company called Ebene Car Park Ltd., No. 7 on the list which has been tabled. Probably this is the project that the hon. Member is referring to. I am not aware as to why they have not started their activities, but I do know, as I said before, that BPML is looking into the building of a parking tower itself and also the hawkers' problem, looking at one of the sites where all the hawkers can be moved to that one site with an infrastructure put

in there so that everybody who has to go and purchase food can actually go there, rather than having all the hawkers all across Ebene. At the same time, BPML is also looking at the cleaning up of all those plots of land where there are bushes which have grown over one metre high and it does not look nice at all.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** In my PQ No. B/90 of 24 February, I made mention of a Report of a Ministerial Committee where several shortcomings were found, especially with regard to the previous Chairperson - the previous Mr D.N. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what action has been taken, whether any Police action has been taken concerning Mr D.N., Executive Chairperson of the BPML and what is the situation now?

**Mr Bhadain:** I don't have this information at this present moment in time, Madam Speaker, but I think everybody is aware as to the abuses which had taken place in BPML prior, by the previous regime and Mr D.N. who had been heading BPML at that time. I am sure that the enquiry which has been referred to the Police must be in progress. I also asked BPML to look at certain issues which they are currently looking at because we are also the Ministry of Good Governance, and once we have further details on that we will inform the House accordingly.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** One of the main problems which was brought to light was the land speculation where names were put and then removed on lands which were supposed to be leased. Can the hon. Minister inform the House - he has given us a list - apart from land which has been vested to the Indian High Commission, whether these companies, which have been given land, have been given a time limit to develop these lands and what are the actions which are being taken to prevent further cases of land speculation within the Cyber City area?

**Mr Bhadain:** Yes, I am aware, Madam Speaker, that under the previous regime there were a lot of extensions which were granted to these companies after the deadline had passed. On many occasions, those leases have been renewed again and again. I have asked BPML to look into that, now that we have a Government which is moving in line with all best practices and good governance and to tell these people: 'look, you have to start construction, if you don't start, then we will have to take the land back. We have other things to do. We are moving to Highlands now.'

**Madam Speaker:** Last question, hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Jhugroo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister confirm with regard to parking space whether all the promoters who constructed huge buildings there did abide with the rules and regulations that are governed before issuing the building and development permit?

**Mr Bhadain:** I don't think they have. I know that there are certain rules in terms of the height of the buildings and also the colour of the buildings. There should have been a harmony in the Cyber City, but under the previous regime some people have painted the buildings whatever colour they wanted, and they have developed universities and so many other things which were not meant to be in a Cyber City where you have an intelligent building, you have fibre optics facilities and which was meant to be a Cyber City. But, hopefully, this is not going to happen with the new project that this Government is going to do - which is in Highlands.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** I have one last supplementary, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question! I think this question...

**Mr Bhagwan:** One last, because...

**Madam Speaker:** No! Hon. Bhagwan, I have given everybody the chance to ask a question. You have asked so many questions. I think it is fair for all those whose questions are on the agenda to have a question. Next question!

### **BATS POPULATION – CULLING**

**(No. B/637) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to bats, he will state the urgent measures taken to prevent the disastrous effects thereof on fruits, especially on mangoes and litchis.

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, let me first of all thank the hon. Member for having brought this question to this House. It shows that the damages caused by fruit bats are a matter of concern to all of us.

As a matter of fact, my Ministry has been receiving loads of complaints from fruit growers regarding the significant damages caused by fruit bats in commercial orchards and more significantly in backyards which mainly affect mango and litchi production.

According to reports from the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI), fruit damage recorded for the year 2014 for litchi reaches as high as 73% in orchards whilst damage caused to mango is estimated up to 42% in backyards.

I am also informed that the fruit bats have now started to affect some banana plantations.

My Ministry has, in fact, been registering complaints from fruit growers since 2006. In that year, action was taken to reduce the bats population through a controlled culling on selected private orchards. However, the culling was done between 16.00 hours to 18.00 hours but did not prove effective given that fruit bats normally fly at night.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Seeruttun:** In 2009, a bird net fruit protection scheme was introduced whereby the price of bird net was subsidised up to 75% by Government. Each grower benefitted from the scheme for a maximum of 10 bird nets. This scheme is still ongoing and as at to date, a total of 4,449 applications were entertained for a total amount of Rs29.5 m.

However, despite the measures taken to protect fruit plantations from bats, the damages caused are increasing. This is explained mainly by the significant increase in the bats population during the last years.

The Mauritian fruit bat is a species endemic to Mauritius only and was in the early 1970s classified as “critically endangered”. With the gradual increase in the bats population over the years, the status was down listed to ‘endangered’ and is presently classified as ‘vulnerable’ by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

A survey carried out in 2010 estimated the bat population at 55,000. The latest survey carried out by the National Parks and Conservation Service in November 2013 indicated that

the population has increased to around 90,000 and the population is likely to have increased further during the last two years.

The bat population is normally controlled naturally through strong cyclones. As we have not been visited by strong cyclones during the past decade, the bat population is continuing to grow and may have reached a pest level. In view of the huge economic losses being incurred by fruit growers, bold and urgent action is required to reduce the bat population and hence reduce the damages caused to fruits.

Government has, on Friday last, agreed to a campaign being launched as from the mid-October for the controlled culling of bats in targeted farms found outside residential areas. The exercise will be carried out by the Special Mobile Force in collaboration with the National Parks and Conservation Service, the Veterinary Services of my Ministry and the FAREI. The culling will take place over a period of three weeks, after which the situation will be assessed and the strategy reviewed. All measures will be taken to ensure that the existence of the fruit bat is not threatened and, in this regard, a monitoring committee under the Chair of the Permanent Secretary has been set up to look into all modalities for the culling exercise.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that the damages caused to fruits in orchards is less than that caused in backyards and one of the reasons is that the installation of nets is extremely difficult on tall trees found in backyards and tree owners are very reluctant to prune their trees as this would reduce production of fruits for the first three to four years.

My Ministry is conducting a sensitisation campaign island wide to encourage fruit growers and members of the public to prune their trees for a maximum use of bird nets. They are also being advised to plant dwarf varieties of fruit plants which are less susceptible to be attacked by bats. Moreover, our native forests which are primary roosting and feeding sites for bats are being increased and appropriate fruit trees such as Jack Fruit, mangoes and guavas are being planted to provide food for bats.

Madam Speaker, the measure which Government will be implementing, i.e. the culling of bats, may attract criticisms from conservationists at both local and international levels. While we are conscious of the need to protect a threatened species and to fulfill our obligations vis-à-vis international conventions, mainly the Convention on Biological Diversity, we cannot afford to maintain the *status quo* and continue to see fruit growers

suffering considerable losses for consecutive years. I hope that the public will not get carried away by the criticisms and will appreciate that by this action, we are ensuring that fruits will be available in sufficient quantity and at reasonable prices during the forthcoming fruiting season and at the same time ensuring that the endemic bat species does not disappear in the long run by taking all necessary precautions.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Minister for the action which he has initiated because we have seen, as rightly stated, that during the past years, this question of nets has not given the result that was expected. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether in this venture of using the Special Mobile Force, the assistance of the Minister of Environment and his Ministry has been sought because there are conventions where the Minister of Environment...

*(Interruptions)*

...can be involved?

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, it is indeed very true that the hon. Minister and the Ministry of Environment is also involved in that....

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Seeruttun:** ... particular issue and I can inform the House that we have had discussions over that issue and he is very willing to help and I am sure his contribution will be a very great value to the success of that particular exercise.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** I hope the hon. Minister won't use a machine gun and the helicopter.

*(Interruptions)*

Can the hon. Minister inform us about the criticisms which we can have? Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the Mauritian Wildlife Society and the international Wildlife Foundation have been informed of the problem of Mauritius?

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, indeed, we have had discussions with the people from the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and also we have written to the international organisations and, as you can expect, they are here and their mandate is to protect and for the conservation of protected species. So, they are very reluctant to accept that kind of decision, but we have to, unfortunately, resort to that kind of decision because with the amount of bats in existence in this country at the moment, it has passed the level of being 'endangered' to the level of 'being a pest'. So, that is why we are taking that kind of decision.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Minister at least inform these people that it is allowed when these bats have become a pest? So, it is allowed for national convention that they be removed as we have had the problem of rhino in Kenya. Can the hon. Minister also inform the House of the action that would be taken by the SMF and so on as from October or November? Can he, at least, give a timetable to the population, especially those fruit growers who would earn their living at the end of December through the sale of these fruits? Can these people be enlightened of the calendar of activities of the SMF?

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, as I said in my earlier reply that this exercise will start in mid-October. A committee is already in place to look at how we are going to go forward with that exercise and it is going to last over a period of three weeks and to see how that kind of exercise is effective. We expect to reduce this population by 20%. So, we expect to mobilise enough resources so that within the three weeks that we have set, we are able to attain that target.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister for his detailed answer. I was just wondering when he talked about the sensitisation campaign, whether that includes taking to the air, going in a helicopter and looking at the bats closely.

*(Interruptions)*

Because I guess this is a detailed appreciation from the air following the good footsteps of hon. Dayal.

*(Interruptions)*

Is that what it was about or will it take you further higher up? I don't know!

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member is trying to be funny, I am not trying to be funny with regard to an issue of such importance especially for growers and consumers.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

**Dr. Sorefan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*(Interruptions)*

The hon. Minister has mentioned subsidies being renewed to the tune of 75% for the nets and he has talked also for long-term to reduce the population of bats. This is very good, but it is long-term. But the short-term, right now, we are talking on nets, is the hon. Minister aware or has his Ministry got the information that the bats are cutting the nets and this year, I learn, that the bats have got teeth?

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, like I just, in my earlier reply, stated that we have seen that even with the Bats Net Scheme, the losses have been on the increase, it shows clearly that the scheme has not worked. That's why we are coming up with the decision to cull bats.

**Madam Speaker:** Last question, hon. Bhagwan.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. Minister must be aware that the whole population is concerned because we have fruit trees. The hon. Minister has informed us about *les craintes de certaines organisations*. Can I ask him if the population could be sensitised, through the MBC or radio, by arranging for programmes, at least, to further inform them what is being done in the interest of one and all?

**Mr Seeruttun:** I take good note of that particular remark and I am sure the committee will look into that as well.

## **SOLAR WATER HEATER SCHEME – REGISTRATION EXERCISE**

**(No. B/638) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the Solar Water Heater Scheme, he will state the number of applications received during the last registration exercise therefor, indicating –

- (a) the number thereof which have been approved and granted;
- (b) the budget earmarked therefor, and
- (c) when the next registration exercise will be held.

**Mr Dayal:** Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, the last registration exercise for the Solar Water Heater Scheme was held on 11 and 12 July 2015.

27,750 applications were received during this exercise.

16,480 applications have been approved and grants are being disbursed as follows –

- Rs10,000 to 11,480 households earning less than Rs25,000 per month;
- Rs5,000 to 5,000 households earning more than Rs25,000 per month.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, an amount of Rs175 m. has been approved for the New Solar Water Heater Scheme and I thank the hon. Minister for that.

As regards part (c) of the question, my Ministry is presently attending to those who have already applied and based on the processing of all applications a decision will be taken for the next registration exercise.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Can I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that during the last exercise, old people had to queue up for a very long time and this has been a very difficult and tiring exercise for all those who have applied and Finally, not all of them have received their grant for the application that they have made?

**Mr Dayal:** I am aware of the situation, but then Mr Bhadain gave directives. He had information at the material time to take action thereat because he was responsible for that exercise as the Chairman. I can assure the hon. Member that timely intervention was done so that each and every one queuing was registered. That exercise was carried out, but then to make sure that next time we won't have this type of problem, I have directed the committee to look after other avenues in this connection.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Madam Speaker, now, we just heard the hon. Minister stated that Mr Bhadain was in charge of the operation. Concerning the complaints that were received against the suppliers of the solar water heaters, may I know whether the hon. Minister has some statistics regarding how many complaints have been received against accredited suppliers and what has been the outcome of any inquiry?

**Mr Dayal:** I need notice of this question.

**Mr Mahomed:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister what are the measures that are being taken to ensure that those who have benefitted from the solar water heaters actually get them connected and running, because its connection is also quite costly.

**Mr Dayal:** Rightly so, we are aware of this problem. Based on previous arrangements where we have found that the regime before us did not attend to the malady of this system, I am curing that system in a way, whereby I am making sure that we have a committee looking after the installation and the maintenance in a very timely manner.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has inspectors who are qualified in technical matters to see to it that those listed companies that supply the solar water heaters do supply them as per the specification listed in his Ministry to the beneficiaries? I understand they do fiddle inside the appliance and they are not providing the required appliance to the beneficiaries.

**Mr Dayal:** Madam Speaker, specific attentions are given to the fact that the appropriate equipment is installed based on specifications and we have, at the level my Ministry, staff dedicated for this exercise.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** May I ask the hon. Minister what is the eligibility criteria for an accredited supplier and also for the list of suppliers, whether any sanction has been taken against those who have default.

**Mr Dayal:** This is being tackled at the level of the authority mandated to look after the whole process.

*(Interruptions)*

I think everybody knows it.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea, your question is very specific. I think the question which has just been asked is outside the ambit.

**Mr Dayal:** Just to clarify matters, Madam Speaker, it is Mr Bhadain from the DBM with his staff.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, hon. Mrs Monty!

***ZONE D'EDUCATION PRIORITAIRE HOT MEAL PROJECT -  
IMPLEMENTATION***

**(No. B/639) Mrs M. C. Monty (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* Hot Meal Project, she will state where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, indicating the time frame set thereof.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that hot meals were being provided to pupils of the ZEP schools as from January 2013. However, following a case of food poisoning which occurred at Bambous Government School on 07 February 2013 and an analysis effected by the laboratories of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life which showed presence of E-Coli beyond acceptable norms in some samples of meals taken, it was then decided to suspend the provision of hot meal in all ZEP schools.

Subsequently, alternative arrangements had been made in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, for pupils of the ZEP schools to be provided with bread, butter, cheese, fruit and this was later supplemented with biscuits and fresh fruits. This arrangement is still in place to date.

Madam Speaker, the security and health of our pupils is of utmost importance and taking this into account, my Ministry has decided to invest the schools with proper infrastructure and facilities so that provision of hot meal can be resumed in salubrious conditions and that all necessary sanitary and hygienic precautions are taken at every step in the production, storage, handling and distribution of a hot meal to our children.

In this regard, a pilot project involving four ZEP schools, namely Bois des Amourettes Government School, Cascavelle Government School, Pointe aux Piments Government School and Aimé Cesaire Government School were undertaken where kitchens and eating areas will be constructed on the school premises.

Construction works have already started at Cascavelle Government School and Bois des Amourettes Government School and are expected to be completed by December 2015

and February 2016 respectively. For the construction of kitchens of the remaining two schools, same is still at the tendering stage.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry is working out an implementation plan in respect of the four pilot schools for the supply of hot meals under appropriate health and sanitary conditions.

Madam Speaker, based on the feedback received from the pilot project, same will be replicated in other ZEP schools as far as possible. Other options would be envisaged for the provision of hot meals in schools where space is not available to put up additional infrastructure. The hot meal programme will resume once all the conditions for the provision of such meals under acceptable sanitary and hygienic norms and standards are complied with.

**Mr Baloomoody:** Can the hon. Minister confirm that there is a pilot scheme for school which is working now? Are they being provided with hot meal?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** As I have just mentioned, Madam Speaker, works are still on and they are expected to be completed by December 2015 in one school and in 2016 in the other school and in the other two schools tendering procedures are on.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister indicate to the House whether she has an idea of the cost that would be involved in terms of providing the hot meals only to the ZEP schools?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** In fact, the amount that had been planned to be used was Rs75 per student for 180 days. So, it will come to around Rs130 m.

**Mr Baloomoody:** The hon. Minister is talking about the structure in the school, but can I know from the hon. Minister who will prepare the food and who will deliver the food to the children?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I have just mentioned, Madam Speaker, that we have to make sure that the providers will satisfy all the requirements, namely the MS133HACCP standard by the Mauritius Standards Bureau to cater for the food and food related supplies.

**Mr Baloomoody:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the Parent-Teachers Association will be taken on board for the preparation of the meal and for the supply of the meal?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Presently, it is a decentralised system whereby the PTAs are involved in the choice of the food providers. However, when it will come to hot meals, we will have to ensure that the sanitary and hygienic conditions are met.

## MBC - NEWS DEPARTMENT - POSTS

(No. B/640) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the News Department of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) name of the incumbent of the post of Head thereof, indicating the terms and conditions of employment thereof and;
- (b) number of Chief Editors and news editors/journalists posted thereat respectively, indicating in each case, the;
  - (i) names;
  - (ii) date of appointment, and
  - (iii) terms and conditions of employment thereof.

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) that Mr Parsadee Jugdish Jatoo, Desk Coordinator (formerly Chief News Editor/Desk Coordinator), has been assigned as Director of News of the MBC as from 22 May 2015 by the then Director General, Mr V. K. Preetam Parmessur. There is no 'Head of News' in post as such - the post of Director of News has been advertised and will be filled within a matter of days.

The terms and conditions of employment are as set out in the Pay Research Bureau Report 2013.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, there is no post of Chief Editor and News Editors/Journalists at the Corporation. With the PRB Report 2013, the new appellations are as follows -

- Desk Coordinator – formerly Chief News Editor/Desk Coordinators
- *Journaliste Reporteur D'Image* – formerly News Editor and Senior News Editor

Madam Speaker, I will table a list of all the journalists who work at the MBC as requested by the hon. Member. I am informed that it exceeds 69 journalists who have all been

recruited in the past because since this Government is in power nobody was recruited at the MBC, but I will table the information in due course.

**Mr Bhagwan:** *Carapate change lichien.*

**Madam Speaker:** Please refrain from making these remarks from a standing position.

**Mr Bhagwan:** This is a fact.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Madam Speaker, coming to the news department of the MBC, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, as Minister, and being given that his Permanent Secretary acts as Chairperson of the MBC/TV, he is satisfied that the MBC/TV is doing what it should be done to give a fair and balance reporting of all the political news activities in its 7 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. news daily and whether there is no discrimination on behalf of the Opposition party politics?

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, we are doing our utmost best to achieve that level of fairness. In fact, since the Director General of the MBC, services were no longer required, there has been a new methodology which we have tried to put in place with regard to news broadcasting and even for covering the activities of Ministers, PPS and even representatives of different Constituencies. There has been a methodology which has been put in place in terms of assessing the news worthiness for the public to know really whether a particular issue is of concern to them and then this is broadcasted on TV. Now, we are trying to change things, we are trying to make things better. We know how things were done in the past, not only under the Labour Government, but since MBC has existed, we know how it has worked. Now, we are also advertising for the posts of Director General, Deputy Director General, Director of News; this is new. It has never been done, it is innovation and we do hope that we will get the successful candidates with the required level of competence, we will take the MBC into a different dimension in terms of bringing them in line with best practices as we have worldwide in developed countries. Of course, there are improvements to make, people who have been trained to operate in a particular manner are not going to change overnight. This is not the on/off *taquet* which has to be pressed ...

*(Interruptions)*

and then everything is changed. It is not like that. So, there is a whole process of training people, of getting them to understand the new concept. It is a paradigm shift and it will happen, but it will happen with time, with the new team in place who will basically do the job as they should and I believe it is going to work like everything else. This is what this Government is trying to do.

**Mr Bhagwan:** The hon. Minister has talked of *taquet* and on and off. Can the hon. Minister inform us whether his office where he has his Chairperson in his SICOM Building, Gooljaury Tower, whether this on and off cutting of the political broadcasting of the different political parties, how can the hon. Minister explain to the House that at the 6.00 p.m. news, you have one type of news which is being given, broadcasting of one activity of one political party, the MMM and then at 7.00 nothing and at 7.30 another news item? Is this the new methodology of the MBC/TV under your direction as Minister and your Chairperson who is your Permanent Secretary?

**Mr Bhadain:** Well the Permanent Secretary ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Please don't interrupt the hon. Minister, allow him to reply, if he wants to reply because you are diverting away from the question.

**Mr Bhadain:** Just to inform the ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan please!

**Mr Bhadain:** Madam Speaker, there are a number of initiatives which are being put in place ...

*(Interruptions)*

Of course, things are going to improve going forward, hon. Uteem was invited in a programme on BAI. I understand my ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** May we have some order please!

**Mr Bhadain:** *Non, du tout. Pas vrai sa. Pas coze menti, demand Reza. Zot ine faire un joli programme. Pas coze menti. Tout dimoune ine guetter.*

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Minister, can you come back to your reply please!

**Mr Bhadain:** Just to say also, Madam Speaker, it is good for the House to know that the hon. Member himself was invited at the MBC programme with hon. Minister Dayal on Environment and he refused to go. But the new processes, the new methodologies, the new procedures are being put in place. The MBC will indeed become one of the best TV stations in this part of the world, I have no doubt about it.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Mohamed:** The hon. Minister has talked about the best TV station that it has to become in the world and I hope so, we all hope so. Could he consider the possibility of another methodology which would be to ensure that there are no ties between himself, his Ministry and the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation in that you have a Civil Servant from his Ministry who is chairing at this moment in time the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and this is the very same person who is going to chair the Board at the time of appointment of those vacancies that have been publicised? So, there is clearly no independence. What I humbly suggest is for good governance - and he knows better than I do, I am sure. Maybe, a humble suggestion would be that he cuts the tie and then the picture would be perfect.

**Mr Bhadain:** I can assure the hon. Member that the Chairman of the Board of the MBC is not going to form part of the panel which is going to recruit the Director of News and all these other people who are there.

Madam Speaker, efforts are being made. We all know what we are talking about when we talk about how things have been happening at the MBC. It is not a secret. *Un secret de polichinelle*. We know what the Labour Government has done to the MBC and how it was being used as Gestapo tool. Now things are being changed; things will be changed. I think the hon. Member, himself, knows that efforts are being made and that these efforts will be fruitful going forward. I have no doubt!

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Rutnah, you have a question?

**Mr Rutnah:** Would the hon. Minister agree with me and confirm to the House that, in fact, there was an established culture for the last nine years or so at the MBC to broadcast without any impartiality insofar as political news were concerned and in doing so, those people who were at the time Editors and News Editors and members of the Board are still in this regime, same Editors, same journalists with the same endemic culture, and that this Government...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Rutnah, ask your question!

**Mr Rutnah:** And that this Government is doing everything...

**Madam Speaker:** Don't make a speech!

*(Interruptions)*

Don't interrupt the hon. Member! Please, order! Order, I said!

*(Interruptions)*

Please, ask your question! Don't make a statement!

**Mr Rutnah:** And this Government, Madam Speaker, is doing everything possible to bring MBC back to its...

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Rutnah, what is your question? Ask your question!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Rutnah:** That this Government is doing everything to bring back the old glory that MBC had.

**Mr Bhadain:** Absolutely. Madam Speaker, as I have already stated to the House, there are...

*(Interruptions)*

898 people who are working at the MBC right now. Since December 2014 to date, ten persons had their employment terminated, which basically means that the 800 odd number of people who are working there were appointed before. The hon. Member is absolutely right.

So, all the News Editors and everybody who are there are people who were working before. Now, it is absolutely true to say also that we are doing everything to bring the MBC in line with best practices. We will continue to do that.

**Madam Speaker:** Last question on this issue, hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Since the hon. Minister has mentioned my name, I was invited supposedly by the MBC.

*(Interruptions)*

I say supposedly. I don't take any instructions with Mr Joy Neeraye! Let me tell your friend! So, can ...

*(Interruptions)*

*'To pa ti la! De suite! To telephone exister.'*

Madam Speaker, since the hon. Minister has mentioned my name, that I was supposedly invited to participate in a programme, let it be known to the public through this National Assembly that we are not going to participate in any manipulated programme under the Bhadain Broadcasting Corporation. This should be...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please!

*(Interruptions)*

I am going to suspend the session if there is no order! Hon. Bhagwan!

*(Interruptions)*

I am suspending the session!

*At 3.55 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 4.38 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair*