

MASTER M. T. I. J. – DEATH - INQUIRY

(No. B/1) **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 the death of late master M. T. I. J. whose dead body was found on or about 10 December 2014, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand in relation to the inquiry carried out thereinto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 10 December 2014, after having received information on a dead body at Beau Songes, Police officers of Bambous Police Station and officers from different units within the Police went on the site. The dead body was thereafter conveyed to mortuary at Candos Hospital for autopsy.

On the same day, the corpse was identified as that of M.T.I.J.

Autopsy carried out revealed the cause of death as being “*incised wounds of neck*”. The case was thereafter referred to the Major Crime Investigation Team for enquiry. As at 06 February 2015, some eight persons have been interviewed and some items have been secured for examination purposes. The investigation is still being pursued by the Police.

Once the investigation is completed, the Police will refer the case file to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether in this case despite there have been eight persons who have been interviewed any person has been arrested pursuant to the case?

The Prime Minister: No, I don't think anybody has been arrested. They have all been interviewed and after interview they have been allowed to go.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister if he can request the Commissioner of Police to convey to the family of the deceased person any progress of the enquiry so that they are reassured that the enquiry is being done because up to now the Police has not communicated any information to the deceased person's family.

The Prime Minister: Well, the members of the family should try to get the information from the Commissioner of Police.

MINISTRIES - ADVISERS/PRESS ATTACHÉS – APPOINTMENT

(No. B/2) 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 Advisers/Press Attachés employed on a contract basis and attached to each Ministry, since July 2005 to date, he will give a list thereof, indicating in each case –

- (a) their qualifications;
- (b) their areas of responsibility;
- (c) their salaries and any other allowances drawn;
- (d) their terms and conditions of appointment, and
- (e) the make and model of Government car put at their disposal.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the information sought by the hon. Member is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as the exercise is completed.

Nevertheless, I can already confirm that the number of Advisers employed by the Government will be far smaller in comparison to the number employed by the previous Government. For example, in my own office, prior to the last general elections, there were 21 Advisers in post, compared to only two who are so far in employment.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister confirm whether the number of advisers - which is good news that there will be less and we welcome that - would there be less advisers at the Ministry of Finance as opposed to the previous Ministry of Finance?

The Prime Minister: We will have to have some patience; in due course, we will know.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I take up from what the Rt. hon. Prime Minister stated. He has stated that there will be less advisers. Can I ask him whether he will give instructions and there will be a new policy for Government to request the press attachés who have been appointed not to engage actively in political activities during office hours because they are paid from public funds? Would the Prime Minister issue new directives to that effect?

The Prime Minister: Directives have been issued that they should do their job.

Mr Bérenger: Since the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has said “only two” therefore, it is easy for him to give the names of these two privileged gentlemen or gentlewomen who have been appointed advisers since the last elections?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the names with me...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan last question!

Mr Bhagwan: Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister at least also request the press attachés to do their jobs with regard to public relations which is the work that they are supposed to do and not to accompany Ministers in their private visits in constituencies and also at the time they are receiving members of the public because this is when and where they are engaged in political activities?

The Prime Minister: I have not received such information.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea next question!

RIVIÈRE DU REMPART POLICE STATION - MR A.K.R. – DEATH

(No. B/3) 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 late Mr A. K. R., who passed away while in Police custody, on or about 30 July 2011, at the Rivière du Rempart Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the inquiry thereof has been reopened and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

ROCHES NOIRES – BUNGALOW – THEFT

(No. B/4) 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 case of the theft which occurred on or about 03 July 2011 in a bungalow reportedly belonging to a Very Important Person, at Roches Noires, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the inquiry thereof has been reopened and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS – MEASURES

(No. B/5) 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 new types of synthetic drugs on the market, including Wazabi, Black Mamba, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the quantity thereof, estimated to have been introduced in Mauritius, indicating the measures taken or that will be taken to prevent the proliferation thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the year 2013, criminal intelligence revealed that new types of Synthetic Cannabinoids made of new psychoactive substances have entered Mauritius. *Wazabi* and *Black Mamba* are the street names of two of those Synthetic Cannabinoids.

Since October 2013, these ‘Synthetic Cannabinoids and their derivatives’ are considered as dangerous drugs according to the First Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Act.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that 30 cases of sale or consumption of this new type of drug have thus been established by the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit. In all these cases, enquiry is still in progress and examination by the Forensic Science Laboratory is still being carried out to determine, *inter-alia*, the quantity of the synthetic drug secured so far.

Madam Speaker, it is indeed of paramount importance that our citizens are shielded from the consumption of not only the *Wazabi* or *Black Mamba*, but from any other incumbent or potential illicit drugs.

A series of measures are being adopted by the Police to prevent illegal drug proliferation which include, *inter alia*, the following -

- (i) the setting of an intelligence cell which enables the pro-active targeting of local and foreign drug dealers and their network;
- (ii) drug mapping where drug transactions, drug traffickers, pedlars and addicts are located;
- (iii) aerial patrols, undercover operations, intensive surveillance, raid and searches, and
- (iv) drug reduction programmes comprising sensitisation campaign in collaboration with NATReSA and other NGO's.

Moreover, Police is working in close partnership with the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to tighten security so as to prevent entry of drugs at the Port and airport.

Madam Speaker, my Government has a zero tolerance policy against the drug scourge. I have taken a commitment in the Government Programme to set up a Commission of Enquiry on Drug Trafficking and my Government shall pursue a relentless fight against traffickers, while ensuring that the seaport and airport are equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and technology to counter any attempt to introduce drugs in Mauritius.

Mr Bérenger: Since the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has made reference to the Commission of Enquiry to be set up, have the terms of reference been prepared or finalised or will they be discussed with the people concerned, the police, the NGOs and so on?

The Prime Minister: Yes, there is a committee working on it and there will be consultations.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In view of the ever changing scene of drugs in Mauritius and abroad like in this case of Synthetic Cannabinoids drugs, can the hon. Prime Minister consider the fact of creating a Drug Observatory like it is the case in many

countries abroad, so as to keep parents, educators and all those concerned with the prevention of drugs aware and to take precautions concerning new drugs entering the country?

The Prime Minister: We will take this into consideration.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: One last question! Madam Speaker, we have only three Rehabilitation Centres for drug addicts around the island. My question is whether consideration will be given to increase the number of Rehabilitation Centres under the aegis of the Ministry of Health because actually the number is too low and also they do not have the human resource and the logistics necessary to combat this *fléau*?

The Prime Minister: I hope the Minister concerned will look into it.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - PROCEEDINGS - LIVE BROADCAST

(No. B/7) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Rt. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly through television, radios and web tv, he will state if Government intends to –

- (a) set up a Select Committee to look thereinto or
- (b) study the draft report of the previous Select Committee on live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House of the Fifth National Assembly and implement its recommendations.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the House may be aware, a Select Committee of the National Assembly was appointed in April 2011, under the chair of hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, to consider the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House and matters ancillary thereto.

I am informed that 11 meetings of the Select Committee were held between April 2011 and January 2012 and I understand that the Committee has completed its assignment and a draft report already exists.

In the circumstances and in view of Government's determination to reinforce democracy in this country, it is proposed to set up a new Select Committee of the House to consider the draft report and to propose firm recommendations to the House.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what according to him will be the time frame that the Select Committee will be set up and whether he will give urgent consideration to set up the Select Committee, as soon as possible in order to prevent further abuse from the MBC/TV?

The Prime Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, it is our habit to act quickly.

Mr Bhagwan: Pending the setting up of the Select Committee, can I make a request to the Prime Minister to see to it that now that we are starting debates at the National Assembly, firm directives should be given to the MBC/TV - we have all been victims of one person at the MBC/TV - not to have the Opposition becoming *muet* every Tuesday?

The Prime Minister: Well, instructions have already been given to the MBC that they should be objective in whatever they do.

Mr Mohamed: Would the Rt. hon. Prime Minister consider the possibility of not holding a new Select Committee since there was broad consensus at the time that the Select Committee sat down and did its work? All parties in Parliament were represented under the able chairmanship of hon. Bodha – as he was then Minister of Government – and we were also honoured with the presence of hon. Obeegadoo, hon. Baloomoody, hon. Ganoo, hon. Bhagwan and many other Members from all sides of the House. Having said so, there has been broad consensus and I am also, Madam Speaker, happy to see that the hon. Minister Bodha is nodding and acquiescing that there was consensus. If that is the case, why go through a Select Committee again? If we really mean business, and I would like to see it happen, that we go faster than the previous Government has done.

In the past

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, you made your point. Do not make a statement, please! You made your point!

Mr Mohamed: Can we go faster than going for a Select Committee and wasting time ...

Madam Speaker: Please, allow the Rt. hon. Minister to reply.

The Prime Minister: Well, we should not go as fast as to knock ourselves down. We are in Government and we will do what we consider is right.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: I am picking up on the same question of hon. Mohamed. Has the hon. Prime Minister given thought to the possibility of coming up with a motion and asking this House to adopt, by way of resolution, the draft report which has been produced by the previous Select Committee?

The Prime Minister: We will come with the final report.

RELIGIOUS & SOCIO-CULTURAL FUNCTIONS – POLITICAL SPEECHES

(No. B/8) Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, following Government's decision not to take the floor during socio-cultural functions, he will state if consideration will be given for the introduction of legislation, as is the case in Singapore.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in my New Year address to the Nation, I indicated that relations between Government and socio-cultural organisations would henceforth focus on our partnership to address problems within our society, including the erosion of values. Obviously, we shall actively continue promoting together our rich and diverse religious, cultural and linguistic heritage.

The use and misuse by the former regime, of religious and socio-cultural platforms that had been converted into political platforms have been prejudicial to national unity. Hence, I decided to act, and the decision I announced in my New Year Speech is not only a Government decision but a political one as well.

The issue of bringing legislation to give effect to this decision does not arise. I expect politicians on all sides to be responsible enough to adopt this line of conduct.

Mr Bérenger: Of course, we agree fully that specially on religious occasions former Members of Parliament and former Ministers and so on used to make cheap political speeches. We all agree this is out of place but, can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister where does he draw the line? Because we must not write off the history of our country, the richness of our cultural heritage and so on. I understand only a few days ago, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister attended a dinner on the occasion of the *Fête du Printemps*. Well, it is a great occasion, and supposedly on the basis of what he has decided he makes no speeches. Where do we stop? I mean, next thing, we will stop making speeches on the occasion of the abolition of slavery of 02 November. I think this has not been really thought through. I don't think it is making speeches on such occasions that is wrong, it is making the wrong speeches on those occasions. So, can I appeal to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to rethink it. When we are dealing with the history of Mauritius, the richness of our cultural diversity and so on, I don't think it is progress for the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister and others to make decent, proper speeches on such occasions.

The Prime Minister: Well, unfortunately, insofar as socio-cultural societies are concerned we know what use has been made of them in the past and in most cases the politicians don't stick to the subject matter, they slip away and they do the most heinous type of politics on these platforms.

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for his answer. Madame la présidente, un sujet aussi délicat que la politique et le religieux mérite qu'on s'y attarde un petit peu plus. Est-ce que le Premier ministre, à la lueur de ce qu'il a déclaré, à la lueur de ce que le discours programme fait mention, c'est-à-dire de consulter la nation sur les sujets d'importance comme le rôle du religieux et de l'état, n'envisage pas un référendum pour élucider toutes ces questions ?

The Rt. Prime Minister: Anyway, I don't find it necessary.

Madam Speaker: Last question on this issue!

Mr Bhagwan: The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has given an indication of the new policy of Government to the nation, which I agree. Can I make a request to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to give directives to the MBC/TV? We have the politicians who are debarred from making speeches, which is a good thing, but at least the MBC/TV should not give voices to the presidents of the socio-cultural centers or persons who go on TV and make speeches and

which are covered live by the MBC/TV. It would defeat the purpose. On one hand, you have the politicians and, on the other hand, the representatives of socio-cultural centers who make political speeches live on the MBC/TV.

The Rt. Prime Minister: Well, it is for the MBC/TV to act on the merit of each case.

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MRS N. S. –

VIP LOUNGE FACILITIES

(No. B/9) Mr M. Hurreeram (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to access to the VIP Lounge, he will state if Mrs N. S. was granted such facilities and, if so, indicate -

- (a) the number thereof, since July 2005 to December 2014, and
- (b) if any official request was made therefor and, if so, in which capacity.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Airport Terminal Operations Ltd that Mrs N. S. was granted access to the VIP Lounge at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport on 71 occasions ...

(Interruptions)

Namely, 35 departures and 36 arrivals. I find it strange how is it 35 departures, but 36 arrivals between 21 September 2008 and 26 November 2014.

In regard to part (b) of the question, no official request was made for such facilities in favour of Mrs N. S. at the level of Home Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Office, which is responsible for processing of applications and grant of access to the VIP Lounge. However, such requests in respect of Mrs N. S. were made by the Private Office of the former Prime Minister directly to the Airports of Mauritius Ltd. or Airport Terminal Operations Ltd. These requests were not made through the normal channel. Thus, there is no information in which capacity Mrs N. S. benefitted from such facilities, but THE public know how and why she was granted such facilities.

Mr Hurreeram: Can we know whether the close relatives of Mrs N. S. were granted the same facilities at the VIP Lounge?

The Prime Minister: Well, if she was accompanied by her relatives, I am sure they must all have been granted. I don't have a list of facilities granted to families.

Madam Speaker: No question! The Table has been advised that the following PQs addressed to the hon. Prime Minister have been withdrawn: Nos. B/12, B/13 and B/14.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - JURISDICTION

(No. B/11) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW and 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 Human Rights Commission, he will state if Government intends to review -

- (a) the jurisdiction thereof, and
- (b) increase the number of staff thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the National Human Rights Commission was created in April 2001 under the Protection of Human Rights Act 1998. The Act was amended in 2012 to create a Human Rights Division; a Police Complaints Division; and a National Preventive Mechanism Division. These Divisions operate under the Protection of Human Rights Act; the Police Complaints Act; and the National Preventive Mechanism Act, respectively. The main purpose of the amendments was to broaden the mandate and functions of the National Human Rights Commission in line with international best practices.

However, as mentioned in the Government Programme 2015-2019, an independent Police Complaints Commission presided by a former Judge of the Supreme Court will be created to further consolidate the fundamental rights of our citizens.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am advised that the Commission is taking the necessary measures to increase its technical staff while the staffing of the new Police Complaints Commission will be looked into after its establishment.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he has taken cognizance of the report of the Human Rights Commission 2013, where the President, now, the Chairman, suggests that we should include new human rights, that is, the Economic Rights, the *abolition de la peine de mort* Rights, *le droit des travailleurs du sexe*, *le droit de la communauté LGBT*, whether Government intend to consider the suggestions, at least, of the Human Rights Commissioner?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, we are trying to do our best to appoint all the members of the Commission because I know for quite a long time there was only the Head

that was there and even his contract has expired, but still he was continuing. We mean business and we are going to do everything so that this Commission can do meaningful work.

POLICE FORCE – PROMOTIONS

(No. B/12) Mr S. Mohamed (First 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 the Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police information and table a list as to the number of –

- (a) Permutations;
- (b) Demotions, and
- (c) Promotions thereat, since 10 December 2014 to date, indicating, in each case, the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

VACOAS POLICE STATION – VEHICLE No. 6271 OCT 08 – REPORTED CASE

(No. B/13) Mr S. Mohamed (First 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 he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a case was reported at the Vacoas Police Station on 09 January 2015 in regard to a vehicle bearing registration number 6271 Oct 08 owned by the Tourism Authority and, if so, indicate who was driving the vehicle and in which capacity, and

- (b) the outcome of inquiry carried out thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

PARASTATAL BODIES - VACANCIES

(No. B/14) Mr S. Mohamed (First 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 parastatal bodies and other

institutions where the State is a majority shareholder he will state the vacancies thereof that will –

- (a) be advertised, and
- (b) not be advertised, indicating the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/19 in regard to the renegotiation of the Avoidance of Double Taxation Treaty; B/44 in regard to introduction of subject teaching at primary level addressed to the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Science Research; B/47 in regard to SICOM Tower addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms. PQ No. B/31 in regard to the project for the construction of a dam at Rivière des Anguilles addressed to the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport will now be replied by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities.

Hon. Ameer Meea, next question!

MOTORCYCLES - MODIFIED SILENCERS

(No. B/17) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Authority whether, in regard to motorcycles with modified silencers emitting loud noises on being run, he will state if he is aware of the increasing number thereof and, if so, indicate the measures that will be taken in relation thereto.

Mr Dayal: Madam Speaker, I am fully aware of this nuisance caused by increasing number of motorcycles with modified silencers.

I wish to inform the House that Section 83 (3) of the Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 2010 provides that –

“No person shall -

- (a) fit on the exhaust pipe of a motor vehicle any extension or other device likely to cause excessive or unusual noise; or
- (b) alter the silencer in such a way that the noise caused by the escape of the exhaust gases is made greater by the alteration.”

The same legislation also provides that any person who contravenes Section 83 (3) of the Act shall commit an offence and may be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs10,000.

To address the ongoing problem, the *Police de l'Environnement* carries regular checks and establishes contraventions against riders. For the years 2013 and 2014, a total of 1220 and for the month of January 2015, 78 contraventions have been established.

With a view to curbing down this offence drastically, the following measures will be implemented –

- (i) an *opération "Coup de poing"* will be undertaken by the 6 teams of *Police de l'Environnement* throughout the island for a period of 2 weeks;
- (ii) an awareness campaign will be undertaken to sensitise the public on the provisions of the law and associated fines;
- (iii) training will be given to the regular Police on the enforcement of the provisions of this piece of legislation to enable the whole Police force to take firm actions against contraveners in the future;
- (iv) the strength of the *Police de l'Environnement* will be also increased, and
- (v) provision for stiffer penalties including seizure of motorcycles will be also looked into.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, I, myself, have raised this issue in this House since 2012 and up to now there has not been any drastic change in this issue.

(Interruptions)

And also, I think this House will agree with me that this issue is a terrible nuisance and discomfort for all persons around the island but especially in densely populated regions.

So, therefore, I welcome all these measures that the hon. Minister just announced, but can I ask the hon. Minister that whether he - as he likes to say - as Raj Dayal, would personally monitor these operations on the field and also be there so as to bring results and whether he needs to wear his *simili cuir* jacket to do these operations with the Commissioner of Police?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, refrain from making comments! Ask your question!

(Interruptions)

Ask your question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Dayal: Madam Speaker, this Government is committed to take firm action where it is required and this is at the leadership level and at all levels. As a responsible Minister, I can give you the guarantee if we are going ...

(Interruptions)

Excuse me, Sir.

Madam Speaker, the point is very clear; we are going to see to it that all actions proactive, active, reactive will be taken in time.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Baloomoody: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that there would be an *opération coup de poing* regarding this issue.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Baloomoody: Regarding this issue, there would be an *opération coup de poing*, the hon. Minister has just mentioned. Can I ask the hon. Minister to ensure that this operation takes place at night because we know all those who have modified their motorcycles do venture in illegal rallies at night and this is where most disturbances are being caused?

Mr Dayal: The officers of the *Police de l'Environnement* work on a 24-hour basis by day and by night and your suggestion is taken on board.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister how many equipment exactly for monitoring noise that emitted by motorcycles does the *Police de l'Environnement* have; if he could give us the exact figure?

Mr Dayal: I need notice of this question, but just to tell you that the equipment that we have; they are functioning as per our requirements.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea! Last question!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Madam Speaker. According to a previous reply in 2013, it has been stated in this House that there has been a Technical Committee that has been set up at the Ministry of Environment so as to look in this matter and also that this Technical Committee found that there were two problems; one with the sound level meters and secondly, with modification to the law, that is, the law should have been amended. So, can I ask the hon. Minister what has happened to this Technical Committee and what has been its finding?

Mr Dayal: I need notice of this question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Next question! This has been sufficiently debated. PQ No. B/19, please! Hon. Uteem!

MAURITIUS/INDIA - AVOIDANCE OF DOUBLE TAXATION TREATY

(No. B/19) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the renegotiation of the Avoidance of Double Taxation Treaty between Mauritius and India, he will state where matters stand.

The Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms (Mr S. Bhadain): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that, discussions on the India Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty have been ongoing for a number of years to address concerns raised on the operations of the current tax treaty.

I understand that in May 2014, Mauritius had proposed the setting-up of special cells both in Mauritius and in India to fast track the renegotiation of the DTA. As a follow-up, the then Secretary to Cabinet led a delegation to India for the renegotiation.

Madam Speaker, the DTA is an instrument of critical importance for both Mauritius and India and has meaningfully served the interest both countries. We will shortly resume the renegotiation process in a spirit of fairness, equity and transparency and in line with all principles of good governance, whilst also taking into consideration the long-term economic interests of both countries.

We will create the appropriate conducive environment for the further development of Mauritius as an International Financial Services Centre.

The renegotiation of the DTA with India is now, Madam Speaker, being seen as an opportunity rather than a threat.

The forthcoming visit of His Excellency the Prime Minister of India will certainly facilitate this process.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Is the hon. Minister aware that in a written reply to Rajya Sabha in India, the hon. Minister of Finance, Arun Jaitley stated that India has made certain proposal for the revision of DTC to end round-tripping and other aspects. Mauritius is yet to agree to such revision. It would appear from the Indian side that the ball is on our camp. May I know from the hon. Minister what he is doing to hit back the ball?

Mr Bhadain: Absolutely, Madam Speaker, we are aware of the proposals and there is a committee both at the level of my Ministry and the level of the Ministry of Finance which is currently looking to the matter.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister whether any meeting of the joint working committee comprising of officers of Mauritius and India has been scheduled and if so, when?

Mr Bhadain: This is precisely what the committee is looking into at the present moment, Madam Speaker.

Mr Uteem: May I take it that as at today the hon. Minister is not in a position to tell us when he is going to have a new meeting and is he aware that time is running out. Only last week the Foreign Investment Promotion Board of India refused treaty to 23 FDI proposals including FDI proposals from Mauritius companies? So, whereas we are sitting here, India is taking action and denying treaty provisions to our FDIs.

Mr Bhadain: The committee is actively working, Madam Speaker, and we will certainly inform the House of any progress in due course.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

PORT LOUIS SOUTH & PORT LOUIS CENTRAL - STATE LANDS - ILLEGAL OCCUPATION

(No. B/20) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the State lands in Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, he will state if any illegal occupation thereof has been reported and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) state, in each case, the measures Government proposes to take in relation thereto.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, there are 181 squatters who have been identified by my Ministry in Constituency No. 2, Port-Louis South and Port Louis Central as follows –

Tranquebar - 82

Vallée Pitot	-	29
Vallé Pitot near Eid Gah-		67
Citadel	-	3

As regards part (b) of the question -

(i) squatters in the region of Tranquebar will soon be relocated to Point aux Sables where a housing project has been implemented together with the necessary infrastructure facilities;

(ii) for the squatters in the region of Vallée Pitot, upon my request, a survey and the registration of these squatters are currently being carried out. It is proposed to regularise those squatters in 'in situ' provided that safety and the eligibility criteria of my Ministry for the allocation of a building site lease.

(iii) regarding those squatters in Vallée Pitot near Eid Gah, lying within and alongside the proposed alignment of the Ring Road project, a committee comprising of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and my Ministry have tasked to look for other suitable sites in the region of Port Louis and Point aux Sables for relocation of these squatters, and

(iv) as far as the three cases of Citadel, the survey of the state land has been completed and the case of each squatter will be dealt with on a case to case basis.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I heard the hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned that there were only 82 cases of illegal squatters in Tranquebar. The number is actually far greater than this. The 82 cases concern only those who had been identified for relocation in Pointe aux Sables. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he will carry out a full survey and identify the exact number of squatters in Tranquebar and come up with solutions with regard to those above these 82?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, I have already mentioned that according to the information that I have, in Tranquebar, we have 82 cases that have been registered in my Ministry. Anyway, I am going to ask my officers to consider the suggestion of the hon. Member and definitely we are going to have a solution.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister refers to a number of squatters in the Vallée Pitot Eid Gah area. Is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware that there is a problem of landslide and that the officers from Japan Corporation has already issued warning that at any time some of these houses may be in a way crumbled down. In the light of the observations made by the Japanese expert, will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give an indication what Government intends to do for those people whose houses are at risk?

Mr Soodhun: According to the information that I have, we have already started an enquiry and with the collaboration of my colleagues, Minister of Environment, Minister of Social Integration and Minister of Public Infrastructure. We have already set up a committee with the Japanese experts to look into the case of Vallée Pitot and Chitrakoot. We have already set up a committee and very soon we are coming to a conclusion and we will have a solution.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned that some of the houses in Vallée Pitot may be affected by the Ring Road track. Is that still the case? Is the Government still going ahead with the Ring Road across Vallée Pitot?

Mr Soodhun: According to my information, yes.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

PORT-LOUIS - HAWKERS

(No. B/21) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to hawkers operating in Port Louis, he will state the –

- (a) number thereof, and
- (b) measures that will be taken to regulate the situation thereof.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, as soon as I took office one of my priorities was to look into the issues of hawkers in Port Louis and to come up with appropriate measures to address this problem.

In this context, I started consultation process with all major stakeholders namely the Market Traders Association, the Street Vendors Association and the Central Market Association with a view to obtaining the ideas and suggestions for a long-term, sustainable and workable solution to this issue taking into consideration the following factors –

- (i) the legitimate aspirations of those hawkers to continue their trade so as to earn a decent living to support their families;
- (ii) the qualm of the shop owners and the market traders who have time and again made representations to the effect that hawkers were operating at their doorstep and competing against them, and
- (iii) the judgement delivered by the Supreme Court in August 2012 ordering the City Council of Port Louis and the police authorities to take necessary measures to refrain hawking activities within 500 metres radius of the Central Market.

However the *Front Commun des Commerçants de l'île Maurice* which was invited did not respond positively.

I am informed that surveys were conducted by the City Council of Port Louis in the years 2009 and 2012 which revealed that around 1200 hawkers were operating along the various roads in the city.

I am further informed that two sites have already been identified at ex-CWA building, Decaen street and the Immigration Square for the relocation of the 1200 hawkers. I personally visited these two sites to assess their suitability in terms of the size, accessibility and availability of basic amenities. I am given to understand that according to a study carried out by the City Council of Port Louis in June 2013, the site at Decaen street can accommodate about 606 hawkers whereas the one at Immigration Square, 357 hawkers. But I am trying to see if we can accommodate more hawkers on these sites.

However, it is noted that major refurbishment works would have to be carried out at the ex-CWA building to make it functional and basic amenities such as covered stalls, toilet and parking facilities would have to be provided on these sites.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that these works will entail substantial investments and will take time for implementation in view of the procurement procedures. We believe that with the concerted efforts of all the parties, namely the City

Council of Port Louis, the Street Vendors Association and other stakeholders, this project can be implemented in about a year.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister mentioned that the building will take one year, may I know from the hon. Minister what action will be taken, if any, with regard to these hawkers now operating in Port Louis during that one year?

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, as you know, this problem has been going on for ten years or more. I have been here only for two months. I have started working on this project, Madam Speaker. It is going to take a bit of time if we are going to have a durable solution to this problem. I don't pretend I can solve this problem in a few months' time. It is going to take its time, but we are working on it to find a durable solution, Madam Speaker.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister said that he visited two sites and he mentioned only two sites. I am given to understand that, in fact, he visited three sites with the Lord Maire of Port Louis and others. So, what has happened to the third site that was visited and that is supposed to be included amongst the sites available. Secondly, the former Minister made a statement that the former Minister of Finance that made Rs171 m. available for that project. Is this still available?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, Madam Speaker. In fact, when I did the site visit, I walked from La Gare du Sud to La Gare du Nord. But, it was not just these two sites, there were a lot of sites on the way. A lot of roads were included. I did not mention each and every road specifically. So, we visited quite a bit of sites. That's No. 1. Secondly, you are right, there were Rs117 billion earmarked for the project, but, as I mentioned, we are working on these sites and that's going to take a bit of investment. The money is here, we are going to invest it to provide these new facilities to hawkers.

Mr Mohamed: The hon. Minister clarifies something. If the money is there provided for by the previous Government, if the sites are there provided for the previous Government, he is not telling the House, I hope, that the procurement process and the preparation and implementation of the previous Government's project to come with the solution will take a year! I am sure that he can find ways and means of being more reasonable with the time that it would take to implement the project, because this goes against the very policy of the hon. Prime Minister, they are going fast, because it is extremely slow.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, this problem has been there for ages. Nobody has been in a rush to provide the solution for the last ten years. Now they want me to provide solutions very quickly.

(Interruptions)

In no way! I am working on it. These sites have been identified. We are planning new project, better project than what was envisaged previously. That's why we are working....

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, just after assuming office, the hon. Minister made a statement to the effect that duty-free vehicle would be given to *marchands ambulants*. Can I ask the hon. Minister how this measure will be applied and what is the time frame for the application of such measure?

Madam Speaker: Excuse me! I don't think this question can be accepted, because the question is in regard to hawkers, the number thereof and the measure that will be taken to regulate the situation. Next question, hon. Lesjongard!

SAVANNE & BLACK RIVER - EDC HOUSES - ASBESTOS

(No. B/22) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the EDC houses in which asbestos is present, in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof that –
 - (i) have been pulled down, and
 - (ii) are still in place, and
- (b) the remedial actions that have been in respect thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that, in Constituency No. 14, there are 8 Cité EDC, namely Bel Ombre, Case Noyale, La Ferme, L'Embrasure, La Mivoie, Petit Bien, Surinam and Tamarin, comprising 479 housing units. Asbestos panels and corrugated iron sheets were used for their construction. The inhabitants of these housing estates are all owners of the housing units.

With regard to parts a (i) and (ii) of the question, I wish to inform that out of the 479 housing units,

- (i) 96 have been pulled down by their owners and have been reconstructed in concrete;
- (ii) owners of 330 housing units have carried out extension to their existing housing units using concrete materials;
- (iii) 45 housing units are in their original state without any extension. They are being properly maintained by their owners and are in good physical conditions, and
- (iv) eight housing units are in deplorable conditions, out of which four units are occupied and four units are unoccupied.

Madam Speaker, as for part (b) of the question, the inhabitants of these housing estates have been informed of the schemes available for the upgrading or the reconstruction of their housing units. Any house owner who either wishes to upgrade or reconstruct his housing unit may take advantage thereof. The facilities include -

- (i) assistance for the removal and carting away of asbestos wastes;
- (ii) grant, on a priority of consideration basis, for the casting of roof slabs or for the purchase of building materials through the National Housing Development Company Ltd.;
- (iii) subsidised loan facilities from the Mauritius Housing Corporation Ltd., and
- (iv) assistance from the National Empowerment Foundation for the construction of a housing unit.

Madam Speaker, the sensitization campaign on how to maintain the housing units and on facilities available for construction is an ongoing exercise undertaken by the officers of both the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and my Ministry. I shall personally effect a site visit to assess the situation *de visu*. Besides, I shall immediately request the dedicated Committee at the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to assess the situation in those EDC Housing Estates and to provide an update as well as indicate whether there is any immediate intervention which is required.

I can assure all my hon. Colleagues of No. 14 that we are going to effect a visit with all the hon. Members and with my officers with different Ministries. After our visit, if there is any action to be taken, you rest assured that I'll do it.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, I welcome the proposal of the hon. Minister and wish to reassure him that my colleagues and myself will be part of the visit whenever he carries the visit in Constituency No. 14. My immediate concern, Madam Speaker, is with regard to the extensions being carried to those houses. The Minister is aware and he stated in his answer that those houses belong to *cités* in that constituency and to poor families and very often they carry out extension works. Is he aware that whenever those families carry out extension works to those housing units, they are exposed to asbestos?

Mr Soodhun: I just mentioned that wherever there is an extension, they contact my Ministry which will do the needful with the Ministry of Health to assist people so that, at least, we can take the necessary precautions with the asbestos products. This is being done and this is going to continue to be.

Mr Mohamed: I thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister for his answers. One question that I would like to put is that there is a report that I have come across which is on the Internet, and I believe it was *à un moment commandité* at the time when hon. Lesjongard was himself Minister of Housing and Lands, that talks about the responsibility of Government in all sorts of removal of asbestos and the financial responsibility and liability of Government in such removal which all Governments have not taken up to now. Could he consider, therefore, the possibility of not only assisting in a passive manner but, financially being responsible, as that report said one should be for helping people in carting away asbestos from those houses and also, not to forget since I am on my feet, if you would allow me, Madam Speaker, that Constituency No. 13, the Cité Batimaraïsis....

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Member!

Mr Mohamed: ...is also concerned...

Madam Speaker: The question relates to Constituency No.14, let us stick to that.

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, I have already answered that we are already giving assistance and, if needed, yes. But, I have mentioned that my colleague from the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and I are going to work closely so that where

it is needed we are not going to refuse. It is not only just to bring the television to assist. We are going to help these people.

(Interruptions)

This is not our way just to go for publicity....

(Interruptions)

There are five years for election, it is not tomorrow.

Mr Ganoo: This is an issue which has been raised several times in this House. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister himself when he was Member of the Opposition asked a question, which I have in my hands. The solution to this problem is that, true it is that a few of these houses have been pulled down and rebuilt by the owners, some are in fair conditions, as the hon. Vice-Prime Minister just said himself but, the fact is that there are still many houses, not only in Constituency No. 14 but in other parts of the country which are still made of asbestos and in which our citizens are still living. We all know that this is a health hazard.

Madam Speaker: Question, please!

Mr Ganoo: In view of the fact that this is a health hazard, in view of the fact that the Truth and Justice Commission itself said that many housing estates have been constructed with asbestos, a toxic substance which is damaging to health and that these houses should be pulled down, and in view of the fact that the hon. Vice-Prime Minister himself, when he was a backbencher, asked a question if Government proposes to pull down these houses and build new ones free of charge - this is the question that we have asked to the previous Minister of the past Government very often - can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister come up with a special scheme for these old couples because most of them are old couples and they are still living in these asbestos houses? True it is, there are many schemes which are made available but, can he come up with a specific scheme to enable the people who are still living in asbestos houses...

Madam Speaker: You made your point, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: ... to pull down these houses once for all so that Mauritius can be free of asbestos?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, I am going to visit these houses and I am going to set up a Committee. Then, we are going to take this into consideration. I have already mentioned that we are going to give priority to all these houses. The hon. Member can rest assured together with all the hon. Members that we are going to sit down and put our heads together, be it Government or the Opposition, and come to a solution.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following Parliamentary Questions have been withdrawn....

(Interruptions)

Yes? Okay, one last question!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since Government raised the issue of a *plan* Marshall - I think it was during the celebration of the 1st of February - can Government give a guarantee to the House that they will include construction or reconstruction of such houses in that *plan* Marshall?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, I just mentioned that we have set up a Committee and the hon. Member is aware, as I have already mentioned, we are going to see to it that we are in a position to see what the situation is exactly and I have already set up an enquiry. After the enquiry, I will be able to know what decision we can take. But, the hon. Member can rest assured that this is not going to be neglected.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following Parliamentary Questions have been withdrawn: Nos. B/6, B/44, B/47. Hon. Members as a matter of courtesy I wish to inform you that the afternoon session will be chaired by the hon. Deputy Speaker as I am leaving on overseas mission. I now suspend the sitting for one and a half hour.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.32 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

JET SKI & SEA KART – LICENCES

(No. B/23) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the licences issued by the Tourism Authority for the operation of Jet Ski and Sea Kart around the island, he will state if his Ministry is envisaging the cancellation thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Tourism Authority that it has received five applications for the operation of jet ski for the period July 2013 to December 2014.

The Tourism Authority issued five Letters of Intent as follows -

- Sports Craft Enterprises on 25 July 2013, at Black River;
- Blue Shell Co. Ltd. on 23 July 2013, at Pointe aux Piments;
- North West Fun Ltd. on 23 July 2013, at Trou aux Biches;
- Watercraft Enterprises Co. Ltd. on 31 July 2013, at Pointe Jérôme
- Cap Nord Ltd. on 02 December 2014, at Cap Malheureux.

I am also informed that the Tourism Authority has issued Tourist Enterprise Licences and Pleasure Craft Licences to the following three companies -

- Blue Shell Co. Ltd., which started operations on 27 December 2013
- North West Fun Ltd., which started operations on 30 December 2013
- Sports Craft Enterprises, which started operations on 12 May 2014

The conduct of jet ski activities were subject to conditions imposed by the Tourism Authority and clearance from the Ministry of Fisheries. The licences of Blue Shell Co. Ltd and North West Fun Ltd were suspended on 30 December 2014 for non-compliance with the main conditions imposed by the Ministry of Fisheries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am further informed that the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands has on 30 January 2015 advised that with a view to reinforcing conservation of the marine eco system, it will not entertain any application for jet ski in Mauritius waters. The Tourism Authority has been requested to take note for compliance.

In regard to sea kart, I am informed by the Tourism Authority that six Letters of Intent were issued for the period February 2014 to January 2015, including one which was issued nine days before the General Elections. Subsequently, five were cancelled due to non-compliance with the conditions and withdrawal of applications. One Letter of Intent is still valid up to December 2015.

The Tourism Authority has issued a pleasure craft licence to Fun Adventure Ltd. which is valid until April 2015.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Fisheries has advised that the operation of Sea Kart can only be carried out outside the lagoon and excluding –

- (i) Identified potential aqua culture sites;
- (ii) Marine protected areas;
- (iii) Diving sites, and
- (iv) Dolphin watching sites.

The conduct of this activity is, therefore, being closely monitored and a decision thereon will be taken by the Tourism Authority at the appropriate time in the light of the advice of the Ministry of Fisheries.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we refer to the last part of my question, it deals with cancelling of those licences. I have heard the Deputy Prime Minister saying that objection has come from the Ministry of Fisheries. Do we understand that there is no clearcut policy from Government with regard to the use of jet ski and sea karts.

The Deputy Prime Minister: There is certainly a clear-cut policy with regard to jet ski. The Ministry of Fisheries has advised that it's no longer in favour of operation of jet ski in Mauritian waters. That is clear. Now the first two licences were suspended because they have violated the conditions imposed by the Ministry of Fisheries which had inspected them before their election, in fact, but they were suspended after the election. There remains a third operator which is in Black River which has not been suspended because they have not got any adverse report, so far. However, in view of the advice given or the opinion of the Ministry of Fisheries concerning operation of water ski, that file has been sent to the State Law Office for advice or for further action. In any case, it comes up for renewal in May. I must say that, as a matter of substance and also in the form, I am against what has happened, because of substance, I think that the jet skis are not appropriate for the environment, conditions in Mauritius. In the form that these were issued, they were issued in total secrecy, without any transparency at all.

Mr Lesjongard: From the reply of the Deputy Prime Minister, I understand that he is dead against the use of jet skis in our lagoons. Then, do I understand that Government will shortly take a decision to ban the use of jet ski?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Member should not put words in my mouth. I said that it is being reviewed in the light of the letter from the Ministry of Fisheries and once the review happens with the State Law Office, we will take a decision as to whether or not to renew the licence at Black River.

Mr Bérenger: At least, in the past, there was a policy when hon. Bodha was Minister, there was consensus, jet skis were banned. Take a decision. Why do we have to wait for a negative comment from the Ministry of Fisheries, Tourism Authority, those who will be appointed, revoked, replaced? Why not take a policy decision? Why not going back to the policy decision that was taken and ban it?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Ban it for future licences, of course, but the existing licences, you will understand, that it is different, in that the licence has been given with a question mark as to how the licence was given. We should not also do something that is illegal. It must be done following legal advice from the State Law Office and that is how we operate.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the Deputy Prime Minister confirm to the House, because from what he stated, no prior consultation was carried out with Ministries concerned, for example, the Ministry of Fisheries before the licences were issued?

The Deputy Prime Minister: No, no, it is not what I said. I said that the licences were issued, letters of intent, at least, were given in 2013. In fact, even a few days before the licences were issued, a question was asked to the Minister. He did not mention at all that the letters of intent had already been issued six months before. So, the whole thing was shrouded in secrecy. Therefore, there was no transparency and no chance for anybody else to have an application for these licences.

DOLPHIN & WHALE WATCHING - MEASURES

(No. B/24) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the activity of dolphin and whale watching, together with swimming with dolphins, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to whether –

- (a) it is conducted in a responsible and sustainable manner, and

- (b) whether he is aware of the dangerous and chaotic situation prevailing during the holding thereof and, if so, will he state the measures proposed to be taken in relation thereto.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, with regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that the Tourism Authority (Dolphin and Whale Watching) Regulations 2012 were promulgated in November 2012 with a view to –

- (i) ensuring that swimming with dolphins and whale watching activities are carried out in a responsible, orderly, safe and sustainable manner;
- (ii) disturbance to cetaceans is minimized, and
- (iii) the safety and security of swimmers and protection of cetaceans are ensured.

The regulations provide, *inter-alia*, that the activity is conducted during specified hours, pleasure crafts keep a reasonable distance from the cetaceans to prevent casualties/incidents by propellers, an insurance cover as well as services of life-savers, medical first aid kit and an oxygen kit are available at all times.

I am, however, informed that these regulations have met with much resistance from operators on the ground that they were costly to implement and are therefore not being fully complied with.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have placed the notion of quality in service delivery at the forefront of my agenda. I will, therefore, review the whole situation in the very near future and take measures as appropriate, in particular training of skippers, the observance of safety and security norms and well-being of the dolphins. Meanwhile, I have directed the Tourism Authority to make an assessment of the situation before deciding on the way forward.

Mr Lesjongard: I thank the Deputy Prime Minister for his reply. True it is that this activity attracts a lot of tourists, but he will agree that the way it is being carried out right now is in a very irresponsible and unsustainable manner. What we need to do is to supervise that activity. May I know what measures...

The Deputy Speaker: Please put the question.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, let me come to my question. You should give me some time to come to my question.

(Interruptions)

Je comprends ce n'est pas grave. Excusez-moi, M. le président !

Mr Lesjongard: What measures he is envisaging to take so that, in the meantime, these activities are carried out in a responsible and sustainable manner?

The Deputy Prime Minister: On this point, we have no issue, we are on the same wavelength. The activity should be encouraged because it is popular with tourists and also takes care of the livelihood of a number of people on that west coast. It should be carried on, but it should also be carried on in a way that it does not ruin our reputation with tourists, it does not endanger the dolphins and also it does not endanger the sea in which we are swimming or whatever with the dolphins. So, this whole thing has got to be taken into account, but it has taken a lot of time, there is a lot of resistance, but at some point of time, we will have to insist that everything happens according to the rules and regulations and according to what international practice recommends.

Mr Ganoo: If I hear the hon. Deputy Prime Minister properly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he said that he intends to conduct a review exercise of the whole situation, probably of the legislation also. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, in the review exercise that he is going to conduct, whether he will kindly have proper consultations with the different associations of pleasure craft owners so that a consensus might be eventually reached?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I, in fact, saw in a file that my predecessor had a lot of discussions with a lot of people, but could not reach consensus. So, hopefully, we can reach consensus, but at the end of the day, we will have to do what we have to do.

Mr Bérenger: Sir, I take it that the regulations referred to must have been prepared by the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Authority. Can I know who has the responsibility to supervise the application thereof and if it is the Coast Guard then we have a real problem. I know that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister himself criticised the Coast Guard sometime back, about a year ago. Rightly so! So, if it is, if I am right, we have a big problem and can I insist, therefore, that the Coast Guard - I think it is under the Prime Minister's control - that we must put our heads together? Otherwise the supervision will remain as it is, that is, dead!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the same issue that we have all over Mauritius in fact, the implementation of laws and regulations are sometimes haphazard, but I agree that we must ensure that once we have the regulations that they are in fact enforced and that is the issue. The enforcement of the regulations is the main issue.

EBENE LINK ROAD & VANDERMEERSCH STREET - CONGESTION

(No. B/25) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to road congestion along Ebene link road to Vandermeersch Round about and Vandermeersch Street, Rose Hill towards Beau Bassin, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if urgent measures will be taken under the Road Decongestion Programme to alleviate the hardship of road users thereat.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government is fully aware of the hardship of road users plying on the Ebène Link Road particularly between the roundabout on Julius Nyerere Avenue and that of Vandermeersch Street and along the Vandermeersch Street itself. In the past various surveys have been carried out by the Road Development Authority and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit and several options have been proposed.

However, the best option remains the construction of the A1-M1 road and bridge between Coromandel and Sorèze and as a connection to Port Louis to the completed Ring Road under the proposed Road Decongestion Programme. This will provide great relief to the traffic along Vandermeersch Street and its interchange with Ebène and Réduit.

However, in the meantime, the following mitigating measures are being considered –

- (i) A third lane will be created from the roundabout at Ebène Link Road with Vandermeersch Street to this junction with Malartic Street;
- (ii) Provision of a dedicated right turning lane from Vandermeersch Street and Malartic Street;
- (iii) Prohibition of vehicular traffic from Sivananda Avenue and Malartic Street into Vandermeersch Street;
- (iv) Traffic lights at the junction of Vandermeersch and Malartic Streets will be put off and the following junctions will be controlled by the Police –
 - (a) Junction of Larché Street and Malartic Street;
 - (b) Junction of R. Rouchecouste Street and Charles de Gaulle Street
 - (c) Junction of Port Louis/St Jean Road and Malartic Street.

- (v) Traffic from Royal Road, Rose Hill and proposing to join Vandermeersch Street will have the option of doing so through Reverend Lebrun Street.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these measures will be made operational during morning and afternoon peak hours only.

Mr Bhagwan: May I ask the Minister whether he had a fresh look since he has mentioned this question having a third lane along Vandermeersch Street from the roundabout of the CEB. I think the whole population of that area will strongly object to that because we have, I would say, the most popular Promenade Armand which people have been using for years. Once a Minister came there and we said we would have a *grève de la faim* there. So, I am sure the whole population of Rose Hill will strongly object to that, if he could review. Also, among the measures proposed by the Minister here I reiterate the issue of having a bypass, a small bridge behind the QEC. There have been surveys and site visits but, unfortunately, that area was not on the list of the decongestion programme. Can the Minister have a fresh look with his Officers to have this bypass behind the Ebène SSS to go near the Reverend Lebrun Street?

Mr Bodha: There are two observations, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. First of all, as regards the third lane, I have in fact raised this point and I have been told that the encroachment is going to be only on one metre. So, I do not think that the whole area as regards to ...

(Interruptions)

Okay, let us see what can be done then.

Second, as regard to the bridge, it is not a small bridge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have been told that, in fact, it is a major bridge. Anyway, in the light of what hon. Bhagwan has said, I am going to review the situation and I would be very grateful to him if he has any other suggestions and proposals because at the end of the day what we want is a better fluidity of the traffic.

Mr Bhagwan: Pending the proposal mentioned by the Minister, can I make a request to him? The measure proposed about putting Police Officers here and there has been on paper for years but, on the field, in fact, there is congestion the whole day. One day we will have a problem when somebody is sick and needs to go to hospital. Can the Minister, at least, liaise

with the Commissioner of Police to see that there are regular Police Officers because once we were having Police Officers only when a Deputy Prime Minister was residing there? Can I make a request to the Minister to have Police Officers posted at the different junctions nearly the whole day.

Mr Bodha: I will do what can be done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lesjongard: Will the Minister agree that the roundabout at the junction between Vandermeersch and the Ebène Link Road is of no use?

Mr Bodha: Well, that is a technical question. I think we may ask the TMRSU to see whether this can be done.

Mr Uteem: I heard the hon. Minister mentioning again the bridge which is going to link A1M1 which had been referred to by the previous Government. May I know from the hon. Minister whether there is a timeframe, procurement procedures have already been followed, where is the status and when can we expect the opening of that bridge and road?

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, we are now seeing what are the priorities of the decongestion programme and we are going to have consultations with the Minister of Finance and we will have a set of priorities. It is going to be one of the priorities.

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, in the main planning of the Ebène Cybercity and the whole region, questions were asked here previously and mention was made, and I know that there was sufficient land reserved for the construction of a new bus terminal being given that the Place Margeot had been built over the years for the eastern region. Can I make a request to the Minister to have a fresh look of having a new bus stand project be implemented which will help to solve part of the problem?

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter.

ALBION VILLAGE - CITE MARCEL CABON– SEWERAGE

(No. B/26) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the acute sewerage problem at Cité Marcel Cabon Albion Village, he will –

- (a) state if urgent consideration will be given for the compulsorily acquisition of land for the installation of a leaching plant thereat, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Waste Water Management Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for regular pumping of individual sewers to alleviate the hardship of the inhabitants.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from available records, the President of Albion Village Council, as far back as January 2013, made representations through the hon. Member regarding this unacceptable and parlous state of affairs. Yesterday, I visited the site in company of two officials of the Authority. Indeed, there is an acute waste water issue in that area.

The House will wish to note that in 2013, the Authority identified a plot of land for the placement of a common septic tank. Designs were also put up. The matter unfortunately rested there. I have now requested the Authority to revisit the matter urgently.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I have asked the Authority to effect at least a one-off pumping. I understand that this cannot be done on a regular basis.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I raised that issue on many occasions here that there was a plot of land identified and it was the responsibility of the Minister of Housing to identify the owner and have a compulsory acquisition, Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to, at least, make a request to the Minister to, at least, speed up

Mr Collendavelloo: Of course!

Mr Bhagwan: Hon. Minister, I have not yet finished!

Mr Collendavelloo: Sorry!

Mr Bhagwan: With due respect, can I make a request to the hon. Minister to ask the Minister of Housing to expedite matters if they have identified the owner of the land and if it is okay, then to proceed accordingly?

Mr Collendavelloo: The question is longer than the answer!

(Interruptions)

The plot of land is identified but those were the days of indolence when nothing was being done! Now things are being done; I have talked to my hon. colleague...

(Interruptions)

Mr Collendaveloo: We will follow up and the cost is there Rs8.95 m. We can some from the Central CID to....

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: We will definitely follow up here and come and see to it whether the reply of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister has been initiated.

The Vice-Prime Minister has informed us of one off. If the Wastewater Management Authority does not have funds - I still remember that there was a case which was made with the National Empowerment Foundation where it was agreed that the NEF, being given that people of that housing estate are of very low income, they can't even afford to pay this private lorry, I'll say once per day, at least regularly, every fortnight or every month to have this cesspit emptied.

Mr Collendaveloo: Well, what I have been given to understand is that regular pumping on a regular basis would not be practicable and would not be feasible. However, I have seen the site, it is impossible as it is just near a school, the health hazards are extreme and we are going to do this pumping. The problem is that houses have been built, I understand, on the place where the water table is very high. So, this is why in the rainy season and since we have been in office, rain has not stopped falling, so, in Albion it is extremely high, but now we can do the one off pumping and we will see how to monitor the situation.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

STC - MOGAS & GAS OIL – MONEY COLLECTED

(No. B/27) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to Mogas and Gasoil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the amount collected, in terms of –

- (a) excise duty;
- (b) Maurice Ile Durable levy;

- (c) contribution to Road Development Authority;
- (d) contribution to Rodrigues transportation and storage;
- (e) contribution to the Build Mauritius Fund;
- (g) contribution to subsidy on Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG);
- (g) flour and rice, and
- (h) Value Added Tax for 2014 and estimated for 2015, indicating if Government will consider reviewing the various components of the price structure thereof to bring down their prices.

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that, with regard to Mogas and Gas Oil, the amount collected in respect of the various components are as follows –

S/N		Payable to	Product	2014 Rs M	2015 (Estimated) Rs M
(a)	Excise Duty	Mauritius Revenue Authority	Mogas	1,896	1,966
			Gas Oil	738	886

(b)	Maurice Ile Durable Levy	Mauritius Revenue Authority	Mogas	53	55
			Gas Oil	67	81

(c)	Contribution to the RDA	Road Development Authority	Mogas	325	337
			Gas Oil	391	470

(d)	Contribution to Rodrigues Transportation and Storage	Rodrigues Subsidy Fund	Mogas	9	29
			Gas Oil	11	43

(e)	Contribution to Build Mauritius Fund	Ministry of Finance	Mogas	176	728
			Gas Oil	224	1,075

(f)	Subsidy on Rice, Flour and LPG	State Trading Corporation	Mogas	263	273
			Gas Oil	336	403

(g)	VAT	Mauritius Revenue Authority	Mogas	1,107	1,171
			Gas Oil	1,147	1,462

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the last part of the question, I propose to consult my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development on the possibility of reviewing the price structure for Mogas and Gas Oil.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, only six days before the announcement of the new price structure, the hon. Minister gave an interview to the press and it is important to have announced a substantial fall in the price of Gas Oil and Mogas, and I quote –

“La decision de faire baisser les prix, fait ressortir le ministre, sera prise afin que la population mauricienne se rend compte tout de suite que l’Alliance qu’elle a porté au pouvoir, tient à respecter son engagement pris pendant la campagne électorale pour rendre la vie des mauriciens moins pénible. »

May I know from the hon. Minister, why is it that only one month after coming into power they are getting back to what was one of their central themes in their electoral campaign?

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in January 2015, the price structure for Mogas and Gas Oil was reviewed to increase, first, the contribution to the Build Mauritius Fund from R1 to Rs4 and the contribution to the Rodrigues Transportation and Storage from 5 cents to 16 cents.

We are all aware that the country needs immediate measures to face the water problem and, as a responsible Government and as announced in the Government Programme, the water supply problem is our priority and huge amounts have to be invested to solve the water

distribution problem. That is why the contribution to Build Mauritius Fund was increase from R1 to Rs4 to have the necessary funds.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister, he has announced that just on this item of Build Mauritius Fund, we are going to pay Rs1.2 billion from users abroad. So, may I know from the hon. Minister why is it that only those who are road users who buy oil and gas oil, have to fork out for national problems as opposed to the general budget that is done every year under the supervision of this Parliament? Why are we creating this huge fund which will not be under the scrutiny of Parliament?

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the country is highly indebted and if we start taking debts again, we will be facing a situation which will be very difficult for the forthcoming generation. So, the best decision was to increase the Build Mauritius Fund to solve the water problem.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the figures but I did not take them down. The contribution to subsidy on three things: LPG gas, flour and rice. We have been given the amount of funds collected. Can we have on these three items –

- LPG subsidy;
- Flour subsidy, and
- Ration rice subsidy

the sum actually spent in 2014? We have the sum collected, how much was spent on these three items of subsidy?

Mr Gungah: I don't have the information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: This is the last supplementary question on this.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister announced again that a substantial amount of money will go to the MID Fund (Mauritius Ile Durable Fund). May I know from the hon. Minister why are we still paying for the MID Fund when the Government has already abolished the Office of MID Commission?

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the MID does not fall under my responsibility and it will be presumptuous on my behalf to decide whether the subsidies should be discontinued or continued.

**QUARTIER SOLITUDE, PLAINE MAGNIEN – INHABITANTS -
RELOCATION**

(No. B/28) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Airports of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the implementation of any project for the relocation of the inhabitants of Quartier Solitude, Plaine Magnien and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. In fact, my attention had already been drawn to the issue by the hon. T. Henry, hon. M. Jhugroo and hon. B. Hurreeram.

I am informed by the Officer in Charge of the Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd that the Solitude village at Plaine Magnien is located on the approach path of aircraft serving the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport. This represents a hazard to both the safety of aircraft operations and to the health of the inhabitants of the said locality.

AML commissioned a survey and a valuation exercise in 2008 in view of acquiring the properties of Solitude to create an operational safety buffer zone around the airport and to relocate the inhabitants. The survey was carried out by Alan Tinkler & Ramlackhan Company with a view to acquire the properties of solitude to create an operational safety buffer zone around the airport. This exercise revealed that 26 households were concerned and out of which 17 have the title deeds and 9 did not possess title deeds or lease agreements.

In August 2009, the then Government had set up a Ministerial Committee to look into the question of relocation of the inhabitants of Solitude Village in Plaine Magnien. The Committee had a first meeting on 27 August 2009 and took cognizance of the situation. The Committee recommended amongst others for the relocation of illegal occupants by Government and for IML to acquire the land from property owners concerned.

I am informed by AML that it is still waiting to proceed with the acquisition of the said land once the case of illegal occupancy of the portions of land have been resolved by the relevant authorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have spoken with my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands who is agreeable, in principle, to the relocation of the nine squatters. I have requested IML to update the evaluation exercise with a view to compensating the land owners concerned once the squatters have moved.

Mr Ramful: I am thankful to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for his answer on this question, but may I also invite the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to the fact that to look into the matter and if he could expedite matters given that I have in my possession a letter from the District Council of Grand Port to the effect that the residence and land owners of that particular area are being denied their right to effect constructions on their respective properties and may I table this letter?

It is a letter dated 5 May 2014 from the Acting Chief Executive of the District council.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I agree with the hon. Member and with all the other hon. Members from that Constituency that these families whether they be squatters or land owners are living in a difficult situation and I will do my utmost to expedite matters.

CAMP CAROL - STATE LAND - LEASE

(No. B/29) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to Government decision to allow leaseholders of State land having a housing unit to purchase their respective plots of land, he will state where matters stand in regard to the leaseholders of State land at Camp Carol, Kenya in Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the amendment of the State Land Act in 2013 to allow for the sale of State land on which stands a residential unit at a nominal price of Rs2000., on 04 February 2014, an advertisement was made by my Ministry inviting applications for the purchase of State land by building site lessees. Some 120 applications were received from the lessees of Camp Carol, Kenya for the purchase of their respective plot of land. It is to be pointed out that in cases where the residential sites are more than 10 perches in extent, these plots cannot be sold and would remain on lease.

Given the haphazard development by the lessees in the locality whereby the boundary limits have not been respected, my Ministry is presently carrying out a fresh survey to determine the exact extent of State land being occupied by each lessee. The ongoing survey exercise is expected to be completed in four months' time.

If the plot of the State land leased is found to be of an extent of 10 perches or less, a survey will be drawn up in respect of each plot. The building site lessee will then be requested to contact a Notary to complete procedures for the purchase of the State land. In case of plots exceeding 10 perches, a new lease agreement will be granted to the lessees.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given that the former Government has spent more than 10 years with this problem, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister if he can settle this matter as early as possible.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would just inform the Chief Whip of the Government that in four months' time the survey exercise would be completed.

BANGLADESHI WORKERS - PERMITS

(No. B/30) Mr M. Gobin (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to the granting/renewal of permit for the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers, since July 2005 to date, he will state if he will consider the advisability of setting up a fact-finding committee or a full-fledged Police inquiry to be carried out thereinto.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the grant of Recruitment License is governed under the Recruitment of Workers Act, 1993 by the Licensing Authority, namely, the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry. In accordance with the same legislation, appeals against the decision not to grant recruitment licence are referred to for consideration by the Minister.

I am also aware that the Director of Audit has, in his report for the year ended 31 December 2013, pointed out some shortcomings in the manner applications and appeals for the grant of Recruitment licence have been processed. According to a report, amongst others, consolidated returns which were to be submitted within a prescribed timeframe were not being forwarded by agencies. Moreover, some agencies were operating despite the expiry of their licences and appeals made after the prescribed delay of ten days have been entertained and granted.

In some cases recruitment licence had been issued on appeal despite objection from the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the shortcomings highlighted by the Director of Audit, I have instructed my Permanent Secretary to carry out an in-depth enquiry into the matter. If such enquiry discloses any irregularities or malpractices, I will then decide as to whether it would be appropriate for the setting up of a Fact-Finding Committee or to order a full-fledged Police enquiry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am also proposing the setting up of a High-Level Committee under the aegis of my Ministry to look into issues relating to the employment of foreign workers in general, including the review of the existing regulations, the streamlining of procedures, as well as the proper operation of recruitment agencies in line with the new policy orientation of this Government as announced in its Programme 2015-2019.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Gobin!

Mr Gobin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what is the expected time frame for this in-depth enquiry being conducted at the level of Permanent Secretary from the hon. Minister, please?

Mr Callichurn: Well, I cannot say for now. It will take the time it will take.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister how many Bangladeshi workers have been recruited since July 2005 up to now?

(Interruptions)

Mr Callichurn: I don't have the figures actually, in 2005 up to now, I can tell for 2014, the figure is around 21,252.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the Consulate for Bangladesh was the father of the former Minister and one of the recruiting agents there was the brother-in-law of the former Minister?

Mr Callichurn: For which period is the hon. Member referring to?

(Interruptions)

Unfortunately, I do not have the information at hand. I give notice of the question.

RIVIÈRE DES ANGUILLES - DAM - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/31) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a dam at Rivière des Anguilles, he will state if -

- (a) a tender exercise thereof was launched and, if so, when, and
- (b) the financing thereof has been secured until its completion.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), the Central Procurement Board is now evaluating certain expressions of interest for Consultancy for the design, review and construction supervision of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam. I have to inform the House that this project dates back to at least September 2012 when the *Agence Française de Développement* agreed to fund the project in an amount of 62.5 million Euros. Because of inordinate delays on the Mauritian side, the AFD cancelled the loan agreement.

The financing will have to be reviewed probably from Government side, we shall see where to get the money.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister confirm if the consulting engineers involved in Bagatelle Dam will be barred from participating in this project?

Mr Collendavelloo: Sorry, I did not hear the last part. If the consulting engineers of the Bagatelle Dam will be...

Mr Jahangeer: Will be barred?

Mr Collendavelloo: Well, they have been barred. Coyne and Bellier were the consultants for Bagatelle Dam. They made a mess of it all and the result is that now we have perhaps to sustain arbitration proceedings. Coyne and Bellier also obtained the consultancy for the Rivière des Anguilles Dam. At least one good decision was taken to cancel them immediately and they are now, I understand, barred from applying for consultancy. I hope the Central Procurement Board will follow this consistently.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister what was the amount, the finance offered by *l'Agence Française de Développement* and the conditions - I take it was a loan - and what is, at this stage, the revised estimated cost to come of that dam?

Mr Collendavelloo: The initial estimated project cost was Rs4.5 billion. Now, it has got to be updated, of course, because this amount is the initial one. We will update this in the light of what the new consultants will have to say. We hope that we can start the project by March 2017 to end in December 2020.

To be more direct to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's question, it was a loan amount of Rs62.5 m. from the *Agence Française de Développement*. The duration was to be November 2012 to 31 March 2018 with the date of first disbursement being 07 January 2013. This deadline not having been respected, the loan agreement was cancelled.

(Interruptions)

No. 62.5 million Euros. The cost 4.5 billion and the loan was in Euros, 62.5 million.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister mentioned the Consultants, presently in view of the exercise that is being carried out, can he give the names of the consultants?

Mr Collendavelloo: No. I am afraid not. It is with the Central Procurement Board. There is a shortlist. They are now going to identify the Consultant.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister talked about the inordinate delays which hindered the progress of this project. Can he elaborate on what he means by inordinate delays?

Mr Collendavelloo: Well, I enquired into this. The official version which was given to me was because of the Coyne and Bellier problem with Bagatelle Dam, they terminated the agreement with the Consultants and that led to these delays. I am not too sure I follow this official explanation very well, let us take it for what it is worth now, but the fact is that there were inordinate delays.

RODRIGUES - CYCLONE BANSI

(No. B/32) Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the aftermath of cyclone Bansi in Rodrigues, he will state -

- (a) if consideration will be given for the setting up of a Rodrigues Emergency Rehabilitation Programme, in partnership with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, for the implementation and emergency projects for the construction and rehabilitation of -
- (i) bridges;
 - (ii) drains;
 - (iii) masonry;
 - (iv) retaining walls, and
 - (v) retention basins, as a matter of urgency and, if so, when and, if not, why not, and
- (b) any other remedial measures envisaged for any other affected sectors.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after the removal of all cyclone Bansi warnings over Rodrigues on Saturday 17 January 2015, I led a Task Force to Rodrigues comprising representatives of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre, the Special Mobile Force and the Central Electricity Board. On Sunday, 18 January 2015. The main objective of the Task Force was to take stock of the impacts of Cyclone Bansi in Rodrigues and to ensure that prompt action is taken by the concerned authorities regarding reconstruction works. This exercise was carried out jointly with representatives of the Disaster Committee of Rodrigues.

Fortunately, except for the electricity network and agriculture, Rodrigues did not suffer considerable damages in terms of infrastructure and buildings, and no casualties were reported. At the time of the visit, around 80% of the electricity network had already been restored. With the support of the Task Force, the whole network was restored after a few days. In the circumstances, the need for the setting up of a Rodrigues Rehabilitation Emergency Programme is not felt. However, during the visit of the Task Force, certain works were identified for disaster risk reduction and mitigation. These include the gradual replacement of the '*Radiers*' located along the coastal roads by bridges, construction or rehabilitation of drains along existing roads as appropriate and the construction of a flood wall. The Public Infrastructure Division of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has been advised to look into the execution of these works. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport has agreed to provide technical assistance whenever required.

With regard to part (b) of the question, coastal erosion was noted between Anse des Anglais to Grand' Baie. My Ministry will shortly arrange to send experts from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency presently working at my Ministry and a team of officers to carry out a technical assessment and to advise the Rodrigues Regional Assembly on remedial measures. Thank you.

Mr Leopold: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there are no armed vehicles in Rodrigues which can be used during adverse seasons?

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this was observed and remedial actions will be taken once we make the necessary arrangements for housing the appropriate infrastructure. So, armed vehicles will be provided to hospitals and also to certain emergency services.

MAURITIUS/RODRIGUES – MV MAURITIUS PRIDE

(No. B/33) Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Mauritius/Rodrigues route, he will state where matters stand as to the operation and to the proposed replacement of the MV Mauritius Pride.

Mr Koonjoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the first part of the question the MV Mauritius Pride, a 25-year old vessel, stopped all operations in February 2014 for technical reasons.

According to information received from the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd, the vessel had already undergone dry docking and thorough repair works in 2013 at a total cost of some Rs70 m. and, in 2014, an additional Rs100 m. of new repairs to maintain its seaworthiness as well as its compliance with the mandatory Conventions of the International Maritime Organisation.

The Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. sold the ship in September 2014 for the sum of USD 1,080,000, (i.e. some Rs30 m). The House may wish to note that the purchase price of the vessel was around Rs200 m.

In order to fulfil the transport requirements of the Rodrigues People, Mauritius Trochetia has stopped its services to Reunion and Tamatave and is currently focusing its services only to Rodrigues and Agalega to ensure that there is no disruption of service.

Operations of Mauritius Trochetia to Reunion and Tamatave are expected to resume with the arrival of a new container vessel.

As regards the proposed replacement of MV Mauritius Pride, the previous Government took the decision to replace the vessel by a container vessel of 350 to 500 container capacity as a back-up for Mauritius Trochetia. In this perspective, following an expression of interest, an international shipbroker, Howe Robinson, has been appointed to advise and recommend on the purchase of second hand container vessel as a back-up for Mauritius Trochetia. I understand that the ship broker has, since 27 November 2014, already submitted its proposal to the Central Procurement Board for consideration. The Central Procurement Board has shortlisted a number of vessels, but given the specificities and the operational constraint of the port of Port Mathurin, none of these shortlisted vessels meet all the criteria and technical requirements to guarantee a safe and risk free berthing at Port Mathurin. In this regard, further investigation and diligence is being carried out to find out whether some of the shortlisted vessels could still berth at Port Mathurin with a minimum acceptable level of risk.

Subject to the above outlined limitations and the timely approval of the Central Procurement Board and the availability of funds, the replacement vessel could be finalised around April 2015.

Mr Leopold: Given the fact that the Mauritius Trochetia is the only vessel which is deserving Rodrigues to make the liaison within the islands of Rodrigues and Mauritius and the Mauritius Trochetia is going to dry dock for maintenance, can I ask the hon. Minister what are the dispositions he has taken so as to ensure liaison between the two islands and whether the hon. Minister is contemplating lowering the airfare so as to allow people to move freely from Mauritius to Rodrigues?

Mr Koonjoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the airfare is concerned, I am unable to answer this question but, so far, the replacement of Trochetia if in case something happens, we are taking precautions and in case we get the money from the Ministry of Finance we are thinking of either to buy a new vessel or to charter a vessel. We are looking forward to it; arrangements have been made in case anything happens to charter a vessel.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister what procedures have been used before selling Mauritius Pride and who purchased it?

Mr Koonjoo: The Mauritius Pride was sold in September 2014 to RJ Maritime Consultancy Limited for USD 1,080,000, as I said, plus an additional of approximately USD 72,000 for its remaining bunker on board, that is, a total of approximately Rs36 m. net of any brokerage commission.

Mr Bérenger: Clearly there is danger being given that we are relying on only one vessel, Le Trochetia, which is not a new vessel. I heard the hon. Minister say that in case - he seems to have thought about it - Le Trochetia is not available, runs into trouble, he will have to charter a vessel. Can I know whether the advance work has been done, that a list of possible chartered vessels that can be chartered has been identified? Because the hon. Minister, himself, pointed out that Port Mathurin is a difficult harbour, not any chartered vessel will be able to come in and out. Do we a list of possible chartered vessels?

Mr Koonjoo: We are looking upon that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, I can guarantee the hon. Leader of the Opposition that everything will be done so as no problem arises between now and 15th of April.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question!

DOMAIN NAME “MU” - REGISTRATION

(No. B/35) Mr M. Gobin (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the domain name “mu”, he will state –

- (a) the name of the person/entity in whose name the domain is registered, indicating in the case of a corporate body the name of the -
 - (i) directors;
 - (ii) shareholders, and
 - (iii) beneficial owners thereof, and
- (b) the measures Government proposes to take with a view to securing the domain name “mu” in the name of the State, indicating the time frame thereof.

Mr P. Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Dot Mu (.mu), which is the country code Top Level Domain for Mauritius, is registered in the name of Internet Direct Ltd. In relation to part (a) (i) of the question, the present Directors of the said company are Mr Prefumo Jean Pierre Guito and Mr Subbiah Subramaniam.

In relation to part (a) (ii) of the question, the shareholders are Mr Kwok Kem Yen Kwok Vee Kong also known as Yann Kwok and Ms Kwok Kem Yen Ah Chook Yolande, each holding 95% and 5% shares respectively out of stated capital of Rs50,000, as evidenced from records obtained from the Registrar of Companies.

With regards to part (a) (iii) of the question, it would appear that the beneficial owner is Yann Kwok as he has been the relevant party who has continuously approached the previous Government in respect of renting or selling of the gov.mu second level domain. According to records and Notes of Meetings available at my Ministry, he has had several rounds of discussion and negotiation with Mr Gunpath Rao Rama, the then Senior Adviser of the previous Prime Minister. These negotiations have revolved between an amount of Rs25 m. claimed by Mr Yann Kwok in October 2013 and Rs864,217,926 claimed by him in October 2014. For the .govmu domain while for the claim made for .mu in 2005 was to the tune of – this is what I am informed - USD20 m.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, according to international best practices as recommended by Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, what is called commonly as ICANN which is, in fact, the international body responsible for internet domain names a Multi-Stakeholders Forum for Internet Governance should be set up in Mauritius. This Multi-Stakeholders Forum would comprise representatives of the local internet community, including amongst others, the private sector and academia.

In this context, my Ministry has engaged discussions with the different stakeholders to form this forum so that we can promptly act.

My Ministry has also applied to join the Government Advisory Committee of ICANN which will allow Mauritius to voice out the danger of one man holding the Dot Mu Domain.

The establishment of the Forum will enable the local internet community to take an active participatory role in the policy formulation for the administration of the .mu domain and internet domain names in Mauritius, with a view to securing the .mu country code Top Level Domain.

In fact, the purpose of the re-delegation is to secure this .mu administration in the name of the Multi-Stakeholders Forum and not in the name of the State as per the guidelines of ICAC.

I am informed that the process of re-delegation is long haul and has to have the participation of the internet community at large and a case be made to ICANN for re-delegation. Further, the Forum should be ready in terms of technology and resources to be able to actually take over in case re-delegation is approved - which explains the long haul nature of the process.

My Ministry is also liaising with IT consultants on the way forward.

Mr Gobin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the hon. Minister mentioned claims for certain payments, may I know from him whether these payments have been made or they have been put on hold?

Mr P. Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, those who are responsible for that company, Internet Direct Ltd, there have been negotiations with them. These were the figures that were proposed to Government, but I understand that there has been no conclusion of any sort of amicable settlement. Therefore, no payment has been made.

Mr Bérenger: May I know from the hon. Minister the date, the year on which the domain name “mu” was registered in the name of the – I won’t try to repeat the owners, but the company we are talking about? Has an inquiry been carried out to find out whether anybody was responsible for not an individual company, but for Mauritius to register that domain name, directly or through any State entity? Has somebody somewhere failed to assume his responsibility?

Mr P. Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not have the exact date, but I am informed that it was registered by Mr Kwok. I can find out the exact date and provide it to the House.

With regard to if there has been any irresponsibility from anybody in Government at any time, well, that also I would have to find out in order to provide the House with this.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether there is any formal agreement between the Government and this company, and if this is the case, whether he is prepared to table a copy of that agreement?

Mr P. Jugnauth: Well, I must say, it has been difficult for me to find out all the information about this process. I am still looking into it, but, as at now, from what I know, I have been informed that there has been no agreement as such. But I can tell the House that I am looking into the matter and trying to get more information. Of course, what I have said today, if there is any rectification to be made, I will definitely come to the House for that.

CHEBEL & BARKLY – HOUSES - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/36) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the construction of houses at Chebel and Barkly, Beau Bassin, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof as at todate under construction, giving details of the -
 - (i) commencement date thereof, and
 - (ii) expected date of completion thereof
- (b) if proper drainage and amenities thereof have been provided therefor and
- (c) the criteria that will be used for the allocation thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I must point out that there is no house construction site in Barkly as such. I am sure that my colleague is aware. I am informed that, as a matter of fact, the National Housing Development Company Ltd. is presently embarked on the construction of 93 housing units in Chebel under 3 different work contracts as follows -

- (i) The construction of 73 housing units over a plot of land of an extent of 5A38P in Chebel, near Barkly. The works started in May 2014 and are expected to be completed in October 2015.
- (ii) The construction of 8 housing units on a vacant plot of land of an extent of 37 perches within Firinga Two NHDC housing estate. These works started in April 2014 and are expected to be completed in March 2015.
- (iii) The construction of 6 housing units on a vacant plot of land of an extent of 35 perches within Firinga Two NHDC housing estate and 6 additional housing units on a plot of land of an extent of 41 perches within Firinga Four NHDC housing estate. These works started in October 2014 and are expected to be completed in August 2015.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I have to inform the House that, in all housing projects, provision is being made in the relevant contracts for basic infrastructure such as road, footpath, drains, individual water and electricity supply and appropriate waste water disposal.

I shall impress on the NHDC the need to ensure that contractors strictly respect their contractual obligations.

With regard to part (c) of the question pertaining to criteria for allocation, I am informed that:

- (i) applicants should not be owner of a house or of a residential plot of land, and
- (ii) their monthly household income should be between Rs6,200 and Rs10,000 and applicants should have been registered in the Social Register of Mauritius with Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions.

Mr Bhagwan: In fact, there are two sites, the Firinga is at Chebel and the first site is at Maingard and Barkly. Where the site is situated it is a low range – *terrains marginaux que l'industrie sucrière a donné au gouvernement*. Can I impress upon the Minister, for the first site at Barkly Maingard, that he requests the NHDC to revisit the site because it is found in a very low region and is a flood prone area and also to have this survey being effected and make sure that these new houses may not be found in flood prone regions?

Mr Soodhun: Yes. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to take the suggestion of hon. Bhagwan into consideration.

LA NICOLIERE RESERVOIR – POTABLE WATER

(No. B/38) Mr K. Teeluckdharry (Second Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the La Nicolière Reservoir, he will state if any recent test has been carried out to ascertain that potable water thereof is free from cyanotoxins and cyanobacteria known as blue-green algae and, if so, the outcome thereof, indicating if the water supply thereof as at to date is safe for consumption.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the quality of raw water at La Nicolière reservoir is being regularly monitored. So far, although the presence of algae

in the raw water has been detected, no toxic-green algae have been found in the course of any of the groups test at the CWA laboratory.

Constant monitoring is being effected. Raw water is treated and is therefore safe for consumption save that usual precautions such as boiling of water should be followed. The La Nicolière treatment plant will be upgraded. For that purpose, Consultants have already been shortlisted.

WORKERS (FOREIGN) – WORK PERMIT

(No. B/39) Mr K. Teeluckdharry (Second Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training whether, in regard to foreign workers, he will state -

- (a) the number thereof from;
 - (i) India;
 - (ii) China;
 - (iii) Bangladesh;
 - (iv) South Africa, and
 - (v) other countries who are under contract of employment, indicating if Government proposes to renew their work permits, and
- (b) if Government intends to -
 - (i) impose a security bond on foreigners seeking work permit in Mauritius, and/or
 - (ii) review the ratio thereof to that of local workers with a view to reducing local unemployment.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to the record available at my Ministry, there are currently around 38,843 foreign workers in Mauritius among whom 7,815 Indians, 3,114 Chinese, 21,252 Bangladeshi, 112 South Africans and 6,550 from other countries.

It has been the policy of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment to allow companies to have recourse to foreign labour when the skills required are not available locally. In this regard, there are guidelines in accordance with section 4(1) of the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act, 1993 for applications for work permits.

The renewal of work permits is presently being considered on a case to case basis so as not to cause prejudice to companies which already have projects or orders in hand.

However, as I indicated earlier to my reply to PQ B/30, in line with the Government Programme 2015-2019 to the effect that the recruitment of foreign workers will be limited to

scarcity areas and the work permit regulations will be reviewed, I am reiterating my proposal for the setting up of a high level committee under the aegis of my Ministry to look into the issues relating to employment of foreign workers in general, including the review of existing regulations, the streamlining of procedures, the need for a security bond or deposit, the ratio of foreign workers to local workers as well as the proper operation of recruitment agencies.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: May I ask the hon. Minister as regards security bonds and his intention to review it, is he aware that it was reviewed in actual fact by the previous Government under the Directors of the then Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who thought that it would be business-friendly to do away with the bonds?

Mr Callichurn: I am aware, but we are planning to review the whole system.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his Ministry has got any control with regard to the recruiting agents from India, China and Bangladesh?

Mr Callichurn: From China we do, from India as well we do but unfortunately not from Bangladesh.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from hon. Minister whether on an ongoing basis there is anyone in his Ministry who monitors the employment contract of these workers because we have a lot of workers who seem to be working in Bakeries and other things as opposed to their place of work for which their permit had been allocated?

Mr Callichurn: Unfortunately, I don't have the information at hand; I need notice of the question.

Mr Mohamed: With regard to the same issue and as the question puts it reviewing the ratio and with a view of reducing local unemployment and now since I see that there is a new portfolio to that Ministry which is very good news that specifically of training which is an excellent and welcome news, would the hon. Minister consider, since now he holds the portfolio for training, to enlist, since I gather the MITD (The Mauritius Institute for Training and Development) as well as the Human Resource Development Council is now, I hope, under his portfolio, since he is - if I am not mistaken now as I said good news - the Minister of Training?

Mr Callichurn: Yes indeed. But we have not come to a decision regarding the institution being transferred to my Ministry. We are still working on it and we should come with a solution shortly.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question! We've spent a lot of time on this question. I would rather move to the next question!

Mr Ganoo: With regard to reviewing the ratio of local workers to reduce local unemployment, may I ask the hon. Minister when this exercise would be carried out and if he could pay a special attention to the building and construction sector where, in fact, the employment of foreign workers is impacting heavily on the employment of our local masons? And may I also, in the same breath, appeal to him to have a look at a recent report which was commissioned by the building and construction companies written by Mr Pierre Dinan in which he highlighted the very extremely urgent situation of how our local masons are suffering?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, you cannot introduce new matters which have not been said before. Thank you.

Mr Ganoo: I think it is directly relevant to part (ii) of the question; the question of local workers with a view to reducing unemployment. I was drawing the Minister's attention to the Construction Sector, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Callichurn: I take good note of the hon. Member's point and I shall eventually when working on the paper take into consideration your proposition.

RIVIERE DU REMPART & PAMPLEMOUSSES DISTRICT COURTS & POLICE STATION - RENT

(No. B/40) Mr K. Teeluckdharry (Second Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the premises rented by Government for housing the District Courts of Rivière du Rempart and Pamplemousses and the Pamplemousses Police Station, he will state -

- (a) the terms and conditions thereof, indicating the amount of rent paid therefor on a monthly basis, and
- (b) if Government proposes to -
 - (i) construct new buildings or
 - (ii) restore the existing ones.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Master and Registrar that both the Pamplemousses and Rivière du Rempart District Courts are located in the same rented building situated in Pamplemousses. The details regarding the terms and conditions are as follows -

- (i) The lease agreement started on 16 October 2013 and will end up on 31 October 2018.

- (ii) The monthly rent payable is Rs400,000 exclusive of VAT escalating annually at the same rate as the Consumer Price Index established by the Central Statistical Office or 5% per annum whichever is the higher.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) (i) and (ii) of the question, Government has in the 2015-2019 programme provided for the review and upgrading of all District Courts premises to ensure better services to all stakeholders.

As regards Pamplemousses Police Station, I am informed by the Police Department that it is housed in a rented building owned by Mrs Sohawon Bibi Azizah. It is of approximately 2917 square feet and is situated at Royal Road Pamplemousses.

The Lease Agreement has been renewed for a period of two years with effect from 01 February 2014, at a monthly rental of Rs37,500, as recommended by the Valuation and Real Estate Consultancy Services, Valuation Department.

As regards the construction of new buildings for Pamplemousses Police Station and restoration of existing ones, I am also informed that provision has been made in the 2014 Budget for the construction of a new Police Station at Pamplemousses. In that connection, a portion of land of the extent of 0A 45 P has been acquired by the Government and vested with the Prime Minister's Office. Preliminary design of the new Police Station is in progress at the Architecture Section of my Ministry and is expected to be completed by mid-March 2015.

Mr Teeluckdharry: This answers the question. I have no further question.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister if any tender exercise was carried out before these premises were rented and if he can give the name of the owner?

Mr Bodha: From the information provided to me, in July 2013, the Judiciary launched public advertisement inviting prospective owners to submit a building for rent to house both the District Courts, but only one, Mascarene Court submitted an offer.

Mr Baloomoody: I understand my question will be answered by the hon. Prime Minister and it will come as Written Question now.

STATE LANDS - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/42) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State lands, he will state -

- (a) if consideration will be given for an in depth inquiry to be carried out to establish -
 - (a) the beneficiaries thereof for the last 40 years and
 - (b) the number thereof that are still being used to generate income.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding part (a) of the question, hon. Members would surely understand that compilation of such a list would be quite a time consuming exercise, as we are considering a forty year period. The more so that...

(Interruptions)

'Coffre la pas encore ouvert.'

The more so that during such a long period there have been numerous cases of transfers and also sale of State lands to lessees. However, the information is being compiled and, at the earliest possible - before five years - it will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Mr Mohamed: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. I see and I totally agree that 40 years is indeed a long time, but since the new Government has been talking and making a lot of do about the importance of transparency which I totally applaud, the importance of being clear and open which I totally applaud, therefore, as far as the 40 years is concerned, I only wanted to find a roundup figure. But because transparency is important, would the hon. Minister therefore consider putting up a special team in order - in the name of that transparency that you rightly hold up to uphold - to work on this before the year is over because for this Government, this transparency is indeed important?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Member is aware since I have been appointed as Minister and you have seen the transparency starting, you know.

(Interruptions)

So, I can assure the hon. Member this is for the first time that at the Ministry of Housing and Lands, we are going to appoint a full-time lawyer and we have already set up a committee since the following day I have been appointed as Minister. I am sure I am coming in this august Assembly to give the long list which concerns - you know - 40 years, but not 40 years, recently we can start from 10 years. I think it would be enough to understand.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over!