

POLICE RIDERS – VVIPS & DIGNITARIES - SERVICES

(No. B/473) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Police Riders, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police –

(a) information as to –

(i) if there has been a change in the policy for the allocation of the services thereof, since January 2015 to date and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor;

(ii) the grade of officers attached thereto;

(iii) the official posting thereof within the Mauritius Police Force, and

(b) the personalities who are entitled to the services thereof, indicating in each case, the number thereof attached thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there is, as such, no policy governing the allocation of services of Police riders to VVIPs and dignitaries.

However, it has been a long-standing practice for Police riders to form part of the *cortège* of the President of the Republic of Mauritius, the Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius, the Prime Minister, the spouse of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, with a view to ensuring safe movement of these VVIPs and a flawless security *en route*.

Additionally, such security facilities are extended to personalities, both local and foreign including VVIPs from abroad, according to their rank and status with a view to ensuring their protection.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that for security reasons, Government has, on 22 May 2015, approved that Police riders from VIPSU be attached on a 24-hour basis to each of the following VVIPs in addition to the current security arrangements provided to them -

(i) the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands;

- (ii) the Minister of Finance and Economic Development;
- (iii) the Attorney-General;
- (iv) the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, and
- (v) the Financial Secretary.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that only the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands and the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms are presently availing of such services. Police riders of the rank of Constable from VIPSU have been attached to these personalities.

Madam Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of the House that this is a temporary security arrangement which will be reviewed in the light of the threat perception against the Ministers concerned.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that allocating additional motorcycle to certain VVIP's, Ministers - I am talking of Ministers - is creating a lot of frustration within his Government and whether ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order please!

Mr Bhagwan: *To lé mo dire kisanla ine dire moi ça, non?*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order please! Order please!

Mr Bhagwan: I don't know why they are so noisy....

(Interruptions)

Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he is contemplating to ask the Commissioner of Police - the way things are going as we have heard the unpopularity of certain Ministers -

to make additional purchase of motorcycles and *casques intégraux* for future problems that may arise with the hon. Members who are very unpopular these days.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, if the need arises and if it is really required that we should have more motorcycles, it is the Government duty to acquire them.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I make a request to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister - I am sure he will be agreeable; except for the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and other few - that these VIPSU riders be given a coach on good manners? We have seen in the past how these riders – you have been witnessing yourself on motorway - behave with other drivers – *vancer, vancer, vancer!* This is happening these days.

(Interruptions)

With your driver, you know it, your rider – *l'arrogance!*

Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, at least, give directives first, so as to ask these Ministers or the Minister who is having official driver to make it for official function only, not for other purposes and also to teach good manners to these riders.

The Prime Minister: Good examples, Madam Speaker, must be set first by the hon. Members of this House inside.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I am not being chased everywhere, *mo pas marche are bodyguard moi!*

Mr Mohamed: I thank you Madam Speaker, for the opportunity for the question. Madam Speaker, the Rt. hon. ...

Madam Speaker: Please sit down hon. Mohamed! Can I draw the attention of all Members...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan! Hon. Bhagwan, please, I am on my feet...

(Interruptions)

Let me remind all Members of this House that all interruptions from a sitting position are out of order.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has stated that there are certain hon. Ministers, Vice-Prime Ministers who are now, as opposed to before, entitled to those riders for security reasons. Could he therefore tell us whether those Ministers - because we feel for them ...

(Interruptions)

Have they at all at any time - when have they been victims of such threats that their own person now requires this additional security and if such security is required, why is a rider required to go to take them to certain place faster and not additional bodyguards be given in the car itself to secure this person who believes that he is threatened?

The Prime Minister: Well, we did what we thought was the right thing to do.

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – LOSS INCURRED

(No. B/474) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Air Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the amount of losses incurred following the last hedging exercise thereat, indicating if –

- (a) actions are being contemplated against those who are responsible therefor and;
- (b) consideration will be given for the reviewing and rescinding of the policy regarding the entitlement of the Board Members thereof of free air tickets for life, indicating;
 - (i) the present number thereof who are concerned therewith, and
 - (ii) if representations have been received from some small shareholders thereof in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, Air Mauritius Limited is a company listed on the Stock Exchange

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please! The Rt. hon. Prime Minister is replying!

The Prime Minister: ... and governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Companies Act.

It would not, therefore, be appropriate to provide the information asked for by the hon. Member.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I am very much surprised by the reply of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. Until recently, the Deputy Prime Minister replied to a PNQ concerning Air Mauritius on 13 May, giving details then of temporary figures on the hedging losses. Can I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister what is the reason now for the small shareholders of Air Mauritius not to know what is the amount spent with regard to hedging losses and the Rt. hon. Prime Minister himself was stating so many millions and billions were spent before the general election on the hedging losses.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, if it was a mistake, we should not continue repeating the mistake.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether certain people who were sitting on the hedging committee before the general election, before the last hedging losses which occurred, the same persons, the same crooks are sitting on the hedging committee at Air Mauritius? What action will be taken? He has a representative on the Board of Air Mauritius.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan please, do not use unparliamentary language, don't say that people are crooks! I would ask you not to say that people are crooks. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

You cannot say so unless you can prove!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister another question: whether he has received representations from smallholders to do away with the facilities for life. I was questioned of having tickets and excess luggage whilst small shareholders - perhaps there are many here in the House, I don't have any share in the Air Mauritius - are not benefitting from any dividends.

The Prime Minister: I have said I am not answering the question.

Mr Bhagwan: One final question! I am most surprised that the Rt. hon. Prime Minister is not replying, so the population and the shareholders of Air Mauritius will know that the Rt. hon. Prime Minister is not giving proper attention when he was a champion of cleaning Mauritius, by not revealing these billions of rupees which have been spent in hedging losses.

The Prime Minister: The clean-up is already in process.

Mr Uteem: Air Mauritius is owned majoritily by the Government as the main shareholder and the Government appoints members to the Board of Air Mauritius. So, may I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he will consider as the shareholder and through his representatives on the Board to convey a message to the Board that we want all abuses to cease, as far as giving free ticket and other abuses that are referred to in this question are concerned?

The Prime Minister: We are already looking into that.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/475) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of a Freedom of Information Bill, he will state where matters stand, indicating if consideration will be given for the draft Bill thereof to be circulated for the information of the public.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in the Government Programme 2015-2019, it is clearly stated at paragraph 258 that “*a Freedom of Information Act will be brought forward to promote transparency and accountability in public administration and more particularly in contract allocations*”.

My Government will stand by its commitment.

As the House may be aware, in the Government Programme 2005-2010, the then Government had committed itself to provide citizens with a right of access to personal information held by State agencies and to information relating to Government business by

enacting a Freedom of Information Act. Since then, the proposed introduction of the Freedom of Information Bill had been the subject of several Parliamentary Questions.

In reply to a Parliamentary Question No. B/154 on 12 April 2011, the then Prime Minister had informed the House that, in the light of the substantial problems that had arisen in countries which had already adopted the Freedom of Information Legislation, the Government was looking at all the implications of such a piece of legislation. As a matter of fact, no such legislation was brought to the House by the former Government.

Madam Speaker, the House will appreciate that, although many jurisdictions have adopted a Freedom of Information Act, the nature and scope of such legislation is still evolving. This is precisely why there is need to ensure that the Freedom of Information Act adopts innovative processes to improve access to information rather than promoting access in name only. Once the necessary groundwork are completed, my Office will give drafting instructions to the Attorney-General's Office to proceed with the preparation of the Bill.

Madam Speaker, all stakeholders will be consulted prior to the introduction of the Bill in the National Assembly.

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, est-ce que je peux savoir de l'honorable Premier ministre si le gouvernement compte s'inspirer d'un pays en particulier pour la rédaction de cette loi?

The Prime Minister: I have already said we are working on it and I will give instructions to the Attorney General to prepare the Bill once we are ready for it. I don't see what else I can say to the House.

Mr Mohamed: Is there any specific committee that has been set up in order to work on it and if so, who are the members that are part of that committee and how many meetings have they had already?

The Prime Minister: There is no special committee. There is a member from my Office, the Attorney General's Office and then in consultation with the State Law Office.

AIR MAURITIUS - AIR ACCESS POLICY

(No. B/476) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for

Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the air access policy, he will state the actions Government proposes to take in relation thereto, indicating the impact thereof on Air Mauritius Ltd.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in my speech on the occasion of the launching of the High-Powered Committee on Achieving the Second Economic Miracle and Vision 2030 on Saturday 22 August last, I announced in no unequivocal terms that, we inevitably need a more open and robust Air Access Policy that takes into account both the national interests and economic growth.

I also mentioned that, to spearhead the preparation of the Vision 2030 Blue Print, a National Advisory Council has been set up under the chair of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, to provide strategic oversight and facilitate cross collaboration among relevant agencies to move things forward.

In that respect, the National Advisory Council has already set up a Task Force under the chair of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service himself, which has been tasked with the development of a national Air Access Policy.

So far, the Council has met on three occasions and its work is ongoing.

Madam Speaker, I wish to assure the House that, any new Air Access Policy will not, in any way whatsoever, adversely affect the interest of Air Mauritius Ltd.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has mentioned that a Task Force has been set up, so may I know whether there is a time frame where they are going to publish their report with regard to this Air Access Policy?

The Prime Minister: Well, if we find it necessary, when the time will come, we will see whether it should be made public or made known to the hon. Members of the Assembly.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, it has been widely reported in the Press that there is going to be a signature of an agreement for the *Alliance Vanille* – regional airline - including Air Mauritius and other companies. May I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether any request has been made from Air Mauritius to get the support of the Government in financial or otherwise in order to make this regional airline a reality?

The Prime Minister: We are studying the whole situation.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Madam Speaker, there was a report that circulated some time ago at the level of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, namely the CAPA report which clearly states the challenges of the industry and more precisely it advocates the introduction of freedom airlines. Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister see to it that this report is made public?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member is asking a question wherein a report has been submitted at the level of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. I don't know whether the Rt. hon. Prime Minister will be in a position to reply.

(Interruptions)

If he can, yes. It concerns air access, but the report has been leveled at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

The Prime Minister: Well, a question can be put to the hon. Minister.

PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION ACT - AMENDMENTS

(No. B/477) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Prevention of Corruption Act, he will state if consideration is being given for proposed amendments to be brought thereto and, if so

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(a) give details thereof, and

(b) indicate when same will be introduced.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the Government Programme 2015-2019 provides that, I quote -

“Government has a mandate for change and will relentlessly fight fraud, corruption and financial crime. To that effect, a Financial Crime Commission will be set up to act as an apex body to oversee the ICAC, the Financial Intelligence Unit and the enforcement department of the Financial Services Commission”.

In my reply to the PNQ on 24 February 2015, I stated that the Financial Crime Commission will be set up as an umbrella organisation to oversee the operations of a revised and enhanced ICAC, the FIU, the Asset Recovery Unit, the Enforcement Units of the Financial Services Commission, the Financial Reporting Council and the Anti-Fraud Unit.

I am informed that in this context, the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation has had further consultations recently with different organisations in the UK involved in the fight against economic crime and serious and organised crimes, namely the National Crime Agency, the Economic Crime Command and the UK Financial Intelligence Unit, with a view to, *inter alia*, seeking advice and assistance on the setting up of the Financial Crime Commission.

Consequential amendments will be brought to the Prevention of Corruption Act and other related legislations in the wake of these proposed changes. Provision will also be made in the Act to enable a more effective tracking and curbing of money laundering and accumulation of wealth through backdoor mechanisms.

I am informed that substantial amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act had been proposed by the former Parliamentary Committee on the ICAC, pursuant to section 61 of the Act. Moreover, the ICAC had also proposed certain additional amendments to the Act, based on the recommendations of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. These proposed amendments will also be taken on board in the course of the exercise.

Madam Speaker, I wish to point out that, in the meantime, a number of measures have been taken by the ICAC in line with our commitment to combat fraud, corruption, malpractices and irregularities. These include -

- conducting corruption prevention reviews in different public bodies – since January 2015 to date thirty such reviews have been effected and 426 recommendations made to enhance transparency, accountability and integrity.
- implementation of Public Sector Anti-Corruption Framework in public bodies to empower them to do their own corruption prevention.
- development of Best Practices Guide to address areas prone to corruption.
- conducting anti-corruption campaign in the secondary education sector – from February to May 2015 around 10,000 students have been sensitised.
- holding of empowerment sessions for public officers and training of integrity officers by UNODC in order to foster a corruption-free public service.

Madam Speaker, Government is committed to conducting business on the principles of discipline, transparency, accountability and exemplary governance. We have pledged to eradicate fraud, corruption, malpractices and irregularities in all aspects of public life and restore our national values.

I wish to reassure the House that my Government stands by its commitment and brings the necessary amendments to the law.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether in the proposed amendments which will be brought to the PoCA, the question of the protection of whistle-blowers will also be included?

The Prime Minister: Well, I am afraid I can't answer this because I am not aware. I will try to find out.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano!

HORSE RACING – COMMISSION OF INQUIRY - REPORT

(No. B/478) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing in Mauritius which was set up on 24 September 2014, he will state the quantum of the –

- (a) fees paid to the Commissioners thereof, and
- (b) related expenses incurred in relation thereto until the submission of the final report thereof in March 2015, indicating if, in the light thereof, consideration will be given for the introduction of proposed amendments to be brought to the Prevention of Corruption Act to empower the Independent Commission against Corruption to investigate into cases of corruption on horse racing activities.

(Withdrawn)

POLITICAL PARTIES – FINANCING - LEGISLATION

(No. B/479) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the financing of political parties, he will state if Government is considering introducing legislation in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the expected date of introduction thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the Government has, in its 2015-2019 Programme, pledged to enact a Financing of Political Parties Act and to widen the powers of the Electoral Supervisory Commission so as to enable it to control and sanction fraud, corruption and conflict of interests during election time, and also to monitor political funding and abuse of position of power.

I wish to reassure the House that my Government will stand by its commitment and will consider the issue in the wider context of electoral reforms.

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, est-ce que je peux savoir de l'honorable Premier ministre si le gouvernement compte, en attendant la nouvelle loi sur le financement des partis

politiques, légiférer pour rendre obligatoire aux partis politiques de s'enregistrer au *Registrar of Associations* et de soumettre des comptes annuels?

The Prime Minister: Well, we won't take piecemeal measures. We will come with a global law regarding this.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: May I ask a question to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister! Doesn't the Rt. hon. Prime Minister think that this is a fit case where a Select Committee should be set up with a definite time frame presided by the Attorney General or some other Minister to allow all the political parties in the House or outside this House to come and depone because this is a subject which interests all political parties, of course, the society at large, but a Select Committee with a definite time frame under the chairmanship of a Minister should be set up to hear evidence about what type of law do we need for the financing of political parties and is best suited for Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: Well, we will take this into consideration and, if need be, we will have recourse to this.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Gobin!

RIVIÈRE DES ANGUILLES & SOUILLAC – PROJECTS - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/480) **Mr M. Gobin (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the projects implemented by the National Development Unit in Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac, he will give a list thereof, indicating in each case where matters stand and, with regard to those which have not yet been completed, indicate the reasons therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am tabling a list of projects of the National Development Unit for the Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac which have been awarded during the last two Financial Years along with a Status Report therein.

There are five projects which have not yet been completed due to delays in obtaining wayleaves/clearances, bad weather conditions as well as delay on the part of the contractor.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY - ALLEGED MALPRACTICES

(No. B/481) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Wastewater Management Authority, he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry to look into the alleged malpractices and excess payments made over the past years thereat, as mentioned in the recent Report of the Director of Audit.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, following the release of the Report of the Director of Audit for the year ending 31 December 2014, Government has decided that the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms should chair a monthly meeting with Supervising Officers of Ministries to look into the adverse comments made in the Report of the Director of Audit and ensure that appropriate and timely remedial measures are taken to prevent wastage of public funds.

I am informed that the Committee has already started its work.

The alleged malpractices at the level of the Wastewater Management Authority will be dealt with by the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms. In the circumstances, it is not proposed to set up a Commission of Inquiry on this matter.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Lesjongard!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Rt. hon. Prime Minister. Has the Rt. hon. Prime Minister been made aware that for the past consecutive five years, there have been cost overruns of the order of 60% in almost all the projects that have been carried out by the Wastewater Management Authority? I am saying for the past five years and this has been highlighted in the various Audit Reports that have been made public.

The Prime Minister: Well, I understand that on this particular issue, there has already been started an independent auditing.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question B/496 in regard to the New Double Taxation Avoidance Convention

between Mauritius and South Africa and 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, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation.

Parliamentary Question B/507 in regard to the Belle Mare Tourist Village project and addressed to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications will now be replied by hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Parliamentary Question B/514 in regard to the foreign medical practitioners employed by the Apollo Bramwell Hospital and addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development. Parliamentary Questions B/495 and B/509 have been withdrawn. Hon. Bhagwan, first question!

MBC – OVERDRAFTS & FEES COLLECTED

(No. B/485) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) measures that have been taken to ensure good governance thereat, especially with regard to the day to day management of the affairs thereof;
- (b) quantum of the –
 - (i) overdrafts it has contracted with banks and financial institutions, as at to date, and
 - (ii) fees collected from the subscribers on a monthly basis, since January 2015 to date, and
- (c) composition of the present Board thereof, indicating the number of times it has met since January 2015 to date.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, since this new Government has taken office in December 2014, it has taken stock of the catastrophic financial and HR situations at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC).

In respect of the financial situation of the MBC, a review carried out in March 2015 by my Ministry has, *inter alia*, revealed the following that, as at 31 December 2014, the Corporation had a cumulative debt portfolio of nearly Rs1.0 billion, the breakdown of which is as follows –

	Rs (M)
Bank overdraft	- 222.5
Loans	- 603
Creditors	- <u>162.4</u>
Total	<u>987.9</u>

The review has also revealed that since 2009/10 the MBC had been operating at a deficit level of more than Rs100 m. per annum and the deterioration of the liquidity situation of the MBC is essentially due to the drastic increase in operational costs from Rs477 m. in 2006/07 to Rs748 m. in 2014, the stagnation of advertising income (Rs225 m. per annum) and expenditure on fixed assets.

After analysis of the information available at the MBC, the conclusion reached is that the latter would not be able to pay its outstanding loans, overdraft and debts though an improvement in the liquidity position has been noted recently. In this regard, my Ministry has made certain recommendations to improve the financial situation of the MBC.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry has also reviewed the procurement activities of the MBC since 2010 and it has to come to light that there have been repeated breaches of the Public Procurement Act 2006 and a complete lack of accountability and transparency in the procurement of goods and services. Out of a total of 240 procurement activities, 110 purchases amounting to some Rs102 m. were undertaken without any competitive bidding exercise, clearly showing an abuse of, what is known, as the direct procurement procedure. There is also evidence of certain specific suppliers of broadcasting equipment and accessories and a specific brand of equipment having been favoured since 2010.

Madam Speaker, on the human resource management side, a review over a period of 2010 to 2014 has revealed that human resource management was generally characterised by malpractices and irregularities in the recruitment and promotion of staff including a complete absence of accountability and transparency. These factors have also substantially contributed towards the deterioration of the financial situation of the Corporation.

From the review carried out it, *inter alia*, transpires that –

- (i) there were no clearly defined recruitment and promotion procedures at the MBC;
- (ii) many officers had been granted increments - some up to 10 to 12 increments a year - more than prescribed by the Pay Research Bureau;
- (iii) contract officers, including the executive management team, had been paid cash in lieu of annual leaves though no record of attendance was maintained;
- (iv) some 300 persons were recruited on both freelance and contractual basis without advertisement, and
- (v) 20 Security Officers were recruited though this position did not exist on the establishment.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, a restructuring has started and is ongoing. The debts are still there but, on the operational side, the Corporation has started breaking even through the following measures –

- Closing down of offices in Port Louis and Forest Side, whereby all employees have been brought to work under one roof, that is, at their Headquarters in Moka.
- Effectively managing the expenditure of the Corporation and creating awareness across the organisation through respective Heads of Departments on the precarious financial situation at the MBC and taking measures to reduce operational costs.
- Termination of employment of 7 contractual employees, who were deemed excessive and surplus to requirement.
- Holding meetings regularly with the relevant Heads of Departments to re-engineer the respective services, such as radio, TV and News

programmes focusing on the economic, social and development activities of the country.

- Continuously communicating to staff about the actions taken by the new Management to restore confidence and trust, and to create a new working and conducive environment with a sense of discipline.
- Re-organisation of the work and re-allocation of duties in various departments to ensure cost effectiveness and quality of service delivery to the public.

Furthermore, in terms of good governance, the MBC is preparing a Human Resource Manual which will include –

- (a) a Policy for the recruitment and selection procedure, taking into account fairness, transparency, meritocracy and equity;
- (b) Equal Opportunity Policy, establishing, *inter alia*, a formal procedure for the management of situations of conflict of interest, and
- (c) a new Code of Conduct for the MBC

The day to day management, following the departure of the former Director General on 25 August 2015, has been entrusted to the Team Leader Finance & Marketing who has been designated as Officer-in-Charge of the Corporation. The latter is presently overseeing the daily operations of the MBC, in close collaboration with the acting Chairperson of the MBC and all Heads of Departments. In line with principles of good governance and transparency, Madam Speaker, the following posts have been advertised –

1. Director General's position;
2. Deputy Director General's position;
3. Director of Radio;
4. Director of News;
5. Marketing & Events Manager;
6. Production Manager;
7. Radio Production Manager (Oriental);
8. Human Resource Manager, and

9. Producer (Urdu).

Recruitment will follow soon.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the MBC that the existing overdrafts with banks and financial institutions have now been reduced from Rs222.5 m. in March 2015 to Rs196 m. in August 2015.

The fees collected from subscribers on a monthly basis from January to August 2015 amount of Rs374.8 m for eight months.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (c) of the question, the MBC Board has not been fully reconstituted pending forthcoming amendments to the MBC Act which are presently being vetted by the State Law Office.

Since February 2015, Mr Jugdish Dev PHOKEER, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation, is acting as Chairperson. The other members are –

- (a) Mr Om Kumar DABIDIN, Permanent Secretary representing the Prime Minister's Office;
- (b) Mr Lutchmeeparsad RAMDHUN, Director, Information Services at the Government Information Service, and
- (c) Mrs Ushalini SHEWRAJ, Assistant Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation.

Since February 2015 to date, the present MBC Board has met nine times.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister has given us a lengthy reply. The hon. Minister has given us information as to measures taken to ensure good governance and the independence of the MBC. Can the hon. Minister inform the House, the subscribers, those who are paying millions of rupees that there is no daily interference of the Minister in the affairs of the MBC, as it is reported and whether one particular journalist is now acting as the Director General because he is a close friend of the Minister. This is the news which is being circulated among all the personnel of the MBC which is creating a lot of havoc as if *la MBC est devenue un navire sans gouvernail*.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member should not read everything from the press and then making as if it becomes Gospel truth. If ever he has any doubt on how the

MBC has changed and is now running in line with practices of good governance, he should ask hon. Uteem. He was there on Friday.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Member is a Deputy Whip, he should behave. I will come to that *émission* later on. Can the hon. Minister, at least, inform the House, the country - I know it is his responsibility, we have discussed about the opportunity of informing him - even the Prime Minister's Question - whether he is satisfied of the *retransmission des travaux parlementaires*; whether he is satisfied that there is no interference. It is a non-sense the way it is manipulated, the way the debate is transmitted. So, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has had a look on what is...

(Interruptions)

Twa ki pu dir mwa ki pu répone là?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please! Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has had a look at the *retransmission des travaux parlementaires* and whether he is satisfied? We are not satisfied and we have discussed the matter with him.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I do understand that hon. Bhagwan is in festive mood today but, he should be serious with the questions we are being asked. A methodology has been put in place - and this has been communicated in the same press that he is reading - in terms of assessing the newsworthiness of an item prior to the MBC deciding which particular event should be broadcasted on the *Journal télévisé* live on TV.

(Interruptions)

No, I don't assess it. I am not from the Labour Party.

Madam Speaker, there are also a number of measures which are being put in place to bring the MBC to operate with a level of transparency in line with practices of good governance which is based on international norms. This is why we have advertised for all these positions so that we can get the best people to run the Corporation. We are also looking

at changing methodologies and we are also looking at putting the MBC financially in order because the heritage of Mr Calikhan and Dr. Ramgoolam is there for everybody to see.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House and the country that the MBC - I have heard the hon. Minister stating that he wants the MBC to become the BBC, the British Broadcasting Corporation and not the Bhadain Broadcasting Corporation.

(Interruptions)

I am honest, many of my friends there are complaining. They are not having access! Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the MBC will not become the Bhadain Broadcasting Corporation?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: Well, Madam Speaker, one thing I can assure: it will not become the BBC – the Bhagwan Broadcasting Corporation!

(Interruptions)

But, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please! Allow the hon. Minister to reply!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: *Tone elu 8 fois to pane fou narien! Dans 8 mois mone faire plis ki twa!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I am drawing your attention to order!

(Interruptions)

Please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I can also assure the hon. Member that the new way that the MBC is operating now is completely distant from those days when there was political intervention and political interference.

(Interruptions)

In fact, I can substantiate what I am saying, Madam Speaker, because for more than 20 years a Member of the Opposition has never been invited to the MBC for a live televised programme...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bhadain: *Demand Reza si ti manipuler!*

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: *Coze la vérité!*

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bhadain: And this is a great step into addressing issues regarding impartiality...

(Interruptions)

Let me answer!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Would you allow the Minister to reply?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhadain: *Allez, lot cou mo invite twa...*

Madam Speaker: Please, allow the Minister to reply!

Mr Bhadain: *Lot cou mo invite twa...*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I said no comments from a seated position, please!

(Interruptions)

Have you finished, hon. Minister!

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I can assure the hon. Member that all these measures are being put in place to ensure impartiality and there is going to be a further agenda of programmes between Opposition Members and Members of the Government for the next 12 months.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Everybody knows that l'émission *de l'autre jour a été manipulée. Le ministre a mis un écran, les gens était en train de lui dicter d'en haut!*

(Interruptions)

Manipulée totalement ! Bodha conné !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, ask your question!

Mr Jhugroo: Will the hon. Minister consider opening two enquiries, first, to look into the purchase of equipment by the MBC, that is, films and serials for the past ten years and, secondly, an enquiry to look for what reason twenty security officers had been recruited by the MBC and most of them come from Constituency No.5 and when we have got the presence of the Special Mobile Force...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, no comment, please!

Mr Jhugroo: ... the presence of the Police Force, we have the CCTV cameras installed everywhere in the premises of the MBC and we have the Central Door Lock

System? So, these two enquiries should be carried out and, if need be, referred to the Police Department.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, the public sector...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, you have asked your question!

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, the Public Sector Efficiency Bureau of my Ministry is still looking into numerous issues because there have been so many malpractices and irregularities. But, we should also look at bringing the Corporation back to the level it deserves and bring the MBC to the standards required. This is what is being done and it is moving towards transparency and good governance.

Madam Speaker: I will allow one last question for hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

So, we will now break for lunch.

At 1.07 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.40 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

PLAINE VERTE - EID FESTIVAL - EXPENSES

(No. B/486) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Eid Festival celebrations organized on 26 July and 01 August 2015 respectively, in Plaine Verte, by the Municipal Council of Port Louis in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, a breakdown of the expenses incurred in relation thereto in respect of each item of expenditure, including the two-weeks' decorations of the garden and for the fire crackers, indicating -

(a) the names of the suppliers thereof, and

(b) mode of selection of the suppliers therefor.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that the following activities were organised in the context of the Eid Festival celebrations.

Firstly, a family cum children day at Concorde Garden, Plaine Verte on 26 July 2015.

Secondly, an Eid Party at Concorde Garden, Plaine Verte on 01 August 2015.

The expenses incurred in respect of these two activities were Rs35, 590 and Rs94,340 respectively.

Madam Speaker, I shall with your permission arrange for the breakdown of the expenses incurred in respect of these activities to be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that the provision of tents, chairs, podium, banners and gifts have been procured from official suppliers of the Council selected through the annual tendering procedures. As regards decorative lights, these were placed on trees and hedges at the Concorde Garden by the Municipal Labour.

I am further informed that fire crackers were not provided nor payment effected by the Council for same.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is a new policy from the Municipality of Port Louis not to invite Members of the Opposition to the following celebration as it used to be the case before?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, sure I'll ask them that. Thank you.

AGALEGA – MINISTER OF HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE - VISIT

(No. B/487) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to his last visit to the Agalega Island, he will state -

- (a) the date and duration thereof;
- (b) the composition of the accompanying delegation ;
- (c) the outcome thereof, and
- (d) if he has had interactive sessions with the inhabitants thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I visited Agalega Island on 27 July 2015 from 09 30 to 15 00 hours. The departure from Agalega was set for 15 00 hours because of operational

constraints of the Dornier Aircraft which usually has to cater for unforeseen landing back at Agalega during day light hours.

I was accompanied by the Senior Chief Executive, the Director General Health Services and the Director Nursing of my Ministry.

The Acting Resident Manager of the Outer Islands Development Corporation also accompanied the delegation throughout the visit.

Madam Speaker, on 27 July 2015 we left Mauritius on the Dornier Aircraft at 06 00 hours in the morning. We arrived in Agalega Island at 09 30 hours. As soon as we disembarked, we met the Acting Resident Manager and his staff at the airstrip. We also met school children there to whom chocolates and fruits were distributed.

At 10 00 hours, we took a 4 x 4 vehicle and stopped at the beach, where we embarked on a boat to go to the South Island. It took us 30 minutes to arrive there because of the rough sea.

We disembarked on the South Island, took another 4 x 4 and visited the Health Centre where we met patients and members of the public.

We then returned to the North Island, took the 4 x 4

(Interruptions)

Well, they are asking for the information, I am giving the information.

We then returned to the North Island, took the 4 x 4 vehicle and visited the Health Centre where we also met patients and members of the public.

I then had a working lunch with the Acting Resident Manager and the health care staff.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, the purpose of my visit was to take stock of the health facilities and services in Agalega and to discuss with the local health staff of their future needs and requirements.

Following site visits at both North and South of Agalega and after discussions held with the health staff and the Acting Resident Manager, the following decisions were taken –

- a Medical and Health Officer/Senior Medical and Health Officer will be posted in South Agalega;
- an ambulance service would be made available on the island. Action is accordingly being taken by my Ministry.
- a first shipment of 38 items regarding the supply of furniture and equipment for Agalega health services have already been shipped on 02 September 2015 and a second shipment will be effected on the next vessel which will apparently proceed to Agalega around 26 September 2015.

Moreover, a Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry will henceforth follow up on proposed course of actions and to consider any future request for the smooth running of the health services in Agalega.

The House is aware, Madam Speaker, that officers are very reluctant to serve in Agalega and that has been the case for long. I am pleased to inform the House that following the visit, four Officers, one female Charge Nurse and three Nursing Officers have decided to extend their tour of service in Agalega till 2016.

Concerning part (d) of the question, Madam Speaker, during the visit I did have interactive sessions with patients and residents of the island, under the guidance of the Acting Resident Manager.

I wish to table two photographs, Madam Speaker, with regard to the visit.

Madam Speaker, while conversing with the Members of the public at both islands, I enquired whether they knew the Members of the National Assembly who represented them there and I must say that their reply was negative. I even asked whether they knew the hon. Member who had asked this question and they said no.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, this is really unprecedented. Agalega visit down the years whether Members of Parliament, previous Ministers, every Minister, every Member of Parliament who go to Agalega do visit the inhabitants and I have a meeting with them. Can I ask the hon. Minister why, in his visit, he did not meet the inhabitants of Agalega, did not have a formal meeting? I, myself as the MP for Agalega, in my last mandate together with hon. Mohamed, Minister then, we met the people of Agalega in a meeting, in the village hall,

about a 100 because the number of inhabitants is only 219 there. Why the hon. Minister did not deem it fit to meet the inhabitants of Agalega?

Mr Gayan: Unless my English is very poor, Madam Speaker, I did say I did meet the inhabitants of Agalega.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister is not aware, but I would refer him to 'Le Mauricien' of 28 July 2015 where there is a press article stating that the hon. Minister did not meet any inhabitants.

Mr Gayan: I am not guided by press articles. I know what I did.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please! Can you please just withdraw what you have just said! You can't say he is a liar.

(Interruptions)

Well, if...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah! Please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah! When I am on my feet, you don't stand up! Can I say that! Okay!

(Interruptions)

What I will do is that I will listen to the recording and then I will come back. Okay. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah, you have even uttered this word which is unparliamentary! When I am on my feet, you sit down! You also have to withdraw this word.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, a last supplementary question on the same issue. The hon. Minister in his reply mentioned that the inhabitants do not know who the MPs are for this Constituency. Does he imply that hon. Minister Husnoo - the inhabitants do not know him as well?

Mr Gayan: I asked the question whether they knew about the hon. Member who asked the question.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

PRIVATE CLINICS – PUBLIC HOSPITALS – FEES PAID

(No. B/488) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the private clinics which have supplied services to the public hospitals since 2010 to date, he will give a list thereof, indicating the quantum of the fees paid out thereto on a yearly basis therefor, indicating in each case, the services supplied, including radiological services for Computed Axial Tomography (CT) Scans and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI).

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, the information which is being requested goes back to 2010. The information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that the CT- Scan has been broken since long and Government is paying millions of rupees to private clinics, *notamment le City Clinic à Port Louis*, and what is he doing to remedy the case?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I know that there are problems with the CT- Scan and other equipment. We are doing the needful to have them replaced and repaired. Unfortunately, we do not have the biomedical engineers available right now, but it is being looked into.

Mr Ameer Meea: My information is that this is being done purposely because there is a '*rakett*' going on in the Ministry. The hon. Minister must be aware of what is going on there. The machines have broken down since long and they don't repair it purposely so as to pay the clinic a fee every month. Can the hon. Minister enquire in such matter?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I have enquired into the matter and the reply that I got was that, as far as possible, whenever there is a breakdown of the CT-Scan in one hospital, the patients are referred to another public hospital. That is information I have.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Does the hon. Minister find it normal to continue paying to the private sector services that are already available in the public sector, and on which grounds are the private service providers chosen?

Mr Gayan: Well, my understanding, Madam Speaker, is that whenever services are available in the public sector, those services are made available to the patients. But it can happen that a machine breaks down or something and if a patient is in urgent need of care and attention, then a decision has to be taken. I am given to understand that the decision that is taken is to refer that particular patient to the closest clinic that is in the area. This is the information I have, but I am also concerned about this particular question with regard to the private clinics. When the information comes to the Library, I am sure there will be other questions, but this is the information I have.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister since when the CT-Scan is broken and what criteria are being used? He just mentioned the nearest private clinic, so can we know what criteria are being used to choose which nearest private clinic to send the patient for the CT-scan?

Mr Gayan: Well, Madam Speaker, I did say that the one that is closest to where the service is required.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My colleague, hon. Ameer Meea, has made mention of a '*rakett*'. I think there is connivance. We are all MPs, we all know what has been happening over the years whereby the pretext of machines are broken down and so on. So, can the hon. Minister, at least, order an enquiry, an investigation in whatever form, be it the Police, other Ministries or whatever ...

(Interruptions)

No, not him! To have an investigation, so that at least the population may rest assured that Government is taking action firmly against all these crooks. I am using the word 'crooks'.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I will certainly look into that, but I have already asked questions and, again, the answers that I got, were that the machines in the public sector break down more easily because the use that is made of the machines is heavier. I mean, in the public hospitals more patients need to have CT-Scans than in the clinics. This is the information I have, but we will see when the enquiry is over.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The region of Port Louis comprises three clinics: the Chisty Shifa Clinic, City Clinic and the Clinique du Nord. As far as the proximity is concerned for Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, the closest clinic is the Chisty Shifa Clinic which is in Labourdonnais Street - the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital being in Volcy Pougnet Street. I would like to know why patients are being transferred to City Clinic in Magon Street from the hospital?

Mr Gayan: I have no information about this. I believe that the CT-Scan is not available in Chisty Shifa Clinic, but I am not sure whether that is the case.

Madam Speaker: I will allow two more questions: one from hon. Jhugroo and one from hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister - if he has information available now - what is the cost of one CT-Scan and can we know whether the personnel working with the CT-Scan had proper training before working with this type of machinery?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I am afraid I do not have the information.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May we know from the hon. Minister whether there is uniformity of payment to each private sector for one CT-Scan? Is it uniform or everyone charge to their whims and caprices?

Mr Gayan: Well, I do not have the information, but I have already given instructions to my staff that we should have a tariff, a rate, tariff for all clinics for all the services that are being provided. This is being worked into.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I grant you a last question.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister enquire whether there is connivance between those responsible for the maintenance of these equipment, the suppliers and also the private clinics? From what I understand, there is connivance.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I hear lots of things but when it comes to getting the evidence and the people to come and say what they claim to be saying, it is difficult.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/494 has been withdrawn. Hon. Jhugroo!

STREET LIGHTING – ELECTRICITY TARIFFS

(No. B/489) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to street lighting, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the -

- (a) current electricity tariffs that are presently applied to the Municipal and District Councils therefor, indicating if consideration will be given for a reduction thereof, and
- (b) measures that will be taken for the promotion of the use of photovoltaic solar systems by the Councils.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Madam Speaker, I am informed by the CEB that the tariff for street lighting is Rs7.82 per KW/hour.

The CEB does not envisage any reduction of the tariff.

With regard to part (b) of the question –

- (i) two solar street lighting systems of capacity 30 Kilowatts and 37 Kilowatts each to be managed by the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix and the Moka District Council have been installed at a *Morcellement* in Highlands;
- (ii) the CEB has launched a new Small Scale Distributed Generation Scheme, which is open to municipalities and district councils or promoters of *Morcellement* to install 5 kilowatt solar photovoltaic system for street lighting, and
- (iii) the Energy Efficiency Management Office is in the process of appointing a consultant to make recommendations on energy efficient street lighting.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware that very often the District Councils face big financial problems to pay their CEB bills after the month of September to October and this is really becoming a very big problem for the District Councils to get works done?

Mr Collendavelloo: Yes, that may be so, but it is also a very problem for CEB to collect money from District Councils.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

MUNICIPAL & DISTRICT COUNCILS – VEHICLES - DUTY FREE FACILITIES

(No. B/490) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the vehicles purchased by the Municipal and District Councils, he will state if consideration will be given for the –

- (a) provision of duty free facilities thereto, and
- (b) waiver of registration duties and annual road taxes in respect thereof.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, yes, consideration will be given to the two suggestions made by the hon. Member in the next Budget exercise.

Madam Speaker: No supplementary! Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

STATE TRADING CORPORATION - GASOLINE & DIESEL - PRICE

(No. B/491) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to gasoline and diesel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the –

- (a) actual cost price thereof in each case -
 - (i) indicating the reasons why the prices thereof have not been reviewed downwards, and
 - (ii) giving a breakdown of the different components of the price per litre thereof, and
- (b) total amount of money collected for the Build Mauritius Fund.

(Vide Reply to PNQ)

SUGAR CANE - HARVEST SEASON

(No. B/492) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to sugarcane, he will state the measures that his Ministry proposes to take to ensure that the harvest season thereof does not extend to January 2016 with its consequences on low sugar extraction which would impair the economic performance of the planters.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (MCIA) closely monitors the harvest of the sugarcane crop with all stakeholders, in particular the millers, to ensure that the harvest is completed in a timely manner. Furthermore, it also gives directives as appropriate in special circumstances with regard to receipt and transfer of canes to ensure that there is no undue delay in the completion of the harvest.

At the start of each harvest, the milling factories are asked to communicate to the MCIA, its estimates of canes to be crushed for the crop season together with the start and the completion date of the harvest.

Based on the duration of the crop, MCIA monitors transfer and surplus of canes from one milling factory to another one depending on the specific circumstances.

For the crop 2015, Alteo has informed MCIA that based on its cane estimates, it has a surplus of 110,000 tonnes of canes which need to be reallocated to other milling factories to enable it to complete its harvest within the recommended guideline of 150 days.

Following consultations with all stakeholders prior to the start of the harvest, MCIA has initially agreed to allocate the surplus of 110,000 tonnes of canes from Alteo as follows –

- (i) 40,000 tonnes to Terra
- (ii) 40,000 tonnes to Médine, and
- (iii) 30,000 tonnes to Omnicane

The House will again note that Médine milling factory has encountered some difficulties during the commissioning period of its new power plant and subsequent breakdowns. This has led to delays in the start of the harvest period at Médine. As a result, the MCIA had, with the agreement of the milling factories, reviewed the allocation of 40,000 tonnes of canes from Alteo to Médine. These 40,000 tonnes have been reallocated as follows –

- (i) 30,000 tonnes to Terra, and
- (ii) 10,000 tonnes to Omnicane

As at 05 September 2015, 45,824 tonnes from Alteo factory area have already been transferred to Terra and Omnicane.

In view of the delay in starting the harvest, following negotiations, Médine has also agreed to operate the factory during all public holidays and starts crushing at earlier hours after the weekly servicing operation to complete the harvest in due date.

As per the milling programme, the harvest is expected to be completed by the end of December 2015.

I would like to reassure the House that I will personally up on progress of the harvest to ensure that the milling period does not extend to January 2016.

The House will also note that the study undertaken to assess the Economic, Social and Environmental Impact on Mauritius of abolition of Internal Quotas of Sugar in EU Market, has recommended for the sugar factory to operate on a 7-day week. This measure would positively impact on the duration of the crop and the extraction rate as milling would be undertaken when the crop has the highest sucrose content. I have already started the consultation process with the relevant stakeholders so as to take on board their views prior to the implementation of the recommendations.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, apart from what the hon. Minister has informed the House, we all know the difficulties which the small planters are facing. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what other facilities which his Ministry or institutions are putting at the disposal of the small planters in these difficult times, especially being given that Médine has started crop late? Apart from the measures which the hon. Minister has informed, what are the additional measures which he intends to give to the small planters to give them some alleviation in the difficulties they are facing?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the Sugar Industry is facing major difficulties at the moment given that the price has gone down drastically with the opening of the Market in EU area and due to that, we have a report that was conducted by Landell Mills Consultant, the recommendations of which have been rendered public. Following that, I have set up a committee which is under the chairmanship of my Permanent Secretary who is looking at the recommendations set in that report and I am coming with some measures very shortly to address the problems being faced by small planters, planters in general, the employees of the industry and the whole industry at large. Those problems will be addressed at in the measures to be communicated very shortly.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I have another supplementary question. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the institutions falling under his Ministry, have estimated the likely price of sugar for small planters for the current crop to relieve them from the difficulties which I have mentioned and whether he will see to it that an increase in the bagasse transfer price, as recommended in one of the reports submitted to him, while the CEB is having windfall gains on one side, whether the planters may benefit from any increase in the bagasse transfer price?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, like I just mentioned, I am coming with some measures in the near future to address those problems being faced by planters in general to see to it that their revenues are relooked at so that they can continue in that activity and continue to have a Sugar Industry in Mauritius.

Mr Bhagwan: A last supplementary question, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister has informed us that he is personally having an overlook for the crop season which, according to him, must end by December. Can the hon. Minister inform the House and the planters whether he has prepared an emergency plan in case the crop season does not end by December, especially with regard to the small planters for the difficult months ahead of them?

Mr Seeruttun: Again, Madam Speaker, like I said earlier on, we are monitoring the situation very closely and already with the breakdown happening at Médine which resulted in the late start of the operation of the factory, we had to reallocate canes that were firstly reallocated to Médine, to other factories and we are going to, like I said, monitor closely how it proceeds so that if ever there is need to reallocate further canes to other factories, we will do that to ensure that the harvest period does not go over December 2015. We will make sure that that does not happen this year.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

M1 MOTORWAY – SPEED LIMIT

(No. B/493) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the M1 Motorway, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the rationale behind the setting of the –

- (a) 80 km/h speed limit when leaving Quatre Bornes to the north, and
- (b) 60 km/h limit when leaving Port Louis to the South.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the speed limit is one amongst numerous measures to mitigate road traffic hazards and to enhance the road safety and many factors are taken into account when determining the maximum limit for a specific stretch of a road.

These include the calculated design speed, the road alignment, safe visibility distances for overtaking, types and number of vehicles thereat, population and types of activities in the neighbouring areas.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am advised that the 80 km/h speed limit along a stretch of the motorway at the level of the Shoprite Commercial Centre when leaving Quatre Bornes to the North can be explained by a number of factors namely - the calculated design speed when the road was first designed, the topography of the road, geometric design and the width of the lanes. With regard to part (b) of the question, I am advised that a 60 km/h speed limit from Place d'Armes to Caudan roundabout when leaving Port Louis to the South is explained by the fact that the region is characterized with mixed and heavy traffic as a result of the -

- presence of Victoria Square Bus Station and a road side bus layby, and
- presence of other open commercial activities at the level of the Port Louis Central Market and the ex-NTA building.

As a result of the above mentioned factors, the technical staff of the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit have concluded that the road safety requirements between Place d'Armes and Caudan roundabout warrant the necessity of a road safety zone of 60 km/h to ensure the best balance among pedestrian safety, multi modal vehicular movement and the mobility of traffic.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has mentioned speed when the road was designed in the beginning, but is the hon. Minister aware that a road is designed to the speed that we want to give - it is not you design a road and then you put a speed? The road was designed in 1960 by Bhurtun Associates and so whatever company it was, for a road to the tune of 17 mph which is equivalent to about 110 kilometres. Could the hon. Minister really consider if the engineers are not misleading that this road was designed for 110 kilometres per hour and more so that now we have 3 lanes? So, it is a golden rule. When you leave a town joining a motorway, you should give the maximum speed to really decongest the road as opposed to congestion.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, this is very technical. I will consider the matter, but from what I understand at the time when the road was designed, it was a roundabout, now it has become more complex.

Mr Jhugroo: May I ask the hon. Minister – I think he said in one of his replies that he was going to unify the speed limit on motorways. So, being given that we have got a motorway in the north and we have got several roundabouts, can we know why do we have several speed limits on that motorway, from Port Louis to the north and we have got several roundabouts? When you come to a roundabout, you know what you have to do? So, why have we got so many speed cameras with so many speed limits? Is the hon. Minister going to review all these speed cameras?

Mr Bodha: I think there are a number of factors like the steep slope, the road alignment, whether it is an urban area. Anyway, the National Road Safety Council that we are going to set up will consider all these matters. What we have done for the time being is we have made a uniform three-possibilities for roads: 60 kilometres, 80 kilometres, 110 kilometres. In the past, we had 70, 90, 100 and 110. So, we have made it more simple for the time being, but we are going to consider the whole matter for the whole island.

Dr. Sorefan: Hon. Minister, when leaving Port Louis, after the Caudan...

Madam Speaker: Address yourself to the Chair, please!

Dr. Sorefan: Yes. I will just explain so that the Minister can answer the question. We have 3 obstacles. The first one, if I may say so, instead of causing decongestion, we are causing congestion, we have 3 speed cameras within a limit of 1 kilometre and 80 kilometres speed limit up to BMW Garage; after that the traffic becomes fluid. The second one, just when you leave the Hindu House, we have a traffic light for pedestrians that causes

congestion and you have mentioned for the safety 16 kilometres. To me, it could have been raised to 80. Would the hon. Minister consider, firstly, that the traffic lights should be replaced by a footbridge?

Mr Bodha: I think it is a valuable suggestion. Madam, we have now speed cameras which are at one side, there are spot checks. I have seen a system which is very interesting in South Africa where, in fact, there is a speed check over a segment of the road, that is, when you enter that segment and when you leave it. If you have been speeding over the speed limit, then it flashes. It is an average between the segments. We are thinking to introduce this in Mauritius.

DOING BUSINESS IN MAURITIUS - WATER & ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

(No. B/494) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to doing business in Mauritius, he will state how far his Ministry is improving access to water and electricity to potential investors with the objective of achieving the second economic miracle.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY – EMPLOYEES – QUALIFICATIONS & SALARIES

(No. B/495) Dr R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the National Insurance Company, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, a list of the employees thereof in the grade of Managers up to Chief Executive Officer, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) qualifications thereof;
- (b) areas of responsibility thereof, and
- (c) salaries and terms and conditions of employment thereof, including all the other benefits draw.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS & SOUTH AFRICA - DOUBLE TAXATION AVOIDANCE CONVENTION

(No. B/496) 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 new Double Taxation Avoidance Convention between Mauritius and South Africa, he will state –

- (a) in what respect it will be more beneficial to Mauritius, and
- (b) if any study has been carried out to assess the impact thereof on the Mauritian economy.

The Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr R. Bhadain): Madam Speaker, the new Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement with the Republic of South Africa was signed by the previous Government on 17 May 2013.

The Republic of South Africa ratified the new Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement on 10 October 2013. Subsequently, Global Business Operators in Mauritius expressed their concerns on the revised Article 4 subsection (3) which deals with the determination of the place of residence through the mutual agreement procedure for dual resident companies. The revised Article 4 subsection (3) did not provide a defined criteria to determine residency status through mutual agreement, thus created confusion and uncertainty.

The operators were of the view that companies using the Mauritius South Africa DTA could be denied treaty benefits unilaterally in the event, mutual agreement was not reached between the South African Revenue Services and the Mauritius Revenue Authority on cases referred to them.

A draft MoU detailing the process to be followed by the competent authorities to settle cases of dual residency was sent to the South African Authorities on 26 August 2014. Counter proposals were received from the South African Authorities on 22 October 2014. The South African Minister of Finance subsequently sent a letter to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development on 10 March 2015 stating and I quote –

“It is imperative that Mauritius ratify the DTA as soon as possible to eliminate uncertainty for cross border investment clause as well as to prevent abuse of a treaty and Double Non-Taxation of Income. The continued delay in the implementation of

these DTA will, unfortunately, leave our authorities with no other option, but to explore alternative unilateral options to curb the abuse of these DTA which will render the current DTA redundant.”

Madam Speaker, this Government was already put before a *fait accompli*. A meeting of the Financial Services Consultative Council was convened on 27 March 2015 with representatives of the Global Business Sector. After discussions, the FSCC agreed on a revised Memorandum of Understanding which sets both qualitative and quantitative criteria to determine the residency status in cases of companies having dual residence.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, on 19 and 20 May 2015, representatives of the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development met their counterparts in South Africa with a view to finalising the MoU. During the meeting, the South African counterparts made it clear that the DTA should be ratified by Mauritius first and only then the MoU could be discussed, subsequently, to clarify Article 4 subsection (3).

On 21 May 2015, together with the Financial Secretary, I met with the South African Minister of Finance. After negotiations, the latter agreed that Mauritius would ratify the DTA after the MoU is finalised. The South African Minister of Finance also agreed to our proposed changes to paragraphs (g) and (h) of the MoU which read as follows –

paragraph (g) –

“any other factors listed in paragraph 24.1 of the 2014 OECD commentary Article 4 paragraph (3) as may be amended by the OECD BEPS Action 6 Final Report.”

So, what we did was we aligned that paragraph with international best practice and what BEPS was proposing.

Then, paragraph (h) –

“Any such other factors that may be identified and agreed upon by the competent authorities in determining the residency of the person.”

The MoU was signed on 22 May 2015 and within six days, Madam Speaker, the double Tax Avoidance Agreement was finally ratified by Mauritius on 28 May 2015.

Madam Speaker, the revised treaty with the MoU will bring the following advantages to Mauritius –

- (i) the MoU, on the mutual agreement procedure on the determination of residency status for dual residence companies now brings more certainty, predictability and also clarity to the process bringing thus, more substance to the Mauritian jurisdiction;
- (ii) Action 6 of Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) preventing treaty abuse is of particular importance to our financial services sector, as has been explained on so many occasions by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development and the MoU prevents treaty abuse and brings new substance requirements which is now more than ever of importance in the light of the BEPS initiatives. Mauritius has taken thus, a further step as compared to its competitors in this regard;
- (iii) if we look at clauses 2 (a) and 2 (h) of the MoU from an alternate perspective, it is interesting to note that South Africa has effectively given the biggest boost to Mauritius Regional Headquartering proposals for South African corporates, thus, making us that gateway for Africa;
- (iv) with the new MoU it now makes sense for South African multinationals to segregate their non-domestic business and house their whole entity or their headquarters in Mauritius;
- (v) the duration for a construction site, for example, building site, installation or assembly project to constitute what is defined as permanent establishment, has been revised from nine months to 12 months. The longer period, Madam Speaker, is more convenient for investors to qualify as permanent establishment.
- (vi) Profits from the operations of ships or aircrafts will now be taxed in the country where the enterprise is situated as compared to the place of effective management in the previous treaty. This, Madam Speaker, is in line with the OECD model Convention and brings Mauritius forward as a jurisdiction of substance;

- (vii) the taxing rights on dividend income is shared between both countries. The tax rate in the country of source is limited to 5% in case of a holding of at least 10% and in other cases, the tax rate is limited to 10%. Under the previous agreement, Madam Speaker, the tax rate was 15%. Taxing rights on interest is now shared by the country of residence and the country at source. The tax at source is subject to a cap of 10 percent. Even though there was no tax on interest under the previous DTA, the current tax rate of up to a maximum of 10% is still better than the 15% domestic tax rate on interest which is prevailing in South Africa.
- (viii) Lastly, the taxing right on royalties is also shared between the country of residence and the country of source up to a maximum tax rate of 5% in the country of source which is much better than the domestic South African tax rate of 15%.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, in the case of a new DTA, the treaty was already signed as far back as May 2013. The MoU which was renegotiated in May 2015 now brings clarity, predictability and much-needed certainty to investors.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that there have been no studies undertaken at the time the treaty was signed in 2013. Nevertheless, I am pleased to inform the House that the ratification of this new treaty and the MoU is already now yielding benefits to our global business sector. I am informed that one regional bank in South Africa has already registered two structured products on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius. Two GBC1 companies, one exchange traded fund and one structured product from an international bank have already made request to list on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius with dual listings on other African exchanges.

I am further informed by the....

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I think you have already replied to your question. Would you, please, allow the Opposition to put their supplementary questions?

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is one of these questions where no one wants to take the paternity. The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development is not

answering this question, he answered for the DTA with India. Today, the hon. Minister says that it is not his doing. In 2013, when I asked hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, he said to me that was before he joined his Ministry in January 2011, saying in effect that it is hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth who took the decision.

(Interruptions)

In 2013, when I asked the hon. Minister about this treaty, this is what he said –

“We are not happy at all with the agreement as it stands. There are various things we can look at, grandfathering being one of them, as I mentioned, a greater clarity between the two revenue authorities. The other thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a most favoured nation clause.”

So, my question is: why is it that when in 2013 the Ministry of Finance had already stated that we were not happy with the treaty and we were going to renegotiate at least these things, this Government has gone along and ratified the South African treaty with all the flaws that had already been identified back in 2013?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, let me first start by saying that teamwork is something that needs to be understood and people, on this side of the House, work as a team. Both me and the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development work as a team. I mean the team over there has been split into two and we can see it!

(Interruptions)

To answer the questions of the hon. Member, of course negotiations have taken place, of course the interest of Mauritius has been looked at and I was, in fact, reading the results of what has been achieved. If we go into the detail that the hon. Member wants to go to, previously paragraph (g) stated, and I quote –

“Whether determining that the legal person is a resident of one of the contracting States but not of the other for the purpose of the agreement, would carry the risk of an improper use of the provisions of the agreement.”

This has been changed, Madam Speaker, after negotiations, to any other factors listed in paragraph 24 of the OECD commentary. So, what we have done is we have, in fact, aligned it to international best practice. Also, paragraph (h) -

“Any other factors that may be deemed relevant by the competent authorities in determining the residency of such person (...)”

That has now changed to –

“Any such other factors that may be identified and agreed upon before by the competent authorities in determining the residency of the person (...)”

I think my hon. friend should relook at the definition of “flaw” in the dictionary.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Minister - he told us that this new Government was faced with a *fait accompli*. Indeed, in 2013 - the then Government, with hon. Xavier-Luc Duval as Minister of Finance responsible, he was Minister of Finance when it was signed - it was ratified by Parliament in South Africa and here, unfortunately, such documents are ratified by Cabinet, it was not ratified. Has the Minister had time to discuss with the then Minister of Finance? Secondly, what happened exactly in 2013? How is it that it was signed and then it was discovered that it is not a good treaty, it cannot be ratified? What had happened in 2013?

Mr Bhadain: I did discuss the matter with the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and, in fact, what had happened, Madam Speaker, was after having signed the agreement, there were certain representations which were made by operators in the sector in Mauritius and they expressed certain concerns to the fact that the residency status, the criteria as I have explained in my answer before, was not clearly defined. So, they wanted more clarity. And as a result of this, the Ministry of Finance, I understand, then drafted an MoU and sent it to South Africa to bring clarity to Article 4 (3). Then, of course, they replied, we came in and sorted out the matter and it is now history.

Mr Bérenger: But, it is worth for the future to learn from past mistakes. What happened in 2013? Was it that there were not proper consultations with the operators, with the result that a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement was signed and then discovered to be faulty according to the Mauritius side?

Mr Bhadain: Well, what I understand, Madam Speaker, is that the operators made their representations after the signature of the agreement then, and then of course, it went on to be ratified by South Africa. But Mauritius did not ratify because they wanted clarity through the MoU. We went, finalised the MoU and ratified the treaty.

I would also say, Madam Speaker, when you look at Global Finance Mauritius report which was issued after the treaty was signed, it goes on to say, GFM's views –

“The MoU brings more certainty and predictability.”

It goes on to say that if we view the MoU clauses (a) to (h) below from an alternate perspective, it would be interesting to note that South Africa has effectively given the biggest boost to Mauritius Regional Headquarters proposition for a South African Corporate. It is not me saying this! It is the GFM, the operators!

Mr Bérenger: If we come to the present, can I get it very clearly. An agreement, a Double Taxation Agreement was signed, not ratified by Mauritius, ratified by South Africa. Now, the same Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement has been signed and ratified. Then I'll come to the Memorandum of Understanding, but the fact is: will he agree that the same Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement that was found to be faulty has been ratified by Mauritius? Now, added to that the treaty has stayed exactly the same. Added to that is the Memorandum of Understanding. Can I know whether legally that Memorandum of Understanding has to be ratified by the South African side and, if yes, has it been so ratified?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, I don't know whether the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not understand or whether ...

(Interruptions)

Or he is confused by the time.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister please! Don't provoke!

(Interruptions)

Order please! Hon. Minister, please don't provoke. Don't make comments, reply exactly to the questions which are being asked, please.

Mr Bhadain: It is very simple for anybody who wants to understand to understand, Madam Speaker. So, the agreement was the treaty, the MOU is the MOU, it is very clear. Now, the treaty has been signed, ratified by South Africa under the previous Government which the hon. Leader of the Opposition was going to go and be in bed with.

Now, the MOU

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Allow the hon. Minister to reply please! Allow him to reply and we will see afterwards.

Mr Bhadain: The MOU is a document which ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed! Don't make comments from a sitting position. Please! Don't make comments from a sitting position!

Mr Bhadain: The MOU, Madam Speaker, brings clarity to clause 4 sub section 3 of the treaty. The treaty was never faulty, the treaty was unclear as to the residency status which is stated in article 4, sub section 3. That is why, following representations made by operators, an MOU was sent to South Africa to say please clarify what are the criteria to define this. Now, what we've done, is we've seen that what was defined as criteria in the treaty was not in the best interest of Mauritius with regard to paragraphs 'g' and 'h' and we went to South Africa, we explained that to the Minister of Finance, it was negotiated, it was discussed, it was agreed and the MOU was signed. Now, when the MOU is signed, it becomes part of the treaty, we all know. Of course, it does. Then the treaty was ratified by way of regulations in Mauritius. That is simple as that. Anybody who wants to understand will understand.

Madam Speaker: Is there any other question on this issue. New question, hon. Uteem!

**VACOAS POPULAR MULTIPURPOSE COOPERATIVE SOCIETY –
ALLEGED FRAUD - INQUIRY**

(No. B/497) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to

the Vacoas Popular Multipurpose Cooperative Society, he will state if any investigation has been carried out into the allegations of fraud thereat and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, following allegations of fraud at the Vacoas Popular Multipurpose Cooperative Society, an inquiry was conducted by a panel of three inspectors appointed by the Registrar of Cooperatives as from September 2013.

Subsequently, the Inspectors' Report dated December 2014 revealed several financial and managerial irregularities such as –

- (a) huge amounts of loans were made by the society without ensuring adequate security from loanees;
- (b) high amounts of non-performing loans;
- (c) severe liquidity problems due to mismatch between members' fixed deposits reaching maturity and availability of funds;
- (d) high level of debts impairment, and
- (e) the then existing management and Board of Directors did not exercise due diligence and prudence in the performance of their duties.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister whether the investigation carried out has revealed any shortcomings at the level of the Cooperative division in their supervision of the cooperative in question.

Mr Bholah: Madam Speaker, I don't think so because as soon as the Registry of Cooperatives received information to that effect, the Registrar of Cooperatives appointed three inspectors just as I have stated to conduct the inquiry.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister is talking about what happened after the allegation of fraudulent practice had been unveiled. My question is whether before that time there were no shortcomings from the officers of the Cooperative Division in failing to identify those defective loans in the audited accounts, for example?

Mr Bholah: As the turnover of this Cooperative Society exceeds the threshold of Rs10 m. it is mandatory that they appoint an external auditor. External auditors have been appointed to audit the respective accounts for each financial year and, on top of that, there was an internal auditor appointed by the Board, by the society. So, there was nothing as information and when they account the file for the previous years -

- Year 2011 it was a clean report;
- Year 2012 it was a clean report;
- Year 2013 it was a clean report, and
- Year 2014 qualified audit report.

Mr Bérenger, Madam Speaker, we've just gone through the BAI affair and the FSC, as a regulatory body, which has been heavily criticised. Rightly so! Is the hon. Minister really telling us that as far as this Vacoas Popular Multi Purpose Cooperative is concerned, he is fully satisfied that the Registrar of Cooperatives, his own Ministry, are adequately staffed, and have done their work for the past years, the way it should be done? Is he really telling us that?

Mr Bholah: We are looking into this question because I understand that the Division is understaffed. They used to have 40 inspectors, now they are operating with only 24 inspectors and there has been an increase in the number of Cooperative Societies.

Mr Ganoo: Does the hon. Minister think that there has been a failure in the regulatory duties of the Registrar of Cooperatives inasmuch as annually the financial statements were being provided to him and he should have audited them and made further investigations?

Mr Bholah: As I said, the audit opinion was a clear audit report and the Registrar of Cooperatives took it to be so.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, will consideration be given to bring the necessary amendments to the Cooperative Act so that officers of the Cooperative Divisions are empowered to ask questions and investigate into Cooperative Societies so that we don't have a repeat of what has happened in this credit union?

Mr Bholah: Of course, we are working on the amendments.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will assure the Members of the Cooperative and the House, at large, that there is no possibility of liquidating that society?

Madam Speaker: Could you please repeat the question for the hon. Minister?

Mr Bholah: In fact, Ernst and Young has been appointed to manage the Cooperative Society because the previous Manager has been asked to leave. They came with a report where there were two options: the first option was to inject a sum of Rs432 m. from the

shareholders otherwise they would have to go into liquidation. But as the Cooperative Act provides that any liquidation should go through a special general meeting and obviously this decision was rejected, instead Members have come up with suggestions that they will come up with rescue plans. So, we are waiting for rescue plans instead of going into liquidation.

Mr Uteem: Thank you Madam Speaker. We have seen that in the case of the BAI saga how Government and the Ministry are trying hard to get back the money and pay back the money of policyholders. May I know from the hon. Minister whether Government is conceiving having a similar approach to those Members of the Cooperative Societies who have lost money as a result of this fraudulent practice?

Mr Bholah: No. It is not the policy of this Government to salvage ailing cooperative societies as a result of malpractices, etc.

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: On the same question, Madam Speaker, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether when he met the people there he has given them false hope initially? These poor people have had problems with the Manager and the hon. Minister has given them false hopes ultimately, that Government will come in with a rescue plan and even give money. So, May we know what the hon. Minister is doing now to, at least, help certain people who are having problems?

Mr Bholah: In fact, this...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Bholah: In fact, I am very sympathetic to the cause of the depositors, but I have never given any assurance that Government will inject money in the cooperative society.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

UNEMPLOYMENT, PUBLIC DEBT & FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS

(No. B/498) 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 period January 2015 to date, he will state the -

- (a) unemployment rate;
- (b) public sector debt, and
- (c) amount of foreign direct investments.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, unemployment rate and public sector debt figures are usually provided with reference to one point in time and not over a period of time.

For the 1st quarter of 2015, the unemployment rate was 8.7 percent. The unemployment rate for the 2nd quarter of 2015 is currently estimated at around 7.8 percent, which confirmed an improvement in the unemployment situation over the first quarter. On the basis of the many projects underway, we can expect the unemployment rate to further improve for the year 2015. I wish to remind the House that Statistics Mauritius has projected an unemployment rate of 8 percent for 2015.

Apart from the projects that have been approved in the Fast Track Committee, including the Smart Cities projects that would create new employment opportunities in the private sector, the YEP programme, which covered private enterprises only, is now being extended to the Public Sector. Thus, some 250 graduates and 750 non-graduates, that is, a total of 1,000 youth will be recruited. Furthermore, the filling of 7,000 funded vacancies in the public service is being accelerated.

With regard to part (b) of the question, as at 30 June 2015 public sector debt, for the purpose of the statutory debt ceiling, stood at Rs222.1 billion, representing 56% of GDP compared to 53.1% as at 30 June 2014. This increase is mainly attributable to -

- the short-term line of credit of Rs3.5 billion contracted by the National Property Fund.
- It is also due to the fact that the revaluation of the foreign debt stock due to depreciation of the Rupee *vis-à-vis* the US Dollar, the Pound sterling and the Chinese Yuan.

As regards part (c) of the question, gross FDI inflows during the period January to June 2015 are estimated at around Rs4.8 billion.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has just confirmed that the unemployment rate for 2015 is projected at 8%, which is higher than the rate of 7.8% for the year 2014. This being the case, will the hon.

Minister Finance and Economic Development maintain that the Government is still on track to create 10,000 jobs between now and the end of the year?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I gave you a few figures. In fact, since 2010 the average unemployment rate has been 7.8%. It moved up to 8% in 2012 and 2013. Now, we have projected an unemployment rate of 8% in 2015. The good news - I need to say that's great news for me - is that in the first quarter there was a deepening of unemployment from 8% to 8.7% and then, in the second quarter we are expecting a rate of 7.8%. This is a substantial improvement in the level of unemployment. In fact, on the basis of what is happening, I have no doubt that in 2015, we will be below the 8% projected by Statistics Mauritius.

Mr Uteem: Still on the unemployment rate, the hon. Minister Finance and Economic Development mentioned that there is an improvement with the second quarter. Statistics Mauritius is not out yet with the official figures. We have only Q1 2015 which talks about 8.7%. So, may I know from the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether this improvement in the rate of unemployment relates to people of less than 25-year old, whether the new job creation affects those people who are less than 25-year old or more than that?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, I need notice of this question. But, what is clearly shown here, and I am quite happy today that unemployment is going down in the country and that's a good news for all of us.

Mr Uteem: With respect to the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) figures, the hon. Minister Finance and Economic Development mentioned the figure of Rs4.8 billion. Is he satisfied that nine months through the year there is only Rs4.8 billion of investment when the hon. Prime Minister himself announced more than Rs150 billions of investment over the next five years?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, I need to correct the hon. Member. The figure of Rs4.8 billion which is presented here represents the first semester. We have just come out of the election and it is quite normal that during election periods, FDI goes down: let us wait and see. On the basis of what we are now projecting, I have no doubt that, in fact, we are projecting for 2015 an FDI of more than Rs10 billion but, as I say, we are still speaking about transfer of money, projects which have been approved will materialise with FDI coming in the country. So, the trends are clearly, I have no doubt that next year would be – in the words

of the former Minister of Finance and Economic Development - would be a bumper crop in terms of FDI.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: The hon. Minister made reference to the Youth Employment Programme. Currently the Youth Employment Programme is being financed by the private sector and the hon. Minister has proposed that this would be extended to the public sector as well. May I know from the hon. Minister who is going to pay for those who are going to be employed by the public sector?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I hope I got the hon. Member's question right. The Youth Employment Programme was under my Ministry and then moved to the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training. So what we are doing now, is that I have increased the budget of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training for Youth Employment Programme (YEP) and phased out the Service to Mauritius Programme which is much more costly. So, we are in fact making the programme more accessible to a larger number of people, graduates and non-graduates.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again on the question of Foreign Direct Investment, may I know from the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development out of these Rs4.8 billion what is the percentage of investment in real estate and what percentage relates to productive assets like manufacturing and other sectors?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: I need notice of this question also. The hon. Member should know that those figures are quite indicative. In fact, the Bank of Mauritius gradually worked out those figures and at times the figures can be quite higher. So, it is just indicative and I don't have the breakdown per sector.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

NTC - FINANCIAL SITUATION

(No. B/499) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom,

information as to the financial situation thereof in respect of the six months ending 30 June 2015, indicating the -

- (a) cash flow;
- (b) net return, and
- (c) quantum of the loans secured from Government, compared to the corresponding period over the past two years and table copy thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the financial statements for the year 2014 as well as the statements for the period ending 30 June 2015 have not yet been completed as there has not been a full-fledged Financial Controller at the NTC since June 2008. These are expected to be completed only in around a month time. As regard to year 2013, the net cash flow of the NTC according to the audited financial statements amounted to Rs217.35 m.

With your permission, Madam Speaker, I am tabling the cash flow statement.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the National Transport Corporation has consistently been incurring losses since 2007-2008, except for 2011 and 2012, when profits were registered due partly to changes in Accounting Standards.

The audited accounts of the NTC for the year 2013 which have just been finalised showed a loss of Rs89.07 m.

Madam Speaker, I consider the situation at the NTC to be a catastrophic one for a number of years. The financial situation of the NTC has deteriorated as a result of collective agreement in 2013 and NRB Regulations in 2015. In fact, the collective agreement provides for 15% increase in wages in 2013, 2% in 2014 and 2% as from August 2015, whereas the NRB Regulations provide for an increase of 15% as from January 2015, that is, this year.

The overall impact of the wage increases following the collective agreement and the implementation of recommendations of the NRB Regulations are estimated to be around Rs14 m. per month involving a total of Rs183 m. since 2013.

Madam Speaker, since my assumption in office, I have taken a series of measures with a view to improving the situation, namely -

- (i) to fill the strategic positions at the managerial level which have remained vacant for years. These vacancies have been recently advertised and the selection exercise is underway;
- (ii) to renew the fleet of the Corporation within the shortest delay. In this wake, 100 new semi low-floor buses are being procured in order to reduce operational costs and improve the service to the travelling public. The delivery is expected in March 2016 at latest;
- (iii) to embark on an efficient improvement plan with specific focus on revenue generation, fuel consumption, vehicle maintenance and labour-related costs;
- (iv) to introduce a modern fare collecting system based on smart cards and in addition, Madam Speaker, to enabling the optimum use of human resources, this measure will equally yield the benefit of eliminating pilferage, and
- (v) to resort to a multi-skilling programme to boost productivity.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that no loan has been secured from Government since the year 2013.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: It is clear when we listen to the reply of the hon. Minister that CNT - the hon. Minister I am sure will agree - it is a question of failed leadership. Since several years, 2008 until now, there is no financial control at the Corporation. Three things, I am sure the hon. Minister would agree...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur, please ask your question!

Mr Rughoobur: May I ask the hon. Minister to confirm that there is an urgent need? Recruitment, yes! But to review completely the organisation structure of the Corporation and to ensure not only that we recruit the best, but also that the best that we recruit are also paid the package as per market rate, otherwise we are not going to get. So, may I ask the hon. Minister to look into the organisational structure and to be very careful on the recruitment at senior management level and the CEO? Thank you.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, this is a very valuable suggestion and this is, in fact, what we are going to do.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Hon. Minister, being given that the...

Madam Speaker: Address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Yes, Madam Speaker. Hon. Minister, being given that the fuel consumption of buses purchased in year 2007 was more than the revenue, would the hon. Minister consider to open an inquiry and take action?

Mr Bodha: Well, we are having a national in-depth study on the national land transport and the second part of it is going to be a thorough in-depth inquiry on the functioning of the National Transport Corporation.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister also look into the possibility of the CNT tying up with the local or foreign strategic partner because maybe if we get a leasing company it might tie up with the CNT for financing purposes because I understand that Government has been putting lots of funds since several years now?

Mr Bodha: Well, Madam Speaker, this can be a suggestion. In fact, we have Africa Fleet Management which is proposing to Mauritius to have a leasing system for bus owners. We can consider them, but, anyway, we have already launched a first tender for 500 buses over five years.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Minister what amount of unused spare parts that have been purchased are lying in the store of the CNT up to now?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, this will require a thorough inventory which we have not done. I need a specific notice of that question.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/516 and PQ B/517 have been withdrawn. Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

AFRICAN UNION - AGENDA 2063

(No. B/500) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Agenda 63 of the African Union, he will state the initiatives taken by his Ministry for the promotion of trade between Mauritius and the African continent through bilateral relations with countries of the Regional Economic Community.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, Agenda 2063 of the African Union, adopted at the AU Summit in January 2015, is a transformative continental agenda which has been articulated into seven main aspirations, namely –

- (i) A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
- (ii) An integrated Continent, politically United, based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the Vision of Africa’s renaissance;
- (iii) An Africa of Good Governance, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law;
- (iv) A peaceful and Secure Africa;
- (v) An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics;
- (vi) An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its women and youth, and finally
- (vii) Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.

According to a report of the African Union Commission, Agenda 2063 paints a vivid picture of where Africans would like to see their continent, when Africa celebrates the centenary of the founding of the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU).

Madam Speaker, given its long-term vision, the African Union Agenda 2063 has been segmented into five ten-year plan frameworks. Each ten-year Action Plan will focus on issues pertinent to the period it covers, but will be aligned with the expected overall outcome envisaged in each of the seven aspirations of Agenda 2063.

The House may wish to know, in this respect, that the first ten-year implementation plan was only adopted at the last African Union Summit held in June 2015 and that the Mauritius Embassy in Addis-Ababa has been pursuing discussions with the African Union to

depute a technical support mission to Mauritius in view of sensitising and assisting national stakeholders in the domestication of Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

Accordingly, Madam Speaker, it would be inaccurate to state that my Ministry has taken initiatives with regard to Agenda 2063 for the promotion of trade between Mauritius and the African Continent through Bilateral Relations with countries of the Regional Economic Communities to which Mauritius belongs given that implementation has yet to start. Nonetheless, Madam Speaker, I can report that my Ministry has certainly taken several initiatives for the promotion of trade between Mauritius and the African Continent through Bilateral Relations with countries of the Regional Economic Communities to which we belong.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister if his Ministry is considering appointing Trade Advisers in those eight economic blocks in order to ensure that we are in line with this Agenda 2063 and to ensure that once implementation is being done, the Ministries in Mauritius are fully in tune with the spirit of Agenda 2063?

Mr Sinatambou: As I just explained, Madam Speaker, Agenda 2063 itself was adopted in January of this year and the first ten-year implementation plan was adopted in June. We have been currently pursuing negotiations with the African Union for them to bring in some technical support missions. In this respect, it is therefore premature to think of appointing specialists and, for the time being, trade and investment specialists have been, in fact, the prerogative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. But I must say that one must bear in mind that we are here speaking of a 100-year plan. So, we have to give it the time that it requires just to work out even the first 10 years.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, within the framework of this Agenda 2063, any trade agreement has been signed with any African countries, so far?

Mr Sinatambou: Following my first reply, I did explain that it would be inaccurate for me to say that we have initiated any agreement and so on, in view of the fact that the implementation has yet to start, but I went on to say that, however, my Ministry has launched a number of initiatives. As an example, I have met myself the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Angola. Angola has a GDP of nearly 125 billion USD compared to our 12.5 billion dollar GDP, but we do not have a visa waiver agreement for our business people and the Angolans

are quite opposed to having an open immigration policy or an open visa waiver policy because of illegal immigration happening there. So, we are working on that.

Also, I must point out that we discovered that an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement draft was sent to Angola as far back as 2013, but no response had been received; same for a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement which was sent since 2011 and a request renewed in 2013. So, this is part of the initiatives which are being taken at the level of my Ministry, indeed, in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, but that is just one of several countries we are dealing with at the moment.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, the former Government had laid a lot of emphasis on economic diplomacy. Has the hon. Minister got certain information about the outcome of the previous Government policies and what has been achieved so far?

Mr Sinatambou: I think it would be better to lay emphasis on the present and on the future than on the past. In that respect, I think it would be good for Members to perhaps take note that there are a number of key indicators and milestones which are contained in the draft of Agenda 2063 which are actually quite promising and I suppose my good friends, on both sides of the House, would rather that we concentrate on what we can do well as opposed to what we did badly.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, we are talking about what the economic diplomacy of the previous Government was on the results and the hon. Minister is failing to say that the roving ambassadors of the previous regime were, in fact, Members of the PMSD...

Madam Speaker: Put your question.

(Interruptions)

Come back to the question, please!

Mr Mohamed: Let us drop the issue about them having been of the PMSD and get the question as you request. Could the hon. Minister consider the possibility - in light of Agenda 2063 and the necessity of integration of all African countries and all the issues that were referred to - of looking into agreements with various African countries on labour mobility since he has rightly shown the light on the financial strength of countries such as Angola and the possibilities of employment, labour mobility for Mauritians in those African countries and to benefit and take advantage of the growth that those countries are experiencing?

Mr Sinatambou: In fact, not only my Ministry, but the Government, in general, is certainly working on the mobility of natural persons into not only Africa, but also into the rest of the world. Now, this is why Mauritius is now participating in the negotiations for the Trade in Services Agreement, because one of its components is about the mobility of natural persons. So, this is being done currently.

Mr Mohamed: With regard to the issue at the level of the World Trade Organisation, undoubtedly this is a multi-party negotiation, it is good that the hon. Minister refers to it, but then again, bilateral agreements leaving aside the Agenda of the World Trade Organisation and negotiations for labour mobility on a bilateral plateau could be considered still by this Government in order to accelerate matters instead of waiting for the negotiations at the level of the World Trade Organisation.

Mr Sinatambou: Well, this is also being done. Perhaps for the information of my good friend on the other side of the House, I should say that yes, it is true that at the WTO level, we are speaking about Multilateral Agreements, but as regards (TiSA) the Trade In Services Agreement, this is a plurilateral agreement, and we are also pursuing matters at the bilateral level. Suffice it to say that there is something from the World Bank called APEI (Accelerated Programme for Economic Integration) which also involves the mobility of natural persons on which Mauritius is currently working.

QUATRE BORNES – MARKET – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/501) Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government whether in regard to the proposed construction of a new market in Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to if a final decision has been reached in respect of the -

- (a) site identified therefor, and
- (b) amount of funds earmarked therefor.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that, following the abandonment of the LRT project, a proposal for the reconstruction of the Quatre Bornes market was under consideration. However, no final decision has yet been taken by the Council.

In fact, I understand that there is a proposal to construct a modern market, together with commercial outlets on the site where Guy Rozemont Stadium is currently situated.

Informal discussions on the matter have already started between the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms and Technology, Communication and Innovation and myself. Further discussions are expected on the issue in the coming months.

Mr Ramano: Votre question a fait l'objet de plusieurs interpellations. Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre si un Traffic Impact Assessment a été commandité par la mairie de Quatre Bornes, prenant en considération le grave problème de trafic qui existe entre la région de La Louise et l'hôpital Victoria?

Dr. Husnoo: As I mentioned these are informal discussions which have started, but further discussions will have to be done. So, up to now, no traffic assessment has been done because we are at very preliminary stages, and we will have to take a lot of things into consideration in the months to come.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, being given that the former Government had been selling a dream to the inhabitants of Quatre Bornes for the past 10 years, would the hon. Minister consider to get this project to become a reality if it is possible, as far as possible?

Dr. Husnoo: As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, we are working on it and we hope we can make it.

Mr Ramano: Madame la présidente, le stade de Candos est la seule infrastructure sportive qui existe dans le centre-ville de Quatre Bornes. Est-ce que la municipalité pourrait peut-être envisager à la place du marché de Quatre Bornes, les marchés de quartiers, prenant en considération que les députés de la Circonscription No. 14 de 2010 à 2015, ont, conjointement, avec la mairie de Quatre Bornes, entamé des pourparlers pour l'acquisition du terrain, communément appelé 'Terrain Balance' qui se trouve entre la résidence Kennedy et la région de Bassin?

Dr. Husnoo: As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, these are preliminary discussions that we have started.

(Interruptions)

It may take five years or maybe 10 years, but we are working on it!

(Interruptions)

Unlike you! What have you done for the last 10 years? Nothing!

(Interruptions)

Anyway! I have mentioned this is a preliminary...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Husnoo: No! Now, listen...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Dr. Husnoo: No! What have you done for 15 years? What are you talking about?

Madam Speaker: Can you allow the hon. Minister to reply, please?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Husnoo: What have you done for 15 years?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem! Hon. Uteem, please!

(Interruptions)

From a sitting position, I have said no comments! There will be no order in the House otherwise.

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my reply, it is an informal discussion. We are going to take on board all the suggestions and then we will decide in the best interest of the people of Quatre Bornes.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Like the hon. Minister said, the light rail project is shelved and will not be on the track where the market is, may I know whether the hon. Minister will consider strongly that as the site is there, why not improve and build the market on the same site where it is right now?

Dr. Husnoo: As we see, there are different opinions on that. Some people want to build it where the rail track was, some people want to move to Quatre Bornes and some people want other places. That is why I said we are having discussions and then we will decide in the best interest of the people of Quatre Bornes.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Leopold!

RODRIGUES – SPECIALIST DOCTORS

(No. B/502) Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the shortage of specialists' doctors in Rodrigues, especially of gynaecologists, he will state the remedial measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, there are presently 25 Specialists/Senior Specialists (Obstetrics & Gynaecology) in post in my Ministry and there are 10 vacancies.

One Specialist/Senior Specialist in each of the following fields is posted to Rodrigues on a monthly basis –

- (i) Obstetrics and Gynaecology;
- (ii) General Surgery;
- (iii) Anaesthesia;
- (iv) Orthopaedic Surgery;
- (v) Paediatrics, and
- (vi) Radiology

In addition, one Specialist in internal medicine and one specialist in Psychiatry are on the establishment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

I wish to point out that Specialists/Senior Specialists in other fields are also posted to Rodrigues on short visits of one or two weeks' duration namely –

- (a) Cardiology,
- (b) Dermatology,
- (c) ENT,
- (d) Neurosurgery,
- (e) Radiotherapy,
- (f) Oral surgery,
- (g) Ophthalmology,
- (h) Orthodontics,
- (i) Physical Medicine,
- (j) Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

Madam Speaker, as regards remedial measures envisaged to palliate for the shortage of Obstetrics/Gynaecologists in Rodrigues, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has taken the following measures –

- (a) Thirty eight vacancies in the grade of Specialists including ten in the field of obstetrics/gynaecology have been reported to the PSC. The vacancies were advertised on 03 July 2015 and the closing date was 23 July 2015. The recruitment selection exercise is currently underway at the Public Service Commission level.
- (b) My Ministry has granted study leave without pay to five Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers to follow post graduate course abroad in the field of Obstetrics/Gynaecology.
- (c) My Ministry is presently negotiating with the *l'Université de Bordeaux*, France for the training of Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers in the field of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and

- (d) In order to encourage Specialists/Senior Specialists to serve on a tour of service in Rodrigues for a period of six months or more, a circular letter has been issued by my Ministry on 18 December 2014 informing them that a monthly Special Medical Service Allowance will be paid to them in line with the recommendation of the PRB. Unfortunately no positive response has been received so far.

In the event that we do not get a Gynaecologist posted to Rodrigues, I will in consultation with the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues, seek the assistance of India and other friendly countries for the recruitment of Gynaecologists.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leopold!

Mr Leopold: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life how many gynaecologists will be posted in Rodrigues after recruitment?

Mr Gayan: Well, as many as are required. But as I said, there is a shortage of gynaecologists right now and, unfortunately, despite the recommendation of the PRB, the gynaecologists would have to serve six months in Rodrigues, they have not done so and we have had to resort to a one-month tour of service just to meet the demands of Rodrigues. But, I hope that we will be able to solve the problem shortly.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Minister has mentioned about specialists and doctors. Is he aware that there is no pharmacist in the hospitals in Rodrigues and the medicines are being dispensed by...

Mr Gayan: I am not sure whether there is no pharmacist, but I know that there are pharmacies. The hospitals and the health care clinics are all equipped with people dispensing medication.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many Rodriguan doctors are registered with the Medical Council and employed by the Ministry of Health and Quality

of Life and whether he will consider giving the chance to these doctors to get a training in different specialties and to serve in the hospitals that we have in Rodrigues?

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, there are already Rodriguan trained doctors serving in Rodrigues. We have had consultations with them and we are exploring the possibilities of giving them further training to become specialists and to serve in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: The hon. Minister has recently been to Rodrigues Island, did he go to the hospital and did he have any photo there?

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: I did go to the hospital and, unfortunately, it was dark, so we could not get a photo.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Osman Mahomed!

(Interruptions)

Please, refrain from making comments!

HARRIS SPORTS COMPLEX - CLOSURE

(No. B/503) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Harris Sports Complex, in Port Louis, he will state the reasons for the abrupt closure thereof on 01 September 2015, indicating if -

- (a) prior notice was given to the users thereof;
- (b) football teams had already effected payment to use the football ground thereof for the month of September and, if so, indicate the –
 - (i) quantum paid, and
 - (ii) if the quantum has recently been increased and, if so, by how much and why

(c) any other football ground was closed on 01 September 2015, and

(d) there is any issue regarding the running of football grounds generally and, if so –

(i) give details thereof, and

(ii) indicate the remedial measures being envisaged.

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr S. Baboo): Madam Speaker, I have to inform the House that Harris Sports Complex is one among the several sports infrastructures the day-to-day management of which has been entrusted to the Mauritius Sports Council (MSC). Consequently, I am informed by the MSC that its Board had decided to close the Harris Sports Complex as from 01 September in view of the bad state of the complex.

There were goal posts broken, damaged nets, damaged fencing and untidy surroundings. With a view not to penalising users, the MSC had to expeditiously provide new goal posts, new nets and repair the fencing as well as conduct a thorough cleaning of the complex. The complex is operational as from 10 September 2015 and fees for the use of the complex for the month of September are being collected since that date.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed by the MSC that users were orally made aware of the impending closure of the ground when they were effecting payment for the use of the ground for the month of August 2015.

As regards parts (b) and (b) (i) of the question, no fees were collected by the MSC from football teams for the month of September prior to 10 September 2015.

Regarding part (b) (ii) of the question, I am informed that the Board of the MSC has decided to increase the hourly rate of fees payable from Rs100 to the following –

- Mondays to Saturdays before 6.00 p.m. Rs150, and after 6.00 p.m. Rs200
- whereas on Sundays before 6.00 p.m. it is Rs200 and after 6.00 p.m. it is Rs250

I am informed by the MSC that it has had to increase the rates payable as the fees collected did not even cover the overtime payable to the handy workers in the service and the maintenance costs.

I am informed by the MSC that it is already operating with an annual budget deficit of Rs6 m. in spite of the fact that the grant allocated by the Government has increased from Rs22 m. to Rs25 m. as from the financial year 2015-2016. With a view to reducing the budget deficit and taking into consideration that the rates last revised in 2012 the board of the MSC decided to increase the rates payable. It is worth pointing out that all National Sports Federations and educational institutions are provided with the facilities available at the Sports Infrastructures free of charge.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (c) of the question, I am further informed by the MSC that the Mini-Soccer grounds at the Military Road in Port Louis and that of Champ de Mars were also closed as from 01 September 2015 to enable appropriate maintenance and repair works to be effected. They are also operational as from 10 September 2015.

Regarding part (d) of the question, I have to inform the House that it is the policy of the Ministry of Youth and Sports to entrust the day to day management and maintenance of football training grounds to Local Authorities with a view to making an effective use of the grounds for promoting mass participation. The different Local Authorities have already been requested to take over the day to day management of training football grounds. In some cases, Local Authorities have already responded favourably to the request. For example, the Municipal Council of Port Louis has already agreed to take over the day to day management and maintenance of the three Mini Soccer grounds situated in Port Louis as from 01 October 2015. I will also circulate a copy of the letter dated 04 September 2015 received from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis.

Mr Mahomed: Well thank you. In his reply, the Acting Minister has mentioned the MSC and the Municipal Council of Port Louis, but as a matter of fact, the Harris Sports Complex is now being managed by the NDU, strangely enough, and there is a formal letter from the NDU under the signature of the hon. Jadoo-Jaunbocus convening meeting about 36 teams of Ward 4 in Port Louis to discuss the way forward. Now, the people have responded...

Madam Speaker: You should ask a question, you are not allowed to make a statement ...

Mr Mahomed: I am going to come to my question soon. The people have responded and they have sent a copy to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, copy to the Leader of the Opposition and I quote from the letter...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mahomed, you are making a statement, you can come with this at adjournment time.

Mr Mahomed: I am going to table it.

Madam Speaker: Ok, please sit down. You are allowed supplementary questions, but you are not allowed to make a statement. If you have got information, could you please come at Adjournment time and make your statement, but right now, you ask your question to the hon. Minister.

Mr Mahomed: Is the hon. Minister aware that the Harris Sports Complex is being used to favour certain specific teams in the letter that has been forwarded to him as well?

Mr Baboo: Well sorry. I am not aware of this and I don't have this necessary information.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Ag. Minister....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I have given the floor to hon. Jhugroo. I'll give the floor to you afterwards.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House on what basis were football teams allowed to play football in year 2013 and 2014 and what criteria was used?

Mr Baboo: Sorry, I don't have the information as well hon. Jhugroo. I need notice.

Mr Mahomed: Madam Speaker

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jadoo-Jaunbocus! Please, don't make provocation! Please!

Mr Mahomed: I am tabling the letter. At a time when people are getting into drugs in the region of Port Louis and elsewhere...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Mahomed: Is it a good decision to double and perhaps on certain days more than doubling the fees that they have to pay to have access to football grounds?

Mr Baboo: Madam Speaker, I would request the hon. Member to address this question to the substantive Minister.

Mr Jhugroo: Are you are aware, hon. Minister ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please address the Chair!

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, is the Acting Minister aware that the football teams of the region who were very close to the former PPS, Mr A. H. were being privileged to use the football ground, without paying any cent by the Monitoring Committee there?

Mr Baboo: I am not aware, but I am not surprised too!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/508 has been withdrawn.

SC & HSC 2014 - EXAMINATION RESULTS

(No. B/504) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the examination results of the Cambridge School Certificate and of the Higher School Certificate of the November 2014 series, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to the number thereof considered as pending, indicating the –

(a) reasons therefor, and

(b) timeframe set for the finalisation thereof.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, I am advised by the MES that, as at now, there is no pending case of results with regard to the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate examinations of November 2014.

However, I am informed that in February 2015, when results were proclaimed a number of cases of malpractices were reported by the Cambridge International Examination.

Upon the issue of certificate, on 13 May 2015, the results in some subjects for six candidates were still pending at the level of CIE.

I am advised that the six candidates referred above had appealed to CIE for release of their results. This is known as Stage 1 Appeal. According to the MES, these appeals were considered by the Cambridge Malpractice Committee and the latter had, however, upheld the decision to retain the results in certain subjects for the six candidates.

I am further informed that none of the candidates pursued with a second stage appeal, that is, the second stage appeal is when the candidates are requested to supply further new evidence in support of their appeal. The CIE maintained its decision not to issue any award in the subjects concerned.

The final results for the above six candidates were issued to them on 11 June 2015.

Madam Speaker: Time is over!