

## VACOAS - METHADONE DISPENSING – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/566) **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 dispensing of methadone at the Vacoas Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of complaints in relation thereto reported by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix thereto, indicating the remedial measures taken, if any, as at to date.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a number of verbal complaints have been referred by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix to Vacoas Police Station about the nuisance due to noise and use of foul language by the beneficiaries of the Methadone Substitution Therapy (MST) in the Vacoas Market building and its vicinity. This was causing a lot of inconveniences and disturbances to stall holders who were feeling insecure.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that MST distribution at Vacoas Police Station started on 22 March 2009 and four cases of rogue and vagabond and assault involving MST beneficiaries were reported there since February 2012.

Madam Speaker, as a result of these complaints, Police have implemented the following measures -

- (i) Frequent foot and mobile patrols are being carried out by the personnel of the Police Station, Divisional Support Unit and ERS thereby reinforcing Police presence in the vicinity of Vacoas Market bus stand, John Kennedy Street to discourage MST beneficiaries from loitering in the vicinity of commercial buildings and Vacoas Market;
- (ii) Frequent sensitisation campaigns are being conducted with shop owners, other hawkers and vegetable sellers regarding precautionary measures to be taken in respect of MST beneficiaries, and
- (iii) CID and ADSU teams are detailed to make frequent patrols to prevent them from loitering.

Madam Speaker, additionally Government decided to decentralise the dispensing of MST as from January 2015. Accordingly, as from 14 April 2015, Methadone dispensing in

the region has been extended to Phoenix, Eau Coulée and Curepipe Police Stations, thereby reducing the impact at Vacoas.

However, I understand that there are still verbal complaints which are being received by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix and the Commissioner of Police has given the assurance that all the needful will be done to deal with the situation.

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

**Dr. Sorefan:** I got two supplementary questions. I will start one by one. Is the hon. Ag. Prime Minister aware that in the market a lady who was on Methadone undressed herself naked and that was taken in the meeting of the Municipal Council? What action the Police Officers took at that time?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I don't have action for this particular case, but I did bring the hon. Member's question to the attention of the Commissioner of Police and he gave me the assurance this morning that he will step up efforts to deal with this issue of methadone users causing disturbance and using foul language. That's the information I have.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

**Dr. Sorefan:** My second question to the hon. Ag. Prime Minister. The hon. Ag. Prime Minister has mentioned that we are decentralising the Methadone dispensing to Eau Coulée and still we are having problem. So, we are shifting Vacoas problem to Castel because we have got complaints. Is it not possible for the Government to think about instead of decentralising, to distribute Methadone at residence, because at residence you get one person who is doing it rather than getting all of them to come to the Police Station where they create havoc?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, this is more of a question for my colleague, the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life. I am sure he will take up this issue.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, next question! Hon. Hurreeram!

*(Interruptions)*

Order, please!

## **H.E. THE VICE-PRESIDENT - OFFICIAL RESIDENCE – RENT**

**(No. B/567) Mr M. Hurreeram (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the premises rented to

serve as official residence for H.E. the Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if tender procedures have been followed for the renting thereof and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) date the bid therefor was launched;
- (b) name of the bidders therefor, indicating the name of the successful bidder;
- (c) extent thereof, and
- (d) monthly rental thereof.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, a press communiqué was issued by the Prime Minister's Office on 10 January 2008 inviting tenders for the rental of a semi-furnished building of approximately 3,000 square feet in Phoenix or Quatre Bornes, preferably in Old Quatre Bornes, to accommodate the Office of the Vice-President.

As at the closing date for the submission of tenders set for 31 January 2008, three bids were received from the following bidders, namely -

- (i) Mr D. Ramful;
- (ii) Mrs E. Dhunnoo, and
- (iii) Mr K. Ragavoodoo.

A bid evaluation exercise was thereafter conducted by the Office of the Vice-President. After consultations with the Valuation Department and following negotiations on the rental value, the bid of Mr Ramful was approved. The premises comprise two reinforced buildings of a total area of 2,645 square feet on a portion of land of approximately 35½ perches situated at 30 Avenue Farquhar, Quatre Bornes, at a monthly rental of Rs70,000.

The Lease Agreement between both parties was signed on 28 November 2008. It has been renewed under the same terms and conditions in 2012, 2013 and 2014 and is valid up to 31 December 2016.

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

**Mr Hurreeram:** Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House if it is proper for the Vice-President's Office to renew this contract on a yearly basis without having recourse to a new tender exercise?

*(Interruptions)*

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I will look up, Madam Speaker. I don't have that particular information.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** No comments, please! Hon. Hurreeram!

**Mr Hurreeram:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given the political connection of those concerned with the former Government, will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister consider requesting the Commissioner of Police to inquire if none was being favoured?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, the best I can do is to send it to the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms to have a look, but I must say that there was a valuation done by the Valuation Department which evaluated a monthly rental at Rs60,000. The original amount of claim was Rs110,000 and then there was some negotiation and the Rs60,000 was increased to Rs70,000. But I am happy to send it to the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms

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

#### **ALLEGED ARM TRAFFICKING NETWORK - INQUIRY**

**(No. B/568) Mr M. Hurreeram (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the recent request made to the Government of Mauritius by Mrs K.L.A., Director of the Conflict Awareness Project, to re-open the inquiry concerning the alleged arm trafficking network in Mauritius, he will state if he will consider acceding thereto.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to Parliamentary Question B/201 at the sitting of 31 March 2015, wherein he stated, *inter alia*, that no enquiry had been carried out so far in any case of alleged arm trafficking in Mauritius. He also informed the House that a response was awaited from one Mrs K.L.A. who had been contacted by the Police in March 2014 and requested to inform whether she intended to travel to Mauritius to give a detailed statement which would enable the Police to start an investigation into the matter.

On 10 August 2015, Mrs K.L.A. addressed a letter to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister requesting for the reopening of the investigation into an alleged international arm trafficking network which might have been operating in Mauritius.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that following that letter, and on the basis of additional information which has come to the knowledge of the Police, the Central Crime Investigation Department (CCID) has already initiated an enquiry in that matter since 24 August 2015.

Mrs K.L.A. has also requested safe passage to and from Mauritius to provide testimony regarding these matters. The Police will guaranty her safe entry and safe exit accordingly and during her stay she will be provided with full Police protection.

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

**Mr Hurreeram:** Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister consider asking the ICAC to explain how they managed to get in the luggage of a private lawyer, to serve upon Mrs Austin, a *mise en demeure*, when the visit was supposed to be confidential to bring further enquiry?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I understand that this matter will be taken up by the Police in the enquiry.

**Madam Speaker:** One last question on this!

**Mr Hurreeram:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether there has been an enquiry or will there be an enquiry to see if there has been any link between the Gorah Issac case and this alleged arm trafficking?

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Hurreeram, you have asked the question as to whether they will re-open this enquiry. Don't put in any cases! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

**Mr Mahomed:** Madam Speaker, thank you. I will stick myself to the K.L.A case. Being given that this issue is being raised this morning and we know that there is a case of defamation against Mrs K.L.A and the plaintiff has requested for an early trial, and given that Mrs K.L.A. is not willing to be here because she has got other commitment, we, on this side of the House, will go even further in asking the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to convey to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister the wish of this side of the House for a full-fledged Commission of Enquiry to be conducted on this whole issue? Can this be considered?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I think it would be best to wait for the arrival of Mrs K. L. A. and the Police inquiry and then I am sure that needful will be done, if it needs to be done, by the Prime Minister.

**Madam Speaker:** One last question!

**Mr Mahomed:** But going by Press reports, she has indicated that she is committed and she is not able to come here some time soon, in spite of the request for an early trial. So, the request is: "Let us quash this whole issue once and for all by going for a full-fledged Commission of Inquiry.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I understand, Madam Speaker, that in this particular case, at least, as in many other cases, we should not go by Press reports.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question!

## **SALE BY LEVY – COMMISSION OF INQUIRY REPORT – RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(No. B/569) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry set up on the Sale by Levy, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the main recommendations thereof, indicating the actions that have been initiated in relation thereto for the implementation thereof as at to date.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, with your permission, I would like to reply to PQ B/569 and B/572 together as they relate to the same matter.

In regard to PQ/572, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to two different Commissions of Inquiry. As a matter of fact, there were two Commissions of Inquiry which had been set up in May 2012: one on Sale by Levy and another one on the System of Acquisitive Prescription.

I would like to refer the hon. Members to the replies made by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to PQ B/155 and B/158 on 10 March 2015. The Prime Minister informed that both Commissions of Inquiry had already completed their work and submitted their respective reports to the President of the Republic who had in turn referred the reports to the former Prime Minister. However, the reports were untraceable at the Prime Minister's Office and consequently fresh copies had been made available by the Office of the President on 07 March 2015, upon request by the Prime Minister's Office.

Madam Speaker, the Commission of Inquiry on Sale by Levy has made a number of recommendations to alleviate the hardship and prejudice which debtors and former debtors are experiencing. The report has been referred to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for an in-depth examination of the recommendations contained therein. I am informed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development that a Special Committee has been set up, as announced in the Budget Speech 2015-2016, to examine the report of the Commission and expedite the implementation of its recommendations. The Special Committee will comprise relevant stakeholders namely, Ministries concerned, the Office of

the Commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers and other institutions such as the Mauritius Bankers Association and Consumer Protection Association.

Madam Speaker, as regards the Commission of Inquiry on the System of Acquisitive Prescription, the Commission has recommended changes in the procedure leading to acquisitive prescription so as to afford better protection to lawful owners and significantly hinder ill-intentioned people involved in fraudulent appropriation of land belonging to other people. The Report of the Commission has been referred to the Ministry of Housing and Lands for an in-depth examination of the recommendations. I am informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that a Committee chaired by the Senior Chief Executive is examining the numerous recommendations, including proposed amendments to a number of pieces of legislation in order to safeguard the proprietary rights of our citizens.

Madam Speaker, a comprehensive submission will be made to Cabinet on both reports once the exercises for the examination of the recommendations are completed. The findings will be made public thereafter.

Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that the Government Programme 2015-2019 already provides that the overall procedure of Sale by Levy will be reviewed in order to prevent collusion between financial institutions, legal advisors and their agents. Moreover, with a view to protecting financially distressed people, Government has also pledged to enact legislation to prohibit, for a period of two years, the sale by levy of the only house of a worker who has been made redundant on economic grounds. I would like to reassure the House that Government will stand by its commitment.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** The Ag. Prime Minister referred to PQ B/155, but the PQ stated that the report was being tabled at the Prime Minister's Office since 07 March 2015, that is, more than six months' time till now. May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he will table the report and why also this is taking so long for the Committee to act upon, because there is a mafia operating around the Sale by Levy as everybody is aware and time is of the essence and the report should be made public and also action should be taken?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, firstly, I would like to just remind the House that prescriptions have been suspended for the present.

As far as the statement by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister is concerned, the Government policy is that the report should be examined first in Committee by Government and then

published, but I will ensure or at least make sure that the Committees do their work diligently.

**Mr Uteem:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister stated that now we are going to set up the Committee. So, may I have a time frame as to when this Committee would deliver its report?

As far as prescription is concerned, is he aware that the fact that all procedures for prescription have been suspended is creating hardship to genuine cases of people who prescribed land for a required number of years?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that both Committees have been set up. As I mentioned, we will do our best with my colleagues to ensure that the reports are produced to Cabinet to enable the Commission of Inquiry reports to be published.

**Mr Bérenger:** I am sure the Ag. Prime Minister is aware that in the recent past a mafia, which has been referred to, was present, in fact, in the Supreme Court's yard, *tapeurs* and gangs who come, terrorise people and so on, *dans la cour de la Cour Suprême, dans la Cour Suprême elle-même* and what causes even more revolting is that he was a foreigner – a foreigner at the head of this mafia organising that with, unfortunately, a few Mauritians also, lawyers some of them. Can I know whether this has stopped and whether, if it has not, what action is going to be taken to stop this?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I have inquired into what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has mentioned, but I must reassure the House that Government is taking this matter very seriously and that we are concerned with the people who suffer either from Sale by Levy or from illegal prescription of their land and that we will do all in our power to stop any abuse of both.

**Mr Ramano:** Madame la présidente, chaque semaine, il y a des ventes qui se font à la barre. Est-ce que je peux proposer au ministre, tout comme les prescriptions qui ont été suspendues, si on peut venir de l'avant pour demander la suspension des ventes à la barre jusqu'à ce que les recommandations soient mises en place ?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. Member is aware of the Commissioner for Protection of Borrowers who has been doing his/her work. I will pass on the request of the hon. Member as far as the suspension for the present.

**Mr Baloomoody:** The Commissioner we know has limited powers when it comes to Sale by Levy. Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether, at least, for the NHDC houses, that we can suspend the Sale by Levy pending the outcome because there are many houses which are the only residence of these people? Can we suspend the Sale of Levy of, at least, NHDC houses pending the outcome of the Committee's report?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I leave it to the good office of the Vice-Prime Minister Soodhun. But, obviously, there are people who also abuse in the system. So, we must be able to separate people who abuse and people who are genuine. I am sure my colleague will take care of that.

**Madam Speaker:** I have observed that there are certain MPs who are asking for supplementary questions. They should know that there is a time limit for Prime Minister's Question Time also and that I cannot allow a question to become a PNQ. I am giving in turn everybody his chance to ask questions, but, at the same time, I think it is a legitimate right of each hon. Member as representative of their constituents to be given a fair chance to ask the questions which are on the agenda. I am asking for the comprehension of everybody on this issue. Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

#### **POUDRE D'OR - FOOTBALL GROUND - CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/570) 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 construction of a football ground at Poudre d'Or, he will state -

- (a) the date of award of the contract therefor;
- (b) the date of completion thereof;
- (c) the reasons why the pre-final handing over has not been effected as at to date, and
- (d) if consideration will be given for the Senior Chief Executive of his Ministry to effect a site visit thereat, together with the hon. Members of Constituency No. 6, Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the NDU that the contract for the construction of a football ground at Poudre d'Or was awarded on 16 June

2014 to Best Construct Co. Ltd with a completion date of 27 September 2014 for the sum of Rs3,661,578.55, inclusive of VAT.

The project comprised the following works -

- (i) earthworks - cut and fill;
- (ii) provision of topsoil and turfing, and
- (iii) construction of French drains.

I am also given to understand that the handing over has not yet been effected given that the grass has not yet fully grown and moreover some levelling works are still being required. This is due to the fact that people are having access to the football pitch given that it is not fenced.

The contractor has been requested to carry out outstanding remedial works, that is, turfing and levelling works at some spots and these are expected to be completed within a period of 6 to 8 weeks. The project will be handed over as soon as the grass is fully grown.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (d) of the question, it is to be noted that at the level of the NDU, there is a Parliamentary Private Secretary who has been assigned the responsibility of overseeing all issues pertaining to NDU projects for Constituency No. 6 and the latter is the 'interface' between elected Members and the NDU.

However, I shall be pleased to arrange for a site visit with all the concerned parties so that the matter can be dealt with.

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

**Mr Rughoobur:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister when was this project supposed to be handed over?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** The completion date was 27 September 2014, a year ago.

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

**Mr Rughoobur:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. There are three or four other projects that are in the same condition. Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister convey to the Chief Executive of the NDU to please look into the issue of the other three projects as well and to ensure that those projects are completed quickly?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is rightly concerned with delays in the completion of the projects. I have the same issue in my Constituency.

*(Interruptions)*

So, I will certainly help him in that way.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mahomed!

### **PORT LOUIS SOUTH & PORT LOUIS CENTRAL – NDU PROJECTS**

**(No. B/571) Mr O. Mahomed (Third 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 Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, he will state the projects undertaken thereat by the National Development Unit, over the period July 2005 to December 2014, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) nature thereof, and
- (b) cost thereof.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am tabling the list of projects awarded in Constituency No. 2 during period July 2005 to December 2014.

**Mr Mahomed:** May I have an indication from the Ag. Prime Minister of the projects that have been allocated for the coming year - 2015 is already late, but for 2016, please?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** This is a different question, Madam Speaker. I don't have that information.

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

### **SALE BY LEVY AND PRESCRIPTION - COMMISSION OF INQUIRY - FINDINGS**

**(No. B/572) 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 Commission of Inquiry on Sale by Levy and Prescription, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom,

information as to where matters stand as to the work thereof and give an indication as to when the findings thereof will be submitted.

*(Vide reply to P.Q. No. B/569)*

### **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - POLICE BRUTALITY – COMPLAINTS**

**(No. B/573) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Human Rights Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of complaints for Police brutality received thereat, since January 2014 to date, indicating the number of investigations thereinto which have led to the prosecution of members of the Mauritius Police Force and the number of convictions secured as a result thereof.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Human Rights Commission that from January 2014 to 25 September 2015, 288 complaints of Police brutality have been received. After investigation, 9 cases have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions in accordance with section 4 of the Protection of Human Rights Act.

I am also informed that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is presently conducting an in-depth examination of the cases referred to it, to establish as to whether there is sufficient evidence to refer the cases to Court. As such no conviction has been secured to date.

**Mr Baloomoody:** The hon. Ag. Prime Minister just mentioned out of 288 only 9 have been referred to the DPP. Can I know whether the complainants have been informed of the reasons why their case has not been sent to the DPP?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I am not aware of that. I have to find out.

**Mr Baloomoody:** Can I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister how many people are there at the Human Rights Commission to investigate enquiries? What is the staff there?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I don't have that information unless I get notice. I must emphasise though that last week we responded to a question to say that a Police

Complaints Commission is on the cards, I think, for this year so that we can, in fact, improve the system.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Madam Speaker, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister indicate, whenever there is an enquiry on a Police Officer by the Human Rights Commission, whether any sanction is taken against the suspect, whether he is suspended or otherwise?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I am sorry, Madam, I don't have that information.

### **POLICE FORCE - VACANCIES**

**(No. B/574) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the vacancies which presently exist in each of the grade of Men and Women Police Constable to Deputy Commissioner of Police, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, in each grade, indicating –

- (a) when they will be filled, and
- (b) the number thereof that will be filled.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there is a total of 2,381 vacancies in the grades ranking from Police Constable/Woman Police Constable to Deputy Commissioner of Police, details of which are being tabled.

As regards parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am also informed that financial provision exists in respect of 1,753 of these vacancies. So, we have funded 1,753 vacancies which will be filled within the current financial year, subject to candidates being eligible and suitably qualified.

### **JUVENILE JUSTICE BILL - DRAFTING**

**(No. B/575) 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 drafting of the proposed Juvenile Justice Bill, he will state where matters stand.

*(Withdrawn)*

## **PRISONERS - ELECTRONIC BRACELETS SYSTEMS**

**(No. B/576) 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 proposed implementation of the Electronic Bracelets Systems for the tracking of prisoners, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, in the Government Programme 2015-2019, Government has announced its intention to introduce electronic monitoring bracelets as an alternative to detention for certain types of suspects who have been released on bail with a view to better managing the prison population.

Consultations on the modalities for the implementation of this project have been held at the level of the Prime Minister's Office with all stakeholders, including the Police Force and the Attorney-General's Office. The Police have highlighted important issues with regard to the economic and operational feasibility of this project.

In view of the high capital investment and recurrent cost implications of the system, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Police Department have been requested to carry out a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed project.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo, please!

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** A decision on the implementation of the project will be taken in the light of this analysis.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Lesjongard!

**Mr Lesjongard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Do we have an indication of the cost of the project?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam, it is a very expensive project. It could cost in the region of Rs250,000 per bracelet.

*(Interruptions)*

It is valuable and...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, order! Please!

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** In addition to that, we will require additional Police cars, the maintenance of a computer system and GPS system. So, it is a very expensive...

*(Interruptions)*

...system and also it is very fragile. So, it is being looked at to see whether it is feasible.

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

**Mr Jhugroo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I know whether there has been a tender procedure for the purchase of these bracelets?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** No tender procedure. We have not purchased them. What has happened is that a consultant was appointed to look at the feasibility of the project.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Lesjongard!

**Mr Lesjongard:** Can the Ag. Prime Minister confirm, if he says that there has not been any tender procedure, whether quotations have been requested to potential suppliers from the Police Force?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, what the Police did was to appoint a consultant and the consultant gave the approximate figure.

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

**Mr Rutnah:** Can the Vice-Prime Minister enlighten the House whether the scheme of electronic bracelets system is...

**Madam Speaker:** The Ag. Prime Minister!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Rutnah:** I am so sorry! Can the Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether the scheme of electronic bracelets system is only limited to accused who are on bail or is it going to be extended to serving prisoners who would be released in advance in order to control the population of prison?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, you will be glad to know that there is plenty of room in our prisons at the moment, about a thousand places are still left to be taken up. However, this is something that needs to be studied because, in fact, there does not seem to be enough people on remand who would justify having such expensive bracelets. So, for it to be feasible, it may have to be extended perhaps to other types of convicted prisoners. But that is something that will have to be studied.

**Madam Speaker:** Time is over! The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions No. B/586 and No. B/587 have been withdrawn! Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

### **NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS PROJECT - CONTRACT**

**(No. B/579) 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 new National Identity Cards Project, he will state the -

- (a) name of the contractor therefor;
- (b) scope of works thereof;
- (c) contractual cost thereof, and
- (d) contractual completion date thereof.

*(Vide reply to PNQ)*

### **NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY – ASSETS & LIABILITIES**

**(No. B/580) 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 Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom –

- (a) a list of the current assets and liabilities thereof, indicating the respective value thereof and the monthly revenue/loss thereof, and
- (b) when the general insurance services will be operational.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo):** Madam Speaker, with your permission I will answer to this question.

The recurring premium business of the ex-BAI Co (Mtius) Ltd has been transferred on 07 August 2015 to two companies which are wholly-owned by the Government, namely, the National Insurance Co. Ltd with respect to the life assurance policies and the NIC General Insurance Co. Ltd for the general business.

These two companies were incorporated on 15 April 2015. I am informed by the FSC that the National Insurance Co. Ltd obtained its Long Term Insurance Business Licence on 05 May 2015 while NIC General Insurance Co. Ltd obtained its General Insurance Licence on 24 July 2015.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the National Insurance Co. Ltd is a Company licensed by the Financial Services Commission under the Insurance Act and it is the responsibility of that Commission to ensure that the company is being maintained in a financially sound condition in line with the prescribed Solvency Rules and Capital Adequacy Requirements.

Can I draw the attention of the hon. Member that it would not be appropriate to disclose commercially sensitive information of the National Insurance Company Ltd.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am advised that the general insurance services are already operational under the NIC General Insurance Co. Ltd since 24 July 2015.

**Dr. Sorefan:** May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether Government is contemplating to have a strategic partner - for example, what I heard from the Press, SICOM - to give the *noblesse* to this insurance Company?

**Mr Collendavello:** In due course, the matter will be considered, but there has been talk of this.

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, with respect to each of these two companies, the amount of money which the Government has capitalised each company to date?

**Mr Collendavello:** I would not know, but I am sure that at the Registrar of Companies we are able to see what are the Balance Sheets and what are the accounts.

**Mr Baloomoody:** Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he will see to it that the NIC do send a letter to those who were holding policies from the BAI, that their policy has been transferred to NIC because there is still some confusion among the public? Some are continuing to pay the monthly premium, but they don't know who is handling their policy.

**Mr Collendavello:** I am sure that if notice is given of that question, the substantive Minister will be in a better position to answer.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Minister who is the auditor of the National Insurance Company Ltd?

**Mr Collendavello:** I don't know this at all.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Regarding the bank account of the NIC, I understand that procedures are not being followed to create the NIC bank account. Could the hon. Vice-Prime Minister see to it that all procedures for the creation of new NIC accounts are done at the soonest?

**Mr Collendavello:** Well, if they are not being followed, I am sure my colleague will see to it that they are followed.

#### **SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - AIRWAY COFFEE - CONTRACT**

**(No. B/581) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the allocation of the contract to Airway Coffee Ltd. for the provision of catering services at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, allegedly to the detriment of Tropical Times, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airports of

Mauritius Ltd., information as to if the case has been referred to the Commissioner of Police for inquiry and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and, if not, why not.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I wish to refer the hon. Member to replies made to Parliamentary Question Nos. B/75 and B/76 of 2015 wherein I provided extensive details as regards the allocation of a contract to Airway Coffee Ltd for the provision of catering services at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport.

I am informed by the Chief Executive Officer of Airports of Mauritius Co Ltd (AML) that the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has started an investigation into this matter and has taken possession of all relevant files and documents.

I am further informed by the ICAC that, on 23 December 2014, it has initiated an investigation on the allocation of a contract for the provision of catering services at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport to the detriment of other bidders including Tropical Times.

The investigation by ICAC is still ongoing. The question of referral of the case to the Police, therefore, does not arise at present.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Would the Ag. Prime Minister agree whether the decision to remove the administrative control of Airports of Mauritius Co Ltd from the office of the Deputy Prime Minister to the PMO in year 2008 does not give the appearance or the perception that the former Prime Minister was systematically involved in a number of tainted conduct that may amount to breaches of PoCA?

**Madam Speaker:** I am sorry, hon. Jhugroo; I think you are going outside the question which has been asked.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister state whether it is correct that the former Senior Chief Executive of the PMO, who is an influential Board Member, could chair the evaluation?

**Mr Mohamed:** On a point of order, please. The Standing Orders do not allow any Member to ask for their opinion. Is it correct to ask for an opinion? The Standing Orders say you cannot ask for an opinion, so the question should not be allowed.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mohamed, I am listening to the question and if there is any need I'll ask the hon. Member not to ask his question. Please proceed!

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister ...

*(Interruptions)*

*Gagne dimal !*

*(Interruptions)*

Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister state whether it is correct that the former Senior Chief Executive of the PMO's Office at that time, who was an influential Member of the Board, could chair the Evaluation Committee?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** At the time, you mean!

*(Interruptions)*

I don't have an answer to this question, Madam Speaker, but I will look into you.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo, will you, please, restrain yourself to the question which has been asked and don't go beyond the ambit of your question, please!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jhugroo:** *Mo pas gagne dimal moi! To pe roder, to pu gagner, pas peur toi.*

*(Interruptions)*

Does this action of the former Senior Chief Executive chairing the Evaluation Committee ...

*(Interruptions)*

*Taler to pu koner, pas peur toi !*

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Mohamed, please!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jhugroo:** While doing so, does this not constitute an offence under the POCA as it gives the perception that she uses her office as Board Member to influence the decision-making process?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Rutnah:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order! It is very improper and this is happening time and time again. Please extend the courtesy of listening!

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Would you please allow the hon. Member to make his point! You will have the opportunity to make your point as well.

**Mr Rutnah:** Madam Speaker, it is happening time and time again, provocation and provocation, and whether this kind of...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, please sit down! What is the point of order?

**Mr Rutnah:** The point of order is whether the behaviour of hon. Mohamed does not amount to disorderly conduct under Section 46 of the Standing Orders?

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, it is for me to decide!

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I would ask the House to have faith in ICAC and to let ICAC do its work in all independence and we will see, without fear or prejudice, what the ICAC decides.

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

## **PROGUARD LTD - PUBLIC BODIES – CONTRACTS**

**No. B/582) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the contracts awarded to Proguard Ltd., he will give a list thereof, over the period July 2005 to 10 December 2014, indicating in each case the -

- (a) awarding body;
- (b) procedures followed for the allocation thereof, and
- (c) total amount of money paid therefor.

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Madam Speaker, as the request spans over a period of nine and a half years and may involve all the 204 Public Bodies falling under the purview of the Public Procurement Act, the information is being compiled and will be tabled at the earliest.

## **SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NEW TERMINAL - CONTRACT**

**(No. B/583) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)**

asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the new terminal of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airports of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the -

- (a) initial and final contract value thereof, indicating if final payment has been effected therefor;
- (b) procedures followed for the award of the contract therefor, and
- (c) reported shortcomings in relation to the infrastructural conditions thereof, since the coming into operation thereof to date.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd that the initial contract value for the construction of the new terminal at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport amounts to USD 305,813,752. The final contract value has not yet been finalised for the following reasons -

- (i) The last remedial works will be completed by end of October 2015, and
- (ii) The final accounts will be settled by end of November 2015.

However, it is currently estimated by the Engineer, Louis Berger Group, that the contract value will not exceed USD 306.1 m., that is, approximately 0.098% above the initial contract value. The final payment will be effected by end of November 2015.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) of the question I am to inform the House that Airport Terminal Operations Ltd, as a private company, is not governed by the Public Procurement Act 2006. Accordingly the following procedures, in line with the requirements of EXIM Bank were followed -

- EXIM bank has submitted a shortlist of three Chinese contractors, that is -
  - (i) Beijing Construction Engineering Group Company Ltd;
  - (ii) China International Water & Electric Corporation, and
  - (iii) China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd.

- An invitation for bids was issued by ATOL on 08 June 2009 and bids were received on 07 September 2009.

Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that since September 2008 the responsibility for the Airport Sector was transferred from the Ministry of Tourism and External Communications to the Prime Minister's Office.

- The Board of ATOL set up a Monitoring Committee and an Evaluation Committee to evaluate the Bid Proposals. The Evaluation Committee, comprised representatives of Aéroports de Paris Ingénierie, Louis Berger Group and ATOL. The Evaluation Committee recommended that two companies namely

Beijing Construction Engineering Group Company Ltd and China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd had the capacity to perform the Project.

- The Financial Proposals of the two companies were opened and were as follows -
  - China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd = USD 316 m.
  - Beijing Construction Engineering Group Company Ltd = USD 360 m.
- Louis Berger Group carried out the evaluation of the Financial Proposal and concluded that China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd had submitted a substantially responsive Financial Proposal.
- ATOL, at its 10<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting of 27 November 2009, approved the award of the tender to China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd at a revised contract amount of USD 305,813,752. after a Value Engineering Exercise.
- The EPC Contract between ATOL and China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd was signed on 30 December 2009.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that a comprehensive list of snags was drawn up after the issue of the Taking Over Certificate on 31 May 2013, and China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd was tasked to attend to these defects during the Defects Liability Period of two years. These snags did not have a direct impact on the overall operation and service quality in the processing of passengers of the Terminal at its opening on 12 September 2013.

On 15 September 2014, another list of defects was brought to the attention of Aéroport de Paris Management requesting for urgent remedial action.

Madam Speaker, in February 2015, I personally requested ATOL to ask its Engineer to submit a report certifying that the foundations, structure and viaduct installations and the curtain wall portion of the building have been constructed as per the approved design and are functioning well. Louis Berger Group, the Engineer, submitted a report on 26 February 2015 certifying that foundation, structure and roof of the new terminal was successfully tested according to British standards and Centre for Window and Cladding Technology standards. Louis Berger Group stated that latent defects associated with skylight installation have been identified and are being rectified. I am tabling a copy of the Engineer report, Madam Speaker.

I am further informed that China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd has to date attended to most of the shortcomings, except for the following -

- Rusting and paint peeling on steelwork at passenger bridges and on viaduct balustrade. This is being attended to and will be completed by end of October 2015.
- Repair of Terracotta Paving both landslide and airside. The remedial works will be completed by end of October 2015.
- Intermittent water leakage through the roof system which is requiring the replacement of all the pressure plates on the roof. The works will be completed by end of October 2015.

All the remaining remedial works are being carried out at no additional costs to ATOL.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Being given that ATOL is a private company and is not governed by the PPA, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether it was AML which is a public company which launched the tendering procedures?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, in the answer it would appear that ATOL launched the tender. I am informed that ATOL launched the tender and it was not in the public procurement regulations. ATOL was not in the Schedule to the regulations. This is something that needs to be looked at in the future, Madam Speaker. That there are no loopholes in that respect and all relevant companies including subsidiaries of public owned companies are correctly included in that Schedule.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Jhugroo:** According to my information, it is AML. Never mind. So,...

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo!

**Mr Jhugroo:** So, can the Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether the reinvestment of the loan is done by Airports of Mauritius Ltd. and not by ATOL?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I have it here. An invitation for bids was issued by ATOL on 08 June 2009. As far as the repayment is concerned, I presume it is ATOL that runs the terminal, but it may also be guaranteed by Government, etc., if a substantive question is asked, I will reply.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Can we know for what reasons an open international tender was not carried out?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, there are two ways to proceed. If the funds are being provided at concessionary rate by some State, in this case it is China EXIM Bank, they may request for special tender procedures for instance including only their nationals. That is obviously a risk that we are taking in that once we are getting cheaper loan facilities, the actual cost of the building may be more expensive. But that is something in terms of good governance that this Government will have to look at, what extent we accept such concessionary loans and what is the real effect, whether it is in fact cheaper or more expensive at the end of the day.

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

**Mr Jhugroo:** Being given that we heard from the Ag. Prime Minister that the repairs will be done without any extra cost, can we know whether the materials used are worth for the price we paid for?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** I don't have that information, but I am told, Madam Speaker, when Government was being set up in January, we did ask for a full report from the independent engineer. The report was provided. I am tabling that report and I can only go by the report of the engineer.

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

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

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

**PRIME MINISTER (FORMER) - ALLEGED MONEY LAUNDERING &  
FRAUDULENT TRANSACTIONS**

(No. B/584) **Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the alleged cases of money laundering and fraudulent transactions by the former Prime Minister involving Centurion American Express credit cards and the purchase of properties in the United Kingdom, he will state if the National Crime Agency of the United Kingdom has solicited the assistance of his office in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

**Mr Yerrigadoo:** Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the information requested is privileged pursuant to section 20 of the Mutual Assistance in Criminal and Related Matters Act, which provides, *inter alia*, that documents exchanged between the Central Authority and a foreign State cannot be disclosed.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo, no supplementary? Next question! Hon. Bhagwan!

**CASINOS DE MAURICE – FINANCIAL, STAFFING & INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
SITUATIONS**

(No. B/585) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the casinos, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Casinos de Maurice, information as to the financial, staffing and industrial relations situations thereof, indicating if -

- (a) losses are being incurred thereat;
- (b) they are overstaffed;
- (c) a mutually agreed retirement scheme and a 14<sup>th</sup> Month Bonus Scheme for the employees thereof are implemented thereat
- (d) arrears disputes are pending thereat, and
- (e) where matters stand concerning the Grand' Baie and Flic-en-Flac casinos and an eventual strategic partner therefor.

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Madam Speaker, Mauritius is probably the only country in the world where casinos lose money. It is surprising that the casino business operated by the SIC Management Services has been consistently making losses since 2009. The accumulated losses as at 31 July 2015 have reached Rs591 m. Any company in such a critical financial situation would have been forced to retrench or close down. Indeed, under the Companies

Act, it would have become technically insolvent. To prevent the closure and protection of employment, SIC has had to inject a total amount of Rs700 m. into the casino companies.

I would like here to ask hon. Members for how long could we continue using public funds to finance casino deficits.

Upon taking office, I gave an additional grace period of six months for the casinos to stop making losses and to break-even. Unfortunately, to my disappointment, the casinos are still in the red.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (b) of the question, the SICMS is currently managing three casinos while it has staff for six casinos. In fact, the manpower requirement for these three casinos is only 300. But, as at date, casinos employ 850 staff, resulting in an excess of 550 employees. The forthcoming opening of the Grand' Baie Casino and the one in the West will absorb a maximum of 200 employees and still leaving an excess of some 350 employees. It is of utmost urgency that we rightsize the work force to save the business. Otherwise, there would be no alternative but to close or dispose of the casinos. In fact, the previous Government intended to sell the casino business.

In respect of part (c) of the question, I am informed that Management has taken a series of cost-cutting measures to improve the financial situation of the casino business. Despite these measures, the casinos are still facing financial difficulties. Faced with this situation, Management has come up with a scheme for employees to take voluntary early retirement. The scheme was offered to 317 employees aged 50 and above. To date, 34 employees have taken advantage of the scheme.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the 14<sup>th</sup> Month Bonus for 2014, the cost of which is Rs22 m., I am quite surprised that the Union is still insisting on payment of the bonus in such a heavily loss making company.

As regards to the total back-pay of Rs50 m. arising from the arbitration award and payable in five equal instalments, the first two instalments have already been paid to the employees in June and September 2014. A third settlement due in June 2015 has yet to be paid. Management has informed the Union that the company is currently not in a position to make payments and the Union is demanding payment in full and immediately.

With regard to part (e) of the question, I am informed that work in respect of the casino to be located at the Grand' Baie Conference Centre is in progress. This casino will be managed by a new company, the Grand' Baie Casino Limited. The existing staff of casinos, especially of beach casinos, will be offered employment in Grand' Baie Casino Limited on new terms and conditions. The objective is to ensure the financial viability of the business.

The Union is not agreeable to this. I must stress that maintaining existing terms and conditions, which provide for payment of the 14<sup>th</sup> month bonus irrespective of financial situation, will impact negatively on the business. I would be in favour of rewarding employees based on a scheme linked to profitability and performance.

As far as the Flic-en-Flac casino is concerned, I wish to inform the House that, following an expression of interest for a strategic partner, two proposals have been received and same are being evaluated.

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

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether last year a steering committee was set up to analyse the situation in the casinos? The terms of reference was prepared by the Financial Secretary, and even Mr Jack Bizlall was a member of that committee. Can we know whether he has received recommendations from that steering committee for implementation, which would have given a way to redress the financial situation, and what action has been taken following the steering committee's report?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** I am not aware of this steering committee, but there is an inter-ministerial committee, which has been set up by Cabinet, that meets to decide on the way forward for the casinos.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the whole problem of casinos arose, especially the way one person was appointed, Mr R. P. – I won't mention the name – which has created some unusual situation among the staff because he was there before – I won't go into the problem he has had – and that appointment created lot of problems within the mood itself in the casinos?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Well, Mr Raja Pillay, my old friend, *a jeté l'éponge. Il a quitté.*

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he is satisfied that - with regard to the Grand'Baie Casino, the whole refurbishment, the works which had been carried out – all the procedures have been followed for the award of contracts, and if there have been shortcomings in the award of contracts?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Concerning Grand'Baie Casino, the project is being managed by a Project Manager Committee and Project Implementation Committee. Name of Project Manager: Claude Wong So and Associates; Architects: Lam Po Tang and Siew Architects; MNA Engineer: Profile Ltd; QS: Apex Surveillance Ltd., MNA Services; then, there are probably, others also and their job is to ensure that the project goes ahead. Now, has

there been anything done which is contrary to good governance, I will look into. But I would think that with people like Wong So and Siew on the Board, I have been quite satisfied that they are following procedures.

**Mr Bhagwan:** One question, Madam Speaker, if you will allow me. Human beings are human beings. All these people have been working in the casinos and I won't go into all the political appointees. I call it the 'fat cats' working there, earning big money while doing nothing. Can the hon. Minister, at least, inform the House whether he is aware that two employees have passed away, from what we have heard? *Il y a un grave problème au niveau des employés, il y a une angoisse*; as I said, human beings are human beings. What humane attitude the hon. Minister can have to make these employees, at least, not to continue with the nightmare? We have been given the figure of some 350 employees, already two have passed away with stress. So, what additional measures the hon. Minister intends to take to see to it that the whole administration looks at the problem of the employees in a more humane attitude?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** I beg to differ with the hon. Member on this issue, I have to. In fact, the situation has been so in the casinos because there have been too many political appointees. We all know it, from all sides of the House. Now, how do you manage a group of people? We have 350 persons over-employed; they do not have a place there. We have suggested VRS to 350 of them, only 36 have accepted and they are insisting for a 14-month when the company is losing money. I take the case of British American Insurance. The employees have accepted reduction in wage just to preserve employment. The same is being done for Apollo Bramwell also. So, I am quite surprised about the behaviour of the union there, No. 1, and No. 2, the fact that we are doing the maximum to save employment. The question is not to improve on what they are getting already but to save employment. And I am in a situation, Madam Speaker, where we will have to thrash it out. The former Government decided to sell the casinos. I have given them six months to break even, they could not make it. So, we will reach a point, probably, a breaking point. I wish that we do not reach the breaking point and that we come to an agreement whereby we can preserve employment but, as it is now, we have, I must say, a union that is used to having their own way. I have nothing against unions. I have been a unionist myself, but it is just becoming very close to being unmanageable, then the Inter-ministerial Committee will have to meet and decide on the fate of the casinos.

**Mr Ramano:** Madame la présidente, est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre qui seront les actionnaires de la nouvelle compagnie, Casino Mauritius Ltd?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** La compagnie de Grand'Baie sera 100% gouvernement, SIC. Si j'ai bien vu, on a demandé à des intéressés qui veulent bien s'installer dans les Plaines Wilhems, Flic-en-Flac et autres, on a eu deux intéressés. Donc, ils travaillent dessus actuellement. Mais, en général, nous avons la majorité. Au fait, j'avais insisté en 1984 que le gouvernement prenne la majorité des casinos, parce que je pensais que le casino c'était les jeux et qu'il fallait donc contrôler. Je le regrette aujourd'hui. Je le regrette parce que, finalement, on a créé des compagnies où il y a eu tellement d'ingérence politique que je me pose la question aujourd'hui s'il faut continuer à ce que le gouvernement garde la majorité dans les casinos.

**Mr Bérenger:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister of Finance has told us that there have accumulated losses of Rs591 m. and that the casinos are still in the red, without giving us figures. The figure of Rs100 m. losses per year has been published in the press, sans *une mise au point*. Can we know what is the amount of loss monthly?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** In 2014, the casino has lost R140 m. So, the SIC had to inject more funds. Casinos are presently losing around Rs3 m. per month, mainly due to the fact that we have more than doubled the number of workers which we should have normally.

**Mr Bérenger:** On this issue of the strategic partner, I understand that there is no strategic partner elsewhere. There will be no strategic partner at Grand'Baie, the new casino in the Conference Centre, but surprise, surprise, there will be a Local Strategic Partner in the case of Flic-en-Flac. Now, can I know, a Local Strategic Partner, what is he going to bring in the business in Flic-en-Flac that cannot be brought in the other casinos?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** This is the information which I have been given. Local Strategic Partner would be a local partner, who, according to the old formula, would be 51% Government, 49% private sector. I am just putting the question now to the House, I say: how long can Government continue using public funds? Government is losing public money to finance a casino business. The House would understand that we are in a situation where we have to take decisions. Now, do we need a Strategic Partner in a casino? This is an issue which is a policy. But I am very much tempted now to either sell over those casinos to those who want to buy or then to allow others who want to buy, majority, in which the State reduces its shareholding of those casinos. It might be a solution.

**Mr Bérenger:** A last one, with your permission, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the Chairperson of SIC, Mr Nakhuda, has informed him, has given him a copy of a letter received three days ago, dated 26 September, signed by someone totally genuine, Jack Bizlall, where very serious allegations are made, where he says that, according to him, there is a conspiracy to take over *pou dipain diber* - as he says in the letter...

*(Interruptions)*

To take over *pou dipain diber!* That is, a conspiracy to take over *pou dipain diber* - that's dirty business - as far as the casinos are concerned, and where he requests a full enquiry, since it is very fishy the way this new company is being set up at Grand'Baie. So, my question is: has the hon. Minister been informed by the Chairperson of SIC of that document?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Well, I will ask for a copy of this letter. If the Chairman of the SIC has it, we will look into it.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, if he has got it, we will have to look into it, no doubt. But, I must say, again, they informed the House that the union has been behaving in the most improper way all the time and it is the union which is pushing the employees just to resist everything. Well, they will reach a point where *les élastiques se cassent à force de tirer*. We are not very far from the moment where we will have to decide, Government will have to decide on the future of casinos.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Does the hon. Minister of Finance agree with me that, one of the reasons that the business of the Casino de Maurice is being affected, is the opening of casinos all over the island? So, would the Minister of Finance consider to stop giving new permits for the opening of the casinos all over the island, in a way to prevent our nation to become a *nation de zougader*, as always mentioned by my friend, hon. Rajesh Bhagwan?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** The policy of Government is clear on the question of gaming and betting. We are dead against and we have taken decisions in the Budget. It was a long way into discouraging betting and gaming.

For casinos, as long as they are within the premises of hotels, that is, within the premises of areas where there are hotels, it might be tolerated. But it should never become a problem for the country. We don't want to encourage Mauritians to go and play in casinos.

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

**Mr Bhagwan:** One last, Madam Speaker, thank you. The hon. Minister has stated and I have stated as well that one of our problems is employees who, without doing anything, have been appointed on political grounds. This is one of the *faits* of the financial mess of the casinos. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether since the new Government has taken over, he can order an inquiry to see that there are political agents who have obtained promotion and *a, b, c, assiser prend casse!* I won't say the other word '*b*'! This is what is happening, whether it will...

*(Interruptions)*

*Mo pas assiser baise casse mwa!*

*(Interruptions)*

Can the Minister at least order an inquiry and see to it, as stated by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the issues raised by Mr Bizlall and also political agents who have been appointed and the Government which is blaming other governments, is taking the same way?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** The employees are mostly political employees named by all parties here concerned! Now, I am very...

*(Interruptions)*

I have again to spell it out I am not looking for a fight! I am just saying that on the other side of the House I know of one person who, on the eve of the elections of 2005, said "*monne reussi fonce enkor 8 dimounes dans casinos!*" So, let us not look for a fight on this issue.

I think that all parties which came to power have been misusing the casinos. What is funny is that people from the Government's side would phone me and say: "you know *ena ene banne MMM pe nommer lot cote.*" On the other side, I have friends there also who phone me and say: "*ena problème cot nou cote la li pe crase nou depi elektions.*" So, I think that most of us are, in fact, having to deal...

*(Interruptions)*

*Non, non!* We are having to deal with people and those people have all their own Ministers, MLAs and so I would treat this...

*(Interruptions)*

No, I would treat this...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Allow the Minister to reply!

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** I would treat this with a lot of reserve because it again proves one thing that we are dealing with the mess which has been created by people in this House and before.

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

### **MBC – EDITORS/JOURNALISTS - APPOINTMENT**

**(No. B/586) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the News Department of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

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

*(Withdrawn)*

### **MBC - ANIMATORS/PRODUCERS –TERMINATION OF CONTRACT**

**(No. B/587) 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 Television, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, over the period January 2015 to date –

- (a) the list of the programmes thereof which have been cancelled, indicating in each case, the reasons therefor, and
- (b) information as to the names of the animators or producers whose services have been terminated, indicating in each case, the –
  - (i) date of termination of the contract of appointment, and
  - (ii) reasons therefor.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **ALBION – CITÉ MARCEL CABON - SEWERAGE**

**(No. B/588) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Cité Marcel Cabon, in Albion, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to where matters stand as to the sewerage water overflow problem which is representing serious health hazards thereat, indicating if –

- (a) remedial measures will be taken to alleviate the inconveniences being caused to the inhabitants of the housing estate found thereat as a result thereof, and
- (b) the land issue for the provision of a leach field thereat has been resolved and, if so, give details thereof.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo):** Madam Speaker, the Wastewater Management Authority is planning to construct a leaching field for which financial provision has already been made in the 2015/2016 Budget.

In my reply on 10 February, I informed the House that a plot of State land had been identified for the construction of the leaching field. My colleague, the Minister of Housing and Lands, or at least his Ministry, informed me that the land is leased as a building site but

the lessee has never occupied the land and has not demonstrated interest to go ahead with any building project.

I am informed that the Ministry of Housing and Lands is proceeding with the cancellation of the Lease Agreement and the vesting of the land into my Ministry within a fortnight.

According to the Wastewater Management Authority, the procurement exercise and the works will be completed within seven months. To forestall your supplementary question, yes, there is being pumping on and off to alleviate the suffering of the people in that area.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Madam Speaker, can I make a request to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister that at least the officials of the Wastewater Management Authority could have a meeting with the inhabitants there – we will brief the people there - but at least to give them some hope that the project is going on? There is some PR exercise. It is a small community residing behind the Government School - as has been the case with Verger Bissambur where the Wastewater Management Authority carried out a PR exercise. At least the people will know that progress is coming and work will start soon there.

**Mr Collendavelloo:** I will certainly transmit to the Authority, but, in the meantime, perhaps the hon. Member would wish to meet the people and tell them what I have said today because he meets them very often.

*(Interruptions)*

I have also visited the site, we all know. We have common interest in this matter. So, participate!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Being given that the Vice-Prime Minister himself said that, we all know that there is a Government School there, when we say regularly - last time the hon. Vice-Prime Minister gave us a reply that it would be one off, so I am happy to hear that it would be on a regular basis. But the difficulties with the Wastewater Management Authority are that when the people talk when there are emergencies like when we have the December and January rainy season, at least a sort of network could be set up with the people and the Wastewater Management Authority as a hotline or something like this so that emergency works can be carried out whenever there are emergencies.

**Mr Collendavelloo:** Yes, of course, the use of the word 'regular' does not mean at regular intervals. It means as and when required, in emergency situations. The hon. Member has himself phoned the Wastewater Management Authority on occasion arising and the Authority has always been glad to help in this matter, as in other matters.

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

### **PORT - LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS – STORAGE**

**(No. B/589) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the port area, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Ports Authority, information as to if new storage facilities for Liquefied Petroleum Gas have been constructed and commissioned thereat, since 2011 to date and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the name/s of the promoter/s thereof, and
- (b) if same have been constructed on freehold land or on land belonging to the Authority and, if in the latter case, further indicate the –
  - (i) extent and location thereof;
  - (ii) procedures followed and terms and conditions thereof, and
  - (iii) shareholding of the company/ies at the time of application therefor and subsequent thereto.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Director General of the Mauritius Ports Authority (MPA) that since 2011 only one company, namely, Petredec (Mauritius) Ltd has constructed and commissioned a Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) storage facility in the Port area.

As regards part (b) of the question, the storage facility has been constructed over 1.11 hectares of land at Mer Rouge belonging to the MPA.

I am also informed that established procedures for land allocation have been followed by the MPA and a Lease Agreement was signed on 27 July 2011. Furthermore, the project was approved under the Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act on 05 May 2011.

Madam Speaker, the rental paid by the lessee is as follows –

- For period 24 February 2010 to 31 December 2011, at the time of acceptance of the lease, an amount of two million three hundred and seventy thousand and six hundred and thirty rupees (Rs2,370,630);
- For period 01 January 2012 to 31 December 2014, Rs1,280,000 annually;
- For period 01 January 2015 to 31 December 2019, Rs1,600,000 annually;
- For period 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2024, Rs2,000,000 annually, and
- For period 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2029 Rs2,500,000 annually.

I am tabling a copy of the lease agreement outlining the other terms and conditions thereof.

I am further informed by the MPA that at the time of application, Petredec (Mauritius) Ltd, a local company incorporated on 09 April 2009, was wholly owned by Petredec Investment Ltd, a foreign company incorporated in Cyprus. The ultimate beneficiaries are Mr Christopher Stedman, Mr Charles Fearn, Mr Giles Fearn and Mr Richard Fearn for 69.7% of the total shareholding. As regards the remaining 30.3%, the beneficiary is the National Shipping of Saudi Arabia which is quoted on the Saudi Arabia Stock Exchange. The shareholding of Petredec (Mauritius) Ltd has remained unchanged to date.

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

**Mr Rutnah:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister enlighten the House as to whether this company Petredec was actually given a Freeport licence?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam, Speaker, Petredec Ltd has a Freeport licence but it was given derogation to supply the local market for 2 years as from September 2013.

**Mr Rutnah:** If the Company was given derogation not to comply with the requirement of the freeport licence, who and what procedures were followed by whom to give such derogation to a company which was supposed to bring investment into our country rather than sending all the profit somewhere to Cyprus or Saudi Arabia.

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I must say that the port also has the ambition to become a regional port supplying petroleum products. This must be borne in mind. However, Madam Speaker, it is the BOI that granted the freeport licence and gave the derogation. I don't have the actual information that the hon. Member is seeking.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Can we know whether tender procedures were followed to allocate this contract to Petredec and if so, can we know when tenders were launched and, if not...

*(Interruptions)*

contract for the construction of the new storage LPG gas to construct there, whether there were any tender procedures which were followed and, if yes, when? If not, why there have not been any tender procedures before giving it to Petredec?

**The Ag. Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, we are talking about the lease of a land and all the appropriate procedures were followed but it is not the practice as for State Land to ask for tenders for leasing a land.

## **UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS -VISITOR'S REPORT - RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(No. B/590) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research whether, in regard to the Visitor's Report dated 25 February 2013 on the 'Restructuring of the University of Mauritius', she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University, information as to if -

- (a) the recommendations thereof have been approved by the Board of the University and;
  - (i) if not, why not and;
  - (ii) if so, indicate where matters stand as to the implementation thereof and obtain copy of the evaluation report on the results achieved as at to date, if any, and;
- (b) consideration will be given for the redefinition of the mission, vision and objectives of the University in the light of the present day socioeconomic challenges facing Mauritius.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, in reply to part (a) of the question, the University of Mauritius has informed that the then UoM Council unanimously approved the visitor's report in toto in March 2013.

With regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, as at date, a large number of the recommendations have either been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. A few carry heavy financial implications and will be considered in due course.

Madam Speaker, the University of Mauritius Council has been closely following up the progress of implementation of the recommendations. Five progress reports have already been submitted, the next progress report will be submitted during the forthcoming Council meeting.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the University of Mauritius launched its strategic plan for the period 2015/2020 in January 2015. In the course of the formulation of the plan, extensive consultations had been carried out with the relevant stakeholders. In light of the discussions, the earlier visions and missions statements were revisited.

As for the strategic objectives, these have been realigned to more adequately address the socio-economic challenges of the country. In this connection, the University of Mauritius has identified six strategic directions with clear objectives, key action and key performance indicators for each of them. These strategic directions are excellence in teaching and learning, excellence in research and innovation, strategic partnership for internationalisation, enriching student experience, sustainable community engagement and long lasting financial sustainability. A number of core areas to transform the economy have been identified in the economic mission statement vision 2030 presented by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. Interestingly, some of the ideas in the strategic plan of the University closely parallel the policy directions enunciated in the economic mission statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Rughoobur!

**Mr Rughoobur:** Thank you Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister just stated that the report has been implemented; there were three divisions that were to be created. The planning facilities and services and I think there was a third division – academy I think. I would ask the hon. Minister to confirm that these three divisions have actually been created and adequately staffed and also to confirm because these days we are speaking about the issue of

employability. These issues were addressed in that report and the Vice-Chancellor lately stated that there is no mismatch between what are the courses that are being offered by the University and the expectation of the job market. Can she please elaborate on this issue of employability?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** To start with, Madam Speaker, as far as the restructuring is concerned, it is on. The three sections mentioned by the hon. Member are the academia, the planning department and the resource department. These are for the planning and academia, it has already been done. As far as the resource and facilities section is concerned, first of all, a Committee of the Council has to sit and prepare a report after which only the appointment of the person concerned will be considered. As far as, employability and the courses are concerned, initially it is true that there has been a mismatch in the past but a lot of care is being taken now to ensure that there are consultations between the University of Mauritius and other Tertiary Education Institutions and the private sector. These consultative meetings have been on since 2013, but we have had more consultations done and what is being done right now is that we are trying to come up with a series of courses which have been proposed by the private sector so that we assure that our students once they leave University are adequately equipped to enter the world of work, thereby enhancing their employability.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Fowdar!

**Mr Fowdar:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I wanted to ask the hon. Minister whether her Ministry is working together with the HRDC in order to look into the issue of career guidance, a major cause of labour mismatch on the job market.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Certainly, Madam Speaker. The Human Resource Development Council is working closely with the Ministry and with all the Tertiary Education Institutions with a view of ensuring that the courses that are being dispensed will help students to get employed more readily. Furthermore, a career service centre is being set up at the Registrar's Office in the meantime the HRDC, the Ministry and the Tertiary Education Institutions are working together.

**Mr Baloomoody:** The hon. Minister, while mentioning about the implementation of the report, stated that, due to financial constraint, some proposals could not be implemented. If you look at the report of the activities for 2013/2014, it is clearly said that the University of Mauritius still faces financial challenges because of the increasingly competitive tertiary

education environment, reduction in Government grants and rising cost of higher education and research. So, can I know, through the hon. Minister, what Government intend to do to assist the University of Mauritius?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** First of all, Madam Speaker, it would be nice to emphasize that the University of Mauritius obtains its funding from the Tertiary Education Commission and for the 2015/2016 budget year, they received Rs504 m. But, over and above this, the University of Mauritius has got fee paying courses from which it obtains funds. There is the University of Mauritius Trust Fund from which it obtains further funds for specific projects and what is also important is that there is an audit being carried out at the level of the University of Mauritius to see where expenses can be cut done and to try to see how more efficiently the funds could be made use of.

**Madam Speaker:** Last question hon. Rughoobur!

**Mr Rughoobur:** There has also been another recommendation of the report to set up a unit where the private sector may participate along with the University to ensure that the issue of mismatch is addressed.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Madam Speaker, in my answer earlier I mentioned that, as from 2013 only, such consultative meetings are being held by the University of Mauritius and the private sector.

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

### **SUGAR CANE LAND - GOVERNMENT & MSPA - AGREEMENT**

**(No. B/591) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Agreement signed between Government and the Mauritius Sugar Planters Association for the Grant of 2000 acres of Sugar Cane Land, in April 2008, he will state -

- (a) if the procedures for the acquisition of all the 2000 acres of land have been completed and, if not, why not;
- (b) the expiry date of the said agreement, and
- (c) if plots of the land so acquired have been allocated and, if so, indicate in the case of each beneficiary thereof, the -
  - (i) names and address thereof;

- (ii) extent and location of the plot of land allocated;
- (iii) criteria used for the allocation of the plot of land thereto, and
- (iv) conditions of the allocation thereto.

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, at the outset, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has no record of any agreement signed in April 2008 between Government and the Mauritius Sugar Planters Association related to the grant of 2000 acres of sugar cane Land.

However, Government has, in fact, an agreement with the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association, most commonly known as the MSPA, which was signed on 22 April 2008 and provides, *inter alia*, for the transfer by the latter to the Government, of 2000 *arpents* of sugar cane lands over a period of ten years.

It is equally worth to underline, Madam Speaker, that a question on the same matter was addressed to me earlier this year by the First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, hon. Bhagwan, namely PQ No. B/250 and to which I tabled a reply accordingly at the sitting of 31 March 2015.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that procedures regulating acquisition of all the 2000 *arpents* of land have been worked out jointly by my Ministry and the Ministry of Housing and Lands. These procedures comprise no less than 10 steps, the key ones being, identification of sites, assessment of suitability for specific purpose, preparation of formal survey report and finalising deed of sale for each site. The responsibility for all land acquisition is vested in the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

As at to date, 761 *arpents* have already been acquired and 779 *arpents* are in process of being acquired, which account for a total land area of 1540 *arpents* representing 77% of the lot agreed upon by the said parties.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that out of the 2000 *arpents* which would be acquired, 1200 *arpents* are earmarked for agriculture and 800 *arpents* for housing and other social infrastructure projects.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Government-MSPA Agreement on the 2000 *arpents* will expire on 31 December 2017.

As regards part (c) of the question, land already acquired under the Government-MSPA Agreement has been released for the following purposes-

Purpose	Extent ( <i>Arpents</i> )
Agriculture	460
Housing	161
University Campus	100
SME Park	30
Other Social Infrastructure	10
Total	761

That makes a total of 761 *arpents* that has already been acquired and vested to the Ministry of Housing and Lands and Agriculture.

Out of the 460 *arpents* of land acquired and vested in my Ministry for agricultural projects, I am informed that 400 *arpents* have so far been allocated on lease to 52 Co-operative Societies or Agro-Based Companies. Allocation has been made on the basis of the following set of criteria -

- profile of promoter/s;
- nature of proposed activities;
- experience in proposed area of activity;
- relevance and feasibility of project proposals;
- place of residence of members of Co-operative Society/Agro-based Company;
- export potential;
- degree of innovation/modernisation, and
- financial capacity for project implementation.

I am tabling the names of the lessees, the extent and location of land allocated as well as a specimen copy of the standard lease agreement embodying all the conditions governing the said lease for agricultural purpose.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Rughoobur!

**Mr Rughoobur:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister has been talking of almost 400 *arpents* of lands that have been allocated for agricultural purposes. May I ask him to confirm how much of these lands are actually being utilised for the purpose for which they have been allocated, that is agricultural purposes?

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, these are questions which myself, I have put to the officers of my Ministry to see to it that all the lands that have been vested to the lessees are being optimally used, that is, being cultivated. I have set up a land squad in my Ministry to go and look out for all those lands that have been abandoned. So far, I have been told that we have retrieved some 20 *arpents* of lands that are known to be abandoned lands, but this exercise is still ongoing and as and when we see lands that have been abandoned; we are going to retrieve these lands and give them to those who really want to carry out agricultural activities.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ganoo!

**Mr Ganoo:** Can I know from the hon. Minister how many *arpents* of lands have been allotted for housing purposes and how many *arpents* have been used so far for the construction of social housing?

**Mr Seeruttun:** As I mentioned in my reply earlier on, so far within that 761 *arpents* that have already been vested to the Government, 161 *arpents* have been put for the housing project and I believe these are being used by the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the construction of low-cost housing.

**Mr Rughoobur:** Will the hon. Minister, please, ensure that all those lands that have been given to the different cooperative societies that are not being used or being abandoned, they are all retrieved and there was a proposal for the setting up of a land bank, I would like to know the status to date?

**Mr Seeruttun:** In fact, Madam Speaker, at the level of the Ministry, we do have a land bank whereby lands that are vested for agricultural purposes are being released to cooperative societies and individuals for the purpose of doing agricultural activities be it for food crops cultivation or for breeding purposes. So, as and when we have cases where people are not using those lands for that particular purpose, they are being retrieved and given back to real growers and breeders.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Fowdar!

**Mr Fowdar:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to ask the hon. Minister whether he will ensure that the land that would be granted as lease would be made in a very transparent manner to those who want to use it for agricultural purposes and furthermore,

being given the fact that there is a pressing need for social housing, whether he would allocate more of the land available for housing purposes rather than for agricultural purposes?

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, as you are aware, the Government is well conscious about the problem of housing and I am sure the Minister concerned is looking after that and where the land is being put at the disposal of the Government for that particular purpose are being used for that purpose.

As regards the transparent way in which the lands are being allotted to growers; as I mentioned earlier in my reply, we have a sort of criteria set and these are being dealt by a Committee which looks after that and I am sure if we apply those criteria, then the exercise would be carried out in a proper way.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** I am sure the hon. Minister must be aware of La Chaumière region where we have a very productive cooperative society for vegetables. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he can look into the file – there was a request from the La Chaumière Cooperative Society for additional land which they have obtained in the past, through Medine Sugar Estate - and within that land which has been reserved for agricultural purpose, the request of the La Chaumière Multipurpose Co-operative Society, which is a very productive and effective Cooperative Society, can be taken into consideration?

**Mr Seeruttun:** Madam Speaker, from the list of beneficiaries of land for that particular project, I can find here that we have allocated 30 *arpents* in the region of La Chaumière to different cooperative societies. So, I will take note of the hon. Member's request and see to it that those who are really in need of that will be given the plot of land.

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

### **NATIONAL LOVE BRIDGE PROJECT**

**(No. B/592) 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 Love Bridge Project being implemented by the Curepipe Starlight Sports Club, he will state if Government proposes to inject funds thereinto and, if so, give details of the project, including the –

(a) amount of funds that will be committed thereto, and

(b) eligibility criteria to benefit therefrom.

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Madam Speaker, I wish at the very outset to clarify that the National Love Bridge Project is not being implemented by the Curepipe Starlight Sports Club, contrary to what it is inferred in the question.

In the Budget Speech, I announced the concept of *parrainage* as a new approach for empowering vulnerable families and getting them out of the vicious circle of poverty. Under *parrainage*, when a company takes under its wings a specific forsaken locality, it is accepting to take responsibility for accompanying its inhabitants all along until they are able to stand on their own feet. The involvement is generational.

Following my announcement in the Budget speech, various organisations in the private sector and civil society have expressed full support in this new approach. Among them, Mr Harold Mayer submitted the 'Love Bridge Project' which is based on the principle of '*Une Famille Accompagnatrice Parraine Une Famille Vulnérable*'. My Ministry along with the National CSR Committee held several consultative meetings with relevant stakeholders including high profile representatives of the private sector, NGOs and the Civil Society.

During those meetings, the private sector has pledged to channel part of CSR funds towards implementation of the project. I am informed that a company named Lovebridge Ltd is being set up by the Joint Economic Council and the Mauritius Employers' Federation with the participation of various private sector companies to implement the project on a national scale.

In fact, to enlighten hon. Members further, I am, Madam Speaker, circulating a soft copy of the presentation of the project.

As regards the amount of funds to be provided by Government, it is proposed to earmark, as seed capital, an amount of Rs100 m., out of the unspent CSR contributions of companies remitted to the MRA so as to kick start this national project.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the project will target poor families living in deprived localities identified by the National Empowerment Foundation and those found eligible under the Social Register of Mauritius.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the clarification by the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development because we were at a loss about what this Love Bridge Project is. The hon. Minister Finance and Economic Development mentioned that money would be spent out of the CSR fund which is collected by MRA for unspent CSR fund. So,

may I know from the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he has received requests from other NGOs to get funds from this unspent CSR fund?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Madam Speaker, yes, we have decided, in fact, that the money paid to MRA which are funds which have to be spent under the CSR scheme, which comes to around Rs165 m., this whole money will be channelled back to NGOs. So, if there are NGOs which have applied for, they would be, in principle, eligible.

**Mr Bérenger:** When the hon. Minister presented the Budget in March, the idea was *parrainage* by the big companies, each big company would choose *une poche de pauvreté* and there would be *parrainage* of that *poche de pauvreté* by the big companies and I remember, theatrically, the hon. Minister saying - "As soon as I have finished reading my Budget speech, I am meeting these companies and it is on." So, apart from this company to be registered from what I have just understood, a company to be called Love Bridge is going to be registered, can I have the list of companies which have agreed to *parrainer les poches de pauvreté* and which the hon. Minister must have met immediately after presenting the Budget?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** But, I always stick to my words. We have 38 companies which have already adopted, mainly, *les cités ouvrières* and their job is quite tough because they are being asked to take care of those *poches de pauvreté* on the very long term. You cannot change, empower people overnight or just by feeding them or by assisting them. Assistance there is of no use. So, those companies have accepted to go on a very long-term. When I say 'very long-term', I mean that it is generational, that, in fact, when they move into a *poche de pauvreté*. I take one company in Moka which is investing in a  *cité*  close to Circonstance. This company will adopt, in fact, the whole  *cité*  for years and years to come. The ultimate result will be that those who possess in this country will learn to share to those who need the most and those who need the most, who are receiving the sharing will have more respect also for the other. I think that this will help into creating a society where there is less difference, less prejudice also.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can we have the list of the companies concerned and the *poches de pauvreté* which each one of them is *parrainé*?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** If the hon. Leader of the Opposition comes with the question, I will give it. No doubt. But I don't have it with me.

*(Interruptions)*

You are challenging me on an issue which you know I will win. I have 38 companies which have adopted. I don't have the list with me. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition come with a question, I will circulate it.

*(Interruptions)*

Now, he is doing politics with me. I don't like it.

*(Interruptions)*

It is done. The Leader of the Opposition...

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Can I ask everybody their comprehension and allow the hon. Minister to reply!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Rutnah:** There is a point of order, Madam Speaker!

**Madam Speaker:** What is the point of order!

**Mr Rutnah:** The point of order is whether the word 'bullshiting' all the time is unparliamentary?

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** I will reserve this for later on!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Minister of Finance, have you finished or do you have anything else to say?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Yes, Madam Speaker. The list will be circulated when the hon. Leader of the Opposition will put a question requesting the list. I don't have it with me.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea, last question!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. If I heard the hon. Minister well, he said that Rs165 m. was received by the MRA in relation to CSR contribution and that this money will be given to NGOs. Can I ask the hon. Minister how this will be done? On what basis? How the amount by each NGO will be given and if he can give the details of how this sum of Rs165 m. will be distributed?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Well, I am not here to give the other reply. There is a CSR Committee chaired by Mrs Wong who is responsible for managing those funds. So, the CSR Committee will look into the request approved or rejected following their own priorities.

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

**BRITISH AMERICAN INSURANCE – AUDITORS' REPORT**

**(No. B/593) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the British American Insurance and Company, he will state if any investigation has been carried out to ascertain if the auditors thereof for the period 2010 to 2014 had properly carried out their duties in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the –

(a) outcome thereof and

(b) actions that will be taken against them, if any.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavello):** Madam Speaker, I understand that the Financial Reporting Council is carrying out an investigation under Section 78 of the Financial Reporting Act. Of course, it is premature to anticipate what action will be taken eventually.

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister talked about the enquiry by the Financial Reporting Council. May I know apart from the Financial Reporting Council whether there is any other investigation being carried out by the Police, ICAC, FSC or any other authorities into the role of the auditors in the BAI scandal?

**Mr Collendavello:** Not that I am aware.

**Mr Uteem:** The hon. Vice-Prime Minister may be aware that under the Financial Reporting Council Act, the only sanctions, the only powers which the Financial Reporting Council has, are to give a warning or to revoke the licence of the auditors. Yet, the substantial Minister on TV stated that KPMG would be paying fines and penalties. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister under which provisions of the law would the auditors be compelled to pay fines and penalties?

**Mr Collendavello:** Well, for the moment, I am replying on what the Financial Reporting Council has said. I am not aware of any fine that has been inflicted. The hon. Member said it was KPMG. Perhaps!

**Mr Uteem:** In view of the fact that the law only gives power to the Financial Reporting Council to revoke licence or suspend or give warning, would the hon. Vice-Prime Minister consider amending the law to impose tougher sanctions on auditors of especially public companies who take public funds and then do not carry out the duty as expected under the law?

**Mr Collendavello:** I take note, Madam Speaker.

**Mr Fowdar:** I know the hon. Minister is not the substantive Minister. Madam Speaker, I am really worried with this issue of KPMG, which is one of the Big Four companies internationally, and I anticipate that anything happening to this firm will have a direct impact on the economy of Mauritius directly, because Foreign Direct Investment will slow down and investors might be scared to come here. So, I would ask the hon. Minister to transmit to the substantive Minister to look at this issue with caution.

**Mr Collendavelloo:** I will certainly do that, Madam Speaker.

### **BAI – LOCAL BANKS - DEBT**

**(No. B/594) 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 British American Insurance and Company and the subsidiaries thereof, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to the amount of money that these companies owed to the local banks, indicating the amount thereof that have been written off, if any, as at to date.

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that under section 26 of the Bank of Mauritius Act 2004, the Bank is required to maintain the confidentiality of information gathered in the performance of its duties. Accordingly, it would not be appropriate for the Bank of Mauritius to disclose any information as to the amount of money that the British American Insurance Company and its subsidiaries owe to local banks or amounts that have been written off as at to date.

**Mr Uteem:** Madam Speaker, I fully appreciate the confidentiality provisions of the Banking Act. We are not requiring any disclosure of names of banks. We just want to know the aggregate amount of exposure and whether this constitutes a systemic risk to the banking sector.

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** I have given the hon. Member the reply I have from the Bank of Mauritius and it stands good. Now the question is whether without divulging the names we can give the figures. I can look into it.

### **SME ONE-STOP SHOP – SETTING UP**

**(No. B/595) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives whether, in regard to

the small and medium enterprises, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, information as to the schemes currently administered by the Small and Medium Enterprise One Stop Shop, indicating in each case, the number of enterprises registered thereunder, as at to date.

**Mr Bholah:** Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, it was announced in the Budget Speech that an SME One-Stop Shop will be set up to provide, under one roof, all the support, financing and information, as well as the delivery of all permits and licences that SMEs require to start and grow their businesses. It was to be located in the SICOM Tower at Ebene, but in view of some practical and accessibility problems, especially for those entrepreneurs who will have to travel to Ebene by public transport to solicit any assistance from the One-Stop Shop, my Ministry sought other possible locations.

We have now, with the assistance of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, identified the ex-BAI building, which is situated at Pope Hennessy Street, Port Louis, for the setting up of the SME One-Stop Shop. Arrangements are being made with all stakeholders for the coming into operation of the One-Stop Shop before the end of November, subject to all clearances being received and to the Lease Agreement being finalised.

Madam Speaker, meanwhile I am informed that the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority is managing since July, this year, one scheme, namely the 'Participation in International Fairs SME Refund Scheme'. Under this scheme, SMEs benefit a grant to finance their participation in international fairs, trade, as well as technology, up to a maximum of Rs200,000 yearly.

Such financial assistance is provided to eligible SMEs to meet the costs of air tickets and accommodation and rental of stands. From July 2015 to date, a total amount of Rs6.1 m. has been approved to fund the participation of 73 SMEs in International Fairs. As the scheme was previously managed by Enterprise Mauritius from January to June, this year, I am informed that, for that period, a total amount of Rs10.8 m. has been approved for 123 SMEs for participation in International Fairs.

Moreover, SMEDA has funded the participation of 62 entrepreneurs from the Furniture, Plastic and Printing Sectors in Technology Fairs in China and Thailand.

I am further informed that, as from January 2015 to date, SMEDA has registered a number of 1,744 new enterprises.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry is also offering two other schemes under the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme (MBGS) to entrepreneurs. These are the 90:10 Payback Technical Assistance scheme and the Start Ups Entrepreneurship Scheme.

The 90:10 Payback Technical Assistance Scheme is a business growth scheme enabling Mauritian-based enterprises to bring in outside technical expertise such as the services of specialists or consultants in very specific fields, in order to assist them how to grow their business and become more globally competitive. Enterprises are given full support for growth, increased productivity, employment creation and competitiveness. Under this scheme, an enterprise may benefit from financial assistance to the tune of Rs3 m. without any collateral and repayable up to a maximum of 1.4 times after a moratorium period of three years. Since January to date, 19 projects have been approved, out of which 14 under SMEs.

Madam Speaker, the Start Ups Entrepreneurship Scheme, which is another scheme offered under the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme, as I mentioned earlier, provides a monthly 'salary replacement allowance' of Rs20,000 for a maximum period of one year to creative entrepreneurs who may not otherwise have the necessary income to launch an innovative business. The beneficiary may have to refund a maximum of 1.2 times the amount of the loan obtained should the growth of the enterprise be significant. Since January to date, 12 projects have been approved under this scheme for a total sum of Rs2.88 m.

Madam Speaker, as regards the new schemes, which will be available to SMEs once the SME One-Stop Shop comes into operation, my Ministry is in the process of finalising same, in consultation with all stakeholders. In due course, I will make an announcement on the introduction of the new schemes for the SMEs.

**Mr Uteem:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister mentioned that the SMEDA will now move to BAI Tower. May I know in terms of rental, whether the amount that is being paid now is the same as the amount that was budgeted when we voted the budget for SICOM Tower?

*(Interruptions)*

How does the rental of the new venue which SMEDA is going to pay compare to the agreed price? Because the hon. Minister of Finance said he did a very good deal with them.

**Mr Bholah:** Well, this is being looked into now. We are in the process of finalising.

**Mr Uteem:** One of the measures announced in the Budget relating to SMEs was that SMEs registered on the scheme will be exempted from the payment of corporate tax for a period of eight years. May I know from the hon. Minister how many enterprises are now eligible for that tax holiday?

**Mr Bholah:** As I said, lately we had 1,744 enterprises, but we are expecting more once the One-Stop Shop is set up.

*(Interruptions)*

I think after June.

**Mr Uteem:** Is the hon. Minister saying that all these 1,700 or so new SMEs will have a tax holiday of eight years?

**Mr Bholah:** If they qualify as SMEs, yes.

**Mr Fowdar:** Madam Speaker, we have seen in the past that DBM loans given to entrepreneurs mostly have failed because there was no proper guidance. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is looking into this matter, whether new loans to be granted would be given only to feasible projects, guided by the Ministry?

**Mr Bholah:** Of course, Madam Speaker. We will look at the bankable projects only.

**Mr Bhagwan:** There are so many incentives for the SMEs. Can the hon. Minister inform the House who is heading the SMEDA these days, whether there has been a change in the Board and whether he has received representation that the Board is not functioning? The SMEs are having lots of problems. Instead, we must have an institution helping the SMEs, to direct them when they have problems. At least the hon. Minister can have a look at the functioning of that organisation and inform us who is actually heading it.

**Mr Bholah:** Madam Speaker, the Board has just been set up under the Chairmanship of Mr Valaydon. In fact, we have revisited the Board, reduced the number of members thereon, but we have also included in the Board institutions such as the MCCI, the Chief Executive of the new MauBank and a member of the BOI.

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

## **MAURITIUS PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE - CONTRIBUTION**

**(No. B/596) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Professional Football League, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to when it will start the new season thereof, and
- (b) state the financial contribution of his Ministry thereto.

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Football Association (MFA) that the next season of the Mauritius Professional Football League will kick start on 18 October 2015 with the Charity Shield.

The League itself will start on 25 October 2015.

Regarding part (b) of the question, an amount of Rs16 m. has been earmarked under the budget of my Ministry for the current Financial Year for the professional football, including female football teams.

**Mr Quirin:** L'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire s'il a eu des garanties de la *Mauritius Professional Football League* que ce présent championnat qui va débiter - comme le ministre vient de nous l'affirmer, le 25 octobre - va pouvoir se poursuivre jusqu'au bout en dépit des relations difficiles qui existent entre la MFA et la *Mauritius Professional Football League* ?

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madame la présidente, il n'y a pas de relations difficiles entre la MFA et la *Mauritius Professional Football League*. Monsieur Georges Chung avait demandé un *Action Plan* des dix clubs. Malheureusement, ils n'avaient pas coopéré et c'est pour ça que Monsieur Georges Chung avait pris la décision d'arrêter la *Mauritius Professional Football League*.

Après avoir rencontré les différents *stakeholders* et la MFA, et quand il est venu me parler personnellement, Monsieur Georges Chung est revenu sur sa décision et *he has announced himself in the press that he is going ahead and he is giving the guarantee that he is going for the full year.*

**Mr Quirin:** Madame la présidente, en ce qui concerne le présent championnat qui va avoir lieu très bientôt il n'y a pas de souci. Mais ce qu'on aimerait savoir, surtout le monde sportif, ceux qui seront concernés par le football, c'est si la *Mauritius Professional Football*

*League* a pris des engagements pour que ce championnat professionnel se déroule dans la durée ? Je veux dire pas seulement cette année-ci, mais les années qui vont suivre.

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Actually, he started last year and this is the second year. Definitely, there are things that we need to reset and I think Mr Georges Chung is determined to go ahead with the Mauritius Professional Football League.

**Madam Speaker:** The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/575 and B/612 have been withdrawn. Next question, hon. Quirin!

### **ATHLETES – DOPING**

(No. B/597) **Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to doping, he will state the actions taken by his Ministry in relation thereto, if any, since the weightlifter P. P. was tested positive thereto.

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madam Speaker, all adverse analytical finding cases of doping in sports, be it in competitions or out of competitions, are dealt with in accordance with the World Anti-doping Code of the World Anti-doping Agency (WADA) of which Mauritius is a member.

In line with Article 7 of the Code, the case of weightlifter P.P is being dealt with by the Results Management Committee of the National Anti-Doping Organisation (NADO). Hearing is still ongoing before the Results Management Committee. The House will, therefore, appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me at this stage to comment on its proceedings.

**Mr Quirin:** Madame la présidente, ce cas de dopage concerne tout le monde sportif local et je crois qu'il serait bon que le ministre nous donne certaines précisions en ce qui concerne ce cas. De ce fait, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire quand le ministère a reçu les résultats du test de M. Prithipaul, et quand ces mêmes résultats ont été communiqués aux personnes concernées, c'est-à-dire l'athlète en question et à la fédération d'haltérophilie ?

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madam Speaker, I think we received, as I was informed, on 08 August after the Indian Ocean Games and the information was immediately circulated to the Federation and to the athlete himself.

**Mr Quirin:** Madame la présidente, je trouve assez surprenant que les résultats du test soient tombés le 11 juin 2015 et que le ministre vient de nous affirmer que ces résultats ont été communiqués, je crois, le 08 août, c'est-à-dire deux mois après ! J'aimerais savoir ; que le ministre nous explique comment cela puisse être possible.

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madame Speaker, the Anti-Doping Unit is found in South Africa. The result came out there in June, but was only sent to us on 08 August because it had to follow all the procedures regarding all the international federations before it reached the Ministry. So, we received it only on 08 August.

**Mr Quirin:** Madame la présidente, j'aimerais savoir du ministre quand la Fédération Internationale d'Haltérophilie, de même que le *World Anti-Doping Association (WADA)*, ont été informés de ce cas de dopage, et s'il y a eu des courriers qui ont été échangés entre ces deux organismes et l'*Anti-Doping Unit* du ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports de bien vouloir déposer copies de ces courriers ?

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, we received the information only on 08 August and when they got the first result they had to do a second confirmation. This is why it took so long. This is the normal procedure and we need to adapt.

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

#### **MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL – SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE – FEES**

**(No. B/598) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the sports infrastructure, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to if the Board thereof has decided to increase all the rental fees thereof which fall under the management thereof and, if so, give the reasons therefor.

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Sports Council that its Board has decided to increase the rates payable as from 01 September 2015 as the fees collected prior to that date were not even sufficient to cover the overtime payable to handy workers in service and the maintenance cost of the infrastructures.

I am further informed by the MSC that as from 01 September 2015, there will be two different rates applicable - one rate for use of the infrastructures before 18h00 and another rate after 18h00. The two different categories of rates are being made applicable with a view

to covering partly the huge expenses incurred for payment of electricity bill as lighting facilities are provided after 18h00.

I am also informed by the MSC that all National Sports Federations and their affiliated clubs as well as their organisations promoting the development of the respective sports are granted the infrastructures free of charge everyday between 15h00 to 18h00, Madam Speaker.

I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to Parliamentary Question No. B/503 where the reason justifying the increase in rates applicable by the MSC has been clearly explained. It is worth pointing out that in spite of the increase the rates applicable by the MSC are still lower than those applicable elsewhere.

**Mr Quirin:** Madame la présidente, malgré la réponse du ministre, j'aimerais qu'il nous dise si cette augmentation - et dans certains cas je dois préciser que les tarifs ont pratiquement doublé - n'est pas une contradiction en elle-même, et un obstacle par rapport à la pratique du sport en général ?

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madam Speaker, yes, I will just give one example. For badminton court it was Rs100 per hour per court and today it is Rs150 per hour per court before 18h00. Badminton per court is paid by a minimum of two players or four players, which comes to Rs75 per player or Rs38 per player. I don't think it is excessive.

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

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is something I raised at Adjournment Time two weeks ago, but the hon. Minister was not present. I asked whether consideration could be given at least for students and unemployed people who can't afford to pay this increase in fees, if there could be a scheme put in place for them to benefit from the reduced cost.

**Mr Sawmynaden:** Madam Speaker, in my reply I mentioned that between 15h00 and 18h00 it is free of charge. This is after school hours.

**Mr Quirin:** Une dernière question, Madame la présidente. Le ministre vient de nous affirmer, encore une fois, que les infrastructures sportives, dont les piscines, sont gratuitement offertes aux clubs, associations sportives et fédérations entre 15 heures et 18 heures. Est-ce que le ministre peut nous confirmer, en ce qui concerne les piscines

essentiellement, si entre 15 heures et 18 heures, les nageurs en particulier ceux qui appartiennent à des clubs, peuvent pratiquer leur discipline gratuitement ou bien dans leur cas ils doivent payer une cotisation à leurs clubs ?

**Mr Sawmynaden :** Madam Speaker, as I have said, it is free of charge from 15.00 hours to 18.00 hours. So, it is free of charge to everyone.

#### **SAUDI ARABIA – EMBASSY - SETTING UP**

**(No. B/599) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to Saudi Arabia, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed –

- (a) setting up of an Embassy thereat, and
- (b) operation of direct flights between Mauritius and Saudi Arabia.

**Mr Sinatambou:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East for this highly topical parliamentary question and I am going to respond thereto in a spirit of full transparency.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to the victims of the stampede at the Holy City of Mecca. I also share the pain and sorrow of those Mauritian families who have not yet got confirmation of the whereabouts of some of our pilgrims and pray for their safe return home.

This Government, Madam Speaker, and, in particular, my Ministry has been doing whatever is necessary to implement the promise made last year during the electoral campaign for the opening of an embassy in the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On 20 January of this year, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister officially wrote to His Royal Highness the King of Saudi Arabia, Late Bin Abdulazziz AL SAUD about Government's decision to establish a Mauritius Embassy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On 13 March of this year, the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Mauritius with residence in Pretoria paid a Courtesy Call on the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the opening of the Mauritius Embassy in Saudi Arabia was raised among other issues.

As a follow-up to the letter of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, hon. S. Soodhun, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Lands met with the relevant Saudi Authorities on 19 March of this year with a view to facilitating the process for the establishment of a Mauritius Embassy in Saudi Arabia as soon as possible.

On 09 April 2015, my Ministry has, through our High Commission in Cairo, transmitted, through the diplomatic channel, an official request to the Government of Saudi Arabia seeking the latter's *Agrément* to the proposed opening of the Embassy of Mauritius in Saudi Arabia.

On 20 May 2015, our Embassy in Cairo sent a Diplomatic Note to the Royal Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Egypt requesting the Saudi Authorities to indicate any development regarding our request to open an Embassy in Saudi Arabia.

On 01 June, the Saudi Ambassador in Pretoria informed our Mission in Pretoria that he was awaiting a reply from the highest authorities in Saudi Arabia.

On 26 June 2015, my Ministry sent a Diplomatic Note directly to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in South Africa regarding the proposed meeting of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Lands, hon. Soodhun, as Special Envoy, to meet with the highest Saudi Arabian Authorities in order to discuss in greater detail the modalities for the opening of a Mauritius Embassy in Saudi Arabia.

On 16 July of this year, our Mission in Pretoria informed my Ministry that the Saudi Ambassador had not yet received a date for our Special Envoy to travel to Saudi Arabia.

On 27 July and 05 August of this year, our Mission in Pretoria sent reminders to the Saudi Embassy in South Africa. A formal reply from Saudi Arabia is still being awaited.

On 27 August of this year, the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in South Africa informed our Mission that the Saudi Ambassador is still awaiting a reply from Riyadh. It was also pointed out that His Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia would be on a State Visit to the United States of America in early September and will thereafter be attending the United Nations General Assembly. Hence, our Mission has been requested to follow up on this matter in October 2015.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry will continue to monitor this matter with the Saudi Authorities together with our respective Overseas Missions in Cairo and Pretoria.

In respect of part (b) of this Parliamentary Question, Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that all matters relating to National Air Access fall under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office.

It may be recalled, in this respect, that on 25 September 2015, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister replied to Parliamentary Question No. B/476 from the First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central in which he informed the House that a Task Force under the Chairmanship of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service has been tasked with the development of a National Air Access policy. That reply has already been tabled.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We also from this side of the House present our deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in Saudi Arabia and we also pray that we find the missing Mauritians and also missing Hajjis there. This question of opening of a Mauritian Embassy in Saudi Arabia has been long on the cards. Myself, during the precedent mandate, I have come with various PQ's in the House...

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

**Mr Ameer Meea:** ... and I thank the hon. Minister for giving us various information. May I ask the hon. Minister what is the time frame that he is expecting that all this would materialise?

**Mr Sinatambou:** As the House will have noticed, Madam Speaker, everything has been done on the part of Government and so many diplomatic notes, contacts, verbal, and visits have been made. If it were for the Government we would do it tomorrow but we depend on the Sovereignty of Saudi Arabia and we will have to bear with them and as you will appreciate especially with what has happened now, we have to be patient and understanding.

**Mr Uteem:** Madam Speaker, it is clear that the Ministry is doing whatever they can. However, it is also clear that there seems to be no hurry, no rush from the Saudi side to accede to our request. May I know from the hon. Minister whether any initiatives have been carried out through friendly countries, third party intervention and at least find out why is it that Saudi is not responding to all our requests?

**Mr Sinatambou:** I would not say, Madam Speaker, that the Saudi Authorities are not responding to our request. In fact, I would say that the Saudis are responding to our request. The reality is that there are a number of good things happening. Not later than this month actually while the Rt. hon. Prime Minister is in New York at the United Nations General Assembly, the Saudi Government and the Mauritian Government will be signing a General Cooperation Agreement.

Now, my feeling is that this might well have been a prerequisite expected by the Saudi Authorities although it is not on paper and it is not being said, but clearly, however, I will not say that there is a reticence on the part of the Saudi Authorities; I will not say that they aren't in a hurry. I think that there is a certain diplomatic itinerary that they would like to follow which is being done just at the precise moment in New York together with the Rt. hon. Prime Minister.

**Mr Rutnah:** Given the national interest raised in this question, can I ask if the hon. Minister is aware, firstly, that in 2010, the former Prime Minister promised the opening of an Embassy? Secondly, that in 2011, he promised that a high delegation will be led by the then Deputy Prime Minister for the setting-up of the Embassy and thirdly, that in 2013, the former Prime Minister himself took the decision to stop all exercise of opening of an Embassy and had an Embassy been opened in Saudi Arabia today, the communication problem that we are having with the pilgrims, would not have happened today.

**Mr Sinatambou:** I don't know whether we would not have had communication problems because, as a matter of fact, there are very good communications between Saudi Arabia and Mauritius in the current crisis. However, I am afraid that to the first three questions...

*(Interruptions)*

It is not an own goal; it is an explanation!

However, the unfortunate fact is that to the first three questions I am afraid that the answer is in the affirmative.

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

**Mr Bérenger:** I don't think when we are talking about opening an Embassy in Saudi Arabia and after the tragic events that we have just known, it is not a question of *marquer des*

*points*, but I wanted to know from the hon. Minister why at one point in time it is our Embassy in Cairo that stepped in? Clearly, we have wasted some time before it was sorted out. Now, it is our High Commission in South Africa that is handling the issue. Can I request the hon. Minister to tell us *pourquoi ce cafouillage* and now, is it clear that it is Ministry to Ministry or through their Embassy in South Africa that we will keep on trying?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Now, in fact, to be precise to the hon. Leader of the Opposition there is no *cafouillage*. What happens is that the Mauritian High Commission in South Africa actually communicates with the Saudi Arabian Embassy accredited to Mauritius but located in South Africa. So, Pretoria deals with the Saudi Arabian Embassy accredited to Mauritius. Cairo is the Mauritian Embassy accredited to Saudi Arabia. So, we are tackling every single problem from each angle that we can, not for *cafouillage* purposes, but to ensure speed in delivery and to ensure that we manage to get better results.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister just now - and I thank him for his very detailed answer - talked about an agreement that was to be signed this month between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Mauritius. In the same breath, can he inform the House whether it has been possible for our hon. Prime Minister to meet with His Excellency, the King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia while in New York since there was advance notice from the Embassy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia that indeed His Royal Highness would be in New York. That was, at least, advance notice and a meeting could have been organised and has it been organised, and if not, why not?

**Mr Sinatambou:** I will need notice of this question because that is outside the purview of what I am answering. However, what I can say about this General Cooperation Agreement, either it has already been signed or it is to be signed.

*(Interruptions)*

I am told that it has been signed already on Sunday, and it is going to pave the way for strong and fruitful relationships between the two countries.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea, last question on this!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Just regarding the document that has been signed on Sunday, can I ask the hon. Minister to make this document public?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Well, I will certainly make it public if I find that it can be made public. As you know, there are things between States which sometimes have to stay confidential. I can assure the House, Madam Speaker, that if that document can be made public, I will certainly make it public.

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

### **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - PROJECTS EARMARKED**

**(No. B/600) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Corporate Social Responsibility, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total amount of money received over the past two financial years thereunder, indicating the -

- (a) projects earmarked for implementation, and
- (b) guidelines presently applicable therefor.

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, the CSR system was put in place in 2009 with the objective to address absolute poverty in the country. The CSR system has become too rigid and cumbersome with its complicated set of guidelines.

It was difficult for companies to allocate funds to eligible NGOs. Accordingly, we removed all the CSR guidelines, but the obligation remains under the Income Tax Act for companies to allocate 2% of their profit after tax towards CSR.

As I had stated in my reply to PQ B/592, we introduced the concept of *parrainage* over and above the CSR to empower vulnerable families and get them out of the vicious circle of poverty in the medium and long terms.

I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that the 2% CSR obligations amounted to Rs659 m. in 2013 and Rs723 m. in 2014. The unspent amount remitted to MRA was Rs125 m. and Rs149 m. respectively.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that around 920 and 1,100 projects had been approved for 2013 and 2014 respectively by the then National CSR Committee.

With regard to part (b) of the question, as explained earlier, there are no guidelines at present.

**Mr Bérenger:** I don't know if I heard the hon. Minister rightly, the law provides that companies have to spend 2% of their profits; they give assistance to NGOs and other organisations, and, if there is a balance, it is sent to the MRA. Did I hear correctly the hon. Minister say that this idea of *parrainage* is over and above the 2%, that is, the companies that agree to *parrainer*, they must spend a full 2% plus whatever the *parrainage* costs?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** The *parrainage* is inclusive in the 2%. Some companies might go beyond it.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes. This is what I am saying.

*(Interruptions)*

No. Over and above the CSR. The concept of *parrainage* does not go against the CSR principle.

I will just read the paragraph again – as I have stated in my reply to PQ No. B/592, we introduced the concept of *parrainage* over and above the CSR method/system.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bérenger:** It was not clear. So, I take it that for the companies that go for *parrainage*, it will be within their 2% and whatever additional, whatever is left they can either spend it themselves or as before, send it to the MRA?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Fowdar!

**Mr Fowdar:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can quantify what is the *manque à gagner* this year as a result of the implementation of the new policy for CSR, that is, not implementing a 2% and leaving it optional for the companies to contribute?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** *Je n'ai pas bien compris.* Can the hon. Member put the question again?

**Mr Fowdar:** Can I know what is the *manque à gagner* this year as a result of the implementation of the new policy?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Well, I wish to explain myself once again. Companies have got to pay 2% of their profit to contribute to the CSR Fund. Those companies, which can't spend that money, pay it to the MRA. This amount, which is around Rs150 m. is being now ploughed back in the CSR system. So, there is no question of loss in revenue with the new concept of *parrainage* being introduced.

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

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Madam Speaker, there seems to be a confusion regarding the CSR contribution because now that there are no guidelines, how do you define that a company contributes 2% of its profit to a CSR activity since there are no guidelines, no *paramètres pour dire dans quelle direction la contribution a été faite*?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Yes, it is quite simple. Company A has got Rs100 m. of CSR money to spend; they can spend it on the *parrainage* project or they can also help NGOs. What I mean is that the *parrainage* system is not excluding NGOs from applying for funds from companies. It still goes on as before.

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

**Mr Ganoo:** May I ask the hon. Minister; in view of the new situation and in view of the experience that we have all learned about what has happened since this CSR project has been implemented by the former Minister of Finance and Economic Development, is it not time for Government to come up with a legal framework for the sake of transparency so that we know that there is a piece of legislation which set up the CSR Committee, the activities that the CSR can look after and also, the Love Bridge Project, for example, so that there is more clarity in everything that is happening in this domain?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Well, maybe we have to communicate more, that's for sure. In my mind, the project is quite simple in the sense that we are giving the freedom now to companies to use their funds as they wish to. We can't direct them to use their funds. We have to remind the House that the 2% is above corporate tax of 15%. It is their money and it is for them to decide how they spend it, whether it be in the form of *parrainage* or whether it be by subsidising or helping NGOs.

**Mr Bérenger:** Still it makes me very uneasy to listen to what I have just heard. So, there are no longer any guidelines and the hon. Minister is saying that the companies have to calculate 2% of their profits and they are totally free to spend that as they wish. They, therefore, define what is the CSR project. Is there any control? There is no more any guidelines. Is there no checking at all on how those companies decide this is a CSR project and this is not one? There is no control at all.

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** Why should we control? It is not our money. I have to make it clear. If it was 2% out of money that is owed to income tax, we can ask for information. In the case of the CSR, it is 2% above the corporate tax of 15%. It is their money. This is why I feel that they have to be given the flexibility of spending their money as they want. What we have seen since that decision is that those big companies are now creating foundations. In fact, there are some 18 foundations created.

*(Interruptions)*

But my friend, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not listening to my reply.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Minister, please address the Chair and please proceed! Have you finished?

**Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo:** I have done.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. The Table has been advised that PQ B/603, B/604, B/605 and B/606 have been withdrawn. Time is over!

Hon. Rutnah raised the point of order earlier on a word which he has heard and asked whether that word is parliamentary. I, personally, did not hear the utterance of the word. I am now asking hon. Rutnah whether he insists on the point of order.

**Mr Rutnah:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** The matter is closed.